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to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



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Kuwait power usage hits record

Mercury rises to new highs as heatwaves scorch the globe

KUWAIT/ROME: Temperatures reached new highs on Monday as heatwaves scorched parts of the Northern Hemisphere, triggering health warnings and fanning wildfires in the latest stark reminder of the effects of global warming. From North America to Europe and Asia, people gulped water and sought shelter from the sweltering heat, with the mercury expected to reach new highs in several places in the next few days.

The maximum power consumption load in Kuwait reached 16,370 MW on Monday, the highest in the country's history, breaking last year's record of 16,180 MW as temperatures reached 50 degrees Celsius. Informed sources said the ministry of electricity and water expects the load to continue rising in the coming days as the country is witnessing a rise in temperatures. The ministry also recorded a parallel increase in water usage, as consumption reached 501 million gallons out of a production rate of 508 million gallons.

Near Athens, a forest fire flared in strong winds by the popular beach town of Loutraki where the mayor

said holiday camps for youngsters had come under threat. "We have saved 1,200 children who were in the holiday camps," said mayor Giorgos Gkionis. Greek police arrested a foreign man suspected of starting another of the ongoing wildfires, in Kouvaras, some 50 km southeast of Athens, fire service spokesman Yannis Artopoulos said.

Europe, the globe's fastest-warming continent, was bracing for its hottest-ever temperature on Italy's islands of Sicily and Sardinia, where a high of 48 degrees Celsius is predicted, according to the European Space Agency. The United Nations on Wednesday validated the European heat record of 48.8C set in Sicily in 2021. "The extreme weather — an increasingly frequent occurrence in our warming climate — is having a major impact on human health, ecosystems, economies, agriculture, energy and water supplies," said World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Petteri Taalas. "This underlines the increasing urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions as quickly and as deeply as possible."

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DEATH VALLEY, California: National Park Service rangers are photographed next to a digital display of an unofficial heat reading at Furnace Creek Visitor Center during a heatwave in Death Valley National Park on July 16, 2023. — AFP

Education minister quits a week after finance minister

KUWAIT: Education Minister Hamad Al-Adwani submitted his resignation on Monday, according to local reports, with Minister of Electricity and Water Jassem Al-Ostad set to be assigned as acting education minister. Adwani is the second minister to resign in as many weeks after the resignation of Finance Minister Manaf Al-Hajeri last Tuesday. Deputy Prime Minister, Oil Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Saad Al-Barrak was appointed as acting finance minister.



Hamad Al-Adwani

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works Amani Bugammaz gave a demonstration during a Cabinet meeting Monday on a proposal to turn the Directorate General of Civil Aviation into an independent authority for civil aviation. The proposal is in line with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) regulations and a step to regulate air transport according to international standards, the minister said in a press statement.

Minister of Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban proposed during the Cabinet meeting to move youth centers to come under the authority of the Public Authority for Sports instead of the Public Authority for Youth. The move will help expand opportunities for team sports, give

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Erdogan on Gulf tour for investments

RIYADH: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived Monday in Saudi Arabia at the start of a three-state Gulf tour as he looks to attract foreign investment in his country's ailing economy. Erdogan landed in the Red Sea city of Jeddah to meet King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, before heading for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar later this week.

Russia: Ukraine grain export deal 'ended'

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Monday said it was exiting a major agreement to facilitate Ukraine grain exports hours after drones struck Russia's only bridge connecting its mainland to the annexed Crimea peninsula. Moscow, which has for months complained about the implementation of the grain pact, said the attack on the Kerch bridge had nothing to do with its withdrawal from the deal designed to avoid food shortages in vulnerable countries.

"The grain deal has ceased. As soon as the Russian part (of the agreements) are fulfilled, the Russian side will immediately return to the grain deal,"

said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. But President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine was prepared to keep exporting grain via the Black Sea despite Russia's exit from the deal. "Even without the Russian Federation, everything must be done so that we can use this Black Sea corridor," Zelensky said. "We are not afraid. We have been approached by companies that own ships. They said that they are ready" to continue shipments, he said.

Moscow's announcement came hours after drones hit the sole road link connecting Russia to the annexed Crimea peninsula, a key supply line for Russian forces in the south of Ukraine. Kyiv's navy and SBU security service carried out the "special operation" using seabornedrones, a security service source told AFP. Russian authorities said a civilian couple was killed and their daughter wounded in the

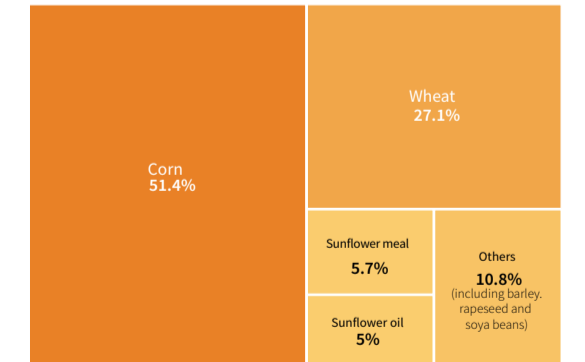
second to Saudi Arabia since a rapprochement after ties between the two countries were strained in 2018. But with ties on the mend, Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia in April 2022, and Prince Mohammed travelled to Turkey in June last year. In March, Saudi Arabia deposited \$5 billion into Turkey's central bank. Erdogan's latest Saudi trip comes as Turkey battles a currency collapse and soaring inflation that has battered its economy.

The two countries will sign several accords during Erdogan's trip as Ankara looks to non-Western partners for financial support, a senior Saudi official told

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Cereal exports from Ukraine by sea

Exports via the Black Sea by grain type in % of total grain exports, as of July 16



Source: Black Sea Grain Initiative, a UN-backed deal between Ukraine and Russia. — AFP

UN hands over ship for Yemen oil transfer

ABOARD NAUTICA, Yemen: The United Nations on Monday handed over a vessel that will take on board oil from a decaying tanker in the Red Sea off war-torn Yemen, an operation aimed at averting an environmental catastrophe. The handover ceremony took place aboard the Nautica, which is being renamed the Yemen, in the presence of the country's Houthi authorities who control the capital Sanaa.

In the coming days, an operation is expected to begin pumping 1.14 million

barrels of crude oil to the Nautica from the FSO Safer, a rusting 47-year-old ship that the UN describes as a "ticking time bomb". The UN-owned ship arrived off Yemen on Sunday. Monday's ceremony highlighted close cooperation between the UN and the Houthis, who since 2015 have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition backing the internationally recognized government based in the southern Yemeni city of Aden.

The UN had been hoping for a low-key event, but the Houthis invited high-ranking officials from various ministries as well as more than 20 local journalists to board the new ship. As Houthi officials looked on, David Gressly, the UN resident coordinator for Yemen, signed the handover

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HODEIDA, Yemen: A picture shows the deck of the UN-owned Nautica vessel on July 17, 2023. — AFP



Tunisian FM reiterates strong bilateral relations with Kuwait

KCCI holds talks with Tunisian delegation



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah meetings with his Tunisian counterpart Nabil Ammar in Kuwait City on Sunday. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: KCCI Vice Chairman Fahad Al-Jouan and KCCI officials hold talks with Tunisian Minister and the visiting delegation.

KUWAIT: Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Nabil Ammar said on Sunday that his meetings with Kuwaiti officials tackled efforts to expand economic, cultural and scientific cooperation.

The meetings were also a good opportunity to update Kuwait officials on the situation in Tunisia and the challenges facing the North African nation. Ammar said in an interview with KUNA before concluding his one-day official visit to Kuwait. He reiterated that Tunisian-Kuwaiti relations are solid and based on shared visions, especially in foreign policy.

Tunisian and Kuwaiti foreign policies focus on finding peaceful solutions to crises and take into consideration the humanitarian aspects of any conflict, he said. On the Kuwaiti investments in Tunisia, Minister Ammar

said his country is keen on creating an investment-attractive environment for all, especially for Kuwaiti investors and is determined to reform laws to increase foreign investments. Regarding his country's vision of the situation in the region, especially Libya and Sudan, Ammar emphasized that Tunisia seeks to bring the views of the conflicting parties closer and backs reconciliation efforts to restore stability in these two brotherly countries.

During his visit to Kuwait, Minister Ammar met Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and several state officials.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said on Sunday it is seeking to boost economic relations with Tunisian businesspeople. High-

lighting the need for more communication between the private sectors in both countries, the Chamber's Vice Chairman Fahad Al-Jouan, affirmed in a statement that strength of Kuwaiti-Tunisian relations, pointing to the Chamber's aspiration to further them in terms of investment opportunities.

Al-Jouan's remarks came while receiving Tunisian Minister Nabil Ammar, Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Hashimi Ajeeli, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Al-Omar. Al-Jouan also voiced the Chamber's readiness to arrange such meetings with any visiting Tunisian economic delegation. Minister Ammar underlined the importance of Kuwait's investments as "they have been present for decades and had a pioneering role in the Tunisian economy," stressing the need to explore new economic ventures and expertise. — KUNA



KUWAIT: KCCI Vice Chairman Fahad Al-Jouan (left) with Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Nabil Ammar.

In my view

A pause for education



Dr Khaled Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Education is not important for man, education is the man, and he who does not believe in this should distance themselves from the education arena. What is happening with education in Kuwait is something that raises many questions, and each question has several exclamation marks with it. Can we say that what is going with education is "something intentional"?

As a reminder, we go back to the history of education in Kuwait. It is possible to consider 1887 the year when education began in Kuwait, the period of the mullah or mutawa. Then in 1911, formal education began with the opening of Al-Mubarakiya School, and this period witnessed continued developments including the establishment of the Maarif (education) council, followed by the religious institution in 1943, the industrial college in 1954, opening of the teachers' institute in the 1962/1963 academic year and Kuwait University in 1966.

The history of the teachers' institute in Kuwait is linked with the questions we mentioned above. The institute was not able to create strong foundations, although there were sincere people who graduated from it. Joining the teachers' institute was a way for young people to quickly start receiving a salary, or the required GPA encouraged those who did not have other opportunities. Here began the encroachment on education, as during that period private schools came into existence and expanded at the expense of government education, which began to weaken.

Then we ended with the catastrophe of the spread of the foreign school culture, which the media, benefitters and conspiring powers succeeded in making it linked in the citizen's mind with better status and prestigious education, which allowed for creating generations of students who are not good at reading in Arabic and not interested in the nation's culture. All they care about is speaking in a foreign language. The forces succeeded through education to pull students out from their culture. They succeeded in weakening public education and creating a parallel education system to Westernize our children and make money, which encouraged more private schools and institutions to open.

Today, we wish we were in 1887, as the mullahs and mutawas taught our children the values of our culture, even if limited in science, which is better than teaching superficial knowledge in a foreign language, as it does not add to our culture anything as much as it destroys the remnants of what we are proud of.

Mothers smile when they speak to their children in a language other than theirs, and some superficial youth get grades they do not deserve in exchange for money and gifts. Some of those schools have become hatcheries for qualified losers! Yes, this is something intended, either for financial gain or for founding a valueless generation, just bodies and brains that move without being a help for their nation, that is if they are not against it.

We have said previously on several occasions that private schools' curricula have historical and cultural mistakes, and there is a lack of interest in the Arabic language and the nation's culture in many of them. The responsibility of the education ministry and the department responsible for private education is to develop means of supervision and be keen on inspecting the curricula. All this has been repeatedly reminded, and many officials tried to follow up, but there are those among us who have other goals, and this is something unwanted.

Whoever wants to reform education must believe that education is life, and equally an important matter.



Retired Colonel Zafer Al-Sayegh honors Dr. Hanan Al-Awadhi, Acting Director of Blood Transfusion and Administration Services.

Kuwait's retired officers hold blood donation campaign

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Association of Retired Officers held a blood donation campaign on Monday in cooperation with the blood transfusion services department at Kuwait Central Blood Bank, under the slogan 'Your blood saves us'. Chairman of the sports committee, Rt Col Zafer Al-Sayegh, told Kuwait Times the campaign is considered part of their social responsibility, adding that donating blood is considered an essential part of human health and community service.

"We seek to contribute with our blood to NGOs. Retired officers from the National Guard, interior ministry, Kuwait Fire Force and defense ministry all

hope to contribute to this campaign as our national and religious duty," he said. Sayegh noted some retired officers will not be able to contribute to the blood donation campaign due to their age, which exceeds 66, and chronic diseases, but they try to include and urge all members and friends to donate for the sake of Kuwait.

Dr Eman Monir El-Sayed, blood donation supervisor at the blood bank, said "We organize external donation campaigns to replenish blood stocks," noting all people can donate from the age of 17 (with the consent of their guardian) till the age of 66. She added a donor who has previously donated blood during the past two years can donate again as long as their health allows it.

"Before donating, we conduct a medical examination of the donor to ensure their ability to donate, as there are some diseases that prevent them from donating blood. However, people with diseases such as diabetes and blood pressure, if their levels are good, are allowed to donate," Sayed said. "Donating blood is a simple and healthy process. Even with ageing, if the donor has donated blood for the last two years,

can donate blood for life," she noted.

Sayed stressed there is a shortage of rare blood types from negative groups as O-. "Type O- is considered one of the groups that can be given to any other type of blood, and there is always urgent demand from hospitals." Sayed called on people to donate blood. "Blood donation is a simple process that takes about 15 minutes. After filling out the questionnaire, the blood bank staff will perform a medical examination and the donor is allowed to discuss with the doctor any medical inquiries. There are nursing staff trained to deal with any medical problem such as dizziness and vomiting, which is normal," she explained.



Dr. Eman Monir El-Sayed



Citizens donating blood at Central Blood Bank.

Cyber Security Center to ensure secure cyber space: Official

KUWAIT: The Head of the National Center for Cyber Security, Major General, Eng Mohammad Bouarraki, affirmed the center's keenness to build a leading and effective national system that supports and enhances development, prosperity and economy in Kuwait.

During an interview with KUNA on Monday, he said the system would protect Kuwait's national interests from internal and external cyber risks and threats in cooperation and coordination between the center, the concerned authorities and friendly countries. He also noted that the main goal of the National Center for Cyber Security, which was established under Decree No 37 of 2022, is to create

a national umbrella that is responsible for securing and protecting information networks, telecommunications, information systems, collecting and exchanging information operations using any electronic means.

He said that the center also aims to develop cybersecurity teams, provide the necessary support and counseling, and coordinate response efforts. He stated that the center also helps prevent any attempts to hinder, disrupt or sabotage the vital infrastructure, communications networks and information systems in the country and take what is necessary to deal to confront all online threats, whether from inside or outside the country.

On the center's strategy, he pointed out that it is emanating from the vision of (Kuwait 2035), to help create a safe and flexible cyber space that supports and enhances development, prosperity, economy and protect national interests. Bouarraki said that the active national governance aims to create a legislative environment that protects national interests and supports and enhances development and prosperity and the development of an organizational

environment that regulates the relationship, responsibilities and specializations between the center and various state institutions and create active national leaders.

Furthermore, he noted that the aim of cooperation with local and international companies is to enhance information on criminal activities on the cyber space at the local and international levels, stressing the importance of raising and strengthening the level of cyber security culture in the country. The Major General also stressed the importance of the commitment of the concerned authorities to classify e-data by determining the level of sensitivity in accordance with the detailed criteria set by the concerned authorities. — AFP



Eng Mohammad Bouarraki

GCC, Japan agree to resume free trade talks

RIYADH: The GCC and Japan signed on Sunday a joint statement to resume negotiations on a free trade agreement between the two parties. The General Secretariat stated in a statement that this came on the sidelines of the meeting held by GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The GCC Secretary General said that the announcement comes in implementation of the directives of the ministerial council to conclude free trade agreements with the trading partners of the GCC countries within the list of priorities that it approved at its session held in June 2022. Al-Budaiwi noted that Japan is one of the countries that the

Cooperation Council seeks to strengthen its strategic, economic, and developmental and investment relations with.

Al-Budaiwi expressed aspirations on behalf the GCC countries to consolidate trade and investment relations between the two sides and launch a new era of partnership aimed at providing many opportunities for joint growth for the two business communities, especially in priority sectors. He added that this agreement would pave the way for the development of a comprehensive economic framework based on mutual interests and would establish strategic cooperation that promotes innovation, stimulates economic growth and creates job opportunities on both sides. — KUNA



RIYADH: GCC and Japan sign joint agreement to resume negotiations on a free trade agreement. — KUNA

Local

People call for regulating car brokers as some report fraudulent transactions

Some brokers fix prices, damage vehicles to buy them cheap, victims say

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Vehicle brokers can be found all across Kuwait, calling on motorists to have their cars evaluated and seeking to buy them at a specific price. But these brokers have no official permit to practice this job. They usually target expats' cars, especially women, due to their ignorance in bargaining and information about car parts. In addition, they have created groups among themselves to fix car prices, despite this being unfair, according to citizens and expats Kuwait Times spoke to.

Ali Al-Fadhli said he witnessed a car broker agreeing with someone not to offer more than a specific price for a car. The car was owned by a woman and was worth KD 600 more than the offered price. "People are not accusing all car brokers of being scammers, but from a personal experience, I always advise people to evaluate their car prices first at an agency, then sell it to these car brokers," he said.

The difference between selling a car to brokers and an agency is the selling price — brokers claim to give a better and higher price, while the truth is that brokers in the same area collude with each other to fix lower prices, while it could be much higher at a car dealership. In some cases, according to a citizen who preferred to remain anonymous, some car brokers who have not been able to buy or sell a car for a

while intentionally damage parts of a car, especially inside the hood, to offer a lower price and force the seller to sell it to them to earn a higher profit.

Many people stressed to Kuwait Times that car brokers have great skills in convincing people to sell their cars, as they have alpha personalities and easily make others trust their opinion due to their experience.

Organize the Profession

Despite the negative opinion that some people have about this profession, a car broker, who are mostly bedoons, explained to Kuwait Times that this profession is one of the hardest jobs, as they start their day at 7 am and work until sunset, depending on their luck and skills to convince motorists. He added they had requested the authorities to provide them with official permits. "We do understand that we don't have citizenship or nationality. But we grew up with this profession, and it is not easy for us to change it now after all these years," he said.

Meanwhile, through Kuwait Times, a number of car brokers called on local car dealerships to provide them job opportunities based on their skills and experience and protect them from culpability. They said they have tried for years to collaborate and work with agencies, but they keep them at arm's length for a variety of reasons.



Brokers are seen outside a vehicle in this photo used for illustrative purposes. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain launches initiative for book recycling

KUWAIT: Zain announced the launch of a new sustainable community initiative to recycle used books and papers. The company has provided containers in 10 different locations at Zain megastores and in Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya. The move comes in collaboration with Enviroserve, Kuwait's first-of-its-kind recycling facility.

This initiative aims at raising social awareness about the crucial topic of environmental sustainability, as well as providing real-world solutions to encourage the community to adopt positive practices that contribute to lessening the effects of climate change. The campaign coincides with the recent end of the academic year, where tons of books and papers are thrown away in waste bins.

Zain provided containers to collect books, papers, and documents at seven of its megastores across the nation: main branch in Shuwaikh, Jahra co-op branch, Adan co-op branch, Farwaniya co-op branch, New Kout Mall branch, Bibi Tower branch in Salmiya, and Mishref co-op branch. The company also joined forces with Kuwait University to provide three containers at Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya.

To make this initiative a success, Zain has collaborated with Enviroserve, Kuwait's first-of-its-kind recycling facility. Books and papers will be collected on a regular basis from Zain megastores and Kuwait University and sent to Enviroserve's facility to be recycled and repurposed, ultimately contributing to the campaign's

goals to lower carbon emissions and tackle climate change.

Zain puts environmental sustainability at the forefront of its priorities, as its social message seeks to create a culture of sustainability within the community by advocating practices like reducing consumption, recycling, using renewable sources of energy, and more.

In one of its recent sustainable projects, the company presented its very own recycled shopping tote bags made entirely out of Zain's outdoor billboard ads. The bags were offered to customers for their shopping needs in place of plastic bags to encourage sustainable shopping and raise environmental awareness.

Zain's part does not stop at raising awareness and launching environmental programs, but also extends to reducing its own footprint. The company continues to exert more efforts into reducing the environmental footprint of its operations, including preserving natural resources, reducing energy consumption, recycling waste, implementing green solutions for water and electricity management, monitoring the company's overall effects on climate change, and more.

Through its corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, Zain is committed to building climate change scenarios that are aligned with the Paris Agreement (2015) to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate physical and environmental risks. The company is well aware of the urgent need to tackle the climate crisis the world is facing today.

Zain has scored A- through its participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), a reflection of its success in meeting the standards and requirements of the project. Zain is also one of the few companies in the region's markets



to have a membership in the CDP.

Zain established an array of initiatives across its operating companies, including the distribution of reusable bags to all employees, and installing water coolers to reduce the use of plastic bottles. The company also developed its first comprehensive (Scope 3) inventory process aligned with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol guidelines for a more accurate and transparent evaluation of its value chain emissions. This allows it to not only disclose and report in a more concise manner but be able to identify areas in which it can reduce its GHG emissions.

Zain continues to address its strategic approach to addressing climate change under its sustainability strategy. Climate change is a pillar on which

the organization has set three focus areas where Zain can address its negative impacts on the environment and create positive ones: Network & Energy Consumption, Strategy & Communication, and Waste Management & Circular Economy.

Enviroserve is considered the first-of-its-kind recycling facility in Kuwait. With the support of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Enviroserve continues its mission to tackle the e-waste problem, help enterprises and individuals to reduce their negative impact on the environment, and raise awareness of climate change within the community. The facility collects over two tons of waste every day and has over 17 years of experience in this industry.

Young Arab women say society shackles, infantilizes females

By Noor AlKhars

KUWAIT: It is said that human beings are their purest, most unfiltered self the day they are born. The very first day they step foot into the world, free of the shackles and limitations of society's expectations based on the gender they came as into this world. Gendered socialization often happens from learned behavior — boys and girls start to come to terms with what is expected of them solely based on their gender despite them having the same capacities at birth. So, how is it that during their formative years, they've already developed behaviors and adopted roles associated with what is expected of them as girls and boys?

In the Arab world, most boys are taught from an exceptionally young age that they're not allowed to cry on the playground if they ever got hurt as it is unmanly, that they are allowed to roam the streets without a chaperone as it gears them up for independence, and that no one has the right to belittle or humiliate them as it could harm their ego and, possibly, their masculinity. Girls learn from a very young age that it is expected of them to be obedient, tidy, passive, and have less options when it comes to activities or hobbies in general. Initially, the family or household dynamic is the first thing that children are introduced to. "I've been taking care of my younger siblings, helping my mother out my entire life, and what kills me is that I still ask for permission to do things on my own despite being 27 years old," said Tasneem.

"As a woman, you constantly compensate for not being a man. So, you work twice as hard just to prove you're worth being taken seriously. So, it does not matter that I help my mother out by basically being a third parent, this does not grant me the life that I want. Why? Because it is simply expected of me."

When girls are brought up in a society that treats them as second-degree citizens no matter where they are in life, it eventually gets buried in the subconscious to never ask for more and never take up space as some girls truly believe they are unable to get tasks done without a guardian. They learn to depend on adults rather than themselves as they sense the behaviors that are expected of them by their parents, and so they act accordingly as men were always considered the showrunners despite these women being fully functioning adults who are capable of the same experiences as men.

"Women are expected to be caregivers, nurturers, teachers, and therapists. We fix things, we always have the answer, but are not allowed to run things or do things independently as this may hinder any chance of us getting married. They teach men to be providers their entire lives and God forbid a woman is independent and can provide for herself, she is instantly seen as unwomanly. We don't want to come off too strong, otherwise we're too intimidating and no man would want to come near us," Tasneem said laughing.

The very first years of any child's life are extremely crucial as they are extremely influential as well as impressionable — their brains are basically sponges where they mimic, mirror, and absorb every bit of mannerisms presented in front of them. Studies have shown that children notice how their parents react to certain things, as well. So, with girls choosing pink and boys opting for the monster truck, the parents' reaction is usually positive, making their kids think that there is a right answer as well as a wrong one. Here, the child's brain starts categorizing and putting things in boxes for them to understand things better.

In some societies, girls are not allowed to study abroad whereas men are often encouraged as well as emotionally supported by their parents to do so. Frequently, girls talk about how heartbreaking it is to have grown up in the same household but have a completely different experience of 'life' as their very own siblings solely because of their gender. 19-year-old Ayah expresses how somewhat disappointing it is to "see your parents be supportive of my brother continuing his studies abroad whereas my father's excuse for me not being able to do so is because he is scared."

"I have been told numerous times that it might be too much for me to handle as he does not believe I can navigate my way around a foreign city on my own, but even if that were true, I was never really taught to be my own person and experience life on my own terms. As girls, we learn to fit the stereotype as much as possible, there is no such thing as a woman with her own personality, so no one truly knows who you are or what you're capable of, not even myself." Tasneem said women are "constantly breaking (themselves) into digestible pieces and making (themselves) small especially when a man is around." Her brother, on the other hand, thinks it's unfair for society to put so much pressure on men. "We are ridiculed for the weirdest things like showing emotion, what do you mean I'm not allowed to cry?" he laughs. "I think boys never get to be kids whereas girls are treated like kids forever".

EPA waste tracking project wins ESRI excellence award

KUWAIT: Samira Al-Kanderi, Acting Director General of Kuwait Environment Public Authority (EPA) said on Sunday that the authority has won the Excellence Award in Geographic Information Systems for the year 2023 from US-based Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

ESRI awarded EPA for their eMISK Waste Project, also known as the Environmental Monitoring Information System of Kuwait, which is a customized EPA-wide GIS-based information system.

Kanderi pointed out that the waste management project is considered one of the advanced systems that are used to manage, monitor and follow-up the collection, transportation, and treatment of waste in the country. It also helps improve the efficiency of waste management operations and make sound decisions, which helps reduce the environmental impact of waste and protect the environment from pollution, she clarified. It also enhances EPA's capabilities in the monitoring and communication, awareness generation and dissemination of environmental knowledge related to environmentally sensitive issues and activities.

The authority received this award during its participation in the activities of the Global Conference for Users of Geographic Information Systems, which was held recently in the American city of San Diego. Kanderi added that the award will be formally handed over to EPA in the coming weeks by the accredited representative of ESRI.

Kanderi noted that the award comes in appreciation of the authority's efforts in the field of environmental protection and improving the quality of life in the country, including for its efforts in the field of geographic information systems and its applications in waste management. She stressed that it is an important step towards strengthening the country's position as a regional center of excellence and innovation in the field of digital transformation and the application of advanced technology to promote sustainability and environmental protection. — KUNA

Kuwait, UK naval forces complete joint drills



KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Naval forces and the Royal British Marines concluded Monday joint drills. In a press release, the Defense Ministry said that the three-week drills encompassed antiterrorism training, maritime piracy combat, ship inspection operations, as well as field first aid, medical evacuations and combat in constructed areas. — KUNA

Traditional crafts exhibition celebrates Kuwaiti heritage



Men play carrom, a famous traditional Kuwaiti game.



A Kuwaiti craftsman shows some of his dhow ship models during the event.

News in Brief

Aswaq Al-Qurain, Ardhiya restaurants to close at 1am

KUWAIT: Restaurants and cafes in Aswaq Al-Qurain and Ardhiya Industrial area won't be allowed to remain open beyond 1am, according to an administrative decision issued by the director general of Kuwait Municipality. Not only is take-out and dine-in not allowed after 1am, but delivery is also prohibited. All main doors must remain shut, the decision said. The resolution called on all concerned authorities and sectors to start implementing the decision 30 days following the date of publication in the official gazette.

Criminal Court postpones luxury cars fraud trial

KUWAIT: The Criminal Court decided to postpone the trial of the defendants in the largest civil case against a luxury car office in Kuwait, to September 11. The office had taken money from 455 citizens under the condition that they would help them buy cars from luxury brands at prices 30 percent less than market value. The citizens demanded their cars after the deadline for receiving them had passed but the office asked for more time claiming that the cars didn't arrive on time due to logistical reasons. The court refused to release the owner of the office and one of his partners but let go of nine others who are employees of a company. The court also rejected the defense's request to unfreeze their bank accounts so that the defendants could pay back what they owe to their victims. The Criminal Court, specifically in Hall 16 of the Palace of Justice, witnessed unprecedented crowding of the public and the defense of civil plaintiffs, as they filled the hall to attend the trial.

Citizens who exchanged or waived housing to still get allowance

KUWAIT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare approved a suggestion to continue crediting rent allowance to citizens who exchanged their government housing for another one or waived their rights to get government housing after the issuance of Ministerial Resolution No. 29 of 2021. The decision came in a meeting chaired by the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Rquba. — KUNA

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: A youth skills event was held at Kuwait Union of Women's Associations in Dasma on Sunday and Monday. The event took a step back to the rich heritage and traditions of old Kuwait. Among the various cultural treasures that Kuwait proudly embraces, handicrafts stand out as vivid expressions of the country's history, craftsmanship and deep-rooted traditions.

During the event, Salman Ali Boland, President of the Kuwaiti Craftsmen Association, told Kuwait Times: "This is a collection of our work with 'healthy cities' in Kuwait. Today we are initiating our work with Dasma, as it is considered a 'healthy city,'" he said.

Dasma is one of more than a dozen cities in Kuwait designated as healthy cities by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to WHO, a healthy city is not one that has achieved a particular health status — it is conscious of health and striving to improve it. Any city can be a healthy city, regardless of its current



Salman Ali Boland



A Kuwaiti man makes pottery during a heritage exhibition in Kuwait City on July 16, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



health status. The requirements are a commitment to health and a process and structure to achieve it.

"We are participating with 19 booths. Men and women are here today to showcase their handicrafts that represent the history of old Kuwait, which makes this exhibition special and active. In addition to the handicrafts, old Kuwaiti games are displayed in this exhibition such as draughts, which is called 'dama' in Kuwaiti dialect, as well as the 'billiard', meaning the wooden carrom board, and dominoes," said Boland.

From generation to generation, the people of Ku-

wait have preserved and celebrated their heritage through handicrafts. These handcrafted pieces not only serve as tangible artifacts of the past, but also reflect the passed down knowledge through time and encourages one's national spirit.

Several activities took place during the event, including women crafting objects and men playing traditional games, while others explained the history of old Kuwaiti dhows and a potter displayed his skills. All activities were hands-on, which enhanced the general atmosphere of the event.



A man shows a handmade traditional wooden chest at the event.



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Health ministry to open 2 ambulance centers in September

KUWAIT: The health ministry is opening two new ambulance centers in September, announced Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Medical Support Services, Dr Yaqoub Al-Tammar on Monday. The two centers will be located in Kuwait University's Al-Shadadiya campus and at the Boulevard. This brings the total number of ambulance centers in Kuwait to 84 centers.

"The ministry is keen to expand ambulance centers in the country in order to reach people in emergency situations as soon as possible," said Tammar on the sidelines of a first-aid and CPR course held on Monday. Tammar also emphasized the importance of first-aid training courses in spreading health awareness and saving lives.

"This is among the first of many courses to educate the masses about the importance of first aid," he added, stressing the need to carry out these courses based on sound scientific foundations to preserve lives. He said the ministry is looking forward to offering more of these training courses to achieve the goal of "a paramedic in every home".

Tammar praised the role played by the heroes of emergency medicine who participate in educating citizens and residents on the importance of understanding the basics of first aid, which might seem simple for many but requires proper education. The number of people graduating the training course, held at a real estate company, is 76, all of whom passed four modules, with two in English and two in Arabic, in three weeks.



Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti



Dr Yaqoub Al-Tammar

Director of the Emergency Medical Department Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti praised the efforts of the workers in the Emergency Medical Department in community service, stressing the importance of familiarity with these skills and keenness to spread them to achieve the slogan "Seven minutes save a life", as it is a message to trainees on how to deal with emergency cases to save a person.



Ministry workers demonstrate CPR and AED at the event.



KUWAIT: Health ministry officials and first-aid course trainees are seen at an event held to honor participants in a first-aid course held by the ministry. — KUNA photos



White House hopeful DeSantis loses steam, struggling with image

Singapore's speaker, MP resign over 'inappropriate' affair

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S Korea vows 'complete overhaul' of approach to extreme weather

Flooding and landslides kill at least 40

SEOUL: South Korea's president vowed Monday to "completely overhaul" the country's approach to extreme weather from climate change, after at least 40 people were killed by recent flooding and landslides during monsoon rains. Rescue workers waded through thick mud as they drained a flooded underpass in central Cheongju, searching for more victims after vehicles were trapped in the tunnel by flash floods, the interior ministry said, with nine people still missing nationwide.

South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, and days of torrential rain have caused widespread flooding and landslides, with rivers bursting their banks, and reservoirs and dams overflowing. More rain is forecast in the coming days. "This kind of extreme weather event will become commonplace - we must accept climate change is happening, and deal with it," President Yoon Suk Yeol said during an emergency response meeting Monday. The idea that extreme weather linked to climate change "is an anomaly and can't be helped needs to be completely overhauled", he said, calling for "extraordinary determination" to improve the country's preparedness and response.

South Korea will "mobilize all available resources" including the military and police to help with rescue efforts, he said. "The rainy season is not over yet, and the forecast is now that there will be torrential rain again tomorrow," he added. Following the meeting, Yoon,

who returned from an overseas trip early Monday, travelled to Yecheon in North Gyeongsang province - one of the hardest hit villages, where more than a third of houses were damaged in landslides and two people remain missing.

Dressed in a green jacket, often donned by top officials during public emergencies, Yoon was briefed by officials as he walked past piles of fallen trees and relief workers shovelling mud. "I've never seen something like this in my life, hundreds of tons of rocks rolling down from the mountain," Yoon told the villagers. "I'll do everything I can to restore the village," he added. The majority of the casualties - including 19 of the dead and eight of the missing - were from North Gyeongsang province, and were largely due to massive landslides in the mountainous area that engulfed houses with people inside.

Underpass disaster

On Monday, the South Korean government and police launched separate enquiries into the fatal flooding of the underpass in Cheongju, some 112 kilometers south of Seoul. It flooded early Saturday when a nearby river overflowed and an embankment collapsed, leaving more than 10 vehicles, including a bus, trapped inside.

At least 13 people were killed and rescue workers have warned the toll could rise as they search the area. The Prime Minister's Secretariat said there had been reports of calls to police request-



CHEONGJU: A man (bottom) rides a bicycle near an underground tunnel where 15 cars were trapped in flood waters after heavy rains in Cheongju. — AFP

ing an emergency evacuation order for nearby residents as well as emergency closure of the tunnel an hour before the disaster struck. "This investigation is to find out the cause of the failure to protect the precious life of the people," it said in a statement.

Yoon said Monday that the mismanagement of danger zones had led to the accident. Preemptive evacuations and road closures were the "basic principles of preventing the loss of lives in disaster response", he added. The Korea Meteorological Administration forecast more

heavy rain through Wednesday and urged the public to "refrain from going outside". South Korea is regularly hit by flooding during the summer monsoon period, but the country is typically well-prepared and the death toll is usually relatively low. — AFP

West, South bake under heat wave

LOS ANGELES: Swaths of the United States home to more than 80 million people were under heat warnings or advisories Sunday, as relentless, record-breaking temperatures continued to bake western and southern states. The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of "a widespread and oppressive heat wave" in parts of the Southwest, western Gulf Coast and southern Florida, with sizzling temperatures carrying into the coming week raising health risks for millions. In Arizona, the state capital Phoenix recorded its 17th straight day above 109 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius), as temperatures hit 113F (45C) on Sunday afternoon.

The sprawling city, home to over 1.6 million people, is under an Excessive Heat Warning until Wednesday evening, according to the NWS, which said Sunday morning's low of 94F (34C) equaled its warmest low temperature on record. "We're used to 110, 112 (degrees Fahrenheit) ... But not the streaks," Nancy Leonard, a 64-year-old retiree from the

nearby suburb of Peoria, told AFP. Leonard said that due to the intense heat she spends only a few minutes outside during the morning, to walk her dog, and then later in the evening once the sun sets. "You just have to adapt," she said.

Volunteers around Phoenix have been organized to direct residents to cooling centers and distribute bottles of water and hats, but program head David Hondula told the local ABC station that its three-days-per-week schedule is "clearly... not enough." In Utah's capital Salt Lake City, the temperature soared to 106F (41C) on Sunday, beating the previous record of 103F (39C) for the date. The stationary high pressure system covering much of the US southwest, known as a heat dome, brought temperatures in some parts of Nevada and southern California to above 115F (46C).

'It's hell'

By Sunday afternoon, California's famous Death Valley, one of the hottest places on Earth, had reached the near-record temperature of 126F (52C). Tourists visited the national park to get a glimpse of what the NWS warned would be "life-threatening daytime heat" set to last until Tuesday night. Visitor

Eliana Luna told broadcaster MSNBC on Sunday the heat felt like a "burning sensation" on her body. "The heat, you can feel it dripping through the back, all the way down," she said.

The NWS has said heat is the leading weather-related killer in the United States and urged Americans to take the risk seriously. "In total, from South Florida and the Gulf Coast to the Southwest, over 80 million people remain under either an Excessive Heat Warning or Heat Advisory as of early this morning," the NWS said in a Sunday morning bulletin. Authorities have been sounding the alarm for days, advising people to steer clear of outdoor activities in the daytime and to avoid dehydration, which can quickly become fatal in such temperatures.

In Miami, the NWS on Sunday issued its first-ever Excessive Heat Warning for the region, in effect until 7:00 pm, as heat and humidity mixed to create a "feels-like" temperature expected to hit 112F. "It's hell, it's hot, it's crazy hot," Miami visitor Lola Cee told AFP along the famed Ocean Boulevard. "I've never experienced this heat before," she added. Residents of the sprawling Texas city of Houston have been asked to conserve electricity from 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm Saturday

through Monday, in an attempt to mitigate pressure on the electricity grid.

'Not typical'

Heat waves are occurring more often and more intensely in major US cities, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, with a frequency of six per year during the 2010s and 2020s compared to two per year during the 1960s. "This heat wave is NOT typical desert heat," the NWS Las Vegas office tweeted Thursday, specifying that "its long duration, extreme daytime temperatures, & warm nights" were unusual.

In Canada, which is suffering from warm temperatures combined with months of below-average rainfall, the amount of land burned by devastating wildfires so far in 2023 climbed to an all-time high of 24.7 million acres (10 million hectares) on Saturday. "We find ourselves this year with figures that are worse than our most pessimistic scenarios," Yan Boulanger, a researcher at Canada's natural resources ministry, told AFP. On Sunday, a firefighter died while working in Canada's Northwest Territories, authorities announced, only days after a 19-year-old woman lost her life working to extinguish a fire in nearby British Columbia. — AFP

Tens of thousands flee over typhoon

BEIJING: Tens of thousands of people were being evacuated in southern China and Vietnam on Monday, and dozens of flights cancelled as a typhoon barreled towards land. Powerful winds, storm surges and lashing rains were forecast to hammer the southern coastline from Guangdong to Hainan provinces when typhoon Talim makes landfall on Monday night, the China Meteorological Administration said.

The forecaster has issued an orange alert, the second-highest warning in a four-tier color-coded system, saying the storm was expected to increase in intensity to become a severe typhoon. Authorities in Vietnam said they were preparing to evacuate about 30,000 people from the areas forecast to be hardest hit in Quang Ninh and Hai Phong provinces from Monday afternoon.

The storm "might be one of the biggest to hit the Gulf of Tonkin in recent years", Vietnam's top disaster response committee said in an online statement. Tourists have been advised to leave outlying islands and airlines have rescheduled services to avoid the storm. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh directed disaster response teams to prepare for "immediate rescue and relief works" late Sunday, warning of possible floods.

At least 1,000 people were evacuated in Yunfu city in south China's Guangdong province, the state-backed Southern Daily reported. Around 2:00 pm (0600 GMT), Typhoon Talim was 280 kilometers southwest of Hong Kong, the city's weather observatory said. Trading on Hong Kong's US\$5.2 trillion stock market was cancelled Monday as the Asian financial hub came to a standstill.

The Hong Kong Observatory has warned of possible flooding in low-lying areas due to a storm surge and ferries and most bus services in the city were suspended. More than 1,000 travelers were affected by flight cancellations and delays, the Hong Kong Airport Authority said. Authorities in south China's Hainan island asked ships in nearby waters to return to port after the local marine forecasting station warned of waves of up to six meters, state news agency Xinhua reported. — AFP

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International

EU holds Latin America summit amid rifts over trade, Ukraine

CELAC delegates push for implementation of EU-Mercosur deal

BRUSSELS: The European Union hosts Latin American and Caribbean leaders Monday hoping to soothe ties strained by deep divisions over trade and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The long-awaited summit is the first between Brussels and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) since 2015, with several issues undermining closer ties.

"We need our close friends to be at our side in these uncertain times," European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said, welcoming Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Von der Leyen promised that Europe would invest 45 billion euros in the Latin American economy under the Global Gateway program, Brussels' answer to China's "Belt and Road" outreach to developing economies.

As EU and CELAC leaders gathered in Brussels, diplomats were struggling to agree on the wording of the final communique - with Europe pushing for a strong stance against Moscow. But the 33 nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have no agreed position on the Ukraine war, and some want to protect ties with Russia or seek a compromise peace deal. Instead some CELAC delegates will push for the implementation of the 2019 EU-Mercosur trade

deal, which has stalled on European concerns about deforestation and agricultural competition.

Three years after agreeing the deal liberalizing trade between the EU and Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, it has yet to be ratified by several European governments. Some capitals had hoped that the summit, held under Spain's EU presidency, would bring new momentum on the Mercosur deal. But diplomats from both blocs were clear that no breakthrough on trade was expected at Monday's talks. A senior Spanish diplomat told reporters in Brussels that EU-CELAC "will be a political summit, not a negotiating summit".

Amazon deforestation

And Gustavo Pandiani, Argentina's undersecretary for Latin American affairs, predicted "consultations and political dialogue about broad political lines. "We are not going to talk about tariffs," he said. "Someone announced four years ago that we had an agreement, and now we're still discussing it. So, it's likely that we didn't have an agreement then."

The first signs of trouble for the trade deal came under Brazil's former right-wing populist govern-

ment, with then-president Jair Bolsonaro unleashing a wave of agricultural development in the Amazon. Bolsonaro - an admirer of US President Donald Trump - has since been replaced by leftist Lula da Silva, who has better green credentials. But Europe's relief was short-lived. Brazil under Lula has proclaimed itself "neutral" in Russia's war against Ukraine, and has pushed back against Europe's bid to attach rules against deforestation to the Mercosur trade pact.

Speaking at the business forum, Lula did not explicitly address the issue of Ukraine, but made it clear that he thought it a distraction from Brazil's pressing issues. "The war in the heart of Europe has launched, over the world, uncertainties. And it channels for war purposes resources that were essential for the economy and for social programs," he said. "The arms race makes it even more difficult to confront the climate change issue." Von der Leyen was diplomatic. "I welcome Brazil's re-emergence as a major actor on the global stage," she said.

In 2020, the EU adopted its so-called Green Deal, which was not aimed at Latin America in particular, but binds its trade deals to tougher environmen-

tal standards. In March, the EU presented a set of proposals to update the Mercosur deal, including binding limits on deforestation, with trade consequences - triggering Brazil's anger. "We are back in government in order to put Brazil once again as a protagonist in the international arena," Lula said, at a brief pre-summit appearance with von der Leyen. "We want to discuss the climate issue," he added. "The energy and climate transition is now a priority for our government."

And if the summit is unlikely to unblock the trade deal, the leaders may also struggle to find common ground on broader international issues. Europe wants the CELAC countries to sign up to a statement supporting Ukraine and condemning Russia's actions since its 16-month-old all-out invasion. Brazil, however, has argued that Kyiv and Moscow share responsibility for the conflict, and Cuba and Venezuela have remained traditional Russian allies. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has addressed summits including the Arab League, the African Union and the G7 by video link - but has been barred from EU-CELAC. The summit is due to last two days. — AFP

White House hopeful DeSantis loses steam, struggling with image

WASHINGTON: Long viewed as the most formidable challenger to Donald Trump in the Republican US presidential nominating contest, Ron DeSantis boasts a record of ultra-conservative legislative wins and a pile of campaign cash. Yet the self-styled tip of the spear in what he says is the struggle against the creeping imposition of "cultural Marxism" hasn't been looking all that sharp of late. So where has Florida's pugilistic governor gone wrong?

The Twitter fiasco

DeSantis's long-awaited entry into the 2024 presidential campaign in late May descended into a fiasco as the launch event, carried live on Twitter with the platform's billionaire owner Elon Musk, was derailed by glitches. The conversation repeatedly crashed, and many of the 400,000-plus users who were hoping to listen in missed the 44-year-old conservative throwing down the gauntlet to Trump.

DeSantis finally began speaking after almost half an hour of confusion and chaos that thoroughly overshadowed what should have been an exultant launch. The governor had been targeting a younger, white male "tech bro" demographic that has aligned itself with Trump. But analysts questioned the judgment of a man willing to trade a more traditional prime-time TV launch that could have netted millions of viewers for cachet at the conservative end of Silicon Valley.

The charisma gap

DeSantis has been barnstorming the crucial early-nominating states of Iowa and New Hampshire to

boost his flagging challenge and fix his reputation as an awkward customer. His missteps on the campaign trail are almost too frequent to enumerate but they have combined to give the impression that, in public at least, he is not a charming man. He often appears rigid and awkward when making small talk, and has lost his cool with journalists more than once, or evaded media scrutiny altogether.

There have been complaints that DeSantis looks bored at events and never says "thank you," and footage of him laughing maniacally during a stop in Iowa triggered widespread mockery. "DeSantis has come out of the gates stumbling. He's not connecting with voters. He blames this on the media, but it's really his own fault," said Todd Belt, a politics professor at George Washington University. "He's not giving voters much to vote for, rather than things to vote against, such as his focus on culture war issues. He's tried to create some policy statements, such as on immigration, but they've mostly fallen flat."

DeSantis is trailing Trump in the endorsement derby, with only a handful of the more than 100 sitting Republicans he once served with in the House backing his campaign. Florida's Republican lawmakers are overwhelmingly in Trump's camp, despite DeSantis being their state's chief executive, and he is a whopping 32 points behind the frontrunner in the RealClearPolitics average of recent major opinion polls. He has managed to close the gap by just two percentage points since his launch day, seeing none of the polling bounce that major campaigns usually enjoy in the weeks after announcing. "The more people get to know him, the lower go his polls," Trump quipped recently.

Comeback kid?

Those who have seen DeSantis up close say it would be foolish to count him out, however. Trump started slowly in 2015, they caution, before wiping the floor with the competition — and DeSantis still



IOWA: Guests attend US Rep Zach Nunn's 'Operation Top Nunn: Salute to Our Troops' fundraiser where Republican presidential candidate Florida Governor Ron DeSantis spoke in Ankeny, Iowa. — AFP

has six months to make his case before the first primary ballot is cast in Iowa. There is also no doubt that the DeSantis agenda has defined the contours of the 2024 presidential primary, forcing Trump to focus on "culture war" issues when he could be touting his tax cuts for the rich or his appointment of three ultra-conservative Supreme Court justices.

DeSantis's big opportunity for a reboot comes with the first Republican primary debate in Milwaukee, Wis-

consin on August 23. Trump, who sees little advantage in sharing the national spotlight with primary rivals who are trailing him by double digits, has hinted that he might not show up, for the first debate at least. Without the frontrunner sucking all the oxygen out of the room, there will be a chance for someone else to emerge as a viable, serious and likeable alternative. DeSantis will be hoping that, despite the evidence so far and the overwhelming odds, it can be him. — AFP

Kuwait power usage hits...

Continued from Page 1

In Rome, American Colman Peavy could not believe the heat as he sipped a cappuccino at a cafe with his wife Ana at the start of a two-week vacation. "We're from Texas and it's really hot there, we thought we would escape the heat but it's even hotter here," said the 30-year-old. It was already the world's hottest June on record, according to the EU weather monitoring service, and July looks to be readying to challenge its own record.

China reported a new high for mid-July in the northwest of the country, where temperature reached 52.2C in the Xinjiang region's village of Sanbao, breaking the previous high of 50.6C set six years ago. In nearby Turpan city, where ground surface temperatures sizzled at 80C in some parts, authorities have told workers and students to stay home and ordered special vehicles to spray water on major thoroughfares, the weather body said.

In Cyprus, where temperatures are expected to remain above 40C through Thursday, a 90-year-old man died as a result of heatstroke and three other seniors were hospitalized, health officials said. In the Turkish-held north of the island building worker Achebe Chimeka, aged 27, was still toiling outside. He may be used to the sun, but admitted "It's very intense heat. It feels like my brain is going to stop. Some bosses don't follow the rules but we don't want to complain for fear of losing our jobs," he said.

In Japan, heatstroke alerts were issued in 32 out of the country's 47 prefectures, mainly in central and southwestern regions. At least 60 people in Japan were treated for heatstroke, local media reported, including 51 who were taken to hospital in Tokyo. The heat was enough for at least one man to dispense with social

mortification in Hamamatsu city. "It's honestly unbearable without a parasol, although I have to admit it is a bit embarrassing," he told national broadcaster NHK of the umbrella in his hand.

In western and southern states in the US, which are used to high temperatures, more than 80 million people were under advisories as a "widespread and oppressive" heatwave roasted the region. California's Death Valley, often among the hottest places on Earth, reached a near-record 52C Sunday afternoon.

In Arizona, the state capital Phoenix recorded its 17th straight day above 109 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius), as temperatures hit 113F (45C) on Sunday afternoon. "We're used to 110, 112 (degrees Fahrenheit) ... But not the streaks," Nancy Leonard, a 64-year-old retiree from the nearby suburb of Peoria, told AFP. "You just have to adapt".

In Europe, Italians were warned to prepare for "the most intense heatwave of the summer and also one of the most intense of all time," with the health ministry sounding a red alert for 16 cities including Rome, Bologna and Florence. Temperatures were due to hit 42C-43C in Rome on Tuesday, smashing the record of 40.5C set in August 2007. Nevertheless, visitors thronged to tourist hot spots like the Colosseum and the Vatican. "I'm from South Africa. We're used to this heat," said Jacob Vreunissen, 60, a civil engineer from Cape Town. "You have to drink lots of water, obviously wear your hat and that's about it."

In Romania, temperatures are expected to reach 39C on Monday. Little reprieve is forecast for Spain, where meteorologists warned of "abnormally high" temperatures on Monday, including up to 44C in the southern Andalusia region in what would be a new regional record. Along with the heat, parts of Asia have also been battered by torrential rain. South Korea's president vowed Monday to "completely overhaul" the country's approach to extreme weather, after at least 40 people were killed in recent flooding and landslides during monsoon rains, which are forecast to continue through Wednesday. — Agencies

The five axes aim to improve living conditions, boost government efficiency and intensify productivity. The axes are split into public finance stability, economic agenda, creation of job opportunities and skillset development, sustainable prosperity and strong human capital and a more productive government.

Article 98 of the Kuwaiti constitution stipulates that each ministry submits to the National Assembly an action plan for the Assembly to reply with notes. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah highlighted in a speech on the occasion of work plan submission the government's keenness on cooperation with the legislative branch for the good and benefit of the people. National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun was handed Sunday the government work plan by Deputy PM and State Minister for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari. — Agencies

Erdogan on Gulf tour for...

Continued from Page 1

AFP on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the press. Erdogan's Gulf tour follows his reelection in May for another five-year term.

"Erdogan's visit to the Gulf after the critical elections held in Turkey itself reflects the importance of the Gulf states in the Turkish foreign policy agenda,"

Sinem Cengiz, a researcher at Qatar University, told AFP. "Growing Gulf interest in investing in di-

Russia: Ukraine grain export deal...

Continued from Page 1

attack on the bridge, which was also damaged last year in a blast that Moscow blamed on Kyiv.

Local officials said traffic across the bridge had been halted and encouraged holidaymakers stranded in Crimea to drive home through occupied Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin had ordered "repair and restoration work" on the bridge and help for people stuck in traffic, according to the Kremlin. Over the course of the last year, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has enabled the export in cargo of more than 32 million tons of Ukrainian grain.

But those transports have come to a halt because of Russia's refusal so far to renew the deal, which

verse sectors is a boost for Turkey, which is trying to increase exports to help ease its economic problems," said the expert on Gulf-Turkish relations.

Ankara has embarked on a charm offensive to improve relations with Gulf states including the UAE and Saudi Arabia after years of rivalry following the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. Turkey's support for organizations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood initially spurred the break with Gulf states, which view the group as a terrorist organization. Relations soured further following a Saudi-led blockade of Turkish ally Qatar by its Gulf Arab neighbors. The embargo was lifted in 2021 but ties with Turkey remained rocky. — AFP

was brokered by the UN and Turkey. "The applications have not been approved by all parties," said a statement from the Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) that oversees the agreement. "No new ships have been approved to participate since 27 June." Putin has repeatedly threatened to pull out of the arrangement, arguing that elements of the deal allowing the export of Russian food and fertilizers have not been honored.

Moscow had notified Turkey, Ukraine and the UN that it was against extending the deal, Russian news agencies reported Monday, citing the foreign ministry. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen condemned a "cynical" decision by Moscow to leave the deal. Moscow's move was an "act of cruelty" that would hurt people who rely on Ukrainian grain supplies, the United States ambassador to the UN said. "While Russia plays political games, real people will suffer," Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters. — AFP

smaller than the Safer, with a clean, rust-free red-and-blue hull. It is expected to moor alongside the Safer so that pumping can begin by the end of this week. Assuming the transfer operation is a success, the oil will stay on the Nautica for the foreseeable future. Ownership of the oil is disputed by Yemen's warring factions.

The Houthis have previously said they want to sell it and use the revenue to cover their employees' salaries. They have also called for the completion of onshore storage facilities where the crude could potentially go. Gressly told AFP that progress on the Safer operation raises optimism for a political resolution to Yemen's brutal war. "It's not easy to predict the future here, of course, but the fact that everybody came together among the parties in conflict... could potentially give a bit of a boost to the process," he said.

Fighting has dropped off considerably since a truce went into effect in April 2022, though it officially expired six months later. In April, a Saudi delegation led by Mohammed Al-Jaber, the kingdom's ambassador to Yemen, travelled to Sanaa for direct talks with the Houthis, fueling hopes for a negotiated settlement. — AFP

Education minister quits a week after...

Continued from Page 1

technical and financial support to sports and provide platforms for young people to develop their sports talents, the minister explained in a press statement.

The National Assembly holds Tuesday a special session to look into the government work plan for the 17th legislative term (2023-2027).

The work plan, titled "Correcting the course: Product-based economy and sustainable wellbeing", consists of five axes, each diverging into various programs and projects reflecting government objectives of development and addressing citizens' priorities.

International

New Zealand urges China to curb tensions in 'contested' Pacific

Solomon's PM attacks 'unneighbourly' China questions

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins urged China on Monday to help curb tensions in a "more contested, less predictable" Pacific, and to preserve access to critical trade routes. China is rapidly expanding its diplomatic, economic and military footprint in the Pacific, often jostling for influence with the United States and its allies. Nearly half of New Zealand's trade passes through the South China Sea, said Hipkins, who led a trade delegation to Beijing last month and met with President Xi Jinping.

The way China exerts its clout in the world is a "major driver" in escalating strategic competition, especially in the Asia-Pacific, Hipkins told the China Business Summit in Auckland. Unimpeded access to shipping and air routes was "vital" to New Zealand, he added. "New Zealand is concerned about a worsening strategic environment and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region in particular in places like the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait," the prime minister said.

"We have direct interests in these areas and are therefore focused on the need for tensions to be carefully managed and de-escalated in the wider interests of the Pacific," he continued. "And we look to China to play its part in this regard." China has in recent years ramped up military and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan, which it claims as its territory, vowing to take it one day - by force if necessary.

Beijing also maintains sweeping, contested claims over the South China Sea. At the same time, China is seeking to grow its influence in the South Pacific, notably making inroads in Solomon Islands, with which it signed a secretive defense pact last year. This month, China rolled out the red carpet for pro-Beijing Solomons Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and inked a raft of deals, including one allowing it to extend its police presence in the island nation until 2025.

Wellington has been increasingly vocal in recent years about human rights issues in China and any potential militarization of the Pacific. Hipkins said New Zealand would talk "candidly, but respectfully" with China's leadership about their differences. "Our region is becoming more contested, less predictable, and less secure," he said. "In this increasingly complex global environment, our relationship with China will continue to require careful management."

Wellington's Western allies have long been concerned about what they regard as New Zealand's overdependence on trade with China. But Hipkins said New Zealand's exporters now enjoyed better terms of trade in other "equally significant" markets after striking free trade agreements with Britain, the European Union and a major trans-Pacific trade bloc.

'Unneighbourly' questions

Meanwhile, Solomon Islands' leader Manasseh Sogavare on Monday attacked foreign questions about a new police deal with China as "unneighbourly" interference. During a July 9-15 visit to China, the prime minister signed a raft of deals including an agreement allowing Beijing to maintain a police presence in the Pacific island country until 2025. The United States, Australia and New Zealand have expressed unease about the policing "implementation plan", urging Beijing to soothe concerns by releasing more details.

"Australia and United States should not fear China's police support to Royal Solomons Police Force," Sogavare told reporters after his arrival back in Honiara. "The narrow, coercive diplomatic approach of targeting China-Solomon Islands relations is - and I want to use this word - unneighbourly," the Solomons leader said. "This is nothing but interference by foreign states into the internal affairs of Solomon Islands," he added. "China has not invaded - it has not invaded or colonized any other foreign state."



HONIARA: Solomon Islands' Deputy Prime Minister Manasseh Maelanga (right) receives Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare in Honiara on July 17, 2023, after returning home from a seven-day trip to China. — AFP

China gave a warm welcome to the visiting Solomons leader, who severed diplomatic ties with self-ruling Taiwan in 2019 in favour of official relations with Beijing. The Solomons was rewarded with large sums of aid and investment in the country by China. Sogavare said some foreign donor countries had delayed assistance to the Solomons, leaving it "struggling" to finance the 2023 budget.

'Total madness'

"I am really delighted to announce that the People's Republic of China stepped up and committed to itself to meet this shortfall by providing the budgetary support that is needed for 2023," he said. The Chinese budgetary support will be provided in the form of projects, he said, without giving precise financial details. The Solomons leader has come under criticism from his country's opposition for signing the

China policing deal and for the cost of the China visit. Opposition leader Matthew Wale said financial documents suggested that large sums of public money had been spent by the Solomons to send a 30-strong delegation to China, including some "only travelling as tourists".

"This is total madness," he said in a statement. "Just last week, teachers' pay was delayed. Our hospitals need basic drugs like panadol, our roads are at its worst state, we have frequent power cuts, water problems, and most importantly we are at a crucial time to fix the economy of this country." Sogavare insisted, however, that the "bulk of the cost" of the trip was being paid for by China and by business leaders who joined the delegation. The cost of the trip was a "drop in the ocean" compared to the benefits it reaped, he said.— AFP



US climate envoy John Kerry

US climate envoy Kerry holds talks in China

BEIJING: US climate envoy John Kerry held four hours of talks with his Chinese counterpart in Beijing on Monday, reviving stalled diplomacy on reducing planet-warming emissions. Climate talks between the two biggest greenhouse gas emitters came to a halt last year after Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the US House of Representatives, enraged Beijing by visiting self-ruled Taiwan, which China considers to be part of its territory.

Kerry, a former secretary of state, has enjoyed comparatively cordial and consistent relations with China despite Washington and Beijing locking horns over Taiwan and other issues. Chinese state media said Kerry met his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua in Beijing. "Xie Zhenhua, China's special envoy for climate change affairs, concluded his talks with John Kerry, the special envoy of the US president for climate issues, which lasted for around four hours," state broadcaster CCTV said. It did not give any further details. Beijing said after the talks "climate change is a common challenge faced by all mankind".

China would "exchange views with the United States on issues related to climate change, and work together to meet challenges and improve the wellbeing of current and future generations", foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said. US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told CNN on Sunday Kerry would press Beijing not to "hide behind any kind of claim that they are a developing nation" in order to slow-roll efforts to cut emissions.

"Every country, including China, has a responsibility to reduce emissions," Sullivan said. "And the world, I do believe, should step up and encourage - indeed, pressure - China to take far more dramatic action to reduce emissions." China has long used its official status as a developing nation to justify its high emissions, with Sullivan saying "there is more work for them to do on that front". "Secretary Kerry will make that point when he's in Beijing," he said.

Coordinated efforts

Kerry's trip follows two other high-profile visits by US officials - Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen - that were aimed at stabilizing US-China ties. His trip to China came as the Northern Hemisphere endured record-setting summer heat waves, which scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change.

"The Kerry visit and the resumption of climate interaction underscores the critical importance of coordinated efforts to address the climate crisis," Chunping Xie, Senior Policy Fellow at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, told AFP in written comments. "It also demonstrates their shared determination to navigate a complex geopolitical relationship to promote the common good," said Xie. As the leading emitter of the greenhouse gases driving climate change, China has pledged to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve complete carbon neutrality by 2060.—AFP

Kenyan court acquits 'miracle baby' pastor

NAIROBI: A Kenyan court on Monday acquitted a controversial self-styled preacher who claimed he could help infertile couples conceive "miracle babies" through prayer, citing insufficient evidence from prosecutors. Gilbert Deya, a former stonemason who moved to London from Kenya in the mid-90s, was accused of stealing five children between 1999 and 2004 to buttress his claims.

Senior Principal Magistrate Robison Ondieki found the 86-year-old not guilty, ruling that the prosecution had not produced enough evidence to link Deya to the charges. The preacher, whose Gilbert Deya Ministries had churches in London, Birmingham, Nottingham, Liverpool and Manchester, was extradited from Britain to Kenya in 2017 following a decade-long legal battle to remain in the UK. Deya and his wife Mary claimed their prayers could see infertile and post-menopausal women become pregnant in four months, and without intercourse.

However prosecutors said the "miracle babies" were stolen, mainly from Nairobi's poor neighborhoods. "I have been acquitted of this burden, a yoke on my shoulder," Deya told reporters outside the court, adding that it was "sad that I have been labeled as a child stealer." "It damaged my reputation," Deya's lawyer, John Swaka, told AFP, "the charges were trumped up and could not stand in a court of law." "He is delighted and very happy. He has no squabbles with anyone and will go back to serving the Lord."

Calls for regulation

Deya's claims first came to light in a 2004 case, when a British coroner found that a baby called Sarah, who had died aged three weeks, was not related to either of her supposed parents. The mother had



NAIROBI: Gilbert Deya celebrates outside the court room with his followers after he was acquitted by the Milimani high courts in Nairobi on July 17, 2023. — AFP

been told she was infertile, and travelled to Nairobi where she claimed to have given birth, but DNA tests proved otherwise.

The case was the first time in eight centuries that an English coroner had to come to an official view on whether a miracle had taken place. In 2015, Deya's now ex-wife, Mary, abandoned her appeal against a four-year jail sentence and elected to serve the entire prison term. Deya claims he was ordained as an archbishop by the United Evangelical Churches of America in 1992. He was a popular televangelist in Kenya before moving to Britain.

A predominantly Christian country, Kenya is home to around 4,000 churches, including some run by self-styled pastors with no theological education. The discovery in April of bodies linked to a Kenyan cult that practiced starvation to "meet Jesus Christ" has prompted questions about the need for more regulation of religious outfits in the East African nation. Nearly 400 bodies have been found so far in the Shakahola forest in coastal Kenya, with cult leader and self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie in police custody since mid-April.— AFP

Singapore's speaker and MP resign over inappropriate affair

SINGAPORE: Singapore's parliament speaker and a woman MP resigned Monday over an "inappropriate" affair, plunging the ruling party into further turmoil following a rare high-level corruption probe involving a cabinet minister. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said he accepted the resignations of speaker Tan Chuan Jin and MP Cheng Li Hui to "maintain the high standards of propriety and personal conduct" of the People's Action Party (PAP).

He said they were in an "inappropriate relationship" that continued even after he had told them to stop in February. It was the latest development to rock the PAP, which has ruled Singapore uninterrupted for 64 years and has prided itself on a corruption-free government. Last week, Transport Minister S. Iswaran was arrested by the city-state's powerful Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau in a rare probe into high-level corruption. He is out on bail and is helping the bureau with its investigation.

Before that, two senior cabinet ministers were probed for alleged irregularities in their rental of sprawling housing properties in the land-scarce nation, but both were subsequently cleared of any wrongdoing. "Taken together, I would say that this is the most severe political crisis to hit the ruling party since 1986 when the minister for national development was investigated for corruption," said political analyst Eugene Tan. "I think public trust and confidence in the ruling party would be significantly affected. And that puts the ruling party very much on the defensive," Tan, an associate professor of law at the Singapore Management University, added.—AFP

Leaks, repairs: How skeleton crew stop Red Sea oil disaster

ABOARD FSO SAFER, Yemen: When an alarm sounded on the decaying oil tanker off Yemen's coast, signaling a leak in its engine room, Hussein Nasser quickly sprang into action. Working around the clock for days, he and the half-dozen other people on board the FSO Safer fashioned makeshift iron strips to patch a burst pipe, before divers arrived to install a permanent steel plate to keep seawater from sinking the ship.

The incident in 2020 was just one example of how a motley crew of sailors and engineers—numbering no more than seven or eight at any given time—have labored for years to keep afloat the FSO Safer tanker abandoned off Yemen, and stave off an environmental calamity. The sinking of the vessel, or an on-board explosion, would have unleashed a thin slick of oil across the Red Sea, imperiling wildlife, coastal fishing villages, lifeline ports and maritime traffic.

The United Nations hopes anxiety about the 47-year-old Safer—which has been woefully neglected during Yemen's ongoing war—is about to ease. That depends on the successful transfer of its oil to a replacement ship, the Nautica, that arrived off the country's coast on Sunday. It represents a rare bright spot after more than eight years of fighting between the Houthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa and waters where the Safer is moored, and the internationally recognized government based in the southern city of Aden. For members of the Safer's skeleton crew, the milestone is a time to reflect on their long stints at sea with little food, no air conditioning and near-constant



HODEIDA, Yemen: A man takes a picture of the beleaguered Yemen-flagged FSO Safer oil tanker in the Red Sea on July 15, 2023. — AFP

stress. "Anxiety accompanies us all the time as a result of the worn-down condition of the ship," Nasser, an engineer with short greying hair and a dark moustache, told AFP. Like other crew members interviewed, he works for the Houthis' maritime affairs authority. "The Safer is like a front line and we have had to fight on it—no different from a military front line," Nasser said.

'Unsung heroes'

The Iran-backed Houthis praise men like Nasser as the "unsung heroes" of the Safer saga. The villains, in their telling, are members and backers of the Saudi-led military coalition fighting in support of the Aden-based government, which they blame for a blockade of the Hodeida port that starved the Safer of needed equipment.

Yet the Houthis themselves were long accused of courting disaster by using the Safer as a bargaining

chip, blocking UN inspection requests and demanding that oil revenue be used to pay the salaries of their employees. After more than eight years without maintenance, there is no disputing the ship is in awful condition, with rust and fast-spreading fungus streaking its red-and-grey hull, whose thickness has worn away by four millimeters in places.

"Any oil ship needs regular maintenance... to keep the ship safe," said Ebrahim Al-Moshki, head of Hodeida's maritime affairs authority. "But the staff here are sometimes just three or five, while they used to be 72" before the war. The situation would be far worse if not for the skeleton crew, said Edrees Al-Shami, the Houthi-appointed executive general manager of SE-POC, the Yemeni oil and gas company. "They worked in very risky and dangerous conditions and they were successful in patching it up. And they were not recognized. It was not publicized," Shami said.—AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2023

NBK reports KD 275.3m in net profit for H1 2023

Net profit grows 15.8% y-o-y • Total assets grew by 5.3% y-o-y to reach KD 36.1bn

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has released its financial results for the six-month period ended 30 June 2023. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 275.3 million (\$896.7 million), recording a year-on-year growth of 15.8 percent compared to the same period in 2022, where it recorded KD 237.8 million (\$774.6 million).

In the three-month period ended 30 June 2023, NBK achieved a net profit of KD 141.1 million (\$459.7 million), reflecting a year-on-year growth rate of 16.4 percent. Total assets as of the end of June 2023 grew by 5.3 percent year-on-year to reach KD 36.1 billion (\$117.5 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 7.1 percent year-on-year to KD 21.6 billion (\$70.2 billion), while total shareholders' equity reached KD 3.6 billion (\$11.7 billion), growing by 6.6 percent year-on-year. NBK Board of Directors has resolved to distribute semi-annual cash dividends of 10 fils per share for the period ended 30 June 2023 representing 10 percent of the nominal value of the shares.

Commenting on the bank's H1 2023 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "NBK delivered robust financial results in the first half of 2023. Our performance during that period reflects the great value derived from our diversified business portfolio and the resilience demonstrated by our balance sheet. It further reinforces our dedication to delivering sustainable and long-term added value to our customers, communities, and shareholders".

"In the face of a challenging global economic landscape, we demonstrate our resilience and strength through our growth strategy, prudent risk and capital management,



Hamad Al-Bahar



Isam Al-Sager

and diverse business portfolio," Al-Bahar added. Furthermore, Al-Bahar highlighted that NBK is reaping the benefits of its strategic investments in technology and its people, expressing his unwavering confidence in the bank's ability to continue its successful path, effectively addressing the growing needs of its customers, and achieving accomplishments that cater to their increasing demands.

"Our dedication to fostering customer loyalty, community contributions, and upholding the highest sustainability standards, strengthens our position as a regional leading bank. Moreover, it facilitates long-term growth opportunities," Al-Bahar stated.

Meanwhile, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "In the first half of 2023, we demonstrated our commitment to our shareholder-focused strategy by successfully achieving strong profits and maximizing returns". Al-Sager highlighted

that the sentiment in the operating environment in Kuwait is gradually improving following the election of the new parliament. He also expressed his optimism that this could result in improved momentum in the operational environment during the second half of the year.

Furthermore, he emphasized the exceptional performance of NBK's core business activities during the reporting period, building upon the continued positive performance achieved since the beginning of the year. "Thanks to substantial growth in net interest income and net fees and commissions, the net operating income experienced a notable increase of 18.8 percent in the first half of 2023, reaching KD 565.9 million," Al-Sager stated.

"Leveraging its robust foundation and a proven track record of maintaining resilient financial performance in various scenarios, NBK is well-positioned to provide its cus-

tomers with comprehensive and tailored services from professional financial advice, to all products and services they require. Furthermore, the bank is dedicated to advancing its innovative digital experiences, distinguishing itself from competitors, and creating long-term value for its shareholders," Al-Sager explained.

He highlighted the significance of strong business growth, robust liquidity, and prudent levels of asset quality as factors that will continue to drive profit growth throughout 2023. Furthermore, he emphasized that these factors have also empowered the bank to successfully navigate substantial challenges within the global banking industry. "The first six months of the year witnessed NBK's unwavering commitment in executing its strategic priorities and initiatives, resulting in notable revenue growth and strong operational performance. Additionally, significant milestones were achieved in the bank's digital transformation journey, bolstering relationships with existing customers and attracting new ones," Al-Sager noted.

Furthermore, Al-Sager expressed the bank's pride in being awarded the "Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility in the Middle East" by Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2023. He also highlighted NBK's advancements in digital innovation, initiatives for women's empowerment, sustainable development of resources and talent. These achievements are the results of the diligent efforts of the bank's employees in creating a unique customer experience and executing the bank's strategic priorities.

"In its pursuit to become the leading partner for customers and the community,

NBK has unveiled its strong commitment to business practices and sustainable financing activities, including dedicated efforts towards achieving carbon neutrality. In alignment with these endeavors, NBK has recently re-envisioned the ESG strategy, with a focus on integrating its pillars throughout the group's operations and various activities. The bank has also published its Sustainability Report 2022, employing a new methodology and framework that effectively highlights the progress achieved in its initiatives. Additionally, NBK has organized training programs to equip employees with accredited certificates, ensuring that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to fully understand the standards established by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)," Al-Sager concluded.

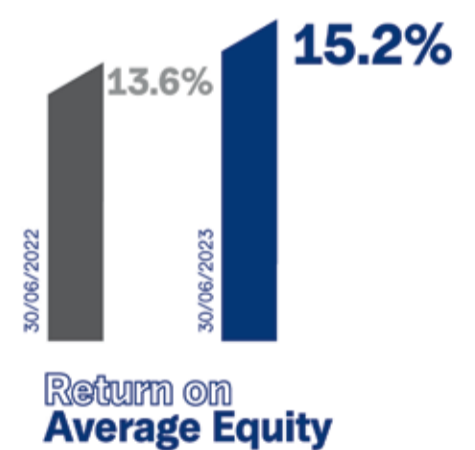
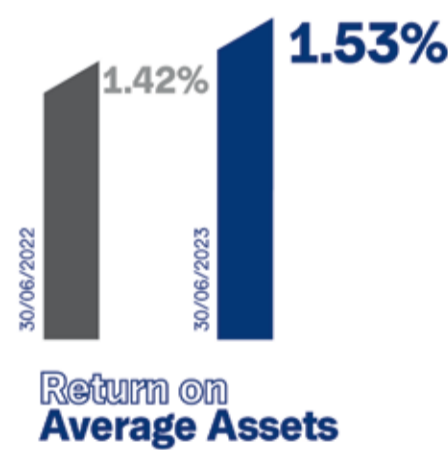
Key financial indicators for H1 2023

- Net operating income stood at KD 565.9 million (\$1.8 billion) in H1 2023, up 18.8 percent year-on-year
- Total assets grew by 5.3 percent year-on-year, at KD 36.1 billion (\$117.5 billion)
- Total loans and advances increased by 7.1 percent year-on-year to KD 21.6 billion (\$70.2 billion)
- Customer deposits grew by 7.1 percent year-on-year to KD 20.3 billion (\$66.0 billion)
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.75 percent and an NPL coverage ratio of 218 percent
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 16.4 percent, comfortably in excess of regulatory requirements

Financial Highlights 1H 2023



Net Profit
+15.8%



Total Assets
+5.3%



Shareholders' Equity
+6.6%



Customer Loans & Advances
+7.1%



Customer Deposits
+7.1%



Net Interest Income
+24.1%



Net Operating Income
+18.8%



Business

Japan PM in UAE to pitch green technology ahead of COP28

Tokyo to offer 'decarbonization technologies' to Mideast

DUBAI: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida arrived in the UAE on Monday to discuss cooperation on clean hydrogen, ammonia and recycled carbon fuels ahead of this year's UN climate talks in Dubai.

Kishida's visit to the United Arab Emirates, which will host COP28 in November-December, is part of the first Gulf tour by a Japanese premier since the late Shinzo Abe in 2020. Japan relies almost entirely on imports for its crude oil, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar accounting for the bulk of its supplies. As the Asian country increases the role of renewables in its energy mix, the Gulf states, too, are moving more towards cleaner energy sources.

Kishida flew in from Saudi Arabia, where he met de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Sunday. After talks with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, he will head to Qatar on Tuesday. The Japanese PM plans to offer Japan's "cutting-edge decarbonization technologies" as part of a green energy initiative for the Middle East, he said in an open letter carried by the UAE's official WAM news agency.

Tokyo's embassy confirmed the comments. Under the initiative, the UAE and

Japan "will be well placed to collaborate in the related fields of hydrogen and ammonia production and utilization as well as carbon recycling", Kishida added.

As the oil-rich UAE gears up to host the COP28 United Nations climate talks, many countries remain far apart on ways to reduce fossil fuels and the global warming they cause. "Japan will work closely with the UAE towards the success of COP28," Kishida said. On Monday, Sheikh Mohammed said he held "fruitful and constructive discussions" with Kishida in Abu Dhabi on "developing bilateral relations and advancing the comprehensive strategic partnership between our two countries".

'Clean energy cooperation'

On Sunday, Kishida discussed energy security and decarbonization with senior Saudi officials including Prince Mohammed in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, official Saudi statements said. During the meeting with Prince Mohammed, Tokyo and Saudi Arabia agreed to launch the "Lighthouse Initiative for Clean Energy Cooperation," according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

"The initiative will support the ongoing efforts that Saudi Arabia is undertaking to become a hub for clean en-



ABU DHABI: This handout image provided by the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs shows UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (right) and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida posing for a photo with COP23 UN Climate Change Conference wrist bands during an official reception at Qasr Al-Watan in Abu Dhabi on July 17, 2023. — AFP

ergy," said a joint statement carried by SPA on Monday. It will focus on areas including hydrogen, ammonia, recycled carbon fuels and carbon capture tech-

nology, the statement said.

Saudi Arabia is the biggest oil exporter to Japan, fulfilling 40 percent of its total needs, the kingdom's Energy Min-

ister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said on Sunday. "The Kingdom, based on its commitment to the strategic relationship with Japan in the field of energy, will continue to ensure the security of oil supplies to Japan," he said, in comments published on his ministry's website.

During Kishida's visit, Saudi Arabia and Tokyo signed 26 cooperation agreements, including in the fields of energy and green energy, according to the state-run Al-Ekhabriya TV. The six-member Gulf Cooperation Council and Japan on Sunday also announced the resumption of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, according to a GCC statement. The GCC-Japan FTA negotiations began in Tokyo in September 2006 but talks were suspended in 2009.

"Japan is considered as one of the priorities of the Council," GCC Secretary General Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi said, hailing "a new era of partnership". The prime minister was due to visit Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar in August last year, but he postponed the trip after contracting the coronavirus.

His visit comes at a time of deepening engagement between the region and China which brokered a shock detente between Gulf rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran in March. —AFP

Global debt dominates G20 talks

GANDHINAGAR, India: G20 finance ministers and central bank chiefs opened talks Monday on debt restructuring deals, multilateral bank reform and finance to tackle climate change, as they aim to bolster a sagging global economy. Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, chair and host of the summit in Gandhinagar, began by telling finance leaders of "the responsibility we have... to steer the global economy towards strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth".

Key on the two-day agenda will be "facilitating consensus to intractable issues associated with rising indebtedness", Sitharaman said, speaking to reporters alongside US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. Talks will also focus on "critical global issues such as strengthening the multilateral development banks and taking coordinated climate action", Sitharaman added.

Yellen said: "The world is looking to the G20 to make progress on key challenges like climate change and pandemics as part of our work to strengthen the global economy."

She also cited work to tackle debt distress among the world's poorest countries, noting debt restructuring progress in Zambia, which she had discussed when visiting Beijing this month.

Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti said targeted interventions must "protect the most vulnerable sections of the population and promote investments to increase the potential of our economies against the risk of recession".

'Go faster'

China, the world's second-largest economy and a major lender to several stressed, low-income countries in Asia and Africa, has so far resisted a common multilateral understanding on the issue, officials said. Yellen on Sunday said the Zambia deal had taken "too long to negotiate", and added she hoped debt treatments for Ghana and Sri Lanka could be "finalized quickly".



GANDHINAGAR, India: India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (right) speaks next to US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen during a joint statement with US as part of the G20 Finance Ministers, Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) and Finance & Central Bank Deputies (FCBD) meetings, at the Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar on July 17, 2023. — AFP

"We should apply the common principles we agreed to in Zambia's case in other cases, rather than starting at zero every time," Yellen said. "And we must go faster." More than half of all low-income countries are near or in debt distress, double the case in 2015, Yellen added.

Several economies have struggled following the double blow of the COVID pandemic and fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine—which hit global fuel and commodity prices. China is a major creditor in some of these cases and has faced criticism for its stand on nations' debt restructuring.

Climate finance

The Group of 20 major economies will also discuss multilateral development banks' reform, cryptocurrency regulations, and making access to financing to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change easier. "In the Global North, climate change means emissions reductions," World Bank chief Ajay Banga said in an op-ed ahead of the meeting.

"But in the Global South, it is a matter of survival, because hurricanes are stronger, heat-resistant seeds are in short supply, drought is destroying farms and towns, and floods are washing away decades of progress."

A newly agreed first step on a fairer distribution of tax revenues from multinational firms reached by 138 countries last week is also set to be delivered. Multinationals, especially tech firms, are currently able to shift profits easily to countries with low tax rates even though they carry out only a small part of their activities there.

But there is also concern that developed G7 member countries' focus on Russia's invasion of Ukraine may derail a final consensus agreement, although Yellen has said she would "push back" on criticism that there was a tradeoff between aid to Kyiv and developing nations. Any discussion on Ukraine is awkward for India, which has not condemned Russia's invasion but is also part of the Quad grouping alongside Australia, the United States and Japan. —AFP

Sudan refugees face soaring rent prices in Cairo

CAIRO: Sudanese refugee Mohamad had only been in Cairo a few weeks when his landlady told him he would have to pay triple the rent if he wanted to keep his apartment. He had arrived with his wife and three children in the Egyptian capital -- 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) north of his home in Khartoum—two weeks after the brutal war between Sudan's rival generals broke out on April 15.

As Egypt said more than 250,000 people crossed in from Sudan—fleeing ceaseless air strikes, street battles, rampant looting and sexual violence—property owners in Cairo saw an opportunity. Mohamad, 35, signed a six-month lease for a furnished apartment for 6,000 Egyptian pounds (\$195) per month—the average monthly income for an Egyptian family, according to official figures.

But "my landlady told me that the rent had gone up to 18,000 pounds," said Mohamad, who like others interviewed by AFP gave only his first name to protect his privacy.

At around the same time, he found out his home in the Sudanese capital had been broken into and looted. When he refused the increase, "she said she had other Sudanese takers who were willing to pay 25,000 pounds".

"She would cut off the electricity and water, and get her kids to throw things at us," he said. Fed up, Mohamad and his family eventually packed up and left. Many others reported similar ordeals in Egypt, where its worst-ever economic crisis has pushed



OMDURMAN, Sudan: People queue for bread in front of a bakery in Omdurman on July 15, 2023. — AFP

property owners to squeeze a profit wherever they can—including from war refugees.

'Nothing left to rent'

Inflation in Egypt hit a record high of 36.8 percent in June, and the pound has lost half its value against the US dollar since early last year. Purchasing power in the import-dependent economy has been slashed as families struggle to make ends meet. New arrivals face the same hardships, with realtors reporting a sharp increase in demand in the satellite city of 6 October, west of Cairo.

Sudanese families scramble to find housing there, near the offices of the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR. Within weeks, "there was nothing left to rent, after a period of stagnation on the local market", said Mohamed, an independent realtor who asked to be identified by first name only, fearing scrutiny by authorities.

And rents have soared well above market prices. "The average rent for a furnished apartment used to be 7,000-8,000 pounds, now it's up to 10,000 and more the closer you are to the UNHCR offices," said the realtor. — AFP

Kuwait plans to set up new fund to push growth

KUWAIT: Kuwait plans to establish a new sovereign fund to develop mega projects and boost economic development, and attract funds from foreign investors and the private sector, according to a government document made available on Sunday.

The government has tasked the Ministry of Finance and the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) with studying plans for the proposed fund, dubbed Ciyada, Arabic for sovereign, the document said.

Ciyada Development Fund will be used to spearhead domestic investments, intended to fuel economic development and diversify Kuwait's economy, the document says. The KIA, which already has more than \$800 billion in assets under management according to sovereign wealth fund tracker Global SWF, controls the Kuwait Investment Office, which manages the General Reserve Fund (GRF) and the Future Generations Fund (FGF).

There was no indication of the value of the funds Ciyada would control or of any specific projects it would help finance. Ciyada Development Fund will be used to spearhead domestic investments, intended to fuel economic development and diversify Kuwait's economy, the document says. The KIA, which already has more than \$800 billion in assets under management according to sovereign wealth fund tracker Global SWF, controls the Kuwait Investment Office, which manages the General Reserve Fund (GRF) and the Future Generations Fund (FGF).

According to the document, Ciyada would accelerate Kuwait's economic growth, promote transformation and progress in various fields of development, through strategic planning and implementation of major development projects.

Pakistan plans to outsource Islamabad airport

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, facing a severe cash shortage, has reportedly decided to outsource the operations of Islamabad International Airport. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, under the Shabbaz Sharif-led government, has instructed stakeholders to finalize the necessary procedures for outsourcing by 12 August, according to reports.

The decision is being made ahead of the end of the current government's term and the dissolution of the National Assembly on 13 August. During a meeting chaired by the finance minister, instructions were given to the relevant departments to complete amendments to civil aviation laws and develop a restructuring plan for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) by the end of the month.

The amendments aim to separate the functions of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, PIA, and Airports Security Force to avoid overlapping responsibilities. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), acting as the transaction adviser for the outsourcing, briefed the meeting on the roadmap for the process. The Economic Coordination Committee had previously decided to initiate a 25-year outsourcing plan for operations and land assets at Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi airports in a public-private partnership to boost foreign exchange. — Agencies

Business

Pakistan facing challenges amid delay in IMF tranche

Country battling runaway inflation, currency devaluation and political crisis

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is currently struggling with severe economic challenges and adversity amid political instability and delay in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) bailout program. The National Economic Council last month approved the annual plan (2023-24), which sets the GDP growth target at 3.5 percent for the next fiscal year and inflation target at 21 percent.

The target set for the next fiscal year seems quite optimistic to an economy that grew a meager 0.29 percent this year where the size of the total economy stands at \$341.6 billion. The country is currently battling high inflation, currency devaluation, political instability, deficient human resources base and lack of continuity of economic policies. Pakistan's reserves stand at around \$3.5 billion where the country needs upwards of \$22 billion to service external debt, make interest payments, and finance its current account for the next financial year.

The Pakistan government has been trying hard for the nine-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) by the IMF to manage the economy amid the political instability after the removal of former Prime Minister, Imran Khan. The gov-

ernment has introduced new taxes and expenditure cuts in the yearly budget to meet the IMF expectations. The State Bank of Pakistan has raised the interest rate by 100 basis points and a hike in power tariffs was also made to get the IMF board approval.

The international rating agencies have lowered Pakistan's credit rating due to the economic uncertainty resulting in loss of trust for the international investors. Pakistan has already taken measures for a market-determined exchange rate by removing market cap on the US dollar exchange rate, which leads to the depreciation of the Pakistani rupee to record low. According to the statistics bureau of Pakistan, the annual inflation in the country stood at 29.4 percent last month falling from record inflation of 37.97 percent the previous month.

The new taxes imposed by the government and removal of several subsidies in the power sector upon IMF demand have increased the inflation rate and cost of living for the common people. Pakistan's consumer price index (CPI) was at 36.5 percent in April, the highest in South Asia where vegetables, pulses, wheat, wheat flour, rice, eggs and chicken in food items and fuel and

gas prices caused the increase.

Inflation continued to move in the upward direction after the Pakistan government struggled to secure a deal with the IMF and had to take difficult decisions following the political instability. The IMF executive board approved last Wednesday a \$3 billion bailout program for Pakistan where the \$1.2 billion tranche will first reach the country. The IMF said that the arrangement comes at a challenging economic juncture for Pakistan. "A difficult external environment, devastating floods and policy missteps have led to large fiscal and external deficits, rising inflation and eroded reserve buffers in FY23," said the IMF.

Pakistan was aiming at the \$2.5 billion leftover amount from the \$6.5 billion bailout package agreed in 2019 but the country managed to secure the \$3 billion package spread over nine months. Finance Minister of Pakistan, Ishaq Dar in a statement said that things are now moving in the right direction for which the government had been striving for the past several months. The approval of funds by the IMF comes immediately after Saudi Arabia and UAE have deposited \$3 billion with the central bank to boost the declin-



RAWALPINDI, Pakistan: A security guard stands outside a currency exchange shop in Rawalpindi on July 15, 2023. — AFP

ing foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, Pakistan has managed to secure over \$9 billion climate-related pledges from different countries to recover from the devastating floods last year. The more than expected IMF bailout package will ease out the economic situation in the country

but the delay in the IMF deal resulting in discontinuation of economic policies has put a pressure on the economy of the country. Despite the IMF bailout package, Pakistan needs to mobilize multilateral and bilateral financial support as the country approaches general elections. — KUNA



RIYADH: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that his visit aims to strengthen strategic relations with Saudi Arabia in all fields.

Saudi Arabia signs 26 MoUs with Japan

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and Japan signed on Sunday 26 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and investment agreements between the two sides. According to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the signing ceremony took place during a roundtable meeting, which was attended by the Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, and the Saudi Minister of Investment Eng. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, in addition to representatives of the Japanese government and over 44 leading Japanese companies. The signed MoUs and investment agreements covered many priority sectors, including healthcare, entertainment, culture, traditional energy, green energy, chemicals, manufacturing, machinery and equipment, financial activities, technology, agriculture, environment, and real estate.

The meeting reviewed and studied opportunities to enhance investment partnerships between the two countries in a wide range of sectors, including clean energy, clean chemicals, mining, healthcare, and digital technologies. The Saudi Minister emphasized that the strategic relations between the Kingdom and Japan are of vital importance, not only to the region but also on a global scale.

Al-Falih indicated that the meeting between Saudi Arabia Crown Prince and the Prime Minister of Japan during his visit to the Kingdom represents an important turning point that confirms a new era of development and growth for these relations.

Moreover, the minister considered the roundtable meeting a unique opportunity to review and discuss mutual investment opportunities and strengthen the close relationship between Saudi Arabia and Japan. The Japanese Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the attendees and participants in the roundtable meeting, adding that it will work to expand and develop economic relations between the two countries.

Japanese Prime Minister also affirmed that Saudi Arabia is an important strategic partner for Japan in energy security and expressed his happiness for the diversity of this partnership in several areas under the Saudi-Japanese Vision 2030, which was agreed upon during the visit of Saudi Arabia Crown Prince to Japan in 2016. — KUNA

Storm clouds loom large over China's economy

BEIJING: China's lower-than-expected growth in the second quarter comes as the world's second largest economy is hit by sluggish consumption, a real estate sector in crisis and worries over deflation.

Here is a look at the main storm clouds over China's economy:

Sluggish consumption

For almost three years Beijing's strict zero-COVID policies meant repeated lockdowns, the fear of be-

Gulf Bank wins Excellence in Data Innovation Award

KUWAIT: The eighteenth 2023 Finnovex Awards Summit, Qatar, awarded Gulf Bank with The Prestigious Excellence in Data Innovation Award, in recognition of its unparalleled excellence in leveraging data to drive transformative change and create new opportunities in the banking industry.

Gulf Bank has proven to be at the forefront of cutting-edge data practices, setting a remarkable example for others to follow, through initiating various data-driven programs, trainings and competitions such as the data Ambassadors program, Data literacy trainings and Fekrety Innovation tournament.

Aws Al-Ansari, manager of Digital Transformation and Innovation Unit, received the award on behalf of Gulf Bank, which was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Doha, Qatar, where industry leaders and experts gathered to celebrate excellence and innovation in the financial sector.

During the ceremony, Al-Ansari reviewed Gulf Bank's pioneering experience in enhancing the role of data and innovation within the bank and beyond — serving as an example in optimizing the use of data, for encouraging and promoting data-driven innovation, and for introducing the important role that both data and innovation play in the future of the banking sector.

Data ambassadors program

As part of its continuous efforts to establish its position as the bank of the future in Kuwait, Gulf Bank succeeded in graduating over 200 employees from the Data Ambassadors Program in the years 2022 and 2023, which the first of its kind data and analytics program in Kuwait, that aims to upskill and empower employees to use advanced data science.

China's economy shows further weakness in Q2

BEIJING: China's economy showed further signs of weakness in the second quarter as data Monday revealed growth missed expectations and consumers remained cautious, adding pressure on leaders to unveil further stimulus.

The disappointing figures follow a string of below-par readings in recent months indicating the post-COVID recovery was already going off the rails and highlighting the tough work authorities face reviving momentum.

The National Statistics Bureau said the world's number two economy grew 6.3 percent on-year in April-June, faster than the previous three months but much weaker than the 7.1 percent predicted in an AFP survey of analysts. That came despite having a very

low base of comparison with last year when the country was hit by a series of COVID lockdowns in major cities.

In quarter-on-quarter terms — considered a more realistic basis for comparison — growth came in at 0.8 percent, well down from the 2.2 percent seen in January-March, the first full period after the removal of zero-COVID restrictions. NBS spokesman Fu Linghui said in a statement that the economy "showed a good momentum of recovery".

"Market demand gradually recovered, production supply continued to increase, employment and price were generally stable, and residents income grew steadily," he added. But Fu admitted at a Monday news conference the Chinese economy faces "a com-



Fekrety Innovation Tournament

In order to stimulate innovative and creative ideas, Gulf Bank launched its first edition of the Fekrety Innovation Tournament, which aims to foster innovation amongst all bank employees — giving them the opportunity to be heard, and to bring forth positive, valuable changes to the bank, the industry, and the wider community. Fekrety Innovation Tournament aligns with Gulf Bank's 2025 Strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035 — where innovation is considered a key pillar that is required to adopt smart and digital technologies and to help create services that contribute towards supporting the economy and improving the quality of life.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engag-

ing and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



SHENYANG: This aerial photo taken on July 17, 2023 shows buildings in Shenyang, in China's northeastern Liaoning province. China's economy showed further signs of weakness in the second quarter. — AFP

plex and difficult international situation, and arduous tasks for reform, development and ensuring stability".

Additional data reinforced the view that the post-pandemic recovery was petering out. — AFP

Deflation looms

For months prices in China have been virtually flat, but while on paper this may seem like a good thing for purchasing power, a drop into deflation would pose a long-term threat. Instead of spending, consumers postpone purchases in the hope of lower prices. And in the absence of demand, companies cut back on production, freeze hiring or lay off staff and agree to further price cuts to clear their inventories, which weighs on profitability as their costs remain the same.

Trade under threat

China, long described as "the workshop of the world", remains highly dependent on exports — making it vulnerable to vicissitudes in the global economy. The threat of recession in the United States and Europe, combined with galloping inflation, is weakening international demand for Chinese products. In June, exports fell for the second month in a row. — AFP

ing arbitrarily quarantined and other draconian health measures that dragged down consumer spending. When the restrictions were lifted at the end of 2022, millions flocked to restaurants, shopping malls and on long-awaited holidays.

But that optimism hasn't lasted, with the recovery running out of steam and the labor market under pressure — more than one in five young people is unemployed. "Companies are reluctant to hire due to soft consumer demand, and consumers are reluctant to spend" because of the economic situation, economist Larry Hu, of the investment bank Macquarie, told AFP.

"Such a self-fulfilled downward spiral bears some resemblance to Japan's 'lost decades,'" he warned, referring to years of stagnation in what is now the world's third largest economy.

Real estate in crisis

Bricks and mortar are a pillar of the economy in

Business

Boubyan Bank increases net profits to KD 41.3 million for H1 of 2023

Net profits grow at a rate of 25% y-o-y • Earnings per share amount to 9.65 fils

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank maintained its outstanding financial results as the bank recorded KD 41.3 million in net profits during H1 of this year at a growth rate of 25 percent compared with past year while the earnings per share amounted to 9.65 fils.

Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer Adel Al-Majed stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, we finished H1 of this year with positive results, which are the fruit of our successful expansion plans and the increase in our market share, in addition to our diversified offerings and innovation to achieve sustainable growth based on clear bases and approach."

"Through well-studied steps, Boubyan managed to be among the early Islamic financial institutions to consider digital transformation to be the fulcrum of regional expansion and the upgrade of the digital infrastructure, thus driving Boubyan's digital products and services towards new regional markets, and achieving more growth to reinforce its leadership and status as a leading digital Islamic financial institution," he added.

Al-Majed thanked the executive management for their efforts as well as all bank's staff who are highly professional. He went on to recognize their efforts towards achieving the best results and positive indicators across all areas, making this year a special year in Boubyan's journey, especially with additional expansion plans.

Boubyan Bank's Key Financial Indicators In KD Million

Indicator	First Half 2023	First Half 2022	Growth
Net profits	41.3	33.1	25%
Operating income	109.2	102.3	7%
Customers' deposits	6,153	5,646	9%
Financing portfolio	6,094	5,749	6%
Assets	8,024	7,636	5%

Positive results and continued strong performance

Al-Majed highlighted the most significant numbers recorded by the bank during the first half of this year where the total of customers' deposits grew by 9 percent to reach KD 6.2 billion, while the financing portfolio grew by 6 percent to reach KD 6.1 billion, and operating income grew by 7 percent to reach KD 109.2 million. Speaking of the bank's market shares, the bank's share of local financing increased overall to 11.51 percent approximately.

The first half of this year witnessed the launch of the bank's new brand identity titled "Imagine the possibilities". The launch is aligned with the bank's success and achievements over the past years as well as its ambitions for the future. The rebranding process aimed to keep up with our growth, while expressing the bank's ambition and passion to build a strong relationship with customers, and to refresh our messages to various segments of customers and stakeholders and, thus, we updated our logo, our mission, vision, and Boubyan core values.

The bank continued receiving international awards and recognitions from many entities led by Euromoney, Global Finance, and Service Hero, which reinforce the strength of the bank and its continued

leadership despite the fierce competition. Moreover, the bank received many awards such as the "World's Best Islamic Retail Bank" for 2023 as a part of GF's awards to banks in Kuwait, the region, and worldwide. This highlights the ongoing efforts of the bank towards improving its banking services, reiterated by receiving the awards for the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait and the World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR.

Additionally, Boubyan joined the annual list of Forbes Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East, which crowns a decade full of achievements and successes that drove the bank to be on the list that includes many names in various economic sectors.

To complement the group of awards and international rankings Boubyan has been receiving since the beginning of this year, the bank received two awards from Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index. The bank was named the Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service for the 13th year in a row since 2010, in addition to receiving the First Place Award in Customer Service as a Country Winner across all economic sectors in Kuwait.

Nomo Bank and expansion overseas

During H1 of this year, the bank continued laying the foundation for its regional expansions as Nomo, a Boubyan Bank Group company, inked a new partnership with Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank "ADCB"

and Al-Hilal Digital Bank to give their UAE customers the ability to benefit from the innovative services and solutions of Nomo Bank through ADCB - Nomo and Al-Hilal Nomo Apps.

Nomo continues to leave its mark on the Islamic digital banking sector through the recent launch of many products such as the sharia-compliant property finance product, which allows all customers in the Middle East to own properties in the United Kingdom in a major step towards employing the digital bank's services in providing easier, more convenient, and secure property finance solutions.

Corporate banking... Outstanding solutions

Ever since the beginning of 2023, the corporate banking line at Boubyan Bank has been witnessing the launch of a group of innovative digital solutions to support various local economic sectors, and to encourage economic and commercial growth; these solutions include the smart supply chain finance platform and the new corporate credit cards' services package (Boubyan Visa Platinum).

The supply chain finance platform is a new service offered for the first time in the local market for instant collection of commercial receivables of sup-

- The positive results coupled with ongoing improvement reflect our contribution to Islamic Banking region-wise
- The Bank received many international awards and rankings due to its achievements across various business sectors
- Boubyan turned into a banking and digital powerhouse in Kuwait and the region



Adel Al-Majed

pliers and extension of payment terms for buyers, giving customers the chance to generate revenue from such payments through integrated digital solutions. As for the unique smart banking solutions and new services of the corporate credit card (Boubyan Visa Platinum), the card is completely designed to enable our corporate customers to manage their cards and facilitate their collections and payments in an easy and innovative manner anytime, anywhere, while maintaining the highest data and information security and safety levels.

CSR & sustainability

Over the past period, Boubyan managed to reinforce its leadership in CSR and its sustainable role through many social events and initiatives that highlighted the bank's domestic and international excellence. The past period represented a milestone in the bank's ongoing CSR journey, and it reinforced the bank's social leadership in Kuwait, which is always targeted by the bank, and which is of no less importance than the banking role of the institution. Sustainability and CSR represent an integral part of Boubyan's ongoing commitment and efforts as a part of a strategy to deliver specific messages to various segments of the society through the bank's various contributions, volunteer and charitable efforts, which benefit everybody and give them a helping hand, ultimately making Boubyan a role model to follow in CSR and sustainability.

Furthermore, Boubyan Bank released its 3rd Sustainability Report titled "Towards a Cleaner and Brighter Future", which reflects on Boubyan Bank's Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) journey, which is aligned with the New Kuwait Vision 2035.

The bank continued supporting its human resources since they represent the main pillar for all its achievements. This was made through unique training strategies, academies, and programs, in addition to international certifications to sharpen their educational and practical skillsets and to increase their expertise so that they may benefit themselves, which would be reflected on customer service at Boubyan Bank.

Expanding the branches network

Boubyan Bank always stresses that it is closer to its customers, especially in light of increasing its investment in digital services. During this year, Boubyan Bank inaugurated a number of new branches, bringing the number of branches across Kuwait to 48, which comes as a part of the strategy of geographic presence, and expansion in offering banking services and solutions using the latest digital technologies.

The new branches (Al-Daiyeh Branch, Al-Khi-

ran Outlet Mall Branch, and Abu Fatera Branch) are modern, and they offer the latest technologies, thus offering a unique experience and service level to maintain Boubyan Bank's leadership and ability to keep up with the ongoing developments in the Islamic banking industry.

Highlights

In an attempt by the bank to provide customers with unique banking experiences, this year saw Boubyan Bank's launch of its new Premium Account, which is a custom-tailored product to its affluent customers, bringing them unique services and products that meet their daily needs and make it easier inside and outside Kuwait.

- For the third consecutive year, the bank supports CBK and KBA's Be Aware Campaign "Diraya" to spread awareness about many banking matters among citizens and residents. This comes in line with the bank's CSR efforts.

- Boubyan Bank celebrated the graduation of 45 of its employees from various training programs of professional certifications approved by The London Institute of Banking & Finance. Additionally, a group of employees received approved certifications from Harvard Business School in collaboration with IBS.

- Brand Finance - the international brand-valuation consultancy - ranked Boubyan Bank on the list of the top 10 most valuable and strongest Kuwaiti brands in terms of valuation for 2023, in addition to naming the bank the "fastest growing" at a growth rate of 33 percent and improving Boubyan's ranking to "AA-" based on its strong financial performance and expectations for future growth against specific standards.

- The bank's New Data Center received the "Tier III Gold Certification of Operational Sustainability" from Uptime Institute, the international institute specialized in certification of international data and information centers. Boubyan Data Center has previously earned the Tier III Design Certification, for design of data centers worldwide in 2020, in addition to the Tier III Constructed Facility Certification, for actual implementation and operation in 2022 from the same entity.

London exhibition spotlights migrant business owners

LONDON: From the co-founder of retail giant Marks & Spencer to the owners of a family-run Chinese takeaway, a new exhibition is showcasing migrant entrepreneurs and the role they played in molding Britain.

They have "shaped all aspects of our lives, from the clothes we wear, to the food we eat, to apps on our phone, the furniture in our homes," Matthew Plowright, the Migration Museum's director of communications and engagement, told AFP.

At the museum based inside a south London shopping centre, visitors can wander through areas dedicated to various types of migrant-owned businesses found on a typical British high street, from restaurants to corner shops.

The "Taking Care of Business" exhibition runs until late September and explores the origins of many British companies that were founded by immigrants and have since become household names.

One example is the retailer Marks & Spencer, which was co-founded by Michael Marks who was born into a Polish Jewish family that immigrated to Britain in 1882. Another comes from Britain's first coffeehouse chain Costa Coffee, which was founded by brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa, who arrived from Italy in the 1950s.

Immigration debate

But the exhibition also retraces the journeys of dozens of migrants who may not be known by name but are among those who came to the UK to seek refuge from oppressive regimes, escape poverty or simply to study and launch a business. Among them are Gary and Jin Hui, who emigrated from Hong Kong in the mid-1980s and set up a Chinese takeaway restaurant in South Wales. Their daughter Angela, 31, recreated their family-run restaurant for the exhibition, bringing back memories of the many hours she and her brothers spent helping their parents, who didn't speak English, at work.

"British history is so complex, through colonialism, and I think a lot of people don't understand it" when it comes to immigration, she said. Migrants from the Caribbean, Jews fleeing persecution in Eu-



Taking Care of Business highlights migrant entrepreneurs such as the founder of Marks & Spencer - AFP

rope, students from India and from former colonies in Africa: understanding their stories can "help us to contextualize and think about contemporary debates around migration in a slightly different way", Plowright said.

Business owner Nomshado Michelle Baca arrived in Britain as a young girl, travelling from Zimbabwe with her mother in 1996.

After attending business school and working in fashion for several years, Baca launched her own business called "A Complexion Company", creating wellness and beauty products tailored for black women. Baca said that many of the points made in the debate surrounding immigration — a live political issue in the UK — are "very short-sighted".

"The UK has always been one of the greater trading places in the world and now, to forget about it is not just harmful to individuals who are immigrants, but it is also harmful to Britain," Baca told AFP.

Immigration has long been the subject of heated debate in the UK and the ruling Conservative party has pledged to curb migration, which hit record numbers last year, after Britain voted in 2016 to leave the European Union.

'Not a coincidence'

"Often when people talk and think about immigration in the news and in politics, it is in these very impersonal debates about numbers or facts and figures," Plowright said.

The exhibition aims to "bring to life the personal stories, the stories behind the headlines", he added.

One in seven British businesses have been either founded or co-founded by an immigrant, according to a study by the UK's Centre for Entrepreneurs. Three of the country's six wealthiest people were not born in Britain, according to this year's Sunday Times Rich List, which was topped by Indian-born billionaire Gopi Hinduja and family. Plowright said "it's probably no coincidence that migrants are disproportionately more likely to found their own business". "When you arrive, often you don't have access to the networks, the connections... and so often you have to do it alone," he said. But the exhibition is not just about celebrating success stories. It is also about "embracing the complexity and highlighting the discrimination and the challenges and the difficulties many of these business owners and people continue to face today," Plowright added. — AFP

Stock markets drop as China data disappoints

LONDON: Stock markets retreated Monday as official data showed China's economy grew less than expected in the second quarter, offsetting hopes of an end to US interest-rate hikes. The euro reached \$1.1249, the highest level since February 2022 on expectations of an end soon to the Federal Reserve's tightening, while the yen and sterling have also pushed to multi-month highs in recent sessions.

While traders reacted to economic storm clouds — oil prices also slid Monday — a typhoon forced the closure of the Hong Kong stock market. Finance ministers and central bank bosses from the Group of 20 meanwhile began a two-day meeting in India, where they will discuss ways to bolster the stuttering global economy. Equities last week surged as news that US inflation slowed more than forecast fanned hopes that the Federal Reserve would soon end its campaign of tightening borrowing costs.

The advance was bolstered by pledges from Beijing to introduce stimulus measures for the struggling Chinese economy. However, "investors have been greeted by a dismal Chinese data dump to start the week", said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. The scale of the work facing Chinese officials was laid bare with data showing gross domestic product expanded 6.3 percent on-year in April-June, much less than forecast in an AFP survey.

The National Bureau of Statistics added that youth unemployment hit a record 21.3 percent in June and retail sales also missed estimates, adding to months of data highlighting softness in the world's number-two economy behind the United States. "China's recovery is going from bad to worse," said Harry Murphy Cruise at Moody's Analytics. "After a sugar injection in the opening months of 2023 (following the lifting of zero-COVID measures), the pandemic hangover is plaguing China's recovery."

The readings will further stoke calls for authorities to announce more measures to fire growth, having cut interest rates last month. But while officials have pledged to do more, there has been little concrete out of Beijing so far. Monday's Chinese data "will be viewed through the lens of how it will influence the (upcoming) policy decisions", added Innes. — AFP

Lifestyle



Melaku Belay (center), director of Fendika Cultural Center and founder of Ethiocol dance group, performs traditional dances in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.—AFP photos



A member of Ethiocol dance group performs a traditional dance at Fendika Cultural Center.



Members of Ethiocol dance group perform traditional dance at Fendika Cultural Center.

THREATENED ETHIOPIAN CABARET LIVES TO DANCE ANOTHER DAY

A beloved monument to Ethiopia's traditional cabaret culture, the historic nightclub Fendika is running on borrowed time, having just escaped demolition. Two decades earlier, Fendika was one of 17 "azmari bet" (a venue hosting performances by Ethiopia's azmari musicians) in the Kazan-chis district, a neighborhood harkening back to Addis Ababa's jazz-fueled era.

Today, it is the only one still standing, says Melaku Belay, the 43-year-old owner and director of Fendika. Comparable to medieval troubadours, the azmari are itinerant poet-musicians from rural Ethiopia, who improvise songs while playing the masenqo, a single-string bowed lute made of wood, horsehair and raw hide. Their songs are rich in metaphors and double meanings, humorously mocking their audience, civil society and even powerful elites—reflecting a freedom of expression rarely seen in Ethiopia.

Under the watchful eyes of Melaku, an internationally-renowned dancer and choreographer who took the reins in 2008, Fendika grew to become a cultural hub. Its nondescript entrance and dilapidated walls—covered with faded posters—belie the thriving life inside, where patrons can browse its library, attend performances and visit a gallery exhibiting the work of young Ethiopian painters.

In addition to the azmari, Fendika hosts Ethio-jazz performers and bands revisiting the country's musical traditions. It is usually packed with Ethiopians and foreigners, many enjoying a glass of beverage or tej, an Ethiopian honey mead.

'A very unique place'
The club is "a very unique place" to learn about Ethiopia and its mosaic of ethnic traditions, according to Addis-based American researcher Luana DeBorst, a regular visitor to Fendika. "Ethiopia is in a bit of a crisis in terms of how it defines ethnic borders and Fendika brings people together, no matter what region they are from and that's a very powerful thing in a divided" country, the 27-year-old told AFP.



A member of Ethiocol dance group performs a traditional dance at Fendika Cultural Center.

The star attraction remains Ethiocol, an in-house band founded in 2009 by Melaku, that has performed in Europe and the United States. Comprising dancers and musicians from various generations and regions, Ethiocol aims to be a bridge between tradition and modernity but also bring together the cultures of more than 80 communities in Ethiopia.

As the amplified sound of krars—

Ethiopian lyres—reverberated across the stage, Melaku displayed his virtuosity, mixing elements from the Amharic eskista dance tradition with steps from other regions. The charismatic performer is the soul of Fendika, a place he discovered 25 years ago, buoyed by "a passion and love for dancing".

A homeless school dropout, Melaku survived on the tips he earned at Fendika before the club's owners allowed him to sleep indoors, on the floor. "I...

sound engineer". "I travelled around the world because of this place", said the 32-year-old, who also founded his own group, Gungun.

Another member of Ethiocol, Emabet Woldetsadik "started as a cleaner, then became a cashier, then a waitress, but now I am a dancer and singer." Fendika "changed my entire life", the 30-year-old told AFP. "As an Ethiopian dancer, I am responsible for showcasing and preserving my culture."

and designer who has previously exhibited her work there. "Fendika is the place where we meet to share ideas and ideas flow and where we support each other," the 30-year-old told AFP.

"Our identity is our history and culture. If that is destroyed, you become a copycat of others' cultures," said Ethiocol drummer Meselu. After a wave of opposition, the municipality offered a surprise reprieve to Fendika, asking Melaku to come up with a proposal to



Chairs crafted with wood art are seen at Fendika Cultural Center.

But Fendika's performers and patrons alike had a shock last month when the municipal government announced plans to demolish the club to make way for a luxury hotel. It was a reminder of the development drive that has taken over Ethiopia's capital since 2008, with old structures increasingly forced to cede space to new buildings.

The club "is a vital place" for Ethiopia's artists, said Eden Mulu, a painter

develop the land. His ambitious dream is to build a multi-storey structure next to Fendika that can house a performance hall, recording studios and an artists' residency. The financing could take a while, but after a 25-year love affair with Fendika, he is willing to wait. "I promised myself, Fendika will never be demolished," he said, smiling.—AFP



Melaku Belay plays music before Ethiocol dance show in Addis Ababa.



Members of Ethiocol dance group perform traditional dance at Fendika Cultural Center.



Members of Ethiocol band play traditional music at Fendika Cultural Center.

'Call of Duty' to remain on Playstation

Tech giants Microsoft and Sony reached a deal to keep releasing the popular "Call of Duty" video games on the Playstation game console, Microsoft announced Sunday. Microsoft, owner of the rival Xbox console, moved to acquire game studio Activision Blizzard -- which produces "Call of Duty" -- in January 2022. That move sparked fears of consolidation in the gaming industry, leading US and British regulators to hold up the finalization of the acquisition.

Sunday's "binding agreement" means that "Call of Duty" games will continue to be released on both the Xbox and the Sony Playstation. "We are pleased to announce that Microsoft and PlayStation have signed a binding agreement to keep Call of Duty on PlayStation following the acquisition

of Activision Blizzard," tweeted Microsoft's gaming head Phil Spencer.

"From Day One of this acquisition, we've been committed to addressing the concerns of regulators, platform and game developers, and consumers," said Microsoft President Brad Smith. "Even after we cross the finish line for this deal's approval, we will remain focused on ensuring that 'Call of Duty' remains available on more platforms and for more consumers than ever before."

In December, ahead of the merger, Spencer had announced that Microsoft was committed to bringing "Call of Duty" to Nintendo, another console maker, following the completion of the acquisition. Sony had previously sought to block Microsoft's acquisition of Activision Blizzard, which also produces mega-hits "Candy Crush" and "World of Warcraft." The acquisition would make Microsoft the third biggest company in the gaming industry, in terms of revenue, behind Tencent and Sony.—AFP



'Mission: Impossible' returns, topping North America box office

The seventh installment of the 'Mission Impossible' franchise was No. 1 at North American box offices this weekend, Sunday estimates showed, scoring off horror flick "Insidious: The Red Door" from last weekend's top spot. Paramount's "Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One," the latest in the long-running series starring Tom Cruise, brought in \$52.6 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported.

David A. Gross, of Franchise Entertainment Research, called the opening "roughly average for an action thriller at this point in its series." "Foreign markets are where action movies excel, and the overseas openings are strong, with the exception of China, which is good-not-great," Gross added. Coming in at second place this weekend was "Sound of Freedom," a controversial action thriller from Santa Fe Films and Angel Studios.

Jim Caviezel stars in a story based on the life of former US government agent Tim Ballard, who says he has rescued more than 100 children from Colombian sex traffickers. The film has found an audience among Christian conservatives. Critics say "Sound" plays into wild QAnon conspiracy theories about a pedophilic international cabal that kidnaps children and harvests their blood.

Commentators on the conservative broadcaster Fox News, meanwhile, have pushed back against detractors among the "liberal media." Angel Stu-



dios denies that its film warps the truth, though Caviezel and Ballard have both embraced some extreme QAnon claims.

Despite the controversy, or perhaps because of it, the film brought in \$27 million over the weekend, bringing its total up to \$85 million so far. "Insidious: The Red Door," from Sony, brought in \$13 million, down to third place in theaters after its \$33 million opening last weekend. "Insidious," the fifth installment in the titular horror series, was followed by another franchise sequel, Disney's "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny."

This "Indy" episode, likely the last, again stars Harrison Ford as a

whip-cracking archeologist, and took in \$12 million. In fifth was Disney/Pixar's "Elemental," an animated immigrant fable that brought in \$8.7 million. Rounding out the top 10 were: "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" (\$6 million) "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" (\$3.4 million) "No Hard Feelings" (3.3 million) "Joy Ride" (2.57 million) "The Little Mermaid" (\$2.35 million)—AFP

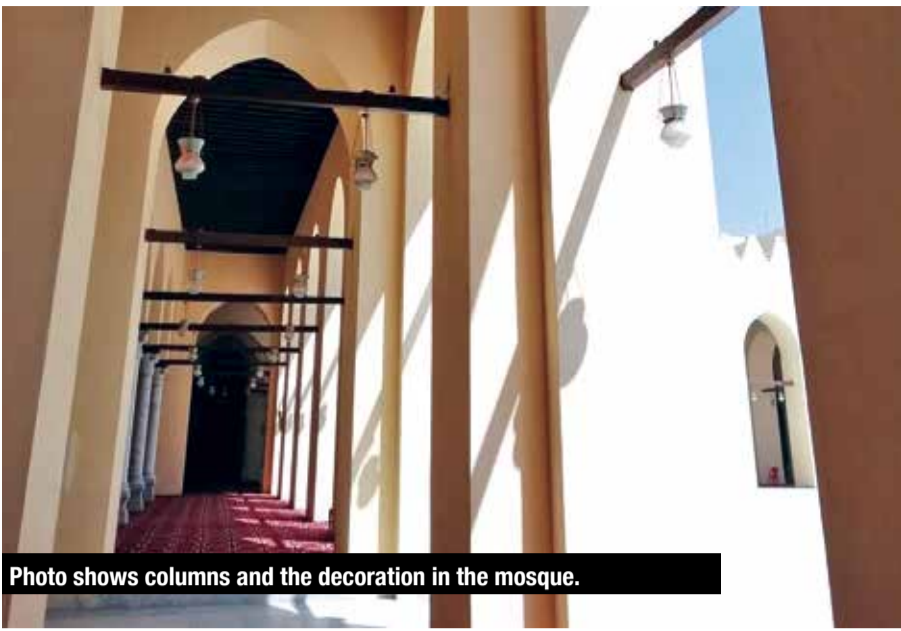


Photo shows columns and the decoration in the mosque.



Marble columns in the mosque.



Stone entry shows the ancient decoration style.

Cairo's Al-Zahir Baybars Mosque

preserved religious identity despite changing times



Mosque of Al-Zahir Baybars, which began construction in the year 1266, is considered one of Egypt's most ancient mosques as it bore witness to many centuries and varying historic events. The

Cairo-based 12,600 square meter land plot was turned by the French into a military fort with cannons lining the walls. The British colonialists, on the other hand, used the mosque for storage purposes. In spite of the

changing times, and recent restoration and development, Al-Zahir Baybars mosque kept up prayer rituals and preserved its religious identity. —KUNA

The courtyard of Al-Thahir Baybars Mosque.



The outer walls of the Mosque.

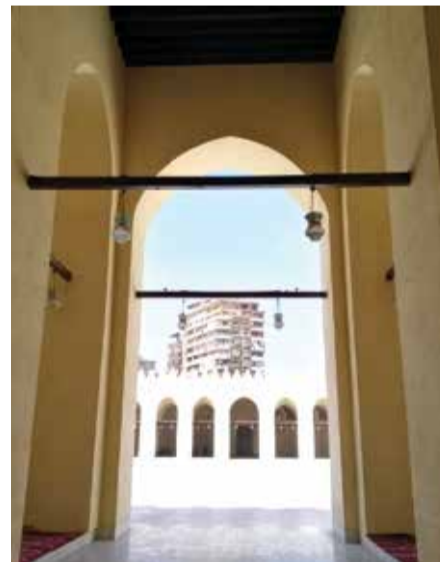


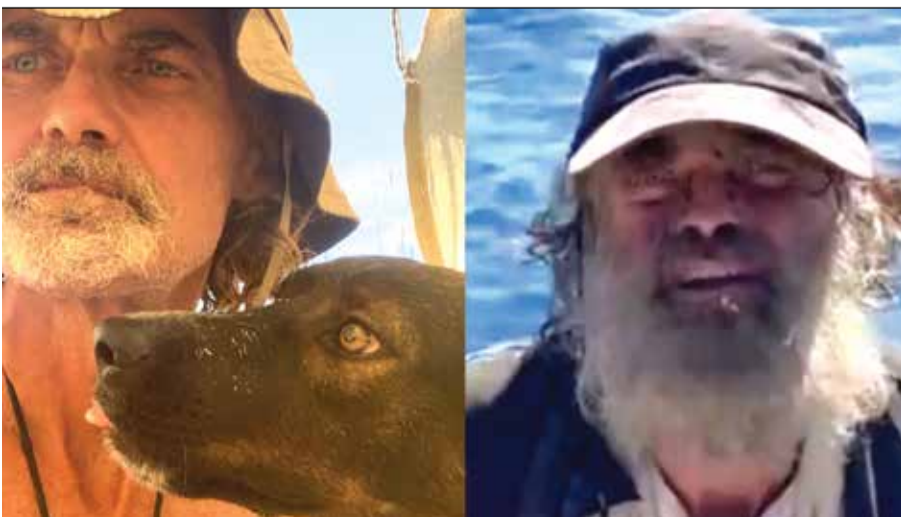
Photo shows columns and the decoration in the mosque.



The wooden pulpit of Al-Thahir Baybars Mosque.



Al-Thahir Baybars Mosque began construction in the year 1266.



Australian 'Cast Away': Sailor and dog rescued after 2 months lost at sea

An Australian sailor and his dog have been rescued after two months adrift in the Pacific Ocean, surviving the ordeal by drinking rainwater and snacking on raw fish. Tim Shaddock and his dog Bella set off in a catamaran from Mexico's seaside city of La Paz in April, and planned to sail about 6,000 kilometers (3,700 miles) before dropping anchor in tropical French Polynesia.

But they soon found themselves

stranded in the vast Pacific Ocean after rough seas damaged the vessel and knocked out its electronics. In an unlikely rescue reminiscent of the Tom Hanks movie "Cast Away", the bedraggled amateur yachtsman was plucked from the water two months later by a Mexican tuna trawler.

"I've just got fishing gear," he told one of his rescuers, in a video obtained by Australia's Nine News. Sporting a shaggy

beard, 51-year-old Shaddock was visibly gaunt after surviving on the spartan sea-food diet—but said he otherwise felt "in very good health".

"I have been through a very difficult ordeal at sea," he said in a separate video, obtained by Nine News. "I'm just needing rest and good food because I've been alone at sea a long time." Shaddock and Bella would soon be ferried back to Mexico, according to the outlet. —AFP

Sports

Paris Olympics practice tricky opening ceremony on Seine

40 boats participate in a practice run

PARIS: Around 40 boats took part in a practice run of the hugely ambitious opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics on the river Seine on Monday, almost exactly a year until the sporting extravaganza begins. All circulation was stopped on the river through the centre of the City of Light on Monday morning as the vessels sailed the six-kilometer (3.7 mile) route which is set to be taken next July by delegations of competitors, as well as TV crews and emergency services.

For the first time in Olympics history, the opening ceremony is set to take place outside the main athletics stadium, with competitors and officials set to travel through Paris on a flotilla of more than 100 vessels. Guaranteeing security for participants as well as a crowd of several hundred thousand people on the banks of the Seine is an enormous challenge for organizers.

Around 40 boats simulating the arrival of delegations sailed on Monday, with another 18

vessels being used by emergency services, organizers and the host broadcaster. "We need to test a new way of filming of the ceremony," event director Thierry Reboul said in advance. The choreography is being done by French theatre director Thomas Jolly, 41, whose plans remain a secret.

Tickets for around 100,000 prize spots along the river have been sold by organizers, with several hundred thousand people set to be authorized to watch for free from the banks of the river. The traditional torch relay leading up the games has also been hailed as "unbelievable" by chief organizer Tony Estanguet. The 80-day relay will see the torch carried from Greece by boat to the southern port of Marseille before featuring at the famed Mont Saint Michel in northern France, the Chateau de Versailles and the French Caribbean. The Paris Olympics are set to take place from July 26 to August 11. — AFP



PARIS: Peniche boats sail towards the Eiffel Tower on the River Seine on July 17, 2023, during a parade to test 'maneuvers, distances, duration' and 'video capture' of the future opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics in 2024. — AFP

News in Brief

Sri Lanka rattle Pakistan

GALLE: Sri Lanka spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took three wickets including skipper Babar Azam to dent Pakistan's first-innings reply after the hosts finished on 312 in the opening Test on Monday. The tourists were 132-5 at tea, still trailing Sri Lanka by 180 runs in Galle, with Saud Shakeel on 22 and Agha Salman on 19. Sri Lankan overnight batsman Dhananjaya de Silva made 122 to hand the hosts a respectable total after a lower-order collapse on the first day. Pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi, fellow quick Naseem Shah and leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed ended on three wickets each to bowl out the hosts and lunch was called. But Sri Lanka's bowlers came out roaring as pacer Kasun Rajitha got Imam-ul-Haq out for one and Jayasuriya sent back Abdullah Shafique for 19. The left-handed Shan Masood hit back as he smashed 39 off 30 balls but fell lbw to Ramesh Mendis, who was denied the wicket by the on-field umpire before Sri Lanka successfully reviewed. — AFP

Chinese divers shine

FUKUOKA: Chinese divers continued their dominance at the world championships in Japan on Monday, winning another two gold medals to make it seven out of seven so far. Chang Yani and Chen Yiyen won the women's 3m synchronized springboard before compatriots Lian Junjie and Yang Hao took gold in the men's 10m synchronized event. China won every diving gold at last year's world championships in Budapest and have so far maintained a perfect record in the southern Japanese city of Fukuoka. Chen, who picked up a fourth world championships gold medal, said she preferred diving in pairs events because it gave her "a sense of security". "The Chinese team is strong because we get a lot of support from our coaches," the 24-year-old said. "They have encouraged us for many years." Chang and Chen scored 341.94 to finish ahead of Britain's Scarlett Mew Jensen and Yasmín Harper on 296.58 and Italy's Chiara Pellacani and Elena Bertocchi on 285.99. — AFP

LeBron returns to No 23

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James will switch his jersey number from 6 to 23 for his 21st NBA season, the Los Angeles Lakers announced. The move, confirmed Saturday night on social media by the Lakers, is a tribute to the late NBA legend Bill Russell, whose jersey No. 6 was retired last year after his death, James' agent Rich Paul told ESPN. Players who were wearing 6, like James, were allowed to continue wearing the number. James did so for the 2022-23 campaign in honor of Russell, an 11-time NBA champion and five-time NBA Most Valuable Player, but has decided to show his respect this season by picking another number. It's the fourth NBA number change for James, who returns to 23, which he wore to start his career and at stops throughout his two decades in the league. James wore 23 in high school and when he first played for the Cleveland Cavaliers. When he left the Cavs for the Miami Heat in 2010, he changed to 6 as the Heat had retired 23 as a tribute to NBA legend Michael Jordan.

Bangladesh win T20 series

SYLHET: Opener Liton Das top-scored with 35 as Bangladesh defeated Afghanistan by six wickets in the second Twenty20 international to take the two-match series 2-0 on Sunday. Liton laid the foundation for the win with a 67-run opening stand with Afif Hossain (24) as Bangladesh raced to 119-4 in 16.1 overs after Taskin Ahmed's 3-33 helped the side restrict Afghanistan to 116-7 in a rain-reduced 17 overs. Bangladesh won the opening match of the series by two wickets on Friday, and Sunday's follow-up — both of them in the northeastern city of Sylhet — earned them their third consecutive T20 series win, and their first against Afghanistan in three attempts. They defeated world champions England 3-0 and Scotland 2-1 earlier this year. Off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman gave Afghanistan a lifeline to save the series by removing Liton and Afif in the space of three balls after their solid stand before Azmatullah Omarzai bowled Najmul Hossain for four. — AFP



Kuwait National Speed Skating team player Adeeb Halawa

Kuwait Speed Skating team win silver medal

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Speed Skating team player Adeeb Halawa won silver medal in Korea International Tournament in the Short Track (500 meters) category. In a statement for KUNA, the Head of Kuwait Winter Games Club Fhaid Al-Ajmi said in a statement that this achievement came after a strong competition with Malaysian player Adem Ammar who won first place, Qatari player Ahmad Al-Majed who came out third and Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Nouri who came out fourth.

Al-Ajmi said that these four players attended an intensive training program in Korea before the tournament for a period of ten days to develop their technical abilities. Kuwait Winter Games Club is keen on participating in the international games that help boost cooperation between Asian countries and help raise the Kuwaiti flag. — KUNA

Vingegaard retains Tour lead as Poels wins in Alps

SAINT-GERVAIS: Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard kept the overall lead of the Tour de France on Sunday crossing the finish line in the second of four Alpine tests wheel to wheel with Tadej Pogacar. Dutch climber Wout Poels won the 15th stage, raced in the shadow of Mont Blanc and dedicated his win to the memory of recently deceased teammate Gino Maeder. In the long-term duel for the overall title between the two top riders, Vingegaard remains 10 seconds ahead of Pogacar.

In the Alps, Vingegaard appears to have stemmed the tide. After three days of Pogacar clawing back time, the last two stages been even, with Vingegaard gaining second over the weekend. The 179km run from Les Gets to Saint Gervais Mont Blanc was again dominated by both their duel between, and also by a series of falls. Pogacar twice attempted characteristic blistering late attacks. Vingegaard caught up both times and then sped past approaching the line, only to slow and look his Slovenian rival in the eye as they crossed together. Monday is a rest day ahead of a potentially decisive individual time-trial on Tuesday

which is followed by another Alpine stage on Wednesday. Pogacar said he was looking forward to the next two stages.

"Tuesday's time trial will provide a shake up, and Wednesday's stage has some of the hardest climbs in cycling," said the 2020 and 2021 Tour winner. "Tuesday and Wednesday will decide the winner of the Tour. I have tested the course for the time-trial and I like it," said the UAE rider. His Danish rival also likes the look of Tuesday's test, and suggested he was saving his powder. "I felt good today, I don't know if I was thinking about attacking, but it didn't make sense," said Vingegaard. "I like short, hard time-trials like (Tuesday's), there will be lots of change of pace and I like that."

The third place

Carlos Rodriguez is more than five minutes behind in third, but the 22-year-old Spaniard, on his first Tour, tightened his grip on a podium place as Australian Jai Hindley dropped to fifth with Briton Adam Yates rising to fourth. Sunday's winding route through wild



SAINT-GERVAIS: UAE Team Emirates' British rider Adam Yates cycles ahead of UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar (center) and Jumbo-Visma's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard in the final ascent of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains in the last kilometers of the 15th stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race. — AFP

Alpine meadows and valleys featured five mountains but the expected fireworks were doused by an early mass fall. Rowdy roadside fans have caused continual havoc on this Tour and on Sunday a clumsy spectator brought down half the peloton after stepping out into the road about 60km in. An

escape group built an eight-minute advantage that the chief contenders showed no appetite to close in sizzling summer temperatures.

Italian Lidl-Trek rider Giulio Ciccone was part of the day's big break and took over the polka dot jersey for climbing points. — AFP

Richardson beats Jackson in Silesia Diamond League

CHORZOW: US sprint star Sha'Carri Richardson reeled in Jamaican Shericka Jackson to claim a morale-boosting victory in the women's 100m at the Silesia Diamond League on Sunday. Richardson and Jackson went into the race as their countries' recently-crowned national champions, the Jamaican having run 10.65 seconds in Kingston to go fifth in the all-time list. In hot, steamy conditions in the Polish city of Chorzow, Jackson swept away on the coattails of fast-starting home favorite Eva Swoboda before taking the lead at the halfway mark.

Richardson then put on the after burners, coming through the line in 10.76sec for a stunning victory just a month away from the world championships in Budapest. Jackson was second in 10.78 with the Pole rounding out the podium (10.94). "The 10.76 - I love the time. I put a great race together," said Richardson. "This was a great competition, it was amazing, I executed correctly."

Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen earlier set a sen-

sational European record of 3:27.14 in the men's 1500m, edging ever closer to Hicham El Guerrouj's world record of 3:26.00. Aided by two pacemakers, the 22-year-old Norwegian was never troubled as the first eight finishers all set personal bests. South Africa's Akani Simbine held his form perfectly to claim a memorable win in the men's 100m in 9.97sec. Simbine beat world champion Fred Kerley into second, on 9.98sec in a photo finish with third-placed Emmanuel Eseme of Cameroon.

Newly-crowned US champion Cravont Charleston was fourth in 9.99sec. It was Kerley's first defeat of the season in track's blue riband event, but the American seemed unfazed by the result. "I feel good about today's race. Nothing was missing. I got my job done," he said. Simbine added: "I won against all of them, not only against the world champion. I am the first to beat Fred this year, we have a good friendship, a good rivalry. I am very satisfied with my performance and hope to continue my good form."

Van Niekerk on fire

Simbine's teammate Wayde van Niekerk confirmed his early-season form by scorching to an impressive victory in the men's 400m, the world record holder clocking 44.08sec. "It is my fastest run in seven years and 44.0 shows that 43 seconds is

possible," said Van Niekerk, who has been beset by injury problems since winning Olympic gold in Rio in 2016. Nigeria's world record holder Tobi Amusan set a new meeting record of 12.34sec when winning a loaded 100m hurdles race.

Olympic and world champion Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco won the men's 3000m steeplechase in 8:03.16 for his ninth consecutive victory and third Diamond League win of the season. And Venezuela's Olympic champion and three-time world gold medalist Yulimar Rojas leaped a world leading distance of 15.18m when winning the women's triple jump. There was another world lead in the men's high jump as Qatar's three-time world champ Mutaz Essa Barshim managed a best of 2.36m.

Italy's Gianmarco Tamperi, with whom Barshim infamously shared Olympic gold in Tokyo, was second on countback from German Tobias Potye after both jumpers cleared 2.32m. "I think I still have a 2.40 jump in me, hopefully this year," said Barshim. By the time pole vault king Mondo Duplantis had soared over the bar twice, at 5.61 and 5.81m, only Americans Sam Henricks and Christopher Nilsen were left in the competition, the rest of the field having bombed out. The US-born Swede was the sole vaulter to clear 6.01m, which turned out to be the winning height after he failed three times at 6.13m. — AFP

Sports

World Cup set for lift-off

Women's football at all-time high

AUCKLAND: The first 32-team Women's World Cup kicks off in Australia and New Zealand on Thursday, with the United States favorites to win an unprecedented third consecutive title in a landmark month for women's football. It has been a rapid expansion for a tournament that started in 1991 and featured only 16 teams as recently as 2011, then 24 in France four years ago when the USA retained the trophy.

That reflects a dramatic rise in interest in women's football over the last decade beyond its traditional heartland of the United States, and a swarm of European sides will be aiming to snatch their title. Australia, led by the prolific Chelsea forward Sam Kerr, will hope to make the most of home advantage and go all the way to the final in Sydney on August 20.

This World Cup is not just bigger in terms of the number of competing nations. FIFA has tripled the prize money compared with 2019 and the total pot, which also covers compensation for clubs releasing players, is up from \$50 million four years ago to \$152 million. It is a vast hike on the \$15 million offered in 2015, and confirmation that it is a boom time for women's football. Big crowds at club and

international matches, particularly in Europe, are more evidence that the game is at an all-time high.

TV blackout averted

Nevertheless, the prize pot still pales in comparison with the \$440 million dished out at the 2022 men's World Cup in Qatar. Meanwhile, a stand-off over the sale of broadcast rights in the biggest European countries - Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Spain - was only resolved last month. The threat of a TV blackout was averted late in the day after FIFA president Gianni Infantino had openly criticized the amount of money being offered by broadcasters.

"FIFA is stepping up not just with words but with actions. Unfortunately, this is not the case of everyone across the industry. Broadcasters and sponsors have to do more in this respect," Infantino said in March, adding that world football's governing body was receiving offers amounting to just one percent of what was being paid for the men's tournament.

In Japan, a deal to avoid a blackout was only reached last week. "It is actually terrible business if you are not tuning in," said Megan Rapinoe, the veteran superstar of the United States team and a cultural icon who transcends the sport. "You are

missing out on a large cultural moment. This is the premier women's sporting event in the world bar none and this is a paradigm shift globally, not just in the US." It will be the 38-year-old's last World Cup after she announced she plans to retire at the end of this season.

Knee-injury plague

Rapinoe was one of the USA stars who led their fight for equal pay, resulting in a landmark collective-bargaining deal last year, meaning the country's men and women would evenly share World Cup prize money paid by FIFA. The build-up to this tournament also saw Canada's national team, the Olympic champions, threaten to strike in a row over pay, funding and contractual issues.

Meanwhile, France players rebelled over conditions in their national team set-up, and a change of coach followed. That meant some of France's top names would be at the tournament after all, having threatened to pull out, but the World Cup will still be marred by the absence of numerous leading players because of serious knee injuries.

England captain Leah Williamson and star striker Beth Mead have been ruled out, as have prolific

Dutch forward Vivianne Miedema, French forwards Delphine Cascarino and Marie-Antoinette Katto, and USA duo Catarina Macario and Mallory Swanson. Spain's Alexia Putellas, the reigning Ballon d'Or winner, will be there though, fit again after spending nine months out with an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

England lead charge

Together with Australia, European sides will be the chief threat to a US team bidding to become the first to win three Women's World Cups in a row. European champions England lead the charge, together with Spain, Germany, Sweden and 2019 runners-up the Netherlands. "The expectations are really high and yes, we have a dream," said England coach Sarina Wiegman. England play their first game against Haiti - one of a raft of World Cup debutants - in Brisbane on July 22, while the USA begin their trophy defense the same day against another debutant in Vietnam. The tournament kicks off with New Zealand facing the Norway of 2018 Ballon d'Or winner Ada Hegerberg in Auckland, and Australia playing Ireland in front of a sell-out crowd of more than 80,000 in Sydney. — AFP

Grant captures first LPGA title

WASHINGTON: Sweden's Linn Grant captured her first LPGA title on Sunday, following up her stunning third-round 62 with a three-under par 68 to win the Dana Open by three strokes from US Open champion Allisen Corpuz. Grant had entered the final round at Highland Meadows with a six-shot lead, having flirted with the second-ever 59 in LPGA history on the way to her nine-under third round. "I think I could be a bit more relaxed," she said of the big lead. "But I knew this course was very scoreable. So in my mind I was just thinking someone was going to shoot the same score I did yesterday."

That didn't happen, and four birdies with one bogey was more than enough to secure the win with a 21-under total of 263. Corpuz, fresh from capturing her first major title at Pebble Beach last Sunday, did manage to apply some pressure with six birdies in a six-under par 65 that left her in second place on 18-under par 266. But Corpuz admitted that going into the final round six adrift she never really expected to be challenging for the trophy. "Linn's such a solid player," she said. "And a six-shot lead is tough to overcome. I really just tried to come out and just give it my best shot."

Grant made seven straight pars before birdies at the par-three eighth and par-four 11th. A birdie at 13 was followed by her lone bogey of the day at 14, but she pulled a stroke back at the par-five finishing hole. "I've imagined this day so many times, so many ways in my own mind," Grant said. "Just being here now I'm just so speechless and at the same time I feel familiar with the setting for some reason." Grant, 24, earned her LPGA tour card for last season but was barred from the US because of COVID vaccination requirements. She had four top-10 finishes in six LPGA starts outside the United States last year plus four Ladies European Tour (LET) triumphs and won her fifth LET title in May in France.

Great form

Now she'll take added confidence into the next two majors of the season, the Evian Championship in France and the British Women's Open. "I feel like I'm in great form at the moment," she said. "I really like that (Evian) golf course. I'm really excited to go back and play there again." Corpuz, who has been caught up in a whirlwind since her US Open triumph, said her first priority this coming week would be "a lot of sleep." "Seeing a couple of friends to celebrate," she said of her other plans, then "just repacking the

bags for Europe. "I missed the cut at both Evian and British last year," Corpuz said. "So have a lot of room for improvement. The game feels really solid so (I'll) just try to keep doing the same thing."

PGA Barbasol title

Meanwhile, Sweden's Vincent Norman won a playoff over England's Nathan Kimsey with a par on the first extra hole Sunday to capture the US PGA Tour Barbasol Championship. The 25-year-old from Stockholm sank a clutch seven-foot bogey putt on the 18th hole in regulation just to force a playoff, then pitched from the rough to two feet in the playoff and made a par putt for the victory. "I don't think I can process this for a while. I'm at a loss for words," Norman said. "It's even beyond (a dream). I don't think I've dreamt this big yet honestly. It's amazing." Norman fired a six-under par 66 to finish alongside Kimsey on 22-under 266 after 72 holes at Keene Trace Golf Club in Nicholasville, Kentucky. The US PGA Tour rookie claimed his first title in only is 23rd tour start, the 286th-ranked standout booking a place in next week's British Open.

Norman, whose best prior PGA result was a share of eighth in May at the Byron Nelson, wasn't sure how the triumph would alter his goals and plans. "We're going to figure that out tomorrow," he said. Norman led Kimsey by one at the 18th tee but his first two shots found the left rough. Then Norman blasted over the green, pitched to just outside seven feet and saw his bogey putt catch the right edge and fall in to force a playoff. "I just hit it left off the tee and I had a terrible lie," Norman said. "It was an impossible shot, I felt like. That was a really good bogey."

The playoff began at the par-4 18th with Norman finding right greenside rough and Kimsey a left greenside bunker. Kimsey blasted out to 15 feet while Norman pitched to two feet. Kimsey two-putted for bogey and Norman tapped in moments later for the victory. "Have a chance to win a PGA Tour event, I can't complain really," Kimsey said. "I feel like I barely missed a shot all day, holed a few nice putts and did a really good job of executing the whole back nine."

Kimsey, a 30-year-old Englishman who plays on the DP World Tour, missed a chance to become the first player since American Jim Benepe at the 1988 Western Open to win in his PGA Tour debut. US rookie Trevor Cone, who made double bogey at the par-3 16th and missed a 12-foot birdie putt at 18 to miss the playoff, settled for a share of third with France's Adrien Saddier on 267. Lucas Glover, the 2009 US Open champion, fired his 12th consecutive round in the 60s with a 68 to finish fifth on 268 with Canada's Taylor Pendrith sixth on 269. — AFP



Kuwait's Surour secures bronze

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Asia Disabled Shot put Champion Faisal Surour took third place and the bronze medal in the F38 Shot put category in the world athletics championship (Paris 2023) as he recorded 17.01 meters. First place went to Colombia's Jose Limos with 18.26 meters, and second place went to Britain's Michael Jenkins (17.14 meters). Kuwait is participating with seven athletes in wheelchair running, discus throw, and shot put. The games will conclude on July 17th. 1,200 athletes from 107 countries are participating.

Chairman of the Paralympics athletics committee and head of the delegation Nasser Al-Ajmi dedicated the achievement of Surour to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people. He said, "This is a major achievement added to Kuwait's disabled athletes honorable record. Surour was able to break his previous personal record of 16:46 meters."

Kuwaiti athletes gave good performances during the world athletics championship despite competition from the best athletes in the world. As Faisal Al-Rajhi qualified for the 800 meters wheelchair running in the T54 category, he also qualified for the Paralympics games in Paris 2024 as he finished fourth in the 5,000 meters wheelchair run.



SYLVANIA: Linn Grant of Sweden poses for a photo with the trophy after winning the Dana Open at Highland Meadows Golf Club on July 16, 2023. — AFP

Asian 27th Table Tennis Tourney kicks off

DOHA: The 27th Asian Table Tennis Youth Championship kicked off Monday in the Qatari capital, Doha, with the participation of 24 countries including Kuwait. In remarks to KUNA, Vice President of the Kuwaiti Federation, Dr Saud Al-Sarbel, confirmed the Kuwaiti team's readiness to participate in the championship, expressing his aspiration for the Kuwaiti team to achieve positive results during the tournament.

He also noted that the main goal of the participation is to develop the players for future events and interact with different high-level players. The



preliminary round competitions for the teams will be held tomorrow with the second and third rounds, while the quarter and semi-final rounds will be held the day after tomorrow. The final matches of all categories will be held on Wednesday, followed by the coronation ceremony. — KUNA

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010

Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764

Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, **Zulfikar** holder of Indian Passport No. Z4063102 having permanent address Boharwadi, Nai Abadi, Bhinder, Udaipur, Rajasthan, 313603, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Zulfikar** (given name) and **Boheda** (surname). (C#3833) 17/07/2023

Mexico lift 9th Gold Cup

Gimenez the hero as Mexico down Panama 1-0

LOS ANGELES: Santiago Gimenez scored the game-winner minutes after entering the match Sunday as Mexico beat Panama 1-0 to win a record-extending ninth Concacaf Gold Cup crown. The final of the regional championship for North and Central America and the Caribbean was a fast-paced physical affair between a Mexico team eager to move on from recent disappointments and a Panama side seeking a first Gold Cup crown in their third appearance in the finals.

Gimenez started on the bench in favor of Henry Martin and, with the match deadlocked, was brought on in the 85th minute. Three minutes later the 22-year-old Feyenoord striker became an instant hero. After Ivan Anderson's cross into the Mexico penalty area was blocked, Mexico's Orbelin Pineda came away with the ball and passed to Gimenez at midfield. Gimenez raced into the penalty area, spinning away from one defender and beating another before slotting a left-footed shot past Panama goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera.

"It is indescribable," Gimenez said. "It is impressive how the group came together to move forward. I'm not saying it with words, it was seen with the title." His fourth goal in 18 international appearances sparked frenzied celebrations among the largely pro-Mexico crowd of nearly 73,000 at SoFi Stadium, home of the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and one of the venues tabbed for the 2026 World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Mexico added a ninth Gold Cup title to those it won in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2009, 2011, 2015 and 2019. The United States own seven titles, but were stunningly eliminated by Panama in a penalty shootout during the semi-finals. "We knew that we were playing to go down in the history of national soccer and opportunities must be seized," said Mexico's interim coach Jaime Lozano, who had coached Mexico to Olympic Bronze at the Tokyo Games in 2021 and was brought in for the Gold Cup tournament after Diego Cocca was sacked last month.

Cocca was fired after a disappointing Nations League campaign, which followed Mexico's failure to advance from the group stage at the World Cup in Qatar. "We have said it from day one. Jaime understands very well what it means to represent Mexico, he understands the player very well, he gets the best out of each player and that is reflected on the field," goalkeeper Guillermo



CALIFORNIA: Guillermo Ochoa #13 of Mexico celebrates after defeating Panama 1-0 in the Concacaf Gold Cup final match at SoFi Stadium on July 16, 2023 in Inglewood, California. — AFP

Ochoa, who won a fifth Gold Cup title, said of Lozano. Lozano himself refused to be drawn on whether he thought he'd earned the permanent job with a North American World. "This decision is not up to me," he said. "I signed a contract for the Gold Cup. Mexicans sometimes do not believe much in the process, but even

if we had lost the final today, I think we should evaluate many other things, not only the final result. "If we trust in the process, the results will be immensely better."

Mexico thought they'd seized the lead in the 33rd minute when an attack launched by a long clearance from goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa ended with Martin skipping

onto a cross from Luis Romo and firing a left-footed shot from the center of the box into Mosquera's net. It took several minutes before a VAR review deemed Martin was offside. Ten minutes later Mosquera kept the score level as he came up with two saves in rapid succession, one from Pineda and one from Martin. —AFP

'America number 10' Messi greets rapturous fans

FORT LAUDERDALE: It rained on his parade, but Lionel Messi greeted his new Inter Miami fans and was hailed by the club's owner as "America's number 10" at a damp but celebratory unveiling event on Sunday. Miami's 20,000 capacity stadium was close to full despite a huge thunder storm just before the event to celebrate the arrival of the Argentine World Cup winner was due to begin. A massive tropical downpour forced organizers to delay the start of "The Unveil" as fans took cover or waited out the rain in their cars.

The event started around two hours later than originally scheduled with wet but delighted fans chanting Messi's name as the lights dimmed on the venue. The club's co-owner David Beckham opened the ceremony saying Messi's arrival was a "dream come true". "Leo, we are so proud that you have chosen our club for the next stage in your career," said the former Manchester United player whose move to MLS's Los Angeles Galaxy in 2007 was the league's previous biggest arrival. "Welcome to our family Leo," Beckham added in Spanish, to roars from the crowd. Miami's majority owner Jorge Mas then whipped the crowd up with his own bilingual speech.

"Tonight is a gift and celebration to the city that opened its arms to my family," said the Cuban-American businessman. "Tonight we are doing this in the rain. "This is holy water!" he added. "This is our moment! Our moment to change the football landscape in this country," he added, before introducing Messi as "Your new number 10, America's number 10". Messi, who arrived in Miami on Tuesday with his family and caused a viral sensation after being photographed shopping with them in a local supermarket, thanked the supporters.

"Thank you very much to all the people for support-



FLORIDA: Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi (2nd left) is presented by (from right) owners of Inter Miami CF David Beckham, Jose R Mas and Jorge Mas as the newest player for Major League Soccer's Inter Miami CF on July 16, 2023. — AFP

ing me and giving me this love. I am very happy to be here in Miami," he said. "I really want to start training, to compete, I have the same desire that I always had to compete, to want to win, to help the club continue to grow. "I am very happy to have chosen to come to play in this city with my family, to choose this project and I have no doubt that we are going to enjoy it a lot, we are going to have a good time and very good things are going to happen," he said.

Inter Miami, the bottom club in Major League Soccer, confirmed on Saturday that the seven-times Ballon d'Or winner had signed a deal that will keep him with the club until 2025. The former Barcelona great opted to join Miami after his contract with French club Paris Saint-Germain expired last month. His former Barcelona team-mate, Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets, was also presented to the crowd after completing his move. Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber praised Mas for his determined pursuit of Messi for the club which is in only its fourth season. — AFP

So I'm not threatened by that at all. By the way, it's just one more thing in this really complicated business that we're in, and we'll manage through it, and I think that we're going to be just fine," he said. Although MLS clubs have focused on younger South American recruits in recent years, they have frequently brought in stars near the end of their careers particularly since the arrival of David Beckham to Los Angeles Galaxy in 2007.

Englishmen Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard, Italians Andrea Pirlo and Giorgio Chiellini and Sweden's Zlatan Ibrahimovic are among the bigger names to have moved to the North American league. With Messi signed up, MLS hope that, together with broadcast partner Apple TV, they can bring in revenue by selling subscriptions to the league globally. Garber said the league, which is already broadcast in Spanish and with some games in French, was considering introducing other languages to broaden the appeal of the broadcasts.

"I think you'll see more and more multiple languages on Apple. That's the uniqueness of the technology. We're looking at launching other languages as early as next year," he said. "We launched a new production and we launched it in three languages, which is remarkable. And I think you'll see more languages in the years to come. I think there will be more opportunity for us to be very, very targeted to specific audiences, whether that's in Portuguese or other languages. Just hang tight," he said. Messi will be the biggest football star to play in the United States since Pele signed for the New York Cosmos, setting off a spending spree from young clubs. — AFP

The Uphill Battle for Think Tank Independence

By: Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri
Founder & CEO
Reconnaissance Research - Kuwait



Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

As I'm nearing the celebration of five years since the foundation of Reconnaissance Research, I have chosen to focus on the crucial yet difficult task of preserving think tank independence for my article.

In a world filled with noise and bias, independent think tanks have emerged as key contributors to the sphere of public knowledge and policy research. Their primary role is to generate non-partisan information, perspectives, and policy proposals. However, the journey towards enlightenment is often obscured by numerous challenges, with coercion and undue pressure being among the most significant. To remain true to their mission, think tanks need to prioritize truth and transparency, resist external pressures, and adhere to the highest ethical standards.

Independent think tanks are entrusted with the task of 'truth-seeking,' presenting their findings to the public and policymakers without fear or favor. Think tanks must resist succumbing to bullying or pressure from any external entities, including state-affiliated agencies. The very essence of an independent think tank is encapsulated by its autonomy. However, this independence can be threatened by various pressures, from funding constraints to direct political interference.

The scarcity of independent voices, particularly in regions like the Middle East, underscores the importance of protecting entities like Reconnaissance Research. In an environment where independent analysis and policy recommendations can be hard to come by, such organizations serve as invaluable resources due to their ability to produce unbiased, evidence-based research that can contribute to informed decision-making at all levels.

Democracies around the world must acknowledge and act upon the responsibility to protect these essential institutions. For example, if think tanks in places like the U.S., which are expected to uphold freedom of speech and intellectual independence, succumb to pressures—such as attempts to shape their research agenda or, most concerning, the direct pressure to suppress publication—it sends a troubling message globally.

While Kuwait has been regarded as more

open and tolerant compared to some of its regional counterparts, and boasts a democratically elected parliament, dynamic civil society, and active non-governmental organizations contributing to public discourse, the extent to which freedom of speech and expression is protected remains a critical consideration for independent think tanks. The government holds considerable influence over media, research, and policy-making, which can manifest as control over media narratives, imposition of research topics, or steering policy-making decisions.

In conclusion, as the balance between democracies and autocracies shifts, think tanks' potential for societal good is vast. They can act as alarm bells warning against potential misconduct amidst politically challenging times, allowing them to continue shining a light on the path towards informed public discourse and policy-making, acting as giant icebreaker ships that make some of the most inhospitable paths accessible to the world.



Saudi spending spree won't harm MLS push

FORT LAUDERDALE: Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber said Saudi Arabia's big spending on international players won't hamper his league's plans for a global push after the arrival of Lionel Messi. Messi signed for Inter Miami on Saturday, completing his move to MLS, after he turned down a huge offer to move to the Saudi Professional League. But the Saudi league have already made major moves to bring in the kind of late-career talent that MLS has, in the past, targeted for recruitment.

Cristiano Ronaldo, who was long viewed as a possible MLS target, was the first to move to the Saudi league followed by Real Madrid and France striker Karim Benzema and Brazilian Roberto Firmino, among others. But Garber said he isn't worried about the new competition in the market for big-name veterans. "I've seen it happen with China, and I wasn't concerned about that any more than I'm concerned about what's happening in Saudi Arabia, it's quite the opposite," Garber told a small group of reporters on Sunday ahead of Messi's unveiling event.

"The fact that we can spread the power and influence of professional football around the world, I think, gives us all who are in emerging markets an opportunity. "You know, it's not just about Europe, right? It's about here.