

Polestar 2
Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



3 No 'severe' shortage of medicine: Ministry



5 China foreign minister Qin Gang removed from office



9 Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait reports a net profit of KD 23.9 million



16 Philippines in historic win as Norway suffer double blow



MPs seek end to political crisis and bedoon issues

Lawmaker calls for pardoning all political prisoners

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers on Tuesday continued to debate the Amiri Address delivered at the opening session of the new National Assembly by calling for a lasting solution to the problem of tens of thousands of stateless people, or Bedoons, and for extending the Amiri amnesty to all political prisoners. MP Mohammad Hayef said that the Bedoons problem should be resolved by granting citizenship to all those who are entitled and then asking others to correct their legal status.

"We are asking to naturalize only those who deserve and Bedoons should not continue to face oppression ... It is not acceptable that people with no

identity should remain in our streets," Hayef said. Hayef also called for extending the Amiri amnesty to all political prisoners in order to close this black page in Kuwait's history, adding that there are female tweeters who remain in jail for tweeting. He said this issue should be closed.

MP Abdullah Fahhad described the Bedoons plight as a "bleeding wound" in this nation, adding that a new section of Bedoons are now carrying fake passports and facing yet a new problem. He claimed that the central agency for Bedoons is dealing with Bedoons in a racist way despite their sufferings for decades. MP Fahad Al-Azemi said the problem of Bedoons must be resolved, adding there is nothing

called Bedoons "but Kuwaitis who have been deprived of citizenship". MP Majed Al-Mutairi said the plight of Bedoons "has become a black point" for Kuwait. He also called for extending the amnesty to around 20 members of the Mutairi tribe, including former MPs, who are in jail for taking part in outlawed tribal primaries. MP Hamad Al-Matar said that the Kuwaiti people are frustrated because of the past political disputes and are looking for achievements and these can happen only through cooperation between the government and the Assembly.

The government and a majority of lawmakers rejected calls by some MPs for the government to reassess the policy of subsidies through abolishing

all forms of subsidies and replace it with a fixed financial assistance to Kuwaiti families. MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem criticized the acting Finance Minister, Saad Al-Barrak, who is also the Oil Minister, for refusing to answer his question over sacking some Kuwaiti pilots for expressing their views. Ghanem said he will re-file the question.

Ghanem, also criticized the government for voting against a letter he submitted in which he called on the assembly's financial and economic affairs committee to study the possibility of replacing subsidies with financial aid to citizens. He said that the proposal aims to reduce squandering of public funds through stopping subsidies to non-citizens.

TikTok rivals Twitter with new format



SAN FRANCISCO: TikTok, the social platform known for its addictive video content, announced Monday that it will offer text-only posts, becoming the latest tech giant to offer an alternative to embattled Twitter. The text posts on TikTok will most closely resemble similar offerings on Instagram, which earlier this month also launched a challenge to Twitter - which owner Elon Musk renamed X - called Threads.

Like Meta-owned Threads, TikTok benefits from its size, with around 1.4 billion monthly active users, according to specialist site Business of Apps. But unlike Facebook's parent company, it has chosen to integrate its new text-only feature into its app rather than launch a separate product, as Meta did with Threads. TikTok's version will remain more visual than a Twitter or Threads post, with users able to add a color background, music and stickers to the post.

The Chinese-owned company said the new format will expand "boundaries of content creation for everyone on TikTok" and tap into the "creativity" seen in comments and captions, the company said. In addition to Threads, smaller platforms such as Mastodon, Bluesky and Substack Notes have emerged as potential rivals to Twitter, but none have so far dethroned it despite its troubles. Musk last week said Twitter has lost roughly half of its advertising revenue, leaving an opportunity for the challengers. — AFP

34 killed as Algeria battles raging fires

ALGIERS: Algerian firefighters were Tuesday battling blazes that have killed 34 people across the tinder-dry north, destroyed homes and coastal resorts and turned vast forest areas into blackened wastelands. Witnesses described fleeing walls of flames that raged "like a blowtorch" as TV footage showed charred cars, burnt-out shops and smoldering fields and scrubland.

Severe fires have raged through the mountain forests of the Kabylia region on the Mediterranean coast, fanned by winds amid blistering summer heat that peaked at 48 degrees Celsius (118 degrees Fahrenheit) Monday. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune sent his condolences to the families of those killed - among them 10 soldiers trapped by flames at Beni Ksila, in Bejaia province, according to the defence ministry. "I have nowhere to go now — my house and that of my son have been completely destroyed by flames",

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MELLOULA: Burnt trees stand in the wake of a forest fire near the town of Melloula in northwestern Tunisia close to the border with Algeria. — AFP

Firefighting plane crashes in Greece as wildfires rage

RHODES: A Greek water-bombing plane crashed Tuesday while battling a forest fire on the island of Evia as hundreds of firefighters struggled to beat back blazes still raging in Rhodes and Corfu amid a new wave of soaring temperatures. The fire department said the Canadair aircraft crashed into a ravine close to where the fire started on Sunday.

Footage on state TV ERT showed the plane clipping a tree before falling nose-first and exploding. "A Greek Canadair plane, with at least two peo-

ple on board, crashed near Platanisto," a village in Evia, spokesman Yannis Artopoulos said. The plane was among at least three other aircraft and around a hundred firefighters in the fight against the flames on Evia.

The accident occurred as Greece battled wildfires on three major fronts, including the tourist islands of Rhodes and Corfu, with many of the country's regions listed at extreme risk of dangerous forest fires exacerbated by strong winds. The very hot weather comes after a weekend of intense heat as thousands of locals and tourists fled forest fires on the Greek islands of Rhodes and Corfu, with the prime minister warning the heat-battered nation is "at war" with the flames.

Continued on Page 6



GENNADI: Wildfires burn the forests near the village of Vati, just north of the coastal town of Gennadi, in the southern part of the Greek island of Rhodes, on July 25, 2023. — AFP

Zionists kill 3 Palestinians

NABLUS: Zionist troops killed three Palestinians in the occupied West Bank Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry said - the latest deaths in a surge of violence in the territory since early last year. "Three Palestinians have been killed by Zionist bullets in Nablus," the ministry said. Palestinian militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said the three were members of its armed wing.

The army said three "armed terrorists" had opened fire on its soldiers from a vehicle in a Nablus neighborhood and the troops fired back "to neutralize" them. The soldiers recovered three M-16 rifles, a gun, car-

tridges and other military equipment, the army said in a statement. The Palestinian health ministry identified the dead as Nour Al-Deen Al-Ardah, 32, Montaser Salameh, 33, and Saad al-Kharaz, 43. Hamas said the three were members of its Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades armed wing. "We mourn our heroic Qassam martyrs who died this morning in an armed clash with the occupation forces in Nablus," Hamas said in a statement.

The Palestinian president's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said the killing of the three men amounted to a "war crime". "Zionist crimes will not bring our people to their knees, and will not bring security and stability to anyone," he said in a statement. Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967. Since early last year, the territory has seen a string of attacks by Palestinians on Zionist targets, as well as violence by settlers against Palestinian communities. — AFP



NABLUS: A reporter observes bloodstains on a wall at the scene of a shooting attack near the West Bank city of Nablus on July 25, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Commercialization, misconceptions leave people feeling alone in mental health journey

Education of great importance as influencers trivialize complex problems

By Ahmad Ali

KUWAIT: Over the past few years, there has been a progressive destigmatization of mental health across the world, leading to a rise in awareness and encouraging more people seeking help. This phenomenon has allowed more research and progress to be put into the large spectrum of mental health, paving the way for better identifying and treating different cases and potentially save lives.

However, misconceptions regarding mental health and treatments still exist, both inside and outside the professional sphere, resulting sometimes in inefficient medication and a deceptive approach to mental health related cases. These misconceptions have led to a gap in our understanding of the complex reality of mental health, allowing some who aren't necessarily concerned by these issues to find room to exploit them to their benefit. Eventually, the exploitation has led to the commercialization of mental health, an exploitative portrayal of mental illness for the enjoyment of others and services marketed to better mental health.

Omar Shawif has had to deal with ADHD, anxiety and depression and feels like he's been misunderstood regarding his treatment. "I was prescribed medication to help me deal with my ADHD symptoms and they were mostly effective. It was never treated completely but that's normal as different people

respond to psychiatric medication differently. The medication helped me perform better at my job, be more social, and generally function better as close to a neuro-typical person as I can be," he told Kuwait Times.

Although noticing improvement with his ADHD, Shawif was disappointed with how professionals treated his depression and anxiety, leading him to believe that misconceptions exist also amongst professionals. "There was a massive misunderstanding between me and the professionals I saw. Depression was treated as an illness that needed eradication as if dealing with the flu. No matter how much I tried, I couldn't communicate that depression was a normal reaction to my life circumstances. The way the symptoms are treated is not to contextualize them in the normal human experience, but rather medicate them and worry about what could be the cause of the symptoms later."

Noor Mubarak, a psychological well-being practitioner based in the UK and a graduate member of the British Psychological Society shares her take on such matters: "While it's true that it is sometimes the case that both clinicians and patients over-pathologize normal distress, environmental factors do not rule out a clinical diagnosis. Situational factors can contribute to the development of symptoms of mental health problems, such as grief leading to depression, or workplace stress to anxiety".

She added that "Biological, psychological and social factors are all taken into account and the resulting symptoms are what form the diagnosis, regardless of whether the origin of symptoms be biological or social."

Social media pseudoscience

Shawif has noted that these misconceptions are carried on through commercialization, benefiting others who sometimes aren't at all concerned by the effects of mental health issues. However, he specified how these benefits are sometimes not financial: "Yes, there's the profit incentive to sell psychiatric medications and hours of therapy sessions, but the biggest way that mental health has been commercialized is through social media."

While some therapists fail to understand the line between legitimate human reaction and an actual clinical symptom, untrained influencers with incentives to increase their following have removed that line, opening the way for "pseudoscience" to take over the current conversation about mental health. "A lot of social media influencers took our real intention to improve our wellbeing to be better mentally and have turned it into a meme, presenting generic solutions with no credibility or source to our very complex problems, in the hopes of gaining online exposure."

Mubarak stresses the importance of having the proper qualifications as a pro-



fessional in order to be able to properly treat a case. "Treatment protocols used by registered mental health professionals are first tested to ensure that they work to improve a person's mental state without causing any harm. Studies are completed to ensure a new treatment will have a beneficial outcome on participants, compared to placebo, waitlists or other alternative treatments. It is therefore hugely important to ensure that your mental health professional is qualified and a member of their relevant professional body to ensure that the treatment received is appropriate."

Mubarak adds an emphasis on the

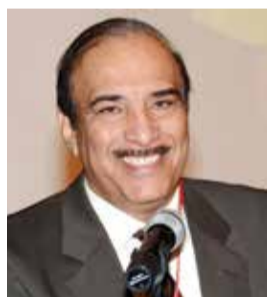
importance of education to not only destigmatize it, but equally to help us have a better understanding of mental health. "Education is important, mental health problems are often a result of factors that are completely out of our own control, such as situational factors genetics or traumatic experiences. They should therefore be treated by acknowledging the problem and then tackling it. Recognizing that these issues are not results of ingratitude or the fault of the individual, just like many physical illnesses is a big step in improving our understanding and experiences with mental illness."

KSPSC affirms Kuwait's interest in fighting smoking

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer (KSPSC) Dr Khalid Al-Saleh confirmed on Tuesday the interest of the state of Kuwait in combating smoking and exerting efforts to cooperate with all regional, governmental and civil organizations to address this scourge harmful to society.

Dr Al-Saleh's statement came during a press conference held to launch the Arab Award for smoking control "Makeen" in Cairo where KSPSC has joined the prize, which is the first of its kind in the Arab World. The award which came at the initiative of the Arab Federation for Human Development aims at consolidating Arab efforts to take unprecedented measures to fight smoking with encouraging innovation in confronting smoking lesion.

Dr Al-Saleh said the society's membership in the award is the result of Kuwait's interest in and work at the government and private sector levels to fight smoking. He said this interest materialized by the establishment of the society since 1980 by the late Dr Abdulrahman Abdul-



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

lah Al-Awadhi and other founders who laid the first cornerstone in fighting smoking in the State of Kuwait. He also pointed to the establishment of the National Program for Fighting Smoking at Health Ministry, which has an effective and continued role in this field with many specialists and volunteers. That is why the society was keen on being present regionally to instill its work at this level side by side with specialized regional entities in order to gather efforts to implement a joint strategy professionally to achieve joint work to show Arab competencies at various levels.

Awareness campaigns

Award Secretary General Dr Jameela Nasser Amin said the Arab representation in the prize affirms concerted Arab efforts to fight this dangerous and harmful phenomenon. She added the award's message is represented in controlling smoking in the Arab world. Its vision revolves around creating a society that's motivated to fight against smoking.

She said work is ongoing through the Award to declare the launch of the Arab campaign for smoking control and to instill the cooperation principle and exchange expertise among Arabs. The award aims to set effective standards to plan and implement smoking control campaigns and measure their performance, in addition to enriching the Arab library with material, research and tools to combat this lesion in various fields.

The award has a large group of partners including the Council of Arab Economic Unity, World Society for Preventive Cardiology, Arab Medical Association Against Cancer and Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer.

"Makeen" committee selects those who deserve the Smoking Control Award based on standards that were set to allow participation of all sectors and individuals.

He said the award will be launched annually and awarded to establishments and individuals who participate with the best activities and achievements that support a healthy life and fighting smoking.

The Award has 11 categories: Short Film, moving graphics, animation; photographs/art drawings; long movies, series and plays; legislations and systems/implementation of procedures; the best charity society/scientific society/NGO; best program for training and qualifying; best smoking quitting services; best research and studies; best awareness project for school students; smoke-free universities; smart applications.



US forces commander General Patrick Frank (L) arrives for the autonomous vehicles testing at Camp Buehring, also known as Udairi, in Kuwait's desert on July 25, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

US Army tests first-of-its-kind vehicle in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The US Army Central tested three autonomous vehicles during sustainment operations in Kuwait at Udairi Range, Camp Buehring, on Tuesday. On the sidelines of the event, on behalf of the Kuwait Land Force, Colonel Fahad Buresli praised in a statement the depth of the defense and security cooperation relations between the two countries.

Buresli lauded the cooperation between the Kuwaiti and US army forces, which are represented by autonomous vehicle demonstrations, adding, "The US Army Central is always keen to present the latest developments and innovations in armaments and mechanisms that carry wheeled equipment, which the US side seeks to introduce in service for the year 2026."

He added that the latest autonomous vehicles operate through a new system, pointing out that the test, the first of its kind on Kuwaiti land, reflects the extent of cooperation between the armies of the two countries and is an opportunity for more joint training and cooperation in concluding deals in the future. Lt Gen Patrick Frank, commanding general

of the United States Army Central, indicated that the Army Central is testing three autonomous vehicles and will later receive seven more trucks that can drive without a human driver.

He stressed that the autonomous vehicles would reduce the number of soldiers exposed to threats on the battlefield while increasing the capabilities of units and organizations, noting that "These autonomous vehicles will help keep Americans, our partners, and allies safer and more effective. Autonomous vehicles are the future of Army sustainment operations, and so we are rigorously testing this new technology in Kuwait to test its capabilities and performance."

"We will continue to develop these vehicles and the autonomous systems. Since interoperability is a prerequisite for any new technology, we are concentrating on testing new technologies alongside the Kuwait Ministry of Defense and all of our regional partners," he added.

Capt Nathan Amos, logistic officer of US Army Central, revealed that this is the first time they are testing this technology in Kuwait, pointing out that they aim to secure and protect soldiers who are considered the most important assets in their operational environment, in addition to using innovative efforts to expand logistical capabilities in the region and protect US allies.

These autonomous systems are installed on Palletized Load Systems, or PLSs, which are ten-wheeled vehicles optimized to transport palletized loads in



US army autonomous vehicles (AVs) being tested at Camp Buehring.



Kuwaiti forces' Colonel Fahd Buresli operates an autonomous vehicle during a training.

support of Army sustainment operations. Autonomous systems are designed to work semi-autonomously with direction and input. The purpose of this testing is to gather as much data as possible about the capabilities and limitations of semi-autonomous vehicles in the challenging desert environment.

The vehicles were previously tested at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and in the US European Command region. The vehicle operators are army transportation specialists who have been trained since late June 2023. Semi-autonomous vehicles are the future of army sustainment operations. They reduce the risks by decreasing the number of operators exposed to threats while increasing the capability of sustainment units.

Academics call for constitutional reforms, fighting corruption

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti academics are calling for "strict application of the law" and the eradication of nepotism in a set of recommendations they released Tuesday.

The Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University held a press conference on Tuesday to announce the results of a scientific forum it organized under the auspices of the Acting Director of Kuwait University under the slogan "New Kuwait, New Era?" The forum included four sessions and two closed panel discussions were held over two days.

"An exploratory study was conducted on a sample estimated at 1,400 members of society. It resulted in a set of good ideas. We hope that they will be implemented during the next stage," Acting Director of the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Dr Yaqoub Al-Kandari said during the conference held at Al-Jawhara Building in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The center said it will prepare a set of academic recommendations, in preparation for submitting them to His Highness the Prime Minister and His Excellency the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University Dr



KUWAIT: Participants in the press conference pose for a photo at the the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies.

Ali Ahmed Al-Tarrah said the four sessions focused on several topics, namely getting out of the political impasse in the next stage, facing constitutional challenges, as well as the social and cultural dimensions of democratic problems. He singled out the challenges presented by corruption and the need to confront them in the next stage.

Jassim Qabazard stressed the need for strict application of the law as a means to achieve the principle of social justice and equality among members of society. "A parallel council for the National Assembly must be established in order to reduce the burden on the National Assembly. It's also important to seriously consider amending some articles of the constitu-

tion, given that the Kuwaiti constitution has not been amended nearly 61 years after its issuance," he said.

Researcher in the field of governance and anti-corruption Salma Hamad Al-Issa pointed to the importance of consensus on constitutional reform through "the adoption of a set of laws and legislation that complement and comply with constitutional articles, as well as strengthening the principle of cooperation between the two authorities and resorting to the open negotiating table in the event of any dispute." She stressed the need to fight all forms of corruption, specifically administrative corruption, and to fight wasta and nepotism and not to interfere in the completion of any popular transactions.

Local

Turning concrete jungles into environment-friendly cities

Urban humanization enhances connection with nature

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: As the concrete jungles keep expanding, we often forget that cities are more than just structures of cement and glass. It is time to revitalize the idea of humanizing cities. To highlight the necessity of prioritizing genuine human experiences, Kuwait Times interviewed Ibtisam Al-Ali, Senior Environmental Health Specialist, who explores the potential of giving life to our concrete jungles by creating spaces where people thrive, connect, and truly live.



Ibtisam Al-Ali, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

Kuwait Times: What is the importance of urban humanization in urban life?

Al-Ali: Urban humanization is not a new concept, and it refers to transforming urban cities into humane and environment-friendly cities. This concept is very important in changing the lives of people, which are filled with challenges. The concept aims to keep up with the fast-paced lifestyle, where the physical and mental health of individuals are the priority. Urban humanization seeks to rescue people from this life full of pressure in all its forms and provide them with a simpler life where they can easily practice their humanity.

For example, leaving your house in the morning to go to work and finding green spaces and trees filling the front of your house reduces the harsh temperatures in the summer, and the elderly and people with special needs have all the facilities they need to meet their basic needs as soon as they leave their homes in easy ways. Hence, the concept of urban humanization has come to liberate people from the dominance of concrete buildings in the city and enhance their connection with nature and living things.

Kuwait Times: What are the challenges facing urban humanization?

Al-Ali: There are many challenges facing urban humanization, especially the issue of transforming existing urban cities into human-friendly cities, which is much harder than establishing a human-friendly city from scratch. There is a problem with the city's infrastructure and how to rehabilitate it to align with the reconstruction of the city to become humane and environmentally friendly. There is also an issue with the dominance of cars and how to change people's mindsets to understand the importance of transitioning to public transportation and less polluting modes of transportation, such as bicycles.

Furthermore, there is a challenge in providing spaces due to the nature of urban life, as the majority of spaces are allocated for constructing cement buildings. Due to the scarcity of vast lands, it is difficult to cultivate land and design green spaces. Moreover, weather conditions pose a challenge, especially in countries like Kuwait, where alternatives that require less water usage in agriculture,

such as planting palm trees on roads, are not the optimal solution.

Kuwait Times: What are the key features of human-friendly places in cities?

Al-Ali: 'Urban humanization' is a term aimed at making cities more livable, enabling individuals to enjoy their lives, develop their potential, and pursue their intellectual, practical, and social lives rather than just being a place to reside. Achieving the concept of 'urban humanization' involves focusing on the human aspect in designing roads, parks, and public spaces. Humans find sufficient green spaces and areas for relaxation and leisure with ease of movement without obstacles, overcoming mobility challenges for people with disabilities. Additionally, consideration is given to the aesthetic and ar-

tistic aspects practiced in public places.

Kuwait Times: What is the role of urban planning in promoting urban humanization?

Al-Ali: From the perspective of urban planning, the quality of life begins with the residential neighborhood because it includes different segments of society and is where we spend most of our time. Through it, the concept of 'urban humanization' emerges. The concept of 'quality of life' has emerged to address the problems of modern cities worldwide. It was necessary to identify the main problem faced by residential neighborhoods within the city, which is often low population density or the distance of amenities from residences, forcing residents to rely on cars. This indicates the absence of urban humanization.

As a result, the neighborhood should be designed in a way that does not exceed a distance of 500-600 meters between any house and any facility within it. This allows residents to walk to amenities without needing a car. Therefore, when designing a neighborhood, urban designers should draw a circle where the farthest area is no more than 700 meters from residences. This leads to another concept, which is the individual's consumption of space. The more space an individual uses within the residential sector, the larger the neighborhood will be. This necessarily means that amenities will



become further apart, population density will decrease, and residents will be forced to rely on cars.

Kuwait Times: What are the factors that contribute to achieving a balance between the natural and urban environments in cities?

Al-Ali: Urban humanization makes the city human-friendly and not merely a concrete jungle. All professionals should strive to enhance the human aspect of all their development projects and make the city more attractive to human life. Implementing urban humanization is a challenging task, especially in established cities that were designed primarily to serve modern transportation means, especially cars, without considering the presence of human beings as a fundamental element in planning and infrastructure.

The primary mode of transportation in cities has a significant impact on their shape, layout, population density, and the services provided, in addition to the infrastructure. Achieving a balance between the natural and urban environments requires sustainable urban planning, prioritizing green spaces, promoting walkability and public transportation, reducing pollution and waste, and preserving natural resources. It also involves incorporating nature into urban design through parks, green roofs, and urban agriculture, creating a harmonious coexistence between the built environment and the surrounding natural ecosystem.

Kuwait Times: What are the best global practices for achieving urban humanity and sustainability?

Al-Ali: The Human Cities project is one of the important projects in achieving urban humanity, in which 12 cities in the European Union participate under the name 'City Challenges'. The experts in this project try to plan urban experiences to restore populations to their cities and make life in them more suitable for human living. This project adopts a number of

values and principles, including sustainability, affinity, empathy, well-being, coexistence, aesthetics, solidarity, respect, and entertainment, among others.

A city that shows empathy and respect to its residents will meet their needs, from the smallest individual to the largest, from ordinary people to those with special needs. These cities nourish the human spirit and imagination through sensory experiences that resonate with human consciousness and the five senses. They give humans a place where they feel valued and humane without making them feel like dwarfs among giant cement buildings.

A sustainable city provides the elements of sustainable living for humans and gives them the imagination to envision the activities and remarkable scenes around them. Cities used to be just the product of urban planning, but now they are becoming the result of a partnership between architects, designers, artists, sociologists, intellectuals, and others, all working together to make the city more suitable for humans in a way that enriches their lives.

Achieving urban humanity is financially and spatially costly, as it requires sacrificing a significant amount of space to create open spaces with breathing room where programs can be held throughout the year. These spaces may not be available in a specific area, so they require long-term planning to change the city. For example, in the countries of the region, temperatures and humidity are generally high, which makes it impossible to enjoy the outdoors except for a short period of time during the year.

Therefore, it is necessary to take into account weather conditions, operational and maintenance costs, and sustainability. Developmental projects in public spaces that aim to improve and humanize cities are not linked to a specific company or project but are a complete culture that starts from the geographical location to the quality of the people, their behaviors, and their cultures.

Kuwait, Portugal hold first round of political consultations

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the friendly Republic of Portugal on Monday held the first round of political consultations at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Kuwaiti

side was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah while the Portuguese side was headed by the Political Director at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Rui Vinhas. During the meeting, Sheikh Jarrah and Vinhas reviewed different aspects of friendship and cooperation between the two friendly countries and ways of enhancing them in various fields and at different levels. They also touched upon the latest regional and international developments of common interest. — KUNA



KISR gains patent for desalination invention

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) on Tuesday announced that it has obtained a patent for inventing an interconnected membrane desalination system with high freshwater productivity and at the same time a significant reduction in return water compared to traditional technologies.

The institute said that desalinated water is characterized by being compatible with the standards and specifications set by the World Health Organization

for drinking water. KISR explained: "The innovative system is able to achieve an increase in freshwater production by more than 95 percent for groundwater desalination applications and implementing an environment-friendly desalination system due to its significant reduction in the amount of return water."

"The invention will help provide fresh water supplies in a sustainable manner to meet the challenges of water security in the country in addition to reducing the economic and environmental burdens of desalination operations," they added. According to the statement, the researchers expressed their appreciation to the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research for funding this invention and its successful completion, looking forward to the actual application of such innovative technologies to develop the desalination system in the country. — KUNA

MoH: There's no 'severe shortage' of medicine

KUWAIT: There is no "severe" shortage of the ministry's medicine, Minister of Health (MoH) Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Tuesday, affirming that there are alternatives to the unavailable ones. During a regular National Assembly session, Al-Awadhi added that the ministry is working on automating information system regarding the medical records. The Ministry seeks to fulfill system and medicine stock as a "security" of the State through the permanent ministerial committee of food and drug security, Al-Awadhi noted. — KUNA



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi

MPs seek new expat appointment policy

KUWAIT: The Parliamentary Human Resources Committee informed the government that it is preparing amendments to the Civil Service Law that will be ready in the next round of assembly meetings, to begin on October 26, under which new requirements will be added for the appointment of expatriates in government sectors.

Sources revealed to Kuwait Times: "The most prominent of these amendments is that the appointment of non-Kuwaitis must be published in the Official gazette, including in all official bodies and companies owned by the government and subject to the control of the Audit Bureau. The door for grievance or appeal against their appointment decisions will be open for 60 days from the date of publication."

The amendments emphasize that non-Ku-

waitis can only be appointed after announcing the job opportunity with its required qualifications in the Official gazette and official media to ensure transparency and put a stop to any violations in this regard. Priority will be given to Kuwaitis in all cases, sources added. "If it turns out that there are Kuwaitis more entitled to get the job due to having a similar specialization, the appointment of the expatriate will be terminated and is considered void," sources said, pointing that the Civil Service Bureau must inform the entity that appointed this expatriate to terminate the appointment immediately.

Sources indicated that these procedures come in line with the state's directions to Kuwaitize government jobs, and not to hire expatriates except for jobs that suffer from a shortage in the number of Kuwaitis. The amendments are in accordance with the country's efforts to adjust demographics and reduce the number of expatriates in proportion to the number of Kuwaitis.

News in Brief

3 stores closed for violations

KUWAIT: The Public Relations Department in Kuwait Municipality announced that the inspection campaigns carried out by the emergency team at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality branch with its three shifts (A-B-C) resulted in the administrative closure of three shops and the release of eight citations. The team inspected 90 shops and a central market in the governorate. The shops were closed for not complying with the requirements of the municipality. The citations were issued due to reasons varying between non-compliance with the requirements of the municipality and general cleanliness. Officials gave 21 warnings for abandoned vehicles and the lack of documentation for issued licenses and municipality approvals.

Burnt body found

KUWAIT: A burnt body was found inside a container in the Saad Al-Abdullah area. According to a security source, the security officers and firefighters found the body after receiving a report alerting them of a fire inside a container at a house under construction. After extinguishing the fire, they found that the object on fire was in fact a body. A felony was registered based on the prosecution's order.

30 people arrested

KUWAIT: Interior ministry officers have arrested 8 people on charges of using an apartment in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area to carry out acts contrary to public morals in exchange for sums of money. Officers from the Public Security Sector, represented by the Farwaniya Governorate Security Directorate, raided the apartment following continuous security surveillance, said the public relations and security media department at the interior ministry in a statement. They have been referred to authorities for further legal action. In a separate incident, interior ministry officers busted two fake domestic worker offices in Salmiya and Sabah Al-Nasser areas. They arrested 22 people who were found in violation of the labor and residency law for various reasons, including absconding and lack of proof of identity. The two companies have been blacklisted and all those arrested were referred to authorities for further legal action.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis buy ice cream as they shop at Al-Mubarakiya market amid soaring temperatures in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

UN summit to help Kuwait set up food security body: Official

ROME: Kuwait's effective and interactive participation in the talks of the UN Food Systems Summit +2 helps to share expertise and knowledge and strengthen food security system considering international fluctuations, said a Kuwait official Tuesday.

Dr Reem Ghazi Al-Fulaij, head of Kuwait's delegation to the summit and chairperson of Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), said in a statement to KUNA that Kuwait is taking part in this key meeting to assess the talks of the food systems summits, the first of which was held in 2021, adding that Kuwait was among the leading countries to have prepared and organized three talks of the systems locally.

Kuwait has started serious work to activate implementing most of the recommendations resulting from these talks, said Fulaij. One of the

most important achievements is establishing a national committee for school nutrition headed by the PAFN chief, she said.

The recommendations also highlighted the dire need of establishing a national body tasked with nutrition and food security, she said. She referred that the UN food summit slated for September would crystallize all recommendations to help deal with them seriously.

Fulaij stressed the importance of this summit in reviewing nutrition systems, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on all countries all over the world. She also lauded Kuwait's success, thanks to its strong food system, in avoiding the crisis of supply chains facing most of the world.

Kuwait has spared no efforts to boost and cement the bases of the national food securi-

ty, considering the situation caused by the war between Ukraine and Russia, Fulaij said. The summit is important for countries to help them share expertise and knowledge as well as strengthen food systems to help countries like Kuwait, which depends on imports, to secure its food security based on a strong national system, she explained. The three-day summit features 1,200 participants, including several dignitaries, from 161 countries. — KUNA



Dr Reem Ghazi Al-Fulaij



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Abdullah Al-Mubarak scholarship program renewed for 3 years

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah announced the renewal of the scholarship program offered by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Foundation for another three years, explaining that this program aims to enable Kuwaiti and Arab students to pursue their studies at the United Kingdom universities, through cooperation with the Mansion House scholarship scheme program, which is supervised by the Board of Trustees of the Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Furthermore, Sheikh Mubarak stressed in his speech during his presence, as a guest of honor at the ceremony held by the Lord Mayor of the City of London to honor graduate students and beneficiaries of the scholarship program in the British capital, stressing the importance of qualified human resources for economic and social progress and for sustainable development. "And it is from this standpoint that we seek to provide the greatest amount of knowledge for students, and to prepare them as a new generation of leaders in line with the era of globalization, and this made us renew the scholarship program to support and help students achieve their aspirations and increase their opportunities for gaining distinguished academic achievement," he said.

Moreover, Sheikh Mubarak added: "We are confident that the scholarship program will strengthen relations in the education sector between the United Kingdom and the Arab world in general, and thus strengthening the close and historical relations between Kuwait and the United Kingdom in particular."

Sheikh Mubarak said the scholarship program was established in 2019 in cooperation between the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Foundation and the office of the Lord Mayor of the City of London. Since its inception, it has been interested in providing scholarships annually to outstanding Kuwaiti and Arab students to pursue and complete their postgraduate studies at prestigious British universities in various disciplines.

"We seek through this program to enhance the academic skills of graduate students and enable them to achieve scientific excellence in various disciplines, which will benefit our Kuwaiti society in particular, and Arab societies in general through developing knowledge and raising scientific levels, and then advancing the labor market and preparing a bright future for next generations," Sheikh Mubarak said.

It is noteworthy that the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Foundation and the Mansion House program have a long history in promoting educational initiatives. Sheikha Dr Suad Al-Sabah established the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Charitable Foundation in 1998, through which she provided support for many scientific, cultural and social initiatives and events, including her annual sponsorship of the prizes for the best English-language books on Middle East and Islamic studies in cooperation with the British-Kuwaiti Friendship Society, which the book prize will celebrate its silver jubilee anniversary later this year.

The Mansion House Scholarship Scheme Program, which is supervised by the Lord Mayor of the City of London in the United Kingdom, was established in 1997 with the aim of helping finance scholarships for students and young people from abroad to specialize in the field of financial services within the United Kingdom. The Lord Mayor of the City of London also works to strengthen financial, commercial, and social relations between the United Kingdom and other countries.



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RENNES, France: Pedestrians walk under a shading device to fight excessive heat on a downtown shopping street in Rennes, western France as Europe is hit by a major heatwave. — AFP

Severe heatwaves grip US, Europe

Researchers say heatwaves 'virtually impossible' without climate change

PARIS: Blistering heat that has baked swathes of North America and Europe this month would have been "virtually impossible" without human-caused climate change, researchers said Tuesday, as intense temperatures spark health alerts and stoke ferocious wildfires. With tens of millions of people affected in the northern hemisphere and July on track to be the hottest month globally since records began, experts warn that worse is to come unless we reduce planet-heating emissions.

Severe heatwaves have gripped southern Europe, parts of the United States, Mexico and China this month, with temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius. In the new rapid analysis of the scorching temperatures, scientists from the World Weather Attribution group found that the heatwaves in parts of Europe and North

America would have been almost impossible without climate change.

Temperatures in China were made 50 times more likely by global warming, they found. "The role of climate change is absolutely overwhelming," said climate scientist Friederike Otto, of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment, Imperial College London.

Intense temperatures have swept much of the southwest and southern United States—including in Phoenix, Arizona, which suffered a record-breaking three straight weeks of highs above 43C.

Blazes on the Greek mainland and islands have caused tens of thousands to flee, sent tourists scrambling for evacuation flights and prompted the prime minister to say the country is "at war".

In Beijing, the government urged the

elderly to stay indoors and children to shorten outdoor playtime to reduce exposure to the heat and ground-level ozone pollution.

'More extreme'

Scientists have already established that climate change—with about 1.2C of global warming since the late 1800s—has made heatwaves in general hotter, longer and more frequent.

To trace how far the July heatwaves in the northern hemisphere had departed from what would have been expected without that warming, Otto and her WWA colleagues used weather data and computer model simulations to compare the climate as it is today with that of the past. Researchers said they focused on periods when "the heat was most dan-

gerous in each region". Otto said in the past it would have been "basically impossible" that such severe heat waves would happen at the same time and that people should no longer be surprised to see temperature records tumbling.

The future could be even worse. "As long as we keep burning fossil fuels we will see more and more of these extremes." The researchers found that these severe heatwaves can now be expected roughly once every 15 years in North America, every 10 years in southern Europe and every five years in China.

And they will become even more frequent—happening every two to five years—if temperature rise reaches 2C, expected in around 30 years unless countries fulfil their Paris Agreement pledges and rapidly cut emissions.

The study also found that these heatwaves were hotter than they would have been without climate change. Last week leading NASA climatologist Gavin Schmidt told reporters that July 2023 is not just on track to be the hottest absolute month since records began, but also the hottest in "hundreds, if not thousands, of years". Experts have said that the surging heat cannot be attributed solely to the warming El Nino weather pattern, which is not expected to strengthen until later on in the year. As with other impacts from climate change, it is those most vulnerable who are most at risk. Last week, the World Health Organization said the extreme heat was straining healthcare systems, hitting older people, infants and children. The WHO said it was particularly concerned about people with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and asthma. — AFP

Chinese FM Qin Gang removed from office

BEIJING: China's foreign minister Qin Gang was removed from office on Tuesday, state media reported, after disappearing from the public eye for a month with little explanation from the ruling Communist Party. Qin's absence had sparked a storm of speculation that the 57-year-old, considered a confidant of President Xi Jinping, had fallen from grace or was subject to an official investigation.

China's foreign ministry had previously said "health reasons" were to blame but more recently had refused to give any updates despite repeated questioning. State media outlet Xinhua said on Tuesday evening that China's top legislature had voted to remove Qin from office and replace him with his boss Wang Yi. Xinhua did not give a reason for Qin's removal but said Xi had signed a presidential order to enact the decision.

Asked repeatedly about Qin earlier on Tuesday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told journalists that she had "no information" to offer and insisted that "China's diplomatic activities are steadily moving forward".

Rumor mill in overdrive

China has remained tight-lipped for weeks about the fate of Qin, who has not been seen in public since June 25 when he met Russia's deputy foreign minister Andrey Rudenko in Beijing. His absence from a high-level ASEAN summit in Indonesia two weeks later first raised eyebrows, with Qin's health given then as the reason. However, that did little to stem an explosion of rumors online, some of which claimed Qin was under official investigation for an alleged affair with a prominent television anchor.

"The CCP system is so opaque that it nurtured the rumors," Moritz Rudolf from Yale's Paul Tsai China Center told AFP. On Tuesday, some analysts urged caution about jumping to conclusions.

"He keeps his more senior position as a state counselor," tweeted Neil Thomas from the Asia Society Policy Institute, a US think tank. "So not 100 percent sure this is a purge."

Manoj Kewalramani, a China expert at the Takshashila Institution in Bengaluru in India, told AFP that Qin keeping the State Council role "could be a product of his proximity to Xi Jinping". "It could be also a sign that this was not a product of displeasure with his work or any disciplinary violation but rather a health issue which prevents him from carrying out the intense (foreign minister) role," he said.

The Lowy Institute's Richard McGregor tweeted that the lack of information around Qin's disappearance was "a transparent example of the utter opacity of Chinese elite politics".



JAKARTA: Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee Wang Yi (left) speaks during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus Three Foreign Ministers' meeting in Jakarta on July 13, 2023. — AFP

Many of Qin's duties over the past month had been taken on by Wang, China's top diplomat who leads the ruling Communist Party's foreign policy and outranks Qin in the government hierarchy.

Qin had only taken over from Wang as foreign minister in December last year. "Rather than bring in someone new, you've got Wang Yi," said Kewalramani. "So you have somebody who's experienced... and can continue at least for the near future in that role." Thomas noted that, because Wang now had two jobs, the situation "could be a temporary arrangement". — AFP

16 killed as homes hit in Khartoum air, artillery strikes

WAD MADANI, Sudan: Air strikes and artillery barrages from Sudan's warring generals killed at least 16 people in a Khartoum neighborhood on Tuesday, a group reported. After more than 100 days of war, the latest bombardments added to a toll of at least 3,900 killed nationwide.

"Sixteen citizens died today in this senseless war" when shells hit civilian homes in the Ombada area of Khartoum's northwest, the neighborhood group said. It is one of many pro-democracy "resistance committees" that have cobbled together supplies over the patchy internet, land lines, or by risking their own lives to venture out since the war began. The total number of casualties from the latest strikes was still unclear, the committee added in statements provided to AFP.

Mohamed Mansour, a local resident, told AFP he "helped pull eight bodies" from the rubble of homes destroyed by the blasts. "Four people were killed in the house next door, including two children," said another resident, Hagar Youssef.

The war that began on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has uprooted more than 3.3 million other people from their homes. Much of the fighting has taken place in densely populated neighborhoods of the capital Khartoum, where residents on Tuesday reported a renewed RSF attack on the army's ammunition corps in the city's south. Pro-democracy lawyers said late Monday that civilians in the city's south and centre were again being "forcibly evacuated from their homes, to be used by fighters" as bases.

Mediators from the United States and Saudi Arabia have previously accused the RSF of "occupation of civilian homes, private businesses, and public buildings."

'Catastrophic humanitarian crisis'

For more than three months, millions have been rationing water and electricity in the stifling heat, shielding their families from blasts and unable to reach the few health care facilities still functioning.

The World Health Organization warned Tuesday of the "catastrophic humanitarian crisis" facing Sudan, "with more than 67 percent of the country's hospitals out of service." Health care and aid facilities have themselves frequently come under attack or been looted by both forces. — AFP

US First Lady says 'proud' of return to UNESCO

PARIS: US First Lady Jill Biden said on Tuesday she and her husband Joe were proud that their country had rejoined UNESCO, the UN cultural agency Washington had quit during the Trump administration. In a speech at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Biden—on her first official visit to France since Joe Biden became US president—said that Washington's "fight for our values like democracy and equality and human rights" was made easier with America being part of the global community.

"The United States cannot do it alone, but we must help lead the way. That's why we're so proud to rejoin UNESCO," she said. Former president Donald Trump announced in 2017 that he was pulling the United States out of UNESCO, accusing the body of bias against Israel. The decision took effect in 2018.

Audrey Azoulay, a former French culture minister who has headed UNESCO since 2017, made it a priority to bring the United States back. Last month, an

extraordinary session of the UN body's General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for the country's return, but there were dissenting voices, notably China and Russia. The United States, a founding member of UNESCO, was a major contributor to its budget until 2011, when the body admitted Palestine as a member state. That triggered an end to the contributions under US law, leading up to the formal withdrawal announcement six years later. Until the suspension of its contributions in 2011, the United States paid about 22 percent of UNESCO's budget, or \$75 million. The US Congress, then fully controlled by the Democratic Party, in December paved the way for the United States to restore funding, setting aside \$150 million in the budget.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in March that the US absence from UNESCO was letting China write rules on artificial intelligence. The United States had already withdrawn from UNESCO in 1984 -- under president Ronald Reagan—and rejoined the organization after almost 20 years in October 2003.

Washington will make payments over coming years to UNESCO to cover its debt, the organization said last month. Paris-based UNESCO is the United Nations' educational, scientific and cultural organization.

Its work includes compiling a list of world heri-



PARIS: US First Lady Jill Biden (right) is welcomed as she arrives to celebrate the US rejoining UNESCO, at the Orly Airport in Orly, Paris' suburb, on July 24, 2023. — AFP

tage sites, defending press freedom, promoting sustainable development and running education programs. Earlier Tuesday, Jill Biden met with French First Lady Brigitte Macron at the Elysee Palace. She is on Wednesday to travel to an American Cemetery in northwestern France to pay tribute to US soldiers who died in World War II.

The final stage of Biden's trip is the Mont Saint-Michel, a world heritage site, in the northwestern Normandy region. — AFP

International

Pakistanis abandon hopes of reaching Europe after tragedies

Hundreds of Pakistanis lost lives in treacherous bid for a better life

KHUIRATTA, Pakistan: After spending weeks in Libya trying to reach Europe illegally, Muhammad Naeem Butt turned back — abandoning a journey that has already cost hundreds of Pakistani lives this summer.

Shoveling sand onto a truck surrounded by Pakistan's Kashmir valley, he says he ended his treacherous bid for a better life when an overloaded fishing trawler sank off the coast of Greece last month. Up to 350 Pakistanis were believed to be among the 600 who drowned, including 24 from Butt's hometown of Khuiratta in the lush Kashmir valley. "Looking back, I realize that the risk I took was not worth it," Butt told AFP.

Butt is one of several men from Khuiratta who told AFP the disaster prompted them to give up on the journey after reaching Libya. "Life is defined by the quality time you spend with your children and spouse, not the amount of money you possess," he said. Tens of thousands of young men have handed over family fortunes to agents who smuggle them to Europe, from where remittances — even more valuable since Pakistan's economy slumped into crisis last year — can be wired home.

Butt sought help from friends and family, and his wife sold her precious wedding jewelry to scrape up the 2.2 million rupees (around \$7,500) he needed to pay the human traffickers organizing the trips.

The first legs of his journey were uneventful — commercial flights to Dubai and Egypt, then overland to Libya, where his ordeal really started. He spent two months in a makeshift shanty camp with 600 other migrants, waiting for the day they would be put on a cargo ship to make the journey across the Mediterranean.

The anguish of families

Instead, they were crowded onto a rickety fishing boat and spent eight days floundering in international waters, where they were first fired on, then rammed, by a Libyan naval vessel, Butt said.

"They only stayed afloat because the navy ship abandoned them when a storm struck, he added — but it re-

turned days later to tow them back to port, where they were thrown in jail. "They gave us the minimal amount of food to keep us alive... a plate of macaroni or boiled rice would be shared among five people," Butt said.

"They were brutal people." While he was in jail, news reached his hometown of the migrant boat sinking off Greece, causing heartbreak and distress. "I can't explain the pain and anguish I went through for a week," Butt's wife Mehwish Matloob told AFP.

"I felt as though my entire world had crumbled before me," the 31-year-old said, clutching a shawl. Butt finally got out of jail and was able to contact his family to tell them he was alive. His mother, 76-year-old Razia Latif, says she now regrets the danger he endured. "We thought that others were making it to Europe, so why not send him," she said. "We would have preferred begging had we known it was that difficult."

'Greed' and risk

The International Organization for Migration has declared the Mediterranean passage the world's most perilous migration route. Around 1,728 migrants have gone missing there this year alone — surpassing the 1,417 disappearances recorded in 2022.

But families that do get one or more of their young men abroad can prosper from the money sent back. The noticeable disparity between families with relatives in Europe and those without is causing envy, said Zafar Iqbal Ghazi of Kashmir's Human Rights Forum group.

"If someone has a single-storey home, right next to it you will find a three-storey home, and bigger mansions, and so on," he said. And the promise of untold riches abroad attracts those even well off by local standards. Hamza Bhatti was earning 200,000 rupees a month (around \$700) as a driver in Saudi Arabia — enough to comfortably support his wife and their eight-month-old son — but he still saw greener pastures in Europe.

"I believed that life in Europe would be more vibrant and colorful compared to my experience in Saudi Ara-



In this picture taken on July 17, 2023, Pakistani worker Muhammad Naeem Butt (left) is kissed by his mother Razia Latif at their home in Khuiratta. — AFP

bia," the 29-year-old told AFP. Bhatti was jailed after his boat was returned to port by Libyan authorities and he found himself alongside Butt as news of the sinking broke. "It was my greed that took me to the brink of death," he said.

Smuggling agents arrested

Ghazi said more than 175 youngsters from Khuiratta alone left illegally for Europe last year, and he

believes any recent pause after the boat incident in Greece will only be temporary. Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said 69 smuggling agents had been arrested since a crackdown was launched last month, but prosecutions will be difficult. "The challenge lies in the fact that most of these youngsters possess valid visas for Dubai, which they use as a starting point to reach Libya," one FIA official said, speaking anonymously to AFP. — AFP

Macron urges New Caledonia to build future

NOUMEA, France: President Emmanuel Macron urged "compatriots" in New Caledonia to forge a common future Tuesday during a landmark visit, more than a year after the overseas territory's disputed vote to remain part of France. Macron faces a significant challenge charting an acceptable path for both French loyalists and the pro-independence, indigenous Kanaks who widely boycotted the December 2021 referendum and rejected its result.

"It is not a full stop, it is a semi-colon", Macron said after a string of three independence referendums over the past five years, all of which rejected independence from France. He held out the prospect of a "slow, humble, demanding" process to build a "shared history" for New Caledonia through a process of "truth and reconciliation".

In separate remarks to French television, the president stressed that the series of referendums was "unprecedented". "The choice that was expressed was to stay in France and the Republic," he stressed, on his first visit to New Caledonia in five years.

"I am with our compatriots during these days to define together the basis for this new path, of this new project for the future of New Caledonia — re-



TOUHO, France: French President Emmanuel Macron (center right) watches traditional dancers performing during a customary ceremony in his honor in Touho, north of New Caledonia on July 25, 2023. — AFP

spectful of its identity, of its history but in the light of the choice that has been made."

Pro-independence campaigners had boycotted the third independence referendum arguing a fair campaign was impossible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The vote outcome has fed ethnic tensions, with the poorer indigenous Kanak community generally favoring independence over the wealthier white community. Macron, who attended a French military display in the capital Noumea, is also seeking to reassert his country's importance in the Pacific region, where China and the United States are vying for influence but where France has territories such as New Caledonia and French Polynesia. —AFP

Putin to bolster Africa ties despite Ukraine conflict

MOSCOW: Russia hosts African leaders this week for a summit aimed at boosting ties despite concerns in Africa over the conflict in Ukraine and the suspension of a deal on Ukrainian grain exports. Isolated on the international scene since launching the military campaign in Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin still has support in several African countries.

"Today the partnership is constructive, confident and turned towards the future," Putin wrote on the Kremlin website. At the summit set for Thursday and Friday in Saint Petersburg, Putin's native city, several African leaders are expected including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Kremlin accused Western countries of trying to deter participants. "Almost all African states have been subjected to unprecedented pressure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Tuesday. "The United States, French embassies were active... and other Western missions are trying to do their share to prevent this summit from taking place," he said.

The summit is the second of its kind after an inaugural one that was held in 2019 in Sochi in southern Russia. The end of a deal that has allowed Ukrainian

grain exports through the Black Sea to global markets, including Africa, is set to dominate the agenda.

Russia pulled out of the deal earlier this month, saying a promise to allow Russian exports had not been honored. Over a year, the deal allowed around 33 million tonnes of grain to leave Ukrainian ports, helping to stabilize global food prices and avert shortages.

In the last few days, Moscow has sought to reassure African partners, saying it understands their "concern" on the issue.

The Kremlin has said that "without any doubt" it is ready to export grain for free to African countries that need it. Putin has said Moscow could return to the agreement but only if the part of the deal allowing Russian grain and fertilizer is fully implemented.

Against Western 'imperialism'

Since the start of the Ukraine offensive, Russia has sought to strengthen diplomatic and security ties with Africa. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has been on two tours of the continent so far this year, trying to win over leaders to Moscow's side by emphasizing Russia's support against Western "imperialism". Experts say the push for more Russian influence in Africa is seen mainly in a series of security contracts and through assistance on social media campaigns.

Russia's Wagner mercenary group has been a major player in the security sphere in Africa but its failed mutiny against Russia's military leadership last month has cast doubt on the future of the group's operations on the continent. — AFP

34 killed as Algeria battles raging...

Continued from Page 1

said a tearful elderly woman who lost her daughter-in-law and granddaughter, speaking on TV from Ait Oussalah. Authorities reported progress in fighting back the almost 100 fires reported in recent days, having mobilized more than 8,000 civil defense personnel, over 500 fire trucks and multiple chartered aircraft.

Out of 97 fires, most had been brought under control but 13 were ongoing by Tuesday afternoon, the interior ministry said as temperatures dropped somewhat and winds eased. The public prosecutor of Bejaia ordered an investigation into the causes of the fires and possible perpetrators. An unknown number of people suffered injuries from burns to smoke inhalation, and more than 1,500 were evacuated as the fires hit 15 provinces, especially Bejaia, Bouira and Jijel.

Much of the water-scarce northern African region has been hit by serious drought, severe summer heat and regular wildfires, a trend expected to worsen

as climate change intensifies. Serious fires have also raged in recent days in neighboring Tunisia, especially the northwestern Tabarka region.

An AFP team there witnessed significant damage and saw helicopters and Canadair water bombers in action. More than 300 people were evacuated from the coastal village of Melloula by boat and overland. Firefighters were still battling flames Tuesday in three areas in the northwest, Bizerte, Siliana and Beja. Northern and eastern Algeria battle forest fires every summer. In August last year, 37 people were killed by fires in the northeastern El Tarf region, a year after 90 died, mostly in Kabylia.

To prepare for this year's fire season, Algerian authorities deployed observation drones and created multiple helicopter landing sites. The government in May announced the purchase of a large water bomber aircraft and the rental of six others from South America. Algeria also placed an order with Russia for four water bombers, but reported that their delivery was delayed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Local media reflected anger about the latest deadly fires, with the TSA news site asking, "in view of all these measures, why couldn't we avoid the disaster?" — AFP

Firefighting plane crashes in Greece...

Continued from Page 1

Scientists from the World Weather Attribution group said Tuesday the heatwaves that have hit parts of Europe and North America this month would have been almost impossible without human-caused climate change. "We have another difficult summer ahead of us," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told the cabinet. WWF Greece on Tuesday said 35,000 hectares (86,500 acres) of forest and other land had been scorched by fire in the country just in the past week.

In the capital Athens the heat is expected to reach 41 degrees Celsius (106 degrees Fahrenheit), and hit up to 44C in central Greece, according to the national weather forecaster EMY. Authorities evacuated nearly 2,500 people from the Greek island of Corfu on Monday, after tens of thousands of people had already fled blazes on the island of Rhodes, with many frightened tourists scrambling to get home on evacuation flights. More than 260 firefighters were still battling flames for an eighth consecutive day on Rhodes, supported by nine planes and two helicopters.

A source at Rhodes airport operators Fraport on Tuesday said the situation had normalized, with traffic levels consistent with the height of the summer season on one of Greece's prime travel destinations. The Greek transport ministry said over 2,100 people had flown home on emergency flights on Sunday and Monday. Fires were also raging on Greece's second largest island of Evia, where Greek civil protection authorities issued an overnight evacuation order in one northern locality.

Mitsotakis said Greece's state apparatus faced a "major challenge" as the prolonged heatwave and successive wildfires had officials on a 24-hour alert footing for "several weeks." The mercury hit 46.4C in Gythio, in the southern Peloponnese peninsula on Sunday, though failed to reach the hottest temperature nationally on record of 48C. Mitsotakis has

warned that the country faced "another three difficult days ahead" before high temperatures are forecast to ease from Thursday.

'Protect our home'

The severe heatwave in Greece has also been reflected across much of southern Europe and Northern Africa. In Algeria at least 34 people have died as wildfires raged through residential areas, forcing mass evacuations. In southeastern France officials Monday issued a fire warning at the highest level in the Bouches-du-Rhone region, warning that the weather conditions make the risk of flames "very high compared to normal summers".

In Albania's capital Tirana, temperatures surpassed 40C on Tuesday, spurring hospitals to open a string of emergency care centers to treat heat-related illnesses. On average more than 100 patients a day have been flocking to each heat centre across the country, with ailments linked to the spike in temperatures including blood pressure issues, dizziness, and fainting, said Skender Brataj, who oversees the national centre for emergency medical care in Albania.

The exceptional temperatures in Greece have forced key tourist sites such as the Acropolis in Athens to close at the hottest times of the day. Vassilis Kikilias, Greece's civil protection minister, said crews had battled over 500 fires around the country for 12 straight days. The fires are particularly devastating on islands such as Rhodes and Corfu where the tourist season is in full swing and hotels are often full.

Volunteers had come to the aid of foreign tourists in the north of Rhodes where nearly 200 people are still camped out at a school after being evacuated from the fires on Saturday. "I can't believe they are so nice, they gave so much in every way," said 69-year-old British tourist Christine Moody, who was spending her first vacation in Greece when the fires hit. "I am very moved," she said. In the village of Vati, in the southeast of the island, local mayor Vasilis Kalabodakis said the impact on the region was "tragic". "The village has been ordered to evacuate but we can't abandon it," he said. "We are leading the fight to protect our home". — AFP



MELLOULA: Firefighters attempt to extinguish a raging forest fire near the town of Melloula in northwestern Tunisia close to the border with Algeria. — AFP

International

Thousands of Afghan parlors close as Taliban deadline bites

60,000 women to lose their income from work at around 12,000 salons

KABUL: Thousands of beauty parlors across Afghanistan closed permanently on Tuesday following an order by Taliban authorities that cuts off one of the few revenue streams available to women, as well as a cherished space for socializing. Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban government has barred girls and women from high schools and universities, banned them from parks, funfairs and gyms, and ordered them to cover up in public. But an order issued last month forces the closure of thousands of salons nationwide run by women—often the only source of income for households and one of the few remaining places for them to gather away from home.

"We used to come here to spend time talking about our future together. Now even this right has been taken away from us," said Bahara, a salon customer in the capital Kabul. "Women are not allowed to enter entertainment places, so what can we do? Where can we go to enjoy ourselves? Where can we gather to meet each other?"

Last week, security officials shot into the air and used firehoses in the city to disperse dozens of women protesting against the order. On Tuesday, many salons in Kabul had already closed, while others were staying open until the last possible minute.

One salon owner said she had been forced to sign

a letter saying she was shutting down willingly and would hand in the shop's license to operate. "The scene was terrible—they came with military vehicles and guns," the owner said, asking not to be identified.

"What can a woman do in the face of so much insistence and pressure?"

Un-Islamic makeovers

The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced the forced closures in June, with a grace period to allow stock to be used up. The ministry claimed extravagant sums spent on makeovers caused hardship for poor families and that some treatments at the salons were un-Islamic.

Too much make-up prevented women from proper ablutions for prayer while eyelash extensions and hair weaving were also forbidden, it added. A copy of the order seen by AFP said it was "based on verbal instruction from the supreme leader" Hibatullah Akhundzada. Beauty parlors mushroomed across Kabul and other Afghan cities in the 20 years that US-led forces occupied the country. They were seen as a safe place to socialize away from men and to prepare for celebrations such as weddings. Thousands of female government workers either lost their jobs when the Taliban government took over or are being paid to stay at home.



KABUL: An Afghan woman beautician paints the nails of a customer at a beauty salon in Kabul on July 23, 2023. —AFP

The beauty parlor ban will see another 60,000 women lose their income from work at some 12,000 salons across the country, according to the Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A report to the UN's Human Rights Council last month by Richard Bennett, the special rapporteur for

Afghanistan, said the plight of women and girls in the country "was among the worst in the world".

"Grave, systematic and institutionalized discrimination against women and girls is at the heart of Taliban ideology and rule, which also gives rise to concerns that they may be responsible for gender apartheid,"

Philippines orders evacuations ahead of Super Typhoon

MANILA: A super typhoon swept towards the northern Philippines on Tuesday, the country's weather agency said, triggering evacuation orders for coastal communities expected to bear the brunt of the powerful storm.

Super Typhoon Doksuri was packing maximum sustained winds of 185 kilometers per hour (115 miles per hour) as it headed towards the northern tip of the main island of Luzon. The storm, which is called "Egay" in the Philippines, was expected to make landfall or pass very close to the lightly populated Babuyan islands or northeastern Cagayan province by Wednesday, the agency said in its latest bulletin at 0300 GMT.

It would then move towards Taiwan and southwestern China. Coastal communities in northwestern and northeastern Cagayan province had been ordered to evacuate their homes in anticipation of storm surges reaching, or even exceeding, three meters (10 feet). Three of the five Babuyan islands are inhabited, with a population of around 20,000 people. Local disaster official Charles Castillejos said people living near the shores of those islands had been ordered to go inland, while fishermen had been told to get their boats out of the water.

"We sent the police to convince the hard-headed ones who refuse to evacuate," Castillejos told AFP.

Science and technology secretary Renato Solidum said people needed to be prepared for the typhoon because "things happen fast". "We need to remind our people the importance of readiness against storm surges, strong winds and also possible floods," Sol-

idum told reporters. Some farmers in the northern province of Isabela, bordering Cagayan, were seen leading their livestock to safety ahead of the storm. "Those living on coastal areas have been moved to higher ground," Isabela provincial disaster officer Constante Foronda told local radio station DZBB.

"Our water search and rescue teams are now deployed in those areas most likely to be affected," Foronda said.

Flooding, landslides 'highly likely'

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 major storms each year that kill hundreds of people and keep vast regions in perpetual poverty. Scientists have warned that such storms, which also kill livestock and destroy key infrastructure, are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer because of climate change.

Boats, including wooden outriggers and passenger ferries that provide transport between islands, have been ordered to shore in Luzon and central islands due to gale warnings, stranding more than 11,000 people, the Philippine Coast Guard said. By midday Wednesday, the storm was expected to have dumped more than 200 millimeters (7.9 inches) of rain on the islands and the northern portion of Cagayan, including Babuyan islands, as well as Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur provinces.

Heavy rain was also expected across the mountainous northern provinces in the coming days, with flooding and landslides "highly likely", the weather agency said.

Cagayan provincial disaster officer Ruelie Rapsing told DZBB that emergency food packs had been stored in warehouses. "The province has been on red alert status since Saturday and all evacuation centers, emergency operation centers of each town, and incident management teams are activated," he said. "Cagayanons are used to this." —AFP



ILAGAN, Philippines: Farmers lead their cows to a safer place in Ilagan town, Isabela province, north of Manila on July 25, 2023, as Typhoon Doksuri heads towards the northern Philippines. —AFP



SEOUL: A man walks past a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test at a railway station in Seoul on July 25, 2023. —AFP

North Korea fires missiles ahead of key anniversary

SEOUL: Pyongyang conducted twin missile launches late Monday, ahead of Korean War anniversary celebrations that will be attended by Chinese dignitaries in the first foreign delegation visit to the country since its 2020 pandemic border closure. South Korea's defense ministry described the two projectiles as ballistic missiles that flew about 400 kilometers (248 miles) before falling into the sea, according to reports by news agency Yonhap of South Korea and Japan's Kyodo.

"Our military detected two ballistic missiles North Korea fired from areas near Pyongyang into the East Sea at 11:55 pm on the 24th and at midnight of the 25th," Yonhap quoted South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff as saying. The launches were the latest in a series of weapons tests in recent weeks by Pyongyang, and come as Seoul and Washington ramp up defense cooperation in the face of soaring tensions with the North.

Last week South Korea hosted a visit by a US nuclear-capable submarine, the first deployment there by such a nuclear-armed American vessel in decades. And in a move that likely further provoked the North, a second US submarine, the nuclear-powered USS Annapolis, arrived at a South Korean naval base around the time of Monday's missile launches, according to Yonhap. The reclusive North Korean regime routinely conducts weapons tests, and the launches come days after leader Kim Jong Un personally oversaw the latest firing of the country's newest intercontinental ballistic missile, the solid-fuel Hwasong-18. Relations between the two Koreas are currently at one of their lowest historical points, as diplomacy between Pyongyang and Seoul has stalled and Kim has called for ramping up weapons development, including tactical nukes. In efforts to bolster deterrence, Seoul and Washington have staged joint military exercises with advanced stealth jets and US strategic assets. The White House took issue with Pyongyang's latest action, with Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre saying "we certainly condemn the DPRK's ballistic missile launches," referring to North Korea by the acronym of its formal name.—AFP

Thai PM vote postponed

BANGKOK: Thailand's parliament on Tuesday postponed a vote to choose a new prime minister, prolonging the kingdom's political deadlock more than two months after an election won by opposition parties. Reformist candidate Pita Limjaroenrat, whose party won the election, failed to get enough votes in a first parliamentary sitting to select a prime minister on July 13 -- blocked by military and pro-royalist senators. He was refused a second ballot on July 19, but this decision is now being challenged at the Constitutional Court.

House speaker Wan Muhamad Noor Matha said the new vote for premier, scheduled for Thursday, had to wait for the court's decision.

"We have to cancel because the Ombudsman is about to send a case to the Constitutional Court," Wan told reporters. "If we go ahead with the sitting on July 27, before the court has

ruled, it could cause problems." Pita's Move Forward Party (MFP) rode a wave of young and urban support eager for change to win a shock victory in May's election.

But their campaign promises of reform to the kingdom's strict royal defamation laws and monopolies provoked intense opposition from the conservative establishment. "I am aware of the postponing of the parliament meeting," Pita told reporters. "There is not much I can do but to be back on the ground and spend most of my time there."

Shortly before the second vote, the 42-year-old was also hit with a Constitutional Court case suspending him as an MP over his ownership of media shares, which is prohibited for lawmakers under Thai law. This left his eight-party coalition scrambling, with MFP saying it would work to support the nominee from partner Pheu Thai, which came second in May's election. Pheu Thai, seen as a vehicle for the Shinawatra political clan—whose members include two former prime ministers ousted by military coups in 2006 and 2014 -- has yet to formally name its candidate for prime minister.—AFP

Singapore to execute first woman in nearly 20 years

SINGAPORE: Singapore is set to hang two drug convicts this week, including the first woman to be sent to the gallows in nearly 20 years, rights groups said Tuesday, while urging the executions be halted.

Local rights organization Transformative Justice Collective (TJC) said a 56-year-old man convicted of trafficking 50 grams (1.76 ounces) of heroin is scheduled to be hanged on Wednesday at the Southeast Asian city-state's Changi Prison. A 45-year-old woman convict who TJC identified as Saridewi Djamani is also set to be sent to the gallows on Friday. She was sentenced to death in 2018 for trafficking around 30 grams of heroin. If carried out, she would be the first woman to be executed in Singapore since 2004 when 36-year-old hairdresser Yen May Woen

was hanged for drug trafficking, said TJC activist Kokila Annamalai.

TJC said the two prisoners are Singaporeans and their families have received notices setting the dates of their executions. Prison officials have not answered emailed questions from AFP seeking confirmation. Singapore imposes the death penalty for certain crimes, including murder and some forms of kidnapping. It also has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws: trafficking more than 500 grams of cannabis and 15 grams of heroin can result in the death penalty.

At least 13 people have been hanged so far since the government resumed executions following a two-year hiatus in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rights watchdog Amnesty International on Tuesday urged Singapore to halt the impending executions. "It is unconscionable that authorities in Singapore continue to cruelly pursue more executions in the name of drug control," Amnesty's death penalty expert Chiara Sangiorgio said in a statement. "There is no evidence that the death penalty has a unique deterrent effect or that it has any impact on the use and availability of drugs.—AFP

Top Russian and Chinese officials to visit N Korea

SEOUL: North Korea will this week welcome Russia's defense minister and a high-level Chinese delegation to Pyongyang for Korean War armistice anniversary celebrations, state media said Tuesday, marking a key shift in the nuclear-armed country's stringent COVID-19 border restrictions.

Pyongyang will celebrate 70 years since the signing of the Korean War armistice on July 27, 1953, which ended open hostilities in the conflict and is known as Victory Day in the North, with state media saying it would be marked in a "grand manner that will go down in history".

Satellite imagery indicates the North has been preparing for the kind of large-scale military parade with which it typically fetes such anniversaries. But the inclusion of Chinese and Russian guests this year is a post-pandemic first, which hints at new flexibility towards enforcing border controls. North Korea has been under a rigid self-imposed coronavirus blockade since early 2020 to protect itself from COVID-19, which has prevented even its own nationals from entering the country.

"A military delegation of the Russian Federation led by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu will pay a congratulatory visit to the DPRK," the state-run Korean Central News Agency said, a day after it confirmed a Chinese delegation would also attend the Thursday event.

Russia, a historic ally of Pyongyang, is one of a handful of nations that maintains friendly relations with the North. Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un has been steadfast in his support for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, including, Washington says, supplying rockets and missiles.

"This visit will contribute to strengthening Russian-North Korean military ties and will be an important step in the development of cooperation between the two countries," the Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement. China also confirmed Tuesday it would send a delegation led by Politburo member Li Hongzhong.

Seoul, Washington monitoring

Seoul's defence ministry said Tuesday it had detected more "people and equipment" in the capital Pyongyang, adding that South Korean and US intelligence agencies were closely monitoring as the North prepared for the upcoming celebration. The visits by the Chinese and Russian delegations are the first known visits by any foreign delegations since the start of the pandemic.

The North only resumed some trade with China last year, and allowed Beijing's new envoy to take up his position this year. Beijing said the delegation would travel to Pyongyang on Wednesday, suggesting they would not be required to undergo an extensive quarantine ahead of the Thursday anniversary event.—AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023

Ooredoo, Zain and TASC Towers Holding enter exclusive negotiations

New partnership to create independent tower company comprising up to 30,000 towers

DOHA/KUWAIT/DUBAI: Ooredoo Q.P.S.C. ("Ooredoo") - Ticker: ORDS announced that Ooredoo Group has entered exclusive negotiations with Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P. (Zain Group) and UAE-based TASC Towers Holding to combine their approximately 30,000 telecommunication tower assets in Qatar, Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq and Jordan into a jointly owned independent tower company in a cash and share deal.

This new partnership will form the largest tower company in the MENA region. The enlarged tower company will continue to operate as an independent and standalone entity providing passive infrastructure as a service throughout the region with a focus on operational efficiencies, synergies and reduction of carbon footprint.

Both Ooredoo and Zain will retain their respective active infrastructure, including wireless communication antennas, intelligent software, and intellectual property with respect to managing their telecom networks. This transaction will create a potential shareholder value uplift for both Ooredoo Group and Zain Group through a more efficient capital structure. Both operators are committed to executing on their respective growth strategies to



Independent operating model will enhance shareholder value, and enhance the operational and carbon efficiency of passive tower infrastructure supporting the reduction of MENA's carbon footprint

unlock significant capital and maximize value for shareholders while at the same time reducing the carbon footprint within the MENA region.

The parties will proceed with negotiations on an exclusive basis with a view to signing definitive agreements in Q3 2023. Ooredoo's tower network in Oman is following a stand-alone process.

The potential transaction remains subject

to, amongst other factors, agreement on final terms, signing of definitive agreements and obtaining of all required corporate and regulatory approvals. The implementation of this transaction is expected to be executed in a customized timeline for each market considering the regulatory environment and ensuring a smooth transition for the operations.

towards its inflation target without having a recession in its future," Gourinchas told AFP. "But it's a very, very narrow path," he added.

Asian economies still dominate

As with the April forecast, much of the global growth this year is forecast to come from emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) like India and China, with economic activity in advanced economies predicted to slow substantially this year and next. Advanced economies are now forecast to grow by 1.5 percent this year, up 0.2 percentage points from April, and by 1.4 percent next year.

Citing positive recent economic news from the United Kingdom, the IMF has lifted the country's forecast for 2023 growth to 0.4 percent, leaving Germany as the only G7 economy expected to contract this year. The news is much more positive among the EMDEs, which are forecast to grow by 4.0 percent this year, and by 4.1 percent next year.

The IMF's 2023 growth forecast for China remained unchanged at 5.2 percent, although it notes there has been a change in composition due to the underperformance of investment due to the country's troubled real estate sector. Alongside weakness in the real estate sector, the IMF said foreign demand remains weak and warned of rising and elevated youth unemployment, which reached almost 21 percent in May. The IMF lifted India's 2023 growth prospects to 6.1 percent, up 0.2 percentage points from April, citing "momentum from stronger-than-expected growth in the fourth quarter of 2022 as a result of stronger domestic investment."

The Fund now expects Russia's economy to grow by 1.5 percent this year, an upward revision of 0.8 percentage points from April, due to stronger-than-expected economic data fueled by "a large fiscal stimulus." — AFP



WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Division Chief of the Research Department, Daniel Leigh, participates in a news conference on the IMF release of the World Economic Outlook Update, at IMF headquarters in Washington, DC, on July 25, 2023. — AFP

count of subdued inflation in China," the IMF said, adding that global inflation remains well above its pre-pandemic levels of around 3.5 percent.

'Resilient' US consumption

The IMF has lifted its outlook for US growth this year to 1.8 percent, up 0.2 percentage points from April, citing "resilient consumption growth in the first quarter." The still-tight labor market in the world's largest economy "has supported gains in real income and a rebound in vehicle purchases," the IMF said in its report. The Fund sees US growth slipping to 1.0 percent next year, as savings accumulated during the pandemic dry up and the economy loses momentum.

"We are cautiously prudent that the US economy could avoid a recession and, you know, glide

decision will be announced at 2pm (1800 GMT) on Wednesday. But despite an aggressive cycle of hikes, inflation remains above the central bank's long-term target of two percent — although it has fallen sharply since peaking last year. Futures traders assign a probability of close to 99 percent that the Fed will lift its base rate by 25 basis points on Wednesday, according to CME Group.

The quarter percentage-point hike predicted by analysts and traders would raise the Fed's benchmark lending rate to a range between 5.25-5.50 percent, its highest level in 22 years.

With the increase generally factored in by financial markets, attention has focused on how far and how fast monetary tightening might go. At its last meeting, most members of the Fed's rate-setting committee predicted they would need to raise rates twice more this year in order to bring inflation down to target. Recent positive economic news has

FactSet had expected a reading of 88.0 points.

The weak score underlined mounting concerns over the outlook for the German economy, which slipped into recession around the turn of the year. "Sentiment among German companies has worsened further," said Ifo president Clemens Fuest, noting that companies' dissatisfaction with their current business was a key drag on general sentiment. "The situation in the German economy is turning bleaker."

Analysts warn that the rough patch will continue in the coming months, leading to a contraction in GDP for the full year. "The German economy is in a no-man's-land between a weak recession and an anaemic recovery," said public lender KfW's chief economist Fritz Koehler-Geib.

"Industry in particular has been disappointing, as

increased the chances of a so-called "soft landing," in which the Fed succeeds in bringing down inflation by raising interest rates while avoiding a recession and a surge in unemployment.

It has also raised the likelihood that inflation could remain higher for longer, leading the Fed to hike again, perhaps as early as the next policy meeting in September. For now, Bank of America economists wrote in a recent note to clients that they expect another 25 basis points hike in September, "though the Fed could decide that the last hike should come in November."

But not all analysts are convinced the Fed will hike again. "We expect the Fed to undertake an eleventh (and final on our forecast) rate increase at next week's July FOMC meeting," Deutsche Bank economists wrote in a note on Friday, referring to the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee. — AFP

production continues to tread water despite dwindling supply chain problems." Household consumption is still suffering due to high inflation, which rebounded to 6.4 percent in June, and due to a series of interest rate hikes by the European Central Bank to combat rising prices.

Energy costs remained high for the manufacturing sector and certain industries, including chemicals, have struggled to regain their strength seen before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. Meanwhile, tepid demand from China and the United States have knocked exports, long a crucial driver of the German economy. LBBW bank analyst Jens-Oliver Niklasch said the clear takeaway from the Ifo survey was, "we're in a recession and won't be getting out of it very quickly." — AFP

China appoints new CB governor as economy flags

BEIJING: China replaced its central bank chief on Tuesday, state media said, as the world's second-largest economy struggles to revive flagging growth.

Economist Pan Gongsheng will take the place of outgoing central bank governor Yi Gang, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Yi has headed the People's Bank of China (PBOC) since 2018 and has reached retirement age. The decision, made by Chinese legislators at a meeting on Tuesday, comes after Pan was appointed the PBOC's Communist Party secretary on July 1.

Pan previously headed China's foreign exchange regulator, a position he had held since 2016, when China faced major capital flight. The 60-year-old has also served as one of the central bank's vice-governors since 2012. Pan, who attended top universities Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Harvard in the United States, is reputed to be deeply experienced in Chinese banking and politics, having also worked at two major state-owned banks.

"All these roles could have ended Pan's career if mishandled," analysts at Beijing-based consultancy Trivium wrote in a note. "Instead, he built a reputation for being a politically savvy problem solver," the analysts said. Neil Thomas, a China specialist at the Asia Society, said: "Pan Gongsheng is a financial technocrat, not a Xi loyalist."

"This suggests Xi is more concerned about China's economy than before the 20th Party Congress," Thomas tweet-



BEIJING: Pan Gongsheng, Deputy Governor of People's Bank of China (PBC) and Director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, answers a question at a press conference during the First Session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing on March 9, 2018. — AFP

ed, referring to a key conclave last year where Beijing's top leadership confirmed a third term in power for Xi. The central bank has cut several interest rates in recent weeks in an effort to reinvigorate the economy, but a run of dismal economic data over recent months has ramped up calls for officials to unveil stronger support measures.

China said this month its economy grew 6.3 percent in the second quarter, much weaker than the 7.1 percent predicted in an AFP survey of analysts. The disappointing result came despite a very low base of comparison with last year, when China 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. Youth unemployment jumped to a record 21.3 percent in June, up from 20.8 percent in May. China's Politburo said on Monday the economy was facing "new difficulties and challenges". — AFP

IMF nudges up 2023 economic growth outlook

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund has slightly upgraded its outlook for global growth this year on the back of resilient service sector activity in the first quarter and a strong labor market, the lender said Tuesday. But despite the mildly better economic outlook, global growth is expected to slow to three percent this year and then stay there, held down by weak growth among the world's advanced economies, the IMF announced in a new report.

"We're not out of the woods yet and growth remains on the low side," IMF Chief Economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told AFP in an interview ahead of the report's publication. The global growth forecast for this year was raised by 0.2 percentage points from the IMF's last forecast in April, putting the world economy on track for three percent growth in both 2023 and 2024.

This is down from global economic growth of 6.3 percent in 2021, and 3.5 percent last year, the IMF announced in its update to the World Economic Outlook (WEO). The IMF published its lowest medium-term forecast since the 1990s, citing slowing population growth and the end of the era of economic catch-up by several countries including China and South Korea.

On Tuesday, the IMF said the global inflation picture has improved somewhat, with consumer prices now forecast to increase by 6.8 percent this year, down 0.2 percentage points from the previous forecast in April. This is "largely on ac-

US Fed meets to consider raising rates to 22-yr high

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve began a two-day meeting Tuesday to decide whether to raise its benchmark lending rate to the highest level since 2001 in order to tame above-target inflation. After a pause in June, the Fed is widely expected to push ahead with what would be its 11th interest rate hike since it started a campaign of monetary tightening in response to soaring inflation in March of last year.

The two-day policy meeting began at 10am local time, the Fed said in a statement. The interest rate

German business morale falls further in July

BERLIN: German business sentiment fell for the third month in a row in July, a key survey showed Tuesday, as pessimism about the state of Europe's largest economy deepened. The Ifo institute's closely watched confidence barometer, based on a survey of 9,000 companies, fell to 87.3 points from 88.6 points in June.

Analysts surveyed by financial data company

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait reports a net profit of KD 23.9 million for H1 2023

Results reflect 30% profit growth; EPS stood at 11 fils

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced its financial results for the first half of the fiscal year 2023 ended 30 June 2023. ABK reported a net profit of KD 23.9 million compared to KD 18.4 million in the same period in 2022, reflecting a 30 percent increase. Earnings per share stood at 11 fils compared to 8 fils in the previous year.

We also continue to enhance and build on cross-border offerings for our customers across the markets in which we operate and continue to capitalize on growth opportunities in these markets."

He added, "We remain prudent and cautious in managing our risks, securing the interests of our shareholders and stakeholders, protecting the intrinsic val-

Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group CEO at ABK, reiterated, "Our financial results depict notable growth across several key financial indicators, reflecting the effectiveness of our implemented strategy." He continued, "Our commitment to expanding our market presence remains unwavering, encompassing both individual and corporate clients. We ensure to meticulously analyze any developments to proactively devise strategies to effectively navigate obstacles that may arise."

In addition to the strength of ABK's strategy, Al-Sumait attributed the positive financial results to the consistent efforts of employees. He emphasized, "ABK places a significant emphasis on attracting top talent to join our workforce. We also continue to place particular focus on increasing the percentage of national employment, specifically amongst the youth segment. This is in addition to women empowerment with an aim of achieving gender equality in the workplace."

He shared that it is crucial to continuously develop employees' skillsets and capabilities, foster innovation, and provide training sessions with specialized institutes. Highlighting their importance, he said, "These efforts are imperative for developing a conducive work environment, enhancing employee productivity, and strengthening competitiveness in the banking sector."

Environmental, social and governance considerations

Recognizing the increasing importance of ESG factors to investors and stakeholders, ABK has diligently endeavored to incorporate these principles into its business. ABK disclosed its firm belief that robust ESG practices have a direct and positive impact on its financial results. This contributes to sustainable development, ultimately fostering long-term growth. Through the integration of ESG into our operations, the Group strives to minimize environmental impact, promote social wellbeing, and deliver responsible

HIGHLIGHTS

- Operating profit KD 44.3 million
- Total assets KD 6.3 billion
- Customer deposits KD 4.0 billion
- Loan portfolio totaled KD 4.3 billion.
- NPL ratio stood at 1.36%
- NPL coverage at 376%
- Capital adequacy ratio at 15.06%
- Shareholders' equity at KD 497.5m



Talal Behbehani



Abdulla Al-Sumait

ABK reported an operating profit of KD 44.3 million, total assets of KD 6.3 billion, customer deposits of KD 4.0 billion, and its loan portfolio totaled KD 4.3 billion. The non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.36 percent, NPL coverage at 376 percent, capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 15.06 percent, and shareholders' equity at KD 497.5 million.

Financial performance

Commenting on the results, Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, stated, "ABK's performance in the first half of 2023 is a result of proactive financial management focused on achieving sustainable growth and enhancing value despite the economic challenges prevalent in the local, regional and global markets. Our strategy focuses on enriching customer experience and simplifying our offerings by adopting the latest digital and technological solutions.

ue of our franchise, and enhancing the solidity of our balance sheet. Our investment grade credit ratings by Moody's (A2) and Fitch (A) are a reflection of the confidence ABK has secured at the global level."

"I would like to also reaffirm our preparedness to actively contribute to development initiatives aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035 and our determination to foster successful outcomes in line with the national strategic vision," continued Behbehani. The chairman expressed his appreciation to the central banks and regulatory authorities in Kuwait, Egypt and the UAE, alongside the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), for their ongoing support and guidance. Behbehani also lauded the efforts of ABK's shareholders, Board of Directors, executive management and staff for their persistent dedication in ensuring that ABK continues to demonstrate high levels of performance.

governance practices. This, in turn, greatly contributes to positioning ABK as a responsible and ethical financial institution.

Digital transformation

ABK strongly believes that digital transformation is vital when it comes to empowering banks to meet changing customer expectations, drive operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance security, and explore new business opportunities. "This is an important enabler to offer seamless, convenient, and personalized service to customers," said Al-Sumait. This was exemplified in the recent inauguration of ABK's digital branch in Al-Khiran Mall, boasting cutting-edge technology, alongside the launch of various digital services. He continued, "These endeavors aim to enhance customer confidence, trust, and convenience by simplifying banking transactions."

Corporate social responsibility

ABK shed light on its leading role in corporate social responsibility, which includes supporting, sponsoring, and implementing various initiatives, activities, sports, and wellness events. This includes participation in career fairs at universities to support students and education where involvement in such events reflects

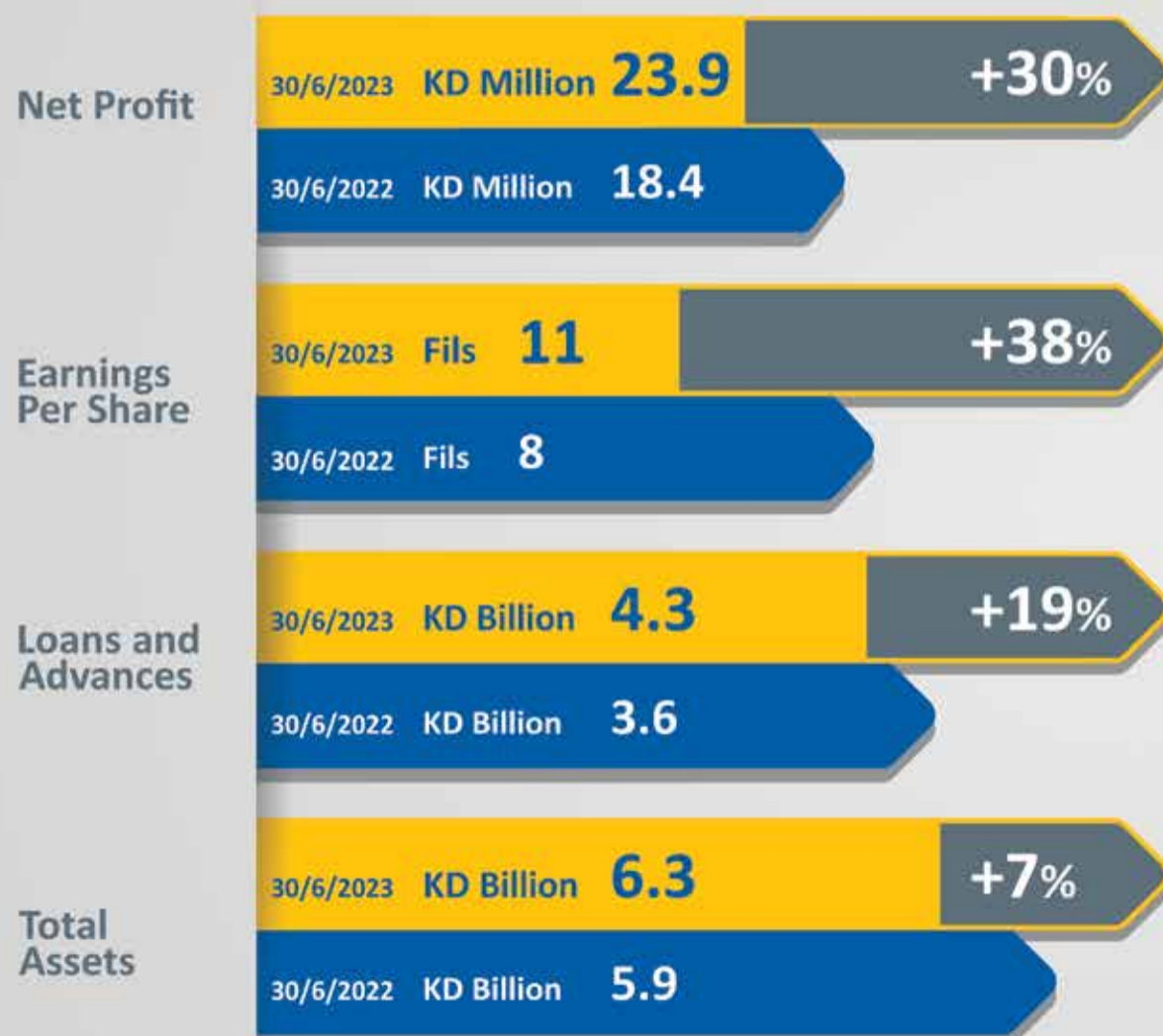
its pledge to give back to society and strengthen its presence in the community.

ABK also continues its support of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign. In collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association, the goal of the campaign is to raise financial and banking awareness among customers and promote financial inclusion in society.

ABK was recognized as one of the top three contributors to the campaign's success in 2022, as announced earlier this year. As such, ABK remains dedicated to spreading relevant information through its branches, social media platforms, and other potential opportunities.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that is today known for offering a simpler banking experience. The Bank offers personal, corporate, and private banking of which includes a wide array of products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital. Enjoying equal stability and strength, the Bank also offers the convenience of banking across the region, servicing other markets in Egypt and the UAE.

2023 H1 RESULTS



MOODY'S A2 FitchRatings A



Business

'Era of mass closures': The Japan businesses without successors

Businesses in crisis as country's population shrinks and ages

YACHIMATA, Japan: Kiyoshi Hashimoto's machinery factory outside Tokyo should be buzzing with industry. Instead, it's so quiet you can hear him practicing the recorder. The 82-year-old entrepreneur founded his company nearly 40 years ago, but well past retirement age he has neither a successor nor a buyer for a business that retains loyal clients.

It is a problem that Japan's government warns could affect up to a third of all small businesses in the country by 2025, as the country's population shrinks and ages.

"All of this would go to waste if I were to close now," said Hashimoto, whose factory in Yachimata, east of Tokyo, is filled with workbenches, drill tables and parts cabinets. He once employed dozens of people, but now gets by with just two part-time workers after scaling back operations.

The problem is so vast that Japan faces an "era of mass closures", said Shigenobu Abe of bankruptcy research firm Teikoku Databank. A 2019 government report estimated that about 1.27 million small business owners would be 70 or older by 2025 and have no successors.

The trend could kill up to 6.5 million jobs and reduce the size of the Japanese economy by 22 trillion yen (\$166 billion), the study warned. By 2029, the situation will worsen still, as baby boomers hit 81, the average life expectancy for Japanese men, who account for most of the presi-

dents of these firms, according to Teikoku Databank. "We know for sure that many workers will lose their livelihoods because of this," Abe told AFP.

'A serious blow'

As elsewhere, small businesses in Japan are often passed down to family or trusted employees. But the country's prolonged economic stagnation has made small businesses unattractive to young people.

Firms in rural areas struggle further because of a preference for city life and a growing trend of rural depopulation. Compounding the problem is a feeling among some older Japanese that selling a family business to outsiders is shameful.

Some liquidate their firms rather than seeking buyers. Japan's government has offered generous incentives to encourage sales, and the private sector has also jumped in to match investors with businesses for sale. Company BATONZ now makes more than 1,000 matches a year, up from just 80 when it opened in 2018.

Still, it reaches a fraction of the people who need it, said BATONZ president Yuichi Kamise.

Waves of closures will mean the loss of specialized craftsmanship, unique services and original restaurant recipes that make up Japan's social and cultural fabric, he said. "Over time, what makes Japan unique could disappear due to a lack of successors," he said. "I think it will

deal a serious blow to Japanese culture and Japan's attractiveness as a tourism destination." Some feel though that the trend offers a chance to fix inefficiencies and consolidate small businesses that are barely scraping by or survive on subsidies. Hiroshi Miyaji, 50, owns Yashio Group, a logistics giant started by his grandfather, and has snapped up various businesses.

"There will always be buyers for firms, with or without successors, that have unique strengths, special know-how and human resources," said Miyaji, a third-generation president. Helped by BATONZ, he recently purchased a small trucking company from 61-year-old Ayako Suzuki.

'Waiting for someone'

Suzuki gave up her corporate career to help her father with the business he had started in 1975. None of the firm's three drivers wanted to take over and she was asked to join and help her father, then in his late eighties. But problems quickly piled up: the coronavirus pandemic hit, a driver left, trucks needed maintenance, and before long she was dipping into savings to stay afloat. "I wanted to keep the business going, at least while my father was alive," she told AFP. BATONZ connected her with Miyaji, who pledged to keep the firm's employees, clients and trucks.

"I'm more relieved than sad," she said.



TOKYO: This photo taken on May 1, 2023 shows chef and restaurant owner Rikuo Morimoto (left), who runs the restaurant 'Andante', chatting with former proprietor Shizuko Suzuki at the restaurant in Tokyo. — AFP

"I didn't think our company had any value." The glut of affordable small businesses can be a boon for young people looking to break into a sector.

Among them is 28-year-old chef Rikuo Morimoto. When the pandemic prevented him from studying in Italy, he used his savings to buy a four-decade-old diner in Tokyo and start a restaurant at a fraction of the normal cost. He kept the decor, furniture and many longstanding customers

of "Andante", a beloved neighborhood restaurant in the Sugunami district, while offering his own menu.

"I thought I could only afford to have a food truck or a small bar," he said. Not everyone is so fortunate, and the future of Hashimoto's machinery factory remains uncertain, despite his attempts to groom three successors. "I'm just waiting for someone to come along and make use of this," he said. — AFP

NBK warns customers against sharing OTP

KUWAIT: NBK's social media accounts publish awareness messages for followers about fraud schemes and protection tips. Reflecting its keenness to promote financial culture and raise awareness among the different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has launched an awareness campaign for customers about the different fraud schemes and protection tips. The campaign emphasizes that the best way to maintain account confidentiality is not to reveal the OTP, which is highly confidential information that may not be shared with anyone.

The campaign comes as part of NBK's ongoing intensified support of the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local

banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

NBK uses its social media accounts and all digital channels to urge customers and followers not to share their OTP with anyone, accentuating that the bank will not ask customers to share their OTP.

NBK is keen to warn customers against the risks of different fraud schemes by posting written and graphic messages on its digital channels, as well as re-posting the Central Bank's related messages to increase customers' awareness about how to avoid falling victim to fraudsters.

These awareness messages reaffirm that the bank will never ask customers for their personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them against responding to messages representing fraudulent attempts to obtain their banking information to steal their money or data. Launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and KBA, the "Let's Be Aware" campaign is the largest across the GCC region that aims to raise banking and financial



awareness among banks' customers, by covering a variety of highly important topics. NBK is a key supporter and partner in all Central Bank of Kuwait's initiatives and campaigns aiming to raise financial and banking awareness among all segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK frequently organizes different activities that help raise awareness about all topics related to the banking sector. It also organizes a wide range of activities and training courses on combating fraud and financial crime.

Grain, weapons and energy: Russia's presence in Africa

MOSCOW: Russia has over the past several years strengthened its presence in Africa, vowing to intensify grain exports, weapons deliveries and energy cooperation. The world's poorest continent is gaining importance for Russia, which has been isolated from Europe and the United States since launching its offensive in Ukraine in February last year.

Grain

Russia in July pulled out from the a deal that allowed Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea. The agreement had eased fears of a global food crisis triggered by the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, two major grain exporters.

It enabled the export of more than 32 million tons of Ukrainian grain over the last year. To answer African concerns triggered by the suspension of the deal, Russia positioned itself as an alternative supplier, even offering free deliveries. "I want to give assurances that our country is capable of replacing the Ukrainian grain both on a commercial and free-of-charge basis," Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

Russia exported 11.5 million tons of grain to Africa in 2022, and another 10 million tons in the first half of 2023. Around 25 percent of Russian exports to Africa consist of wheat and meslin — a mixture of cereals — said Pavel Kalmychek, a senior official at the Ministry of the Economy.

Wagner

Russian mercenary group Wagner has been seen for years as an armed extension of Moscow's influence in several African countries. Wagner fighters have been identified in Libya, Mali, Mozambique and Sudan as well as in the Central African Republic, where a Wagner executive manages the security of President Faustin Archange Touadera.

A European military source told AFP that Wagner was bringing back gold and minerals from Sudan, the Central African Republic and Mali, which then fed the Russian economy. But Wagner's failed revolt against Russia's conventional army raises uncertainties around the future of the group's operations overseas.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wagner's future in Africa was "above all up to the governments of the countries concerned."

Weapons

Russia has long-standing military agreements on the African continent dating back to Soviet times. Russia "continues and in some places increases military cooperation in Africa," a Russian source in the industry told AFP. The partnerships consist in "the modernization of weapons supplied since Soviet times" as well as next-generation equipment, the source said.



TRIPOLI: A worker arranges bags of wheat at a grain market in Libya's capital Tripoli on July 22, 2023. Russia issued a veiled warning over the future of grain exports via the Black Sea after refusing to extend a key agreement allowing safe passage for cargo ships from Ukrainian ports. — AFP

"Russia is working with all countries, even those that have traditionally worked in this area with France, the United States or Spain," according to the same source. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute said in a March 2023 report that African states received around 12 percent of Russian arms exports in 2018-2022. In 2021, however the Director of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Dmitry Shugaev said that arms deliveries to Africa accounted for 30-40 percent of arms exports. In 2019, Shugaev had estimated the arms exports portfolio to Africa was worth 14 billion dollars.

Energy

Russia also aims to export its expertise in terms of nuclear infrastructure. In 2022, Russian nuclear giant Rosatom started the construction of Egypt's first nuclear power station in El-Dabaa, on the Mediterranean coast. It also discussed the construction of small and floating nuclear power plants with a number of African states including Rwanda and Nigeria. Excluded from most of the Western market, Russia is reorienting its energy exports and pledged to "intensify" energy cooperation with Algeria. According to the Ministry of the Economy, around two-thirds of Russian investment in Africa involve the exploration and production of oil and gas, as well as uranium, diamonds, and other minerals. — AFP

Eurozone loan demand lowest since 2003

FRANKFURT: Demand for loans among eurozone companies fell to the lowest level since 2003, a key bank survey showed Tuesday, following sharp hikes in interest rates by the European Central Bank. The decline in the second quarter of 2023 was "substantially stronger than expected by banks," the ECB's quarterly bank lending survey found, with the indicator reaching its lowest measure since the series began two decades ago.

Rising interest rates and reduced investment needs were the main factors behind the latest drop,

the ECB said. The Frankfurt-based central bank has lifted borrowing costs at their fastest rate ever to combat red-hot inflation after Russia's war in Ukraine sent food and energy prices soaring. Key rates have risen by four percentage points since July last year, with the ECB's deposit rate now sitting at 3.50 percent — the marker's highest level since 2001.

The ECB is set to raise rates again at its next meeting on Thursday, with observers expecting another quarter-point hike. With the property market looking weak, eurozone banks also reported a decline in demand for housing loans, the ECB said, although the drop was smaller than in previous quarters.

Growing pessimism among households in the euro area likewise contributed to slipping consumer credit demand, the survey found. Banks further tightened their lending conditions, "reflecting the ongoing pass-through of higher market rates to lending rates for firms and households", the ECB said. — AFP

Spotify reports strong user growth, raises prices

STOCKHOLM: Spotify reported Tuesday a bigger-than-expected rise in active users at the end of the second quarter, a day after the music streaming giant announced price increases for its premium service.

The Swedish company, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, said total active users rose 27 percent to 551 million year-on-year, or 21 million more than it expected.

The number of paying subscribers also rose, with

a 17 percent jump to 220 million — three million more than expected. On Monday, the company announced it was raising its prices for premium subscribers "across a number of markets around the world," following in the footsteps of similar moves by competing music services from Apple and Amazon.

Despite the boost in users, Spotify reported a bigger operating loss of 247 million euros (\$273 million) in the second quarter, compared to a loss of 194 million euros for the same period a year earlier.

The company said it was "primarily impacted by charges related to our actions to streamline operations and reduce costs." In early June, Spotify announced it would be cutting some 200 positions working with podcasts. That move came after a January announcement that Spotify was cutting around 600 jobs — equaling about six percent of its workforce — following similar moves by other tech industry giants. — AFP

Lifestyle



Zoroastrian religious items are displayed at an exhibition at the Fire Temple of Yazd in central Iran.



A view of the Faravahar symbol on the facade of the Fire Temple of Yazd (Yazd Atash Bahram) in central Iran.



A Zoroastrian priest adds wood to the Atash Bahram ("Fire of Victory" or Eternal Flame) in the sanctum at the Fire Temple of Yazd.



Visitors look behind a metal fence as they view the exhibition at the Fire Temple of Yazd in central Iran.

IRAN'S ZOROASTRIANS keep ancient, sacred flame burning

A Zoroastrian priest dressed in white carefully added wood to a fire that has burned for centuries inside an Iranian temple, sacred to one of the world's oldest religions. The fragrant holy fire, kept in a large bronze goblet, "has been burning for more than 1,500 years", said Simin, a tour guide welcoming visitors to the Zoroastrian fire temple in Iran's central Yazd province. Zoroastrianism dates back some 3,500 years, but centuries of persecution have dwindled its numbers and a fast-changing modern world has left it struggling to adjust.



This picture shows a view of the facade of the Fire Temple of Yazd (Yazd Atash Bahram) in central Iran.-AFP photos

Founded by the prophet Zarathustra, it was the predominant religion of the ancient Persian empire, until the rise of Islam with the Arab conquests of the seventh century. Today, the Zoroastrian community is estimated at around 200,000 people who live mainly in Iran and India.

They venerate fire as a supreme form of purity. Alongside water, air and earth, the elements must not be contaminated by human activity, according to their faith. Only Zoroastrian priests are allowed in the Yazd sanctum, covering their faces to prevent vapor and breath from contaminating the sacred fire, as they take turns during the day to keep the flame burning. The fire "can never die out", said the tour guide. Visitors can only observe the rituals from behind tinted glass.

In Iran, Zoroastrian leaders say the community nowadays counts about 50,000 members. The latest national census, conducted in 2016 and excluding converts, put their number at 24,000.

Over the centuries, faithful have undergone forced conversions, with many of their temples destroyed, libraries set ablaze, and much of their cultural heritage lost. But "our religion still occupies a place in the history of the world, and it will continue to exist", said Bahram Demehri, a 76-year-old faithful from Yazd. "The essence of Zoroastrianism, like other religions, is based on monotheism, prophecy, belief in the afterlife and benevolence," he told AFP.

'Joy' at the core

Zoroastrians believe that "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" are the key to happiness and spirituality. A messiah called Saoshyant will one day return and save the world by fighting wrongs, they believe. Their teachings are embodied in Faravahar, an ancient symbol of a man emerging from a winged disc while holding a ring, which is carved on the pediments of ancient Persian temples.

"Joy is essential in the practice of our religion," Simin, the tour guide, noted, mentioning multiple religious celebrations. One of those festivals, Nowruz, marks the new Persian year and is celebrated to this day by Iran's overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim majority.

Tehran recognizes Zoroastrians as a religious minority, granting them freedom of worship and representation in parliament, which also reserves seats for other minorities including Armenians, Assyrians and Jews. Some other religious minorities, like followers of the Bahai faith—Iran's largest non-Muslim group—are not recognized by the state. But for Zoroastrians like Demehri, "the laws protect us", he said. "Zoroastrians are active members of Iranian society," and

include "university professors and government employees", Demehri added. They are, however, barred from careers in Iran's armed forces and cannot run for president.

Other traditions are challenged by modernity, with many followers scattered around the world. Among the community's most famous exiles is legendary Queen lead vocalist Freddie Mercury, born to a Zoroastrian family originally from India.

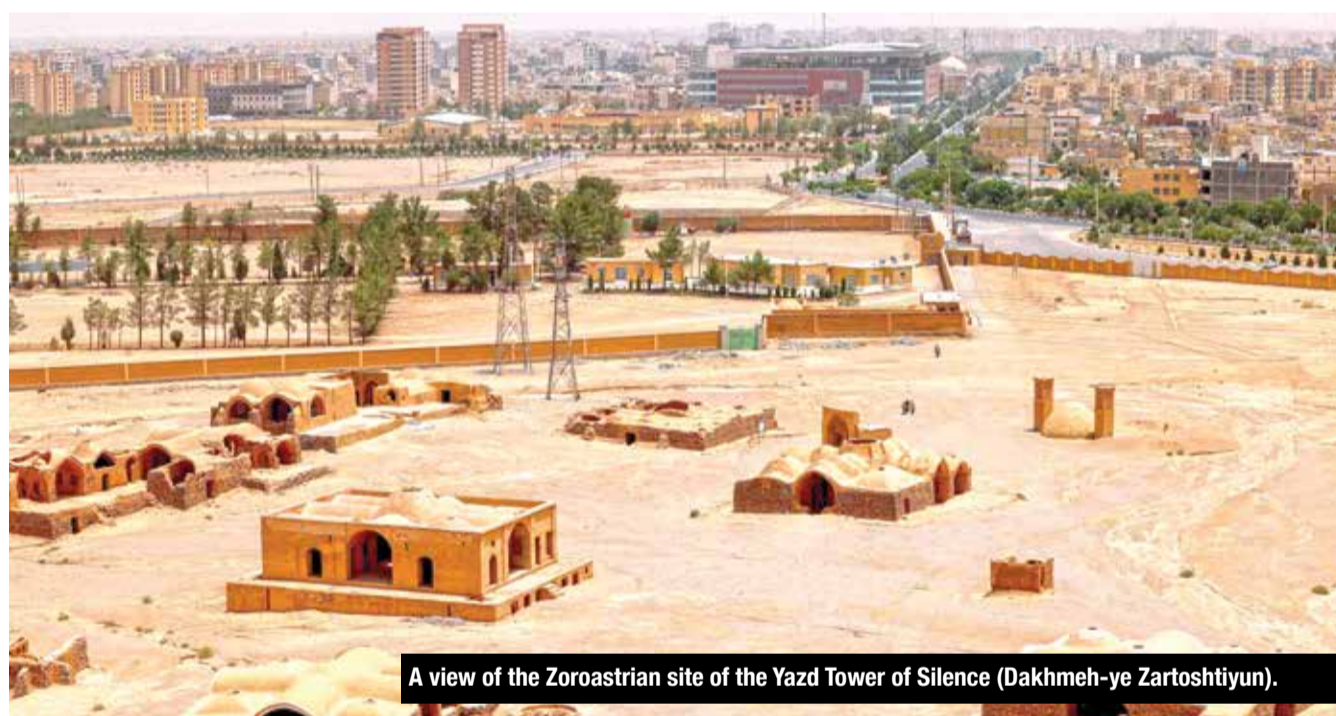
Zoroastrian priests have sought to open centers abroad, including in California in the United States, where a sizeable diaspora community lives. Demehri noted efforts to "modern-



Visitors walk at the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun), about 15 kilometres southeast of Yazd in central Iran.



A view of the top of the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun), about 15 kilometres southeast of Yazd in central Iran.



A view of the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun).

Waning traditions

Some Zoroastrian rituals were lost as followers were forced to practice their faith discreetly. A funerary rite known as "dakhma" was banned in Iran since the late 1960s for sanitary reasons. It in-

clude the rites" and simplify them for younger generations. "It is difficult to ask young people who love pizza to eat our traditional tasteless bread during celebrations," he said.—AFP

ize the rites" and simplify them for younger generations. "It is difficult to ask young people who love pizza to eat our traditional tasteless bread during celebrations," he said.—AFP



A general view of the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun).



Visitors view from behind a glass window the Atash Bahram ("Fire of Victory" or Eternal Flame) in the sanctum at the Fire Temple of Yazd in central Iran.



A woman carries a child viewing sign with an illustration explaining the Faravahar symbol as they visit the Fire Temple of Yazd in central Iran.



Visitors stand at the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun).



A guard in camouflage fatigues uses a phone at the Zoroastrian site of the Yazd Tower of Silence (Dakhme-ye Zartoshtiyun).

Lifestyle



Chef Tue Nguyen presents a bowl of her Didi fried rice at her soon-to-open first restaurant, called Di Di (Let's Go! in Vietnamese), in West Hollywood, California. — AFP photos



Chef Tue Nguyen cooks her Didi Fried Rice in the kitchen of her soon-to-open first restaurant, called Di Di (Let's Go! in Vietnamese).



Chef Tue Nguyen displays her Didi Fried Rice and Beef Carpaccio outside her soon-to-open first restaurant, called Di Di (Let's Go! in Vietnamese).

TIKTOK CHEF whips up real-life Los Angeles restaurant after virtual success

Tue Nguyen became a TikTok star by posting videos of herself cooking Vietnamese dishes during the pandemic. With lockdowns over, the young chef has leapt from the virtual to the real world to open her first restaurant near Los Angeles. "I think that's always kind of been like a dream," Nguyen, 25, told AFP recently at Di Di, her restaurant in the vibrant suburb of West Hollywood. "But... I honestly didn't know that it would come this fast." Nguyen attended culinary school to learn the basics of the craft, but says she truly mastered gastronomy when she tapped into her heritage.

"I genuinely didn't learn how to cook until... I really looked back at what I grew up with. And that's the taste of my mom's cooking." Nguyen, who immigrated to the United States from Vietnam with her family as a child, credits her mother and stepfather as her main influences in the kitchen. "They remind me every time that I'm in the kitchen to cook, to make good food and to trust your taste," Nguyen said.

'Find my taste in the kitchen'

Known on social media as @TwayDaBae, Nguyen first started posting mukbangs, or videos in which people livestream themselves eating. But it was her cooking videos that made her



Chef Tue Nguyen carries dishes in her soon-to-open first restaurant, called Di Di (Let's Go! in Vietnamese).

genuinely popular on platforms like TikTok. Nguyen began posting on social media just for fun, but she quickly saw that people had an appetite not only for eating but also for learning to recreate the food themselves.

"And that was when I realized okay... I'm going to take this opportunity as a way for me to not only learn but

also develop like my style of cooking... and find my taste in the kitchen." Unlike other chefs who rise to restaurant fame before they become media celebrities, Nguyen tried the opposite approach and began bringing her online dishes to the real world at pop-up restaurant venues.

The location of her first appearance

is where she later opened Di Di. With hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, and millions of likes on her videos, Nguyen doesn't think sharing her recipes with the world will hurt her restaurant business. "A lot of times my recipes online are very easy to follow," Nguyen said. "Here," Nguyen said of Di Di, "it's more polished."

'My story, my heart'

Filled with huge armchairs and golden lamps and decorated with tropical plants, Di Di—the Vietnamese phrase for "Let's go"—opened its doors on Thursday. Nguyen, who takes care of every detail at Di Di, describes her cooking style as a blend of the techniques she learned in culinary school and the taste of her mother's cooking she grew up with.

Nguyen hopes this personal brand will help her succeed in the competitive Los Angeles gastronomic scene. "I have my story. I have my heart. That is really what makes this place special, she says. "This restaurant is about just celebrating the culture that raised me and a picture I'm really proud of."—AFP



A person looks at the Tik Tok account of Chef Tue Nguyen, (@twaydabae) in Los Angeles.



Journalists take footage as Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, charged after a climate action in the Norra hamnen neighborhood in Malmo, waits for the start of her trial at the District Court in Malmo, Sweden.



Climate activist Greta Thunberg is carried away by police officers after she took part in a new climate action in Oljehamnen in Malmo, Sweden. — AFP photos

Police remove Greta Thunberg from protest hours after fine

Swedish police removed climate campaigner Greta Thunberg from a protest on Monday, an AFP photographer reported, hours after a court fined her for disobeying law enforcement at a rally last month. The 20-year-old activist, who has become a key face of the movement to fight climate change, had earlier in the day appeared in court, accused of disrupting traffic and refusing to leave a June protest in port city Malmo.

"It's correct that I was at that place on that day, and it's correct that I received an order that I didn't listen to, but I want to deny the crime," Thunberg told the court when asked about the charge against her. Thunberg said she had acted out of necessity, citing the urgency created by the "climate crisis".

The rally, organized by environmental activist group Reclaim the Future, tried to block the entrance and exit to the Malmo harbor to protest against the use of fossil fuels. "According to me we are in an emergency, and then due to that my action was legitimate," she told reporters after the trial.

Not backing down

After a short trial, the court found her guilty and issued a fine of 1,500

kronor (\$144) plus an additional 1,000 kronor to the Swedish fund for victims of crime. The crime she was convicted of can carry a maximum sentence of six months in prison, but usually these types of charges result in fines. Asked if she would exercise more caution in the future following her fine, Thunberg said they were "definitely not going to back down".

"We know that we cannot save the world by playing by the rules because the laws have to be changed," the activist said. "It is absurd that the ones acting in line with the science, the ones blocking the fossil fuel industry are the ones having to pay the price for it," she added. Hours later, Thunberg joined a protest similar to the one in June that resulted in her being fined. Sitting on the road leading to the Malmo port, she put out a sign reading "I block tanker trucks".

Same crime

After about an hour, Thunberg and five others were forcibly removed by police, an AFP photographer at the port reported. "Six people have been removed from the scene," police said in a statement, adding they would be reported for "Disobeying police or-

ders", the same crime Thunberg had just been fined over. Thunberg shot to global fame after starting her "School Strike for the Climate" in front of Sweden's parliament in Stockholm at the age of 15.

She and a small band of youths founded the Fridays for Future movement, which quickly became a global phenomenon. In addition to her climate strikes, the young activist regularly lambasts governments and politicians for not properly addressing climate issues. Reclaim the Future insists that despite the legal pressures, it remains unbowed in its determination to stand up to the fossil fuels industry.

"If the court chooses to see our action as a crime it may do so, but we know we have the right to live and the fossil fuels industry stands in the way of that," group spokeswoman Irma Kjellstrom told AFP. Six people present at the June protest have or will face charges at the court in Malmo. "We young people are not going to wait but will do what we can to stop this industry which is burning our lives," she said, explaining the group's plans for continuing civil disobedience.—AFP

Jamie Foxx says medical scare put him through 'hell and back'

Oscar-winning US actor Jamie Foxx said an unspecified medical emergency that thrust his health into the spotlight earlier this year sent him to "hell and back" but that he was finally able to work again. "I went through something that I thought I would never ever go through," Foxx said in an Instagram message posted overnight Friday to Saturday. He still did not say what went wrong with his health.

In the post, the 55-year-old was rushed to a medical facility in the state of Georgia, where he was filming a Netflix movie. No details on his medical condition were divulged, leading to speculation that the "Django Unchained" star could have a serious health issue.



But Foxx, at one point teary-eyed, dispelled rumors in the Instagram post, explaining that he had been avoiding the spotlight while recovering. "I didn't want you to see me with tubes running out of me and trying to figure out if I was going to make it through," he said. "I went to hell and back and my road to recovery had some potholes as well." Crossing his eyes comically, he showed viewers that "the eyes are working just fine," before also moving his arm to demonstrate he wasn't paralyzed.

In the post, Foxx vowed that he was "coming back and I'm able to work." In May, his daughter Corinne confirmed he had been out of the hospital for weeks, even playing pickleball.

"If you see me out from now on and every once and a while I just burst into tears, it's because it's been tough, man," the actor said. "I was sick, man. But now I've got my legs under me, so you're gonna see me out." Foxx, an actor, comedian and Grammy-winning singer, won an Academy Award in 2005 for the Ray Charles musical biopic "Ray," and was also Oscar-nominated for "Collateral" that same year. —AFP

Top films to fill Venice festival but on-strike celebs may stay away

Emma Stone as a Frankenstein-like creature and biopics of Priscilla Presley and Enzo Ferrari will premiere at next month's Venice Film Festival, organizers said Tuesday, although a Hollywood actors strike could keep top stars away. The 80th edition of the prestigious festival on the beach-lined Lido could be a more toned-down affair this year with fewer A-listers on the red carpet due to the first industry-wide walkout in more than 60 years that has effectively shut down Hollywood.

But although many US actors and actresses may have to stay away, the impact of the strike on the event running from August 30 to September 9 has so far been "very modest", the festival's artistic director, Alberto Barbera, told journalists, with only one film pulling out entirely.

Talent working in independent films, which are not linked to the big studios, may still come to promote their latest work at the festival, he said, in announcing the official lineup. "So we hope the red carpet won't be as empty as some have stated in recent days," said Barbera. Among the 23 films competing for the top Golden Lion prize is Bradley Cooper's "Maestro" about legendary conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein.

Barbera described the film as a "biography of an extraordinary genius" that focuses on Bernstein's tormented relationship with his wife, played by Carey Mulligan. It was not clear if director Cooper, who also plays the lead role, will be able to attend. Venice has increasingly become a launchpad for Oscar contenders, including recent winners such as "Joker", "La La Land" and "A Star is Born", with shots of celebrities arriving by gondola making for priceless PR.

Stone is not likely to appear for "Poor Things" in which she again teams up with Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos ("The Favourite"), playing a woman brought back to life by an eccentric scientist.—AFP

Lifestyle



Yuan Meng is pictured inside a transportation box at the Beauval zoo in Saint-Aignan, Central France.



People gather along the way as the truck carrying away Yuan Meng leaves the Beauval zoo in Saint-Aignan, Central France before the panda is transported to Roissy airport to fly to Chengdu in Southwest China's Sichuan province. --AFP photos



Caretakers gather around the transportation box carrying away Yuan Meng at the Beauval zoo in Saint-Aignan, Central France.

Fond farewell as first France-born panda heads to China

The first giant panda to have been born in France received an emotional send-off on Tuesday as he left his French zoo ahead of the long haul flight back to his ancestral China. Yuan Meng, who was born in 2017 in the Beauval zoo in the Loire region of France, was cheered by visitors and zoo staff as he was driven under police escort to Charles de Gaulle airport for a 12 hour China Airlines flight to the Chinese city of Chengdu. Trained for several days to get ready comfortably for the trip, the son of Yuan Zi and Huan Huan—the first pandas loaned to France by the Chinese authorities in 2012 -- did not show much hesitation in climbing into his special cage filled with bamboo for his trip.

“Everything went well. He said goodbye to his parents and his sisters, with tears in the eyes of his keepers,” said Rodolphe Delord, head of the zoo. “He can now continue to live his good life. It’s inevitably a moment of emotion, but all our animals born here are forced to leave one day. We’re used to that,” he added.

Hundreds of fans of the black and white bear braved morning rain to bid farewell to the winsome ursine. “It’s still sad, we got attached to the pandas. But we know he’ll be better off there, for the good of the species,” said Caroline Bernard. Her daughter Lilou, nine, was less sanguine. “I cried, I am sad he is leaving. But I am trying to tell myself that he will be better off there. It’s for his own good,” she said, her eyes red with tears.

In Chengdu, the panda will be transferred to a panda reproduction centre, with the job of helping to keep his species in existence. China has long deployed so-called panda diplomacy with friends and even foes ranging from the US to Taiwan, gifting the animals to various countries, often to further its foreign policy aims. Beijing only loans pandas to foreign zoos, which must usually return any offspring within a few years of their birth to join the country’s breeding program. There are an estimated 1,860 giant pandas left in the wild, mainly in bamboo forests in the mountains of China, according to environmental group WWF. There are about 600 in captivity in panda centers, zoos and wildlife parks around the world. —AFP



Yuan Meng is pictured inside a transportation box at the Beauval zoo in Saint-Aignan, Central France.

Toronto film fest unveils packed lineup despite strikes

The Toronto International Film Festival, North America’s largest, on Monday unveiled an A-list lineup of world premieres amid the Hollywood strikes, including movies starring Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Seth Rogen. The festival, which has been a launchpad for numerous Oscar-winning movies, is moving ahead with plans for its September 7-17 event in the face of doubts over whether the big names will come to promote their work.

The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) is on strike in a battle with studios over pay and other work conditions—meaning that its members generally cannot promote films produced by studios and streamers involved in the dispute. But SAG-AFTRA negotiator Duncan Crabtree-Ireland told Hollywood news outlet Deadline that actors could benefit from some kind of “interim agreement” to head to Toronto in support of independent features.

On the list of world premieres slated for TIFF are several expected award contenders including “Dumb Money,” starring Rogen and Paul Dano, about the amateur investors who turned GameStop into a Wall Street phenomenon in 2021. De Niro stars in actor Tony Goldwyn’s “Ezra,” about a man (Bobby Cannavale) who moves back in with his father (De Niro) after blowing up his career and marriage.

Other world premieres include Taika Waititi’s sports comedy “Next Goal Wins,” French filmmaker Ladj Ly’s drama “Les Indesirables,” Atom Egoyan’s “Seven Veils” starring Amanda Seyfried and Michael Keaton’s “Knox Goes Away,” starring Pacino. Also on tap is the international premiere of awards hopeful “The Holdovers” from director Alexander Payne (“Sideways”) about a teacher (Paul Giamatti) tasked with supervising students at a boarding school who cannot go home for Christmas break.

TIFF CEO Cameron Bailey said in a statement that the lineup showcased a “rich tapestry of talent, vision, and storytelling.” The Toronto film fest is a key part of the fall festival lineup, along with Venice and Telluride, at which movies hoping to build early Oscars momentum typically hold lavish premieres. —AFP



Ekaterina Germanovich prepares a cake at her house in Montevideo.



Ekaterina Germanovich watches herself cooking on a screen during the final broadcast of the Uruguayan reality television broadcast Bake Off Uruguay: El Gran Pastelero (Bake Off Uruguay: The Great Baker).

War ‘pain’ to pastries: New path for Russia ex-diplomat in Uruguay

In Uruguay, thousands of kilometers from the war waged by her country of nationality on her country of birth, Ukrainian-born Russian diplomat Ekaterina Germanovich saw her life changed irrevocably by the conflict. Renouncing her job as economic counselor at the Russian embassy in Montevideo in protest at Moscow’s invasion, she carved out a new path: finding solace in baking and winning a national competition. In an interview with AFP after becoming a celebrity in the small South American country, Germanovich described the war as “a pain that will never go away.”



“The war has polarized people. It is a rupture that will take decades to repair... Families were broken, separated,” she said at her home in Montevideo. Born 40 years ago in Zaporizhzhia, then part of the Soviet Union but now in Ukraine, she settled as a child with her parents and siblings in Moscow. She has only Russian citizenship. Germanovich spent her childhood holidays in Ukraine and has family in both countries.

But many of those ties have now been broken. “In Ukraine, any contact with people in Russia is seen as treason, and it’s the same on the Russian side,” she told AFP. “Some of our relatives in Ukraine stopped talking to us for being Russian.”



Ukrainian-born Russian diplomat Ekaterina Germanovich (right) reacts after winning the Uruguayan reality television broadcast Bake Off Uruguay: El Gran Pastelero (Bake Off Uruguay: The Great Baker) in Montevideo.—AFP photos

atives in Ukraine stopped talking to us for being Russian.”

From depression to dessert

Outraged by the war that Russian leader Vladimir Putin described as a “special military invasion,” Germanovich said she resigned her post in Montevideo in March 2022 -- days after the invasion. “I had a very promising career. But I found it impossible to continue representing a government that is bombing my country of origin,” Germanovich, who speaks seven languages, said she struggled to find other work after ending a 10-year diplomatic career and entered “a depression.”

Then, encouraged by a friend, she signed up for “Bake Off Uruguay,” a televised competition with prizes worth 600,000 pesos (nearly \$16,000). On July 12, she was proclaimed the victor from among 14 competitors. Her bak-

ing, she said, is largely inspired by traditional recipes from her Ukrainian maternal grandmother, who passed away during the competition.

She will soon open a dessert kitchen at a friend’s sushi restaurant, and hopes to one day have her own tea house. Germanovich, who is pregnant with her third child, said she was not scared to speak out, but had no plans to return to Russia “in the coming years.”

She does not want to risk the future of her two sons, especially the oldest, 16, by taking them to a country where military service is mandatory for all nationals from the age of 18. “I don’t know what will happen if I travel to Russia,” she said. “Some people tell me: ‘It’s no big deal, nothing will happen to you.’ But I spoke out publicly against the war.”—AFP



Ekaterina Germanovich (right) takes a selfie with fellow contestants during the final broadcast of the Uruguayan reality television broadcast Bake Off Uruguay: El Gran Pastelero (Bake Off Uruguay: The Great Baker).

Sports

India clinch fifth consecutive series triumph in West Indies

Umpires abandon the day's play

PORT OF SPAIN: India clinched a fifth consecutive series triumph in the West Indies on Monday when the second and final Test of their series ended as a draw with no play possible because of rain on the final day. West Indies closed day four at 76 for two having been set a daunting victory target of 365 to square the series at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad. However early showers put paid to any prospect of play in the morning and when they returned with greater intensity in the afternoon, the umpires were left with no option but to abandon the day's play and the end of the Test match and the series.

Mohammed Siraj, whose Test-best figures of five for 60 in the West Indies first innings opened the door to victory for India on the fourth morning, was named "Player of the Match". "There was no help for fast bowlers on this wicket and when you get success like this in these conditions it gives you confidence," said Siraj via an interpreter on receiving the award. "I had simple plans and just executed them. The captain just asked me to keep on doing what I have been doing before."

For his skipper, Rohit Sharma, the disappointment of not being able to push for victory on the last day to earn a 2-0 sweep was tempered by the satisfaction of seeing this team succeed without key performers in the bowling department. "It was really pleasing to see how Siraj has led the attack in the absence of (Jaspri) Bumrah and (Mohammed) Shami," he observed. "We have been playing really good Test cricket and I hope we can contin-

ue to do that. It's great to see how everyone has been ready to play their role, like yesterday when we needed quick runs."

'A lot of belief'

For Kraigg Brathwaite, the captain of a West Indies team that last defeated India in a Test match in May 2002, it was yet another case of fishing for positives in a sea of setbacks. "The key from here is obviously to be consistent," said the opening batsman in what has become a familiar refrain after every failed campaign. "We will continue to work on our game, but it is encouraging to see the emergence of Alick (Athanaze) and Kirk (McKenzie) in the middle-order. I think these two guys have the promise and they are the future. I have a lot of belief in these two." India won the first Test in Dominica by an innings and 141 runs — a record margin of success for them in the Caribbean — in three days.

While India would have been satisfied in some measure with the 1-0 series success, adding to previous triumphs in 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2019, they would have been disappointed to miss out on the chance to earn maximum points at the start of the new cycle of the World Test Championship. Both teams now adjust their squads for the white ball leg of the tour with the first of three One-Day Internationals to be played at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Thursday, followed by five T20 Internationals, the last two of which will be played at Lauderhill in Florida, the United States. — AFP



PORT OF SPAIN: Mohammed Siraj (right), of India, celebrates the dismissal of Shannon Gabriel, of West Indies, during the second Test cricket match between India and West Indies at Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. — AFP

Arendse recalled as Springboks make 9 changes for Pumas

JOHANNESBURG: Star winger Kurt-Lee Arendse has been recalled as South Africa make nine changes to the starting line-up for a Rugby Championship match against Argentina in Johannesburg on Saturday. Arendse scored three tries — raising his total to 10 in eight appearances for the Springboks — in a 43-12 win over Australia in the first round of the southern hemisphere competition in July. But the former sevens star was omitted from the matchday 23 the following weekend, and the world champions crashed 35-20 away to greatest rivals New Zealand.

Makazole Mapimpi, a 2019 World Cup winner who replaced Arendse for the second-round game, performed poorly against the All Blacks, especially in aerial contests. Arendse replacing Mapimpi is one of four changes in the backline with veteran outside centre Jesse Kriel, fly-half Manie Libbok and scrum-half Grant Williams also promoted. Centre Lukhanyo Am, fly-half Damian Willemse and scrum-half Faf de Klerk drop to the bench and there is no place for Mapimpi, scorer of a try in the 2019 World Cup final triumph over England.

South Africa will field a new back row for the clash with the Pumas as captain and No.8 Duane Vermeulen and flankers Pieter-Steph du Toit and Marco van Staden are selected. Vermeulen is standing in as skipper for Siya Kolisi, who is recovering from a knee injury he suffered last April. The Springboks camp is hoping that World Cup-winning captain Kolisi will be fit to face Wales and or New Zealand during August in warm-up matches for the global showpiece. Fly-half Handre Pollard, who kicked 22 points in the last World Cup final, and prop Ox Nche are also injured. Of the loose trio that started in Auckland, Kwagga Smith is on the bench but there is no room for Jasper Wiese and Franco Mostert.

'Quality team'

Lock Marvin Orie replaces Lood de Jager and Malcolm Marx starts as hooker with Bongani Mbonambi now on the bench. Entering the third and final round of the Rugby Championship this weekend, title-holders New Zealand have nine points, South Africa five, Argentina four and Australia one. "This is a quality team that will offer us the skills we need against Argentina," said head coach Jacques Nienaber. "It also contains a good balance of experience and youth, which is vital as we build toward the Rugby World Cup. "There are only four more matches before we kick off our World Cup campaign so it is a fine balancing act to give all the players a chance to stake a claim for places.

"We also want to select teams that we believe are best equipped for the opposition we will face, and are pleased with the way we have managed that process up to now. "The result in New Zealand was bitterly disappointing, but we came into the season with a plan that will hopefully allow us to select the best possible squad for the World Cup and peak at the right time." Seeking a record fourth World Cup title in the September 8-October 28 tournament in France, South Africa are in Pool B with Scotland, Romania, Ireland and Tonga. Pool winners and runners-up qualify for the quarter-finals and South Africa and Ireland, currently the top-ranked Test team, are favored to qualify for the knockout stages. — AFP

Indian captain slammed for 'deplorable' behavior

NEW DELHI: India women's cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur was criticized on Tuesday for being a bad example after she smashed the stumps and took a verbal swipe at umpires in a match against Bangladesh. Media reports said Kaur could be fined 75 percent of her match fee and is also in danger of a two-game suspension for her behavior in the one-day international, which ended in a rare tie on Saturday. Kaur hit the stumps after being given out on 14 and later said the umpiring was "pathetic".

She was then heard telling her opposite number Nigar Sultana to invite the umpires on stage after

Ukrainians united against IOC stance, question boycott

PARIS: Ukrainian athletes are steadfast in their condemnation of the IOC permitting Russians to compete in sports events but some are at odds with their government over the threat to boycott the 2024 Paris Olympics. With no end in sight to the hostilities since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine and with a year to go to the start of the Paris Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has yet to decide whether competitors from Russia and its ally Belarus can compete under a neutral flag.

Olha Saladukha, Ukraine's 2011 triple jump world champion and now a lawmaker, prays that her compatriots are not presented with an ultimatum. "I hope that neither the IOC nor the French government will force us to make a difficult choice: boycott the Games or shake hands with those who have the blood of Ukrainians on them," Saladukha told AFP.

Talented 800 meters runner Dmytro Kovalchuk is one of the many Ukrainian athletes who have fought on the frontline. His faint hopes of competing in Par-

Paris Olympics organizers face challenges

PARIS: The Paris Olympics begin with a spectacular ceremony on July 26, 2024 but with a year to go, organizers face a series of challenges.

Security concerns

Organizers will pray there is no repeat next summer of the riots that raged around France earlier this month after a policeman shot dead a 17-year-old youth at a traffic stop. International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach said this month he was sure the Paris Olympics would take place "in a peaceful environment", even though much of the trouble flared in parts of the French capital where Games events will take place next year. "We can note that these riots were not related to the Olympic Games in any respect," Bach told reporters. "We can feel the great support of the French people for these Olympic Games. So we are very confident that the Games can and will happen in a peaceful environment," Bach added.

Shadow of Ukraine war

With no end to the war in Ukraine in sight, the issue of whether Ukrainian and Russian competitors can compete side-by-side at the Paris Olympics remains unresolved and highly sensitive. Ukraine's sports minister has threatened to boycott if Russian competitors are allowed to take part, although many potential Ukrainian Olympians are now questioning that stance. IOC chief Bach's instruction to sports federations that Russians and their Belarusian allies should be allowed

to compete in qualifying events for the Olympics has angered many Ukrainian sportspeople. Bach argues that denying Russian competitors the right to compete because of their government's actions is tantamount to denying them their human rights. "It seems to me the entire sports community is shouting that Russian athletes have no place at the Olympics, and Bach stubbornly ignores the opinion of the majority," Anna Ryzhykova, a three-time European Championships 400m hurdles medalist, told AFP. If Russians do compete in Paris, it will undoubtedly be as a 'neutral' team without official team colors.

the post-match presentation, forcing the Bangladesh players to opt out of a joint photo session. "I have been watching cricket for a long time, but have never seen anyone behave that way India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur did after the game," former women's captain Diana Edulji wrote in her column in the Indian Express on Tuesday. "She has set a bad example for her teammates. I say that because juniors look up to seniors and this, over a period of time, can impact the team culture," Edulji said.

"It was deplorable to see Harmanpreet call the umpires to pose with the Bangladesh team, suggesting that they were part of the team and playing for them." Indian men's World Cup winner Madan Lal also blasted Kaur. "Harmanpreet's behavior against the Bangladesh women's team was pathetic," Lal tweeted. "She is not bigger than the game. She got a very bad name for Indian cricket. BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) should take very strict disciplinary action." — AFP



Mumbai Indians' captain Harmanpreet Kaur



Ukraine's Olha Saladukha

ugee team and compete at the Olympics."

However, two athletes with hopes of being in Paris agree with tennis player Lesia Tsurenko who told AFP in June it was best for Ukrainians to beat the Russians on "any field." Tennis has allowed Russians and Belarusians onto the international circuit, often facing Ukrainian opponents who refuse to shake hands after matches in protest. Track and field athletes have not had that dilemma as World Athletics is one of the few federations to have rejected the IOC's recommendation. — AFP



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

Opening ceremony

The unprecedented opening ceremony on the River Seine will set the tone for the Games. Instead of the traditional setting in a stadium, the teams will parade down the river on 115 boats, with the spectacular backdrop of the Eiffel Tower and the Paris landmarks and up to half a million spectators lining the river. "It will be a little bit like the signature of Paris 2024," the head of the Games' local organizing committee, Tony Estanguet, said. The nature of the ceremony also presents heightened security challenges — security forces have underlined the threat from drones. — AFP

Sports

PSG draw with Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Japan friendly

PSG to play Cerezo Osaka on Friday

OSAKA: Paris Saint-Germain's Japan tour started with a whimper on Tuesday as they played out a 0-0 draw with Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Osaka. Japanese fans flocked to stadiums to see Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar strut their stuff in a series of friendlies for PSG last year, but none of that trio was on show this time around. Messi has departed for Major League Soccer side Inter Miami and Neymar has been out with a knee injury since February and only just returned to full training.

Mbappe was sensationally left out of the squad on the eve of PSG's departure for Asia, with his future at the club in doubt. Carlos Soler tried an ambitious free-kick from distance in just the second minute in Osaka, but Al Nassr goalkeeper Nawaf Alaqidi was equal to the attempt. Noha Lemina broke in behind for PSG 20 minutes later but saw his effort skew wide of the near post. The biggest reactions from the relatively modest crowd of 25,432 in the first half were reserved for a couple of Ronaldo efforts.

The first saw him denied from six yards by Gianluigi Donnarumma before an acrobatic overhead kick went wide of the target - although it wouldn't have counted because he was offside. The second half was broken up by a slew of substitutions by both sides, with Ronaldo departing after 66 minutes. Neither team was able to make a breakthrough, although PSG youngster Ilyes Housni looked lively after coming on and went close on a couple of occasions. PSG will next play Cerezo Osaka on Friday, before travelling to Tokyo to take on Inter Milan. Al Nassr will face Inter in Osaka on Thursday. — AFP



OSAKA: Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo (left) fights for the ball with Paris Saint-Germain's Marquinhos during the friendly football match between France's Paris Saint-Germain and Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr at Nagai Stadium on July 25, 2023. — AFP

Crystal Palace pay fond farewell to 'talismán' Zaha

LONDON: Ivory Coast international Wilfried Zaha, who has signed for Turkish champions Galatasaray, has been labeled Crystal Palace's "talismán and greatest player" by the Premier League club's chairman Steve Parish. The 30-year-old forward joined Galatasaray on a free transfer after turning down a new contract with Palace and will receive a signing-on fee of 2.35 million euros (\$2.6 million) and an annual salary of 4.35 million euros, the Turkish club said.

Zaha had been offered a reported £200,000 (\$256,000) a week from the London club whom he joined aged 12. He has scored 90 goals in 458 games for Palace and was sent on loan to the club twice during an unhappy two-year hiatus at Manchester United. Parish called Zaha "our talismán, our greatest player" and said he "remains a true inspiration for all our young players in the academy". "We would not be the club we are today without Wilfried," he added.

Palace manager Roy Hodgson - who capped Zaha twice when he was England head coach before the player switched allegiance to the country of his birth - said he would be a huge loss. "I was really sad to hear that Wilf has decided to leave and start a new chapter in his footballing life," said Hodgson. "The club is losing an iconic figure and although we regret that it has not been possible to persuade Wilfried to stay longer, we can only wish the very best of luck to him and his family." Zaha's first spell with Palace drew the attention of Manchester United, who signed him for £10 million in 2013.



Ivorian striker Wilfried Zaha

However, he never settled at Old Trafford, playing just twice, and aside from the two loan spells with Palace also went on loan to Cardiff. He re-joined Palace permanently in 2015 but decided that despite being offered almost double what he will earn at Galatasaray it was time to cut the ties

with the club. "I want to thank Steve Parish, all of my team-mates, coaches and the entire Palace fanbase for always believing in me and encouraging me to get to where I am today," Zaha wrote before his move was announced. "I have been blessed to play in front of you and call you family from the day you accepted me. From the bottom of my heart, I'm forever grateful." — AFP

Chelsea's Fleming set to return in Canada World Cup boost

PERTH: Canada's bid to ignite their Women's World Cup campaign is set to be boosted by the return of Chelsea midfielder Jessie Fleming for the clash with Ireland on Wednesday. The Olympic champions started their tournament sluggishly after being held to a goalless draw by Nigeria. With Fleming on the sidelines with a calf injury, Canada failed to create many clear opportunities and had to settle for a point in a tight Group B headlined by co-hosts Australia. But having taken part in Canada's training session in Perth on Monday, where her right calf was taped, Fleming is tipped to start against Ireland.

"Jessie fully trained yesterday," Canada coach Bev Priestman told reporters Tuesday. "We have one more session before tomorrow, but I would expect Jessie to be available," she said of Fleming, Canada's player of the year in 2021 and 2022. Canada will face a gritty Ireland who impressed on their World Cup debut against Australia in front of 75,000 fans in Sydney. Australia won 1-0 thanks to a penalty but were holding on at the end.

Ireland also have fitness issues with defender Louise Quinn facing a race against time to recover from a foot injury sustained against Australia.

The 33-year-old centre-back arrived in Perth wearing a protective boot on her left foot. "We're a bit concerned, we think she can play. She's going to train, we'll see how far she gets," Ireland coach Vera Pauw said. "The injury is not straightforward... reliant on how she reacts to this final training session. "Plan B is ready (if Quinn doesn't play)." The odds appear against underdog Ireland but Priestman was not under-

estimating them. "They're a team full of heart, spirit and passion," she said of the Irish. "They are very well-drilled and difficult to break down. "We've got to respect Ireland. By no means are we going into this game thinking this is going to be an easy game."

With damp conditions forecast for Perth for the night fixture, Canada face a challenge in penetrating Ireland's defensive might. "It is about moving the ball to break down that really solid block they've got," Priestman said. "It's trying to keep the tempo of the game and not be lured into that sort of rhythm." With the team's ongoing labor dispute with Canada Soccer "pretty much done", according to Priestman, Canada are focused on getting their campaign back on track and understand the significance of notching a victory. "We absolutely don't want to leave this pitch tomorrow without those three points," she said. "It's an unbelievable opportunity for us to take a step forward." — AFP

US team liberated after winning equal pay battle: Morgan

AUCKLAND: Alex Morgan said Tuesday her United States team felt liberated after winning their fight for equal pay and can now focus on pursuing an unprecedented third straight Women's World Cup crown. One of the best-known players in women's football, the 34-year-old hopes that other national teams will also eventually win their own battles for pay parity. "Any time you take your focus off playing and what your job is, that is distractions that are unnecessary," the forward told reporters in Auckland.

"So not having distractions like having to fight for equal pay and working conditions moving forward, at all, ever again, it feels really good. "I hope that will soon be the case for all of the players around the world at international level." The US team, led by their highest-profile names like Morgan, Megan Rapinoe and Carli Lloyd, filed a complaint several years ago against the US Soccer Federation alleging wage discrimination. Their fight eventually led to a landmark collective-bargaining deal that was announced in May 2022 and meant the US men's and women's teams would evenly share World Cup prize money.

Prize money from FIFA is not the same for the Women's World Cup as for the men's. The total prize pot for this year's tournament in Australia and New Zealand is \$152 million, which is triple the figure from four years ago. The figure for the men's tournament in Qatar last year was \$440 million, with the United States men's team pocketing \$13 million for reaching the last 16. Numerous other women's national teams are fighting for the same conditions, with the Canadians threatening to go on strike earlier this year in a row over pay, funding and contractual issues.

Rerun of 2019 final
The US team's triumphant campaign at the World Cup in France in 2019 was played out with that off-field battle looming over them. Chants of "Equal Pay" rang out from the stands after they beat the Netherlands 2-0 in the final. "Where we were in 2019 to where we are now is almost the same but also couldn't be more different," said Morgan as she and her team prepare to face the Dutch again on Thursday.

"We were fighting a legal battle off the field and trying to also win over the world's hearts and minds and prove ourselves. "This time around we don't have to worry about anything off the field. "That feels really good and we have to do the work each time we step on the field. "US Soccer has done a great job in supporting us and that is not the case with a lot of other federations around the world." Morgan, appearing at her fourth World Cup, had a penalty saved as the USA began their campaign in New Zealand with a 3-0 win over Vietnam on Saturday. The Netherlands beat Portugal 1-0 in their first outing in Group E, setting up the rerun of the 2019 final nicely. "We watched the Netherlands the other night and they have a lot of the same players as when we played them four years ago," Morgan added. "They have a little bit of a different formation but still the same personnel and that is important for team chemistry, so we know we have to be at our best. "This is going to be a very big match-up." — AFP



Canada's midfielder Jessie Fleming

Classifieds

Clinics

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Rawda	22517733	Dasmah	22532265
Adaliya	22517144	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
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Kaifan	24849807	Qibla	22459381
Shamiya	24848913	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Shuwaikh	24814507	Mirqab	22456536
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Nuzha	22465401
Nuzha	22526804	Sharqi	22465401
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Salmiya	25746401

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Change of Name

I, **Qutbuddin**, holder of Indian Passport No. L4533621 having permanent address 25, Durga Colony, Neemuch Kheda, Udaipur, Pin - 313001, Rajasthan, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Qutbuddin and (surname) Rajnagar. **(C#892) 26/07/2023**

I, **Shahabuddin Ahmad Ansari**, holder of Indian Passport No. M9885941 having permanent address UP, Pin code 274409 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) Shahid and (surname) Ansari. **(C#3837) 25/07/2023**

I, **Naseemuddin**, holder of Passport No. T8985703, permanent address Bechua, Katkunya, Sirsiya, Shrawasti, Pin: 271840, Uttar Pradesh, India, do hereby change my name to Mohammad Naseem (as given name as surname). I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammad Naseem and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#3834) 24/07/2023**

I, **Dharmendra Kumar Rai** S/o Wakil Rai R/o Sunita Sadan House No-19C, Chanakyapuri colony Khorabar urf Soba Bazar, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh-273010, have changed my name to Dharmendra Singh S/o Wakil Singh for all future purposes. (Given name) Dharmendra (Surname) Singh. Passport No. P7113638 **(C#3835) 24/07/2023**

Norway in World Cup peril amid Hegerberg injury, player unrest

New Zealand players in tears after World Cup shock



WELLINGTON: Philippines' goalkeeper #01 Olivia McDaniel (left) jumps to save the ball next to New Zealand's forward #17 Hannah Wilkinson (right) during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group A football match between New Zealand and the Philippines on July 25, 2023. — AFP

HAMILTON: Norway coach Hege Riise was left sweating on news of an injury which forced star striker Ada Hegerberg out of Tuesday's goalless Women's World Cup draw with Switzerland. Riise's problems were exacerbated due to tensions in the squad with Caroline Graham Hansen unhappy at being left out of the line-up. Winger Graham Hansen, a Champions League winner last month with Barcelona, was dropped by Riise for the game in Hamilton following Norway's 1-0 defeat to co-hosts New Zealand in the opening match of the World Cup.

Meanwhile, former Ballon d'Or winner Hegerberg had lined up on the pitch for the national anthems before heading back towards the dressing room injured, with Sophie Roman Haug coming in as a last-minute replacement. The Norwegian Football Association said Hegerberg had felt a pain in her groin in the final sprint of the warm-up, with Riise admitting she only realized a change would need to be made at the last moment. "We were quick to have (the line-up) changed so Sophie could come in and not use a substitute," said Riise, who did not provide any further update on the extent of Hegerberg's injury.

Graham Hansen's frustration at not starting might be a more pressing concern for Riise with Norway now needing to win their last Group A game against the Philippines just to stand a chance of reaching the last 16. According to Norwegian media, Graham Hansen complained she had not been shown re-

spect after being left out of the starting XI. "These are things we will handle internally," Riise said when asked about the player's reaction.

'Frustration'

"There is a lot of frustration that we didn't win. Caroline is entitled to be frustrated and to express an opinion, but since I arrived in this position I have always said the team is the most important thing. "All players want to start matches. I reached the decision in the best interest of my team and I defend my decision today," added the 54-year-old coach. Norway lacked inspiration in the final third in the absence of Hegerberg, the UEFA Champions League's all-time top scorer, and with Graham Hansen only coming on just before the hour mark.

They remain without a goal or a win in the tournament and have just one point in Group A. Switzerland are top with four points, one ahead of New Zealand and debutants the Philippines, who beat the co-hosts 1-0 earlier in Wellington. Norway must win their final group game against the Philippines in Auckland on Sunday to stand a chance of progressing.

Switzerland just need to avoid defeat against New Zealand at the same time in order to reach the last 16. The loss just before kick-off of Hegerberg, whose career has been blighted by injuries in recent years, was a disappointment for the 10,769 fans who showed up on a cold, wet and miserable night. Her replace-

ment, the Roma player Roman Haug, was unlucky not to score, forcing a good save from Swiss goalkeeper Gaëlle Thalmann with a header midway through the first half and from a half-volley after the restart.

Norway were more lively following the introduction of Graham Hansen, who forced another save from Thalmann after cutting in from the right flank. Her club teammate Ana Maria Crnogorčević had Switzerland's best chance, firing over after a quick exchange of passes in the first half. Yet a draw was a better result for Switzerland, and Norway are at risk of a group-stage exit, just like at last year's European Championship.

Players in tears

New Zealand coach Jitka Klimkova said her players were in tears after the Women's World Cup co-hosts suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to debutants the Philippines on Tuesday. Sarina Bolden scored the only goal in Wellington to bring New Zealand crashing back down to earth after their 1-0 win in the opening match of the tournament. It was the Philippines' first win at a World Cup, women's or men's, and the result blew Group A wide open. "It was heartbreaking, I could see tears in my players' eyes," said Klimkova. "I know how much it means to play in front of their family and friends. "But it's not over yet. We still have one game to go. We still have time to reset and refocus before the game against Switzerland." — AFP

Ledecky grabs 20th gold; Popovici flops

FUKUOKA: Katie Ledecky won a record-extending 20th gold at swimming's world championships on Tuesday but Romanian sensation David Popovici fell flat, missing out on a medal after an "awful" performance. Ledecky romped home in the women's 1,500m freestyle in Fukuoka to bolster her credentials as the most decorated woman swimmer in the history of the world championships. It was also her 15th individual world gold, drawing her level with fellow American great Michael Phelps.

Ledecky said that "every race has a story to it" after she won the 15,000m freestyle world title for a fifth time. "I'm just feeling really locked into my distance races right now," the 26-year-old said. "I dove in and felt really, really good." Ledecky's gold was one of two for the United States, with Ryan Mason dethroning Italian champion Thomas Ceccon in the men's 100m backstroke. Britain won its first gold of the championships as Matthew Richards stunned Popovici in the men's 200m freestyle.

Australia's Kaylee McKeown beat American rival Regan Smith to win the women's 100m backstroke, while Lithuania's Ruta Meilutyte came out on top in the women's 100m breaststroke. Ledecky came home

in a time of 15min, 26.27sec to win the 15,000 freestyle ahead of Italy's Simona Quadarella on 15:43.31 and China's Li Bingjie on 15:45.71. It was the third-fastest swim of all-time and gave Ledecky the 16 top times ever in the event. "I feel good - it hurt a lot but I'm really happy with the outcome," Ledecky said. "I'm just having a lot of fun this week."

Popovici was expected to share top billing with Ledecky but he suffered a shocking meltdown in the first final of the evening. The 18-year-old, one of swimming's brightest stars and the red-hot favorite to defend his 200m freestyle title, comfortably led from the start and looked set to coast to victory as he reached the home straight.

But he faded badly as his rivals closed in, and ended up out of the medals completely as Britain's Matthew Richards took gold in 1min, 44.30sec. Britain's Tom Dean was second on 1:44.32 and South Korea's Hwang Sun-woo was third on 1:44.42, leaving Popovici fourth on 1:44.90. Popovici said he "felt awful" but believed his shock defeat could benefit him as he eyes gold at next year's Paris Olympics. "If you have the absolute perfect race and you have nothing else to improve, you know that you've basically reached the top, the limit," he said. "You know that you can do nothing better from there on. "I'm glad it happened now and I'm sure it has a meaning and I'm going to learn from it," he added. Last year in Budapest, Popovici became the first man to complete the 100m-200m freestyle double at a world



FUKUOKA: USA's Katie Ledecky competes in the final of the women's 1500m freestyle swimming event during the World Aquatics Championships on July 25, 2023. — AFP

championships in nearly 50 years. Richards said "keeping my head" was the key to beating him. "Swimming isn't a sport like boxing - no one is going to come in and hit you in the face," said the 20-year-old, who was appearing in his first world final. "It's all about you and what you do in your lane."

Olympic champion and world record-holder McKeown won her battle with defending champion Smith in the 100m backstroke. The Australian came home in 57.53sec to beat Smith on 57.78 and American Katharine Berkoff on 58.25. McKeown was disqualified from her 200m individual medley semi-final on Sunday and she said it had been "a hard 48 hours". — AFP

Women's World Cup Tables

FIFA Women's World Cup tables after matches in Australia and New Zealand on Tuesday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Group	Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Group A	Switzerland	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
	New Zealand	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
	Philippines	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
	Norway	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Group B	Australia	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Canada	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Nigeria	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Republic of Ireland	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Group C	Japan	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
	Spain	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
	Costa Rica	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
	Zambia	1	0	0	1	0	5	0
Group D	Denmark	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
	England	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
	China	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
	Haiti	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Group E	United States	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
	Netherlands	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Portugal	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
	Vietnam	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Group F	Brazil	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
	France	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Jamaica	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Panama	1	0	0	1	0	4	0
Group G	Sweden	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
	Italy	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
	South Africa	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
	Argentina	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Group H	Germany	1	1	0	0	6	0	3
	Colombia	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
	South Korea	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
	Morocco	1	0	0	1	0	6	0