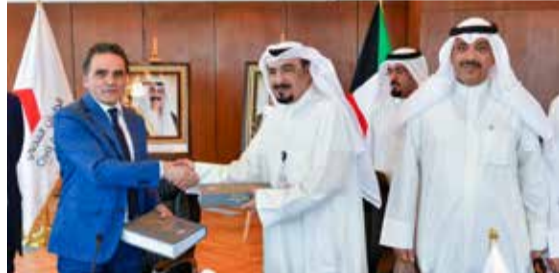


Polestar 2
Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



4 DGCA signs KD 6.68m deal to boost airport's air navigation



14 Boland strikes as Aussies thrash India in WTC final



16 History-making Djokovic claims record 23rd Grand Slam triumph



16 Rodri strike gives Man City Champions League victory



New Silk Road to link Arab world and China

China is Arab world's key partner with trade reaching \$430bn

Grade 12 final exams begin in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Education Minister Hamad Al-Adwani visits an examination center as around 43,000 grade 12 students in public and Arabic private schools around Kuwait started their final exams on June 11, 2023. — KUNA (See Page 2)

RIYADH: Saudi Investment Minister Khaled Al-Falih on Sunday announced the launch of a new modern Silk Road connecting the Arab world and China. Falih, speaking at the Arab-China Business Conference held in Riyadh, said it is time for China to become an essential strategic partner of development in the region. The Saudi minister spoke of the growth in trade exchange with China, saying it creates promising opportunities for investments.

On behalf of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan inaugurated the 10th edition of the conference earlier on Sunday, held under the slogan "Cooperation for Prosperity", with the participation of 23 countries, including Kuwait. In his opening speech, Prince Faisal mentioned China's role as the region's largest economic partner with bilateral trade exchange having reached \$430 billion in 2022.

Prince Faisal underlined the joint willingness of Arab countries and China to develop their partnership and cooperation, based on the outcomes of the forum since it was created. The Saudi minister added that the gathering's theme "Cooperation for Prosperity" reflected the paramount significance, great potential and joint visions regarding Arab-Sino investment and trade relations. He commended the conference as an opportunity to promote shared consensus, share expertise and realize growth that could contribute to achieving the prosperity, development and welfare of the people of the region and the world.

"Oil demand in China is still growing so of course we have to capture some of that demand," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said. "Instead of competing with China, collaborate with China." The two nations' momentum has also raised prospects for a successful conclusion to negotiations for a free trade deal between China and the Saudi Arabia-dominated Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), ongoing since 2004.

Falih said any agreement would have to protect emerging Gulf industries as the region starts to diversify towards non-oil economic sectors. "We need to enable and empower our industries to export, so we hope all countries that negotiate with us for free trade deals know we need to protect our new, emerging industries," Falih said, adding he hoped a deal would soon be struck.

The two-day conference is the largest Arab-China gathering for business and investment with participation of more than 2,000 government representatives, CEOs, investors and entrepreneurs. The event is held under the auspices of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and is scheduled to discuss many topics, including investment and financing through the Belt and Road Initiative, the role of mega projects in re-imagining future cities, innovative ways to produce clean energy, renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions. The conference also deals with the role of tourism and entertainment in diversifying the economy, food security and agriculture as key to unlock development capabilities. — Agencies

MPs hold informal meeting on priorities; roadmap proposed

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Forty-seven MPs of the new 50-member National Assembly held their first informal meeting on Sunday to discuss coordination on priority issues and the election of Assembly panels to be held on the inaugural day on June 20. MP Abdullah Fahhad said after the meeting that there was a consensus on priority issues that should be debated, adding that the meeting did not discuss election of posts.

MP Mohammad Al-Sayer said the meeting discussed coordination in electing committees and drawing up priority issues, adding that the main object of the lawmakers is to approve reform laws. He called on the prime minister to form a Cabinet that is capable of implementing priority issues for the people and also capable of coordinating with MPs.

Two MPs have announced they will contest the deputy speaker's post, Mohammad Al-Mutair, who was deputy speaker of the 2022 Assembly which was annulled by the court, and Marzouq Al-Hubaini. Several MPs have proposed that the same people who held posts in the scrapped Assembly should be unanimously elected because they did not get enough time in the previous Assembly.

But MP Hubaini said while entering the meeting that "this issue should be decided inside the Assembly hall", a reference to voting. The meeting, hosted by MP Mohammad Hayef, was held hours after 14 lawmakers signed a joint statement proposing a broad roadmap to

Continued on Page 6

Rains kill 27 in Pak; Amir sends condolences

PESHAWAR: Heavy rains followed by strong winds killed at least 27 people, including eight children, in northwest Pakistan, officials said Sunday. The storms hit four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province late Saturday, with five siblings aged between two and 11 among the dead. "At least 12 people were buried alive after the roofs and walls of their houses collapsed," Taimur Ali Khan, a spokesman for the provincial disaster management authority, told AFP.

More than 140 people were injured and more than 200 livestock died, he said. Authorities have declared an emergency in all four districts.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable to Pakistani President Arif Alvi expressing his sincere condolences over the victims of the floods. HH the Amir expressed condolences to the victims' families, wishing speedy recovery for those injured. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent cables of condolences to Alvi.

Meanwhile, a cyclone is making its way across the Arabian Sea towards the coastlines of Pakistan

Continued on Page 6



KARACHI: Fishing boats are anchored at a fishing harbor on June 11, 2023. — AFP

Trump rallies supporters after indictment

COLUMBUS, Georgia: Donald Trump addressed his supporters Saturday for the first time since his indictment on multiple federal charges propelled the 2024 presidential election race into uncharted and potentially destabilizing territory. The 37 counts of the indictment — released on Friday and focused on his alleged mishandling of classified

materials — set the former president up for a far more severe legal reckoning than the charges of personal, political and commercial misconduct he has largely ridden out in the past.

And it also sets the stage for a White House race like no other before it, with President Joe Biden's Department of Justice pursuing the prosecution of the clear frontrunner for the Republican nomination. Trump, who has already denounced what he insists is a politically-motivated witch hunt, is talking at two state Republican conventions in Georgia and then North Carolina, and was widely expected to use both platforms to attack the FBI and accuse federal prosecutors of unfairly targeting him.

Continued on Page 6



GREENSBORO, North Carolina: Former US President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump gestures as he speaks at the North Carolina Republican Party Convention on June 10, 2023. — AFP

'Unabomber' dies in prison

WASHINGTON: Ted Kaczynski, known as the "Unabomber", who terrorized Americans from 1978 to 1995 with his sporadic, anonymous bombing campaign, died in prison Saturday, US authorities said. Kaczynski, 81, whose attacks killed three people and injured two dozen, was found unresponsive at 00:25 am (0425 GMT) at a federal prison medical center in Butner, North Carolina, said the Federal Bureau of

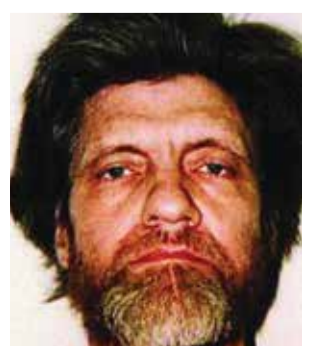
Prisons. He was taken to the hospital, where he was officially pronounced dead later in the morning.

The reclusive Harvard-educated mathematician, whose targets ranged from academics to random civilians, had a self-professed goal of halting the advance of modern technology and society, mounting his campaign of violence from a shack in rural Montana. His bombs were either hand delivered or mailed over nearly two decades, confounding investigators

looking to bring him to justice.

It was only after Kaczynski's capture and the revelation of his identity that the FBI uncovered his previous life — one where he scored 167 on an IQ test and entered university at just 16. The nickname of "Unabomber" came from his targeting of a university and an airline company, leading the FBI to dub him the "University and Airline Bomber". The seemingly random nature of Kaczynski's

Continued on Page 6



Ted Kaczynski



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Local

Armenian Embassy announces launch of direct flights between Kuwait and Armenia

No visas for Kuwaitis, visa on arrival for expats: Ambassador

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Armenian Ambassador Sarmen Baghdasaryan announced at a press conference on Sunday the launch of direct flights between Armenia and Kuwait from June 22, with two weekly flights by Armenian national carrier Fly Arna. He also announced exempting Kuwaiti citizens from visas and e-visas (or visa on arrival) for foreigners residing in Kuwait (depending on their nationality). The launch of the direct flights coincides with the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Baghdasaryan pointed out this is another example of the developing relationship between Armenia and

Kuwait, which are built on mutual trust and respect. He added the direct flights will enhance existing relations and enrich them, especially when it comes to economic ties and people-to-people contacts.

"Armenia has many advantages to offer to holiday travelers. It is a nearby destination, with a 2-hour flight. It is a family-friendly destination with activities suitable for all the members of the family, especially children. The capital Yerevan is considered one of the top 20 safest and secure cities in the world," he said. "Armenia has also turned into a destination for foodies, given the sensational tastes and variety of cuisines and fusions offered. Young people can

also enjoy adventure tourism like mountain climbing, diving, surfing and skiing," Baghdasaryan added.

The ambassador also mentioned the social values and culture are very similar between Arabs and Armenians, saying Armenia is looking forward to welcoming Kuwaitis to the country. He added the number of foreign tourists who visited Armenia between January to April 2023 increased by more than 700,000 compared to the same period in 2019. Baghdasaryan concluded by pointing out that the number of visitors from the UAE to Armenia is around 10,000, with 36 daily flights between GCC countries and Armenia.



Armenian Ambassador Sarmen Baghdasaryan



GCC officials pose for a photo on the sidelines of the meeting.

Kuwait FM takes part in 156th GCC ministerial meeting

RIYADH: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation participating in the 156th GCC foreign ministerial meeting, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The meeting discussed supporting and strengthening the historical march of joint Gulf action in various fields. It also touched on mechanisms of developing various fields of cooperation between the Gulf States, friendly countries, and regional and international organizations. — KUNA



RIYADH: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen with other officials during the meeting. — KUNA photos

Kuwait university announces application dates for coming year

KUWAIT: Kuwait University announced Sunday that applications for the 2023-2024 academic year will be open from July 15-26. The announcement was made during a press conference held at the university to publicize the university's summer term plan in addition to the 'Future Makers' forum, held starting Tuesday for three days, to review the educational system's outcomes in Kuwait.

Acting Admissions Registration Dean Dr Rawaa Al-Jarallah said an unprecedented achievement was made by Kuwait University for the current summer term by providing 180,000 seats for students, constituting a 20 percent increase compared to last year.

Registrations have also jumped by 24 percent compared to last year, with 26,000 students having registered so far. Jarallah said no additional costs were incurred as a result of the increase.

Acting Assistant Dean of Admissions, Registration and Graduates Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Failakawi said applications for Kuwait University will be online, meaning there will be no need to visit the admissions and registration hall to complete the process.

Failakawi said applications by Kuwaitis, children of Kuwaiti women, GCC nationals and bedoon students will be accepted from July 15-26, provided these students have graduated from unified system schools, religious institutions, American high schools and English secondary schools in Kuwait.

Transfer students coming from other universities, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Saad Al-Abdallah Academy or the Army and National Guard can submit their applications from July 16 until September 7.

Prospective students who completed their high school education outside Kuwait can apply for admission at the admissions and registration hall at Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya starting from July 18 until July 26. This is under the condition that these students are one of the following: Kuwaiti, children of Kuwaiti women, non-Kuwaiti children of Martyrs, children and spouses of diplomats, children of teaching faculty and allied academic staff, language teachers and workers at the university.

Member of the Higher Committee for (Future Makers) Forum Dr Reem Al-Baghly said the forum which will start Tuesday with participation from various academic entities in the university is the first of its kind in the country and aims at achieving Kuwait 2035 vision and university strategy. She said the forum encourages competition among students and increase production competency to achieve economic prosperity for the country.

Faculty members and experts in different literary and scientific fields have been chosen to give workshops at the forum. The forum will also include a job fair promoting employment opportunities for students in more than 30 entities in the public and private sectors. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Speakers at the Kuwait University press conference held Sunday pose for a photo. — KUNA



Exam proctors examine the final exam papers before distributing them to students.



Students line up for a security check before entering the exam hall.



KUWAIT: Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani checks on a student taking his final exam during an inspection tour he took to a number of schools on Sunday. — KUNA photos



A proctor hands out exam papers to a student sitting for his first final exam for the 2023-2024 academic year on Sunday.



Students read through their notes ahead of Sunday's final exams.

Grade 12 finals underway as MoE battles cheating

KUWAIT: Around 43,000 grade 12 students in public and Arabic private schools started their final exams on Sunday. Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani toured a number of schools to oversee the process and preparations put in place to facilitate the test-taking process for students, as well as efforts to prevent cheating.

Schools opened their doors for 26,576 students in the scientific stream and 17,314 in the literary stream who are taking their end-of-year exams for

their last stage of high school.

"The ministry made sure to provide a positive atmosphere for students," Minister Dr Adwani told reporters, adding that ministry personnel are achieving balance between ensuring a stress-free environment for students while tackling "negative aspects that may happen at examination halls", such as cheating.

The Interior Ministry announced Thursday that police arrested three people accused of leaking high school final exams for all grades. The suspects operated WhatsApp groups where they gave the tests papers to subscribers in exchange for money, the ministry explained.

"This operation is a testimony to the great efforts exerted by state departments to fight this problem," Dr Adwani said. He noted that the interior and education ministries had decided to work together in fighting groups that promote cheating and "put an

end to the activities of these networks which tarnish the education process and outcomes."

Dr Adwani, who doubles as Minister of Higher Education, indicated that high school graduates should have seats waiting for them either in Kuwait University, Abdullah Al-Salem University, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training or in the state's scholarship program for local and international universities.

"Higher education institutions have put a plan to absorb high school graduates and provide seats for every graduate who meets the minimum GPA requirements," he said. Furthermore, he urged students who will choose to study abroad on their own expense to select universities "that meet quality education standard requirements" and avoid colleges which do not meet those standards "because their degrees will not be accredited by the higher education ministry."

Kuwait, Pakistan sign military deal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Armed Forces and its Pakistani counterpart signed on Sunday an agreement to boost military cooperation between the two countries. In a press release, Kuwait Ministry of Defense said that this agreement aims to strengthen bilateral ties on all levels, especially on the military and defensive fields. Several senior officials from both sides attended the meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials from the Kuwait Armed Forces and their Pakistani counterpart sign an agreement to boost military cooperation Sunday. — KUNA

Local

Environment authority to combat plastic pollution through circular economy: Official

Research paper in the works to study model's feasibility: Report

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority is planning to concentrate its efforts in transitioning Kuwait's economy to a circular model to protect the environment, said the authority's Acting Director General Samira Al-Kandari. "We must recycle plastic waste and reduce the use of plastic due to its dangerous effects on people's health, the environment, ecological systems and world economy," Kandari told reporters during an event held to mark World Environment Day.

In a circular economy, markets give incentives for reusing products, rather than scrapping them and then extracting new resources, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "In such an economy, all forms of waste, such as clothes, scrap metal and obsolete electronics, are returned to the economy or used more efficiently. This can provide a way to not only protect the environment, but use natural resources more wisely, develop new sectors, create jobs and develop new capabilities," reads the organization's website.

According to the authority, the amount of plastic waste produced annually is estimated at 314 tons, 13 percent of which is solid waste. Kandari said eight percent of solid waste in the country gets recycled. She said the authority will focus on supporting "technology, reusing, manufacturing and recycling, along with long-term behavioral change that must be taken to

eradicate plastic pollution effectively".

As part of its efforts to promote recycling, said Kandari, the authority launched a media campaign in February to raise awareness of the importance of moving away from consuming single-use plastic products in coordination with NGOs and the public and private sectors.

Idea long in the works

The idea of a circular economy has been on the government's agenda for some time. A report published by Kuwait Public Policy Center in 2019 outlines a plan to prepare a research paper identifying "key barriers and enablers" to adopting circular economy business practices. The paper will use input from literature, discussions and an analysis of circular business models used by small and medium enterprises.

"Applying circular economy principles to waste management in Kuwait requires change across all stages, from production, use and reuse, recycling and disposal. It is a whole-of-system approach that requires accounting of the full cost and life-cycle of materials," the report reads. The report cites creating new industries and markets and leading to new revenue streams and the creation of jobs as some of the model's benefits.

"Less waste, more recycling and recovery means less use of landfills, and consequently, reduced environmental impacts and lower landfill operation costs including reduced re-



KUWAIT: Samira Al-Kandari, the Environment Public Authority's acting director general, interacts at one of the booths at the event held to mark World Environment Day. — KUNA

habilitation costs including reduced rehabilitation costs," says the report. The center gave the research paper "medium" priority and said

it would be ready by 2024 through partnership between Kuwait Municipality and "a leading global economic institution".



Zain Jordan provides phone subscriptions in sign language

AMMAN: Zain's operation in Jordan has made mobile phone subscriptions accessible via sign language for customers with hearing and visual impairments, in a step that is the first of its kind in the region to provide this service.

Zain customers in Jordan who may be visually impaired, blind, hearing impaired, or deaf, will be able to view contracts and understand their terms through an audio-visual video available by scanning a QR Code located in Zain showrooms across the Kingdom. In the near future, this service will make it easier for customers to identify all the terms and conditions translated into sign language at any time.

Zain has decided to position the introduction and development of disability issues for its customers and within the workplace as a priority task that is part of its Diversification, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) vision, by creating the 'We Able' disability inclusive program to meet the needs of all segments of society and is working with organizations and partners who are experts in this field to further strengthen this new strategy. The

company is also committed to adopting harnessing technology tools for persons with disabilities, thereby reducing inequalities as stated in the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

DEI initiatives under the 'We Able' program across Zain's operations include the following: the creation of a sign language digital library for four countries specific sign language, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, and Iraq, aiming to create more sign languages to cover other Zain operations. This library provides high-quality educational materials offering employee contracts in sign language, while continually training its staff in sign language, thus facilitating their bonding and communication with fellow hearing-impaired colleagues. The library also contains video lessons provided by sign language trainers and experts and includes a detailed explanation of the vocabulary and basic expressions in sign language.

Zain also provided training of 300 employees Groupwide on sign language. Zain Kuwait added accessible evacuation chair for all its offices while Zain Jordan added handrails for all ramps and added a new restroom with an automatic door and hosted an inclusive accessible excel training course. Zain Jordan was the first telco in the world with a virtual translator for the deaf on its website and social media channels, using a plugin that adds sign language using interpreting 3D smart Avatars. In 2015, Zain Jordan launched the Basma+ line, providing complimentary minutes for video calls, as well as technical



support services to the deaf and hearing impaired, responding to inquiries. Zain launched the GROW program and trained fresh graduates with disability to prepare them for the workplace that has seen 14 graduates join Zain since the program's launch. Zain Bahrain launched a hotline for People with Disabilities to provide exclusive communication access and have made four retail stores wheelchair friendly, with more in progress.

More on Zain's Disability Inclusion vision

Zain's influential role in society means the company must maintain its pioneering outlook with respect to creating positive change in the workplace and in all other areas of its activities. The company is proud to stand as an example for other corporates to follow and the implementation of the WE ABLE initiative reflects its commitment to develop and implement a sustainable Disability Inclusion program. Zain believes it is time that the contributions that people with disabilities can make in our workforces and in society in general be recognized and is pleased to have the opportunity to raise awareness in this area through its words and more importantly through its actions.

As one of the first institutions across the region launching a dedicated department for the areas of DEI and notably its 'We Able' initiative, Zain has entered partnerships with notable entities such as The Valuable 500, as well as being a signatory into the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network Charter.

MoH issues Hajj guidelines as COVID restrictions lifted

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health issued Saturday guidelines for pilgrims going to Makkah for the upcoming Hajj season.

The Hajj season, expected to begin on June 26, will likely see millions of pilgrims flock to the holy city of Makkah. This is the first Hajj season since the COVID-19 pandemic to see restrictions lifted on the number of people allowed to perform the pilgrimage. In its guidelines, the ministry said that pilgrims must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, meningitis, bacterial pneumonia and seasonal influenza at least 10 days before heading for hajj, urging them to carry their vaccination certificates during their trip.

The ministry called on pilgrims, who suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, to consult their doctors before traveling. The ministry also urged them to bring a sufficient amount of the medications they use as well as detailed and up-to-date reports of their health condition, including information about their health problems, medicines and their prescribed doses. It advised pilgrims to don facemasks, use tissues when coughing or sneezing and wash their hands with soap, water and disinfectants during their spiritual journey to prevent respiratory infection.

Pilgrims are also asked to avoid touching their eyes, mouths, or noses with their hands, and avoid direct contact with those who show symptoms of illness. The ministry encouraged pilgrims to drink large quantities of water, liquids, and juices and to eat water-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables in order to avoid dehydration as well as avoid direct exposure to the sun, heat and crowding. It called on the pilgrims to adhere to the precautionary measures and instructions issued by the relevant Saudi authorities to preserve their health and safety.

Saudi Arabia has unveiled the largest ever Hajj operational plan ahead of the upcoming pilgrimage season, according to news reports. A record-breaking 14,000 staff members, as well as more than 8,000 volunteers, will be deployed on the ground to help the millions of pilgrims who will take part in Hajj this year. — Agencies



KUWAIT: A woman speaks with a dermatologist at the vitiligo awareness campaign organized by Kuwait Medical Association on Saturday.



Dr Sneha Mariam, Registered Dermatologist at Adan Hospital.



Kuwait Medical Association's booth at The Avenues mall. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Campaign spreads awareness, acceptance of people with vitiligo

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Vitiligo is a skin condition characterized by loss of skin pigmentation, which results in white patches of skin. It occurs when the immune system attacks and destroys melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing pigment in the skin. According to dermatologists, there is no cure

for vitiligo, but there are treatments that can help improve the appearance of the affected skin and reduce the spread of white patches.

Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) organized a program on June 10, 2023 to raise awareness about vitiligo through a booth at The Avenues mall, where a number of dermatologists specialized in vitiligo were present to educate people and encourage social acceptance of people with this condition. Kuwait Times visited KMA's booth at The Avenues mall and interviewed Dr Sneha Mariam, a registered dermatologist at Adan Hospital.

"Vitiligo is an autoimmune disease, where our body does not recognize a body cell to be its own but as a foreign object and starts to fight it. The

cells that are involved in this are melanocytes, which are responsible for pigmentation in the body. When melanocytes are fought, the pigmentation that is present in our body gets reduced, which causes vitiligo in an individual. There are over 30 genes responsible for this condition. It is also hereditary — if a family member is affected, there will be an almost 5 to 10 percent risk factor of getting vitiligo," Dr Mariam told Kuwait Times.

Dr Mariam also said vitiligo is not contagious, as it is the body's own cells that are fighting, which means it is not an infectious disease. Like diabetes or any other chronic disease, vitiligo is a lifelong condition that cannot be completely cured. However, the goal of treatment is to reduce the

spread of the disease to other parts of the body and induce pigmentation for some of the pigment to return. This happens in some people but cannot be generalized.

Dr Mariam also shed light on the most common misunderstandings people have about this condition. She said that the most common misconceptions are related to food, such as going on a gluten-free diet or drinking milk soon after eating fish triggers vitiligo, which is not true. Dr Mariam said vitiligo is not dangerous or life-threatening, and people with this condition learn to live with it. She also emphasized the main message of the program — to spread acceptance of people with this condition, as it is not contagious and not dangerous.

News in Brief

Health institutions closed
for violating license

KUWAIT: Two health institutions in Abu Halaifa were closed by Ahmadi Municipality branch inspectors for activities contrary to their license. The shutdown happened during an inspection campaign organized by the municipality in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior. A spokesperson with the municipality said officials will continue their inspection tours to find violators and take legal action against them.

Kuwait to sign new labor
deals with Nepal, Vietnam

KUWAIT: Informed sources said Kuwait is communicating separately with Nepal and Vietnam with the purpose of signing two labor agreements. The agreements are meant to organize bringing in labor from those two countries, including domestic help, in a deal similar to that signed with Ethiopia. The new agreements go in line with the instructions of First Deputy Premier and Interior Minister, who is also in charge of the Manpower Authority, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. Sheikh Talal had called for allowing in labor from new countries as a solution to Kuwait's demographic imbalance and prevent the disproportionate growth of certain communities. Sources said completing the two agreements with Nepal and Vietnam will reduce the need for domestic help from countries such as India, Philippines and Sri Lanka. The move will also keep prices low and prevent labor offices from imposing extra fees to bring in new labor. If things were to go according to plan, the agreements would be complete at the start of next year and go in effect immediately.

Vaccine certificates now
available on Sahel app

KUWAIT: Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Health Affairs Dr Ahmad Al-Ghareeb said preventive vaccine certificates have been added to the services of the ministry that are accessible through the government app Sahel. Ghareeb said the new service will show details of preventive and routine vaccinations for children, as well as Hajj vaccines. Users can also request a certificate for themselves or any of their children under 16 through the app.

DGCA, Italy's Leonardo ink KD 6.68m
deal to boost airport navigation system

Deal among several made with company over last decade

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) signed a KD 6.68 million (around \$21.4 million) deal with Italy's Leonardo Aerospace, Defense and Security company to develop the air navigation system at Kuwait international airport.

The agreement, inked Sunday, involves installing two advanced radar systems, according to KUNA. This is not the first airport-related venture for the Italian company, which has been present in Kuwait since 2010. The first two projects for Leonardo in Kuwait involved upgrading the airport — the company installed and provided complex hardware and software systems for the management of data traffic between multiple airport systems in 2013. It also set up a primary radar for air traffic control in 2010. Leonardo has also done some work in the new T4 terminal, having supplied the baggage handling system, which has been in operation since 2018.

Deputy DGCA Director for planning and projects Saad Al-Otaibi told KUNA that the new radar system would help improve and smooth out the process of air navigation at Kuwait International Airport.

The deal, signed by Director General of DGCA Emad Al-Juluwi and representatives from Leonardo, includes the designing, manufacturing, importing and operation of the new radars. Training, maintenance and technical support services were also included in the deal, said Otaibi.

The Eurofighter deal

Leonardo, an Italian multinational company, is one of the largest defense contractors in the world. It's partially owned by the Italian government, which holds 30.2 percent of the company's shares and is its largest shareholder. It has operations in 118 countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The company's Kuwaiti branch, founded in 2014, is one of the first-foreign owned Kuwaiti companies



KUWAIT: Director General of DGCA Emad Al-Juluwi and a representative from Leonardo exchange copies of the contract signed Sunday. — KUNA

in the country, according to Leonardo's website. The company was established through agreement with the National Offset Company, launched in 2007 to pave the way for foreign companies to enter joint ventures with Kuwait's private sector, and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, a government entity promoting direct investment in the country.

The company's activities in Kuwait include supplying the Ministry of Defense with 28 Eurofighter Typhoon aircrafts, an \$8.7 billion deal which raised eyebrows when compared with similar purchases of the combat planes across the Middle East.

It led Kuwait's government to launch an investi-

gation into the jets' inflated price in January 2022, after which several senior officials were referred for prosecution in a major corruption case.

The Kuwaiti Anti-Corruption Authority's investigations into the deal revealed that the officers "caused grave damage to public money by issuing inflated bills to the manufacturer that exceeded the total value agreed upon in the main contract," KUNA reported at the time. However, the special tribunal for trying ministers acquitted a former defense minister and four senior ministry officials of the charges earlier this year. The final few Eurofighter jets are expected to be delivered by Leonardo in 2024, according to local media.



KUWAIT: British Ambassador Belinda Lewis cuts a cake during the launching ceremony of the festival in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait.



British Ambassador Belinda Lewis cuts the ribbon during the launching ceremony of the festival in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait.

Festival of British
Foods at LuLu
Hypermarket

KUWAIT: A week-long celebration of the best of British foods is being held at all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket from June 10-17. The 'LuLu British Food Week' was inaugurated on June 10 at the Al-Qurain branch of the hypermarket by British Ambassador Belinda Lewis along with top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, and in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the brand.

Adding to the lively vibe of the inauguration was a high-energy performance by a special British band that delighted guests and shoppers alike. Another major draw was an exhibition of classic vintage cars from the UK that had many classic-car enthusiasts swooning over the

gleaming vehicles.

A major attraction of the seven-day food festival, which showcases the finest food products from the United Kingdom, is the amazing offers on all UK-branded products, as well as special promotions on select items. Shoppers appear spoilt for choice with hundreds of well-known British food brands being made available at one-off prices during the promotion period.

The festive and exciting backdrop to the LuLu British Food Week continued indoors at all LuLu outlets with UK-themed decorations.

Kiosks offering free food samplings and replicas of traditional British street-food stalls offering popular items such as fish, chips, cheese and gravy, are other singular attractions drawing shoppers in large numbers. The LuLu British Food Week is part of the hypermarket's continued commitment to bring high-quality food products from around the world to shoppers in Kuwait, and to offer customers the widest selection of best of the world products at exceptional value through extremely competitive prices.



Ambassador Belinda Lewis browses a variety of British products at the market.



British products are on display at LuLu Hypermarket.



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Thousands evacuated as Philippine volcano spews ash, rocks

French town to pay tribute to those who chased off knife attacker

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Ukraine announces retaking village in southeast, first gain of offensive

Thirty-five people, including seven children missing in southern Ukraine flood



KHERSON: Rescuers from the State Emergency Service help evacuate a local resident from a flooded area in the town of Kherson on June 11, 2023. The flood, triggered by damage to the Kakhovka dam in the early hours of June 6, 2023, forced thousands to flee, disrupted water supplies and sparked fears of an environmental and humanitarian disaster. — AFP

KYIV: Kyiv announced on Sunday that Ukrainian forces have retaken a village in the war-torn country's southeast, the first reported gain of the offensive. Ukraine's ground forces said in a statement that soldiers of the 68th separate ranger brigade had "liberated the settlement of Blagodatne" in the eastern region of Donetsk. The ground forces released a video showing soldiers carrying a Ukrainian flag into a destroyed building.

Another military spokesman, Valeriy Shershen, said in televised remarks that the retaken village was located on the border of the region of Donetsk and the southern region of Zaporizhzhia where Moscow has reported heavy Ukrainian assaults over the past week.

He said Ukraine's forces captured several Russian and pro-Russian troops, adding that the Ukrainian flag was hoisted over Blagodatne. On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that a counteroffensive against Russian forces was underway but refused to provide any details. Russian President Vladimir Putin said this week Kyiv's offensive had already begun but was already failing.

Meanwhile, thirty-five people, including seven children, were missing in southern Ukraine on Sunday following a devastating flood prosecutors called the "worst environmental catastrophe since Chernobyl."

The Russian-controlled Kakhovka dam along the front line in the Kherson region was destroyed on

June 6, forcing thousands to flee and sparking fears of humanitarian as well as environmental disasters.

Ukraine accuses Russia of blowing up the dam on the Dnipro River, while Moscow says Kyiv fired upon the structure. Ukrainian interior minister Igor Klymenko said that 77 towns and villages had been flooded in the southern regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv. Klymenko said that in the Kherson region 35 people were missing, including seven children.

As a result of the flood, five people died in the region of Kherson and one person was dead in the region of Mykolaiv. A total of 3,700 people have been evacuated from their homes in the two regions, the minister added in a statement. Separately, Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin and representa-

tives of the International Criminal Court visited the flooded territory, his office said.

"This is the worst environmental catastrophe since Chernobyl so we are investigating not only a war crime but also an ecocide," Kostin said in a statement. "The situation is very complicated," he added. He noted that a number of "dangerous" facilities including at least three cemeteries, oil storage terminals and garbage dumps have been flooded.

A total of 450 tonnes of turbine oil have spilled into the waters of the Dnipro and the Black Sea, he said. More than 170 prosecutors have been investigating the breach of the dam. "Our colleagues from the International Criminal Court are also with us," he said. — AFP

Clashes resume in Sudan as 24-hour ceasefire ends

KHARTOUM: Shelling and gunfire resumed Sunday in the Sudanese capital, witnesses said, after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had given civilians rare respite from nearly two months of war. Deadly fighting has raged in the northeast African country since mid-April, when army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), turned on each other.

The latest in a series of ceasefire agreements enabled civilians trapped in the capital Khartoum to venture outside and stock up on food and other essential supplies. But only 10 minutes after it ended at 6:00 am (0400 GMT) on Sunday the capital was rocked again by shelling and clashes, witnesses told AFP. Heavy artillery fire was heard in Khartoum and its twin city Omdurman to the north, and fighting also erupted on Al-Hawa Street, a major artery in the south of the capital, they said. Multiple truces have been agreed and broken, including even after the United States had slapped sanctions on both rival generals after the previous attempt collapsed at the end of May.

Both Burhan and Daglo amassed considerable wealth during the rule of longtime Sudanese dicta-



KHARTOUM: Mourners gather to bury the victims killed by an artillery shell strike in southern Khartoum on June 11, 2023. Shelling and gunfire resumed in the Sudanese capital, witnesses said, after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had given civilians rare respite from nearly two months of war. — AFP

tor Omar al-Bashir, whose government was subjected to decades of international sanctions before his overthrow in 2019. The 24-hour ceasefire that ended on Sunday morning had been announced by US and Saudi mediators who warned that if it failed they may break off mediation efforts.

The two warring sides had "agreed to allow the unimpeded movement and delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the country", the Saudi foreign ministry said on Saturday. "Should the parties

fail to observe the 24-hour ceasefire, facilitators will be compelled to consider adjourning" talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah which have been suspended since late last month, it added. The mediators said they "share the frustration of the Sudanese people about the uneven implementation of previous ceasefires". The fighting has gripped Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, killing upwards of 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. — AFP

As the committee prepares to make public its findings, Johnson said they had contacted him "making it clear... they are determined to use the proceedings against me to drive me out of parliament". By quitting, Johnson avoids the consequences of a humiliating fight to remain an MP in his Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in northwest London where he holds a slim majority of just over 7,000.

He denounced the committee, chaired by veteran opposition Labour MP Harriet Harman, as a "kangaroo court". "It is very sad to be leaving Parliament — at least for now — but above all I am bewildered and appalled that I can be forced out, anti-democratically... with such egregious bias," he said.

Nadine Dorries, one of Johnson's allies quit on Friday, while another, Nigel Adams, resigned on Saturday, triggering three by-elections for a government languishing in the polls. Speculation is rife about Johnson's next move, and whether he will attempt to run to become an MP again at the next general election, due next year.

Influential Johnson supporter Jacob Rees-Mogg wrote in the Mail on Sunday that said the former Tory leader could "easily get back into parliament at the next election." He also warned party officials against blocking such a bid, saying it would "shatter



LONDON: File photo taken on May 9, 2022 shows then Britain's prime minister Boris Johnson looking up as he delivers a speech in front of 10 Downing Street in central London for the launching of the street market Downing Street Spring Showcase. — AFP

our fragile party unity and plunge the Conservatives into civil war."

Sunak was finance minister under Johnson, and it was his resignation that ultimately triggered his then boss's demise. The party is still divided as a result, but had recently arrived at an uneasy truce that now looks to be under serious threat. — AFP

UK oppn demands election amid Johnson 'farce'

LONDON: UK opposition leader Keir Starmer on Sunday demanded a general election as three MPs from the ruling Conservative Party, including Boris Johnson, quit parliament following a probe into COVID lockdown-breaking parties.

Labour leader Starmer tweeted that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak "must finally find a backbone, call an election, and let the public have their say on 13 years of Tory failure." "This farce must stop. People have had enough of a shambolic Tory government and a weak prime minister no one voted for."

Johnson announced on Friday he was leaving as a member of parliament, claiming he had been forced out in a stitch-up by his political opponents. The 58-year-old Johnson has been under investigation by a cross-party committee about whether he deliberately lied to parliament over parties when he was in office.

Fires intensify in Canada, could last 'all summer'

MONTREAL: New and intensifying fires are forcing the evacuation of thousands across Canada as the country battled out-of-control blazes that a provincial minister warned on Saturday could last "all summer." Nearly 17,800 square miles have burned since the beginning of the year, well above previous averages as the country warms quicker than the rest of the world amid climate change.

The country's west has been particularly hit. After several days of respite, fires intensified in Alberta, where Friday night the town of Edson saw its second evacuation since May. "The fire is so out of control that some forestry crews have had to back off," said Luc Mercier, chief administrative officer of Yellowhead County, where Edson is located. "They can't fight this fire."

Speaking to broadcaster CBC, resident Hayley Waites said the evacuation of Edson took place in the form of an "enormous convoy" of people fleeing the town. "When you're panicking to go all out, all you think about is running away," she said. "But as soon as you leave in the car, you ask: 'What if my house is no longer there when I come back?'"

In British Columbia, the 2,400 person town of Tumbler Ridge was largely evacuated as a fire approached within a couple miles of the city. In the country's east, Quebec Minister of Public Security Francois Bonnardel said Saturday morning that the situation in the central and northwestern parts of the province remained difficult, with several towns threatened.

Fires in northeast Quebec were considered "stable." "This is a first in the history of Quebec to fight so many fires, to evacuate so many people," he said. "We are going to have a fight that we think will last all summer."

Some 14,000 people are under evacuation orders in the province, with Bonnardel having declared that "we haven't yet won the battle." Environmental authorities currently list 416 active fires in the country, 203 of which are classified as out of control. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2023

Commute no more: Employees embrace telework in America

Companies struggling to bring staff back to the office



NEW YORK: People walk through a Manhattan subway station in New York City. — AFP photos

WASHINGTON: Commuting to and from the office five times a week? "It's just not what I want for my life," said Claire, a consultant in her thirties living in Washington. Like Claire, millions of employees across the United States have grown fond of telework since the COVID-19 lockdown and now companies are struggling to bring them back to the office. Before COVID-19, Americans workers had grown used to less-than-friendly job conditions, such as short vacations and little or no maternity leave, but the experience of working from home left them wanting more.

"All of these practices that workers had become accustomed to in the US before have now then kind of disrupted by the pandemic," chief economist Nela Richardson with the ADP Research Institute told AFP. American offices are still half-empty compared to February 2020, according to a weekly average calculated by Kastle, which manages the entry badges of 40,000 companies around the country.

'The world is changing'

There are also wide disparities between different regions and cities: offices in California's Silicon Valley, for example, have only recovered a third of their pre-pandemic occupants, compared with around half in New York and Washington, and as much as two-thirds in the Texas cities of Austin and Houston. "Collaborating and inventing is easier and more effective when we're in person," Amazon CEO Andy Jassy wrote in a memo to the company's vast workforce back in February, ordering them to return to the office for at least three days a week. Many Amazon employees disagreed so strongly with the in-person working requirements that they took to the streets in front of the company's Seattle headquarters last month to protest the move.

"The world is changing, and Amazon needs to em-

brace the new reality of remote and flexible work," the organizers of the demonstration said in a statement. Elon Musk, the billionaire boss of Tesla and Twitter, went a step further than Jassy, banning telework in the name of productivity and morality. "You're going to (tell) the people who make your food that gets delivered, that they can't work from home, the people that come fix your house, they can't work from home, but you can?" he said in a recent interview.

Half-empty offices

A third of employees in the United States currently have complete freedom about where they work, compared with just 18 percent in France, according to a recent ADP study of 17 countries. "If I worked for an employer that required five days a week, I just don't think that would be on the table for me," Claire, the Washington-based consultant, told AFP.

Claire, who requested anonymity to discuss her employment, goes to the office irregularly, usually once every two weeks, sometimes more often. And, given the upsides, she can't see herself going back full-time. She has replaced the metro to work with a walk around the block, no longer wastes time dressing for the office, and sits outside with her laptop whenever the sun shines. Claire said she sometimes misses conversations with colleagues, but she also realizes the small talk led her to be less productive.

A challenge

Despite the headlines made by chief executives like Elon Musk, not all managers are opposed to telework. Questions about "quality and lifestyle efficiency" have emerged, said Gayle Smith, chief executive of the Washington-based anti-poverty NGO One, which has offices in cities around the world. "Raising kids became a bit easier if you didn't have to com-



ARLINGTON: Danny Crouch pets his dog as he sits in his basement working from home in Arlington, Virginia. The pandemic forced Americans to work from home. And now, more than three years on, employees are struggling to bring them back to the office.

mute every morning," she told AFP.

Since the onset of the pandemic, some of her employees have left the Washington area in order to be closer to their aging parents, or to follow a spouse who relocates for work. Gayle has seen no decline in efficiency but regrets the loss of the positive dynamic that comes from face-to-face work. The question now, she says, is how to replicate this dynamic while preserving the lifestyle improvements for her employees. "If we can regain that, at least in part, it'll put us in a very good place," she said. Teleworking has become "part of a cluster of benefits and options that companies can choose to offer workers," said Nela Richardson from ADP. For potential employees, "it's a choice of whether or not you are willing to negotiate that or look for that in your job search," she added. — AFP

Gold prices stand at \$1,960 per ounce

KUWAIT: Gold prices stood at \$1,960 an ounce by the end of last week's trading due to diverging expectations about the decisions of the US Federal Reserve (US Central Bank) as to whether it will raise or keep interest on the US currency. Most investors and analysts in the gold markets are awaiting the next meeting of the Federal Reserve, which will be held the day after tomorrow, Tuesday, in which it will decide its future directions regarding monetary policy, as this will directly affect the gold prices to go up or down, the Kuwaiti-based company Dar Al-Sabaek said in a report Sunday.

This upcoming meeting coincides with similar meetings of the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan, as they are scheduled to take similar decisions about interest rates and any cessation of raising interest rates will be immediately followed by a rise in gold price and vice versa, it added.

Head of Dar Al-Sabaek's strategic planning Adel Al-Fadhli said, according to the report, that investors were cautious in trading last week after the issuance of the International Monetary Fund report, in which it urged major central banks to continue their monetary policy and monitor inflation closely.



Adel Al-Fadhli

The Bank of Canada unexpectedly raised interest rates last week by 25 basis points to reach 4.75 percent, which is the highest level of Canadian interest since 2001, he mentioned, indicating that this step was shocking to the gold markets, which were expecting Canadian interest rates to remain stable at their previous levels. Although the global economy was not affected by the decision of Bank of Canada, it increased the fears of investors in precious metals that other economies and central banks would follow the same step and raise interest rates, which would negatively affect gold's price, he stated.

Gold futures for next August delivery fell by 0.1 percent, or the equivalent of \$1.4, to reach \$1,977.2 an ounce, reducing its weekly gains by half a percent, while the dollar index, which measures the performance of the US currency against major currencies, recorded a decline of 0.2 percent with 103.5 points, he noted. Regarding the local market, Al-Fadhli said that the price of a 24-carat gram gold amounted to KD 19.55, while a 21-carat gram was KD 17.1, whereas the silver price reached KD 286 per kilogram. The ounce is one of the units of measurement of mass, which is equal to 28.349 grams, while a troy ounce of gold equals 31.103 grams.

Euro rises by 0.33%

Meanwhile, the US dollar on Sunday stood at KD 0.307 while the Euro rose by 0.33 percent to KD 0.330, compared with Thursday's rates. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily bulletin that the British sterling pound and the Swiss franc rose 0.95 and 0.59 to stand at KD 0.386 and KD 0.339, while the Japanese Yen stood at KD 0.002. The CBK publishes daily average exchange rates that do not necessarily reflect actual prices of the currencies' trade for the day. — KUNA

Tanger Med a portal connecting Africa to the world

RABAT: The port of Tanger Med, strategically located at the intersection of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean on the strait of Gibraltar, has become a portal connecting the African continent to the whole world, as some 2.5 million containers pass through to reach the continent's nations. Tanger Med, serving as a logistic, commercial, industrial and touristic port, is perhaps the largest economic Moroccan project, established with the highest of international standards and with contributions from Kuwait.

Since its inauguration in 2007, the port has been steadily climbing ranks, most recently, it has been ranked fourth most efficient port in the world and most efficient port of the Mediterranean sea. Tanger Med has surpassed longstanding international ports

of Guangzhou, China or Japanese Yokohama port, Egyptian Port Said and American ports of Virginia and Miami.

The ranking, issued by the World Bank in cooperation with Standard and Poor's Global Market Intelligence, aims to identify improvement opportunities that could ultimately benefit all stakeholders. General Director of Port Authority Hasan Abqari attributed Tanger Med's high ranking to the cooperation and coordination between all those concerned, adding that such results should serve as a stimulant for continuous improvements whether in infrastructure or digitalizing and automating operations.

The Director commented to the press saying that the port not only greatly benefits Morocco but it also benefits the whole of Africa as 36 percent of its total marine traffic is directed to the rest of the African nations. Data from the port authority show that Tanger Med is connected to more than 196 international ports, with handling capacity of nine million containers and seven million passengers as well as 700,000 trucks and the export of one million vehicles. Tanger

Med, covering over one million square meters, is a project that altered the face of Moroccan economy becoming an attractive hub for investments and an ample platform for trade exchange. — KUNA

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The port of Tanger Med

Med, covering over one million square meters, is a project that altered the face of Moroccan economy becoming an attractive hub for investments and an ample platform for trade exchange. — KUNA

KOC: Digitalization contributes to economic growth

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Co announced on Saturday that it managed to upgrade its five-year digitalization strategy, noting that the process will contrib-

ute to reducing the operating expenses, increasing production and realizing sustainable growth. The upgrading of the strategy will also enhance safety and security, and help manage risks in a better way, Deputy CEO for gas and innovation at KOC Bader Ahmad Al-Munaifi said in a press release.

"The Company works relentlessly to advance innovation at all sectors, upgrade the operating systems at all facilities and build the capacity of its human resources," he noted. Under the supervision of CEO Ahmad Jaber Al-Eidan, the company pursues

the digitalization process, which will help realize the strategic goals, improve the national cadres and address the new challenges, Al-Munaifi went on.

"The digitalization strategy aims to make the information technology mainstream in the quest for increased productivity and sustainable development. "KOC will announce a roadmap for digitalization and launch a massive database during a conference on June 18," he pointed out, adding that the conference will focus on the applications of artificial intelligence and various forms of digitalization and IT. — KUNA

Paws and popcorn: Thai cinema goes pet-friendly



A pet cat explores the seats inside a movie theatre on the opening day of the pet-friendly i-Tail Pet Cinema opening at Major Cineplex inside Mega Bangna shopping mall in Samut Prakan on June 10, 2023. — AFP photos



A fluffy white cat in a yellow dress perched on the top of a Bangkok cinema seat while, nearby, a Chihuahua in a Sebastian the Crab costume geared up to watch Disney's 'The Little Mermaid' with their owner. One terrier even channeled Ariel in a red wig and mermaid's tail. They were among dozens of four-legged film-goers that arrived in strollers Saturday for the opening of Thailand's first pet-friendly cinema on the fringes of the capital.

The country's pet industry is considered the second-biggest in Asia, behind China's, with some 8.3 million dogs and 3.7 million cats in 2021, according to industry data. Pet ownership grew further during the coronavirus pandemic, and now some businesses are trying to cash in. Mano, 37, had brought his rescue cat, Kati, to the cinema. "We take him to work sometimes... today is like an experiment," he told AFP. "We are seeing 'The Little Mermaid'. He will enjoy seeing all the fish on the screen."

The animals had to wear diapers and sit in bags while the sound and lighting were adjusted for their comfort, Major Cineplex spokesman Narute Jiensong said. "Bangkok is not a very pet-friendly city," Narute told AFP, adding that the concept built on their child-friendly theatres. Narute noted some pets acquired during the pandemic suffer separation anxiety now that owners are no longer working from home or in lockdown. "In the kid cinemas, kids will be running around screaming or shouting... I think pet cinema will be the same. Everyone who comes will own a pet and be understanding (if dogs bark)," he said.

It is not the only business opening its doors to furry visitors. Earlier this month, Swedish furniture giant Ikea announced that small dogs and cats were welcome to visit its Thailand stores, as long as they sit in



A pet dog and owner wait to see a screening of Disney's "The Little Mermaid" on the opening day of the pet-friendly i-Tail Pet Cinema.

prams. Outside the cinema, there were howls of disappointment as a 62-kg Alaskan Malamute named Tungchae — who arrived in a 1.5-sq-m dog trolley equipped with a fan — was considered too big to enter.

Despite the cinemas' animal welfare safeguards, not all pet owners were thrilled about the idea. One long-time Bangkok expat said that, while her cat frequently falls asleep beside her on the couch watching TV at home, she would never take her pet to the cinema and thinks the concept is "unnatural" and "torture". "Being zipped up in this cage, I don't know if that's enjoyable for the animal," she told AFP. — AFP



Pets and their owners sit inside i-Tail Pet Cinema.

Massive 'chirping' egg sculpture hatches in Warsaw



People interact with the acoustic sculpture. — AFP photos



People listen to "The Hatchling. Song Thrush".

In a square in central Warsaw, a couple of people are bent over a huge sculpture of a blue egg, their heads turned and pressed against the shell. As they listen to the soft sounds of a baby bird hatching, a hooded crow cocks his head and sips from a shallow pool of water installed nearby. "This chick and the mini-pond next to it speak to a sensitivity to Warsaw's non-human residents," Warsaw deputy mayor Aldona Machnowska-Gora said at the unveiling. "Don't hesitate to walk up to the egg and hug it. It makes for an incredible experience," she said.

Located at Five Corners Square — once home

to an arena where animals would fight to the death — the acoustic installation titled The Hatchling is a call for empathy with other lifeforms in the era of climate change. "The idea was to bend people's bodies over something other than themselves," said Joanna Rajkowska, the artist behind the sculpture. "We care about our well-being so much. It's like a complete obsession... It's time to think about other species," she told AFP.

'The Hatchling speaks'

At around two meters high and three meters long, The Hatchling is a larger than life version



Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska listens to her acoustic sculpture "The Hatchling. Song Thrush" which is a scaled-up egg that make chick sounds like just before it hatches, at five corners square in Warsaw on June 8, 2023.

of a song thrush's blue spotted egg. The color is more intense than the real blue because the sculpture will inevitably fade in the sun. "Inside, instead of a bird, we have a lot of electronics, a lot of circuits and sound transducers... So The Hatchling speaks," said Rajkowska. "Literally, like pecking the shell. But also the heartbeat, which is three times faster than the human heart. You can also hear all the movements and the chirping," she added. "So it's a whole spectrum of sounds. Basically the desperate life that is trying to get out of the egg."

She teamed up with her musician partner for the recordings, though they do not come from a song thrush, as the stress of the process would have been enormous for a wild bird. "An ornithologist told me that if I take an egg from the nest and then return it, the parents will not accept it... So I decided to find safe conditions," Rajkowska said. They came across "this crazy guy who is trying to revive old species of chickens" who allowed them to record in his lab as long as they kept the eggs warm. "So we had to really rush to do the recording and put it back in the incubator," Rajkowska said.

'Surreal, unexpected'

The artist is also the creator of a massive fake palm tree that has for years added a tropical note to the Polish capital and even become a popular postcard landmark. Similarly, the egg — whose top is already speckled with bird droppings, to Rajkowska's amusement — is meant to be "surreal, unexpected and slightly out of touch with reality". Piotr Nowacki, a life-long Warsaw resident, is a fan of the project, which he has visited several times and calls "a break from routine, somewhat abstract, surprising". "It also educates (and) draws your attention to nature... It's cool that it's dynamic, that it's alive, right?" the 36-year-old software engineer told AFP.

Rajkowska has also exhibited a series of collages juxtaposing old and new magazine clippings, old photographs of the plaza — and birds, of course. "I love that they evolved from the dinosaur and they have such a long, long history... And we make their habitats smaller and smaller and smaller. We concrete everything," Rajkowska said. "The Hatchling is actually a sad project. It is tinged with disappointment but also with hope that we mature enough to see beyond ourselves." — AFP

With bows and spears, indigenous 'warriors' defend the Amazon



Members of the 'Warriors of Forest', a vigilante group from the Kanamari ethnic group, gather in Sao Luis village, in the Javari Valley, in the northwest Amazonas state of Brazil, on May 18, 2023. — AFP photos



In a remote pocket of the Brazilian Amazon under siege from illegal fishermen, poachers, loggers and drug traffickers, Indigenous people have taken it upon themselves to defend the land and its resources. With bows, arrows and spears, young men of the Sao Luis village patrol the Javari River

in the Javari Valley which holds Brazil's second largest protected Indigenous reservation. Like many others who live here, he takes his surname from his tribe which lives in a part of the rainforest the size of Portugal that contains many of the world's last uncontacted Indigenous groups.



A member of the Brazilian security forces stands guard in the Javari River Valley.



abandoned us, we had to assume our responsibilities... We defend what belongs to us: our lakes and forests," he said.

It is not only fishermen the watchmen fear. There are also narco groups growing coca crops on the Peruvian side of the river, and in April, loggers threatened to kill a Kanamari chief, forcing him into exile. The warriors have built two floating wooden observation posts on the river near their village of Sao Luis. One of the structures has come under fire. Their task is immense and dangerous, their means lacking. The team has only two motorboats and little fuel. The "warriors" avoid violent conflict, and in tense situations, withdraw back into the forest.

'Under threat of death'

With government forces absent from the area, the Sao Luis warriors work with another Indigenous group known by its acronym EVU – a sort of commando unit attached to Univaja. Pereira helped set up the EVU before his death. EVU members – about 30 in total – are equipped with motorized barges, GPS, drones, phones and satellite Internet, much of it made possible by private donors. They carry no weapons.

EVU volunteers from different Javari Valley communities undergo

training by NGOs and security specialists in "how to intervene, make surveys, confiscate equipment or boats," explained EVU co-founder Cristobal Negrodo Espisango,

known as Tatakó. According to Univaja coordinator Bushe Matis, the EVU does not "replace the state." "We monitor, we collect information and evidence, and we pass it on to the relevant authorities. Then let the state do its job."

EVU leader Orlando de Moraes Possuelo said a key goal is "to occupy terrain" in areas with an abundance of sought-after fish and animals. "We arrive as soon as possible to catch the intruders in the act, before they disappear or return to Peru." Legally, they cannot detain anyone. Many of the group's members have received threats. "I am under threat of death. I am afraid of course, but there is no other option," said Tatakó. "The EVU is the only organization that really fights organized crime in the Javari Valley," he added.

With the return of leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to the presidency, many in the Amazon hope help will soon be coming. Last week, as Brazil marked the anniversary of the murders of Pereira and Phillips, Lula vowed that "we will not abandon this struggle for the planet." "We are fighting to revive policies to protect Indigenous peoples and the Amazon," he said in a statement to The Guardian newspaper, to which Phillips was a contributor.

But just last week, Brazil's Congress passed bills cutting the powers of Lula's environment and Indigenous affairs ministries and dramatically curbing the protection of Indigenous lands. Univaja's Matis fears for the future. "There can be a tragedy at any moment. The invaders will never back down: They will always want to lay claim to the Javari," he said. — AFP



by motorboat in the valley of the same name.

They call themselves the "Warriors of the Forest," the self-styled heirs of Indigenous rights defender Bruno Pereira, who was murdered in the Javari Valley one year ago along with British journalist Dom Phillips. "We must always be prepared for the worst. But we do not want violence," said Lucinho Kanamari, his face painted red, insisting the traditional weapons are merely a "precaution".

"When we spot intruders, one of us will talk to them. The others stay back, ready to react if things go wrong," he told AFP. "We are there to teach, to act as a peaceful deterrent. We talk, we explain." Lucinho is a member of the Kanamari Indigenous group, one of six

'Invasions exploded'

The patrolling warriors particularly fear the illegal fishermen in search of pirarucu – one of the world's largest freshwater fish, its flesh considered a delicacy worth a small fortune. Such poachers are believed to have killed Pereira and Phillips on June 5, 2022, hacking up their bodies and hiding the remains in the jungle. For a while, the crime brought international attention to this threatened corner of the planet long-abandoned under former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro and his pro-industrial agenda.

"With Bolsonaro, and then Covid, the invasions exploded," said Varney Todah da Silva Kanamari, vice president of the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley (Univaja). "As the state



Mauro da Silva Kanamary, leader (Cacique) of the Kanamari community of Sao Luis, poses for a picture in the Javari Valley.

Lifestyle

Lithuania capital turns pink for love of beetroot soup

Lithuania's capital was flooded with pink food, decor, and colorful outfits on Saturday, as residents celebrated the Baltic nation's love for a cold beetroot dish commonly known as "pink soup". While beetroot soup is beloved in many eastern European nations, Lithuania lays claim to Saltibarsciai — made of kefir, cucumbers, beetroot, and dill — eaten cold and a favorite on a hot summer's day.

"It's not just soup — it's a way of life," said the city's tourism agency Go Vilnius, which organized the first-ever festival in its honor. French student Victor Delcroix came dressed as a bowl of "Pink Soup". "I fell in love with Saltibarsciai and I felt obliged to wear this to honor it," he said before jumping on a giant pink slip-and-slide covered in foam.

Elsewhere some festivalgoers prepared to set a record with the largest-ever bowl of Saltibarsciai. Topped with sour cream and boiled eggs and served with boiled or fried potatoes, "pink soup" is a summer staple in Lithuania. "There are bars ... that prepare them in interesting ways, like a sushi place that makes it with wasabi," said Ricardas Andrijauskas, at the festival. "We usually make it more traditionally." He was not entirely convinced by all the innovations, he confessed. "Not with wasabi," he said, shaking his head.

'Instagrammable' soup

Elsewhere at the festival vendors were selling pink ice cream, coffee, cocktails and perfumes. Go Vilnius wants the soup to boost food tourism to the city. "Our city's gastro scene has skyrocketed in the past years," Inga Romanovskiene, director of Go Vilnius, told AFP. "Historical cuisine recipes from the 700 years of the capital's multicultural heritage, which celebrate a unique local fusion of Lithuanian, Jewish, Polish cuisine, have also settled in the menus of the city's restaurants."

According to Lithuanians, the dish originated in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which existed until 1795 and included swathes of territory in present-day Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. However, Poland and Belarus are among those who contest its heritage. Pink soup has also become a star on social media. "It's called one of the most 'Instagrammable' soups," said Dovile Seliuke, spokeswoman of the country's tourism promotion agency, Travel Lithuania.

The Pink Soup Fest is taking place against the backdrop of hundreds of Ukrainian flags fluttering around the capital. Over 80,000 Ukrainians have now sought asylum in Lithuania, a Baltic country of 2.7 million people. "The celebration helps take your mind off [...] the war in Ukraine," said Rasa Kasitiene, who with her daughter was dressed up all in pink. — AFP



A participant moves down a water slide during the Saltibarsciai Slip and Slide competition. — AFP photos



Participants dressed as Saltibarsciai soup take part in the Saltibarsciai Slip and Slide competition during the Pink Soup Fest.



A participant poses for a photo.



A cook serves Saltibarsciai soup.



Participants move down a water slide during the Saltibarsciai Slip and Slide competition during the Pink Soup Fest in Vilnius on June 10, 2023.



Pixar returns with immigrant fable 'Elemental'

Pixar is seeking to rediscover its box office fortunes with timely immigrant fable "Elemental," the animation studio's first totally original new film to hit theaters since the start of the pandemic. The movie, out next Friday in the United States, is set in the fantastical Element City — where residents made out of fire, water, earth and air must learn to live in close proximity, despite their highly combustible differences.

It follows a dangerous romance between Ember, the fiery daughter of a hard-working immigrant, and Wade, the

del Carmen — who voices Ember's dad Bernie — emigrated from the Philippines.

Several stars noted the importance of the film's themes, at a moment when immigration dominates political debate. Just last week, Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis, flew planeloads of immigrants across the country to California, in a bid to tout his tough stance on the issue ahead of next year's presidential election. "It is very timely in our world today... If everybody can watch this movie, please, we need it," del Carmen told AFP. The message is "a very prescient



Actor Mason Wertheimer



Actress Wendi McLendon-Covey



US actor Mamoudou Athie arrives for the US premiere of "Elemental" at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, California, on June 8, 2023. — AFP photos



Executive producer and Pixar chief creative officer Pete Docter arrives for the US premiere of "Elemental".



Actress Meg Donnelly



Singer/songwriter Lauv

go-with-the-flow son of a wealthy water family. Their relationship tests the divided city's mantra that "elements don't mix", a not-so-subtle metaphor for racism and prejudice in real-life society.

"Oh, my goodness, it's so forbidden! The fact that their very lives are at stake if Wade and Ember get close together — it's like Romeo and Juliet," said Leah Lewis, who plays Ember. "This film talks a lot about family loyalty, cultural identity, falling in love for the first time," she told AFP at the film's US premiere in Los Angeles last week.

Like many involved with the film, Lewis has her own immigrant story. She was adopted as a baby from a Shanghai orphanage by Floridian parents. Mamoudou Athie, who voices Wade, was born in Mauritania and obtained US citizenship just over a year ago, while Ronnie

one for the times we're in," said co-star Wendi McLendon-Covey.

Pixar pressure

The film also comes at a critical time for Pixar, a subsidiary of entertainment behemoth Disney since 2006. By its own high standards, the all-conquering studio behind classics like "Toy Story", "Finding Nemo" and "Up" has had a rough few years. Its last original, non-franchise movie to hit big screens, 2020's "Onward", launched and swiftly vanished as COVID shuttered theaters. Its next few titles were sent straight to the Disney+ streaming platform.

Pixar returned to cinemas last summer with "Lightyear", but the "Toy Story" spin-off flopped, and its director was among 75 Pixar employees laid off last week amid wider Disney job cuts. Mean-

while, rival animation studios are flourishing in the post-pandemic era. Sony's "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" is currently atop the box office charts, while Universal's Super Mario video game adaptation is this year's biggest film to date, grossing \$1.3 billion.

Even last year's best animation Oscar, traditionally dominated by Pixar, went to Netflix and Guillermo del Toro's dark version of Pinocchio. So it is no surprise that the Disney-owned studio is throwing everything at "Elemental". "I think it's important... if you have any reason at all, to step out of your house, to go to a theater, and be entertained, it would be this Pixar movie," said del Carmen, who previously co-directed "Inside Out".

The film even received a glitzy world premiere in Cannes, where it closed last

month's festival. Based on early reviews from the festival, the movie scored just 68 percent on Rotten Tomatoes — the joint-lowest for any Pixar movie except "Cars 2". But Pixar executives will be hoping audiences warm to the film, which has drawn praise for its innovative rendering of water and fire characters.

And for its director Peter Sohn, "Elemental" is also a deeper, personal story about the sacrifices made by immigrants. The son of a Korean couple who moved to New York before he was born, Sohn previously directed Pixar's 2015 animation "The Good Dinosaur". When he returned to his native Bronx for a talk on that film, he welled up seeing his proud parents in the audience, and the seed for his next movie was planted. — AFP

City taste Champions League glory

Manchester City complete a remarkable treble



ISTANBUL: Manchester City's German midfielder #8 Ilkay Gundogan holds aloft the European Cup trophy as they celebrate winning the UEFA Champions League final football match between Inter Milan and Manchester City on June 10, 2023. Manchester City won the match 1-0. — AFP

ISTANBUL: Manchester City tasted Champions League glory at last on Saturday as a second-half Rodri strike gave the favorites a 1-0 victory over Inter Milan in a tense final, allowing Pep Guardiola's side to complete a remarkable treble. Rodri fired in from a Bernardo Silva cutback midway through the second half at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium to decide a game in which City were knocked out of their usual rhythm and lost Kevin De Bruyne to injury.

Erling Haaland, scorer of 52 goals this season, went a fifth straight match without finding the net, but City had enough to edge out opponents who had never been expected to get this far. "It wasn't easy. What a team we faced, unbelievable," Rodri told British broadcaster BT Sport. Having already claimed a fifth Premier League title in six seasons, and added the FA Cup, City are the first English club to win such a treble since Manchester United in 1999. That same month 24 years ago, City won the English third-tier play-off final on penalties against Gillingham.

Now they have established themselves as England's dominant side and have finally added the biggest prize

in European club football, two years after losing to Chelsea in their first final. "I think we made history. The good thing is that we want more. This project is to want more, more ambition," Rodri added. The match was watched by owner Sheikh Mansour, who made a very rare appearance at a City game as his team capped their rise from also-rans to superpower in the years since he bought the club in 2008.

Guardiola's third title

Twelve years after last lifting the trophy with Barcelona, meanwhile, Guardiola joins an elite club of coaches to have won the competition three times. "It's so difficult to win it," Guardiola said, before adding that City's triumph this season was "written in the stars". Having brushed aside RB Leipzig, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid to reach the final, City did not have it easy against Inter, who saw Federico Dimarco and substitute Romelu Lukaku both almost equalise.

Inter had hoped to spring a surprise and lift the trophy for the fourth time. It was not to be, but Simone Inzaghi's side will be back in the competition again

next season. "We didn't deserve to lose," Inzaghi said. "We played against a top team, absolutely, but Inter also played a great final." Victory for Guardiola's men, to go with the three titles of rivals United, means Manchester becomes just the second city to produce two different winners of the competition, after Milan.

The occasion did not match the drama of the last Champions League final at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium. Liverpool triumphed here in 2005, recovering from a three-goal deficit against AC Milan to draw 3-3 before winning on penalties. However, it also passed off without serious incident, a year after chaos overshadowed the final at the Stade de France in Paris, even if the stadium's location some 25 kilometres west of central Istanbul did not make access simple for supporters.

De Bruyne comes off hurt

City, with Nathan Ake starting ahead of Kyle Walker in defense, expected Inter to come out and attempt to thwart them, and the first half went to plan for the Italians. They pressed and snapped at City's

heels, although the best chance fell to Guardiola's men when De Bruyne set up Haaland for an effort that was well saved by Andre Onana.

City were then dealt a major blow as De Bruyne - who came off hurt in the 2021 final - departed injured on 36 minutes, to be replaced by Phil Foden. It was just as the prospect of extra time, and a final finishing past midnight, began to loom that the game opened up. Lautaro Martinez squandered a chance that was gifted to him by a poor Silva ball back towards his own goal, and City struck on 68 minutes.

Manuel Akanji's pass found Silva in the box and his cutback came off a defender before falling for Rodri to fire in. It was a second goal in the competition for the Spanish midfielder following his brilliant strike against Bayern in the quarter-finals. Inter's resistance was broken, and yet they nearly leveled almost immediately as Dimarco's header hit the bar. They nearly did so again in the 88th minute as Ederon somehow got in the way of a goal-bound Lukaku effort. After coming so close in recent Champions League campaigns, finally it was City's time. — AFP

Drink with Messi for \$42,000: Scam alert

BEIJING: Dinner, drinks and a selfie with Lionel Messi sounds like every football fan's dream, but Chinese police have warned it's just one of numerous scams surrounding his visit to Beijing. The Argentine legend's presence in China for a friendly against Australia in the capital on Thursday has drawn scammers and ticket-scalpers desperate to capitalize on Messi mania.

Beijing police are warning against falling for one widely circulated advertisement that promises an evening in Messi's company for 300,000 yuan (\$42,000). "If you can be scammed of 300,000 yuan, we'll raise a glass to you," the usually austere Beijing public security bureau joked on the Twitter-like Weibo. Other dubious offers posted online include "internal" stadium passes for 5,000 yuan and a "tailored VIP package" including an autographed jersey, front-row seats and a photo with Messi for over 8,000 yuan.

For 50 million yuan, Messi will appear on your shopping livestream to extol the virtues of your product, another unauthorized advertisement claims. Messi landed in Beijing on Saturday and will lead the world champions against the Soccerroos at Beijing's newly renovated 68,000-capacity Workers' Stadium. It is a rematch of the round-of-16 clash at last winter's World Cup, where Argentina won 2-1 and went on to lift the trophy. Chinese fans have been



BEIJING: People shop for merchandises next to a board with human-shaped image of Argentina's footballer Lionel Messi and Angel Di Maria at a newly decorated post office in Beijing. — AFP

desperate to get close to their hero Messi, with tickets for the game ranging from 580 to 4,800 yuan quickly selling out.

Dozens of merchants on the Taobao online shopping platform are offering to resell tickets for as much as 18,000 yuan, despite anti-scalping measures including an ID requirement for entering the stadium. Hundreds of people waited outside the Argentina team hotel in central Beijing on Saturday, with one fan telling AFP they had booked a room in hopes of catching a glimpse of Messi after failing to secure match tickets. The 35-year-old Messi, who is set to join Inter Miami after leaving Paris Saint-Germain, will also play another friendly match when Argentina take on Indonesia in Jakarta on June 19. — AFP

History-making Djokovic claims record 23rd title

PARIS: Novak Djokovic created history on Sunday when he captured a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title with a third French Open triumph, reinforcing his case to be crowned the greatest player of all time. The 36-year-old Serb brushed off an early wobble to defeat Casper Ruud of Norway 7-6 (7/1), 6-3, 7-5 and snap the tie of 22 Slams he shared with career-long rival Rafael Nadal.

Victory for the third time in Paris, after 2016 and 2021, adds to his 10 Australian Open titles, seven at Wimbledon and three at the US Open. Djokovic is the first man to win all four majors at least three times and is once again halfway to the first calendar Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969. Only Margaret Court and Serena Williams in women's tennis have managed to rack up 23 Grand Slam titles. Court's all-time mark of 24 will now be in his sights at Wimbledon next month. There is little sign

PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic jumps as he celebrates his victory over Norway's Casper Ruud during their men's singles final match on June 11, 2023. — AFP



of Djokovic slowing down. He is now the oldest French Open champion but 11 of his Slam trophies have now been won after he turned 30. On Monday, he will reclaim the world number ranking and start his 388th week in top spot. The sense of Sunday's occasion certainly attracted sports A-listers. NFL legend Tom Brady watched from the Djokovic box, football stars Kylian Mbappe and Zlatan Ibrahimovic sat side by side in the VIP area which also accommodated former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, a regular this weekend. Djokovic was playing in his seventh French Open final and boasted a 4-0 career record over Ruud, not having lost a single set.

However, the fourth-ranked Norwegian was the more composed of the two at the start, sprinting out of the blocks for a 2-0 lead when Djokovic shanked an overhead. Ruud, the 2022 runner-up to Nadal, stretched to 3-0 and 4-1 before Djokovic retrieved the break in the seventh game when his opponent buried an easy smash into the net with an open court begging. It came at the end of a lung-busting 28-shot rally. Djokovic missed a break point in the ninth game, tumbling to the red clay as he chased down a Ruud drive. His frustration boiled over when he angrily accused umpire Damien Dumousois of rushing the players between changeovers on a heavy, humid afternoon in the French capital. Fired up, he then raced through the tiebreak, sealing the opener with a running forehand. Tellingly, that was Djokovic's sixth tiebreak at this French Open and in none of them had he committed a single unforced error in the 55 points contested. — AFP