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Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



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16 Denver Nuggets win NBA Finals for first title



Amir renames Sheikh Ahmad as PM

Crown Prince meets ex-premiers • Kuwait signs \$367m deal with Turkey to buy Bayraktar drones



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives former prime ministers HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (left) and HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (center) and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah (right) at Bayan Palace on June 13, 2023. — KUNA photos

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: An Amiri order was issued late Tuesday appointing HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as prime minister and assigning him to nominate members of the new Cabinet. HH the Crown Prince earlier Tuesday met former prime ministers as part of customary consultations before appointing a prime minister. HH Sheikh Mishal met HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah,

HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah. He also spoke over the phone with HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, who is outside the country.

On Sunday, HH the Crown Prince received former Assembly speakers Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Ahmad Al-Saadoun for the same purpose. Under Kuwaiti law, the government should resign immediately after the announcement of results of parliamentary elections. Then, consultations are held with former premiers and

ex-speakers before naming a prime minister to form the new Cabinet. The new Cabinet must be ready before the Assembly holds its inaugural session on June 20.

Meanwhile, 47 MPs held their second informal meeting at the National Assembly on Tuesday and unanimously approved what they called a roadmap for reforms. Two more MPs who did not attend the meeting declared their support for the plan. After meeting for three hours, the lawmakers issued a joint statement vowing they will not let down the Kuwaiti

people who elected them. They said the Assembly will approve four urgent legislations in the summer and before the Assembly starts its summer recess. These include approving a law to establish an independent election commission and another to amend the law governing the constitutional court to prevent it from annulling elections. They added they will also approve a law on housing and another to include Kuwaiti housewives in a health insurance law.

Continued on Page 6

KOC initiates strategic new gas pipeline

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) announced Tuesday the operation of a new strategic gas line extending from North Kuwait operations area to Mina Al-Ahmadi, with a size of 40 inches. In a statement, KOC said the 140 km long line is in line with the company's plan to increase natural gas production to meet the requirements of the local market. The capacity of the line reaches 900 million standard cubic feet, as it starts from gas booster station 132 in northern Kuwait, passing through gas and condensate separation facilities in the north and south of Kuwait to finally reach Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery, the statement added.

The pipeline will contribute to keeping pace with KOC's strategy for the year 2040, which aims to increase oil and gas production and make the best use of Kuwait's hydrocarbon resources, KOC said. The line meets the requirements of global markets while ensuring the highest standards of security, safety and environmental preservation, taking into account the requirements of local consumers.

KOC recently started operating eight pipelines to transport oil and gas to Al-Zour refinery of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), with the total length of eight pipelines reaching 450 km.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said global demand for OPEC crude in 2023 is around 900,000 barrels per day (bpd), higher than in 2022. OPEC's report, which was distributed in Vienna on Tuesday, said this demand remained unchanged in 2023 from the previous assessment at 29.3 million bpd. OPEC-13 crude oil production in May decreased by 464,000 bpd to average 28.06 million bpd, the report mentioned. — KUNA

EU states move towards digital Schengen visas

BRUSSELS: EU member states and lawmakers on Tuesday agreed on how to change the current Schengen visa system so it becomes largely digital, with no need to get a sticker in a passport. The

new law — which will come into force once formally adopted — would allow most people needing a visa for visits to the European Union to apply online, rather than turning up at a consulate or visa service office.

Applicants would find the process "easier, cheaper and faster", the lead MEP on the issue, Matjaz Nemec, said. Sweden's Migration Minister Maria Malmer Stenegerd, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, said the change also "increases the security of the Schengen area by for example reducing the risk of

falsification and theft of the visa sticker".

The Schengen area encompasses almost all 27 EU member countries, except Cyprus, Ireland, Bulgaria and Romania. The latter two are meant to join it in the future. The European Union allows visa-free access for citizens from more than 60 countries outside the bloc. At the moment, visitors who do need a visa have to obtain a Schengen sticker for their passport.

But with the establishment of EU databases to help monitor entries and exits, overstays and security checks at the

bloc's external borders, the visa system has marched steadily towards digitalization. Some countries, such as Australia, already have similar systems in place, where the online visa is linked to a traveler's passport without the need for a sticker in it. Using these systems, applicants can upload required documents and pay the processing fees. Under the EU's incoming system, first-time applicants for a Schengen visa, or those with a new passport or changed biometric data may still need to attend an in-person appointment at a consulate or visa office. — AFP

Scores evacuated as cyclone to hit India and Pakistan

AHMEDABAD: More than 40,000 people have been evacuated across India and Pakistan as a cyclone approaches their coast, officials said Tuesday, with gales of up to 150 km per hour predicted. The cyclone — named Biparjoy, meaning "disaster" in Bengali — is making its way across the Arabian Sea and is forecast to make landfall as a "very severe cyclonic storm", government weather monitors warned.

In Pakistan's southeastern Sindh province, officials said at least 20,000 people had been evacuated from the storm's path, while across the border in India's Gujarat state, authorities said they had also helped a similar number to move.

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KARACHI: People enjoy the high tide splashing on the seafloor at a beach before the onset of cyclone Biparjoy on June 13, 2023. — AFP

Iran, Venezuela have 'common enemies': Raisi

CARACAS: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi began a rare diplomatic tour of Latin America on Monday with a first stop in Caracas, where he said his country and Venezuela are "friends" with "common enemies". Raisi's schedule is also set to include visits to Cuba and Nicaragua, who, like Iran and Venezuela, are all the target of US sanctions. "We have common interests, common visions, and common enemies," the president said, without specifying, in remarks to the

press alongside Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro.

"The relationship between Iran and Venezuela is not a normal diplomatic relationship, but a strategic relationship," he added. Tehran is one of the principal international allies of Maduro's government, which, like those in Cuba and Nicaragua, are also allies of Russia, an international pariah since its invasion of Ukraine last year. "Iran is playing a starring role as one of the most important emerging powers in the new world," said Maduro, claiming that "together we will be invincible". Part of the reason for Raisi's trip was to increase trade between the two countries, Raisi said, up from the current \$3 billion a year to eventually \$20 billion. The two leaders announced that they signed 25 accords, across sectors ranging from education and health to mining.

Continued on Page 6



CARACAS: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro hold a private meeting at Miraflores Presidential Palace on June 12, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Partnership between private, public sectors main pillar for sustainable economy: Official

Cooperation encourages foreign investment, creates job opportunities



KUWAIT: Khaled Mahdi speaks at the conference for partnership between the private and public sectors held on Monday. — KUNA photos



Participants in the conference, which stressed the importance of cooperation between the private and public sectors to achieve prosperity, are seen in this group photo.

KUWAIT: Partnership between both private and public sectors is imperative for a diverse and sustainable economy in accordance with Kuwait's 2035 Vision, General Secretary of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Dr Khaled Mahdi said Monday.

Mahdi made the statement while inaugurating the second Kuwait conference for partnership between the private and public sectors, organized by the Kuwaiti Federation of Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses with the participation of some govern-

ment agencies and under the sponsorship from SCPD. Partnership between the two sides is one of the main tools for economically enabling the private sector, including small and medium enterprises, and encouraging foreign investment, Mahdi told attendees.

Cooperation between the two sectors "is no longer a complementary policy for economic development only, but also necessary and inevitable for economic growth," he said. It contributes to creating new job opportunities, raising production efficiency, achieving better value for investment and helps with

the transfer and localization of technology. The partnership also creates investment opportunities for the local and foreign private sector, he elaborated.

Although SCPD projects have so far been focused on infrastructure, specifically generating electricity, water desalination and sewage treatment, Mahdi said, the authority will be expanding to other fields when collaborating with the private sector.

Meanwhile, Badar Suleiman, head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses (KFECH) which organized the conference,

said the gathering aims at discussing executive, legal and legislative aspects required to achieve the success of partnership projects and removing obstacles. The three-day conference will also touch upon the best global practices in this field to avoid delays and inefficient government measures, he said.

Partnership is the way for the private sector to actively participate in achieving renaissance and prosperity of society, he said, stressing the federation's support for this aspect to reach the desired positive results. — KUNA

Official shares Kuwait's election experience at Arab League meeting

CAIRO: The information and media sector constitutes a key part of the democratic process, particularly during the elections, said Brigadier Jurist Ahmad Al-Hajri, the director of electoral affairs at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior.

Hajri affirmed the State of Kuwait's keenness on media coverage of national elections on the sidelines of the fourth meeting of electoral administrations, held at the Arab League headquarters under the theme, "the media and elections."

"The media presence in the elections is necessary to provide the public with a clear message and correct any misinformation to prevent the spread of rumors and any irregularities undermining the democratic action," said Hajri, who represented Kuwait at the meeting.

The three-day Cairo meeting, organized by the Arab League Secretariat General in coordination with the United Nations and the UN Development Program, kicked on Monday. It is designed to boost cooperation in the elections' realm among Arab electoral administrations. It grouped a large number of heads and members of electoral authorities in the Arab countries, representatives of international organizations. Among the main themes of the gathering is the media role in polling.

Hajri indicated Kuwait's deep advocacy of transparency, integrity and neutrality in handling election nominees. He shed some light in his statement on laws that penalize offenses, namely cybercrime laws and election laws. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior and other state departments, regularly, deploy personnel at the electoral sites in all phases of the polling process, he said. — KUNA



CAIRO: Brigadier Jurist Ahmad Al-Hajri speaks at the fourth meeting of electoral administrations held at the Arab League headquarters. — KUNA

Children make up 4 percent of cancer diagnoses in 2010-2019

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN) held a workshop to raise awareness and follow up on cases of children's cancers, with support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences at the CAN training center on Tuesday.

Oncologist Dr Khalid Al-Saleh spoke about the genetic changes and their relationship with cancer and explained that the genetic symptoms could be due to environmental reasons such as exposure to radiation, or carcinogenic products such as benzene, or could be hereditary.

He said the goal behind health awareness is

guiding families, particularly mothers for early observation of primary symptoms as well as how to best deal with the sick child.

Dr Amani Al-Basmi, consultant of cancer epidemiology, spoke about the most common children's cancers in Kuwait. There have been 26,609 new cancer cases diagnosed between 2010-2019, she said, 4 percent of which were in children. The age children were diagnosed with cancer was on average nine years old for Kuwaitis and eight years old for non-Kuwaitis, she added. Leukemia made up 40 percent of cases and the death rate was 12 percent.

Stem cells transplant and blood disease consultant Dr Sundus Al-Shareedah spoke about risk factors during childhood and the role that the mother's awareness plays in early detection, adding that 12 types of children cancers were diagnosed.

Dr Khalid Al-Saleh thanked participants and the media who helped spread awareness of the disease in society.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Malta reading the Kuwait Times newspaper.



Ambassador of Malta George A Said-Zammit



Kuwait Times reporter Ghadeer Ghloom (right) interviews Malta's ambassador. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Malta's ambassador to foster stronger ties with Kuwait

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times visited the official residence of the Ambassador of Malta to Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan, Prof Dr George A Said-Zammit, to discuss his vision on what he intends to do in this country to boost the excellent and friendly diplomatic relationship between Kuwait and Malta.

Said-Zammit introduced himself to Kuwait Times, saying he arrived in Kuwait at the end of March after a very long period of more than 33 years working in the field of education. He said he spent the first 15 years of his career as a teacher, teaching a variety of subjects such as history, environmental studies and Latin. In 2008, he moved to the ministry of education in Malta, where he served in different senior management positions, including that of director of education. For some years, he was responsible for support services in all schools of Malta and Gozo, while between 2017 and 2023, he was director and registrar of examinations.

Said-Zammit said in 2021, he was offered the position of Non-Resident Ambassador of Malta to Armenia and Georgia. Late in 2022 he was appointed as Resident Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. "I am also Non-Resident Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Republic of Iraq, but I am resident in Kuwait," he added.

Said-Zammit expressed his love, passion and satisfaction for being in Kuwait from the day he arrived here. He said he does not see Kuwait as a different country but as a second home, because the people

of Kuwait share many common values, besides similarities in their language, explaining how Maltese, a Semitic language, derives from Arabic. In fact, it is the only Semitic language in the world written in the Latin alphabet. Due to its uniqueness, Maltese also constitutes one of the official languages of the European Union.

Said-Zammit explained how the Maltese culture is deeply rooted in Semitic civilization in various aspects, not only the language. This is because for a long time, the Maltese Islands were dominated by Arabs — between 870 and the late 11th century. Hence, there are similarities in various aspects such as numbers, days of the week, toponymy, architecture and even traditional farming practices. He also showed his admiration on the way Kuwaiti people salute others, as they speak of love, respect and peace (like what the Maltese do), which makes one feel at home.

With regards to the political and diplomatic relationship between Malta and Kuwait, Said-Zammit explained that diplomatic relations between the two states hark back to the second half of the previous century, more than 50 years ago. However, their relationship got even stronger during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when Malta was one of the principal actors involved to bring an end to the military conflict.

The relations between the two countries exist at various levels: "One of my main goals is to continue working and improving the excellent diplomatic relations that exist between the two countries. We can work on this through different means such as tourism and education, as we have a good number of Kuwaiti students coming to Malta to study medicine and dentistry at the University of Malta, besides some other subjects. So, the friendly relationship is in place, but to make it stronger, it is crucial to meet people and get to know them, talk to them, discuss with them and learn from them too. That is certainly one of my principal objectives," he said.

Said-Zammit also emphasized the significance of reading, reflecting and studying, stressing that one of the main tasks an ambassador has is to read and evaluate what is happening around them every day. Reading the newspaper and following television and social media is a must: One has to know and understand the host country in context. "You cannot observe and see what is happening in Kuwait as if it is a country on its own. Kuwait is part of the Gulf region and the Gulf region forms a part of the world, so one has to view Kuwait within a global context. Every country has its own challenges, but I can see that we can work together on various aspects: Tourism, education, culture, business and trade," Said-Zammit said.

Ambassador Said-Zammit told Kuwait Times he would like to interact soon with students in different educational fields. He hopes to give lectures about the similarities between both cultures, maybe at Kuwait University and other educational institutions.

Said-Zammit gave a brief description of Malta, saying it is a very small island located between North Africa and southern Europe, in the center of the Mediterranean Sea. Due to its strategic geographical position, Malta plays a pivotal role for those seeking asylum, mainly from North Africa. Malta is obliged by international treaties and agreements to rescue and take care of these people, not only because of its international obligations, but after all, also because they are human beings. He further elaborated saying that Malta also offers good business opportunities to the international commercial community, particularly in the banking and financial sector.

Malta does not have natural resources except for its local globigerina stone, used mainly in the construction industry. For this reason, Malta depends mostly on tourism, manufacturing and the services industry. Insofar as education is concerned, Said-Zammit also mentioned Malta's leading role in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh speaks with one of the women in the audience.



KUWAIT: Participants at the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness workshop for children cancer are seen in this photo.

Local

As bullying rates soar, people with disabilities must be protected: Experts

Seminar discusses phenomenon's implications, prevention methods

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Society of Lawyers organized a seminar on Monday to discuss means to combat bullying against differently-abled people. The seminar delved into the legal, psychological and social aspects of bullying differently-abled individuals.

The topic of this seminar is of no less importance compared to other topics, said Head of the Disability Center Mohammed Dughaim Al-Azmi said. Azmi explained that bullying comes from those who suffer from a psychological illness that incites aggression and assault, as bullying is a type of violence in which a person attacks another person by spreading accusations or rumors, whether through electronic means, verbal abuse, psychological abuse or physical abuse.

Member of the Disability Center Hamed Al-Shabu said it is important to know who the bully is, and that the bully is a psychologically ill person. Shabu suggested six ways to combat bullying: "We must listen to the victim (by listening and providing emotional support), motivate the victim and let them know that there is a responsible party to protect them, work to improve the work environment between family and school, look for specialized help for this

category, such as psychotherapists, encourage the victim to develop skills for dealing with bullying, such as speaking with confidence, and improve awareness of bullying through education and awareness-raising," he said.

Since the lecture was limited to people with disabilities, Shabu highlighted that the people surrounding them and those who are responsible for them must be close to people with different abilities, so that they turn to them in case of bullying.

Regarding the legal aspect of this issue, Treasurer of the Disability Center Khaled Al-Sharif began his speech with a Quranic verse that states: "Woe to every slanderer and backbiter". He said bullying is a matter that concerns people with different abilities and others as well, but there is no law that fights bullying differently-abled people as a category of their own. The reason behind this may be to show equality between differently-abled people and others and facilitate their integration into society.

He then mentioned some criminal laws for penalties against those who cause disability, threaten or bully others. Sharif drew a distinction between two different types of cyberbullying: Bullying through private messages, which comes under investigation by the interior ministry, and

group bullying, which is reviewed by the public prosecution because it is considered to be public bullying. He praised the role of mothers in educating, thanking them for undertaking the most difficult task, which is upbringing and raising children, especially mothers of people with different abilities.

Secretary of the Disability Center Mubarak Sabah Duajj Al-Sabah mentioned some Arab countries' action towards protecting differently-abled people from bullying, as he provided a few examples such as Saudi Arabia, which established a center to protect people with different abilities by providing a hotline; the UAE, which has fixed a week every year and surveys students and parents for awareness purposes; and Egypt, which amended a law to protect differently-abled people. He then necessitated working on the protection of differently-abled people, adding society must be aware not to bully this category.

Member of the Disability Center Wadha Al-Naham addressed the psychological aspect of bullying, saying she has noticed bullying is increasing lately, and that it is not easy for a victim to express their suffering. She also said bullying can lead to suicide, as this issue has gone beyond schools and children and has reached



workplaces and has started appearing among adults.

She expressed her displeasure towards those who bully differently-abled people, saying bullying can kill the skills and abilities of people with different abilities, although they may be capable of creativity and productivity. Naham pointed out that places that refuse to employ people with

different abilities also play a role in bullying them. When bullying occurs by differently-abled person themselves, resorting to the law is necessary, where the legal system will protect the victim. She concluded by encouraging fighting bullying in every possible way, even if it is through a simple tweet or mentioning the topic in meetings and sessions.



KUWAIT: Sheikha Fadiya Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah tours the family business exhibition.



Bursa Kuwait organizes blood donation drive

KUWAIT: In commemoration of World Blood Donor Day, Bursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) organized a blood drive at the Bursa Kuwait building on Sunday, June 4, which was held in partnership with the Central Blood Bank.



Started in 2004 by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Health Organization and other international partners, the annual event is held on June 14, coinciding with the birthday of Austrian biologist and physician Karl Landsteiner, considered the founder of modern blood transfusion.

The theme for this year's campaign is "Give blood, give plasma: share life, share often", and sheds light on the patients requiring life-long transfusion support, as well as underlining the role every single person can play by giving blood or plasma. It also highlights the importance of giving blood or plasma regularly to create a safe and sustainable supply of blood and blood products that can always be available for patients to receive timely treatment.

This year's campaign aims to celebrate the individuals who regularly donate blood, encourage more people to become new donors, highlight the critical roles of voluntary regular blood and plasma donations in achieving universal access to safe blood products for all populations, as well as mobilize support at the national, regional and global levels among governments and development partners to invest in, strengthen and sustain national blood programs.

Held in line with Goal 3, Good Health and Well-Being, and Goal 17, Partnership for the Goals, of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Bursa Kuwait's blood drive leveraged sustainable partnerships to promote the important social cause.

Bursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations. With the two pillars of Community, and Environment, the strategy provides the foundation for creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allows Bursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other organizations specializing in different fields and integrate sustainability efforts with the company culture.

As part of this strategy, Bursa Kuwait has launched a variety of initiatives in partnership with both local and international organizations including the United Nations, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) amongst others. The exchange embraces a forward-thinking approach to creating long-term value for stakeholders with a focus on supporting nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, raising financial literacy and capital market awareness, empowering women, fighting pollution and contributing towards the improvement of Kuwait's socioeconomic conditions.

Women associations union urges support for family businesses

KUWAIT: Supporting small family businesses leads to empowering them economically and supporting national product, said Head of Kuwait Union of Women's Associations Sheikha Fadiya Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Helping small family businesses is especially important because they reflect the role of the productive Kuwaiti woman in economic development, Sheikha Fadiya added.

The remarks came at the opening of the 'productive families' exhibition — which was organized Monday by an organization whose mission statement is to empower women — to help families overcome barriers when launching their own small business. Small family projects, Sheikha Fadiya said, are the first defense line for instilling self-sufficiency and protecting many families from becoming in need.

She urged Kuwaiti society to encourage such projects, especially after proving popular among people in the local markets due to their high quality which meets consumers' needs.

Among the obstacles low-income families face when starting a small business to become self-dependent is the lack of financing mechanisms, insufficient marketing plans and the lack of experience

in managing small businesses, said Sheikha Fadiya.

She added that it is important to care for this sector and transform projects of 'productive' families to successful commercial projects and to promote the culture of independent work among society members and encourage families to produce and work.

She called for highlighting a woman's role and empowering her economically, as well as making an effort to add revenue streams for low-income families. It's also necessary, she said, to launch initiatives aimed at developing the standard of living for families and supporting their stability.

Head of the women empowerment organization Ibtisam Al-Quoud said it is necessary to support low-income family projects and introduce the public to the achievements made by these families. — KUNA

Shuwaikh Beach development project comes into effect

KUWAIT: The agreement to develop the Shuwaikh Beach has come into effect, Kuwait Municipality said Tuesday. The project includes developing a 1.7-kilometer-long area of the Shuwaikh Beach to create four zones. The first zone will be turned into sports fields and entertainment facilities, the second will be used as a sandy beach, the third will be turned into a covered park while the fourth will contain walking and bike lanes, Kuwait Municipality explained in a press statement. The project is scheduled to be completed within 17 months.

The agreement was signed with National Bank of Kuwait who are contributing KD 3 million for the project. This project comes as part of Kuwait Vision 2035 plan to create new touristic, entertainment and sports sites in the country, said Maisa Boushehri, Deputy Director of the Projects Affairs Department at Kuwait Municipality. She added that the beach's "vibrant and dynamic location" adds to its importance as the Municipality seeks to create new touristic destinations around the country. The project is also in line with the Municipality's plans to develop all beachfronts in Kuwait, she noted. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of India Dr Adarsh Swaika met with Sheikh Nimr Fahad Al-Sabah, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Oil of Kuwait on Tuesday. They appreciated the strong oil connection between the two countries and discussed opportunities for further strengthening bilateral collaboration in this important sector.

Kuwait envoy, Irish Parliament speaker discuss bilateral ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ambassador to Ireland Mohammad Fahad Al-Mohammad met with the Irish Parliament Speaker Sean O'Fearghail, where they discussed boosting bilateral relations. O'Fearghail praised His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait for their efforts in achieving stability and maintaining peace in the region, as well as congratulating Kuwait on the success of the recent 2023 National Assembly's elections, while admiring the established democracy. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Ambassador to Ireland Mohammad Fahad Al-Mohammad (left) meets with the Irish Parliament Speaker Sean O'Fearghail. — KUNA

News in Brief

Lumber warehouse
fire extinguished

KUWAIT: Five fire stations battled a fire in lumber warehouses in Khuwaisat area, and no injuries were reported. Firemen found out the warehouses had, in addition to wood and hazardous material, oils, gas cylinders, batteries and petrochemicals. The presence of these materials in large quantities at the site made it difficult for the firefighters to control the flames. Kuwait Oil Company water tanks present near the site of the fire were used in the firefighting operation. — KUNA

Nearly 100 laborers
arrested in Mutlaa

KUWAIT: Public Authority of Manpower inspected several sites under construction in Mutlaa area and arrested 96 laborers found in violation of the residency law. The authority said the campaign was carried in coordination with residency affairs detectives. — KUNA

1,126 illegal residents
registered in Kuwait University

KUWAIT: Kuwait University announced the number of registered students who are illegal residents has reached 1,126 during the 2022-2023 academic year. Kuwait University official spokesman Dr Fayed Al-Dhafiri said the education college has the largest share with 340 students, followed by the College of Arts with 171 students and College of Science with 154. He said 264 students who are illegal residents were accepted during 2022-2023, with the number of graduates among those students in 2021-2022 being 143. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A man reads Quran inside his shop where he sells Abayas and head coverings at Souq Al-Mubarakia in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Legislative amendments needed to close gender equality gap: Experts

Conference calls for shattering stereotypes keeping women at home

KUWAIT: A number of participants in the 43rd edition of women's empowerment and capacity building conference, titled "Tamkeen", underlined Monday the need to provide more support to empower women in leading positions.

Speaking in the conference held by the International Organization for Women's Empowerment and Capacity-Building, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Union of Women's Associations, participants stressed the need to give women more opportunities to help them get more posts, especially given that the extent to which a society is developed is proportional to how involved women are in the workforce.

A panel discussion held as part of the two-day conference underscored the importance of enhancing achievements made by Kuwaiti women in different fields. In a speech, former Minister of Information Sami Al-Nisf called for supporting women in order to help them accomplish bigger goals and enable them to take on leadership positions to keep pace with the international community.

Iqbal Al-Ahmad, a media personality, called for changing the stereotypical view of some people towards women, which confines women's role to being at home. She considered that "men created this view because they enact laws and regulations that affect women and their ability to get leadership positions".



KUWAIT: Participants in the 43rd edition of women's empowerment and capacity building conference, titled "Tamkeen", pose for a picture. — KUNA

Wafaa Al-Arabi, associate professor at Kuwait University, said women in some societies face systemic cultural and legislative barriers that prevent her from taking leadership positions. "Social support networks supporting women are different from those supporting men," she said.

Mona Al-Arbash, member of Kuwait Bar Association's women and business committee, underscored the necessity of making legislative amendments to further the advancement of women and their partic-

ipation in the labor market, referring to some "gaps in gender equality". Member of Tamkeen Salwa Al-Jassa pointed out what she considered "flaws" in how some laws are enforced when it comes to women empowerment. She added that the private sector could play a larger role in supporting them.

Malak Al-Rashid, another professor at Kuwait University, said women can "enact change if they believe in themselves," calling for fostering an environment that supports innovative women. — KUNA



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NBK takes part in PAM's career day

KUWAIT: Within its consistent endeavors to support fresh graduates taking the first step in their career and to help them navigate their way into the labor market, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in the career day organized by the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) at its headquarters.

The career day targeted Kuwaiti graduates with majors in banking and accounting, in addition to administrative sciences, information systems, finance and marketing, computer science, literature, mass communication, public relations and visual communication.

NBK's pavilion attracted a large number of visitors from the participants, as group human resources staff provided answers to all inquiries raised by the students who filled out the job applications for available vacancies, and a number of applicants were recruited in various jobs including the call center.

NBK's participation in the Career Day reflects its continuous endeavors to support the Kuwaiti youth and to attract high-caliber national talent, and to provide them with suitable job opportunities in an important sector like the banking and financial sector.

By sponsoring career fairs, NBK aims to offer a meeting point between private sector companies and potential candidates looking for a career. It also helps graduates navigate their way into the labor market and connect directly with companies and institutions to secure job opportunities.

Speaking on this, Jarrah Al-Shatti, Senior Talent Acquisition Officer at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We always seek to actively participate in the various annual career fairs organized by different

agencies and institutions, in line with our strategy to invest in our community, and to increase job nationalization ratio."

"NBK's recruitment strategy is focused on attracting, training and developing the skills and capabilities of young national talent through the best-in-class programs to help them build a successful career that qualifies them to take on future leading roles in the bank," he remarked.

NBK is one of the best private sector employers guaranteeing equal opportunities, as it ensures equal opportunities for all its employees, with no exception. It also enjoys a uniquely robust workplace culture that is on par with international peers, he noted.

"NBK not only provides job opportunities in a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, but also a promising career path and prospects, thanks to its world-class professional training resources and programs, which help upskill the youth and increase their efficiency," he explained.

NBK annually sponsors many career fairs for the Kuwaiti youth to introduce to them suitable job opportunities that meet their aspirations, reflecting its constant commitment to nurture the young national talent and qualify them for the labor market. It also provides unwavering support to all career fairs that help youth and fresh graduates to find the right job.

The bank's endeavors to attract national talent go in line with its development and training plans to invest in national cadres and prepare a promising banking generation. It also offers a wide range of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for the youth.



Jarrah Al-Shatti



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Russian overnight strikes kill 10 in Zelensky's hometown

Russia launches 14 cruise missiles, four Iranian-made drones



MARIUPOL: Workers fix partially destroyed building in the Russian-controlled Azov Sea port city of Mariupol in southeastern Ukraine. — AFP

KYIV: Russian strikes early Tuesday on the hometown of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky killed ten people, as Moscow said it had captured Western armored vehicles from Kyiv's forces. The strikes overnight hit multiple sites and smashed into a five-storey apartment building in the central city of Kryvyi Rig, leaving smoke billowing from the housing block strewn with debris.

"Ten people have died. One is under rubble. Twenty-eight are injured and 12 of them are in the city's hospitals in medium, serious and very serious condition," said Oleksandr Vilkul, the head of the city's military administration. "Rescue operations are ongoing," he added.

Zelensky said after the strikes that Russian forces were waging a war against "residential buildings, ordinary cities and people". He promised Ukrainians that those responsible would be held to account.

"Terrorists will never be forgiven, and they will be held accountable for every missile they launch," he said in a statement on social media. Air raid sirens earlier had sounded across Ukraine as the capital

Kyiv and the northeast city of Kharkiv also came under missile and drone attacks. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 14 cruise missiles and four Iranian-made drones overnight, with 10 missiles and one drone intercepted.

'Trophies'

In the morning, another missile was fired by Russian forces before being shot down by the Ukrainian air defences. The fresh wave of attacks came shortly before Moscow claimed to have captured several German Leopard tanks and US Bradley infantry fighting vehicles.

The defence ministry released footage showing Russian troops surveying the equipment supplied to Ukraine by Western countries. "Leopard tanks and Bradley infantry fighting vehicles. These are our trophies. Equipment of the Ukrainian armed forces in the Zaporizhzhia region," the Russian defence ministry said in a statement.

"Servicemen of the Vostok group inspect enemy tanks and infantry fighting vehicles captured in bat-

tle." Kyiv has appealed to its allies in the West to deliver a broad range of modern military equipment to help Ukrainian forces recapture large swathes of territory controlled by Russia.

The defence ministry said several of the captured vehicles had working engines, suggesting that battles they were involved in had been short and that Ukrainian troops had "fled" their offensive positions.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has asked Australia about the condition of dozens of retired F-18 fighter jets, the country's ambassador told AFP on Tuesday, eyeing a potential weapons transfer that could significantly bolster Kyiv's airpower.

Flooding toll rises

The strikes across Ukraine came shortly after Kyiv claimed to have retaken seven villages and made advances in its counter-offensive against Russian forces. Military spokesman Andriy Kovalyov said the area of the recaptured land in the eastern and southern regions amounted to "more than 100 square kilometres" (40 square miles).

The commander of Ukrainian ground forces, Colonel Oleksandr Syrskyi, said troops were continuing "the defence operation in the Bakhmut sector", scene of the longest battle of the offensive.

"Our soldiers are advancing, and the enemy is losing ground on the flanks," he said.

On Monday, Zelensky said Ukraine was making small gains in a "tough" counter-offensive. Kyiv's ambitions to capture more territory further south have been complicated after the destruction of a major dam in southern Ukraine, inundating huge swathes of land under Russian and Ukrainian control.

The toll in Russian-controlled territory from the Kakhovka dam breach last week — which Kyiv and its allies believe was an act of Russian sabotage — has since risen to 17, Moscow-installed officials announced Tuesday.

"As of this morning, 12 dead were confirmed in Gola Prystan and five in Oleshky," Andrei Alekseyenko, head of the Russian-installed government in the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson, said on social media. — AFP

Rescued Colombian kids recovering, in 'high spirits'

BOGOTA: The four Indigenous children rescued after wandering the Colombian Amazon for 40 days are recovering and in "high spirits", welfare officials said Monday, even drawing a picture thought to depict a missing army search dog.

Siblings Lesly, Soleiny, Tien Noriel and Cristin — aged 13, nine, five and one, respectively — were receiving treatment at a military hospital in Bogota after they were found hungry and dehydrated last Friday, having survived a plane crash more than five weeks earlier.

Their mother had died in the aftermath of the crash, which killed the two other adults they were traveling with. By Monday, the rescued children were "in high spirits," Adriana Velasquez of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute said in a video sent to media.

"They have been coloring, drawing. They love to talk," she added. The army released a drawing attributed to the children that depicts Wilson, a rescue dog that went missing during the search. "The dog was with them, he would leave and come back again... but then he disappeared," said Narciso Mucutuy, the children's grandfather, in a video released by the Ministry of Defense.

The army said on Saturday it would keep looking for Wilson, a six-year-old Belgian shepherd who was key to finding some of the items left behind by the children in the jungle. "No one is left behind," the army said in a tweet including a video of the dog.

While alone, the children survived in part by eating a three-pound package of cassava flour found in the plane wreckage, as well as fruit from the jungle.

Custody dispute

The older siblings had been fighting fevers, a colleague of Velasquez, Astrid Caceres, told W Radio, while Tien Noriel was being monitored for a possible reaction to something he ate. Tien Noriel was too weak to walk by the time rescuers found the four



BOGOTA: An indigenous woman who participated in the search for the four children who were found alive after being lost for 40 days in the Colombian Amazon rainforest following a plane crash performs a ritual outside of the Military Hospital, where the children were hospitalized. — AFP

after covering more than 2,600 kilometers (1,615 miles) of jungle, only to discover them about five kilometers from the wreck of the small plane.

The youngest of the siblings remains in intensive care, "not due to any serious condition but for closer monitoring due to her age," said Caceres, adding that all four had been catching up on lost sleep. The children are expected to remain in hospital for another two to three weeks.

The family welfare agency will keep the siblings under its guardianship until a custody dispute between their relatives is resolved. Family members of Magdalena Mucutuy, the deceased mother, have said the father of the two younger siblings, Manuel Miller Ranoque, mistreated the children, which he denies. Ranoque, speaking to the press on Sunday outside the hospital, said his wife had been severely injured in the May 1 crash, but did not die until four days later, her children beside her.

During the search, rescuers broadcast a message recorded by the children's grandmother, urging them not to move. Their maternal grandmother, Fatima Valencia, told AFP that she hoped to gain custody of the four children. — AFP

Trump's own words used to build case against him

WASHINGTON: US prosecutors who indicted Donald Trump used his own words — and notes jotted down by his lawyers — to build the historic case against the former president. The 49-page indictment unsealed last week accuses Trump of endangering US national security by hoarding top secret nuclear and defense documents after leaving the White House.

The indictment from special counsel Jack Smith relies heavily on statements made by Trump himself to make the legal case against the 45th US president. It recounts one instance in which Trump described a Pentagon "plan of attack" on a US rival nation to a writer, publisher and two staff members, none of whom held security clearances.

Trump allegedly told them during the audio-recorded meeting at his golf club in New Jersey that

the plan was 'highly confidential' and 'secret,' the indictment says. Trump is quoted as telling them "as president I could have declassified it" and "Now I can't, you know, but this is still secret."

The target of the attack is identified in the indictment only as "Country A." According to US media, the nation involved was Iran. The indictment also uses Trump's own words to establish that he was aware — even before winning the 2016 presidential election — of the importance of safeguarding classified information.

"In my administration I'm going to enforce all laws concerning the protection of classified information," the then Republican presidential candidate said in August 2016. "No one will be above the law." And as president, the indictment notes, Trump issued a statement in July 2018 stressing his "unique, Constitutional responsibility to protect the Nation's classified information."

The indictment also recounts meetings between Trump and two of his lawyers — identified as Attorney 1 and Attorney 2 — to implicate him in an effort to mislead investigators seeking the return of documents taken from the White House to Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida. — AFP



DORAL: Supporters of former US President Donald Trump gather outside Trump National Doral resort in Doral, Florida. Trump is expected to appear in court in Miami for an arraignment regarding 37 federal charges. — AFP

International

Man arrested after killing three in UK's Nottingham

My thoughts are with those injured and the families who lost their loved ones: PM

NOTTINGHAM: Police arrested a man Tuesday after three people were found dead and a van tried to mow down three others in the central English city of Nottingham in incidents authorities believe are linked. Nottingham's centre was cordoned off, with a heavy police presence, including some armed officers following the events that left residents shaken.

A 31-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murder, police said. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak thanked emergency services who had dealt with the "shocking incident" in the city, which is home to more than 320,000 people.

"My thoughts are with those injured, and the family and loved ones of those who have lost their lives," he added. Police were called just after 4:00 am (0300 GMT) after two people were found dead in Ilkeston Road, which runs west out of the city centre between the city's two university campuses.

Residents reported hearing screams and seeing a young man and woman being stabbed, before the attacker — said by one witness to be a "black guy dressed all in black with a hood and rucksack" — walked off calmly.

The body of a man was also found on Magdala Road, about two miles (3.2 kilometres) away, police said. The three people hit by the van, in Milton Street, in the city centre, were being treated in hospital, the force added in a statement. A white Vauxhall van with a shattered

windscreen was cordoned off a mile away outside a convenience store, an AFP photographer said. A black rucksack was seen on the road under the vehicle's open passenger-side door.

Sirens

Witness Lynn Haggitt said she saw a van hit two people at around 5:30 am near the city's Theatre Royal after the vehicle pulled up beside her on her way to work. "He looked in his mirror, saw a police car behind him, he then quickened up, there were two people... he went straight into these two people," she told BBC news.

Another man, Glen Gretton, said he was woken up at around 5:00 am by the sound of police cars passing his home. "I heard a police car go past. It was driving extremely quickly, followed by another one, another one," the 46-year-old delivery driver said.

"They just kept coming so I knew something quite major... was happening somewhere around the city centre," he said. "This is an horrific and tragic incident which has claimed the lives of three people," said Nottinghamshire Police Chief Constable Kate Meynell.

"We believe these three incidents are all linked and we have a man in custody," she added. The city's tram network was suspended while the investigation took place. Home Secretary Suella Braverman said she was "shocked and saddened" by the deaths. The city's three members of



NOTTINGHAM: A police officer stands by a cordon outside on Market Street in Nottingham, central England, during a 'major incident' in which three people have been found dead. — AFP

parliament — Nadia Whittome, Lilian Greenwood and Alex Norris — said they were "shaken" by the events and expressed their condolences to the families of the dead and injured.

"Our city has been devastated by the deaths of three people this morning. Nottingham is a beautiful city, home to brilliant people from all backgrounds. "We

are shaken by today's events but will meet them collectively as a community and heal together," they said in a joint statement on Twitter. — AFP

Seeking to dodge French police, migrants eye UK

GRAVELINES: Some 200 migrants cast shadows in the evening sunshine across the dunes of Gravelines beach in northern France, anticipating a police chase as they attempt to cross the waters before them to England.

At least 7,610 people have been detected in small boats off Britain's coast so far this year, according to UK government figures, amid a political push to stop the flow. For three weeks a "strong northeast wind" has halted Channel crossings, along with the activity of smugglers who negotiate the voyage, according to a French police source, who asked not be named. The fragile boats, overloaded with migrants, can't withstand the strong swells and currents.

But now, the wind has died down and the weather is ideal. In nearby camps, the flux of new arrivals has grown and the smugglers are determined to move quickly, the police source said. Dozens of officers are staked out between the dark alleys, the camp and the beach, in a game of cat-and-mouse along the coastline that offers many hiding places.

The journey across the Channel waters can be

deadly. Since the shipwreck that saw 27 die in November 2021, surveillance of crossings has been reinforced. But the number of those desperate enough to make the journey continues to climb, with a record 46,000 landings in England in 2022 and 8,000 rescued in French waters.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the purchase of more barges to house asylum-seekers, as backlogs in processing their applications has put the government under pressure on where to accommodate them in the interim.

The country also signed a new multi-million-euro partnership with France to prevent small boats crossings in the first place. The red sun glows over the glassy waters, and only the seagulls and the hum of a nearby nuclear power plant disturb the silence.

The CRS, a special mobile French police force, patrol the forested coastline where smugglers tend to hide their equipment. "They know we're here, it won't go through tonight," said one officer. Fifteen silhouettes suddenly emerge from the dunes, dressed in black and walking calmly — accomplices of the smugglers who perform a well-rehearsed dance of scouting and retreating to evade law enforcement.

Once the officers appear to have left, dozens more silhouettes appear on the beach, appearing more nervous. Around 80 migrants, mainly young men, run toward the power station to hide. They're followed by two more groups, some men carrying



GRAVELINES: Migrants return inland after being prevented from boarding smugglers' boats by French National Police on the beach of Gravelines, northern France on June 12, 2023. — AFP

life jackets, others parts of the very boats they intend to sail, with some children stumbling alongside. A group of women, couples, children and elderly position themselves in the centre.

An hour later, without a sound, they begin their descent to the water carrying on their shoulders two "small boats", partially inflated. Families run into the sea, children in their arms. Two police vans

sweep across the beach, interrupting the effort.

Mothers stop, seemingly lost, with some continuing their futile mission to the water while others turn around for the dunes in confusion. Police don't arrest them, but rather turn them inland. One woman throws her lifejacket to the ground in rage. Others, who say they come from Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq or Vietnam, look defeated. — AFP

Erdogan hails ties with 'sister' nation Azerbaijan

BAKU: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday highlighted his nation's ties with Azerbaijan in a post-election visit to one of his firmest allies. Ankara's supplies of combat drones to Baku helped to secure Azerbaijan's victory in its 2020 war with Armenia for control of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. "Turkey and Azerbaijan are two sister nations," Erdogan told a news conference alongside Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. "We have walked together up to this point as two states and one nation. From here on out, we will continue on our way resolutely."

Referring to the war, Aliyev said decades of talks had "failed to bring about any results, but our force did". He added that Azerbaijan and Turkey "will increase their force in the world and in the region". Six weeks of fighting in late 2020 ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that saw Armenia cede swathes of territories it had controlled for decades.

In the wake of the war, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been negotiating a peace agreement under the mediation of the European Union and United States. On June 3, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended Erdogan's inauguration in Ankara, the latest sign of a thaw between the two arch-foes whose relations are strained by World War I-era mass killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Yerevan insists the atrocities amounted to genocide, a label which Turkey fiercely rejects.

Erdogan arrived in Azerbaijan from Northern Cyprus, his first port of call after winning a runoff two weeks ago that saw his two-decade rule ex-



BAKU: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets Azeri President Ilham Aliyev on June 13, 2023. — AFP

tended until 2028. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ethnic Armenian separatists in Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing conflict claimed some 30,000 lives.

Erdogan redoubled his call Monday for the international recognition of Northern Cyprus. Erdogan met the north's leader Ersin Tatar, whose rule is recognized only by Turkey. "If there is to be a return to the negotiating table, the way to do this is through recognition" of the north, Erdogan declared. Turkey's calls for a "two-state solution" to the Cyprus issue have been rejected by Greek Cypriots who comprise a majority in the south. Erdogan rejected compromises during his joint appearance with Tatar. "The just demands of the Turkish Cypriots are clear and unequivocal," Erdogan said. "There are two separate peoples in Cyprus," Tatar added. — AFP

issues over the four years of the Assembly's term.

Meanwhile, Kuwait signed a \$367 million deal with Turkey to purchase Bayraktar TB2 drones, the Center for Government Communications announced on Tuesday. The deal was signed directly between the governments of Kuwait and Turkey without any brokers, the CGC said in a statement. The deal provides technical support for three years, maintenance and logistics requirements, training courses for Kuwaiti staff and more. Kuwait becomes one of 28 countries to sign such a deal to support its defense and military systems, the CGC added.

Scores evacuated as cyclone to hit...

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India's Meteorological Department said the storm would hit near the Indian port of Jakhau on Thursday evening with winds surging up to 150 km per hour.

"Over 20,000 people have been evacuated," said C C Patel, the official in charge of relief operations in Gujarat state, adding that more people would be moved throughout Tuesday. Fishing has been suspended along the Gujarat coast where there could be waves of up to three meters, and the Indian Coast Guard on Monday evacuated 50 personnel from an oil drilling ship due to rough conditions.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday chaired meetings to review the impending cyclone, calling for officials to "take every possible measure to ensure that people living in vulnerable locations are safely evacuated". Authorities in Gujarat have warned as many as 1.6 million people are likely to be affected in their state, and heavy winds and rains ahead of its arrival have already

killed three people. Two children were killed when a wall collapsed, and a woman was hit by a falling tree while riding a motorbike.

In Pakistan, the deputy commissioner of Badin district said between 22,000 and 23,000 people had been moved from seafront villages. Agha Shahnawaz told AFP that up to 10,000 were now living in 13 camps set up in government schools and colleges across the district. "Initially people were reluctant to leave their places, but we kept pursuing them," Shahnawaz said. Sindh's provincial information minister Sharjeel Memon put the number of evacuees there at 22,400 around midday on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department said winds gusting up to 120 km/h were forecast along the coast, with storm surges of up to 3.5 m predicted. In 2021, the same coast was hit by Cyclone Tauktae, which killed more than 150 people and caused large-scale destruction. Cyclones — the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the Northwest Pacific — are a regular and deadly menace on the coast of the northern Indian Ocean where tens of millions of people live. Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer because of climate change. — AFP

Iran, Venezuela have 'common...

Continued from Page 1

Also on the agenda is developing technological cooperation between the two countries, part of Raisi's goal of improving "economic, political and scientific cooperation" between Iran, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba.

"Over the last two years, our cooperation with these countries has developed," Raisi told the IRNA news agency before he set off from Tehran. Iran and Venezuela are also members of the OPEC oil cartel, which has become central to international discussions on the energy crisis sparked by Russia's war on Ukraine. The war has renewed global efforts to solve Venezuela's ongoing political and economic crisis.

Last year, the US sent delegates to Caracas to meet Maduro, and after talks resumed between his government and the opposition in November, Wash-

ington granted a six-month license to US energy giant Chevron to operate in Venezuela. The South American country, facing a deep economic crisis, has the world's largest oil reserves. Raisi's trip follows a previous diplomatic visit by Maduro, who visited Iran in June 2022 and signed a 20-year pact to open "major fronts" for cooperation in the oil, petrochemicals and defense sectors.

In February, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Caracas and discussed with Maduro the "defense of their national interests faced with external pressures," according to Tehran. In 2020, Iran sent 1.5 million barrels of fuel to Venezuela along with supplies to help restart struggling refineries. Washington has since accused Iran of circumventing sanctions. The last Iranian president to visit Cuba and Venezuela was Hassan Rouhani in Sept 2016. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made the last presidential visit to Nicaragua in 2007. Daniel Ortega, the Nicaraguan president, defended Iran's right to acquire nuclear weapons in February. — AFP

Crown Prince meets former PMs...

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The statement said they have agreed to classify legislations they will pass over the four-year term into political legislations and legislations on development and raising the standard of living of citizens. The statement said the lawmakers have unanimously entrusted a three-MP committee to set priority is-

International

Myanmar's blocking of aid access 'unfathomable': UN

6,000 Myanmar civilians killed in 20 months post coup: Report

GENEVA: The United Nations slammed Tuesday the Myanmar junta's "unfathomable" decision to suspend travel authorizations for aid workers trying to reach more than a million people in cyclone-ravaged Rakhine state.

Cyclone Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour to Myanmar and neighboring Bangladesh last month, killing at least 148 people in Myanmar. The cyclone destroyed homes and brought a storm surge to Rakhine state, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya minority refugees live in displacement camps following decades of ethnic conflict.

But despite the towering needs, the UN said last week that junta authorities had suspended "existing travel authorizations for humanitarian organizations". "Four weeks into this disaster response and with the monsoon season well under way, it is unfathomable that humanitarians are being denied access to support people in need," Ramanathan Balakrishnan, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, said in a statement on Monday.

Since the cyclone hit on May 14, humanitarian workers have been getting aid to a growing number of people using limited travel authorizations granted to organizations with long-standing operations in Rakhine.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday that more than 110,000 people had received shelter and other relief items during that time, while food assistance had reached almost 300,000 people in Rakhine thanks to those approvals.

He slammed the "effective ban" on access by humanitarian workers, "paralyzing the distribution of life-saving food, drinking water, shelter supplies and other relief to affected communities." "We had plans and material relief available for distribution in the coming weeks and months for one million people in Rakhine alone. That has been stopped," he said.

Last month, the UN launched an appeal for \$333 million in emergency funding for the 1.6 million people in Myanmar it said were affected by the storm. Laerke said the suspension also raised serious health concerns over possible disease outbreaks, "if we don't have access and we don't have the ability to first of all monitor, to survey what the situation is, and of course bring help".

He called on the junta authorities "to reconsider this decision and re-instate the initial approval for aid distributions and transportation plans". Rakhine state is home to around 600,000 Rohingya, who are regarded by many there as interlopers from Bangladesh, and are denied citizenship and freedom of movement. Most of the 148 people who died during the storm are from the minority, according to the junta.

More than 6,000 civilians were killed in Myanmar in the first 20 months after the February 2021 military coup, a report published Tuesday by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo said. "Our data shows that the human toll of the conflict is higher than previously reported, and while the junta is clearly the main killer, anti-junta forces also have large amounts of blood on their hands," Stein Tonnesson, one of the two co-authors of the report, said in a statement.



SITTWE: A man walks past the destroyed houses at That Kel Pyin refugee camp in Sittwe in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha's landfall. — AFP

The report said 6,337 civilians were killed "for political reasons" between February 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022, and 2,614 were injured. That toll is much higher than others that have circulated, including those from international organizations.

According to the report, almost half of the deaths, 3,003, were attributed to the regime — the army, police and militias — while 2,152 were attributed to armed opposition groups. Twelve were attributed to other civilians not affiliated with either the regime or opponents, and 1,170 to undetermined actors.

"This is a larger number than is normally cited in the media, and yet it is only an estimate, based on reported killings gathered from reliable media reports," the report said. "The actual total is surely higher since many killings have likely gone unreported". Alleging massive fraud, the Myanmar military annulled the legislative elections won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party and overthrew her government. Since then, the junta has carried out a large-scale repression of any opposition, arresting more than 23,000 people according to a local watchdog. — AFP

UK's pandemic query opens as victims' relatives lash out

LONDON: An inquiry probing the UK government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic kicked off Tuesday with the investigation mired in controversy even before the first witness is called. The inquiry chair, retired senior judge Heather Hallett, has called for ex-prime minister Boris Johnson's unredacted WhatsApp messages and notebooks to be handed over, prompting a legal challenge from the government of his successor Rishi Sunak.

Sunak, who was finance minister during the pandemic, has denied trying to block the material, while Johnson is said to be in favor of it being shared. Relatives of COVID-19 victims have also taken aim at the investigation saying it will be a "farce" if bereaved families are not able to testify.

Members of the COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice campaign group lined up outside the inquiry in central London holding pictures of their loved ones. Launching proceedings, Hallett pledged that those who suffered during the pandemic would "always be at the heart of the inquiry".

She paid tribute to the relatives' "dignified vigil", adding that she hoped they would "understand when they see the results of the work we are doing that I am listening to them". "Their loss will be

recognized," added Hallett, who previously oversaw the coroner's inquests into the 52 people killed in the July 7, 2005 London bombings.

The UK suffered one of the worst COVID-19 death tolls in Europe with more than 128,500 fatalities recorded by mid-July 2021. The current toll of deaths with COVID-19 on the death certificate stands at just over 227,000, according to the latest government figures.

The first phase of the inquiry is due to focus on the UK's resilience and preparedness in the face of

the global health emergency. Established by Johnson in 2021, it has been split up into six sections. The first witnesses to give evidence in person to the inquiry will be leading epidemiologists Jimmy Whitworth and Charlotte Hammer on Wednesday.

'Just a farce'

The relatives' campaign group has condemned the decision not to include any of them in the inquiry's first six-week phase. "Without learning from the experiences of our members, how can the inquiry properly evaluate the decisions made by those in charge?" group member Barbara Herbert, who lost her husband Paul to COVID, said earlier this week.

"We are people that will be able to put reality to the theory that Hallett is testing, that has got to happen, otherwise it's just a farce," added Saleyha Ahsan, a doctor whose father Ahsan-ul-Haq Chaudry also died.

A spokeswoman for the inquiry has said Hallett had not ruled out calling testimony from bereaved people in later phases of the probe. Public inquiries in the UK are government-funded but have an independent chair. They investigate matters of public concern, establishing facts about what happened, why and what lessons can be learned.

They do not rule on civil or criminal liability, and any recommendations are not legally binding. Hallett has refused to back down over her request for Johnson's unredacted communications, likely to include exchanges at the heart of government relating to the ordering of lockdowns in 2020 when Sunak was in charge of the country's purse strings. — AFP



LONDON: Members of the COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice hold photos of relatives who died during the pandemic, as they demonstrate outside the venue for the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, ahead of its first day in west London on June 13, 2023. — AFP

which raise funds through drugs and precious minerals trafficking as well as kidnapping for ransom. Extortion, with the use of fake Tinder profiles to lure victims, is also widespread.

'Organized crime is rife'

Kidnapping cases doubled to 4,000 between July and September last year, compared to the previous quarter, police statistics show. "Organized crime itself is rife," in South Africa, said Opperman. To avoid detection, the money is then transferred to Islamist cells across the continent in small remittances that don't raise eyebrows. Some 6.3 billion rand (\$342 million) was wired from South Africa to Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and Bangladesh through mobile money transfer using nearly 57,000 unregistered phone SIM cards between 2020 and 2021, according to an investigation by a South African weekly newspaper, the Sunday Times.

The hawala system, an informal method of payment based on trust that is far more difficult to trace than bank transfers, is also used to siphon money away. Some money sent abroad is genuinely aimed at supporting family, and it's unclear just how much jihadists raise. But experts believe they are awash with cash, likely making "more money than they need," Schindler said. IS internal documents seen by experts show that of the money raised on the continent, the IS in Somalia keeps 50 percent while 25 percent is split between cells in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the balance going to IS central.

'Waiting for proof'

One of the suspects listed by the United States as an IS cell leader is Durban-based Farhad Hooper, 47. He was sanctioned last year for "playing an increasingly central role in facilitating the transfer of funds from the top of the ISIS hierarchy to branches across Africa".

Hooper denied being an IS cell leader, telling AFP by phone from Durban that he "was surprised" by the sanctioning. "I'm waiting for the proof. It's one year waiting for the proof," he said. Hooper was arrested by South African police in 2018 for allegedly planning to deploy improvised incendiary devices near mosques and retail shops. Authorities brought dozens of charges against him, which were however later dropped. Tore Hamming, a fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, told AFP those involved in jihadist financing were "pretty well-known extremist figures from South Africa who have been active in the extremist milieu for a good number of years." — AFP



KHARTOUM: Black smoke billows behind buildings amid ongoing fighting in Khartoum. Sudan's warring generals have resumed fighting after a 24-hour ceasefire. — AFP

Kenya's Ruto vows to get Sudan rivals together, end crisis

NAIROBI: Kenya's President William Ruto vowed Monday to arrange a "face to face" meeting between Sudan's warring generals to end the crisis roiling the country after multiple ceasefires have failed to hold, the Kenyan presidency said.

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, turned on each other.

Multiple truces have been agreed and broken, with US and Saudi mediators warning on Saturday that they may break off mediation efforts if a 24-hour ceasefire was not respected. Alongside US and Saudi efforts, the African Union — which suspended Sudan following a 2021 coup led by Burhan and Daglo — and East African regional bloc IGAD have pushed for discussions mediated by South Sudan's President Salva Kiir.

At a summit held in Djibouti on Monday, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development announced that it would expand the number of countries tasked with resolving the crisis, with Kenya chairing a quartet including Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.

'Trapped civilians'

"Kenya commits to meet the two Sudan generals face to face to find a lasting solution to the crisis," Ruto said, according to a statement released by the Kenyan presidency that summed up his remarks to the media in Djibouti.

"In the next three weeks, we will begin the process of an inclusive national dialogue," Ruto said, adding that a humanitarian corridor would be established in a fortnight to facilitate the delivery of aid. A draft communique of the IGAD meeting released by Ruto's office said the quartet leaders would "arrange (a) face-to-face meeting between (Burhan and Daglo)... in one of the regional capitals."

The United States imposed sanctions on both rival generals after an attempted truce collapsed at the end of May. A record 25 million people — more than half the population — are in need of aid and protection, according to the United Nations.

Fighting has gripped Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, uprooting nearly two million people, including 476,000 who have sought refuge in neighboring countries, the UN says. The latest ceasefire that ended on Sunday offered residents a rare respite from the violence, allowing trapped civilians to venture outside and stock up on food and other essential supplies. Sudan's military elites as well as Daglo amassed considerable wealth during the rule of longtime strongman Omar al-Bashir, whose government was subjected to decades of international sanctions before his overthrow in 2019. — AFP

S Africa in the spotlight over terror funding

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa has never been touched by Islamist attacks. Its three-decade-old democracy is solid, and its financial system is respected. Yet experts say the continent's most industrialized nation is now a nerve centre for jihadist financing in Africa.

"South Africa is open hunting ground," Pretoria-based counter-terrorism expert Jasmine Opperman told AFP. Islamist financiers gather money in the country and transfer it into "the hands of terrorism," she said, adding it was internationally recognized "that we are now a hub". It's a stark indictment for a country that, apart from the odd alerts issued by the US embassy, hardly registers on the radar of extremist activities worldwide. Yet Opperman's assessment is widely shared by analysts across Africa, Europe and the United States. Red flags were first raised last year when the US government levied sanctions on several South Africans it accused of belonging to an Islamic State (IS) cell. The group facilitated the transfer of money to IS branches across Africa, according to Washington. It "provided technical, financial, or material support to the terrorist group," the US treasury said in November.

Complicity

Some analysts have suggested that jihadist financing flourished because South African authorities grew complacent at the lack of visible Islamist activity. "I don't think South Africa realized it. It was the Americans who said, 'something not okay is going on in your country,'" Hans-Jakob Schindler, director of the Counter-Extremism Project think-tank, told AFP. "The entire government is now put to task," he said. One of the clearest signs something was amiss came in March this year when the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global illicit cash flow watchdog that aims to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing, placed South Africa on its "grey list" over gaps in monitoring and stemming illegal financial activities.

A cocktail of conditions, including a functional financial system, liberties, porous borders, corruption and criminality have made South Africa fertile ground for Islamists to raise funds, experts say. A lot of the money comes from organized crime syndi-

Quest to find the WWI dead, 100 years on

LOOS-EN-GOHELLE: The remains of three Canadian soldiers who died in World War I, 105 years ago, but were only recently identified have been reburied in France at an emotion-filled military ceremony. Hundreds of thousands of servicemen died in the war but only a few of those whose remains languish in the fields of northern France have been identified — until now.

Thanks to major infrastructure projects and better organization within the agencies that deal with the dead, the remains of more and more WWI soldiers have been discovered in northern France in recent years. "We knew he'd been killed. We knew he was honored on the Vimy Memorial. But to have a place of remembrance is something else," said 77-year-old Gordon Giffether of his great uncle, Sergeant Richard Musgrave, who died when he was 32.

The Vimy Memorial, north of nearby Arras, is inscribed with the names of the 11,285 Canadians who died in France in WWI and have no known graves. "It's been a very emotional day," Giffether said at Thursday's ceremony at the British cemetery in Loos-en-Gohelle near the northeastern city of Lille. "It's marvelous," another grand-nephew, James Musgrave Collman, 83, said of the ceremony.

"I only wish his sister, who was our granny, was here to see it." Musgrave's body was found in 2017 near Lens and reburied at the British cemetery along with those of the men discovered with him — Harry Atherton, 24, and Percy Howarth, 23. All three were born in Britain and emigrated to Canada before enlisting and returning to Europe to fight.

They fell on the first day of the Battle of Hill 70 in August 2017, when more than 10,000 Canadians were killed or wounded trying to retake the strategic mining town of Lens. A sixth of the 600,000 soldiers who went missing in northern France during WWI were from the former British Empire. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2023

Storm at Baltic beauty spot over Germany's gas plans

Germany installing LNG terminals along its coast



OSTSEEBAD BINZ: Photo shows the beach in Binz, northern Germany. Melanie Schmid grows walnuts and keeps sheep at her organic farm by the cliff's edge above the port of Mukran on the German island of Ruegen in the Baltic Sea. — AFP

OSTSEEBAD BINZ: Melanie Schmid grows walnuts and keeps sheep at her organic farm by the cliff's edge above the port of Mukran on the German island of Ruegen in the Baltic Sea. The view across the bay to the resort town of Binz brought her here, but Germany's plan to park two ships at the port for the import of liquefied natural gas may drive her away from the popular beauty spot.

To replace lost Russian supplies, the German government has been frantically installing LNG terminals along its coast. Over the last months, Berlin has inaugurated several with fanfare, and is planning for Mukran to be the next. Berlin sees the new terminal as insurance against the risk of a potential gas shortage but residents remain unconvinced. Due to the thrum of machines turning LNG back into gas, 59-year-old Schmid says she fears she "simply won't be able to sleep here anymore".

Noise pollution is however only one concern for the organic farmer, who has joined a campaign to stop the project that brings together environmental groups and local politicians worried about the effect on the destination's health and prosperity. "Are there

not other locations on the Baltic coast or the North Sea that would have less of an impact on nature, on people, on tourism as the island of Ruegen?" Binz mayor Karsten Schneider tells AFP.

'Security buffer'

Piled up next to the port, the pipes that would connect Mukran to the gas network are leftovers from the construction of Nord Stream 2. The controversial pipeline, which would have relayed gas from Russia to Germany, was mysteriously sabotaged last year before it was ever put into use. Approval for the energy link was blocked by Berlin amid tensions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while Moscow slowly dwindled gas deliveries to Europe, plunging the continent into an energy crisis.

To make up for the drop in Russian supplies, Germany quickly began to develop the capacity to import LNG. Government-backed floating terminals are already in operation in ports on the North and Baltic Seas, with a total of five planned — including in Mukran. The drastic expansion is a necessary "security buffer" and a safeguard against the risk of im-

port drops "due to accidents, sabotage or other exogenous events", according to the economy ministry.

To placate residents, Economy Minister Robert Habeck travelled to Ruegen in May for discussions, following which he agreed to almost halve the capacity of the terminal at the site. A swift decision must be made on the site if LNG is to arrive via Ruegen in the winter, he wrote in a letter in May to the region's economy minister following the visit. But after Germany steered clear of its worst-case shortage scenario earlier this year, locals are questioning whether the Mukran installation is really necessary. "It really looks like we will get through the next winter without any big problems," says Binz mayor Schneider.

Local challenge

Unmoved by the government's arguments, resistance continue to build up. Residents have petitioned parliament, while the local government has filed an injunction against the terminal's accelerated planning approval. Arguments for surplus capacity are "incomprehensible and not at all acceptable", says

Thomas Kunstmann, 64, one of the organizers behind the local campaign group "Liveable Ruegen".

Opponents of the planned terminal are concerned about the environmental impact of building new gas infrastructure. "Most of us are against LNG because it is a fossil fuel that is harmful to the climate," says Kunstmann. Concerns for nature abound, too. A new pipeline around the island could likewise disrupt wildlife, running straight through spawning grounds for herring, Kunstmann says. "An industrial port simply does not belong here."

The area's natural bounty is why Binz attracts so many tourists. Increased shipping traffic and noise disruption "doesn't fit with the reasons why people come here on holiday", says the resort's tourism director Kai Gardeja. Already gas import vessels are anchored just off the coast and in sight of the beachfront. The sight of the new terminal across the bay could "scare some tourists away", says 25-year-old Kai Birkholz from Mannheim, out for a walk on the Binz pier. Other visitors are less troubled. Pensioner Manfred Steiner, 88, says he would come again. "It's just tremendous here." — AFP

India denies threatening Twitter with shutdown

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday denied claims it had threatened to shut down Twitter inside the country if it did not block accounts critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The world's biggest democracy petitions Twitter for content removals more than almost any other country, and the platform regularly takes down or blocks content at the request of Indian authorities. Former chief executive Jack Dorsey said Monday that the platform he founded had come under sustained pressure from Indian officials during his tenure.

Dorsey told YouTube chat show Breaking Points that authorities had threatened to "shut down Twitter in India" as well as raid the homes of its employees, unless his company yielded to their demands. Indian in-

formation technology minister Rajeesh Chandrasekhar responded Tuesday that Dorsey's claim was an "outright lie", while also accusing Twitter of repeated violations of local laws. "It behaved as if the laws of India did not apply to it," Chandrasekhar said in a lengthy statement posted on Twitter. "They had a problem removing misinformation from the platform in India."

Twitter said last year that India ranked fourth globally in the number of requests made by a government to remove content — behind Japan, Russia and Turkey. In March, the platform blocked the accounts of several journalists during the manhunt for a radical Sikh preacher in the northern state of Punjab. At the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2021, the government ordered Twitter and Facebook to remove dozens of posts critical of the government's handling of the outbreak.

Global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders described social media suspensions during mass farmer protests in India the same year as a "shocking case of blatant censorship". Rights groups say freedom of expression is under broad threat in India, which has fallen 21 spots to 161 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index since Modi took

degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

"I haven't had running water for more than three weeks," said Imach Omorov, 61. "I was able to get 150 liters. Hopefully that's enough for the next three weeks." At the start of summer, the authorities introduced restrictions to manage water supply. In some districts of Bishkek, water was cut off at night. Swimming pools and car washes were closed. Night-time watering was banned. But residents have struggled to cope. When Omorov's neighbor died, "it was complicated to wash the body", he said.

Like other city-dwellers, Omorov took part in a protest against the water shortage this week, where demonstrators blocked one of the main avenues south of the capital. His frustrations are shared across Central Asia, where water shortages are a chronic problem. According to the World Bank, almost a third of the region's approximately 75 million inhabitants do not have access to water.

In Kyrgyzstan, where one million now lack access to water, consumption levels are rising. "Daily water consumption per person was around 170 liters. But it has tripled — almost quadrupled — with the rise in temperatures since May," said



LOS ANGELES: This illustration photo shows Elon Musk's blue tick next to his name on a smartphone. — AFP

office in 2014. Indian authorities have regularly imposed blanket internet shutdowns during periods of unrest, including a four-month outage in Kashmir during a major security operation in the disputed territory in 2019. — AFP



BISHKEK: Kyrgyz people collect water from a water truck in the Archa-Beshik district in the capital Bishkek. — AFP

Kadyrbek Otorov, chief engineer at the organization in charge of water distribution in Bishkek. One cause of the drought this year is the steep drop in the water table. That, in turn, is caused by the melting of glaciers due to climate change. — AFP

Court urged to stop Microsoft Activision deal

SAN FRANCISCO: The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) asked a federal court on Monday to block Microsoft from completing its \$69 billion buyout of gaming giant Activision Blizzard, a court filing showed. "A preliminary injunction is necessary to... prevent interim harm" while the FTC determines whether "the proposed acquisition violates US antitrust law," the regulator said in the filing. In requesting the preliminary injunction at the Northern California District Court, the US government sought to prevent the companies from finalizing the deal before a July 18 deadline.

An FTC hearing is set for August to argue the merits of the deal, but the appeal to a federal court will potentially see Microsoft subject to a restraining order blocking the accord before that process has run its course. The California judge would need to agree to stop the deal after hearing arguments by the FTC on why the buyout is illegal and from Microsoft on why it should go ahead. "We welcome the opportunity to present our case in federal court," said Microsoft President Brad Smith. "We believe accelerating the legal process in the US will ultimately bring more choice and competition to the market," he added.

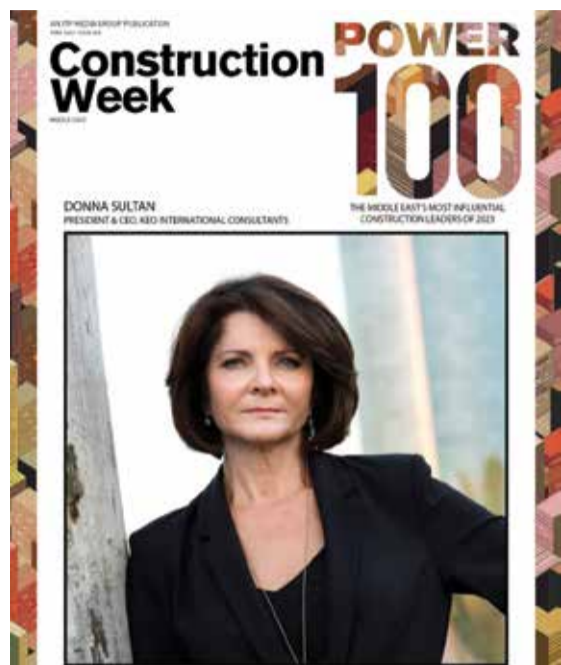
Xbox-owner Microsoft launched a bid for Activision Blizzard early last year, seeking to establish the world's third biggest gaming firm by revenue after China's Tencent and Japan's PlayStation maker Sony. While the European Union has greenlit the deal, Britain's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) blocked it in April, arguing it would harm competition in cloud gaming. The FTC in December sued to block the transaction with Activision Blizzard, maker of the blockbuster "Call of Duty" title, over concerns that it would stifle competition. The regulator is led by Lina Khan, an antitrust academic who had been an advocate of breaking up the biggest tech firms before she was nominated by President Joe Biden to the job in 2021. Khan has accused Meta, Facebook's parent company, of stifling competition by buying up startups and the FTC has carried out investigations of Amazon. — AFP

Drought hits Bishkek where taps run dry

BISHKEK: For the past month, Bishkek resident Kanychai Bakirova has lived with her family of 11, including young children, in a home with only a trickle of water running from the tap. At the laundrette where she works, she is unable to serve customers who come in with piles of dirty clothes. "I'm a laundress but I can only run three washing machines," 59-year-old Bakirova told AFP, waiting her turn to collect water at a distribution point as others took the opportunity to wash their faces.

In the south of the Kyrgyz capital, where the water shortage is acute, such scenes are increasingly common. Drought — once restricted to the country's villages — is now drying city-dwellers' taps. With Soviet-era water infrastructure and few resources, the Bishkek authorities have struggled to keep the water running. In the southern districts of the city, residents have come to rely on plastic bottles of water distributed by the city as temperatures near 40

Donna Sultan 'key figure in construction industry'



Kuwaiti among Mideast most influential leaders

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti, Donna Sultan, the President and CEO of KEO, has once again secured a place among the most influential leaders in the Middle East's construction sector, according to Construction Week Middle East's annual #Power100 list. This notable list highlights key figures from various sectors who collectively drive the region's construction industry. Acknowledging the recognition, Donna Sultan stated, "This inclusion in the distinguished list with industry peers is indeed an honor. My congratulations to all on the list." Known for her dedication and passion, Donna Sultan is a key figure in the construction industry, inspiring others through her unique approach to leadership and excellence.

She has held the title of CEO of KEO International Consultants for over 30 years and has been integral to the firm's expansion. She assumed the additional role of President in 2016. Under her leadership, KEO, as a group, diversified to offering full range of multi-disciplinary project and construction

management, architectural, engineering, and sustainability services. Her strategic oversight saw the establishment of specialized Allied Practices: InSite, C-Quest, and Black Mule further contributing to KEO's growth. Starting from a single office, KEO's reach has extended to eight central offices and over 100 active field offices across the Middle East and Europe, employing close to 2,500 staff.

Guided by Donna's vision, KEO has earned global recognition and is associated with prestigious developments and constructed projects spanning the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Europe. KEO's sustained excellence has been recognized earning consistent rankings for 19 years as one of the top 20 Non-US PM/CM firms and among the top 200 International Design Firms. Notably, KEO ranked as the #1 architectural firm in the Middle East for the past three years and ranks globally in the top 10 for Master Planning, Mixed Use, Retail, Environmental and Sustainability Services.

Her career of nearly 40 years of project delivery experience, contributions to the industry and successfully navigating KEO to being one of the leading consulting firms have been widely acknowledged. Forbes Middle East once again listed her as one of the Most Powerful Businesswomen in 2023 and in 2022 she was named 'CEO of the Year'. In 2017, she was named both 'Construction Executive of the Year' and 'Female Leader of the Year'. She is annually recognized as one of the 'Most Powerful Women in the Middle East' and 'Most Influential Construction Leaders'. Beyond her professional role, Donna Sultan is committed to Corporate Social Responsibility, supporting KEO's initiatives across their operational regions this includes the launching of KEO Academy. Since 2016, she has also served on the International Advisory Council of the Harvard-affiliated Mass General Hospital, now Mass General Brigham. Donna Sultan's career is a testament to her commitment to her profession and community, marking her as a true leader in the industry.

HUAWEI nova 11 Pro: The most beautiful, trendy smartphone

KUWAIT: Smartphones have evolved into more than just simple communication devices. Besides the performance and features, consumers these days are also concerned about other aspects like the cameras and the visual appeal of the phone. They want something that is reflective of their personal style. The HUAWEI nova series has been a trendsetter in this regard, known for its cutting-edge design and vibrant color palette and mind blowing cameras. It seamlessly blends technology with style. So it's no surprise that the series resonates with young users that value both aesthetics and performance. The HUAWEI nova 11 Pro is the latest in this line and represents the true spirit of the nova Series. Each new model in the HUAWEI nova series seems to outdo the last, and the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro is no exception.

New Style Statement

The HUAWEI nova 11 Pro introduces the new Color No 11. And by choosing this as the main color, it integrates the vitality and personality of young people into the design concept, creating a unique visual impact of fashion. This new color way mirrors the dynamism of today's youth. It's an embodiment of their spirit – ever-changing, vibrant, and full of life.

The phone also takes a step forward in design with the nova Monogram Vegan Leather Design. The vegan leather back not only lends an elegant texture to the device but also makes it resistant to fingerprints, ensuring that the phone retains its pristine look throughout the day. The lychee grain pattern, popular among young people, provide skin-soothing touch and feel, and high drop-resistant and wear-resistant capabilities as well.

Besides Color No 11, the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro comes in Black. Each color brings its own charm to the table, allowing users to choose the one that best suits their style and personality. Whether it's the mesmerizing allure of Color No 11, the classic elegance of Black, or the opulent charm of Gold, there's a nova 11 Pro for everyone. The all-new Super Star Orbit Ring design is another innovative design feature. It uses metal precision processing technology to present a unique metal lustre. The ring design language of the Super Star Orbit Ring absolutely steals the show.



Redefining selfie game

Taking a closer look at the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro, one of the standout features that impresses straight away is the 60MP Ultra Portrait Dual Camera. It uses XD Portrait to capture high-quality portrait shots with stunning clarity and detail. With low-light portrait enhancement technology, it captures and displays richer details and more authentic colors even in poorly lit environments, carefully retaining natural skin texture and tone. The HUAWEI nova 11 Pro takes advantage of the upgraded HUAWEI Multi-Vision Photography, featuring a 60 MP Ultra Portrait Dual Camera with a 100-degree ultra-wide-angle, a 1/2.61-inch sensor that supports 4K image quality, and excellent resolution and light sensitivity.

The 8 MP Close-up Portrait Front Camera supports 2x optical zoom and up to 5x digital zoom, including 0.7x for group photos, 1x for HD selfies, 2x for textured portraits, and 5x for makeup close-ups. Moreover, the Makeup Restoration feature is a boon for those who enjoy their selfies. It restores the makeup in the photos, ensuring that your look is always on point in your selfies. This front camera system, in essence, is a tool for you to express yourself creatively and authentically.

Durable Kunlun Glass

Another remarkable feature that stands out is the durable Kunlun Glass, known for its outstanding drop resistance. In fact, the drop resistance of the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro is ten times better than the previous generation of nova Series, making it that much more reliable. The Kunlun Glass is also the first to receive a five-star glass drop resistance certification from Switzerland's SGS. It gives you peace of mind,

knowing that your device is well protected from accidental drops.

SuperCharge turbo

Now, let's talk about the powerhouse that keeps the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro running - its battery. With a 4500 mAh battery, this phone is designed to last you through the day and beyond. Whether you're busy snapping selfies, streaming movies, or playing games, you won't have to worry about running out of juice in the middle of the day. But that's not all. The HUAWEI nova 11 Pro also supports 100W HUAWEI SuperCharge Turbo. With this, you can power up your phone incredibly quickly. The phone can be charged to 60% in 10 minutes and fully charged in 20 minutes with the screen off. So you spend less time waiting and more time doing what you love.

Visual feast

The display is the first thing you'll interact with when you pick up your phone. Well, the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro comes with a 6.78-inch 120Hz OLED Flawless OLED Curved Display that offers vibrant colors and crisp images and provides a smooth and responsive touch experience. The curvature of the display blends seamlessly with the phone's design, enhancing the overall look and feel. To wrap it all up, the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro has a lot to offer, especially for the younger generation. Its unique design, impressive camera capabilities, durable construction, and powerful performance make it a solid choice for anyone in the market for a new smartphone. So if you're ready to upgrade your smartphone game, give the HUAWEI nova 11 Pro a look. You might just find it's the perfect fit for you.

Korea's total exports in 2022... and is a national security asset." Six other people who worked with the executive have been charged over suspected involvement in the theft. Samsung declined to comment when contacted by AFP on Tuesday.

Chip war

Samsung Electronics is one of the world's largest producers of chips and smartphones, and its parent group's turnover is equivalent to about one-fifth of South Korea's GDP. Like many of the world's biggest chip makers, a large portion of its production is based in China. Chips are the lifeblood of the modern global economy, and China — the world's second-largest economy — relies on a steady supply of chips made by foreign firms for its huge electronics manufacturing industry.

The United States imposed a series of export controls last year to prevent China from acquiring the most advanced chips that could be used in cutting-edge weapons and frontier tech such as artificial intelligence. The Netherlands and Japan followed this year with restrictions of their own, without naming China. But the curbs have infuriated Beijing, which has accused Washington of "technological terrorism". China last month said US chip giant Micron had failed a national security review, and told operators of "critical information infrastructure" to stop buying its products.—AFP



SUWON: A worker waters the flower garden next to the logo of Samsung Electronics at the company's headquarters in Suwon on June 13, 2023. — AFP

Demand for oil and gas expected to fall

By Nasser Almatrouk
(Hughes Hall College
University of Cambridge)

For a lengthy period, the enduring viability of oil earnings in GCC economies has been a major worry, leading to several initiatives to diversify their economies through policies, plans, and reforms. As the globe shifts to renewable energy and aspires to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, demand for oil and gas is expected to fall.

Oil revenues account for more than 70% of GCC countries' total revenues. Despite this, the transition from surplus to deficit in fiscal balances indicates that the GCC region is still experiencing turbulence. Amidst elevated oil prices, several GCC economies struggle to meet fiscal break-even levels, highlighting the urgent need for alternative revenue sources. Continuing energy price volatility impedes economic diversification efforts.

The long-term viability of hydrocarbon revenues in economies of the GCC is in jeopardy. Despite the continuing significance of oil, it is crucial to diversify revenue sources. Adopting proactive measures, such as investing in renewable energy, fostering innovation, and establishing new industries, is vital for ensuring the resilience and prosperity of GCC economies in the face of altering global dynamics.

Deep diving into Kuwait's unique case of lack of progress toward its plans to diversify its sources of income away from oil, which continues to account for 90% of its annual revenues, with 80% of its budget spent on salaries and subsidies for the past ten years, the country is trapped. With a projected 22.6% increase in crude production costs and volatile oil prices, Kuwait anticipates a budget deficit of approximately \$22 billion. The average price per barrel required for budget break-even in fiscal year 23/24 is \$92.9.

To surmount such obstacles, Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund and pension fund, which manage a combined \$900 billion, are required to support the economy by increasing their local exposure and incorporating sustainable investments into their investment decisions. This could be accomplished either voluntarily through asset allocation by upper management or through parliamentary legislation, which has been experiencing a period of instability due to repeated dissolutions.

Kuwait must promptly generate revenue from crude oil exports to advance the reform program and diversify its economy from relying on oil. Shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, oil prices rose to near-record levels, resulting in revenue for Kuwait of \$76 billion in 2022. Regardless, the Kuwaiti budget posted its tenth deficit in a row.

Thales to acquire cybersecurity firm Tesseract

PARIS: Thales has signed an agreement to acquire Australian cybersecurity firm Tesseract, the French defense contractor announced Tuesday. "This acquisition would enable Thales to accelerate its cybersecurity development roadmap and expand its footprint in Australia and New Zealand," Thales said in a statement. With 500 employees and turnover last year of Aus\$185 million (US\$125 million), Tesseract is one of Australia and New Zealand's largest cybersecurity companies, it said.

"Together we will address the growing cyber needs in our country, including those of the Australian government and defense sectors," Tesseract CEO Kurt Hansen said in the statement. Tesseract, which will continue to operate under its own name, "will become the lead cybersecurity offering of Thales Australia and New Zealand", according to the French group. For Thales, which generated 1.5 billion euros (US\$1.6 billion) in cybersecurity sales in 2022, the acquisition will strengthen its presence in Australia where it is already one of the country's main defense manufacturers.—AFP



EY boss quits after UK audit firm split plan fails

LONDON: UK financial services firm EY announced Tuesday that its CEO will retire in 2024 - a year earlier than planned and on the heels of a failed plan to split its audit and consulting units. Carmine Di Sibio, who has headed the group since 2019, was supposed to oversee the break-up until the end of his mandate in 2025 but the project was rejected by its US branch in April.

Dubbed "Project Everest", the plan aimed to accelerate growth and avoid conflicts of interest but required the approval of EY's 13,000 worldwide partners. The firm said in a statement that Di Sibio announced to partners in a webcast that "he will retire as Global Chair and CEO of EY, having reached the mandatory retirement age of 60 this March". "I am proud of the bold vision we set out in Project Everest," Di Sibio said. "The courage that we displayed set the entire sector on a new course that will only become apparent in the years to come," he said.—AFP

Samsung's former executive charged with 'secrets'

SEOUL: South Korea has charged a former Samsung executive accused of stealing company secrets worth hundreds of millions of dollars to set up a copycat chip factory in China, prosecutors told AFP on Tuesday. Semiconductors have become a flashpoint issue between the United States and China, which are locked in a fierce battle over access to chip-making technology and supplies. South Korean prosecutors said the 65-year-old former Samsung employee allegedly stole the company's factory blueprints and clean-room designs from 2018 and 2019. The Suwon district prosecutor's office said the suspect unsuccessfully tried to set up a copycat production facility in the Chinese city of Xian — where Samsung already has a chip factory. The man, who has not been identified and is in detention pending trial, stole material that is classified by South Korea as a "national core technology" — a category of tech that could potentially harm national security and the economy if disclosed overseas.

Prosecutors said he had been in custody for some time and was formally charged on Monday. They described him as a "top expert in semiconductor manufacturing", who had worked in the industry for decades. South Korean authorities said the information allegedly targeted in the theft would have been worth at least 300 billion won (\$236 million) to Samsung.

"It is a serious crime that can have a tremendous negative impact on our economic security by shaking the foundation of the domestic semiconductor industry at a time when competition for chip production is intensifying every day," prosecutors said in a statement on Monday. "The semiconductor industry accounted for 16.5 percent of South

US consumer inflation cools for an 11th straight month

An encouraging sign for policymakers

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation in the United States cooled for an 11th straight month on an annual basis in May, the Labor Department said Tuesday, in an encouraging sign for policymakers. The data comes as Federal Reserve officials are set to begin a two-day policy meeting on Tuesday, with the figures expected to have a bearing on their interest rate decision at the end of the gathering.

While the US central bank has embarked on an aggressive campaign of rate hikes, lifting the benchmark lending rate 10 times in a row since early last year, it is widely anticipated to pause this week. Government figures released Tuesday show that the consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of inflation, jumped 4.0 percent from a year ago in May, in line with analyst expectations and down from a 4.9 percent rise in April. This brings it to the lowest level in around two years, and less than half the peak rate of 9.1 percent in mid-2022.

But analysts caution that Fed policymakers are likely looking for a more sustained trend of cooling growth before they end their cycle of rate hikes. On a monthly basis, CPI rose 0.1 percent in May, decelerating from 0.4 percent in April, the Labor Department said. Excluding the volatile food and energy components, consumer inflation was up 5.3 percent over the last 12 months. "The index for shelter was

the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, followed by an increase in the index for used cars and trucks," said the Labor Department in a statement.

Lingering worries

Oren Klachkin, lead US economist at Oxford Economics, told AFP: "A month's worth of data won't ease policymakers' worries. They want to see clear trends that inflation is cooling and that the economy is slowing." "We haven't had that so far, so there's a risk of more rate hikes in the second half of 2023," he added. For now, halting further rate hikes will allow policymakers more time to assess the economic impact of existing increases, which come on top of recent pressures in the banking sector.

Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics, added in a note that the figures reflect that underlying inflation "remained elevated but showed improvement," and would unlikely change expectations of the Fed's rate decision. "As for the future path of policy, incoming information on inflation, the labor market as well as considerations about credit conditions will determine whether the (Federal Open Market Committee) is done raising rates or if more tightening is needed," she said. — AFP



NEW YORK: Products are seen on display at Ideal Fresh Market of Church Ave in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York City. — AFP

News in Brief

UK unemployment dips

LONDON: UK unemployment eased in the three months to the end of April but wage rises continue to lag inflation, official data showed Tuesday. The unemployment rate decreased to 3.8 percent from 3.9 percent in the three months to the end of March, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. "While there has been another drop in the number of people neither working nor looking for work... those outside the jobs market due to long-term sickness continues to rise, to a new record," noted Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS. "In cash terms, basic pay is now growing at its fastest since current records began, apart from the period when the figures were distorted by the pandemic." "However, even so, wage rises continue to lag behind inflation," he added. Morgan said the number of people in work had past its pre-pandemic level for the first time, setting a new high. — AFP

Global oil demand higher

VIENNA: The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said that global demand for OPEC crude in 2023 is around 900,000 barrels per day (bpd) higher than in 2022. OPEC's report, which was distributed in Vienna Tuesday, stated that this demand remained unchanged in 2023 from the previous assessment at 29.3 million bpd. OPEC-13 crude oil production in May decreased by 464,000 bpd to average 28.06 million bpd, the report mentioned. On oil prices, the OPEC Reference Basket (ORB) fell by \$8.31, or 9.9 percent, to \$75.82 per barrel (pb) in May, it said. The ICE Brent front-month contract declined by \$7.68, or 9.2 percent, to \$75.69 pb, and New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) West Texas Intermediate (WTI) declined by \$7.82, or 9.8 percent, to average \$71.62 pb, it noted. World economic growth is estimated at 3.3 percent for 2022 and forecast at 2.6 percent for 2023, both unchanged from the previous month's assessment, it pointed out. — KUNA

Tunisia urged to reform

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called on Tunisia to agree to IMF reforms and avoid falling off an "economic cliff" after the European Union dangled a major aid package. Tunisian President Kais Saied has repeatedly refused "diktats" from the International Monetary Fund and the United States has led accusations that the birthplace of the Arab Spring is falling to authoritarianism after the dissolution of parliament and arrest of opposition leaders. But led by Italy, which fears a surge of migrants if Tunisia's economy further falters, the European Union on Sunday offered a 900-million-euro aid package - contingent on Tunisia reaching an IMF deal. Blinken, meeting his Italian counterpart, voiced support for the "important step" by the European Union. But he said "something more comprehensive - that in our judgment the IMF can best provide - would be important to actually helping Tunisia get on a sustainable and positive path." — AFP

China cuts short-term rate

BEIJING: China's central bank on Tuesday cut a key policy interest rate, in a surprise move to boost the country's flagging economy. The People's Bank of China said it was lowering the seven-day reverse repo rate to 1.9 percent from 2.0 percent, the first such move since August last year. The seven-day reverse repo is the short-term interest rate paid by the central bank on loans from commercial lenders, and a decrease in the rate is expected to increase domestic money supply and stimulate spending. Analysts had predicted monetary easing measures in the coming weeks, but in the form of a cut to the required reserve ratio — the amount of cash banks are required to hold — rather than a rate cut, Capital Economics economist Julian Evans-Pritchard wrote in a note on Tuesday. The cut reveals "growing concerns among policymakers about the health of China's recovery", Evans-Pritchard wrote. Chinese authorities have announced a series of lacklustre economic indicators in recent months, pointing to a slowdown in the country's post-COVID recovery. — AFP

European stocks rise before key US inflation data

LONDON: European stock markets steadied and the dollar largely fell against main rivals Tuesday as investors awaited monthly US inflation data that could determine the Federal Reserve's next move on interest rates. Expectations are for the US central bank to hold fire at the end of its meeting Wednesday — after 10 straight hikes to combat elevated inflation. But there is a chance it could hike again should Tuesday's consumer prices number

weaken less than expected.

"If we don't see a slowdown in core (inflation) prices, then that might introduce some nervousness that might prompt the Fed to hike again tomorrow instead of the pause that is currently being priced," noted Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets. Core inflation strips out contributions from energy and food — the two sectors mainly responsible for consumer prices indices rocketing worldwide over the past year. The Fed decision comes as central banks around the world continue to struggle in their battle against inflation, which remains well above their two percent targets.

The European Central Bank is expected to unveil another increase

Thursday despite the euro-zone dipping into recession, while the Bank of Japan is tipped to stand pat when it meets Friday. Canada and Australia announced increases last week. Official data Tuesday showing record UK wage growth, despite lagging the country's inflation rate, increased the chances of another rate hike from the Bank of England next week and possibly more thereafter, analysts said.

China's central bank, however, announced a small cut in its short-term lending rates as authorities try to kickstart a recovery in the economy, which has run out of steam after an initial burst following the lifting of zero-COVID restrictions. Tuesday's move comes after figures showed in-

flation remained subdued and saw the yuan drop against the dollar, though the currency pared the losses on reports that fresh stimulus measures were being discussed.

The cut reveals "growing concerns among policymakers about the health of China's recovery", said Capital Economics economist Julian Evans-Pritchard. China's problems have weighed on the crude market, even after Saudi Arabia's surprise decision to slash output by a million barrels a day next month. Oil futures jumped Tuesday but made only some headway into the four percent losses suffered a day earlier when Goldman Sachs slashed its price forecast for the third time in six months. — AFP

Ukraine coal propped up by miners who fled Russian occupation

MYKOLAIVKA: Ukraine's energy sector is under attack. Kyiv power stations have been targeted by cruise missiles, the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam has been breached and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant is under Russian occupation. Of the 89 coal mines that were in newly-independent Ukraine at the break-up of the Soviet Union, 71 are in the eastern Donbas region, now partly held by Russian forces. But the remaining mines — which power 30 percent of Ukraine's grid — are working hard, thanks to an influx of new recruits fleeing the Russian-occupied east.

In the build-up to the war, some in Moscow argued Russia had a duty to defend Russian speakers in the Donbas from alleged persecution by Ukrainian nationalists. But in February last year, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion and tightened its grip on the east of the country, many civilians fled west into Kyiv-held towns.

Meanwhile, mines in Russian-occupied areas or close to the frontline closed and some were flooded as power to their water pumps was cut. Further inside Ukraine, there was another problem. "When the full-scale war started a lot of miners from this area enlisted as volunteers," said Oleg Bilousov, chief engineer at a cluster of mines in the central region of Dnipropetrovsk. Mineworkers who remained had to work double shifts to maintain production.

'Impossible to survive'

"It was a hard time for the company and for the country," Bilousov said, describing how during four blackouts last year miners trapped underground had to be evacuated. Relief for Ukraine's industry came from miners

from the Donbas, men and women that Moscow had once tried to portray as a downtrodden minority cut off from their motherland. Some of those kicked out of pits in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions headed to central Ukraine, finding secure employment and contributing to the national war effort.

"Many, many of those who were forced to move from the occupied area wanted to work for us," said Bilousov, adding that Donbas-born miners now make up a third of his 2,780 workers. Under a landscape of rolling green fields splashed with swathes of red poppies, Ukraine's renowned fertile black earth gives way to even richer seams of black coal. Under a towering headframe equipped with a powerful winch, a rusty steel lift lowers the miners down a 180-meter (590-foot) shaft.

Then the workers clamber into closed metal trucks behind an electric locomotive and are carried down more than a kilometer of galleries to the coalface, 370 meters down. Here, miners like 37-year-old Artyom, who studied in now occupied Donetsk, describe the mix of political and economic pressures that drove many west. He laughed off Kremlin chief Vladimir Putin's claim to be the Donbas' protector. "It's all fake," he said, his face smeared with sweat and coal dust as he worked the morning maintenance shift.

Some of his friends fled to Russia and some like him into unoccupied Ukraine, but none now mine the eastern region's once rich coalfield. "It's impossible to survive there. There's literally no jobs there. Living conditions are really bad, they don't get paid at all, or receive really little," he told AFP. Still, even with the arrival of the Donbas miners, the pit is short of manpower. "Many of them are fighting now, some of them are mobilized," Artyom said. "Thankfully, the mine does not just rely on 'manpower'. Ukraine's wartime economy has seen women taking up posts that would once have been limited to men.

'I want to go home'

This has been a lifeline for 36-year-old Vika, who fled



This general view shows a partially flooded area near The Antonovskiy Bridge (REAR) on the outskirts of Kherson on June 6, 2023, following damages sustained at Kakhovka hydroelectric dam. — AFP

war-torn Lysychansk in the Russian-occupied part of the Lugansk region with her two children, mother and husband. Before the war, she had worked as a shop assistant in a grocery. Now she is a surface elevator operator in a hard hat and overalls, responsible for the lift to the mine. "For us, the people who came from over there, can you imagine how it is to suffer from the mines being closed? Where can we work? After losing our homes, we lost our jobs," she said.

The mines are run by DTEK, Ukraine's biggest private power industry player owned by Donetsk-born billionaire Rinat Akhmetov, reputedly Ukraine's richest man. Workers like Vika appreciate the steady salary and health insurance that comes with the job. "Here I feel fine, even though I cannot speak Ukrainian fluently. It's not a problem at all," she said. "Of course I would love to go home. But I don't have a home anymore, it's destroyed. I hope Ukraine gives me my home back, and maybe helps me rebuild it. "I want to go home, and for home to be Ukraine." — AFP

Ukrainian farmers mourn animals and crops lost in flood

AFANASIYIVKA: Yuriy, a 56-year-old Ukrainian farmer, stands chest-deep in water in his village of Afanasiyivka, gazing around in bewilderment. A week ago, he was growing vegetables and fruit and grazing his cows. Now his land in the Mykolaiv region is deep under murky green water. The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam has caused massive flooding in the regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv.

The flooding was yet another crippling blow to farmers in the regions, who were already struggling to plant crops due to heavy shelling and the need to de-mine their land. "What's underwater here could have fed several large families for a year," says Yuriy, watching drowned ducklings float past. He places the blame squarely on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

'Putin took everything'

"Putin took everything away from us," he says. According to Ukraine's ministry of agricultural policy, several million tons of crops could be lost due to the flooding. On the right bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson region, 10,000 hectares of agricultural land were flooded, while the flooded area

on the Russian-controlled left bank is several times larger, the ministry estimated. The small village of Afanasiyivka is still partially underwater due to flooding from the local Ingulets River.

Locals say the disaster caused the worst damage to potato crops and fields for grazing, as well as drowning smaller animals. The water cut off the village, and soldiers have been ferrying people across. There is no electricity, phone connection or drinking water. Olena Gulyuk, a 59-year-old farmer, comes to the crossing point to get bottled water from volunteers. Her hands and dress are covered in mud from trying to salvage her belongings.

'Our rabbits died'

"Our hay got soaked. We had grain for animal feed. That's spoiled too. Our hutches floated away with the animals inside. Our rabbits died, which is really painful," says Olena, who has farmed her whole life. "We'd planted potatoes, beetroot, carrots, everything you need for the household," she adds. "We're villagers, so we plant everything to eat for a year. There's nothing now."

Afanasiyivka was occupied by Russian forces for seven months. Shelling damage is visible on the roofs of houses that now stand in water. The fields still have red signs warning of mines. Some 470,000 hectares of agricultural land in Ukraine are still contaminated with unexploded ordnance and mines, the agriculture ministry said in April. "The Russians just want to destroy



AFANASIYIVKA: Ukrainian servicemen evacuate local residents and cows on a barge from the flooded village of Afanasiyivka, Mykolaiv region, following damage sustained at Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam. — AFP

Ukraine. But we're Ukrainians, we'll survive," Olena vows. "They beat us and set our homes on fire, rockets flew over our heads here, but we survived... Now we will not allow ourselves to be drowned." But some farmers are less optimistic. The flooding "ruined our land for crops. Nothing will grow for a decade, it's an ecological disaster," says 71-year-old Vasyly Palamarchuk, who farms in the village of Chornobaivka close to Kherson.

'There'll be hunger'

The grey-haired man, bare-chested and tanned, has piled up wet unripe corn cobs, useless as food or animal feed. Strawberry plants are rotting underwater and prices for soft fruit are going up at local markets.

In Kherson, market trader Olga Markova, 63, says local strawberries and cherries already cost more than in western Ukraine. "The whole harvest got flooded. Now vegetables, berries and wheat will be expensive," she says.

"How can people get money? How will they live? Already you can't buy seedlings at the market - there's nothing." "This year there'll be hunger most likely. Kherson used to feed the whole of Ukraine and Russia. Now look what they've done to us," she says. Yuriy is clearing debris from his flooded greenhouse, where his strawberries had been ripening. He angrily gestures at the water, calling for Russia to compensate farmers for the damage. "That moron sitting in the Kremlin did it all," he says. — AFP



This aerial view shows workers harvesting salt destined for animal consumption in Bilma on May 23, 2023. — AFP photos

Sahara salt diggers struggle to maintain centuries-old trade

At the edge of an oasis almost engulfed by the dunes, where the rare caravan still passes, is a desert landscape punctured by holes. The salt pans of Kalala, near Bilma in northeastern Niger, were once an essential stop for traders with their swaying lines of camels. Salt digging, carried on from generation to generation, was a thriving business, involving a commodity so precious that it was bought and sold across the Sahara and beyond.

Today, in this isolated desert region plagued by armed gangs and smugglers, the diggers struggle to survive. Over centuries, hundreds of pits have been dug by hand and then filled with water to leach salt from the local rock. Standing in the black- and ochre pits, Ibrahim Tagaji and a colleague were wrestling with a crowbar to harvest the bounty — a method of extraction that essentially remains unchanged over time.

A blisteringly hot day, when the temperatures reached 45 degrees Celsius in the shade, was coming to a close. Barefoot in brine swimming with crystals, the two men dug out salty chunks and pounded them into grains, which were then scooped out with a gourd. They then poured the salt into molds made from date palms, forming slabs that were then ready for sale.

It is punishingly hard work, rewarded by an income that fluctuates according to whichever buyers happen to pass through town. "When someone with money comes, you earn a lot," said Tagaji between shovelfuls. "Otherwise, it's a lot of work and the money's poor."

But the local economy offers few alternatives and roughly half of Bilma's population still works in the pits, according to local officials. "As soon as you drop out of school, you have to work here," said Omar Kosso, a veteran of the industry. "Every family has its own salt pan. You are with your wife, your children, you come and work."

'The world has changed'

The camel caravans still stop over in Bilma, where the vast majority of residents live in traditional houses with walls of salt and clay drawn from nearby quarries. An individual called the "mai" is the traditional authority here, determining who gets which area to dig and setting the sale price.



Kiari Abari (center), the descendant of a long lineage of sultans, poses for a portrait at his palace in Bilma on May 23, 2023 in front of a 200-year-old flag carrying his family insignia.

Kiari Abari Chegou comes from a long line of chiefs, each of whom has handed down to his successor the office and its attributes: a ritual sword and a parchment leather war drum. There is also the white flag covered with surahs, the same one displayed by his grandfather in an old black-and-white photo from the early 1920s pinned to the wall of the family home.

As mai, Abari Chegou promotes the virtues of the locally produced salt. "Sea salt has to be iodized to avoid deficiencies," he said. "Our salt is 90 percent iodized, so we can eat it directly without risking getting sick."

Unfortunately for Bilma, however, the world outside has changed. "In the past, the caravans came — the Daza, the Hausa, the Tuareg," he said, reeling off some of ethnic groups in the region. "Now it's not like before." The Tuareg traders, for instance, gradually gave up their nomadic way of life to settle, farming the fertile foothills of the nearby Air mountains in the north.

"You make more money like that than tiring yourself out spending 10 days travelling to get to Bilma, then 10 days back," Abari Chegou acknowledged. It made more sense to buy a slab of salt for 2,000 CFA francs (\$3.25) in Agadez, the regional capital 550 km away, than to travel all the way to Bilma to bargain for it at a third of the price, he said.

Black market

The desert journey is as dangerous as it is tough. The Kawar oasis borders Chad and Libya, a country ravaged by a civil war since 2011, and traffickers and other criminals take advantage of the region's porous borders. That means that people travel in the region armed and, where possible, in convoys under military escort to guard against attacks.

"The bandits stop our trucks, they take our phones and money and then they let us through," said a driver who gave his name as Ahmed and was about to set off with sacks of salt. Salt worker Omar Kosso said that customers were hard-bargaining merchants, passing traders or traffickers. "We don't have good customers," he said.

All of that means that offers are difficult to refuse for the people in this poor region. The European Union did pay for several trucks, in an bid to open up the salt-producing municipalities. But the fleet of vehicles succumbed to the heat, the rugged roads and squabbles between members of the local cooperative.

Abari Chegou, the chief, said he dreamt of a "well-knit" cooperative that could buy vehicles and have a place to store production to help buttress prices. In the meantime, he waited for the lonely caravans that passed between the dunes. — AFP



A truck carrying food for humans and animals crossing the Sahara desert is seen in the area of Djado in Niger, towards the Libyan border, on May 22, 2023.



Caravanners are seen leading their animals along their 45-day journey to Libya, in the area of Djado in the Niger portion of the Sahara desert.



A trader arranges salt slabs.



This aerial view shows salt fields where salt is harvested.



Lifestyle



New life breathed into Tunisia's bagpipes

Montassar Jebali, who plays several jazz and hip-hop ensembles, tests a "mizwad". — AFP photos

At his workshop in Tunisia's capital, Khaled ben Khemis pieces together a type of bagpipe once banned from airwaves but now embraced by artists infusing its sound into new musical styles. Known as a "mizwad", it "must be made from natural elements", the 50-year-old craftsman said, taking two cow horns and connecting them to pieces of river reed and a goatskin bag for producing the musical notes. He has made the instrument for 30 years.

Most musical historians agree the mizwad first appeared in Tunisia at the beginning of the 20th century and was confined to working-class suburbs for decades before growing in stature to now be incorporated into other genres, including hip-hop and jazz. The increased popularity has seen commercial manufacturers turning out mizwads.

But modern variations that replace natural materials with plastic "do not have the soul of those made with reeds", ben Khemis said of the new models, which cost up to 1,000 dinars (\$320). He acknowledged the instrument has, however, evolved. "Before we played out of tune, and we made it in a hurry," he said.

The mizwad spawned its own musical style that was frowned upon by authorities for associations

with alcohol, drugs and prison — where many songs were composed. "It was a musical genre whose reputation was bad just like those who played it," said Noureddine Kahlaoui, a self-described mizwad "activist" aged in his seventies. "Criminals and those on the run were always found by authorities at mizwad concerts," said the popular artist who has played the instrument for 40 years.

The songs address "daring subjects criticizing society, politics, migration and racism", said Rachid Cherif, a musicology researcher. Mizwad concerts are traditionally held in poor and marginalized neighborhoods, particularly for weddings. Song lyrics can be abrasive and considered rude, drawing resentment from families and sometimes triggering brawls at parties.

These elements combined to see Tunisia's authorities ban the mizwad on public television channels until the 1990s — leading folk artists to undertake a restoration of the instrument's image. In July 1991, a "Nouba" concert that mixed folk, popular and Sufi music was staged in Carthage's ancient Roman amphitheatre and broadcast on television, marking a fundamental step in the mizwad's rehabilitation. But some snobbery toward the instrument remains. In 2022, officials from Tu-

nis's municipal theatre refused to allow a mizwad show, deeming the institution too prestigious to host such a concert.

Jazz and rap

"Despite the criticism, we have worked so that this original heritage can progress," said Kahlaoui, who describes the mizwad's evolution as "dazzling". For the researcher Cherif, "the mizwad occupies a prominent place in the history of Tunisian popular music" due to its fundamental identity. It "consolidates the idea of belonging to a nation, an ethnic group and a culture", he said.

In recent years, a new generation of musicians has taken up the instrument, mixing it with contemporary genres offering more room for creativity such as rap and world music. "Thanks to what I learnt during my studies, I understood what could be done with this instrument," said Montassar Jebali, 32, who plays mizwad in several jazz and hip-hop ensembles.

Jebali studied Arabic music at the Higher Institute of Music of Tunisia, where the mizwad is not taught. "I used my academic knowledge to find out which instrument it went well with," he said. Jebali's concerts and those of other contemporary mizwad players



Tunisian craftsman Khaled ben Khemis fabricates a "mizwad".



In this picture taken on May 24, 2023, Tunisian craftsman Khaled ben Khemis (left) fabricates a "mizwad" as musician Montassar Jebali tests another at a traditional workshop in the locality of Jedaida near Tunis.

have been popular with young Tunisians. "The mizwad is gaining ground" and will have its international breakthrough, he said. "Perhaps not tomorrow, but after tomorrow." — AFP

ChatGPT founder says homework will 'never be the same'

Artificial intelligence tools will revolutionize education like calculators did, but will not supplant learning, ChatGPT's founder Sam Altman told students in Tokyo on Monday, defending the new technology. "Probably take-home essays are never going to be quite the same again," the OpenAI chief said in remarks at Keio University. "We have a new tool in education. Sort of like a calculator for words," he said. "And the way we teach people is going to have to change and the way we evaluate students is going to have to change."

ChatGPT has captured the world's imagination with its capacity to generate human-like conversations, writing and translations in seconds. But it has raised concern across many sectors, including in education, where some worry students will abuse the tool or turn to it rather than producing original work. Altman was in the Japanese capital as part of a world tour where he is meeting business and political leaders to discuss possibilities and regulations for AI.

He has regularly urged politicians to draft regulations for AI, warning "if this technology goes wrong, it can go quite wrong". "The tools we have are still extremely primitive relative to tools we are going to have in a couple of years," he said Monday, again urging safety measures and regulation. He said he felt "positive" about new regulatory frameworks for AI after meeting world leaders, without offering details, but reiterated his fears. "We will feel super responsible, no matter how it goes wrong," he said. He also repeated previous attempts to calm fears that AI could make many existing jobs obsolete, though he conceded that "some jobs will go away". "I don't think it is going to quite have the employment impact that people expect," he added, insisting that "new classes of jobs" will emerge. "Almost all of the predictions are wrong," he said. — AFP



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman addresses Keio University in Tokyo on June 12, 2023. — AFP

In Cyprus no-man's land, owls come to the rescue of farmers

Standing amid ears of wheat growing tall in the buffer zone dividing Cyprus, farmer Christodoulos Christodoulou can rest easy. The rodents that once ran rampant in the decades since the no-man's land was created and destroyed his crops are being driven out by owls. "Our village was full of rats and mice. They ate our crops, nibbled on our tyres," recalls Christodoulou, who owns a farm in the demilitarized corridor that splits the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. "Then we set up these boxes for the owls," he said.

Around 50 light wooden boxes with circular openings have been installed on tree trunks as part of a 10-year-old initiative led by the BirdLife Cyprus non-governmental organization and the Cypriot government. BirdLife says the objectives of the project are to encourage farmers to abandon using poison and to help repopulate the barn owl population of Cyprus, which has been in decline across Europe.

Deneia, one of the few villages in the 180-km buffer zone that is still inhabited, is now home to between 20 and 50 barn owls and their chicks — recognizable by their milk-white plumage. The birds of prey are only about 30 cm tall, but have large appetites, devouring as many as 5,000 rats and mice a year. Rodents have proliferated in the corridor in the absence of large amounts of human activity — ransacking agricultural areas.

'A miracle'

Farmers have often tried to address the situation with rat poison — harmful to both humans and the environment — before the launch of the initiative. "The owls are a miracle!" said Christodoulou, who first tried spraying poison on his fields. Their presence has had a "radical" impact in driving away the rodents and he can

now practice organic farming. Today, thanks to the owls, "to find a rodent here, you would have to search for a week", said Deneia mayor Christakis Panayiotou. BirdLife director Martin Hellicar, who counts more than 1,300 owl boxes across Cyprus, attributes the success of the project to farmers becoming "attached to the barn owls and reconnecting with nature".

Further west in the same demilitarized corridor, whole villages have been abandoned for decades since the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, in response to a Greek-sponsored coup attempt. Bird boxes have gone up in coordination with the United Nations. Not far from looming watchtowers manned by some of the 800 UN peacekeepers patrolling the area, a ranger wearing gloves pulls two owl chicks out of a box. The small creatures blink, blinded by the daylight. With an expert hand, Nikos Kassinis attaches a ring to them with an identification number.

Birds without borders

Every year, authorities find the bodies of around 20 owls. Autopsies reveal that many die as a result



A member of the UNFICYP holds a female adult barn owl.



In this picture taken on May 11, 2023, a member of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) holds a female adult barn owl that was removed from its nest for inspection, near the abandoned villages of Agios Nikolaos and Agios Georgios in the UN buffer zone separating the two parts of the divided island. — AFP photos



A picture taken on June 2, 2023, shows a manmade nest for barn owls installed by Cyprus' Game and Fauna service on a tree in the village of Deneia in the United Nations buffer zone separating the two parts of the divided island.

of consuming rat poison. "They lose their capacity to fly and get hit by cars," added the mayor, noting that this most often takes place outside in more populated areas. Scientist Iris Charalambidou describes the no-man's land as a "unique" environment for its expanse of largely untouched nature in comparison to the unbridled real estate development on other parts of the island.

With permission from the United Nations, the Greek Cypriot specialist sometimes comes to the area with a Turkish Cypriot colleague. The researcher says being able to work together to observe barn owls in the buffer zone that divides them is "invaluable". "Because no bird will ever respect the borders drawn by man," she said. — AFP

Lifestyle



People attend the Ubisoft Forward livestream event.



Yves Guillemot, CEO and co-founder of Ubisoft, is flanked by members of the Ubisoft team at the end of the Ubisoft Forward livestream event.



Game director Ditte Deenfeldt speaks at the Ubisoft Forward livestream event.

UBISOFT TEASES VR VERSION OF HIT GAME 'ASSASSIN'S CREED'

French videogame powerhouse Ubisoft on Monday announced that a virtual reality version of its blockbuster "Assassin's Creed" franchise will be available by year's end. Player's in "Assassin's Creed Nexus VR" will take on the roles of

game's senior creative director David Votycka told AFP at a Ubisoft Forward showcase of upcoming games in Los Angeles. "It's a really strong fit for VR." Gameplay in "Assassin's Creed" involves a lot of climbing, jumping between buildings swinging from poles,

or nauseous from dashing about in VR are comfortable, adding features like quick ways for characters to "teleport" from one spot to another. There was also discussion early on by the team how realistic it should be for someone in VR to sneak up on a person and stab them to death, according to Votycka.

Game designers tuned down the violence of assassination scenes, making them quick and controlling where targets could be struck. "You can't torture them," Votycka said of assassination targets. "It's still more like video game violence as opposed to trying to simulate what a real hidden-blade kill might be like." The game will be available on Meta's latest VR headsets known as Quest, formerly branded as Oculus.

The new VR component will also add an interesting double-layer to the series, whose plot often centers around modern-day protagonists entering their own virtual historic world. Players will see through the virtual eyes of Ezio Auditore da Firenze in Renaissance Italy; Kassandra in Ancient Greece, and Connor in Colonial America in a storyline that lets them slip in and out of the memories of ancestors.

Real-world moves, while holding controllers, will be used to duel, throw axes, move with stealth and more in the game, demonstrations showed. "This is a full proper 'Assassin's Creed' game in



Narrative director Sarah Beaulieu speaks at the Ubisoft Forward livestream event.

VR," Votycka said. "I hope that it shows players and developers and publishers that big brands can be awesome in VR."

Ubisoft also showed off a coming "Assassin's Creed Mirage" addition of the franchise tailored for play on videogame consoles and personal computers. "Mirage" was described as an homage to the first Assassin's game and plays out in ninth-century Baghdad. Gamers will take on the role of "Basim" fighting

against "The Order of the Ancients" in "Mirage," which is set for release on Oct 12. "Assassin's Creed" is also going mobile, with a "Codename Jade" free-to-play version of the game set during the time of the Qin Dynasty in China. Players were invited to register for a public "beta" test of "Jade". - AFP



Attendees try Ubisoft games at the Ubisoft Forward livestream event in Los Angeles on June 12, 2023. — AFP photos



Game director Julian Gerighty speaks at the Ubisoft Forward livestream event.

earlier protagonists from the franchise, complete with the trademark hidden wrist blades, dramatic parkour escapes, and the iconic "leap of faith" from atop buildings.

"Being able to feel what it is like to become a master assassin is going to be a huge draw for players," the

running, combat and more. "Games that work best in VR are obviously the ones that feature a lot of physicality; so it allows us to make something different and better in some ways than the non VR version," Votycka said.

A team at Ubisoft was devoted to making sure people who get disoriented

'Final Beatles record' out this year aided by AI: McCartney

A "final Beatles record", created with the help of artificial intelligence, will be released later this year, Paul McCartney told the BBC in an interview broadcast Tuesday. "It was a demo that John (Lennon) had, and that we worked on, and we just finished it up," said McCartney, who turns 81 next week. The Beatles — Lennon, McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr — split in 1970, with each going on to have solo careers, but they never reunited.

Lennon was shot dead in New York in 1980 aged 40 while Harrison died of lung cancer in 2001, aged 58. McCartney did not name the song that has been recorded but according to the BBC it is likely to be a 1978 Lennon composition called "Now And Then". The track — one of several on a cassette that Lennon had recorded for McCartney a year before his death — was given to him by Lennon's widow Yoko Ono in 1994.

Two of the songs, "Free As A Bird" and "Real Love", were cleaned up by the producer Jeff Lynne, and released in 1995 and 1996. An attempt was made to do the same with "Now And Then" but the project was abandoned because of background noise on the demo. McCartney, who has previously talked about wanting to finish the song, said AI had given him a new chance to do so.

'Now and Then'

Working with Peter Jackson, the film director behind the 2021 documentary series "The Beatles: Get Back", AI was used to separate Lennon's voice and a piano. "They tell the machine, 'That's the voice. This is a guitar. Lose the guitar,'" he explained. "So when we came to make what will be the last Beatles' record, it was a demo that John had (and) we were able to take John's voice and get it pure through this AI. "Then

we can mix the record, as you would normally do. So it gives you some sort of leeway."

McCartney performed a two-hour set at last year's Glastonbury festival in England, playing Beatles' classics to the 100,000-strong crowd. The set included a virtual duet with Lennon of the song "I've Got a Feeling", from the Beatles' last album "Let It Be". Last month, Sting warned that "defending our human capital against AI" would be a major battle for musicians in the coming years.

The use of AI in music is the subject of debate in the industry, with some denouncing copyright abuses and others praising its prowess. McCartney said the use of the technology was "kind of scary but exciting because it's the future", adding: "We'll just have to see where that leads."

Exhibition

After the Beatles, the singer-songwriter went on to have hits with his band Wings, but also dabbled in painting and photography as well as animal rights campaigning. An exhibition — "Paul McCartney Photographs 1963-64: Eyes of the Storm" — opens later this month and is part of the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery in London after a three-year refurbishment. It features more than 250 unseen images that McCartney took on his Pentax camera between November 1963 and February 1964 as Beatlemania emerged.

"It's very poignant, it's great because whenever you lose someone, I think your natural thing is, 'Well, we've got beautiful memories', and you hold fast those memories of the good times," he said. "I don't tend to dwell on the fact that you've lost someone. — AFP



A member of the Australian chapter of BTS' ARMY smiles after buying travel cards with designs dedicated to the group.



Members of the Australian chapter of K-pop megastars BTS' global following sing while on a coach.



Fans pose after buying a special commemorative stamp series of K-pop megastars BTS.

BTS 'CHANGED MY LIFE': AUSSIE FANS MAKE K-POP PILGRIMAGE

The excitement on the tour bus was palpable. From young kids to grandmothers, the Australians had come to Seoul with one aim: to celebrate 10 years of their favorite K-pop band BTS. Wearing novelty headbands and hats in the supergroup's official color, purple, and brandishing huge cut-outs of their favorite members' faces, the fans — from the Australian chapter of BTS's global following, known as ARMY — burst into song. "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, BTS!" the 28 people on the bus sang in unison, before segueing into enthusiastic covers of BTS's many hits, complete with lip-syncing and dance moves.

The fans are on a 12-day "BTS tour" of South Korea to mark the 10th anniversary on Tuesday of the group's debut. Organized in part by Seoul's official tourism board, their trip takes in a range of locations nationwide associated with the K-pop juggernaut. First up on Tuesday: the main Seoul office of the group's agency HYBE, which has become a pilgrimage site for fans this week, and where a huge mural of the septet has been freshly painted on the wall outside.

"I am just happy that we are here right now, the Australian ARMY tour group... It's such a milestone to be here while the boys are celebrating their 10th year," Barbara Pena, a 48-year-old real estate agent from Sydney, told AFP in front of the mural. Pena, the admin of the BTS Australia fan group, has been to South Korea four times previously, with each trip themed around BTS. She estimated this trip cost participants around \$5,000 per person, including flights. It was worth it, she said, because BTS "changed my life".

Discovering BTS had helped her realize she "could do so much more", including travel places she never imagined she would go, Pena said, rattling off destinations she had visited to see the band. "And now I have so many of these

memories and experiences I can share with my grandchildren," she added.

'Struck a chord'

On June 13, 2013 a seven-member hip-hop group put together by one of South Korea's smaller music labels debuted under the moniker Bangtan Sonyeondan — or "bulletproof boy scouts". The initial domestic reception was muted. Their name was seen as

Pena, whose eyes well with tears when she thinks of the song that means the most to her: "Love Myself". "There's a part that says, 'Why is it so hard for you to love yourself and easy for you to love other people?' and that struck a chord," she said. Although the band is currently on a hiatus, with two members performing their mandatory military service, they released a new digital single last week and have thrown themselves into cele-



Members of the Australian chapter of K-pop megastars BTS' global following, known as ARMY, pose with a Japanese ARMY member they met while visiting a mural (back) dedicated to the group, during their 12-day "BTS tour" of South Korea to mark the 10th anniversary of the group's debut, in Seoul on June 13, 2023. — AFP photos

strange, and in South Korea's highly competitive music market, being repped by a smaller label meant they were squeezed out of the mainstream, forcing them to find fresh ways to connect with fans.

Gradually, as they broadened their musical style and increasingly went by the snappier name BTS, their albums started to rise up local and global charts. By 2018, their third album — "Love Yourself: Tear" — went straight to the top of the Billboard 200, prompting congratulations from the South Korean president at the time. Their direct outreach to fans online, coupled with their heartfelt music, has won them legions of adorer's like

brating the anniversary. Pena's tour, meanwhile, has already ventured far afield — the Australians did six hours round trip on their bus to the eastern city of Gangneung to see a bus stop where BTS once posed for an album cover. They have also visited a Korean barbecue restaurant that BTS eat at, and a cafe run by band member Jimin's father. For Darrin Goodwin, 52, this was the undisputed highlight of the tour — especially as Jimin's father gave him an unexpected hug after their chat. "It was very very surreal and it was an honor and privilege," Goodwin said. — AFP



British singer Paul McCartney and his wife Linda arrive on May 15, 1980 for the screening of the cartoon "Seaside Woman" at the 33rd International Cannes Film Festival. - AFP

Sports

Olympic champion Titmus on fire, books world championship place

16-year-old McIntosh as a serious contender

MELBOURNE: Olympic champion Ariarne Titmus swam the second fastest 400m freestyle this year Tuesday to book her place at next month's world championships, as did fellow swimming superstars Emma McKeon and Kaylee McKeown. Titmus, who lost her world record to teenage Canadian sensation Summer McIntosh in March, touched in 3:58.47 to win easily ahead of Lani Pallister at Australia's world championship trials in Melbourne.

"It wasn't the best 400, but every swim under four minutes is a fast swim," said Titmus, who chased down American great Katie Ledecky to win gold at the Tokyo Olympics. "But honestly, I would have preferred to be a bit faster tonight." McIntosh's stunning 3:56.08 this year broke the 3:56.40 world record Titmus clocked in 2022 when she bettered Ledecky's six-year-old mark of 3:56.46 set at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

The emergence of 16-year-old McIntosh as a serious contender sets the scene for a blockbuster 400m clash between the trio at the worlds in Fukuoka, Japan, next month. Titmus will also swim the 100m, 200m, and 800m freestyle in Melbourne. In the men's 400m freestyle, 2016 Olympic champion Mack Horton could only come third behind exciting young prospect Sam Short (3:43.38), who pipped reigning world champion Elijah Winnington with both inside the qualifying time. The versatile McKeown cruised to victory in the 200m medley, hitting the wall in an impressive 2:07.60 - the second fastest this year behind McIntosh.

The Olympic 100m and 200m backstroke champion and dual world record holder touched well clear of Jenna Forrester, who also qualified. "Really nice relief to gain a qualification on the first night

of racing. Always good to blow out those cobwebs on the first race," said McKeown, who will also race the three backstroke disciplines in Melbourne and 200m freestyle. Seven-time Tokyo Olympic medalist McKeon booked her seat to Japan by touching first in the 100m butterfly in 56.74 ahead of Brianna Throssell.

McKeon will also suit up for the 50m fly and the 50m and 100m freestyle but has opted out of the 200m free. "I was hoping for a bit quicker, but it was obviously just about making the team," said McKeon. "This year is just another stepping-stone to Paris (Olympics)." In a setback, 200m breaststroke world record holder Zac Stubblety-Cook failed to crack the automatic qualifying time over 100m. He could still be selected, at the discretion of national coach Rohan Taylor. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Ariarne Titmus of Australia competes in the women's 400m freestyle event at the 2023 Australian World Championship Trials in Melbourne on June 13, 2023. - AFP

Fitzpatrick sets aside PGA-LIV worries to defend Open title

LOS ANGELES: Matt Fitzpatrick is putting any questions and concerns about the future of global golf on the back burner as he prepares to defend his US Open title at Los Angeles Country Club this week. England's Fitzpatrick was among the golfers, fans and sponsors stunned at last week's announcement of an agreement between the US PGA Tour, Europe's DP World Tour and breakaway LIV Golf's Saudi backers. The yet-to-be-finalized deal between the tours and the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) is drawing scrutiny from US legislators as players — from both the established tours and LIV Golf — say they are awaiting details of what it means for them in what Fitzpatrick called a "confusing" time. "I don't think anyone knows what's going on," Fitzpatrick said. "Are we signing with the PIF? Are we not signing with the PIF? I have no idea. "Even though I guess it is confusing, it's pretty clear that nobody knows what's going on apart from about four people in the world."

On Thursday, however, he'll be focused on solving the questions posed by the LACC North Course, hosting a US Open for the first time as the championship returns to Los Angeles after a 75-year absence. "I think it's overrated," Fitzpatrick said of the effect the upheaval could have on performances this week. "I think you're not going to be stood on the first tee thinking, 'Oh what's going on in the golf world.' "You're thinking, it's a par-four, where do I need to hit it, where is the wind. That's all you're thinking about." Reigning British Open champion Cameron Smith was one of the highest-profile PGA Tour players to make the jump to LIV Golf, which launched in October 2021 and lured top talent with record \$25 million purses as well as money guarantees. Smith said he, too, had been completely in the dark about the deal until he received a call from PIF governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan shortly after the news broke in the media. — AFP

Kuwait Special Olympics team arrive in Berlin

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Special Olympics team have arrived in Berlin to participate in the Special Olympics Berlin 2023 Games which is scheduled from 12th-26th June. Ambassador Najeeb Al-Bader and embassy staff, as well as the National Director for Kuwait Special Olympics, Rihab Buresli, received the delegation at the airport. The delegation includes 60 people.

Athletes will participate in 10 singles and team games, including athletics, equestrian, swimming, bicycling, basketball, bowling, weight lifting, judo, bocce, and badminton. The delegation was seen off by Chairman of the Board of Tomooh Sports Club

for Mental Disability, Jassim Al-Nouri, who thanked the political leadership, air force, and Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Force Base for offering a private jet to take the delegation to Berlin. He also thanked the

Information Minister, the State Minister for Youth Affairs, and the Kuwait Olympic Committee for their support. Chairwoman of Kuwait Special Olympics Hanaa Al-Zawawi said Kuwait players are ready.



Flames promote assistant Huska to head coach

NEW YORK: Ryan Huska was named head coach of the Calgary Flames on Monday after spending the past five seasons as an assistant with the NHL club. The 47-year-old Canadian replaced Darryl Sutter, who was fired last month after the Flames missed the playoffs for the second time in his three seasons guiding the team. Huska will serve as an NHL head coach for the first time. "I know these players and I look at that as a positive thing," Huska said. "There is a lot of good people in our dressing room and there are excellent hockey players who want to win and they will do anything they can to succeed."

"I'm a big believer in that group of people and their ability and my job now as a head coach is to make sure I push them every day to get the best version of them and push them to another level as

individuals and as a team." Huska oversaw defensive work and penalty killing by the Flames, who allowed 27.3 shots against per game, third fewest in the NHL, and ranked fourth in penalty killing.

"He has put his time in, done everything he can. The only thing he hasn't gotten is the chance to be an NHL head coach and now he is," said Flames general manager Craig Conroy, promoted three weeks ago from an assistant role to replace the fired Brad Treliving. "I wanted a good communicator, a leader, someone who can inspire this group, play sound defensive hockey with structure... as we narrowed the search down it became more clear to me that Ryan and I had the same vision."

Huska was a head coach for the first time with the Western Hockey League Kelowna Rockets and guided the junior team to a league crown in 2009. He was named to coach the Flames' top developmental club in 2014 and joined the Calgary staff in 2018. The Flames have not gone beyond the second round of the NHL playoffs since losing the Stanley Cup Final to Tampa Bay in 2004. Only two NHL coaching vacancies remain, with the Columbus Blue Jackets and New York Rangers yet to select a bench boss. - AFP

Australia's Lyon primed to join exclusive club

SYDNEY: Australian spinner Nathan Lyon heads into another Ashes campaign on the cusp of joining an elite group of players with 500 Test wickets - and warning he can still get better. The veteran of 120 Tests will do battle once more with England this week and is primed to torment a country that has accounted for 101 of his 487 scalps. The 35-year-old Lyon declared last month he believed "100 percent" that a whitewash of their hosts and arch-rivals was doable.

Affectionately known as "Garry" after former Aussie Rules player Garry Lyon, he is one of the most prolific off-spinners to grace Test cricket. He took four wickets in India's second innings to help Australia win the World Test Championship final at The Oval on Sunday and is poised to join spin greats Shane Warne, Anil Kumble and Muttiah Muralitharan in the exclusive 500-club.

Two of his England rivals, Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad, are also among the seven players to have taken 500 or more Test wickets. Lyon's fellow Australian Glenn McGrath and Courtney Walsh of the West Indies are the other two. A classical spinner who flights the ball, the durable right-arter could feasibly catch Walsh (519) during the five-Test Ashes series starting at Edgbaston on Friday.

While his seemingly anointed off-spinning successor Todd Murphy was also included in Australia's squad, Lyon is not ready to slow down or give selectors any reason to consider his 22-year-old teammate as an alternative. "There's no end in sight for me," Lyon, whose longevity is partly due to having not played international white-ball cricket since 2019, told reporters ahead of his departure from Australia. "I still feel like I can get better. I feel like I'm still learning about the art of off-break bowling. I'm trying to get a lot more consistent and trying to get my stock ball even better with a few variations as well."

He will face an added challenge in England with short boundaries designed to aid the home side's aggressive batsmen set to be deployed, which risks him being routinely pummeled to the ropes. But the opportunistic Lyon, who made his Test debut in 2011,

only sees this as another chance to boost his wicket haul. "I've been hit for six... it must be getting close to 300 (times) now for me," he said. "I'm not worried by it at all, I'm not scared by it. It provides a chance (of wickets) in my eyes."

Clear number two

In Murphy, Australia appear to have a long-term heir from their never-ending conveyor belt of top-class spin bowlers. This time last year he was a virtually unknown, handed a surprise Test call-up after just seven first-class matches for Victoria. He grabbed the chance with both hands in a stunning debut against India at Nagpur in February where he bagged a seven-wicket haul in their first innings while beautifully bowling in tandem with Lyon.



Nathan Lyon

Able to beat the bat on both edges, Australian coach Andrew McDonald said earlier this year: "I think he's a clear number two. "I think there's been discussion over a period of time what would happen if we didn't have Nathan Lyon. That's been one of the real positives that we've got an obvious number two that can play in all conditions."

The bespectacled Murphy, who won a Cricket Australia contract this year, knows he is still learning the ropes, with spinning in often cold and seam-friendly English conditions a different ball game to the sub-continent. When he gets the chance to add to his four caps remains to be seen, but it appears unlikely to be in England, where the need for two spinners is rare. Chief selector George Bailey has urged him to bide his time, saying: "We think he has a really bright future." — AFP



CALGARY: Assistant coach Ryan Huska, of the Calgary Flames, speaks with players during a time-out in an NHL game against the Winnipeg Jets at Scotiabank Saddledome in this file photo. Ryan Huska was named head coach of the Calgary Flames on June 12, 2023, after spending the past five seasons as an assistant with the NHL club. - AFP

Sports

Mbappe's future in doubt after refusal to extend PSG contract

France striker's decision a major blow to PSG

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe's future at Paris Saint-Germain is once more in doubt after he told the French champions that he will not be taking up an option to extend his contract beyond next year, raising the specter of him following Lionel Messi out of the club this summer. The 24-year-old France striker signed a new deal a year ago to stay at PSG, turning down an approach from Real Madrid in the process.

But that contract will expire in 2024 unless he decides before July 31 this year to agree an extension for a third season, until 2025. If he does not sign, the French champions therefore risk losing him for nothing in a year's time, meaning they could now opt to sell him in the current transfer window, which is open until September 1. Mbappe's decision not to renew, announced in a letter to the club and first revealed by French sports daily L'Equipe, is a major blow to PSG.

It comes as they have been planning to make the forward the focal point of their team after allowing Messi to leave at the end of his own two-year contract. According to sources with knowledge of the discussions, PSG were surprised that the letter was leaked and do not envisage letting Mbappe leave for nothing. That means either renegotiating the contract or selling him in this transfer window. "PSG play hardball" was the

headline on the front page of L'Equipe on Tuesday. Mbappe's entourage said they would make "no comment for the moment" when contacted by AFP.

Real Madrid on alert?

Having missed out on his signature a year ago, Real would again be chief among his suitors. They are in the market for a new striker after reigning Ballon d'Or Karim Benzema ended his 14-year stay in the Spanish capital, opting to move to Saudi Arabia. Mbappe recently stated that he planned to remain at PSG next season but hinted that he may not extend his deal at the Parc des Princes.

"I said that next year I will play for PSG. I still have a year left on my contract and I am going to honour my contract," Mbappe said at an awards ceremony last month after being named Ligue 1's player of the year. Mbappe is currently with the France squad preparing for Euro 2024 qualifying matches against Gibraltar in Portugal this Friday, and at home to Greece next Monday. Recently named as the new France captain, Mbappe appeared smiling and relaxed as he trained with his teammates at their base near Paris on Monday.

He was still a teenager when he joined PSG on a season-long loan from Monaco in August 2017, just after help-

ing the principality club win the Ligue 1 title. The move turned into a permanent transfer the following year in a 180 million-euro (\$195m) deal. He helped France to World Cup glory in 2018 and has established himself as arguably the leading forward on the global stage. Mbappe also scored a hat-trick in France's 2022 World Cup final defeat to Messi's Argentina before helping PSG win a record 11th French title.

He was the top scorer in Ligue 1 last season with 29 goals and netted 41 in 43 games for his club in all competitions. Yet it was an often frustrating season, as PSG went out of the Champions League in the last 16 to Bayern Munich and lost at the same stage in the French Cup. Their regularly poor performances in the second half of the campaign persuaded PSG not to offer new terms to Messi, who fell out with the club after missing training to take an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia.

Last week Messi announced that he would move to MLS side Inter Miami. Sergio Ramos has also been allowed to leave and Neymar's future in Paris is in doubt with the club understood to be keen to part ways with the Brazilian. Neymar, who is under contract until 2025, has been out injured since February. The Qatar-owned club are cur-



VELINES: France's forward Kylian Mbappe throws a bottle during a training session ahead of the upcoming UEFA Euro 2024 football tournament qualifying matches in Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines, on June 12, 2023. France will play against Gibraltar on June 16, 2023 and against Greece on June 19, 2023 in their UEFA Euro 2024 Group B Qualification matches. — AFP

rently working on bringing in new signings, with Spanish international Marco Asensio from Real Madrid and Uruguay midfielder Manuel Ugarte of Portuguese

side Sporting both expected to sign soon. PSG are also expected to bring in a new coach to replace Christophe Galtier. — AFP

Five EPL transfer moves to watch

MANCHESTER: The English transfer window opens on Wednesday ahead of what is expected to be another heavy summer of spending by Premier League (EPL) clubs. Business has already been done by some teams as Liverpool moved on quickly from missing out on Real Madrid-bound Jude Bellingham to land Alexis Mac Allister from Brighton. Harry Kane's future at Tottenham looks set to be the major transfer saga as the England captain enters the final year of his contract. Several of Kane's international teammates could also be on the move with Declan Rice, Mason Mount and James Maddison attracting interest, while Brighton are expected to cash in once more by selling Moises Caicedo. AFP Sport looks at five of the transfer moves to watch in the coming months.

Harry Kane (Tottenham)

Despite leading the line for a struggling Spurs side that finished eighth, Kane was still prolific with 30 Premier League goals. Kane is now within 47 goals of Alan Shearer's record as the Premier League's all-time top scorer, but he may have to decide whether to pursue more individual milestones or the first trophy of his career. Real Madrid are reportedly keen to make Kane their replacement for Karim Benzema and Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy will likely be more willing to listen to offers from the Spanish giants than a Premier League rival. However, Kane could also opt to see out the final 12 months of his contract to be able to choose his next destination on a free transfer.

Declan Rice (West Ham)

Hammers chairman David Sullivan admitted Rice's last game for the club likely came in lifting the Europa Conference League trophy after last week's win against Fiorentina. The 24-year-old is not short of suitors after developing into one of the Premier League's finest all-round midfielders. Arsenal are leading the race to land the England international's signature as the Gunners look to go one better than finishing second to Manchester City this season.

Mason Mount (Chelsea)

A darling of the Chelsea support, Mount was a peripheral figure this season due to injury and a



Harry Kane

stand-off over his contract. The midfielder only has 12 months to run on his deal and is expected to become a makeweight as Chelsea rush to sell to balance the books for financial fair play rules. Manchester United and Liverpool are reportedly interested but are refusing to meet Chelsea's £70 million (\$88 million) valuation.

Moises Caicedo (Brighton)

Brighton stood firm as Arsenal tried to land Caicedo in January even though the Ecuadorian issued a public transfer request. Caicedo then went onto sign a new contract until 2027, but with the understanding he would be allowed to leave this summer. "They deserve to change level of team and competition," said Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi on both Caicedo and Mac Allister. "We have to be happy for them." With Arsenal in the race for Rice and Liverpool looking at other midfield targets, Chelsea appear to be the front-runners for the 21-year-old.

James Maddison (Leicester)

Leicester's surprise relegation is set to spark an exodus from the King Power Stadium. Maddison is the Foxes' prize asset after scoring 10 goals and providing nine assists in just 30 Premier League appearances this season. The playmaker could swap the Championship for the Champions League next season, with Maddison leading Newcastle's wish-list. The Magpies are expected to be among the biggest spenders in Europe this summer as the Saudi-backed club gear up for their return to the Champions League after 20 years. — AFP

Points to prove for all of Nations League final four

ENSCHDEDE: Aiming to follow in the footsteps of Portugal and France, four of Europe's strongest sides this week battle to win the third edition of the UEFA Nations League. Hosts the Netherlands face Croatia in Rotterdam on Wednesday in the first semi-final, while Spain and Italy clash in Enschede on Thursday, ahead of Sunday's final. None of the "final four" have won a trophy in over a decade, except for Italy — although the Euro 2020 champions have plenty to prove themselves after failing to qualify for the 2022 World Cup.

The two-yearly tournament began in 2018, giving European nations more competitive fixtures instead of international friendlies, with the four group winners of the strongest "A" tier reaching the final four. Quarter-finalists in Qatar, the Netherlands' last success came in the 1988 European Championship. "We can write history," coach Ronald Koeman told reporters Saturday. "It was always about a European Championship or World Cup, but now the Nations League has been added."

"They are still talking about 1988, when there were eight teams (in the tournament). That says it all." Koeman was at the helm when the Netherlands finished runners-up to Portugal in the first Nations League finals, in 2019. The coach, who later departed to take over at Barcelona but returned in January, hopes home advantage can push his team on.

"The players push themselves and perform better as a team," Koeman told UEFA. Netherlands got the better of Belgium, Poland and Wales in Group A4 to reach the finals. In their way lies a Croatia side which proved their mettle in the World Cup by knocking out favorites Brazil and ultimately finishing third. For some players, including Real Madrid midfielder maestro Luka Modric, the tournament represents one of the last chances to win silverware at international level — something Croatia has never managed.

"It would be phenomenal to win the Nations League and snatch a trophy for Croatia," striker Andrej Kramaric told UEFA. "For a number of us older players, this seems like a great chance to mark our



Netherlands' coach Ronald Koeman

international career with a trophy." Croatia beat France in Paris on their way to topping Group A1, also finishing ahead of Denmark and Austria. Both the Netherlands and Zlatko Dalic's Croatia will be missing key defenders through injury, with Matthijs de Ligt and Josko Gvardiol sidelined respectively.

Mediterranean derby

Spain finished runners-up to France in the 2021 finals, beating Italy in the first game. The sides have clashed multiple times on big stages, including in the Euro 2020 semis, with Italy progressing on penalties before beating England to lift the trophy. The last time Spain won a trophy, at Euro 2012, they thrashed Italy 4-0 in the final. Luis de la Fuente's team arrive in the tournament under pressure after a 2-0 loss against Scotland in March in Euro 2024 qualifying. The coach was a surprise replacement for Luis Enrique after Spain were knocked out of the World Cup by Morocco in the last 16.

Goalkeeper Unai Simon said Spain's style of play had not changed too much under De la Fuente. "We go direct a bit more, but generally it hasn't changed a lot," Simon told a news conference Monday. "There are areas that change and we have to adapt to that (but) we have the key elements and with them we'll go all out against Italy." Spain reached the final four under Luis Enrique by seeing off Portugal, Switzerland and Czech Republic in Group A2. Italy coach Roberto Mancini has called up five Inter Milan players for the finals, who will arrive after finishing runners-up in the Champions League final. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, Fathima Muneeb, holder of Indian Passport No. V1965265, having permanent address 23-2-519/1, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, Pin code- 500002 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Fathima (given name) and Ayub (surname). **(#3806) 14-06-2023**

I, Kalamarla Subbaiah @ Sunkara Mahmoud C/o. Sunkara Ramachandra, residing at D.No: 3-40-2-7, Vasavi Nagar, Kadiiri Town & Mandalam, Sree Satya Sai (Dist.) A.P., India. My name is calling as Kalamarla Subbaiah and Sunkara Mahmoud (Indian Passport bearing No: M2310696) both names are belongs to me and both names are one and same and there is no other person above said name's. Hence I am making this declaration for clarification of my name. Vide affidavit, dated 03/04/2023 before advocate T. Baba John, Notary, Sri Satya Sai District. This is for kind information of all concerned. **(#3805) 13/06/2023**

by change my name to ZARINA (as given name) HITA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ZARINA HITA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3803) 12/06/2023**

I, KADHAR SAMATHU, holder of Passport No. L5941243, do hereby change my name to ABDUL SAMED (as given name) KADHAR SAHIB (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ABDUL SAMED KADHAR SAHIB and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3804) 12/06/2023**

I, SHABBIR, holder of Passport No. Z4825725, do hereby change my name to SHABBIR (as given name) HITA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SHABBIR HITA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3803) 12/06/2023**

I, ZARINA ABBAS ALI, holder of Passport No. S5547730, do here-

I, ABBAS ALI, holder of Passport No. P7118093, do hereby change my name to ABBAS ALI (as given name) HITA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ABBAS ALI HITA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3803) 12/06/2023**

I, SABIRA BANU, holder of Passport No. Z6929011, do hereby change my name to SABIRA (as given name) HITA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SABIRA HITA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3803) 12/06/2023**

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Nuggets capture their first title in franchise history

Denver Nuggets overcome Miami Heat to end 47-season wait



DENVER: The Denver Nuggets celebrate with the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy after a 94-89 victory against the Miami Heat in Game Five of the 2023 NBA Finals to win the NBA Championship on June 12, 2023. — AFP

DENVER: The Denver Nuggets sealed their first title in franchise history on Monday, defeating the Miami Heat 94-89 to end a 47-season wait for a maiden NBA championship. Nikola Jokic scored 28 points with 16 rebounds as the Nuggets won the best-of-seven NBA Finals 4-1 to bring the Mile High City an NBA crown as a sellout crowd roared in delight and pondered what more the young squad could achieve.

"I've got news for everybody out there. We're not satisfied with one," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said afterwards. "We want more." The championship filled the final gap in the impressive resume of Serbian star Jokic, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and five-time All-Star center in his eighth NBA campaign. Two

days after countryman Novak Djokovic won the French Open for his record 23rd Grand Slam tennis crown, Jokic was named the NBA Finals MVP.

"For us he's the best ever of course," Jokic said of Djokovic. "Now we have our NBA championship. It's a really good moment to be a Serbian." Jokic delivered on a night when the team struggled with early shooting futility but blanked Miami for more than five minutes of the fourth quarter. "It was amazing effort by the team," Jokic said. "It was an ugly game. We couldn't make shots. But at the end we figured it out, how to defend and we scored 90 points. That's why we won. I'm just happy we won the game. "It's good. The job is done and we can go home now." Michael Porter Jr. added 16 points and

13 rebounds and Jamal Murray added 14 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets. "We had the belief from the get-go," Murray said. "It's just great to see it through." "To do it with this group of guys, nothing could feel better than this," Porter added. Jimmy Butler led Miami with 21 points while Bam Adebayo added 20 and 12 rebounds. Denver was the playoff top seed in the Western Conference while the eighth-seeded Heat, who had to win a play-in game just to reach the playoffs, lost in the finals for the third time in 10 seasons.

"One hell of a basketball team that we couldn't really find enough solutions to be able to get us over the top," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. With their seasons on the line, players brought intensity and

physical defending over the final minutes to create an electric atmosphere inside Ball Arena. The Nuggets, down by as many as 10 points in the first half, pulled within 51-44 at half-time despite going 1-for-15 from 3-point range, the worst-ever NBA Finals shooting half from beyond the arc.

A Murray jumper gave Denver an 81-76 lead with 6:43 remaining while the Heat began the fourth quarter hitting only 2-for-14 from the floor and going scoreless for more than five minutes. Butler, who had struggled all night, sank back-to-back 3-pointers and made three free throws after a controversial foul on Denver's Aaron Gordon was upheld on video review.

Butler and Jokic traded hoops and Butler followed with two free throws to give Miami an 89-88 lead. Bruce Brown

answered with a rebound basket to put Denver ahead 90-89. "Those last three or four minutes felt like a scene out of a movie," Spoelstra said. "Two teams in the center of the ring throwing haymaker after haymaker. "It will probably rank as our hardest, competitive, most active defensive game of the season, and it still fell short." Kentavious Caldwell-Pope stole a pass by Butler and sank two clutch free throws with 24 seconds remaining to give Denver a 92-89 edge. "For me it was all about defense," Caldwell-Pope said. "We've got to get stops. Defense was going to win us a championship. I always told them that." Butler missed a 3-pointer, Brown grabbed a rebound for Denver and then made two free throws to seal the victory with 14 seconds remaining. — AFP

Weather fails to rain on Man City treble parade

MANCHESTER: Manchester was bathed in blue on Monday as even a thunder storm and torrential rain could not stop thousands of Manchester City fans celebrating a treble with their heroes. City became just the second side to win the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup in the same season after beating Inter Milan 1-0 in Istanbul on Saturday to become European champions for the first time.

Despite a delay to the festivities caused by the stormy weather, the streets of the city centre were still crammed to pay tribute to manager Pep Guardiola and his players. "What a parade," said Guardiola. "It has to be like that, no sunshine. We want rain. The perfect way." Erling Haaland was just one of City's stars who appeared on stage topless, while England duo Jack Grealish and Calvin Phillips appeared to be suffering the effects of 48 hours of celebration. "I've had the best 24 hours, day and night," said Grealish. "I don't think I've slept."

The City delegation jetted back from Istanbul to Manchester on Sunday but many of the squad immediately headed off on a private jet to Ibiza for a second night of partying. For City supporters there was the extra glee in ensuring Manchester United's 1998/99 treble is no longer a unique achievement. The blue half of Manchester lived in the shadow of their neighbors for decades as Alex Ferguson built a dynasty at Old Trafford in 27 years in charge of United between 1986 and 2013.

But an Abu Dhabi-backed takeover of City in



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's players celebrate on stage with their trophies following an open-top bus victory parade for their European Cup, FA Cup and Premier League victories, in Manchester, northern England on June 12, 2023. — AFP

2008 turned the tables in the rivalry as Guardiola's men have claimed five Premier League titles in six seasons to become the dominant force of English football. "How times have changed," said office worker Sarah Morris, 27. "This is like the dream. I could never have imagined this." Even those not old enough to remember United's treble think it may never get any better for City having finally ended their wait for Champions League glory.

"I'm 21, but it can't get any better than this. It's

all downhill from here", said student Tom Kennedy, bedecked in a City bucket hat and shirt. For the older generation, there is still a sense of disbelief at how City have gone on to conquer Europe. In the season United did their treble 24 years ago, City were in the third tier of English football. "It's unbelievable," said retired fan Gary Henley, 63. "We've been down the leagues, we've been there when we didn't win anything for ages. "We went 35 years without a trophy. Now we've won the treble. It's unreal." — AFP

Kimmich's penalty salvages Germany draw with Ukraine

BREMEN: An injury time penalty from Germany captain Joshua Kimmich salvaged a 3-3 draw with Ukraine in a friendly in Bremen on Monday. Germany trailed 3-1 with less than 10 minutes remaining but a goal from Kai Havertz gave the home side hope, before the Chelsea forward won a penalty in injury time, bringing Kimmich to the spot. Despite the comeback, an impressive Ukraine led for much of the match and will take significant momentum into this month's crucial Euro 2024 qualifiers against North Macedonia and Malta.

Asked if his side had given away victory, Ukraine manager Serhiy Rebrov, in his first match in charge, said "are you asking me whether it's a success if we draw 3-3 with Germany?" "I think we created enough chances and we could have scored even more." The manager thanked Germany for hosting the friendly, telling the post-match press conference "this is an important match for Ukraine". "We are grateful to Germany for supporting us in the war".

Germany coach Hansi Flick lamented the "individual mistakes" and said his side needed to "keep working and showing that we've improved the things we're training". "We know it's a long process, but it's the process that's important." Flick told Germany's ZDF network. "We started well," Kimmich said after the game, "but then conceded two stupid goals. That's exactly what we need to stop".

Flick stayed true to his pre-match promise to bring the "attacking power" ahead of the game, which was Germany's 1000th top level match. The manager selected a back three, allowing the offence-minded David Raum and Marius Wolf to roam the wings. — AFP