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Broken roads, reckless drivers torment motorists in Kuwait

Drivers saddled with massive repair bills due to potholes, flying gravel



KUWAIT: A van navigates a potholed street. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Driving in Kuwait has become a burden for many motorists, who are forced to regularly repair their vehicles as a result of the dilapidated roads that drivers have been suffering from for years in Kuwait. Dangerous potholes on highways, steep turns, bad asphalt mixes, flying gravel and damaged streets in many areas of Kuwait lead to frequent car accidents.

Recent statistics published by the interior ministry reveal that among the main causes of horrific car accidents in Kuwait are the poor road infrastructure and reckless drivers, with eight traffic accidents occurring every hour in Kuwait. The problem worsens in winter, when flying gravel becomes a regular occurrence due to rain that loosens the outer layer of the asphalt

as a result of bad asphalt mixing. The issue is compounded by negative behaviors of some drivers, who exceed the speed limit, which leads to flying gravel. On most roads, especially highways, gravel gathers on the side lanes, where reckless drivers speed insanely, affecting other motorists.

Meanwhile, action toward this problem and response by relevant authorities are still inadequate. The ministry of public works had launched a tender to submit offers by construction companies to repair the country's roads, and while it has received offers from a number of international companies represented by foreign countries, it still hasn't approved any bid yet.

Kuwait Times visited a number of car repair garages and asked them about the rise in the number of vehicles damaged due to the poor condition of roads. Ali Mohammad, who

works in a car repair shop in Shuwaikh, said in the last couple of years, he has dealt with motorists seeking to repair their vehicles almost daily due to accidents with other cars as a result of potholes in the streets. He said this increased demand has also resulted in a slight increase in prices, causing more suffering to drivers. Mohammad added cars are also damaged when visiting camping areas, as the streets there are extremely broken.

A Kuwaiti man who drives an SUV told Kuwait Times that even his car that is designed for off-roading was damaged badly due to a big pothole on a highway. He said he has spent more than KD 300 on repairs until now only for replacing the tyres, which are expensive, calling on agencies to provide customers special prices until the streets are repaired.

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Putin hails ties as he meets MBZ, slams Zelensky



SAINT PETERSBURG: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on June 16, 2023. — AFP

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin hailed Russia's ties with the United Arab Emirates on Friday as he met the leader of the oil-rich nation, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, in Saint Petersburg. "The Emirates are a very good partner," Putin said in televised comments at the start of the meeting, which took place on the sidelines of an economic summit in Russia's second city. Putin thanked Sheikh Mohamed for the role the UAE has played in prisoner exchanges between Russia and Ukraine and Russia and the United States.

Sheikh Mohamed, widely known as MBZ, said he was in favor of "de-escalation" and a "political solution" to the Ukraine conflict during the talks, in which the pair discussed their countries' "strategic partnership", according to the UAE official news agency WAM. Russia and UAE have closely cooperated as members of the OPEC+ oil alliance and Dubai is one of the rare world capitals to have maintained direct flights to Moscow following the start of the Ukraine conflict in Feb 2022.

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait working to be a secure source of energy

BAGHDAD: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Minister of Oil Manaf Al-Hajeri said Friday that Kuwait is investing and working as part of its declared strategic plans to continue playing an enhanced role in the world as a secure source of energy and calls on the world to invest in all kinds of energy to ensure the world's growing needs are met.

This came in a speech delivered by Hajeri at a ceremony

hosted by Baghdad on the 63rd anniversary of OPEC's founding. The minister was honored to represent Kuwait, one of the five founding countries of OPEC, expressing gratitude to Iraq for hosting this historic event at Al-Shaab Hall, where the five founding countries met to establish OPEC between Sept 10-14 in 1960, he said.

OPEC confirms, through its main objectives and in accordance with its basic system and long-term strategy, its commitment to the security and stability of global oil markets, and is keen to strengthen cooperation frameworks with other producers, dialogue with all influential groups of stakeholders in the industry, and address concerns such as sustainable development, preserving the environment, energy scarcity and other challenges, Hajeri added. — KUNA (See Page 2)



BAGHDAD: Kuwaiti Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Manaf Al-Hajeri attends a celebration of OPEC's 60th anniversary on June 16, 2023. — KUNA

Saudi FM on first Iran visit since detente

TEHRAN: Iran and Saudi Arabia took a further step Saturday to seal their reconciliation as Riyadh's top diplomat made a landmark visit to the Islamic republic following a seven-year rupture. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan held talks with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian focusing on regional security, and was

also to meet President Ebrahim Raisi.

Saudi Arabia severed relations with Iran in 2016 after its embassy in Tehran and consulate in the northwestern city of Mashhad were attacked during protests over Riyadh's execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. But the two countries agreed in March to mend ties and reopen their respective embassies, in a Chinese-brokered deal that has shifted regional relations.

On June 6, Iran reopened its embassy and consulate in Saudi Arabia and the kingdom is expected to reopen its diplomatic mission in Tehran "soon", Prince Faisal said.

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TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian meets his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan on July 17, 2023. — AFP

Macron, MBS call for end to 'political vacuum' in Lebanon

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called for a "rapid end to the institutional political vacuum in Lebanon", the Elysee said on Friday. It came after Macron hosted Prince Mohammed for talks in Paris, where he had been expected to seek support from MBS, as he is widely known, to find a solution to Lebanon's leadership crisis.

Lebanese lawmakers on Wednesday failed for a 12th time to elect a new president, as bitter divisions between Iran-backed Hezbollah and its opponents risk miring the country in a protracted power vacuum. The prolonged absence of a president "remains the major obstacle to resolving the country's severe socio-economic crisis", the French presidency said.



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron greets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as he arrives at Elysee Palace on June 16, 2023. — AFP

The pair also discussed the war in Ukraine. Macron expressed his "profound concern in the face of Russia's war of aggression... its disastrous impact on the civilian populations and its repercussions on food security", his office said.

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UK royal family unite for King's birthday parade

LONDON: Britain's royal family rounded off King Charles III's inaugural birthday parade Saturday with a balcony appearance at Buckingham Palace to watch a spectacular fly-past. Three of the king's young grandchildren — future king Prince George, nine, Prince Louis, five, and Princess Charlotte, eight — joined the rest of the family on the balcony with the princes sporting red ties and blue blazers and Charlotte in a sailor suit with red trim.

They were cheered by the crowds who gathered outside the palace and in The Mall, the avenue leading up to it.

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Oil minister: Kuwait working to be a secure source of energy

Officials hail stability in oil markets as OPEC turns 60



Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Oil Manaf Al-Hajeri speaks at the ceremony. - KUNA

BAGHDAD: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Minister of Oil Manaf Al-Hajeri said Friday that Kuwait is investing and working as part of its declared strategic plans to continue playing an enhanced role in the world as a secure source of energy and calls on the world to invest in all kinds of energy to ensure the world's growing needs are met.

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of global oil markets, and is keen to strengthen co-operation frameworks with other producers, dialogue with all influential groups of stakeholders in the industry, and address concerns such as sustainable development, preserving the environment, energy scarcity and other challenges, Hajeri added.

The signing of the historic and unprecedented Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) in 2016 resulted in effectively supporting stability in the global oil market, where according to the DoC, OPEC is working with 10 non-OPEC producing countries to maintain the stability of oil markets, Hajeri mentioned. The challenges of the future will enhance the role of OPEC to ensure a smooth and balanced transition of energy that supports the global economy and industry and is in the interest of people and the environment, he pointed out.

Hajeri concluded by saying that cooperation and dialogue have played an effective role in OPEC's



BAGHDAD: A handout picture released by Iraq's Prime Minister's Media Office shows Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani (C) delivering a statement during the celebration of OPEC's 60th anniversary in Baghdad on June 16, 2023. — AFP

work for over six decades, and undoubtedly this role will continue in the future for the benefit of producers, consumers, investors and the global economy as a whole.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud said the OPEC and OPEC+ alliance succeeded in achieving a stable oil price that will benefit member states and oil industry in general. OPEC achieved the purpose of its founding and enhanced its march through the Saudi proposal on founding the OPEC+ alliance, which helped the organization achieve its aims, he said. Both OPEC and OPEC+ have succeeded in achieving stability in markets, thanks to consensus amongst, and interest of, all OPEC member states amid current conditions, economic fluctuations and uncertainty facing the world, he elaborated. Prince Abdulaziz lauded the results of the OPEC meeting in Vienna, stressing that its outcomes supported member states and assured oil investors.

Meanwhile, OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais said the organization played a pivotal role in maintaining stability and balance in energy markets across the world. Speaking at the celebration, Ghais indicated the historic agreement on establishing the organization in 1960 contributed to maintaining the sovereign right of the five constituent countries to their natural wealth, mainly oil, and drawing up a new global path, which benefited all oil-producing countries.

Therefore, the organization grew to reach its current position as a vital and effective member in the international energy sector, he stated. Consequently, the number of members rose to 13 that follow the same principles on which the bloc was founded, including cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect, he clarified. OPEC will continue playing its pivotal role in energy markets to maintain their balance and stability for the generations of today and future, Ghais concluded. — KUNA

Exam bans fall by 80 percent in first week: MoE official

KUWAIT: The number of students who were banned from taking their finals in the first week of exams this year has dropped by nearly 80 percent compared to last year, the Ministry of Education announced.

The ministry says the drop is due to the measures put in place to counter cheating and curb violations of exam rules, which included a social media awareness campaign for students to prepare them for exam season and more thorough inspections targeting electronics, such as mobile phones, at exam centers.

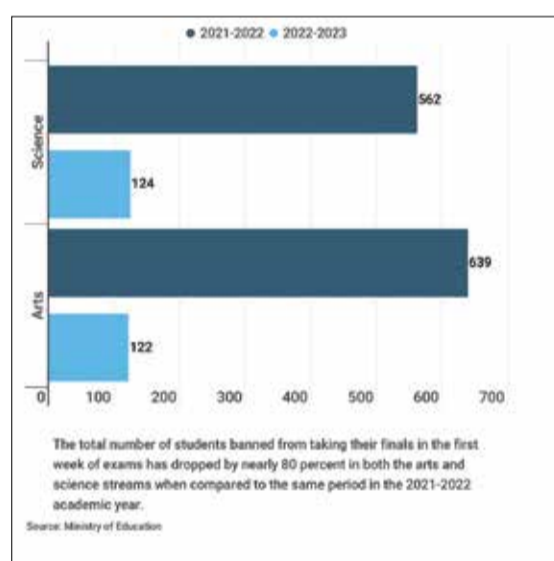
"Senior officials at the education ministry are feeling good after one week had elapsed since the start of the 12th grade (high school) examinations," a statement released by the ministry quoting its spokesman Ahmad Al-Wuhaida reads.

The ministry's "plan" has been allegedly reflected in exam rooms, where the statement noted a "prevailing" commitment from students to the regulations, "leading to the elimination of the negative phenomena commonly seen in previous years". The results signify a "major success" for the ministry, the statement said.

Bans by the day

The number of students caught in violation of exam rules and subsequently kicked out of the exam room has fell by more than 80 percent for the arts section and 77 percent for the science section compared to last year.

On the first day of exams last Sunday, there were 36 students who were banned from taking the math exam in the science section due to breaking exam



regulations, which usually means cheating. That's compared to 306 cases during the second term of the previous year 2021/2022. In the French exam of the arts section there were 26 cases only, compared with 200 cases during the second term of the year 2021/2022.

On Monday, the second day of exams, there were 62 suspensions in the Islamic education for both sections compared with 249 cases in the second term of 2021/2022. There were 37 science students disqualified from taking the biology exam on Tuesday and 31 arts students who were disqualified from taking the geography exam. Last year, the numbers were 102 and 161 respectively. During the English language test, there were 55 suspensions in both streams compared with 183 suspensions for the same period last year. Wuhaida said the reshuffling of heads of committees at the education zones has contributed to the ministry's success and was well received by parents.

Kuwaiti envoy: Iraq's stability, prosperity of great importance

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Bader Al-Awadhi said on Friday that Kuwait attaches great importance to Iraq's stability and prosperity. The ambassador spoke to KUNA and KTV on the sidelines of the 11th conference of the Iraq-Britain Business Council that was held in London under the theme "Iraq 2023 Open to the World".

He said the Arabian Gulf Cup 2023 was hosted by Iraq's Basra governorate in January and around 15,000 Kuwaiti citizens attended the tournament. "This is a large number that reflects Kuwaiti's interest in visiting Iraq, which is an indication of the availability of promising opportunities for Iraq in the field of investment," he said.

He said the Iraqi authorities' decision to issue entry visas for Kuwaiti citizens at land borders eases the movement of travelers from Iraq to Kuwait, be it for cultural exchange or business, "particularly in the

areas of southern Iraq that Kuwaitis used to frequent since a very long time, which is something that will pave the way to create a suitable environment for business".

As for the support Kuwait presents to infrastructure and development projects in Iraq, Awadhi said Kuwait is active in this field through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development that is currently financing the construction of modern schools in Baghdad and other governorates at a cost of \$75 million. "We see this investment benefits both countries and supports Iraq's efforts that aim at achieving prosperity and stability in the Middle East," he said.

"Kuwait was first in participating in the international community's efforts to support stability and rebuild Iraq, especially the conference it hosted in 2018 during which participating countries pledged \$30 billion. Kuwait is an economic gateway for Iraq as its stability and development benefit both countries," Awadhi said. The ambassador also spoke about the power linkage between GCC countries and Iraq.

Honorary Chairwoman of Iraq-Britain Business Council Emma Nicholson lauded Kuwait's role in supporting its neighbors, saying it is an important partner in the neighborhood. She said IBBC is proud to be a fundamental element in Iraq's future, as Iraq is exerting great efforts to quickly recover. — KUNA

Not what you expect: Kuwaiti small business owner details journey

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Business has been booming in Kuwait in the past couple of decades. Many Kuwaitis are considering setting up a business rather than being employed in the private or public sector, although many are wondering if this is the right option for them. Kuwait Times interviewed Dhuha Al-Surayei, co-founder of a well-known bookstore in Kuwait, to ask her about her entrepreneurial journey.

Surayei said she had wanted to start a business ever since she was a child. She said she couldn't find stationery items like planners and congratulations cards that were in Arabic and had an Islamic theme, so she always made them herself, until it reached a point where she felt like she had to share them with other people. She said people around her believed in her and supported her, which helped in the success of her business. The business slowly grew online, until it became so big, she started needing outside help, and it could not just be a home business anymore.

Surayei said the easiest part about starting a small business is that it does not need a lot of money to start and maintain, because it is only part of your life. As the business grew, she discovered running a business is not exactly as she expected. She said she expected coming up with product ideas and designs would be difficult, but it was not. On the other hand, she expected the finance, accounting and monetary part would be manageable, but she discovered that it was not.

After a while, and the more her business grew, the more Surayei needed support. That is when her husband joined her, and a company was able to help her. She emphasized that her bookstore is "not reliant solely on Dhuha", and that there is a team that helps with a lot. In general, Surayei said opening a small business in Kuwait is getting harder and harder, especially in terms of high costs when it comes to rent-



ing, and employees' wages. She said there is no support for small businesses in Kuwait when it comes to renting stores in malls and commercial buildings. The bigger a business becomes, Surayei believes, the more details, tasks and expenses materialize that you never knew would come your way.

The Kuwaiti consumer, according to Surayei, is different but not difficult. She has noticed that Kuwaitis "are up to date on everything around the world and do not accept anything that is of low quality". However, she believes that as long as you have something special that you believe in, then the consumer will cooperate.

Surayei said if she had the ability to change one thing in Kuwait when it comes to opening a business, it would be the cost of renting stores in a mall and similar edifices. She believes there needs to be prices that are specific for small Kuwaiti businesses. According to her, it is unrealistic to compare a Kuwaiti business that has just started and is trying to succeed in its first years with a multinational corporation that has been in operation for years.

When asked if she has any advice for people who are considering starting a business, Surayei said people should ask and search for information and make sure that starting a business is truly something they want to do. She said one should ask about the failures, rejections and impediments, before asking about the successes, victories and joys of being self-employed. Starting a business, according to Surayei, is not all rainbows and sunshine. However, she believes that the beauty of owning a business is how tiring it is.



Kuwait 18th safest country in the world

KUWAIT: Kuwait sits at the 18th spot in Global Finance's latest rankings for the safest countries in the world announced recently. The ranking is topped by Iceland, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar respectively. Bahrain (12), Saudi Arabia (19) and Oman (25) all ranked in the top 25, while Morocco (24) was the only other Arab country to rank among the 25 safest countries in the world according to the list.

Singapore, Finland, Mongolia, Norway, Denmark, Canada, and New Zealand round up the top 10 in the list which includes a total of 134 countries. Meanwhile, the 10 least safe countries on the list are (in order of least safe): the Philippines, Colombia, Guatemala, Nigeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Yemen and North Macedonia.

The safety score for countries takes into account three fundamental factors. These factors are war and peace as measured by the global peace index, personal security meaning a very low crime rate, and the risk of natural disasters which includes the potential of a new pandemic.

Local

Recycling reflects society's sense of responsibility towards environment

Kuwaiti organic farming expert shares passion for sustainable practice

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Given the global climate crisis and Kuwait's situation in particular, embracing new habits and lifestyles that benefit the environment has become necessary to secure a sustainable future for ourselves and the coming generations. It is no longer a matter of individual choice, but rather part of the social and humanitarian responsibility that every individual must participate in.

Among multiple lifestyle changes that people can follow to help the environment recover, recycling is one of the most significant methods that is a simple but effective way to make a positive impact on the world around us. As individuals, we can all take responsibility for our actions and develop the habit of recycling in our daily lives.

To encourage environment-friendly habits and take a closer look at this lifestyle, Kuwait Times interviewed Ghadeer Al-Qattan, who recycles most of the things she uses and engages in organic home farming.

Kuwait Times: Why is recycling necessary for the environment?

Ghadeer Al-Qattan: Because the harmful effects of the huge amounts of waste that are being dumped are increasing and getting worse, and the most obvious of these effects are global warming and air pollution, which pose a danger to all living creatures.



Ghadeer Al-Qattan

KT: How can recycling conserve natural resources?

Qattan: In my opinion, if the individual is fixed, everything in life gets fixed. Societies that produce huge amounts of waste are made up of non-producing individuals; they are only consumers and have no limits on consumption and extravagance. They depend on others to manage their resources and they have a very weak sense of conserving resources and the environment. Thus, the first resource we must preserve is the human being. Humans have to learn and understand their role in this life and their responsibility towards the earth and its cultivation. If this level of awareness is reached, our earth will be on track towards healing. Therefore, every person has to begin with themselves.

KT: What are some common misconceptions about recycling?

Qattan: Initially, all misconceptions are a result of ignorance and lack of knowledge. For instance, claiming that recycling is tiring, useless, requires a lot of labor, costly, waste of time, difficult to implement, "we are not used to it", "I personally do not need it", "my family will not accept it and will not help me apply it" and so on...

Kuwait Times: What is the recycling process and how does it work?

Qattan: For me, it is love and a sense of responsibility towards the earth, and appreciation and gratitude for the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. It is the opposite of consumption, which is pro-

duction. It is transforming something that is not used to something that is very useful and beneficial. It is contributing to reducing risks to the environment, even if it is a very modest contribution.

KT: What are the elements that you usually recycle?

Qattan: Because I use two methods of composting and vermiculture, I recycle all food waste in all its forms, whether raw or cooked vegetables or meats or dairy products. I also recycle garden waste, including fallen leaves and pruned and removed plants, as well as tea, coffee, paper and carton waste, unusable grains, legumes, flour and eggshells.

KT: What do you do with hazardous waste items such as batteries?

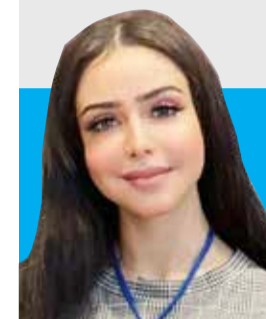
Qattan: Before the coronavirus pandemic, I sorted all household waste such as plastics, metals and other items in separate containers, and all my family members and household workers began to implement this. I then contacted the relevant authorities to receive the waste. However, during the pandemic, waste collection stopped, so I just recycled what I mentioned before using my composting and vermiculture methods, but unfortunately, I threw batteries in the trash. I should take a serious step in this matter and change this behavior!



This photo shows a blanket made by Qattan to signify the beauty of being a producer rather than a consumer.

In my view

History and future of distributorship



Atyab Al-Shatti

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In an increasingly interconnected world, the distribution of medical supplies and resources plays a vital role in ensuring global health security. The World Health Organization (WHO), as the leading international agency responsible for public health, has been at the forefront of efforts to facilitate equitable access to medical resources worldwide. Through its strategic initiatives, partnerships and coordination efforts, the WHO has made significant contributions to the efficient and effective distribution of medical supplies, saving countless lives in the process.

Global coordination and emergency response

One of the primary responsibilities of the WHO in medical distribution is to coordinate international efforts during health emergencies. The organization plays a critical role in coordinating the rapid deployment of medical personnel, vaccines, medicines and other essential supplies to regions affected by disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. By working closely with member states, local health authorities and humanitarian partners, the WHO ensures that resources are allocated appropriately, minimizing delays and preventing duplication of efforts.

Development and implementation of distribution guidelines

The WHO develops evidence-based guidelines and recommendations to guide member states in establishing efficient and equitable systems for medical distribution. These guidelines cover various aspects, including supply chain management, cold chain logistics, storage and handling of medical products and quality assurance. By disseminating these guidelines and assisting countries in their implementation, the WHO helps to enhance the capacity of healthcare systems to effectively distribute medical supplies, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Facilitating access to essential medicines and vaccines

The WHO plays a pivotal role in facilitating access to essential medicines and vaccines, particularly for diseases that disproportionately affect low-income countries. Through initiatives like the Access to Medicines Program and the Global Vaccine Action Plan, the WHO collaborates with pharmaceutical companies, governments and other stakeholders to ensure affordable pricing, quality assurance and sustainable supply of life-saving drugs and vaccines. By negotiating price reductions and promoting technology transfer, the WHO helps to bridge the gap between supply and demand, improving access to critical healthcare interventions.

Strengthening health systems

The WHO recognizes that robust health systems are essential for effective medical distribution. The organization works closely with member states to strengthen their healthcare infrastructure, including supply chain management capacities, laboratory networks and regulatory frameworks. By providing technical assistance, training and support, the WHO empowers countries to build resilient health systems capable of efficiently distributing medical resources and responding to emerging health threats.

Collaboration and partnerships

The WHO actively engages in partnerships with various stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to leverage resources and expertise for medical distribution. Collaborative initiatives, such as the COVAX Facility for COVID-19 vaccines, showcase the WHO's commitment to equitable access and the pooling of resources to ensure fair distribution. By fostering partnerships, the WHO expands its reach and influence, enabling more efficient and effective distribution of medical supplies worldwide.

Conclusion

In a world grappling with complex health challenges, the World Health Organization plays a vital role in facilitating the distribution of medical supplies, vaccines and essential medicines. Through its global coordination efforts, development of distribution guidelines, facilitation of access to medicines, strengthening of health systems and collaborative partnerships, the WHO strives to ensure equitable access to healthcare resources for all nations. As we continue to face both immediate and long-term health crises, the WHO's contributions in medical distribution remain indispensable, helping to save lives and protect global health security.

Mangroves, air quality system: Kuwait's new environmental endeavors

KUWAIT: Kuwait has joined the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) initiative, launched by the UAE in partnership with Indonesia during the COP27 climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in 2022. In a statement to KUNA on Friday, The Environment Public Authority (EPA) Director General Dr Sameera Al-Kanderi affirmed Kuwait's commitment to the initiative, focusing on protecting mangrove trees ecosystem and enhancing their role in reducing the impact of climate change.

This is an important step towards fighting climate change and support efforts to absorb emissions of greenhouse gases worldwide, she noted.

Mangroves are highly salt-tolerant trees that provide a good environment for many sea creatures and birds. They are also great producers of oxygen and protect beaches against erosion. They are particularly beneficial as Kuwait plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 4.7 percent by 2035.

The plant could be found in Kuwait, particularly in the Khweisat and Kazma areas, in the forties of the last century but later became extinct due to defor-

estation, according to a 2019 KUNA report.

A tree-planting project carried out by the Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences brought mangroves back to Kuwaiti coasts.

More recently, EPA had also planted mangrove trees across the country, in cooperation with Oman, Kanderi said. In 2021, EPA had presented Kuwait's contributions to limiting the emission of greenhouse gases by 2035, through a number of projects, aiming to reduce 4.7 percent of the total emissions in the country, Kanderi said.

New air quality sensors

EPA has also announced it's working with the

Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to develop an "advanced air quality forecasting system" for the country. The system will enable the authority to "predict" air quality and levels of air pollutants, but only over this weekend, according to a statement released Thursday.

EPA says the new tool will contribute to improving air quality management, identifying sources of emissions and working to reduce them in cooperation with local and regional stakeholders. The authority will subsequently inform and warn citizens and residents about places and times when pollution levels may exceed national standards. According to the statement, EPA will also visit Arianet, an environmental consultation company based in Italy, to discuss technical issues related to the system's operation.



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of a project to study and save them from extinction. The university team thanked all concerned parties for their efforts, cooperation and contribution to

preserving biological diversity, urging citizens and residents to safeguard the environment for the sustainability of our beloved country.



Third green sea turtle released into Gulf waters

KUWAIT: Kuwait University, in cooperation with the Environment Public Authority, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Scientific Center, the coastguard and The One Dive Center, participated in releasing a third sea turtle into the sea, Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at EPA Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan announced.

The green sea turtle is an endangered species, and in order to conserve it, it was released into Arabian Gulf waters after undergoing rehabilitation at the Scientific Center. Specialists from Kuwait University, represented by Dr Amani Al-Zaidan, a faculty member at the Department of Biological Sciences, took the necessary biological data and samples for the success of the green turtle project, with the animals tracked by satellite.

The importance of this project lies in establishing the first database of migratory turtles threatened with extinction and their genetic fingerprint, as part



Dr Sameera Al-Kanderi

News in Brief

Kuwait Army probes
food poisoning incident

KUWAIT: Kuwait Army is investigating an incident in which 17 trainees suffered from poisoning, the army said in a statement. Kuwait Army's Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department said the trainees, who are with the non-commissioned officers' course, got mild poisoning after having lunch. The non-commissioned officers' institute, the organizer of the course, rushed the patients to hospital. They were discharged from the hospital after getting treated, according to a statement from the department. The army's General Staff has promptly set up a fact-finding committee to probe the incident and bring the culprits to justice. — KUNA

MoI begins to reap benefits
of printing schoolbooks

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information's printing press has achieved "unprecedented" revenues in the first quarter of the current fiscal year 2023/2024, an official told Kuwait's state media agency KUNA. The press has generated more KD 140,000 in four months, slightly more than what it would have made in a year previously, said Assistant Undersecretary for the press, publishing and publications sector at the Ministry of Information Lafi Al-Subaie. Subaie attributed the jump in revenue to the press printing education ministry textbooks for the first time in 48 years. The education ministry had printed government schoolbooks in the press up until 1975. The collaboration between the two ministries is back in effect after they signed a deal last year under directions from the Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. The printing press revenues are expected to reach about KD 1 million by the end of 2023, Subaie said.

Seven men caught
with drugs, firearms

KUWAIT: The Drugs Control General Department arrested seven suspects in possession of 13.5 kilograms of various drugs, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement. The suspects, who also had 2500 psychedelic tablets and two firearms, confessed to owning the illicit materials with the intention of sale and use. They were transferred to concerned authorities for further legal action, said the ministry. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A bird stands on a sandy beach close to the edge of the water in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Aid for Syria: Kuwaiti donations reach \$2 billion since onset of crisis

Official recounts Kuwaiti relief, diplomatic efforts



BRUSSELS: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah speaks at the seventh Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. — KUNA



SAADNAYEL: In this picture taken on June 13, 2023, Syrian women and children stand near tents at a refugee camp in Saadnayel in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. — AFP

BRUSSELS: Kuwait has spent \$1.9 billion to support the Syrian people since the outbreak of Syria crisis, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah said in a speech to the seventh Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region.

"In addition, the State of Kuwait contributed \$100 million to the UN humanitarian appeals following the devastating earthquakes in Syria and Turkey in February," he said noting that the funds were channeled to various aid agencies.

Jarallah appreciated the EU for hosting this annual conference in support for Syria and neighboring countries. The high-level ministerial segment of the conference on June 15 gathered representatives of 57 countries, including EU member states, and over 30 international organizations, including the United Nations.

"The Syrian conflict is with us for more than 12 years. It is a long-lasting crisis with unspeakable suffering of millions of people. This was made even worse first by the dramatic and damaging earthquake in February, and because the global situation is worsening – not only due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, but also with the new conflicts erupting – the latest one is in Sudan," Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union, said in a statement.

"We are the biggest donor for the Syrian people, the EU needs and wants to make sure that their situation remains high on the international agenda."

The international humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis followed Kuwait's initiative for hosting the first Pledging Conference for Syria in January 2013, Jarallah recalled.

The efforts of the international community

culminated in the UN Security Council adopting unanimously Resolution 2254 in 2015, which endorsed a roadmap for a Syrian-led peace process, he went on.

However, Jarallah expressed regret over UN reports of continued horrible suffering in Syria 13 years after the breakout of the crisis, citing a report in March that over 15.3 million people need urgent humanitarian assistance.

Reports of severe shortage in food and dire need to rehabilitate the health system in Syria, as well as acute social, economic and security problems in Syrian refugee-hosting countries stress the need of doubling efforts by the international community to improve the humanitarian situation, he pointed out.

The senior diplomat reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to shouldering its moral and humanitarian responsibilities and contributing to the relief efforts for the Syrian people. "The State of Kuwait, as a non-permanent member in the United Nations Security Council (2018-2019), co-sponsored with the Kingdom of Sweden the UNSC draft resolution 2401 on cessation of hostilities in Syria for 30 days to allow delivery of assistance to needy people as well as the UNSC 2449 on trans-border humanitarian corridors to Syria," he added.

Concluding, Jarallah thanked the UN and the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen for their efforts to address the crisis, voicing hope that the ongoing Brussels Conference would open up a bright future for the Syrian people and the entire region.

The conference succeeded in mobilizing aid to Syrians inside the country and in neighboring countries, through international pledges totaling €5.6 billion for 2023 and beyond, including €4.6 billion for 2023 and €1 billion for 2024 and beyond. — Agencies

Kuwait TV, radio win awards at Arab festival

TUNIS: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, through radio and TV bodies, won three awards at the 23rd edition of the Arab Radio and Television Festival, which concluded last week, with an artistic ceremony on the stage of the Carthage Theater in Tunis.

The competitions committee of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) announced that the series "Saleh in the Heart of Astronomy," which was produced by Kuwait Radio, won first place in the drama category. Kuwait TV also won two awards at the festival, where the TV program "What's Next" won first place in the talk show category, while "Kids Studio" won second place in the children's program competition.

The four-day activities of the Tunis-hosted 23rd edition concluded late Thursday under the theme "Arts and Culture Bring Us Together", with the participation of 15 TV organization members of ASBU in the competition for various program and news items. — KUNA



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Japan's emperor in Indonesia for first state visit

Parents of Syrians missing in Greece boat tragedy 'pray day and night'

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African leaders prepare to meet Putin after Zelensky rules out talks

Air raid sirens force delegates to take shelter in the capital



KYIV: (Left to right), Egypt's Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, Senegal's President Macky Sall, Comoros President Azali Assoumani, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa and Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema walk after their talks in Kyiv. — AFP

KYIV: A high-level African delegation was preparing to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday, a day after its calls for talks between Moscow and Kyiv were rebuffed by Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

The diplomatic team had gone to Kyiv on Friday to voice the concerns of a continent that has suffered from the fallout of Russia's invasion — in particular rising grain prices — with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa insisting "there should be peace through negotiations".

But Zelensky ruled out that possibility during a joint press conference with the delegates, telling reporters: "I clearly said several times at our meeting that to allow any negotiations with Russia now that the occupier is on our land is to freeze the war, to freeze pain and suffering".

Shortly after the African leaders' arrival, air raid sirens sounded across the country as Russian missiles were detected, forcing the delegates to take shelter in the capital. Zelensky said the strike on Kyiv during the

delegation's visit showed that Putin either did not control his army, or was "irrational".

Ramaphosa, however, took the barrage as evidence that both sides needed to stop fighting. "It is precisely that type of event that we saw today... that makes us call for de-escalation," Ramaphosa said, quoting Nelson Mandela several times on the need for peace.

In a statement, Zelensky said he had called on the leaders to set out their views on how to stop the "crimes committed by Russia", and how to work towards food security. "But first of all, we must restore the full force of the UN Charter and stop this brutal Russian aggression and free our land," he added.

The African delegation had gone first to Bucha, a town outside the capital that has become synonymous with alleged war crimes carried out by Moscow. The group includes four presidents: Ramaphosa, Senegal's Macky Sall, Zambia's Hakainde Hichilema and Comoros' Azali Assoumani, who also currently heads the African Union.

The leaders of Uganda, Egypt and Congo-Brazzaville pulled out of the visit at the last moment and sent representatives instead. The meeting came as Ukraine announced gains in a new counteroffensive, but Putin claimed on Friday that Kyiv's forces "stand no chance" in the sectors where fighting has intensified.

'Clear message'

Following Friday's attack on Kyiv, the Ukrainian Air Force said it had shot down 12 missiles, including six hypersonic ones. There was no reported damage inside the city, but seven people including two children were wounded, the regional police said.

"With what happened today, it's very obvious also to the African leaders how sincere Putin is about stopping the conflict," said Peter Stano, a spokesman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. Ukrainian officials were also quick to call attention to the strike.

"Russian missiles are a message to Af-

rica: Russia wants more war, not peace," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. The African leaders were set to meet Putin in the northwestern Russian city of Saint Petersburg on Saturday.

"In our view it is important to listen very carefully to what both countries have to say, and tomorrow we are now going to listen to President Putin," Ramaphosa said. Speaking at an annual economic forum in Saint Petersburg on Friday, Putin displayed little appetite for peace talks, announcing the deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus while also calling Zelensky a "disgrace to the Jewish people".

Russia first announced plans to station tactical nuclear arms in its ally and neighbor in March, with Putin saying Friday that the "first nuclear warheads were delivered to the territory of Belarus". He said the weapons were meant as a deterrent to "those who are thinking of inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia".

Putin also told forum attendees he had "a lot of Jewish friends" who had told him

"that Zelensky is not Jewish, that he is a disgrace to the Jewish people". Despite Zelensky's Jewish heritage, Moscow has justified its war with claims it needs to "de-Nazify" Ukraine.

'Touching livelihoods'

Analysts, meanwhile, said the delegation's mediating effort could hope to win some concessions from the Kremlin ahead of a Russia-Africa summit next month. The African continent has been badly hit by rising grain and fertilizer prices as well as the wider impact on global trade since Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

"This conflict is also affecting African countries negatively, touching on the livelihoods of 1.2 or 1.3 billion people on the African continent," Ramaphosa said. African nations have been divided over their response to the war, with some siding with Ukraine and others remaining neutral or gravitating towards Moscow. South Africa, for one, has drawn scrutiny for refusing to condemn the offensive launched by Moscow. — AFP

Medics overwhelmed by wounded from Sudan's Darfur

KHARTOUM: Medics on Saturday said they are overwhelmed by the hundreds of wounded fleeing Sudan's Darfur region, which has become an increasing focus of global concern more than two months into the country's war.

Residents of the capital Khartoum, hundreds of kilometres (miles) east of Darfur, on Saturday also reported fresh air strikes, gunfire and explosions there in battles between the army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Since April 15 when fighting began, the death toll across the country has topped 2,000, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project said. Up to 1,100 have been killed in the West Darfur state capital El Geneina alone, according to the United States State Department.

The victims included West Darfur Governor Khamis Abdullah Abakar, killed after he criticized the paramilitaries in a Wednesday television interview. The RSF denied responsibility. "The situation is frankly overwhelming, but everyone is doing their utmost to cope with it," said Seybou Diarra, project coordinator in Adre, Chad for the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity.

"As violence rages in West Darfur, wounded people are coming in waves" to the hospital in Adre, just over the border about 20 kilometres (12 miles) west of El Geneina, the MSF statement said. More than 600 patients, most with gunshot wounds, arrived at the facility over a three-day period — more than half of them on Friday, it said.

"We are overwhelmed in the operating theatre. We urgently need more beds and more staff," said Diarra, a physician. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at least 149,000 people have fled from Darfur into Chad.

'Ominous reminder'

They are among the roughly 2.2 million people uprooted nationwide by the fighting which has forced a total of more than 528,000 to seek



GENEINA: People walk among scattered objects in the market of El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, as fighting continues in Sudan between the forces of two rival generals. — AFP

refuge in neighboring countries, IOM said. On Thursday the State Department attributed the atrocities in Darfur "primarily" to the RSF and said the violence and alleged rights violations are an "ominous reminder" of the region's previous genocide.

A years-long war in Darfur began in 2003 with a rebel uprising that prompted then-strongman Omar al-Bashir to unleash the Janjaweed militia, whose actions led to international charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The RSF have their origins in the Janjaweed. Along with Darfur, Khartoum has seen the heaviest fighting. Residents on Saturday reported air strikes around the Yarmouk district — home to a weapons manufacturing and arms depot complex which the RSF claimed in early June to have seized "full control" of.

The latest strikes caused "civilian victims", a citizens' support committee said. Residents in Khartoum's south also reported gunfire from "various types of weapons". In the northern suburbs witnesses reported rocket fire and heavy artillery. A record 25 million people — more than half the population — are in need of aid and protection, according to the United Nations, which says it has received only a fraction of the necessary funding. Saudi Arabia has announced an international pledging conference for Monday in Geneva. — AFP

Death toll from militant attack in Uganda hits 37

MPONDWE: Militants linked to the Islamic State group hacked and burned 37 students to death in western Uganda in the country's worst such attack in over a decade, army and police officials said Saturday. The army said it was pursuing militants from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) after the cross-border raid late Friday on a secondary school in Mpondwe in Kasese district near the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Investigators said dormitories were set alight and students cut down with knives in a brutal late-night assault by ADF, which is one of the deadliest groups active in DR Congo's strife-torn east.

"Unfortunately, 37 bodies have been discovered and conveyed to Bwera hospital mortuary," Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) spokesman Felix Kulayigye said in a statement, referring to a town near where the attack occurred.

Eight people were injured while six others were kidnapped and taken by the attackers toward Virunga National Park, which straddles the DR Congo border, he added. "UPDF embarked on pursuing the perpetrators to rescue the abducted students."

The Resident Commissioner for Kasese, Joe Walusimbi, told AFP that at least 25 of the deceased were "confirmed to be students at the school".

It is the deadliest attack in Uganda since twin bombings in Kampala in 2010 killed 76 in a strike claimed by the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab group.

'Big attack'

According to a police report seen by AFP, police and military units were alerted to a "big attack" at Lhubiriha Secondary School in Mpondwe at around 11:00 pm (2000 GMT) on Friday evening.

"On arrival the school was found burning and the dead bodies of students were found lying in the compound and the school's food store broken into" with items missing, the report stated.

The school is less than two kilometres (1.2 miles) from the border of DR Congo, where ADF is primarily active and has been accused of killing thousands of civilians since the 1990s.

Major General Dick Olum told AFP intelligence



MPONDWE: Residents are seen at the premises of an attack in Mpondwe, Uganda, on June 17, 2023 at the Mpondwe Lhubiriha Secondary School. The death toll from an attack on a school in western Uganda by militants linked to the Islamic State group has risen to 37. — AFP

suggested the presence of the ADF in the area at least two days before the attack, and an investigation would be needed to establish what went wrong.

He said it appeared the attackers had detailed information about the school.

"They knew where the boys and girls' dormitories resided," said Olum from Mpondwe. "This is why the rebels locked the boys' dormitory and set it on fire. The rebels did not lock girls' section and the girls managed to get out, but they were cut with machetes as they ran for safety, and others shot".

He said some of the bodies were burned beyond recognition and DNA testing would be required to identify them. "We have called for more firepower, planes to help in the rescue operation of those abducted, and locating the rebel hideouts for military action," he said.

Rare attack

The rebels fled toward Virunga, a vast expanse on the border with Uganda and Rwanda and a globally renowned sanctuary for rare species, including mountain gorillas.

But militias — of which dozens are active in the mineral-rich eastern DR Congo — also use the park as a hideout. Originally made up of mainly Muslim Ugandan rebels, ADF gained a foothold in eastern DR Congo in the 1990s. Since 2019, some ADF attacks in eastern DR Congo have been claimed by the Islamic State group, which describes the fighters as a local offshoot, the Islamic State Central Africa Province. — AFP

International

Parents of Syrians missing in Greece boat tragedy 'pray day and night'

'We borrowed a large amount of money to send him to Libya to work – not to die'

DAMASCUS: In war-torn Syria, parents of teenagers missing in a shipwreck off the Greek coast are clinging onto hope their children might be alive, days after the tragedy. A fishing boat overloaded with migrants capsized and sank off Greece's Peloponnese peninsula on Wednesday, killing at least 78 people.

While the exact number of passengers on the rusty trawler is unknown, hundreds are feared missing, and relatives and activists have told AFP at least 141 Syrians were aboard. Iyad from Jassem in the southern province of Daraa, the cradle of Syria's 12-year civil war, said his 19-year-old son Ali was still unaccounted for. "I have had no news of my son. I haven't spoken to him. I haven't heard his voice," said Iyad, who works at a school and declined to provide his surname. "His mother hasn't stopped crying for three days."

The 47-year-old said he had heard of two Greek reports — one listing his son among the survivors and another among the dead. "I still have hope that he will be among the survivors," Iyad told AFP by telephone on Saturday. "We are praying to God day and night."

The teenager was looking for a better life in Libya, his father said, and had travelled there by plane from Damascus. "He told us he wanted to work in a restaurant" and had planned to send money to help the family, Iyad added.

"We didn't know he wanted to take a boat," he said. "If we'd known, we wouldn't have allowed him to go." Activists at the Daraa Martyrs Documentation Office told AFP on Saturday that 106 people aboard the trawler were from the country's south, mainly from Daraa province, where they said "living and securi-

ty situation... is absolutely unbearable". Only 34 so far were known to have survived, they added.

A blind 15-year-old boy and his 28-year-old sister from Daraa province were also among those missing, their uncle told AFP on Friday, declining to be identified for security reasons. Daraa province was the cradle of the 2011 uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, but it returned to regime control in 2018.

Iyad said Ali's uncle in Germany had travelled to Greece to search for the boy, but "it's like looking for a needle in a haystack". "For us, he is missing. We have not mourned and we will not mourn until we are sure what has happened," he said. "If he is found alive, we'll bring him back to Syria. I don't want my son to be far away from me... not even for one more second. "We borrowed a large amount of money to send him to Libya to work — not to die."

'Fleeing death, finding death'

In Kobane in Syria's Kurdish-held north, Mohammed Mohammed said he too was awaiting news of the fate of his 15-year-old son Diyar. "Every day, hope is fading of seeing my son again," Mohammed, a tyre repairman, told AFP by telephone late Friday. Diyar "left because the situation here is terrible", the 48-year-old said.

Kobane became a symbol of symbol of victory over the Islamic State group, after US-backed Kurdish forces drove the jihadists out in 2015. But the city, also known as Ain al-Arab, is in the crosshairs of Ankara, which wants Kurdish forces to withdraw from frontier areas.

Turkey has carried out deadly raids in the area and threatened a new ground



MALAKASA: Members of a family of a missing person search for information after shipwreck survivors were transferred to a Greek migrant camp in Malakasa, near Athens. — AFP

offensive. Mohammed said the family lived less than one kilometre (little more than half a mile) from the Turkish border. Diyar's "dream was to go to Germany to be with my brother who lives there", he said. "Everyone wants to

leave," he said, adding Diyar had been with four friends. At least 35 people aboard the boat were from Kurdish-held areas in Syria's north, a relative told AFP on Friday. Mohammed said his brother had travelled

to Greece in the hope of finding Diyar, but was denied entry to hospitals where he had hoped to speak to survivors. "People are fleeing death, but finding death" along the way, he said. — AFP

Children in Yemen line up for water, not school

TAEZ: Every day at dawn, 14-year-old Salim Mohammad leaves home to fetch water, trekking through his city in southwestern Yemen to join the queues at the nearest public dispenser. He and his three siblings walk at least a mile (1.6 kilometres) and wait, sometimes for hours, hoping to fill their jerry cans and make it back in time for school.

"My arms and my back hurt from the load I carry every day," Mohammad told AFP from the family's

makeshift apartment, a former grocery store, in the city of Taz. "We wake up in the early morning and leave home with our father, sometimes even at night, to collect water," he said.

The teenager's plight is common in Yemen, which had ranked among the world's most water-stressed countries even before conflict broke out in 2015 between Iran-backed Huthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition supporting the ousted government. The dire mix of war and climate change has only aggravated the country's water woes.

Fighting has ravaged critical infrastructure while rising temperatures and varying precipitation have further hit supply, experts and aid groups say. Yemen's groundwater is being depleted at twice the rate it is being replenished, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the Unit-

ed Nations (FAO). At the current rates, the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country could completely run out of groundwater within 20 years, the FAO says. "We wake up every morning and race after water," said Mohammad's mother, Umm Mujahid. "Sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't... it's a competition," the 35-year-old said, as her children filled containers at the public tank, one of several around the city.

The family fled fighting in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah to move to Taz, a government hold-out that has been surrounded and besieged by the Huthis for years. Yemen's third-biggest city suffers from some of the worst shortages in a country where about 14.5 million people — nearly half of the population — do not have access to safe drinking water, according to the FAO. — AFP



TAEZ: People gather with jerrycans to fill up water from a tanker truck on the outskirts of Yemen's third city of Taz. — AFP

Broken roads, reckless drivers...

Continued from Page 1

An expat woman who drives a sedan said she was forced to change her tyres and windshield after two separate accidents. "Despite the fact I was driving at the speed limit, I was surprised by a medium-sized pothole on a main highway, which ruptured one tyre and damaged another. This cost me KD 90, not to mention

changing the windshield due to flying gravel, which messed up my budget," she rued.

All the garages Kuwait Times visited stressed the damaged streets are placing a huge burden on car owners, who are forced to spend huge amounts of money to repair their cars. Abdullah Al-Hamad, a customer who was visiting an expensive automotive shop to repair his car, said he had bought the vehicle to ship it to the UK, where he is studying. But only three days after buying his sports car (which sits close to the ground), a pothole in Salmiya caused a crack in the car's body. "This cost me hundreds of dinars," he lamented.

Marcon's entourage had made it clear he would try to persuade his guest to take a stand on Ukraine. But Saudi Arabia has maintained a cautious stance, stopping short of condemning the assault while emphasizing the importance of Kyiv's territorial integrity. MBS hosted President Volodymyr Zelensky last month in Jeddah during an Arab League summit, the Ukrainian leader's first visit to the Middle East since the invasion began.

But Saudi Arabia also retains close ties with Russia, particularly through Moscow's involvement in the expanded OPEC+ format of the oil cartel that includes 10 non-OPEC members. Macron last month named his former foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian as his personal envoy for Lebanon in a new bid to end the political crisis. The veteran politician is due to visit soon.

Saudi Arabia and its regional rival Iran are also in the throes of an unexpected rapprochement — brokered by Beijing — that has caused huge interest among Western governments still seeking to revive a 2015 deal on the Iranian nuclear program. "In Saudi Arabia's normalization with Iran, there is potential for easing tensions in the region," said the French official, expressing hope it could also smooth the path to an election of a Lebanese president. — AFP

against Nazi Germany in World War II. "We will never forget it," Putin said. "Why is no one listening to us?"

Putin's insult caused uproar in Ukraine. Ukraine's chief rabbi said he was proud of Zelensky. "And not only me. I think the whole world is proud of him," rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman told Ukrainian news agency UNIAN. "He did not flee and is doing everything to help the Ukrainian people," he added. The rabbi also said that there were no neo-Nazi forces in Ukraine. "There are decent people in Ukraine who are protecting their homeland," he was quoted as saying.

Ukrainian businessman and philanthropist Victor Pinchuk, who stressed he was of Jewish heritage himself, said: "Today Zelensky is the embodiment of the fight for freedom. And freedom is one of the main values of the Jewish people." The American Jewish Committee tweeted: "Putin's attempt to smear President Zelensky's Jewish heritage is a desperate and disgraceful move." — AFP

Saudi FM on first Iran visit...

Continued from Page 1

"I would like to point out the importance of cooperation between our two countries concerning regional security, especially the security of maritime navigation and waterways," Prince Faisal said at a joint news conference with Amir-Abdollahian. The Iranian foreign minister told reporters they had discussing ways of bolstering cooperation in the fields of security, economy, tourism and transportation. But Amir-Abdollahian stressed Iran's view that "regional security will be ensured by regional actors only" without external interference. "Our relations are based on a clear foundation of full and mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs," Prince Faisal added. The Saudi foreign minister said he would extend an invitation to Raisi "to visit the kingdom soon".

Prince Faisal was the first Saudi foreign minister to visit Iran since 2006 when the late Saudi top diplomat Prince Saud Al-Faisal made a trip to Tehran. Since restoring ties, Saudi Arabia has pushed for a peace deal with Iran-backed Houthi rebels and also championed the return last

month of key Iran ally Syria to the Arab fold.

Saturday's meeting between the Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers was not the first for the two top diplomats. Prince Faisal and Amir-Abdollahian had met in Beijing in April, where they both vowed to promote regional security and stability. The same month, a Saudi delegation visited Iran to discuss reopening its diplomatic missions, Riyadh's foreign ministry said at the time.

While Iran reopened its embassy in Saudi Arabia, the reopening of the Saudi embassy in Tehran has been delayed due to the poor condition of the building which was damaged during the 2016 protests. Pending the completion of the work, Saudi diplomats will be working from a luxury hotel in Tehran, according to media reports. After the landmark deal with the Saudi kingdom, Iran has moved to cementing or restoring ties with neighboring Arab countries.

In April, Iran named an ambassador to the United Arab Emirates nearly eight years after his predecessor left. The move came after Iran welcomed an Emirati ambassador last September ending a six-year absence after the UAE had cut the level of its diplomatic representation in 2016. Iran has also said it would welcome restoring diplomatic ties with Bahrain to end a seven-year rupture. And at the end of May, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he would welcome a resumption of relations with Egypt which have been cut since the 1979 Islamic revolution. — AFP

Macron, MBS call for end to...

Continued from Page 1

Macron and MBS "also reiterated their shared commitment to security and stability in the Near and Middle East and expressed their desire to pursue their joint efforts to bring about a lasting easing of tensions". They intended to "develop and deepen the partnership between the two countries", said the Elysee. France was also prepared "to support Saudi Arabia in strengthening its defense capabilities", the statement said.

The 37-year-old crown prince's trip came less than a year after his last visit to the Elysee Palace and underlines the warm relationship between Paris and Riyadh. His stay in France appears set to be a long one, with MBS due to attend a Paris summit on a New Global Financing Pact hosted by Macron on June 22-23. On Monday, he will also attend an official Saudi reception for Riyadh's candidacy to host Expo 2030, a bid for which Saudi Arabia wants strong French support.

Putin hails ties as he meets MBZ...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Putin on Friday said Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, who is Jewish, was a "disgrace" to people of his faith. "I have a lot of Jewish friends," Putin told the forum in Saint Petersburg. "They say that Zelensky is not Jewish, that he is a disgrace to the Jewish people. I'm not joking," he added.

Moscow claims Ukraine's treatment of Russian speakers in the western-backed country is comparable to the actions of Nazi Germany. These allegations have been contested by the Ukrainian government and the country's Jewish community. Putin said Moscow "must fight" neo-Nazism, adding that Russia had suffered enormous losses during the country's fight

UK royal family unite for King's...

Continued from Page 1

The air display of some 70 military aircraft, following a 41-gun salute from nearby Green Park in central London, came after bad weather cut short a planned fly-past at Charles's coronation on May 6. It ended with the Red Arrows, the Royal Air Force's aerobatic display team, trailing red, white and blue vapors.

Earlier, Charles saddled up for the annual Trooping the Color parade that marks the British sovereign's official birthday. It was the first time the monarch has ridden at the ceremony since his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in 1986. Charles, who also took the royal salute, was followed on horseback as he inspected the troops by his eldest son and heir, Prince William, Charles's brother Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, and sister Anne, the Princess Royal.

Queen Camilla in a military-inspired red outfit, and William's wife Catherine, the Princess of Wales, who was dressed in green, followed in a carriage. The colorful display of regimental precision and pageantry was the first of 74-year-old Charles' reign. Charles's actual birthday is on Nov 14 but British sovereigns celebrate twice — once in private and again in public.

The June parade tradition began in 1748 under King George II, who wanted a celebration in better summer weather, as his own birthday was on Oct 30. The televised event kicked off with a procession from Buckingham Palace to Horse Guards Parade. Some

1,400 soldiers, 400 musicians and 200 horses took part, led in the parade by Juno, a 10-year-old shire mare, alongside three other Drum Horses — Perseus, Atlas and Apollo.

Drum Horses are the most senior animals in the army and hold the rank of major. They are traditionally named after figures from Greek mythology. The minutely choreographed event has its origins in the display of colors or flags of different regiments to allow their soldiers to identify them in battle. The 1st Battalion Welsh Guards trooped their color up and down the ranks this year.

The UK is currently experiencing a hot spell which would have made it difficult for the troops in their ceremonial black bearskin hats and thick red tunics. Unlike last weekend, however, when William inspected troops from the Household Division group of senior regiments, none of the soldiers appeared to faint. As Prince of Wales, William is honorary colonel of the Welsh Guards. Charles — who as head of state is commander-in-chief of the armed forces — later led the soldiers back to the palace.

Queen Elizabeth last rode her horse, Burmese, a gift from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, at the parade in the mid-1980s. After the horse — which she rode for 18 years — was retired in 1986, she decided to use a carriage for Trooping the Color. Last year's parade was the last for the late queen and formed part of four days of events to mark her record-breaking 70th year on the throne. It was one of her final public appearances before her death, aged 96, in September. — AFP

International

Singapore says 'premature' for ASEAN talks with Myanmar

'We condemned the coup, and the ongoing violence against civilians'

WASHINGTON: Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said Friday that conditions were not yet right for ASEAN to open high-level talks with Myanmar on the country's political situation. "We believe it would be premature to re-engage with the junta at a summit level or even at a foreign minister level," Balakrishnan said when asked about a news report that Thailand had proposed talks.

Speaking in a joint press conference in Washington with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Balakrishnan said the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had recently reaffirmed their stance.

"We condemned the coup, and the ongoing violence against civilians, the instability in the country, the setback to national reconciliation, and the enormous impact on the economy," he said of the 2021 military takeover in Myanmar. "Unfortunately, it's now more than two years. We haven't seen any signs of improvement."

Balakrishnan did not reject all engagement with the Myanmar junta. "The key point is this.

You do need everyone ultimately to sit down and negotiate," he said. "I don't know how long it will take. The last time it took 25 years for some form of democratic transition to occur in Myanmar. I hope it won't take that long."

Blinken said the United States backs ASEAN efforts to resolve the crisis. "It's very important that we continue, all of us, to sustain the appropriate pressure on the junta and look for ways of course to engage the opposition" in Myanmar, he said.

Thailand has proposed to host an informal ministerial meeting of some ASEAN members with Myanmar on Sunday and Monday. "It is time for ASEAN to fully re-engage Myanmar at the leaders' level," according to a Thai government letter, seen by AFP.

"In consideration of several pressing factors, the time for dialogues is sooner rather than later." A Myanmar junta spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on the proposal. A Southeast Asian official familiar with the matter told AFP on condition of anonymity that Malaysia would not attend the proposed meeting.



WASHINGTON: Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan (left) speaks during a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) at the US Department of State in Washington. — AFP

But the Cambodian government said its foreign minister will attend the two-day informal discussions in Bangkok. The meeting will focus on advancing ASEAN's five-point peace plan agreed with Myanmar two years ago, Cambodia's foreign ministry said. ASEAN's last summit, held in May, ended with-

out any significant progress on that peace plan, with Indonesian President Joko Widodo warning that the bloc risks becoming irrelevant. More than 6,000 civilians have been killed in Myanmar since the February 2021 coup, the Peace Research Institute of Oslo said in a report published Tuesday. — AFP

Brimful clinics, cemeteries as dengue ruins Peru

PIURA: Two months after cyclonic downpours flooded the town of Catacaos in northern Peru, dozens of inhabitants lie sick and dying of dengue, a disease carried by mosquitoes attracted by stagnant water. Near the border with Ecuador, Peru's Piura region is battling a new health crisis even as the South American country is still recovering from the world's highest reported COVID-19 death rate.

This time it is an epidemic of dengue, a viral disease with symptoms ranging from fever, headache and joint pain to bleeding, organ failure and sometimes, death. The virus is carried by the Aedes aegypti mosquito that lays its eggs in standing water, of which there is a lot in Piura since cyclone Yaku hit northern Peru in March.

Dozens of people were killed and thousands affected as rivers burst their banks, destroying homes and infrastructure. Half of the Piura region's 416 clinics were damaged by the cyclone that also paralyzed the local economy as thousands lost their ability to survive from informal jobs. Maria Francisca Sosa, 45, is one of many taking care of ailing relatives at home amid skyrocketing infections and overwhelmed public health care facilities in scenes reminiscent of the coronavirus epidemic. Her father Jose Luciano, 93, is fighting a dengue infection.

"It hit him so hard that he couldn't even stand anymore. Once, he was so sick that we thought he was going to die," Sosa told AFP as she wiped her father's sweaty forehead in the shanty they share with five other people. With public health facilities overwhelmed, the family was forced to take out a loan to pay for a private doctor and medicine to treat the old man's symptoms. There is no cure for dengue.

'Lost control'

By June 13, Piura had reported 82 dengue deaths — including 11 children — and more than 44,000 infections since the start of 2023, said the region's rights ombudsman Cesar Orrego. This was about a third of the national toll of 248 deaths and more than 146,000 infections.

"We have lost control" of the epidemic, vector-borne diseases expert Valerie Paz-Soldan of the Cayetano Heredia University in Lima told AFP. On Thursday, Peru's health minister resigned over her handling of the crisis. Most of Piura's 1.8 million inhabitants live along the coast. In Catacaos, an agricultural area, Yaku turned roads into rivers, destroyed the drinking water and sewerage systems, and ruined mango, grape and rice crops.

Water accumulated in open tanks, hollows and containers, multiplying mosquito breeding grounds. In the heart of Catacaos, the football field is still water-logged. Multiple fumigation efforts failed to stop the epidemic spreading like wild-fire through the town's rickety homes.

Teolinda Silva, 45, takes care of her stricken son Gabriel, 27. "I don't have the money to take him to a clinic and have him examined. Right now, I am going through difficult times, there is no work, there is nothing," Silva, an informal fish merchant, told AFP.

Luis Alfredo Espinoza Venegas, 44, who coordinates dengue surveillance at the Sullana hospital, said the region was dealing with its worst outbreak in recent memory. "We have an immense human resource gap, our first level of care has collapsed and we lack supplies, medicines," he said. Doctors fear the number of infections and deaths may be much higher than reported as many patients are never even diagnosed.

'We did everything'

Last weekend, a wailing procession accompanied the remains of FerMaria Ancajima to a cemetery in Catacaos. She was just ten years old when dengue took her. Her family had to borrow money to bring her body back from Lima, where they had taken her to seek medical care. "We did everything we could," her uncle Julio Morales, 52, told AFP.

The World Health Organization says dengue and other diseases such as chikungunya carried by A. aegypti are spreading far faster and further amid climate change. Other countries in Latin America are also affected by the dengue outbreak, but Peru has registered the second highest mortality so far this year after Brazil. In February, Peru declared a health emergency in several departments after recording a 72-percent increase in dengue cases from the same period in 2022. — AFP



TANGERANG: Indonesia's Minister of Public Works and Public Housing Basuki Hadimuljono (left) welcomes Japan's Emperor Naruhito (centre) and Empress Masako at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Tangerang. — AFP

Japan's emperor in Indonesia for first state visit

JAKARTA: Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako arrived in the Indonesian capital Jakarta on Saturday for their first state visit since ascending the Chrysanthemum Throne in 2019. The June 17-23 trip to Southeast Asia's biggest economy includes a meeting with Indonesian President Joko Widodo at a palace south of Jakarta and a visit to a military cemetery honoring Indonesian and Japanese soldiers.

Japan ruled Indonesia for more than three years during and after World War II, capturing it from the Dutch East Indies without a fight and breaking the image of Dutch superiority. The Japanese surrender at the end of the war paved the way for Indonesian independence in 1945 despite Dutch attempts to wrest back its former colony.

"Since the war, Japan has worked hard to

contribute to international peace and prosperity with Asian countries including Indonesia," Naruhito told reporters Thursday before the trip. "Based on the countries' history of diplomacy, I hope this visit will help deepen the friendly relationship between our nations."

The royal couple will visit a military cemetery in south Jakarta where 28 former Japanese soldiers who stayed and fought for Jakarta in the Indonesian War of Independence between 1945 and 1949 are buried.

They will also pay a visit to a new mass rapid transit (MRT) train depot constructed in the capital with Japan's help and a Tokyo-funded pump station that prevents flooding. As well as travelling to the central Javan city of Yogyakarta to meet the provincial monarch, the emperor is scheduled to visit Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple.

The couple have gradually resumed public duties after limiting them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year, they made their first trip abroad since the enthronement to attend Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in London. Previous Japanese monarchs visited Indonesia in 1962 and 1991. — AFP

Kidnappers use tactics as Ecuador crime spirals

GUAYAQUIL: Crime has taken a sadistic turn in Ecuador, where kidnappers now regularly amputate the fingers of their victims and send images to pressure relatives to pay higher ransoms. For decades, Ecuador was a refuge of peace wedged in a dangerous region. But these days, it increasingly resembles nearby Peru and Colombia, two huge producers of cocaine with violent criminal histories. In March, the wife of a businessman in the port city of Guayaquil received images of someone snipping two fingers off her husband's left hand, threatening to mutilate him further unless they were paid \$100,000.

At the end of 2022, police released a photograph of a member of the Chilean navy who'd had two fingers lopped off during a kidnapping while he was in the country visiting a girlfriend. Social media lit up in April when an x-ray of a hand with no fingers made the rounds. The image was of an Ecuadorian migrant to the United States ensnared in a kidnapping during a vacation back home.

For the first five months of the year, reports of kidnappings tripled to 189 cases compared to the same



GUAYAQUIL: A member of the army frisks a man on motorbike in Guayaquil, Ecuador, after a state of emergency was declared in areas of the country reeling from fight drug-related crime. — AFP

period in 2022, when 60 cases were tallied. That number is still widely believed to be underreported. Some kidnappers seek a quick payout, demanding ransoms as low as \$5,000. Expert Luis Cordova told AFP a "frightening" campaign of attacks was putting pressure on a government mired in a public safety crisis. The port of Guayaquil, with some three million residents, has become a hotbed of violence, with car bombs, prison massacres, mutilated bodies hanging from bridges and kidnappings.

Not just narcos

The bloodshed has not yet soared to the levels once reached in Colombia or Mexico at the height of narco violence but "we are traveling along a similar road," security analyst Carla Alvarez says. The chances of someone becoming the victim of a kidnapping, extortion attempt or murder have risen five-fold, she said.

Guayaquil, where cocaine leaves are smuggled aboard ships bound for Europe or the United States, has tallied more than 1,000 murders so far in 2023. Much of the crime wave has no ties to large drug gangs like Los Lobos and Tiguerones, linked to Mexican cartels. Most kidnappings and extortions are the work of common criminals, bus robbers or low-profile thieves. "Why would a powerful gang, allied to a drug cartel, risk talking to the relative of a kidnapped person when they can traffic two tons of drugs?" asked Cordova, a professor at the state-run Central University. Thirteen major crime gangs now exist in Ecuador, and in April the government declared members of organized crime to be terrorists and empowered the military to pursue them with greater freedom.

Even when tortured, the majority of kidnapping victims survive, said Oscar Salguero, regional chief of a police anti-kidnapping unit. Those held for ransom are often kept in bathrooms, with hands bound and in constant terror, as crime gangs negotiate with their loved ones. At the same time, extortion of entrepreneurs is on the rise. Some 2,700 such complaints have been registered this year. Miguel, 40, who asked not to have his surname used, was threatened with kidnapping for a month because he refused to hand over \$20,000 to extortionists. The construction businessman received follow-up photos and warnings from cell phones coming from a prison, according to investigations. Cordova said those most affected by kidnappings and extortion are the middle and upper classes, most of whom will vote for a "hard hand" against organized crime in general elections slated for August. — AFP

German Greens in doldrums over bitter compromises

BERLIN: When Germany's ecologist Greens hold a mini-party congress Saturday, members of the junior coalition party are expected to vent their fury over tradeoffs that have sent the party's popularity plunging. From concessions on coal to clashes with climate protesters, the party has repeatedly found itself on the defensive since entering Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government. Matters have come to a head in recent weeks, with a painful compromise on European Union migration measures and a row over gas boilers.

"The situation for the party has not been as dangerous for many years as it is this summer," the NTV broadcaster said in a recent report. The German Greens scored their best-ever election result in 2021, becoming the third-largest party in parliament and entering the government for the first time since 2005.

But critics in the party say it has sacrificed its founding principles to govern in an awkward coalition with Scholz's centre-left SPD and the pro-business FDP. Ahead of the congress, opinion polls put the Greens in fourth place behind the resurgent far-right AfD. Anger boiled over when EU nations last week reached agreement on a long-stalled revision of their rules on migration. They included plans to introduce fast-track asylum procedures on the bloc's external borders. The deal was a crushing blow for the Greens, who had been pushing for more lenient rules for families with children, among other things.

'Low point for Greens'

Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock defended voting for the changes. "If Germany had rejected the reform or abstained, it would have meant more suffering, not less," she argued. But many party members remain furious. "It was the wrong decision and we should admit that at the weekend," Greta Garlich, leader of the Greens in Lower Saxony, told Stern magazine on Friday. The mood among the party's grassroots supporters is "pretty dire," she said.

The Greens have also run into trouble over a controversial heating law championed by vice-chancellor Robert Habeck, of the Greens. The law, finally introduced in parliament this week after months of infighting within the coalition government, effectively bans new oil and gas boilers from 2028 in favor of more climate-friendly but expensive solutions.

But the text was only agreed after hefty concessions from the Greens, including pushing back the start date by four years. Habeck defended the policy in parliament on Thursday, insisting "the core of the law remains intact". But Die Welt daily described it as a "low point for the once so radiant Greens" and a "resounding defeat" for the party. As recently as May 2022, Habeck was one of Germany's most popular politicians. But the ZDF broadcaster noted in a recent report that he had undergone a "transformation from communications talent to crisis manager and now bogeyman".

Accusations of nepotism

The three-way coalition had never looked like a match made in heaven for the Greens. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis have made that partnership even more difficult than they might have imagined.

To help compensate for a shortfall in Russian gas deliveries, the government voted last year to restart mothballed coal-fired power plants — much to the ire of climate activists. The expansion of the Garzweiler open-cast coal mine proved a particular flashpoint, with protesters occupying the village of Lutzerath as clearance work began in January. — AFP



BAD VILBEL: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock is pictured during a party rally of the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) in Bad Vilbel near Frankfurt am Main, Germany. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2023

Boursa Kuwait, GCC stock exchanges join forces with HSBC to present investment opportunities

Over 50 asset management firms meet with 12 Kuwaiti listed companies



LONDON: Boursa Kuwait successfully organized its tenth Corporate Day in London, coinciding with the London GCC Conference organized by HSBC, one of Europe's largest banks, from 12-16 June. The prominent event brought together twelve companies listed in the esteemed "Premier" Market, including Boursa Kuwait, with more than 50 globally recognized asset management firms and investment companies.

Over the 80 meetings conducted during the conference, international investors were provided with a valuable opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge about the listed companies, as well as a comprehensive understanding of the financial performance and business strategies employed by the companies publicly traded in the Kuwaiti capital market.

Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi expressed his thoughts on the occasion, stating, "As we mark our tenth Corporate Day, a tradition that started in 2017, we remain committed to showcasing our listed companies and investment opportunities to foreign institutional investors through our series of Corporate Days and Roadshows, a tradition we've started in 2017.

Our tenth Corporate Day gave us the opportunity to engage with over 50 asset management firms and investment companies and presenting the unique investment opportunities available in Kuwait. The company constantly seeks to provide transparency and ensure that market participants, including both local and international investors, have a voice in shaping our market."

Al-Osaimi expressed his optimism for the future, anticipating a productive period ahead and



Mohammad Al-Osaimi



Abdulaziz Al-Mulla

highlighting ongoing developments in the Kuwaiti market. He emphasized that Boursa Kuwait remains committed to enhancing the market in line with international standards and practices and stated that the upcoming launch of the Central Clearing Counterparty system (CCP) is expected to reduce systematic risks in capital markets. "Boursa Kuwait aims to introduce additional products and services, focusing on key objectives such as fostering an attractive issuer base, expanding the range of products, diversifying the investor base, and upgrading infrastructure and business practices to meet international standards," he added.

The conference also brought together CEOs and senior executives from the GCC stock exchanges, as representatives from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates showcased the benefits and prospects of investing in their respective countries. This conference marked the second

meeting of GCC exchanges and featured a panel discussion that provided valuable insights into each country's economic outlook. Representing Kuwait on the panel were Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi and Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Mulla, the Head of the Debt Management Department at the Ministry of Finance, which was moderated by HSBC Global Research's Chief CEEMEA Economist Simon Jon Williams.

For his part, Head of the Debt Management Department at the Ministry of Finance Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Mulla thanked Boursa Kuwait and HSBC for inviting him to the conference, which was an opportunity to showcase the State of Kuwait's National Development Plan for diversifying the economy to international investors, adding that the private sector has an integral role in that plan. Al-Mulla also showcased the national debt market and the need to develop it in line with the tenets of the "New Kuwait 2035" vision.

Boursa Kuwait has been a key driver in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market and the diversification of the national economy, in line with the goals of the "New Kuwait 2035" vision. Since its establishment, the company has been dedicated to building a reputable exchange founded on efficiency and transparency, fostering a liquid capital market and developing an advanced exchange platform through a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level. Over the past five years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans.

News in Brief

Bank of Italy boosts forecast

MILAN: The Bank of Italy more than doubled its growth forecast for the current year, helped by better-than-expected first-quarter expansion in gross domestic product, while warning of "high uncertainty" from the Ukraine war. The central bank now expects gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 1.3 percent in 2023, up from its 0.6 percent forecast published in January. Despite the 0.6 percent expansion seen in the first quarter, growth will remain moderate, the bank warned, "curbed by the effects of worsening financing conditions." In 2024 and 2025 it now forecasts growth of 1.0 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively, versus the 1.2 percent estimated for each year in January. Household consumption, which fell at the end of 2022, is expected to expand moderately over the three-year period at a similar pace to GDP growth, helped by declining inflation tied to lower energy costs. — AFP

German economy 'struggling'

FRANKFURT: The German economy is set to shrink in 2023 after a weak start to the year and as consumers continue to rein in spending because of stubbornly high inflation, Bundesbank president Joachim Nagel said Friday. Europe's largest economy is projected to contract by 0.3 percent in 2023, according to the central bank's newest forecasts. Back in December, the Bundesbank was still expecting a 0.5-percent contraction, but it said falling energy prices had slightly improved the outlook. "The German economy is still struggling with the consequences of high inflation. This is reducing citizens' purchasing power," Nagel said in a statement accompanying the forecasts. Germany unexpectedly slipped into a mild recession in the final months of 2022 and the start of 2023, as the energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and higher interest rates took their toll on companies and households. — AFP

Nissan executive Gupta leaves

TOKYO: Top Nissan executive Ashwani Gupta is leaving the company, the Japanese automaker confirmed Friday, a day after reports of a leadership clash inside the company. The departure will revive concerns about the stability of Nissan's leadership, which was left in disarray after former chief Carlos Ghosn was arrested over financial wrongdoing in 2018. Nissan said chief operating officer Gupta had "elected to leave the company to pursue other opportunities effective June 27", without detailing the reasons for his departure. A new executive line-up will be announced on the same date, the firm added. The announcement came a day after a source told AFP that 52-year-old Gupta was leaving, citing in part a "rivalry" between the Indian national and Nissan CEO Makoto Uchida. "He had a very clear ambition to take the top job. He wasn't forced out, but he had understood" that it wouldn't be possible, the source said. — AFP

US business titans flocking to China despite fraying ties

BEIJING: From Elon Musk to Bill Gates and Apple's Tim Cook, some of the United States' biggest business titans have headed to Beijing, seemingly defying the barrage of doomsayer narratives around the US-China trade war. The stream of visits by some of the world's richest men began after China abruptly ended nearly three years of COVID isolation late last year. In Beijing, the American magnates have talked up their optimism about China's vast market and trade ties between the world's two largest economies.

Landing in China in late May, Tesla owner Musk reportedly said that Beijing and Washington's interests were "intertwined, like conjoined twins, who are inseparable from each other". Apple CEO Cook also spoke of his firm's "symbiotic" relationship with China - home to the world's largest iPhone factory. The biggest honor of all - a meeting on Friday with Xi Jinping - was reserved for Gates, whom the Chinese leader hailed as "our old friend", according to the state-run People's Daily. The visits come as US-China trade tensions deepen, and after trade between the two countries reached a record \$690.6 billion last year, according to the US Department of Commerce. But businesses are worried about a slow in US ex-



BEIJING: A China Central Television news broadcast shows footage of Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates (left) meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, on a giant screen outside a shopping mall in Beijing. — AFP

ports to China, America's third-largest trading partner, with the drop strongly felt in the tech industry.

Citing national security concerns, the United States in 2022 blocked exports to China of the most advanced semiconductors and the equipment needed to make them. China has hit back by vowing to accelerate its efforts to become self-reliant on semiconductors. "China-US trade was... once mutually dependent and beneficial," analysts at the Peterson Institute for International Economics wrote in a re-

cent paper. "US exports to China are one more channel through which the bilateral relationship continues to deteriorate." The US government is engaged in high-stakes disputes with China over policy issues ranging from Taiwan to human rights, with no sign of tensions abating despite an upcoming visit to Beijing by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. US businesses in China have long been at the forefront of advocating for engagement, arguing that a strong economic relationship could spur reform. — AFP

now defunct FTX, were key brands in the crypto industry, helping grow what began as a secretive playground for tech geeks into a new way to invest embraced by Wall Street.

The SEC has been slowly tightening the screws on crypto since 2020. But the blows against Binance and Coinbase hit the industry with an accusation that stung: some crypto currencies are securities that must be traded under strict rules and not an alternative to dollars, yen or euros and outside the reach of regulators. Defenders of digital currencies have argued that regulators are stuck in the past and applying rules unfit for the likes of bitcoin or ethereum.

"Cases lodged by regulators are likely to ramp up uncertainty and confusion about crypto as they drag through US courts," lamented Scott Freeman, co-founder and partner at JST Capital, which spe-

cializes in crypto. "We wish to see from regulators a bit more proactive guidance and legislation rather than regulation by enforcement," said Paolo Ardoio, chief technology officer at Bitfinex, a cryptocurrency trading company that was fined by another US regulator, the CFTC, in 2021.

Crypto companies are also "caught in the middle of a turf war" between US regulatory authorities, Coinbase chief legal officer Paul Grewal told AFP. The industry, eager to join the financial establishment, has asked for clear regulation, but progress on that front has been thwarted by political gridlock in Washington. "If we don't see that regulatory clarity emerge in the US we may have to consider investing more elsewhere in the world," Coinbase CEO Brian Armstrong told a conference in London. "Anything is on the table, including relocating." — AFP

US clampdown has crypto kings looking abroad

NEW YORK: After years on the sidelines, financial regulators in the United States are throwing the book at the free-wheeling cryptocurrency industry, with angry entrepreneurs threatening to take their business overseas. Earlier this month, Wall Street's regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission, pressed a raft of charges against Binance, the world's biggest cryptocurrency exchange, and US-based Coinbase. Both companies, along with the

Business

Zain showcases strategic efforts to digitalize the energy sector

Company sponsors The Energy Year event, attended by public and private sector executives

KUWAIT: Zain sponsored the book launch and awards ceremony of The Energy Year, the prestigious magazine specializing in the oil, gas, and renewable energy industries. During the event, the company showcased its top strategic efforts to enable and accelerate digital transformation within the local energy sector by empowering national institutions to embrace digitalization.



Al Marzouq showcases Zain's digitalization strategy in the local energy sector.

Zain's support to this event came to further affirm the prominent role the company plays as one of the Kuwaiti private sector's leaders in supporting digital transformation projects across the biggest sectors. This is especially true within the local oil & gas sector, which is considered the backbone of Kuwait's economy as one of the world's biggest oil producers.

The event's program featured a special excellence awards segment that recognized a number of the most contributing companies to the development of the local energy sector. CEO of Kuwait Oil Company, Ahmad Al Eidan, was recognized along with executives and officials representing the biggest local and regional oil & gas companies.

During his keynote speech, Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al Marzouq showcased some of the top strategic efforts Zain introduced recently to push the digital transformation wheel within the local energy sector: "During the past years, we doubled down on technology in our efforts to digitalize the local oil & gas industry. We heavily invested in tech solutions such as 5G, drones, digital



KOC CEO Ahmad Al Eidan with Hamad Al Marzouq and officials from Zain and The Energy Year.

applications, managed cloud services, and more to empower companies to embrace digitalization."

"It is crucial for energy companies to believe in digitalization and the role technology plays in enabling them to keep up with the huge changes in today's markets. Companies must set up a digitalization strategy and office within their operations, and we are ready to be their success partner in bringing this vision to reality," Al Marzouq added.

Al Marzouq went on to highlight one of Zain's recent energy projects with the Government of Kuwait: "Zain has a distinguished long list of fruitful partnerships with the public sector, and one of the top examples that come to mind within the energy sector is the smart meters project. Since 2017, we've partnered with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy to install 800,000 smart meters

and operate the entire digital system of the project across Kuwait."

Al Marzouq added: "We offer a number of key tools to oil & gas companies, including migrating infrastructures to more agile ones on the cloud; where 5G technologies play a big role, as well as a wide range of reliable, secure, and efficient datacenter, cloud, and connectivity solutions. We also cover an extensive range of cybersecurity solutions, as well as rig connectivity tools through our UAV division, Zain Drones."

Al Marzouq continued: "Our customers also benefit from our extensive and solid strategic partnerships with the globe's biggest hyper-scalers like Google, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS), and Oracle. By collaborating with our global partners, we bring the latest technologies to empower our customers to

embrace digitalization within their operations at the highest efficiency and lowest cost." "Our main goal is to contribute to empowering the New Kuwait 2035 vision, and we aspire to be a main partner in achieving it. We will continue to invest in building robust capacity and help achieve this vision's goals," Al Marzouq concluded.

The Energy Year is a prestigious global magazine that specializes in the oil, gas, and renewable energy industries in over 30 countries. The magazine presents the views and opinions of more than 2,000 key energy decision-makers, alongside up-to-date licensing and infrastructure maps, project reports, articles, partnership and investment opportunities, forums and debates, resources and statistics, and more. The latest edition, Kuwait 2023, focuses on digital transformation in the local oil and gas sector.

European leaders host Musk, chase Tesla investment

PARIS: Billionaire Elon Musk swept into Paris on Friday to hold court at an event with thousands of spectators hours after meeting the leaders of Italy and France, as European capitals jostle for investment from his electric car firm Tesla. He told the audience at the huge VivaTech trade fair his ambition was to put neurope implants in a human brain this year and defended his controversial decision not to censor Twitter.

The maverick tech titan took to the stage to shouts of "we love you Elon", defended his record since he bought Twitter and repeated his warnings that artificial intelligence could go terribly wrong. "My strong recommendation is to have some strong regulation for AI," he said, without specifying. On Thursday he met Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who tweeted later that their talks had been "fruitful" and they had discussed "innovation and opportunities". A day later he was talking to French President Macron, who had earlier promised to "tout the attractiveness of France and Europe" as an investment destination.



PARIS: SpaceX, Twitter and electric car maker Tesla CEO Elon Musk (left) and Publicis Groupe's Chairman of the Supervisory Board Maurice Levy attend an event at the Vivattech technology startups and innovation fair in Paris. — AFP

Musk and Macron met a month ago and afterwards the maverick boss of SpaceX and brain implant firm Neuralink said he was considering big investments in France. The country's technology minister Jean-Noel Barrot fuelled speculation earlier this week by telling US broadcaster CNBC that "a lot of effort and energy" had been expended to secure a Tesla factory for France. But reports from Spain say Tesla is planning to build a factory there and Italy now appears to be waging a charm offensive. The electric carmaker's European footprint is relatively small, having opened its first manufacturing plant in Germany last year.

Europe's leaders and plutocrats are desperate to get some face time with Musk—in Paris he had lunch with French magnate Bernard Arnault, with whom he regularly trades the title of "world's richest man". But despite the breadth of Musk's business empire, it is his acquisition of social media network Twitter that continues to fascinate and baffle observers. He bought the platform for \$44 billion, sacked much of its staff, allowed right-wing conspiracy theorists to return and introduced all sorts of fees and charges. Advertisers fled the platform and he has admitted the firm is no longer worth anywhere near the amount he paid. — AFP



VILLAROCHE: A view shows LEAP-1A turbo reactor engine during the visit of French President at the Safran Aircraft Engines site in Villaroche, near Paris. — AFP

France to pump millions of euros into low-emission planes

VILLAROCHE: France will pump hundreds of millions of euros into developing low-emission aircraft, engines and aviation fuel in the coming years, President Emmanuel Macron said Friday. Paris would dedicate 300 million euros (\$330 million) to aircraft and motor research, Macron said during a visit to jet engine maker Safran just outside the capital. Public and private cash would also be funneled to developing small electric or hydrogen-powered aircraft and renewable fuels, including a biofuel plant for southwest France. "We French have to be the champions of ultra-clean planes... and it is in our power to do it," Macron said.

Aviation is a key sector of the French economy, with leading companies including Safran, Airbus and Dassault. The industry employed 691,000 people in 2020 - seven percent of France's industrial work-

Intel to invest up to \$4.6bn in new Poland chip site

NEW YORK: US chip giant Intel will invest up to \$4.6 billion to build a new site in Poland, creating around 2,000 jobs, the company said. Its new facility, to be located in the southern Polish city of Wroclaw, "will help meet critical demand for assembly and test capacity that Intel anticipates by 2027," Intel said in a statement. The investment in Poland is aimed at helping the European Union develop a more resilient semiconductor supply chain and reducing dependence on Asia, the statement added.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki hailed the announcement as an element of "cementing and

force - with annual revenues of 186 billion euros, according to national statistics authority Insee. Activity is taking off again after a COVID-enforced slump, with global passenger numbers set to match 2019's figure of 4.5 billion.

Airbus, which by itself accounts for around half of global airliner sales, expects the global plane fleet to double to around 46,000 by 2042. But French and European industry faces fierce competition from the United States and China in the race for eco-friendly options. The stakes are high, with up to four percent of global greenhouse emissions coming from air transport. Macron's announcement comes before the opening next week of the Paris Air Show, a landmark on the global aerospace industry calendar.

The extra cash for low-emission planes was not welcomed by all. "The zero-emission plane doesn't exist," leading French Greens MP Sandrine Rousseau told broadcaster Franceinfo before Macron spoke. "We might as well go looking for the Yeti". Instead, "we should immediately take measures like reducing the number of trips by plane," she added. France recently banned short domestic flights on routes that could be covered in less than two-and-a-half hours by high-speed rail. — AFP

consolidating transatlantic cooperation" with the US. "From now on, from this investment by Intel, Poland will be a key part of the not-so-extensive supply system of these most advanced technologies," Morawiecki told reporters in Wroclaw. Intel is one of the world's leading semiconductor firms, making a wide range of products, including the latest-generation chips. The EU aims to reclaim 20 percent of global semiconductor manufacturing capacity by 2030 - twice its current production - and has invested billions in Intel's chip facilities in Germany and Ireland.

Intel has said its European sites will help with cost efficiency in the EU's supply chain, and that it plans to produce 80 billion euros worth of chips in Europe over ten years. Intel has said construction of its plant in Germany, scheduled to start in the first half of 2023, has yet to begin, due in part to inflation. Germany's Ministry of Economic Affairs has said it is looking to support construction with additional public aid. The announcement of Intel's new Poland site

UK record water demand sparks restrictions

LONDON: Millions of people across parts of southern Britain will be banned from using garden hoses as a hot spell sparks record demand for drinking water, authorities said on Friday. A temporary ban for people living in the southern Kent and Sussex areas will come into force on June 26 as forecasters predict the summer will see little rainfall. South East Water said demand in June had broken records despite the company providing an extra 120 million liters of water a day.

A lack of water for sanitary facilities on Friday forced three schools in East Sussex to partially close. "This situation has developed much more rapidly than last year," said chief executive David Hinton. "Despite asking for customers' help to use water for essential uses only, regrettably we've now been left with no choice but to introduce this temporary use ban restriction to protect customers' supplies across Kent and Sussex," he added. Southern Water, which supplies areas of Kent, also issued a warning on Thursday that demand for water in the county was "outstripping supply". The provider said demand was 15 percent higher than expected for this time of year.

High demand, low supply

Hosepipe bans — formally called temporary use bans — are used by water companies to manage supplies at times of high demand and lower supply. They limit non-essential usage such as watering gardens, filling paddling pools or washing cars with hosepipes. Anyone found flouting the ban can face a fine of up to £1,000 (\$1,300). England last year had its joint hottest summer on record, tied with 2018, according to the country's meteorological agency.

Temperatures climbed to more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in some part of the country — a record. Areas of England are already seeing plummeting levels in reservoirs due to prolonged dry spells. In Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has put every region on a water scarcity alert, with warnings of significant shortages in a third of the country by the end of the month. "Our rivers and lochs are under immense stress and it's clear further action will be needed to protect them," said SEPA's head of water planning Nathan Critchlow-Watton. — AFP

follows a difficult first quarter of 2023 for the firm.

In April, it announced a massive fall in sales for the January-March period because of a steep drop in demand for semiconductors, especially those used in PCs. The company was also affected by falling demand for chips that power data centers, and is struggling to compete with Nvidia for the semiconductors that undergird ChatGPT-style generative AI, a major new chip-hungry sector. The chip industry is well-known for its volatility, with demand and supply see-sawing with the dips and rises in the world economy.

Its central role in the global supply chain became clear during the height of the COVID pandemic. Lockdowns and health restrictions diminished production in Asia, leaving surging demand for chips unmet just as everyone turned online for work, shopping and entertainment. Semiconductors have also become a political pawn between the US and China, with Washington urging its allies to stop supplying China with cutting-edge chips. — AFP

Business

Pause, hike and cut: Central banks diverge over regional challenges

World's key economic regions unveil divergent monetary policies

WASHINGTON: In Washington they paused; in Frankfurt they hiked; and in Beijing they cut. Central bankers in three of the world's key economic regions have unveiled divergent monetary policies this week as they each contend with their own challenges. The moves reflect the different economic headwinds faced by the Euro-zone, the United States and China, and also where they are in their cycle of monetary policy.

The US Federal Reserve began rapidly and aggressively raising rates in March last year, while the European Central Bank (ECB) adopted a more gradual approach to monetary tightening. "I don't know who has more to do, but certainly the Fed has done more than the ECB," Joseph Gagnon, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), told AFP. China's situation is markedly different than the United States and the Euro-zone, with rate cuts on the menu as policymakers move to tackle lackluster economic growth and soaring youth unemployment.

Skip, hike and cut

On Wednesday, the Fed paused interest rate hikes after 10 straight increases, bringing its benchmark lending rate from close to zero to a range between 5.0 and 5.25 percent. "It allows the economy a little more time to adapt as we make our decisions going forward," Fed chair Jerome Powell said, adding that the Fed expects more hikes were likely ahead. The Fed's decision to pause was swiftly mirrored by countries including United Arab Emirates,

whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar.

A day later, the ECB took a more proactive decision as it pushed ahead with another quarter-percentage-point interest rate hike to tackle sticky inflation, raising its key lending rate to a 22-year high of 3.5 percent. The ECB's updated economic forecasts also indicated additional hikes on the horizon. "Unless there is a material change to our baseline, we will continue to hike at our next meeting," ECB chief Christine Lagarde said after the bank raised rates to their highest level since 2001. "So we're not thinking about pausing," she said.

On Thursday, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) cut a key lending facility by 10 basis points to 2.65 percent, and extended 237 billion yuan (\$33 billion) of fresh funding to lenders "to maintain reasonable and sufficient liquidity in the banking system." The announcement came two days after it unveiled a surprise cut in short-term interest rates, which analysts said reflected growing concern about the state of the economy among Chinese policymakers.

Further hikes ahead

Both the Fed and the ECB have indicated they expect more monetary tightening will be needed to bring inflation back under control. "Looking ahead, nearly all committee participants view it as likely that some further rate increases will be appropriate this year to bring inflation down to two percent over time," Powell said Wednesday.

Analysts have taken Powell's comments to indicate support for at least

one additional quarter-percentage-point hike. "Our baseline remains for a final 25bp rate hike in July, with the Fed then remaining on hold into early 2024," Deutsche Bank economists wrote in a note to clients after the decision. Others see US rates going even higher. "We expect 25bp rate hikes in July and September, though a delay in the second hike to November is also possible," Bank of America economists wrote in a note.

In Europe, analysts say the ECB's updated economic forecasts point to at least two additional hikes. "The upwardly revised path for headline and, especially, core inflation into 2025 provides a surprisingly clear indication that the ECB's tightening job is unlikely to be finished next month," said Marco Valli, Chief European Economist at UniCredit. "We now think the ECB will deliver two more 25bp hikes, in July and September, taking the deposit rate to 4.0 percent, which we think will be the terminal rate," Pantheon Macroeconomics Chief Euro-zone Economist Claus Vistesén wrote in a note to clients.

China to expand stimulus

The message from China this week has been starkly different, as policymakers at the PBOC look to reignite the world's second-largest economy after months of underwhelming data. Beijing has kept interest rates low compared with other major economies, but near-zero inflation highlights challenges faced by officials trying to stimulate growth. "All the data points so far sent consistent signals that the economic momentum is weakening," Zhiwei



FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is pictured prior to the press conference following the meeting of the governing council of the ECB in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. — AFP

Zhang, president of Pinpoint Asset Management, said Thursday.

Alongside barely positive inflation in May, exports fell and industrial production growth slowed, as factories returned to full capacity after the pandemic. Retail sales, which rose in April, are currently "the only functioning engine of Chinese growth," Rob Carnell, Asia-Pacific head researcher at ING, said in a note. "I don't predict a crisis, but I do think we're in for several months — if not a year or more — of somewhat slow, weak growth in China," said Gagnon from PIIE.

Japan holds steady

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) has gone against the grain set by the Fed and ECB, announcing on Friday that it would maintain its long-standing, ultra-loose monetary policy as it looks to boost economic

growth. Officials left the bank's negative interest rate in place, pushing down the value of the yen against the dollar. While inflation in Japan remains lower than the sky-high increases seen in the United States and elsewhere, it is above the central bank's two-percent target, which has been surpassed every month since April last year.

Shigeto Nagai of Oxford Economics said the BoJ did not seem in a hurry to change its ways. "We believe that the BoJ will maintain the status quo for another year or so to assess whether the economy is on track to achieving two-percent inflation" within the new governor Kazuo Ueda's five-year term, he said. The BoJ argues that the price rises are fuelled by temporary factors, such as the war in Ukraine, and so has stuck to its loose policies in a bid to encourage sustained growth. — AFP



KUWAIT: On the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, Gulf Bank is providing the 'Ayadi' service at its branches and ITMs located across Kuwait, including the newly launched ITM drive through at Sharq branch.

Gulf Bank provides 'Ayadi' at branches and ITMs

KUWAIT: On the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, Gulf Bank is providing the "Ayadi" service at its branches and ITMs located across Kuwait, including the newly launched ITM drive thru at Sharq branch. The bank is providing "Ayadi" at all Gulf Bank branches — excluding the Kuwait International Airport branch — and at the ITMs located in 12 branches, of which include: Sharq branch, Crystal Tower, Jabriya, Al-Shaab, Al-Adan, Al-Fanar Mall, Al-Salam (South Surra), Fahheel (Al-Ghanim Electronics Complex), Hawally, Kuwait International Airport (TI), and Mishref, including the first ITM drive thru in Sharq.

The "Ayadi" service provides customers with brand new KD 20, KD 10, KD 5, and KD 1 banknotes to meet the growing demand for brand new bank notes during the Eid period. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer-excellence and serving the community at large.

With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Huawei slams EU's approach

BRUSSELS: China's Huawei has hit out at the EU after Brussels described the telecoms giant as a risk to the bloc and called on EU member states to exclude its equipment from their mobile networks. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, on Thursday named Huawei and another Chinese telecoms company, ZTE, as representing a greater risk to the bloc than other 5G suppliers. The commission also said it would stop using services that are supplied by the two companies as the EU takes steps to move away from reliance on Chinese tech companies over national security concerns. The EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton, urged more EU member states to remove the companies from their 5G networks. — AFP

NBK supports Kuwaiti artists

KUWAIT: Within its consistent endeavors to support Kuwaiti talented artists and encourage them to showcase their outstanding artistic works, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched a competition for Kuwaiti artists to provide a limited edition design for NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card. The initiative is introduced in partnership with Visa and Visual Therapy Art consultancy, and registration in the competition is open from June 15 to August 15, on the Company's website via the following link: www.visualtherapy.art/nbkktvisainfinite

Contestants can submit more than one design, and at the end of the competition, the organizers will announce two winners: one for the silver card and the other for the pearl white card. Each winner will receive a cash prize of KD 2,500, and one artist can win both prizes. Applicants must be painters who have previously presented artistic works like drawings, sculptures, artistic design (graphic designer) or a professional artist.

The artistic designs will be presented to a panel consisting of members from NBK, Visa and Visual Therapy, through which the two winning designs will be selected and announced no later than next October. Commenting on this campaign, Bader Al-Janah, Head of Card Products, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "This competition comes in line with our commitment to support Kuwaiti artists, as part of delivering on our corporate social responsibility towards all segments." "NBK seeks to preserve the national identity that these designs can give to the cards," he emphasized.

"We always aim to provide a comprehensive banking experience with attention to all details to ultimately achieve customer satisfaction and convenience. Therefore, we seek to explore innovative ideas to develop product design and benefits relevant to customers' needs," he added. "This 5-year limited edition design is only for

Bank of Japan sticks to ultra-loose policy

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan said it would maintain its long-standing, ultra-loose monetary policy as it looks to boost economic growth. The central bank has gone against the grain as its global peers hike interest rates to tackle inflation, pushing down the value of the yen against the dollar. Officials had been widely expected to keep policies unchanged after the second two-day meeting under new Governor Kazuo Ueda, who took the helm in April.

They left the bank's negative interest rate in place and did not adjust the band in which rates for 10-year government bonds fluctuate, a scheme known as yield curve con-

control. The announcement prompted the Japanese currency to sink to around 141.39 yen per dollar in the afternoon, from around 140.20 yen in the morning. In contrast, the European Central Bank on Thursday raised interest rates to a 22-year high, boosting the euro, while also warning of persistent inflation and slower growth.

On Wednesday the US Federal Reserve decided against lifting rates, as expected, but signaled plans for additional increases as it assesses the impact of 10 straight hikes since early last year. Shigeto Nagai of Oxford Economics said the Bank of Japan did not seem in a hurry to change its ways, "despite recent upside surprises both on the growth and inflation fronts". "We believe that the BoJ will maintain the status quo for another year or so to assess whether the economy is on track to achieving two-percent inflation within Ueda's five-year term," he said.

On his part, Ankush Devadason, Visa's Head of Financial Institutions for Kuwait, said: "We are delighted to partner with National Bank of Kuwait and Visual Therapy on this special initiative. Kuwait is home to a vibrant art scene and this initiative is a great way for us to showcase local artists and support them in creating unique designs that will enhance the payment experience of NBK's Visa Infinite credit cardholders. Good luck to all the participating artists and I am excited about seeing all the great local art that will be designed for this competition."

Shahad Bishara, Founder and Curator of Visual Therapy also voiced her pleasure with the campaign saying: "We are extremely proud to partner with illustrious institutions like NBK and Visa on this creative campaign. This campaign will present young Kuwait artists and creatives with a unique opportunity to showcase their talents on a broad scale. One of the Visual Therapy's key missions has always been to support young local artists and creatives and this opportunity will undoubtedly provide a tremendous creative outlet for them. We would like to thank NBK and Visa for this opportunity and look forward to bringing the artistic creations to life."

NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card gives customers the flexibility to choose the way they want to earn rewards based on their lifestyle; either the "Spends Tier" or "Merchant Category" option. A customer can earn NBK KWT Points on all their spends made using the card when choosing the "Spends Tier" earning option, based on their monthly spends, with up to 5% on digital payments and international POS, and up to 3% on all



Shahad Bishara



Ankush Devadason



Bader Al-Janah



other spends.

When choosing the "Merchant Category", customers can earn NBK KWT Points on all payments made using NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card at the selected categories, with 10% on dining and telecom, 5% on fitness and beauty and 3% on clothing, grocery and education. In addition, customers can enjoy flat 10% NBK KWT Points when using their card at Ikea, Eureka, Farfetch, and booking.com. Customers can redeem NBK KWT Points up to KD 1,000 per month. In addition, NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Cardholders can earn NBK Rewards Points at over 900 participating outlets.

following the bubble era. But moving away from monetary easing will be a tricky balancing act for Ueda, who faces pressure to normalize policy while minimizing any shock to the economy.

On Friday he said the bank would stick to its guns. The BoJ "will tenaciously continue monetary easing, so that the two percent inflation target will be maintained in a continuous and sustainable way, accompanying rises in wages", Ueda told reporters. There had been speculation of a change of tack late last year when the bank widened the band in which it allows 10-year bonds to fluctuate, but it has not moved since. Ueda "will likely set a deadline to judge whether the economy is on track... within his term so that he can take necessary actions", Nagai said, adding that such a decision point could arrive in mid-2024. — AFP

'Decision point'

A recovery in tourism and household spending helped the world's third-largest economy expand a better-than-expected 0.7 percent in the January-March quarter. Inflation stood at 3.4 percent in April — down from a January peak when consumer prices rose 4.2 percent on-year, the highest rate since 1981. While inflation in Japan remains lower than the sky-high increases seen in the United States and elsewhere, it is above the central bank's two-percent target, which has been surpassed every month since April last year.

The BoJ argues that the price rises are fuelled by temporary factors, such as the war in Ukraine, and so has kept its loose policies in a bid to encourage sustained growth. In April, the bank announced a broad review of its "non-traditional" attempts to banish the deflation that has plagued Japan since the 1990s,

Lifestyle



Cuban-US singer-songwriter Gloria Estefan performs onstage during the 52nd Songwriters Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Gala in New York City on June 15, 2023. - AFP photos



Gloria Estefan performs onstage alongside her husband Emilio Estefan and grandson Sasha Estefan Coppola.

Music world honors songwriters at gala featuring Gloria Estefan, Post Malone



Post Malone performs.



US songwriter/producer Glen Ballard speaks onstage.



English lyricist/author Tim Rice speaks onstage.

A little bit of drink, a little bit of shrooms, and some mucking around with the guitar: That's one recipe to write a smash song, says Post Malone. The hitmaker was speaking to AFP as a special honoree at Thursday's gala inducting new members into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, as Cuban-American Gloria Estefan became the first Latina artist to enter the prestigious pantheon.

A who's who of music, the institution foregoes a televised event in favor of a festive dinner and intimate concert in a Manhattan hotel ballroom. Two of the slated inductees – Nigerian-British singer Sade Adu and Calvin Broadus, aka rapper Snoop Dogg – deferred their honors to future years, opting out of the 52nd annual ceremony.

But the night still boasted five writers behind some of pop culture's indelible hits. The Grammy-winning Estefan has sold over 100 million records worldwide, and has already won many of the highest music honors including induction into the Kennedy Center as well as the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

But "this one is very special, because I've gotten through the hardest parts of my life listening to other songwriters," Estefan told AFP. "To be able to have our words reach other people's minds and hearts is a really big privilege and a blessing that I don't take lightly."

Glen Ballard co-wrote tracks including Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" and Alanis Morissette's acclaimed LP "Jagged Little Pill". Speaking on the red carpet, he called the honor "incredibly validating." "You write songs for 50 years, and you get an honor like this, and you feel like, 'I wasn't wasting my time after all!'" Ballard said with a laugh.

Pop-rock artist Jeff Lynne – who wrote songs including "Don't Bring Me Down" and worked closely with Tom



US songwriter Liz Rose speaks onstage.

Petty, including on "Free Fallin'" – and Liz Rose, best known for her frequent collaborations with Taylor Swift, also became hall of famers, joining the likes of John Lennon, Carole King and Stevie Wonder.

And Teddy Riley, whose vast influence on R&B included the coining of the genre New Jack Swing, rounded out the 2023 class. "This is the greatest honor – I've got a star in Hollywood, and so many other things, but this meant the most, Riley said on stage before launching into a rollicking medley of his greatest hits, including "No Diggity." "Because at the end of the day, it is about the song."

'Angelic goat'

Tim Rice, a decorated English lyricist widely known for his collaborations with Disney on "Aladdin" and "The Lion King" as well as his work with Andrew Lloyd Weber, received the Johnny Mercer Award, the most prestigious award



US singer/songwriter Teddy Riley speaks onstage.

doled out by the Songwriters Hall of Fame. And Post Malone flashed peace signs and took selfies with adoring fans – a screwdriver cocktail in hand – before working the red carpet ahead of receiving the Hal David Starlight Award.

The prize is designated for songwriters "at an apex in their careers". "I'm so honored and so blessed that I have the ability to sing these songs with people and for people," said the genre-melding 27-year-old on the carpet, who later was introduced as having the voice of an "angelic goat" thanks to his unique variegated vocals. "It's fun to make music!" he said, adding that in addition to booze and psychedelics, his one-year-old child is among his greatest inspirations. "I'm kind of in dad mode, but I just want to keep making the music that I love making."

The songwriting and publishing side of the music business has gained attention outside industry circles for several years now, as catalogs increas-



British musician Jeff Lynne performs.

ingly have become coveted assets for investors and made blockbuster headlines. And songwriters who aren't also performers have started gaining wider recognition within – and outside of – the industry.

Last year the Recording Academy behind the Grammy awards awarded a long-lobbied for Songwriter of the Year prize, which is open to working songwriters who are not also performing or producing artists. "Every song I've written is a surprise to me," said the prolific Ballard. "I would just try to start with one nugget, one good idea – it might be musical, it might be lyrical."

"And then it becomes a hero for the whole thing," said the Grammy-winning writer, who beyond Jackson and Morissette has worked with artists including No Doubt, Shakira and The Pointer Sisters. "And it might just be a conversation I overheard on the subway." – AFP

Marvel swaps superpowers for spies in 'Secret Invasion'

Alien conspiracies, Oscar winners and hardly a superhero in sight: Marvel is taking its record-breaking franchise in a new direction with "Secret Invasion," a spy thriller starring Samuel L Jackson, Olivia Colman and Emilia Clarke. The series, out next Wednesday on Disney+, marks Jackson's 14th Marvel film or television series, but the first time his character Nick Fury is the undisputed star.

Fury, the mysterious, sometime boss of the all-powerful Avengers, originally appeared on-screen way back in 2008's "Iron Man" - the movie that launched the entire Marvel franchise that has come to dominate Hollywood.

But the new series "ranks number one, in terms of things I've done in the Marvel cinematic universe," Jackson told a press conference Wednesday. "It's a story about people doing people stuff, without all those supers coming in to save you," he said, referring to superheroes.

The series finds US spy chief Fury battling shapeshifting, reptilian humanoids known as Skrulls – introduced in previous Marvel films – who live among us, and are intent on fomenting war between Moscow and Washington. Fury



US actress LaTanya Richardson and US actor Samuel L. Jackson arrive for a special screening of Marvel Studios' upcoming "Secret Invasion" at El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood, California, on June 13, 2023. – AFP photos

must also contend with British spook Sonya Falsworth, played by Olivia Colman, who appears to relish her character's loose morality, including at least one shocking torture scene. "Sonya works for MI6. She likes wearing red, she's quite funny and she's potentially a little bit not that nice sometimes," joked Colman, with plot details strictly under wraps.

The presence of Colman, a best actress Oscar-winner for 2018's "The Favourite," alongside Jackson, who was given an honorary Academy Award for his career last year, represents a casting coup for Marvel. They are joined by "Game of Thrones" star Emilia Clarke, as a conflicted Skrull rebel, along with returning regulars such as Don Cheadle, Martin Freeman and Ben Mendelsohn.

'Very different'

But "Secret Invasion" arrives at an uncertain moment for Marvel. Since the gargantuan success of "Avengers: Endgame," which in 2019 briefly became the highest-grossing blockbuster of all time, parent company Disney has churned out a whopping 18 new Marvel films and television shows.

It has not all gone to plan. Recent movies such as "Eternals," "Thor: Love and Thunder" and "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania" have received the franchise's worst-ever reviews. A major new villain named Kang was introduced, played by Jonathan Majors – only for the actor to be arrested and charged with assault and harassment in March. – AFP

Valentino returns men as it sheds coed format in Milan

Italian haute couture house Valentino opened men's fashion week in Milan on Friday, abandoning its coed format of the past three years for men front and center on the runway. With the maison having long chosen Paris over Milan to show its women's and couture collections, Friday's men's show was a return to roots of the atelier founded by famed Roman couturier Valentino Garavani – now 91 and retired – who presented his very first men's fashion show in Milan in 1985.

In a nod to fashion's dependence on, and inspiration from, the younger generation, the show was held in the inner courtyard of the University of Milan, with some students even filling the rows of seats. Pierpaolo Piccioli, Valentino's artistic director since 2008, unveiled a collection that teamed bermuda shorts with slim-fitting jackets and more relaxed silhouettes with loose-fitting tops and trousers paired with long coats.

Indispensable accessories for the Valentino man include the vintage 50s skinny tie, handbags in flashy colors such as yellow, red and fuchsia, and flashy earrings. "A changed culture and a shifted society re-evaluates our notion of the masculine, and the garments that clothe it," the brand said. Since 2012, Valentino has been owned by Qatar investment fund Mayhoola.

Revenue surge

The Italian men's fashion industry saw its revenues jump by 20.3 percent to €11.3 billion (\$12.3 billion) last year. Exports were the driver, gaining 24.8 percent to €8.3 billion, according to the fashion branch of Confindustria, Italy's main lobby for manufacturing and service companies. "We believe that fashion will be doing very well in 2023," said Carlo Capasa, president of the Italian

Chamber of Fashion. Revenues have certainly been swollen by inflation. "We thought we were in for a difficult year, but in the first quarter we recorded a 15.3 percent increase in sales," said Capasa, who has raised the sector's annual growth target from four to five percent.

The men's Spring/Summer 2024 fashion week includes more than 70 events, only five of which are purely digital, breaking free from the virtual formats that were the mainstay of fashion shows during the Covid pandemic.

Fendi in Florence

The major labels, including Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, Armani and Zegna, plan to thrill fashionistas with 22 catwalk shows in the flesh, promising spectacle, thrills and joie de vivre. Andersson Bell, a young brand launched in Seoul in 2014 that fuses Korean street style and Scandinavian minimalism, will make its much-anticipated debut on Sunday. It was popularized in 2019 by Jungkook, lead singer of South Korean K-pop group BTS and a fan of the brand's sneakers.

Among the big absentees this season are Versace, Moschino, Missoni and even Fendi, which opted to show its men's collection Thursday as part of the Pitti Uomo show in Florence, which traditionally precedes Milan Fashion Week. The models paraded through the workshops of Fendi's new leather goods factory in Capannuccia, south of Florence, amidst machines and craftsmen. Linen, cotton, leather and silk were the favorite materials, with sober colors oscillating between terracotta, sage green, ecru and brown, reminiscent of the Tuscan landscape. – AFP



US filmmaker Ali Selim.



US actor Don Cheadle.



British actress Olivia Colman.

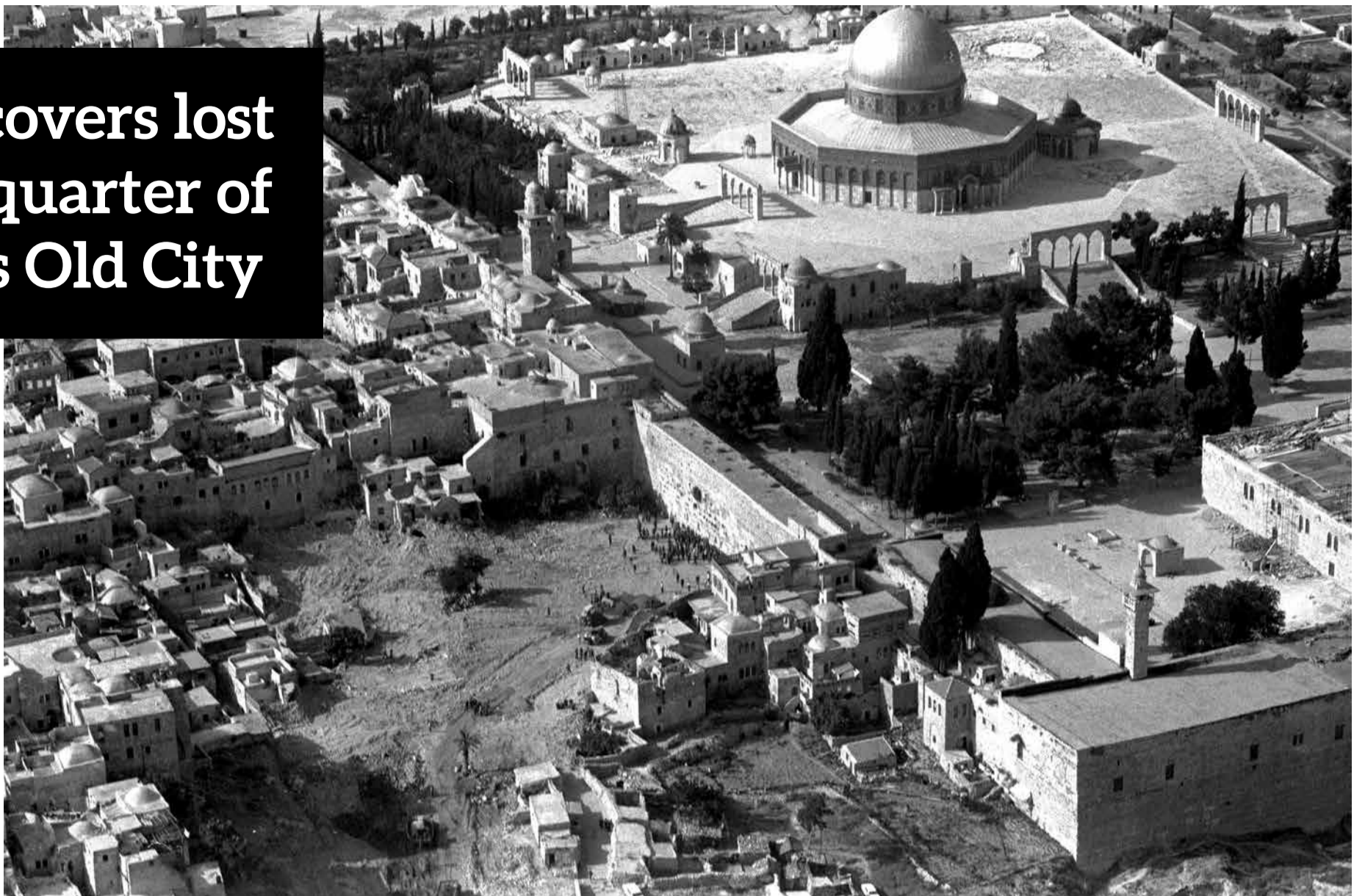
3D app uncovers lost Mughrabi quarter of Jerusalem's Old City

More than 55 years after the Zionist entity destroyed the Moroccan quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, it has been rebuilt in 3D with the help of a mobile phone application. Once located at the foot of the Western Wall, the Moroccan, or Mughrabi, quarter was inhabited by about 1,000 people until Zionist forces captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The Zionist entity demolished the neighborhood and went on to annex east Jerusalem – a move deemed illegal by the United Nations. In just a few hours, Zionist bulldozers tore through more than 100 buildings, displacing residents of the neighborhood, founded in 1187 by Saladin who defeated the Crusaders in Jerusalem.

The ancient leader had established the quarter for Muslim pilgrims from North Africa. Today it serves as a plaza in front of one of Judaism's most sacred sites. "I think 99 per cent of visitors who are in front of the Western Wall know nothing of this history," French historian Vincent Lemire told AFP.

Working with Italy's University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Lemire developed a mobile application allowing people to stroll through each alley. The application's designers said it "allows users an immersive experience across the streets, mosques, schools and courtyards of the Maghrebi quarter". Lemire, who authored a book on the neighborhood in 2022, said the 3D technology makes it possible to reach a



An aerial picture of Jerusalem taken on June 12, 1967 shows the remaining buildings in the Mughrabi Quarter in Jerusalem's Old City by the Western Wall and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound following the Six Day War. – AFP

wider audience than in academic writings. "The history of this neighborhood is inaccessible, it must be made more accessible," he said.

In a press conference to launch the application, Ashraf Al-Jandoubi Al-Mughrabi, a descendent of Tunisian residents of the quarter, said: "We will

never forget our belonging to this district." Lemire said the quarter was "very representative of the open history of Jerusalem that we are trying to promote, which bears little resemblance to the current Jerusalem which has turned into a very simplistic and crude battlefield between two camps". A dichotomy

which, he said, "crushes all the other plural and diverse stories of Jerusalem."

In January 2023, excavations by Zionist archaeologists unearthed remains of the neighborhood, but experts were concerned about the fate of the ruins, which were buried soon after their discovery. The 3D modelling of the Mughrabi quar-

ter is part of a larger project called "Open Jerusalem", which has brought together some 60 researchers who have collated and last week put online an archive of about 40,000 documents in 12 languages on the history of Jerusalem. – AFP



A gallery assistant studies a work "The Raising of Lazarus" created in the style of Peter Paul Rubens.



A gallery assistant studies a work "Figures worshipping a Pagan Idol" believed originally to have been created by infamous British forger Eric Hebborn, but this has recently been thought to be incorrect.

Cat-and-mouse world of art fraud revealed in London show

Some of the most notorious art forgeries form the centerpiece of a new London show, which reveals a cat-and-mouse world of intrigue, deception and painstaking detective work. The exhibition, which opened at the Courtauld in Somerset House on Saturday, features around 25 drawings and seven paintings, as well as sculpture and decorative art from the renowned gallery's collection.

Armed with magnifying glasses, visitors can scrutinize purported masterpieces by Sandro Botticelli, John Constable, and Auguste Rodin. Visitors will learn how they were created, the methods of the most infamous forgers and the increasingly sophisticated methods used to detect them.

"Forgeries have always existed in the history of art and have a place in our study," Rachel Hapoienu, drawings cataloguer at the gallery, told AFP. Hapoienu highlighted one work thought to be by English artist Constable, which came from a sale from his daughter Isabel. "We thought we had a straight line back to the artist," said Hapoienu, but a shock discovery proved them wrong.

Shining a torch through the work revealed a watermark on the paper that dated it to the 1840s – after Constable had died. "There is a sizeable group of paintings and drawings that came from John Constable's children and grandchildren which were... probably made by one of his sons," said Hapoienu. "Whether they were trying to perpetrate fraud...is up or debate."

'National hero'

The show also highlights the infamous tale of British forger Eric Hebborn, who operated from 1950s until he was exposed in the 1970s. Hebborn was classically trained at the prestigious Royal Academy, winning many awards while a student. He struck up a close relationship with dealers and earned their trust by supplying them with genuine works, but mixed in his own forgeries. "He was really meticulous, and would make his own inks and chalks in

the manner of Renaissance artists and make sure he got the right paper," said Hapoienu. "He made a mistake when he had one piece of paper cut in half; one side he did a drawing by one artist, on the other side he did a drawing by an artist who lived a 100 years later," she added. "Both sheets ended up in the same collection... the curator happened to be looking at them next to each other and thought, 'How can this artist and this artist be working on the same sheet of paper?'"



A gallery assistant examines a copy of a work in the style of Flemish Renaissance painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder at a press view for "Art and Artifice: Fakes from the Collection" at The Courtauld Gallery in central London on June 16, 2023. – AFP photos

Hebborn, who was never convicted of a crime, claimed to have produced thousands of other forgeries, and was murdered in Rome in 1996. Also on show is a fake Vermeer created by Dutch forger Han van Meegeren, whose works often ended up in the hands of leading Nazis, including Hermann Goering. He was tried for collaborating with the enemy, "but got out of it by saying he had been tricking the enemy and therefore became a national hero," explained Karen Serres, curator of paintings at the gallery.

Rusty nails and bakelite

Serres also revealed some of the tricks of the trade used by leading forgers. Van Meegeren used bakelite to give his paintings an aged

appearance, while another fraudster used a fine brush to paint "cracks" onto his works. One renowned deceiver painted on a woodworm-riddled piece of wood to date his work and recommended using rusty nails to hold together panels.

But Serres also highlighted some of the tools used by investigators in their game of "cat-and-mouse". One painting, supposedly by Botticelli, aroused suspicion when one expert noted the similarity of its Madonna to the silent

movie stars of the 1920s. Analysis of pigments can also flag up fakes, and close scrutiny of brush strokes can reveal whether the creator was left- or right-handed. One fake was identified by bushes meticulously drawn outside a castle, which researchers realized weren't planted until after the work was purportedly created.

Alongside old-school detective work, the gallery also uses the latest technology, such as a machine that performs ultraviolet and infrared scans of works. "It's satisfying, you have found out the truth," Hapoienu said of the moment when a case is cracked. "If you are a dealer obviously it's a whole different story." – AFP

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Using YouTube and TikTok, CAR makeup artist defies odds

As a child, Djibril Gueye Marvin dreamed of being a makeup artist, no easy feat in the chronically unstable Central African Republic, where he faced ridicule for doing a "girl's job". Help came from an unusual source: The make-up tutorials that have flooded YouTube over the past decade, launching influencers across the globe and generating billions of dollars in beauty sales.

"There is no make-up school in Bangui, without YouTube tutorials I would not be where I am now," said the 23-year-old, nicknamed Djibou, who lives in the country's capital. Today, his services at a small Bangui beauty salon are highly sought after, and his TikTok account has more than 36,000 followers.

Djibou is all smiles, but life has not been easy in what the United Nations says is the world's second-least developed country, gripped by armed rebellion and daily violence. As he works on the face of a client in the cloying heat, the electricity cuts out – as it does several times a day – halting a whirling fan and cutting out the lights.

Unfazed, he moves his client towards the entrance to continue applying foundation in natural light. "I do what I can with what I have, but I always manage," said Djibou. His client agrees: "He is the best!"

'We all fled'

Djibou charges a minimum of 10,000 CFA francs (€15), admitting it is "not within everyone's reach" in a country where the minimum wage is only €44 a month. Getting the make-up brushes, foundations and eyeshadows he needs is also a "struggle". "I bring my products in from France or Nigeria, you can't do good work without good products," he said.

After growing up amid a brutal civil war, which broke out in 2013 when he was 13 years old, Djibou fell in love with the idea of "people being transformed, beautiful and chic". The mineral-rich Central African Republic has known little peace, with decades of coups and rebellions since independence from France in 1960.

But the 2013 coup, by mostly Muslim rebels, led to the bloodiest sectarian violence in the country's history as mainly Christian militias sought revenge against their Muslim foes. "One day, my little brother, little sister and I were almost killed by a rebel on our way to school, so we all fled, to Cameroon," said Djibou. Despite numerous peace agreements, armed groups and government forces backed by Russian mercenary group Wagner continue to clash,

Prejudice

Djibou also had to battle prejudice from a traditional society in his bid to

become a makeup artist, hearing a thousand times: "It is a girl's job." But he did not give up, and hid his makeup at his friends' houses when he was younger. "If my parents found it, they would destroy it, but I just kept buying more," he said. "I had to study for an international business license and prove myself as a makeup artist for them to accept my job," he added.



Djibril Gueye, also known as Djibou, the most popular Central African makeup artist poses in his beauty salon in Bangui on Jan 30, 2023. — AFP photos



Djibril Gueye applies final touches to a bride-to-be at his beauty salon.

Now, when he is criticized, he brushes it off. "I know they are a little jealous." Djibou shares his work, inspiration and stories about his daily life on his TikTok channel. With his face smeared in greenish-blue powder and gold glitter, Djibou poses in a dilapidated photo studio to show off his artistic makeup skills. "For my fans," he said. Later, he talks about the future, in the modest room he shares with one of his sisters, where a statue of the Virgin Mary, a Bible and rosary lie among the cosmetics scattered on his night table. "I want to go to a make-up school abroad, but I don't have the means," he said sadly. – AFP



Djibou sits on the rocks of the Oubangui river, one of his favorite places in Bangui, on April 15, 2023.

Lifestyle

One vision: The surgeon, the millionaire and 500,000 eyes

She never dances with her husband, but when the bandages were peeled from her eyes after a double cataract operation to cure her blindness, Nepali farmer Santi Maya leapt up to clasp his hands. "I am so happy," said Maya, who does not know how old she is, as the elderly couple swayed on the playground of a school converted into a temporary eye hospital.

"I can see the world," she cried. "Yesterday everything was closed. Today, I can see everywhere." Now she will be able to do household chores again and collect grass for the cattle, she added. Maya was one of more than 200 beneficiaries of a cataract treatment camp in Basantapur, a small town perched high on a Himalayan hillside.

It was run by a pioneering surgeon who has performed more than 130,000 operations, funded by a tech multimillionaire once jailed in the United States for mail fraud. The pair plan to restore the vision of 500,000 people worldwide by 2030. Nepal has one of the world's



In this photograph taken on March 3, 2023, patients wait for their eyes to be unbandaged following surgery at a cataract camp in Basantapur. — AFP photos



Eye surgeon Sanduk Ruit inserts a new lens into the eye of a cataract patient.

highest rates of cataracts, where the lens of the eye slowly clouds over, with vision blurring before giving way to blindness. It has multiple causes but in the developing world poverty is a key driver. For subsistence farmers whose livelihoods are marginal at the best of times, the impact can be devastating – and doubly so for their families, who lose a breadwinner and at the same time have to take on the burden of care.

"It feels like you have become a corpse," said farmer Rudra Prasad Nepal, 66, after his left eye was unwrapped. "I could not differentiate what is seed, what is fertilizer, what is pesticide and what to use," he explained. "If you are old and cannot see, you feel hated in your home or family."

'A Clockwork Orange'

Anaesthetized with an injection into the eyeball, each patient has their eyelids drawn back with retractors recalling a scene from "A Clockwork Orange". Surgeon Sanduk Ruit sliced into the cornea from the side, removing the clouded lens whole or cutting it up with an ultrasound knife, working barefoot to better adjust the pedals under the operating table that control his microscope's focus and suction.

He slid in a new lens matching the patient's vision prescription, made for as little as four dollars by his institute's factory in Kathmandu, before cauterizing the wound. Each operation was finished in around seven minutes. At 68, he is well into six figures for lifetime surgeries and has multiple international awards to his name, but remains keenly aware that every procedure "could change not only the vision of this patient, but the entire outcome of his life, his family". "That's not a small thing to be given responsibility" for, he added. But when he removes the bandages the next day and sees their reaction, "every time that makes me giggle".

Yak herders

Ruit grew up in Olangchung Gola, a remote village towards both the Chinese border and Kanchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain – and nine hours' walk from the nearest motorable dirt road. Culturally Tibetan, its people are Walung, one of the smallest groups in Nepal's ethnic patchwork, and largely yak herders and traders. It is an unlikely origin for a pioneering surgeon, but Ruit's father recognized his potential early and enrolled him at missionary school in Darjeeling, the best education he could afford. The pair took two weeks to walk to the institution, sometimes sleeping in caves along the way. As a teenager he moved to a school in Kathmandu where he shared a small room with his sister, until she contracted tuberculosis. "We were very close," he said. "She finally succumbed, a very sad part of my life," his voice still trailing away decades later. Before she died, weak and emaciated, the 13-year-old told him to do something "that will have impact on the peo-



Eye surgeon Sanduk Ruit gestures while speaking at his childhood home in Olangchung Gola village.



Eye surgeon Sanduk Ruit examines the eye of a patient following surgery at a cataract camp in Ta-



A patient is prepared for surgery.



Patients are being prepared for their cataract surgery.



Santi Maya leaps up to dance with her husband after her eyes are unbandaged following a double cataract operation at a surgical camp in Basantapur.

ple". Her words, he said, stuck in his mind. He qualified as a doctor and specialized in ophthalmology. "In such a short time, you can make a difference in so many people's life."

'Redemption'

Ruit had run cataract camps for years, and since the coronavirus pandemic has set up a foundation with Indian-born, British-based entrepreneur Tej Kohli to accelerate operations and train surgeons in several countries for a multiplier effect, and which brought AFP to the camp. Kohli, 64, has the trappings of wealth – a mansion in the English countryside and a collection of super-

cars – and declines to specify his net worth. He expects to spend at least \$100 million on the project this decade and describes the sum as "well within my limits".

It was not always thus. In the 1990s he pleaded guilty to multiple mail fraud charges in the United States over a multimillion-dollar real estate scam – he said an associate misled him – and was handed a nearly seven-year prison sentence. He served much of it at a military camp in Nevada and was released early but said it was "still a bad experience. And it taught me a lot".

An electrical engineering graduate, he set up a company in Costa Rica operating online payment systems and for a time owned a number of gaming web-

sites, when regulation was lax and Internet businesses boomed. His investment portfolio now includes an e-commerce platform, property interests and an artificial blood company in Florida. "If I were blind, I wouldn't want to live," he told AFP.

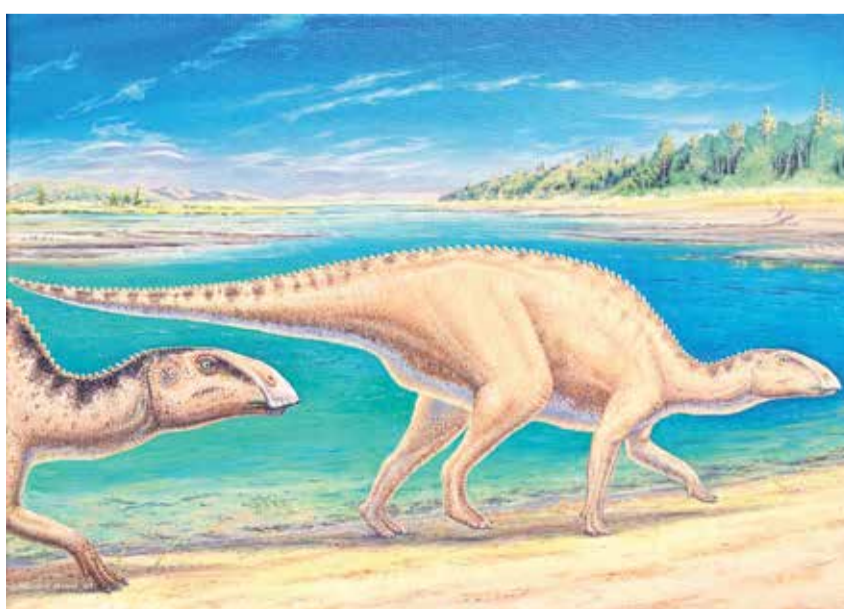
He believes needless blindness has been unfairly sidelined by donors, and that at around \$50 per operation all in, there is no better way to spend his fortune. "There is some element of redemption," he acknowledged. There are "hundreds of them, thousands of them. And when you scale it up, then you feel like you've done something good in life. "Not doing it is absolutely a crime in my humble opinion." — AFP

Remains of new species of duck-billed dino found in Chile

Remains of a species of herbivorous dinosaur previously unknown in the southern hemisphere have been discovered in Chile, challenging long-held beliefs about the range of duck-billed dinosaurs, scientists said. Measuring up to four meters in length and weighing a ton, Gonkoken nanoi lived 72 million years ago in the extreme south of what is now Chilean Patagonia.

"These were slender-looking dinosaurs, which could easily adopt a bipedal and quadrupedal posture to reach the vegetation at height and at ground level," said Alexander Vargas, director of the paleontological network of the University of Chile and one of the authors of the study published by the journal Science Advances and presented in Santiago.

The discovery demonstrated that Chilean Patagonia served as a refuge for very ancient species of hadrosaurs, a type of duck-billed dinosaur common in North America, Asia and Europe during the



Handout picture released on June 16, 2023 shows an illustration of a dinosaur whose remains were found in the Chilean Patagonia on June 8, 2023. — AFP photo

Cretaceous period, from 145 to 66 million years ago. Their presence in the remote southern lands surprised scientists, who will have to "understand how their ancestors got there,"

Vargas said. Gonkoken nanoi, the fifth species of dinosaur discovered in Chile, was actually found in 2013, kicking off a decade-long investigation. The



Handout picture released on June 16, 2023 shows the tibia of a dinosaur fossil at the Valle del Rio de las Chinas,



Chilean scientist Escarlet Zapata works on a dinosaur fossil in Santiago.

name Gonkoken comes from the Tehuelche language, the first inhabitants of the region, and means "similar to a wild duck or a swan." — AFP

Sports

Bangladesh crush Afghanistan; Taskin grabs career-best 4-37

The biggest Test victory margin by runs in nearly 90 years

News in Brief

Woods to miss British Open

LONDON: Tiger Woods will miss next month's British Open at the Royal Liverpool course as the American star recovers from surgery. Woods withdrew from the third round of the Masters in April due to injury and will not return in time for the British Open. Woods said he suffered plantar fasciitis at the Masters and the 47-year-old then had a subtalar fusion procedure in New York to address a problem caused by a previous fracture of a bone in his ankle joint. The 15-time major winner did not compete in the US PGA Championship at Oak Hill in May or this week's US Open at Los Angeles Country Club. Woods won a third British Open title at Royal Liverpool in 2006 in his first tournament since the death of his father Earl two months earlier. But British Open organizers have confirmed Woods will not make an emotional return to the Hoylake course in July. "We have been advised that Tiger won't be playing at Royal Liverpool," an R&A spokesman said. "We wish him all the best with his recovery." — AFP

Axelsen storms into semis

JAKARTA: Badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen swiftly routed Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen on Friday, storming into the Indonesia Open semi-finals, but women's world number one Akane Yamaguchi crashed out. Danish ace Axelsen is the defending Indonesia Open champion, and he played with an aura of invincibility in Jakarta, racing to a quarter-final victory over the world number eight 21-5, 21-19 in 39 minutes. "I think first set, I played really, really well. I came out really strong. I'm a little bit disappointed about my level in the second game," he told reporters. "But all in all, I'm really happy to be in the semi-final." He will face India's HS Prannoy in the last four. Japan's Yamaguchi had no such luck, falling to Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon in a three-game thriller. They were evenly matched in the first two games with scores of 18-21, 25-23, until the Thai player romped to victory in the decider 21-16. "I think my opponent played better today." — AFP

Furue grabs 1-stroke lead

GRAND RAPIDS: Japan's Ayaka Furue, chasing her first LPGA triumph on US soil, fired a bogey-free, five-under par 67 to seize a one-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the LPGA Meijer Classic. The 23-year-old from Kobe made five birdies to stand on 11-under 133 after 36 holes at Blythefield Country Club in Belmont, Michigan. "My shots and putting were really good. That worked for me," Furue said. "I just want to keep playing my golf and get confidence as well." South Koreans Amy Yang and Kim Hyo-joo, Ireland's Leona Maguire and Spain's Carlota Ciganda shared second on 134. World number 17 Furue, an eight-time winner on the Japan Tour, won her only LPGA title at last year's Scottish Open but has been impressive this season with five top-four finishes in her past nine events, including a runner-up effort at last month's LPGA Match-Play tournament. "I felt really happy to keep in the highest places before this week," she said. "That's why I could really get confidence." — AFP

Aston Villa appoint Monchi

LONDON: Aston Villa appointed highly-regarded Spaniard Monchi as their president of football operations. Villa landed a major coup as they convinced Monchi to leave his role as Sevilla director of football to move to the Premier League. The 54-year-old's time at Sevilla included seven Europa League titles, with the first coming in 2005-06 and the most recent this season. Three of those Europa triumphs were achieved with Sevilla being managed by current Villa boss Unai Emery in 2014, 2015 and 2016. "I am very excited to join Aston Villa, a great project which is striving for excellence from the Under-9s to the top level, and I completely share the vision of the owners," Monchi said. "I am also delighted and can't wait to work with Unai Emery again, one of the best managers in football." — AFP

Brighton, Dahoud ink deal

LONDON: Brighton announced the signing of midfielder Mahmoud Dahoud from Borussia Dortmund on a free transfer on Friday. The 27-year-old will join Albion on a four-year contract on July 1 following the expiry of his deal with the Bundesliga giants Syria-born Dahoud, who was capped twice by Germany in 2020, becomes the Premier League side's third signing of the summer following deals for Joao Pedro and James Milner. "I'm excited to have Mahmoud in my team," said Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi. "I wanted him when I was at Sassuolo and I'm sure he is going to be a top player for us." Dahoud began his career with Borussia Monchengladbach before moving to Dortmund in 2017. He went on to make 141 appearances for this season's Bundesliga runners-up, although his game time was restricted after he had surgery on his shoulder last year. — AFP

DHAKA: Bangladesh crushed Afghanistan by 546 runs Saturday to secure the biggest Test victory margin by runs in nearly 90 years, with Taskin Ahmed grabbing a career-best 4-37. The match ended in the extended opening session of the fourth day in Dhaka after a Taskin bouncer hit Zahir Khan, forcing the final batsman to retire hurt.

The visitors barely made a dent in the mammoth target of 662, giving the hosts the biggest Test win by runs since Australia's 562-run victory over England in 1934. "This win is obviously very satisfying," skipper Liton Das told reporters. "The batsmen should be given some credit because the wicket was not that easy," he added. "You cannot ask for more after winning by this kind of margin."

It was more than double Bangladesh's previous record win - by 226 runs over Zimbabwe at Chittagong in 2005. The Bangladesh triumph was all but guaranteed after they declared their second innings at 425-4 in Friday's final session. Afghanistan stumbled quickly, losing Ibrahim Zadran for a duck off the first ball of the innings and resuming on Saturday at a precarious 45-2. The tourists showed little improvement on the fourth day and lost wickets at regular intervals, with Taskin and Shoriful Islam leading the Bangladesh attack.

'Very disappointing'

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott lamented a "very disappointing" defeat to mark his side's first Test in more than two years. "There were some slight moments of good cricket from us, but not enough and not consistent enough," he said. Trott said the tourists were "lacking in all three disciplines" and needed to improve their mentality. "It's always good to have a Test match and play well, but not when you perform like that," he added. Taskin was denied his maiden five-wicket haul when he bowled last man Zahir Khan in the 33rd over of the innings, only for

Hamilton leads Russell in Mercedes one-two in Canada practice

MONTREAL: An upbeat Lewis Hamilton demonstrated his undimmed vim and speed on Friday when he led George Russell in a Mercedes one-two in a truncated and interrupted day's practice at the Canadian Grand Prix. The seven-time world champion topped the times in a best lap of one minute and 13.718 seconds to beat his team-mate by 0.027 seconds, the duo making the most of the best track conditions before heavy rain curtailed the action at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

"That was probably the bumpiest circuit we've been on for a long time," Hamilton said. "And it was such a strange day. We missed the first session because of an issue with the circuit's CCTV or something and I felt bad for the fans. The city here is really pumping and there were so many people out there, but I am glad we did finally get out and it was good to have an hour and a half even if we did not use all that time optimally."

"But this track. I love this place. This track is mega. From the moment you leave the pitlane - it's wicked. My car was not the greatest, but not the worst

Michael Jordan to sell majority stake in NBA's Hornets

NEW YORK: Basketball legend Michael Jordan has agreed to sell his majority stake in the NBA's Charlotte Hornets to an investment consortium, the team announced Friday. The buyer group is led by Gabe Plotkin, chief investment officer at Tallwoods Capital LLC, and Rick Schnall, co-president of private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier & Rice. The group also includes musicians J Cole and Eric Church, said a press release from Hornets Sports & Entertainment that did not disclose financial terms.

Jordan will retain a minority stake in the franchise, the team said. The transaction is subject to NBA approval. Jordan acquired a controlling investment in the Hornets in 2010 for \$275 million. The franchise has been the league's sole team with Black-majority ownership. Under the terms of the deal, the Hornets as a whole were valued at \$3 billion, according to the New York Times.

Other outlets have valued the Hornets at closer to \$1.7 billion. It was not clear how much of Jordan's initial stake he would retain. Often considered the greatest-ever basketball player, Jordan led teams

Morant suspended for 25 games over latest gun video

LOS ANGELES: Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant was suspended for 25 games by the NBA on Friday after being caught waving a gun in a social media video for the second time this year. Morant, one of the brightest young stars in the NBA, had already served an eight-game suspension in March after another video in which he flashed a firearm in a nightclub.

In a statement, NBA commissioner Adam Silver said Morant's latest suspension would send a message that the league will crack down on "reckless behavior" with firearms. "Ja Morant's decision to



DHAKA: Bangladesh's Taskin Ahmed (2nd left) celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of Afghanistan's Rahmat Shah (not pictured) during the fourth day of the Test cricket match between Bangladesh and Afghanistan on June 17, 2023. — AFP

the umpire to signal a no ball.

Afghanistan lost a wicket in the third over of the morning when Nasir Jamal edged Ebadot Hossain to the keeper. Shoriful, who claimed 3-28, forced Afsar Zazai to give a catch to Mehidy Hasan at gully five overs later. It brought Bahir Shah to the crease as a concussion sub for skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi, who retired hurt after he was hit by a Taskin bouncer on the third day. But Bahir also failed to survive long as Taskin forced him to give a catch to Taijul Islam at slip for seven.

by far and massively better than last year. "It's just so bumpy. We have to improve the ride control and balance in the corners and we should be all right." Hamilton has won seven times in Canada, a record he shares with Michael Schumacher. Hamilton is without a win since the 2021 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, the last of his record 103 victories.

Hamilton's Mercedes team technical director, James Allison, played down expectations despite the success and just 12 days after a double podium finish in Spain. "It's nice to be at the front and not the back, but don't read too much into it," he told Sky Sports F1. "We did our long run work first and our short runs at the end, when the track was its best before the rain." Russell added: "It looks like its going to be wet (Saturday) so let's see what it brings and try and get a big result here."

On an unusual day, the opening session was reduced to five minutes action following a technical failure of the circuit's CCTV systems - a move that resulted in organizers deciding to extend the later second session by 30 minutes. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and fellow-Spaniard Fernando Alonso, a two-time champion of Aston Martin, were third and fourth fastest ahead of Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari and defending double world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull.

Verstappen, the runaway leader of this year's title race, was unperturbed by Friday's unexpected

to six NBA titles, won the league's Most Valuable Player award five times and garnered two Olympic gold medals. He played his last game professionally in 2003. However, Jordan's tenure as the only Black owner of an NBA team has been less successful.

'On-court failure'

During his 13-year reign, Charlotte reached the playoffs just three times, losing in the first round on all three occasions. Last season, Charlotte finished one place off the bottom of the Eastern Conference at 27-55. Rumors of Jordan's interest in selling his stake have circulated for several weeks. Speaking on the eve of the NBA Finals last month, league commissioner Adam Silver said Jordan had "the absolute right to sell", but admitted he hoped to see more Black team owners in future.

"I would love to have better representation in terms of principal governors," Silver said. "It's a marketplace. It's something that if we were expanding that the league would be in a position to focus directly on that, but in individual team transactions, the market takes us where we are. I will say I know that increasingly our governors are focused on diversity in their ownership groups just as they are in their front office, so the trend lines have been positive over the last several years." News of Jordan's decision to sell up went largely unmentioned by commentators in Charlotte.

Charlotte Observer sports columnist Scott Fowl-

once again wield a firearm on social media is alarming and disconcerting given his similar conduct in March for which he was already suspended eight games," Silver said.

"The potential for other young people to emulate Ja's conduct is particularly concerning. Under these circumstances, we believe a suspension of 25 games is appropriate and makes clear that engaging in reckless and irresponsible behavior with guns will not be tolerated." Morant, who had already sought therapy to manage stress following his earlier suspension, said in a statement that he planned to spend the off-season working on his mental health. "I've had time to reflect and realize how much hurt I've caused," said Morant, who was suspended from team activities by the Grizzlies last month following the emergence of the latest gun video.

"I want to apologize to the NBA, the Grizzlies, my teammates and the city of Memphis. I'm spending the off-season and my suspension continuing to

Liton brought an end to Rahmat Shah's dogged innings of 30 from 73 balls with a catch behind the stumps off Taskin. Karim Janat showed some aggression, hitting two sixes before Taskin bowled him for 18. Spinner Mehidy Hasan joined the act by removing Amir Hamza for five to leave Afghanistan eight down, and Taskin did the rest. Bangladesh made 382 runs on a green wicket in the first innings and bowled out Afghanistan for 146 to take a 236-run lead. Afghanistan won the only other Test between the two teams when they beat Bangladesh by 224 runs at Chittagong in 2019. — AFP



MONTREAL: Esteban Ocon of France driving the (31) Alpine F1 A523 Renault on track during practice ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Canada at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve on June 16, 2023. — AFP

turn of events. He said his car had not felt set up yet for the kerbs and bumps of the track. "But with the weather, I think we expect there to be a few more surprises to come this weekend." Valtteri Bottas was seventh for Alfa Romeo ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull, local hero Lance Stroll in the second Aston Martin and Pierre Gasly of Alpine, whose driveshaft failure in the opening session caused the original red flag that ended that session. — AFP



RICHMOND: NBA Hall of Famer Michael Jordan and co-owner of 23XI Racing looks on from the 23XI Racing pit box during the NASCAR Cup Series Toyota Owners 400 at Richmond Raceway. — AFP

er said that Jordan's departure marked the "end of an era" as the NBA's only Black majority owner of a team. "But he failed as the Hornets owner in the way he would consider most important: he never turned Charlotte into a winner," Fowler wrote on Friday. "Jordan's reign as Charlotte's most famous sports owner ever was ultimately a PR success but an on-court failure." The Hornets sale marks the third change of franchise ownership in the NBA in the past year and coincides with a period in which team values are believed to have skyrocketed. — AFP



Ja Morant of the Memphis Grizzlies

work on my own mental health and decision making. "I hope you'll give me the chance to prove to you over time I'm a better man than what I've been showing." — AFP

Sports

Fowler rides rollercoaster to US Open lead; McIlroy lurks

Defending champ Fitzpatrick aces 15th at US Open

LOS ANGELES: Rickie Fowler got off to a blistering start then held on tight as Los Angeles Country Club struck back on Friday, taking a one-shot lead at the US Open in search of his first major championship. The former world number four, had eight birdies and six bogeys in his two-under-par 68 for a 10-under total of 130. Wyndham Clark carded a three-under-par 67 for 131 and was one stroke in front of Xander Schauffele and Rory McIlroy, who had six birdies in his last nine holes on the way to a 67 that left the Northern Ireland star poised to strike at the weekend for a fifth major title and his first in nine years.

Fowler set a US Open low-round record of 62 on Thursday that was matched by Schauffele as misty weather made for benign conditions on the LA Country Club North Course. With the course playing longer and firming up fast once the sun broke through in the afternoon, Fowler picked up right where he left off with three straight birdies to open his round. His ability to keep the birdies flowing - his 18 over 36 holes is another US Open record - let him overcome three three-putts, one from just off the green at the 11th which he answered with a 23-foot birdie at the 12th.

"The birdies are out there if you put yourself in the right position, but as you can see, bogeys are very easy to make," Fowler said. "You hit fairways and hit greens, yes, you can score well, but you get out of position and it's going to eat you up." Fowler managed to bounce back from his mistakes when he needed to. After a three-putt at 13 he rolled in a birdie putt from inside eight feet at the par-three 15th. Unable to get up and down from a greenside bunker at 16, he responded with his final birdie of the day at 17.

Fowler, once tipped as likely to win multiple majors, missed the past two US Opens as he remained mired in a slump that saw him drop to 185th in the world. "I'm looking forward to the weekend," he said. "It's been a while since I've felt this good in a tournament, let alone a major." But Fowler cautioned that

the 36-hole lead "means nothing." "(It's) a little different once you get to after 54 holes because that's when things really heat up," he said.

Clark is hoping to get a taste of that challenge after putting himself in a strong position in a bid for a first major - a month after he broke through for his first PGA Tour title at Quail Hollow. McIlroy, meanwhile, will be aiming to keep the pedal down after a searing finish to his round that got off to a rocky start with three bogeys and a birdie in his first nine holes.

DJ battles back

Four birdies in his last five holes included a tap-in at his final hole, the par-three ninth, where his tee shot nearly went in. Schauffele's challenge was in trouble after three straight bogeys at 13, 14 and 15, but he closed with birdies at 17 and 18 and signed for an even-par 70 to join McIlroy on 132. "It was big, just to keep myself in touch," Schauffele said of his birdie-birdie finish. Harris English was alone in fifth after a 66 for 133. Two-time major-winner Dustin Johnson remarkably headed a group on 134 despite a quadruple bogey eight at the par-four second hole.

Johnson was in a fairway bunker off the tee and entangled in a barranca on the way to his big number, but had five birdies and a bogey to wrestle his way to an even par 70. He was joined on six under with Australian Min Woo Lee, who had six birdies in an impressive five-under-par 65. "Definitely proud of the way I came back and finished off the round," Johnson said. World number one Scottie Scheffler carded a two-under par 68 to share eighth place with Sam Bennett on 135. British Open champion Cameron Smith was alone in 10th after a 67 for 136.

But there was frustration for a few other marquee players. Brooks Koepka was even par through 36 holes. Defending champion Matt Fitzpatrick had the excitement of a hole in one at the 15th - AFP but his even par 70 left him one-over par. Masters champion Jon Rahm's opening eagle was a lone bright spot in a three-over-par 73 that saw him make the cut on the number at two-over par. Notable names who didn't



LOS ANGELES: Rickie Fowler of the United States prepares to putt on the 18th green during the second round of the 123rd US Open Championship at The Los Angeles Country Club on June 16, 2023. — AFP

make it included Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth, and six-time US Open runner-up Phil Mickelson.

Defending champ

The hole-in-one count kept climbing Friday at the US Open, where defending champion Matt Fitzpatrick aced the 120-yard par-three 15th in the second round. England's Fitzpatrick became the third player in two days to notch a hole in one at one of Los Angeles Country Club's more intriguing holes after France's Matthieu Pavon and American Sam Burns did so on Thursday. Fitzpatrick notched his first hole

in one as a professional, and became the first defending champion to ace a hole at the US Open.

Fitzpatrick didn't see his tee shot at 15 spin into the cup, although he felt it was "dead center" coming off his sand wedge. He was alerted by the roar from the gallery and let out a yell himself, high-fiving playing partners Cameron Smith and Sam Bennett. "My hand was a bit sore afterward, I'll be honest, after all the high fiving," Fitzpatrick said. The eagle helped ensure that Fitzpatrick will play the weekend. After an even par second round, he was one-over for the tournament with the cutline projected at two-over. — AFP

Son-less South Korea lose in Peru friendly

BUSAN: South Korea fell 1-0 to Peru in a friendly on Friday, with the hosts missing their talisman Son Heung-min and top defender Kim Min-jae. Bryan Reyna scored the only goal in the 11th minute in Busan as Tottenham Hotspur star Son, recovering from a recent sports hernia surgery, watched from the bench. Centre-back Kim, who won the Serie A title with Napoli, is completing his mandatory South Korean military training this month.

His absence was felt by the hosts as an unmarked Reyna scored from a Paolo Guerrero pass. Peru nearly doubled their lead in the 19th minute when Reyna teed up Guerrero but the shot went just wide. "The first 20, 25 minutes, you could see that our back line hasn't played together yet," South Korean coach Jurgen Klinsmann said.

South Korea's first real chance came in the 33rd minute when Mallorca's Lee Kang-in shot from the edge of the box and forced Peruvian keeper Pedro Gallese to make his first save of the evening. Still winless under the recently appointed Klinsmann, South Korea ramped up the pressure in the second half. Oh Hyeon-gyu found himself one-on-one with Gallese during a counterattack just past the hour mark but failed to score. Lee Kang-in and substitute Cho Gue-sung later failed to make their headers count. Cho got another opportunity in the 89th minute but sent his header high and wide from a corner. "I think the second half was all us," said Klinsmann, who previously coached Germany, the USA and Bayern Munich. "We had enough chances to



BUSAN: South Korea's Park Kyu-hyun (right) fights for the ball with Peru's Christian Cueva (2nd right) during the friendly football match between South Korea and Peru on June 16, 2023. — AFP

score one or two goals to win the game but unfortunately we didn't finish it." Despite the defeat, the former German striker struck an optimistic note: "Overall, the energy is very good, the spirit is very, very good among the players." Peru manager Juan Reynoso said he was looking to

build on the win. "South Korea are a great team who played at the World Cup. I am really happy we played so well against them," he said. "But we're not going to stop here. We will keep trying to get better." South Korea's next test is against El Salvador on Tuesday. — AFP

Pulisic double fires US over Mexico as Canada advance

LAS VEGAS: Christian Pulisic scored twice as the United States beat Mexico 3-0 on Thursday to set up a CONCACAF Champions League final showdown with Canada after a stormy battle that saw both sides finish with nine men. Chelsea winger Pulisic opened the scoring in the 37th minute and then drove in a second a minute after the interval, slotting home a low cross from Tim Weah, who had been sent clear down the right by a fine long pass from Weston McKennie.

The game at Las Vegas's Allegiant Stadium turned ugly in the 69th minute when Cesar Montes was shown a red card for an ugly wild kick at US debutant Folarin Balogun and McKennie was also dismissed for his role in the fracas which followed. Substitute Riccardo Pepi made sure of the win with the American's third goal in the 78th minute after an offside flag was over-ruled after a VAR review.

Two more red cards followed in the 85th minute when Mexico's Gerardo Arteaga and the US's Sergino Dest were sent off after another mass brawl. The match was stopped in the final minutes due to a homophobic chant from Mexico supporters, triggering the stadium warnings of a potential suspension of the game. There were also objects and drinks thrown from the stands on to the field and the referee blew for time with around half of the announced 12 minutes off stoppage time still to play.

Pulisic expressed satisfaction with the result but frustration that the game was allowed to spiral out of control. "It's a great scoreline for us, it's a big win and we're into the finals," Pulisic said. "But the game didn't need to turn into all this madness that it did." "They really need to control the game much more. It's sad. And now we're missing two good players just because everyone's losing their heads." "I'm a little bit upset but at the end of the day we're in the finals."

American goalkeeper Matt Turner, who had to deal with the loud shouts of the homophobic slur when kicking the ball in the latter stages of the game, said the behavior was unacceptable. "It goes against everything that we stand for on our side. We've been very open and vocal about the strength of our team being our diversity, strength of our nation being its diversity. So to use something so divisive during a game, a spirited game, and maybe the play sort of set off the flares in the stands, but it has no place in the game," he said. — AFP

Croatia aiming for first trophy against boosted Spain

ROTTERDAM: Luka Modric has been Croatia's driving force on the way to Sunday's Nations League final, where they could earn their first ever major trophy against a Spain team he knows inside out. Questions surround the veteran midfielder, 37, over his future both in international football and at club level with Real Madrid, with his contract set to end this month. Before resolving them, Croatia captain Modric is aiming to lead his country, with a population of only four million people, to glory in Rotterdam at De Kuip.

The Balkan nation has consistently over-performed

on the world stage over the past 25 years, starting with their third place finish at the 1998 World Cup. They followed that up by reaching the 2018 World Cup final, where they were beaten by France, and again finished third in Qatar last year, eliminating favorites Brazil along the way. "We have once again become a powerhouse in football, showing that despite all our problems, we have quality and character," said Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic. "Now we need to stay calm and smart, not rush anywhere, towards that gold. That's my great wish... bronze, silver and gold."

Modric, who made his international debut in 2006, earned his 165th international cap against the Netherlands on Thursday. He converted a penalty to help fire Croatia into the Nations League final with a 4-2 extra-time triumph, one step closer towards that elusive "gold". The midfield maestro pulled the strings for his country, getting the better of Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong, but Manchester City's Rodri will provide an even

sterner test. City's Champions League final hero is the key piece in Luis de la Fuente's La Roja, who are still finding their footing. Joselu's later winner to help them beat Italy in Enschede calmed the storm around Spain and they can end a trophy drought of over a decade, with their last triumph coming in Euro 2012. With Luis Enrique at the helm they lost in the 2021 Nations League final against France, a couple of months after they defeated Croatia in a thrilling 5-3 triumph to reach the Euro 2020 semi-finals.

Despite having the richer history on paper, thanks to their 2008 and 2012 Euros wins and lifting the 2010 World Cup, as well as having a greater player pool to draw from, Spain will not underestimate Croatia or Modric. "Luka Modric is another example of a sportsman, a player that at his age still has that hunger and ambition to win things, he's never tired of it," said Joselu. "He's an example for all kids out there and another sign that age means nothing." — 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
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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, (Ahmedi), holder of Indian Passport No. N7017922, having permanent address (State: Rajasthan, Country: India, Pin Code: 314025) residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Ahmed Husami Ahmedi (given name) and Husami (surname). (#3807) 15-06-2023

England, France cruise to Euro qualifying wins; Wales stunned

Mbappe among scorers as France see off Gibraltar



FARO: France's forward Kylian Mbappe controls the ball during the UEFA Euro 2024 group B qualification football match between Gibraltar and France at the Algarve stadium in Faro. — AFP

PARIS: England and France cruised to victories over international minnows in Euro 2024 qualifying on Friday, but Wales saw their hopes of reaching next year's finals in Germany suffer a setback in a 4-2 home defeat by Armenia. Gareth Southgate's

goals in three games in this campaign with a penalty to make it 3-0. Substitute Callum Wilson then completed the scoring late on from another spot-kick awarded for a handball following a VAR check. "Of course we know we have the quality to win the game and then it's about the mentality. I thought that was excellent from the start," said Southgate. England are six points clear of Ukraine, Italy and North Macedonia, albeit having played one match more. While Italy are currently involved in the Nations League finals, Ukraine got their first points with a stunning comeback to win 3-2 in North Macedonia. An Enis Bardhi penalty and a brilliant curling strike from Napoli's Eljif Elmas had North Macedonia - who qualified for Euro 2020 - two goals up. Bournemouth defender Illia Zabarnyi pulled one back for Ukraine just after the hour mark and they then equalized through Yukhym Konoplia. North Macedonia, who visit England on Monday, were reduced to 10 men before Viktor Tsygankov headed in a cross from Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk with seven minutes left to complete the comeback.

scored more goals," said France coach Didier Deschamps. The World Cup runners-up are top of Group B with a maximum nine points from three games, leaving them three points clear of Greece, who beat the Republic of Ireland 2-1 in Athens. Captain Tasos Bakasetas gave the hosts the lead from a penalty before Nathan Collins equalized, but Giorgos Masouras got the winner for Greece, who visit France on Monday.

Ireland ended the game with 10 men after Matt Doherty's late sending-off. Wales have qualified for the last two European Championships and reached the knockout stages both times, but their chances of making Euro 2024 are in the balance after going down to Armenia in Cardiff. Daniel James put Wales ahead but Argentina-born Lucas Zelarayan and German-born youngster Grant-Leon Ranos both scored twice for Armenia. Harry Wilson pulled another one back for Wales, but they had Kiefer Moore sent off towards the end and are currently third in Group D, two points behind leaders Turkey, who won 3-2 in Latvia.

Denmark edge N Ireland

Turkey twice threw away a lead, with Kristers Tobers scoring Latvia's second goal in the 94th minute. However, Irfan Can Kahveci headed in the winner a minute later. Denmark edged out Northern Ireland 1-0 in Copenhagen to sit at the top of four teams all on six points in Group H. Jonas Wind of Wolfsburg scored the winner, although Callum Marshall was denied an injury-time equalizer for Northern Ireland after a lengthy VAR check discovered an offside. Kazakhstan and Finland also moved onto six points after beating San Marino (3-0) and Slovenia (2-0) respectively. Switzerland won 2-1 in Andorra to make it three victories out of three in Group I. They are two points above Romania, who drew 0-0 in Kosovo, while Israel scored two late goals to beat Belarus 2-1 in Budapest. — AFP

England scored twice from the penalty spot as they eased to a 4-0 win away to a Malta side ranked 172nd in the world and kept up their perfect record in Group C. Malta defender Ferdinando Apap turned Bukayo Saka's cross into his own net to give England an early lead, and Trent Alexander-Arnold made it 2-0 with a superb strike.

Harry Kane, who became England's all-time top scorer during the last international window in March, made it three

Giroud, Mbappe on target
Kylian Mbappe put speculation over his future at Paris Saint-Germain to one side as he captained France and scored in their 3-0 win over Group B outsiders Gibraltar in Faro, Portugal. Olivier Giroud's early header put France ahead and Mbappe added a penalty awarded for handball in first-half stoppage time. France got their third late on when Aymen Mouelhi scored an own goal, turning in Mbappe's low cross. "The objective was to win and get the job done but we should have

Chiefs outmuscle ACT Brumbies 19-6

WELLINGTON: The Waikato Chiefs outmuscled the ACT Brumbies 19-6 on Saturday to set up an all-New Zealand clash in the Super Rugby Pacific final against the Canterbury Crusaders. All Blacks lock Brodie Retallick crossed for the only try of a grinding semi-final encounter with two minutes remaining to seal victory and ensure Hamilton will also host next Saturday's final. Retallick was one of just two survivors from the Chiefs side that last won a Super Rugby title, when they defended their crown in 2013.

The Chiefs lost only once in the regular season to qualify first for the knock-out phase. The final will be a fascinating contest, laden with All Blacks and featuring a Crusaders side chasing a seventh successive crown after coming off a 52-15 semi-final trouncing of the Auckland Blues on Friday. Chiefs co-captain Brad Weber was relieved after his team notched a 15th win from 16 matches.

"I feel like we have probably won in every way possible this season and that was a hell of a grind against a good Brumbies team," said Weber, who is poised to join Stade Francais. "Couldn't ask for anything more

than that. (I'm) stoked that it's against the Crusaders too, they have been the benchmark for what feels like 90 percent of my career. "If we want to be the best, we have to beat the best."

Wet conditions in Hamilton created a conservative spectacle, with neither the Chiefs nor Brumbies prepared to take risks. The game became a tactical contest, with both sides kicking often, choosing not to run the ball at defensive lines that were offering few chinks. Outside half Damian McKenzie was again a key figure for the Chiefs, landing all four of his penalty shots and converting Retallick's try, which he helped to set up with a half-break. McKenzie's boot put the hosts 6-3 ahead at halftime, while opposite Noah Lolesio landed penalties for the Brumbies either side of the interval.

Wallabies playmaker Lesolie entered the game late in the first half as a replacement for the injured Jack DeBreczeni. The wait for another title goes on for the Brumbies, who were crowned champions in 2001 and 2004. Captain Nic White praised the spirit of Australia's only team to qualify for the semi-finals. "We knew it was going to be a hell of a wrestle, we said all week we were going to come over here and throw everything at them and we did," he said. "Fair play to them, they held on, we held on - it was always going to come down to one moment. They are a good side, but certainly we did everything we could out there." — AFP



HAMILTON: Chiefs' Josh Ioane is tackled during the Super Rugby semifinal match between the Waikato Chiefs and ACT Brumbies on June 17, 2023. — AFP

Pitch invader detained after hugging Messi

BEIJING: Chinese police detained a young football fan and barred him from stadiums for a year after he invaded the pitch and embraced Lionel Messi during an Argentina-Australia friendly in Beijing, authorities said Friday. The jersey-clad man ran onto the pitch at the Worker's Stadium midway through the match's second half on Thursday night and scored a hug from his idol before being chased down by guards.

The crowd roared and clapped at the man's antics, but police were not amused. "The Chaoyang District public security bureau has already imposed administrative detention on him in accordance with the law," police said in a statement on Friday, identifying the 18-year-old by his surname Di.

Police ordered Di not to attend matches at stadiums for the next twelve months. "Di also expressed remorse for his actions and accepted the punishment from the public security organ," the statement added, without specifying how long Di had been detained or whether he had been released. Messi is idolized in football-mad China, where the underperforming national team and struggling domestic league are chronic sources of disappointment. More than 50,000 people in Beijing braved the searing heat on Thursday to watch Messi lead his team to a 2-0 win over the Socceroos.

Many donned replica shirts bearing Messi's name, while others wore blue-and-white face paint and waved miniature Argentina flags. Hundreds of fans had massed outside the team's luxury hotel earlier in the week and lined heavily guarded streets in the hopes of catching a glimpse of their hero. One fan told AFP he had hidden inside the janitor's closet at the Argentinean team's hotel hoping to get close to Messi. He was caught and questioned by hotel security before being released. — AFP



BEIJING: A pitch invader is escorted by security personnel during a friendly football match between Australia and Argentina at the Workers Stadium in Beijing. — AFP

Teams withdraw from Tour in wake of Maeder tragedy

GENEVA: The Tudor Pro Cycling and Intermarche teams withdrew on Saturday from the Tour of Switzerland following the death of Swiss cyclist Gino Maeder. Maeder, who rode for Team Bahrain Victorious, fell into a ravine in the downhill finale of Thursday's fifth stage and succumbed to his injuries aged 26 on Friday. His team withdrew on Friday and they were joined by Swiss outfit Tudor and Belgian rivals Intermarche prior to Saturday's seventh stage.

Their withdrawals comes despite organizers saying they had decided to proceed with the remainder of the race after consulting both the teams and the rider's family. Tudor, though, tweeted it could not carry on. "After careful consideration and talking to both riders and staff, the team decided not to continue racing this year's Tour de Suisse," Tudor tweeted. "Under these difficult circumstances we feel it is the human way to respect the feelings of our riders and pay respect to Gino," it added.

Intermarche followed suit. "After consultations with our riders and staff, we have decided to withdraw from the Tour of Switzerland," Intermarche posted on social media. "Our priority is to respect the mental health of our riders." Following the news of his death, the cyclists took part in a 20km ride in his honor re-



LA PUNT-CHAMUES-CH: A picture shows the curve where Swiss rider Gino Maeder fell during a high-speed descent of the fifth stage of the Tour of Switzerland cycling race above La Punt-Chamues-ch. — AFP

placing the sixth stage. Organizers however decided against cancelling the tour altogether. "After an emotional day and a very touching ride in memory of Gino Maeder, it was decided in consultation with the family of Gino Maeder that the Tour of Switzerland will continue," the race director Olivier Senn said Friday.

Maeder's death sparked many tributes led by two-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar,

who posted on Instagram: "Rest in peace (heart icon) I will miss you." Pogacar's fellow Slovenian and recently-crowned Giro d'Italia winner Primož Roglic tweeted: "Speechless." The seventh stage on Saturday was due to take the cyclists on an 184-kilometre ride from Tubach to Weinfelden. The eighth and final stage Sunday is a 26-km time-trial between St Gallen and Abtwil. — AFP