

Polestar 2
Why wait to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



4 360 driving licenses revoked for exceeding penalty points



10 Chinese tech giant Alibaba names new CEO, chairman



12 Influencer Andrew Tate indicted for human trafficking in Romania



14 Paris Olympics organizers in turmoil after police raid HQ



Deputy Amir opens new Assembly, warns no time to waste in crises



HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he arrives to deliver a speech.

- Premier vows to accelerate reforms in all fields
- MPs elect Saadoun as speaker, Mutair as deputy

- Ghanem objects to appointment of first deputy PM
- Assembly elects committees, extends current term



KUWAIT: MPs attend the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term of the National Assembly on June 20, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah inaugurated the new National Assembly on Tuesday and issued a stern warning that no more time should be wasted in conflicts and crises. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah said the Kuwaiti people sent a clear message through the June 6 parliamentary elections that they totally reject tensions and disputes

between the government and the Assembly.

MP Mubarak Al-Hubaini, who chaired the inaugural session being the oldest member, said the government and Assembly must cooperate to achieve comprehensive political and legislative reforms to benefit citizens. The Assembly then unanimously elected Ahmad Al-Saadoun as speaker of the house after his only competitor, newcomer MP Dawood Marafie, withdrew. Marafie said he had announced his candidacy to draw attention of young people in Kuwait.

The Assembly later elected MP Mohammad Al-Mutair as the deputy speaker with 32 votes, defeating Hubaini, who got 14 votes. Both Saadoun and Mutair were speaker and deputy speaker in the scrapped 2022 Assembly. Before the election of speaker, former three-time speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem demanded to speak, but was prevented by the chairperson because debate before electing the speaker and other office bearers is not allowed. However, Ghanem spoke without a microphone,

protesting at a member taking a picture of his voting ballot, saying this is illegal. Later, Ghanem told the Assembly that he objects to the appointment of the second deputy premier and defense minister (Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah) because it violates article 125 of the constitution and a constitutional court ruling, adding that nothing will scare him and he will talk. After the session, Ghanem told reporters that he was not allowed to speak in violation of the

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait denies player abused Irish opponent

PARIS: The Kuwait Football Association on Tuesday denied that a match between their Olympic team and Ireland's under-21s the day before was abandoned because of racist abuse by one of their players. "The Kuwait Football Association condemns the announcement made by the Irish Football Association through its official Twitter account, regarding the alleged racism directed towards one of their players during the friendly match between Kuwait Olympic Team and the Irish team," said a statement.

The match, which the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) said was played in Bad Radkersburg, Austria, and the Kuwaiti statement said was in Slovenia, was abandoned in the second half. "Kuwait Football Association confirms that the circulated news is false, and it categorically rejects such accusations, especially considering the match did not reach completion due to excessive roughness and tension

Continued on Page 6

Air, sea search for sub missing near Titanic

BOSTON: Rescue teams expanded their search underwater Tuesday as they raced against time to find a deep-diving tourist submersible that went missing near the wreck of the Titanic with five people on board and limited oxygen. All communication was lost with the 6.5-m Titan craft during a descent Sunday to the Titanic, which sits at a depth of crushing pressure nearly four kilometers below the surface of the North Atlantic.

The submersible was carrying three fee-paying passengers — British billionaire Hamish Harding, and Pakistani tycoon Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman. The US and Canadian Coast Guards have deployed ships and planes in an intensive search for the vessel, which is equipped with just four days of oxygen. Rear Admiral John Mauger, leading the search, told ABC News that rescuers had scoured an area of about 13,000 sq km.

Mauger said a P-3 plane from Canada has dropped sonar buoys in the area of the Titanic wreckage to listen for any sound from the small sub. He added

Titanic tourist submersible
Craft went missing during a dive to the Titanic wreck in the North Atlantic

TITAN
Equipped with a toilet, cameras, controls and sonar screens

- Capacity: 5 (1 pilot + 4 crew)
- Life support: 96 hours (for 5 people)
- Operator: OceanGate Expeditions

Height: 2.5 m
Width: 2.8 m
Length: 6.7 m
Weight: 10,432 kg
Speed: 5.56 kph

Pressure vessel: carbon fibre and titanium

Thrustors

Viewport

RMS Titanic wreck around 4,000 m underwater

TITAN takes around 2 hours each to descend and ascend

Source: OceanGate

AFP

ed that the search, initially restricted to the ocean's surface, is now going under water as well. France's oceanographic institute said it was sending a deep-sea underwater robot to aid efforts. In an Instagram message posted just before the dive, Harding said a mission window had opened after days of bad weather.

Among the crew he named was Paul-Henry Nargeolet, a veteran diver and expert on the Titanic wreck.

Unconfirmed reports said the fifth person on board was Stockton Rush, the CEO of OceanGate Expeditions which operates the tourist dives. The Titan lost contact with the surface less than two hours into its descent, according to authorities. "We are exploring and mobilizing all options to bring the crew back safely. Our entire focus is on the crewmembers in

Continued on Page 6

4 Zionists shot dead near West Bank settlement

AL-LUBBAN ASH-SHARQIYA: Four people were shot dead Tuesday near a settlement in the occupied West Bank, Zionist officials said, a day after an army raid in the territory left six Palestinians dead. The attack took place at a petrol station near the Eli settlement, south of Nablus. Four other people were wounded, according to the Zionist entity's Magen David Adom (MDA) emergency services.

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and the territory, excluding east Jerusalem, is now home to around 490,000 Zionists who live in settlements considered illegal under international law. An MDA spokesperson said its medics confirmed four fatalities but their nationalities were not immediately available. Media reports said all four were Zionists. An AFP photographer saw Zionist police officers inspecting a partially-covered body, as soldiers and medics stood nearby. The area around the gas station and an adjacent restaurant were sealed off with police tape.

Continued on Page 6



Local

Recurring blackouts leave Salwa residents baffled, exhausted

Kuwait no stranger to failures despite being oil-rich

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: People living on a residential street in Salwa woke up Tuesday dawn to the smell of diesel and a loud noise disturbing the otherwise quiet area. The source of the polluting commotion? Three generators that emergency teams at the electricity ministry had placed temporarily after power outages paralyzed residents' lives for two nights in a row. "It's frustrating," said one resident on Monday night who asked to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions. "They've been trying to restore power since last night. They managed to fix it Sunday night, but the power went out again Monday at around 9 pm."

Power was down for a total of nine hours Sunday and Monday, with a whopping six-hour outage that began Monday night and continued into the early hours of Tuesday. Lights flickered and appliances turned on and off several times as emergency workers dressed in yellow vests attempted to investigate and remedy the source of the disruption.

According to some residents, some apartments had electricity in half of the rooms, while the other half was shrouded in darkness. "That actually helped because one of the two air-conditioners in the apartment continued working, so my family didn't have to suffer in the heat," said the unnamed man. Temperatures on Monday night reached 33 degrees Celsius.

Repairing the electrical failure, which is reportedly due to a damaged underground cable, was expected to take a few days, a man living in the area heard from the team dispatched by the ministry to handle the issue. But residents were baffled to see the generators removed without a trace less than eight hours after they were installed. "This is ridiculous. Am I expected to believe that they fixed a damaged cable so quickly?" said the man. "They probably used a band-

aid solution and didn't fix the underlying problem."

Record-breaking loads

Despite being an oil-rich country, Kuwait is no stranger to blackouts. The issue is exacerbated by the hot summer season, when people spend more time indoors with air-conditioners on full blast, putting extra pressure on the country's electrical grid. On June 12, Kuwait's electrical load indicator reached 15,764 megawatts at 2:30 pm. In 2022, the indicator peaked at 16,180 megawatts, according to local media, meaning the country will likely reach record-breaking loads as temperatures continue to rise.

The electricity ministry reportedly expects loads to near 17,000 megawatts, only 10,000 megawatts less than the country's estimated capacity of 18,000 megawatts. In a 2020 interview with local media, an official with the ministry said violations, such as tampering with electrical fuses and meters, lead to more frequent blackouts. These illegal practices, he said, are very common in areas with farms, horse stables and animal sheds, including Kabd, Abdaly and Wafra.

Between June 3-4 this year alone, electricity was disconnected in three residential areas — Doha, South Sabah Al-Salem and Gharnata — due to power boxes in the areas' power plants going out of commission, the ministry reported on Twitter at the time.

Same problem, different year

Power outages also seem to be a chronic problem for the Salwa street — the same thing happened last summer, according to another resident who also asked to remain unnamed. And the way the electricity ministry has been dealing with the issue has not changed much, either. Power generators remained in place for "weeks" in 2022 as repairs were carried out, said the resident. Just



A power box placed at the front of one of the buildings on the street was left wide open for hours after workers connected it to one of the generators.



KUWAIT: An emergency team from the ministry of electricity placed generators, seen in the photo, six hours after power was disconnected from a Salwa street on Monday. — Photo by Nebal Snan

as the case on Sunday, last year's outage was also caused by damage to one of the underground cables, the repair of which had electricity ministry teams drilling into the street.

"Had there been regular maintenance to the electrical grid, this wouldn't have happened," said a female resident who asked to remain anonymous. "It's a trend we see across Kuwait, where the lack of maintenance leads to the shutdown of many projects after neglect renders them a hazard to the public."

Speaking to Kuwait's state media agency KUNA in April, then Electricity Minister Mutlaq Al-Otaibi said the ministry is "prepared to face the summer season". Otaibi added that the ministry had completed 78 percent of the maintenance work needed to ensure power generation and water desalination plants

continue to fulfill the country's needs.

Inconvenient repairs

While the generators provided temporary relief for a majority of residents, some said having them on the street was also an inconvenience. At least three people living in the area were called out of their apartments at around 2 am to remove their vehicles and park them elsewhere to make space for the massive power supply units. The installation process was also far from seamless, they said.

"I moved my car as I was told; then (the workers) told me they don't need my parking spot, so I moved it back. But as I was doing that, they told me to move it again. This happened twice," said one exasperated resident.

There was back and forth with bringing over the generators as well. Accord-

ing to a witness, the maintenance team brought over three generators early Monday night, but later realized they were too large to fit without blocking all residents' vehicles. The witness added that workers did not have enough insulation and asked residents for trash bags to use instead. A power box placed at the front of one of the buildings was left wide open for hours after workers connected it to one of the generators, said another resident who feared it would put people at risk.

The electricity ministry had announced on Twitter a series of power outages to affect all six governorates between June 18-22. The tweet, which said electricity will be disconnected to carry out repairs to some of the secondary transformers in these areas, did not include Salwa on the list.

Bias against divorced women still rampant, but change coming

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Social media has not only connected people, but also helped the world improve its awareness and change its views toward many traditional negative ideas and habits. Marrying a divorced woman (with or without children) is one of the issues that social media has accelerated in reducing stereotyping among people. Meanwhile, many people still believe marrying or having a relationship with a divorced woman is unacceptable, with this thought prevalent all around the world and not in specific cultures.

Kuwait Times discussed with people their opinion about this matter and asked them what the main reasons are for societies not accepting them, and how social media has decreased stereotyping such women.

Saad Rashed said conservative societies think women should always have the perfect specifications. "They want her to cook well, raise children, take care of her husband and also be beautiful, almost with superpowers. When a woman is divorced, they subconsciously think she lacks one of these specifications, and that's why they reject her," he said.

"On the other hand, in societies that are less conservative, they think having a relationship with or marrying a divorced woman or a widow will not give them the perfect image they want to portray to the world. People are always looking for perfection in other people's eyes, and that's why they avoid taking this step," he added.

Rashed said over the years, men have started to become more aware about this issue, and many realized women who have been through a failed marriage are more mature and understandable about married life, and social media has helped a lot in delivering this message. "Not only women — men who have been through this experience become more open to life and more respecting of women," he said.

Social media, which is full of human experiences, is changing the opinions of generations, who have become more lenient about the strict thoughts they have. Sanaa Omar, an expat, said many women are still suffering from discrimination due to being divorced, whether acceptance by the husband's parents or the stress women face from the society that always blames her for being divorced. "People should understand that every person has the right to choose whether to stay in a relationship or not, but due to people's interference in others' lives, some people are afraid to take this step, although they might think that the divorcee (male or female) is the right person for them," she said.

Regarding the effect of openness and social media in changing the general stereotype of divorced women, Omar said that everything today is encouraging people to change their lame ideas about many things. "We see examples of a happy couple, where one of them was divorced, and some of them with children too. Also, there are people who are always sharing awareness on this issue. It takes one step from us to shake these old traditional thoughts, whether by men accepting divorced and widowed women and vice versa," she added.

Amthal Ali told Kuwait Times her sister faced the same issue for years, but due to the great support from their family, she was able to face the stress from society. Also, because she was young when she got divorced, her friends were more understanding, as they were more open than the older generations. "Finally, she met a man who rejected the idea that there is even an issue in being divorced, and believed it was her choice to separate," Ali said.

Dasman Diabetes Institute holds mobile clinic

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) organized an awareness campaign at the Martyr's office where the institute's mobile clinic was on hand to carry out tests and medical examinations for office employees.

DDI Public Relations Director Tareq Abdullah Al-Eryan said the institute participated through its medically equipped mobile clinic in carrying out basic and preventive tests such as blood sugar level, blood pressure, vital signs in addition to other services, out of the institute's belief in the importance of carrying out early tests and awareness about diabetes to contribute to the prevention from this disease and its complications, as it forms a major burden on both the patient and his family that in addition to the health system.

The medical team gave medical consultations about diabetes and its complications and answered questions about health aspects in general.

There were booklets about vital topics such as diabetes, pilgrimages, physical activity, insulin

First of 75 flights carrying pilgrims to take off Friday

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Flights to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj will begin Friday June 23, as 75 flights will be operated to transport 9,000 pilgrims by five Kuwaiti and Saudi airlines. Deputy Director-General for Planning and Projects Affairs and official spokesperson of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Saad Al-Otaibi said. Kuwait has affirmed its readiness to meet the needs of the pilgrims and ensure the pilgrims' safe arrival to Saudi Arabia.

Abdulaziz Al-Shatti, Head of the Public Relations Committee of the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission, affirmed in a statement that the committee is receiving and answering calls of pilgrims while coordinating with the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission and hajj campaign owners. "The committee also coordinates with the ministry of health regarding any emergency and to provide needed medicines or hospital admissions," he added. Mishaa Shuwais, a member of the Services Committee of the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission, said in a statement to KTV that the mission's members had arrived in the sacred places in Saudi Arabia to serve the guests and arrange what pilgrims need in terms of services, food and others.

Earlier, Director of the Operations Department at the General Administration of Civil Aviation Mansour Al-Hashimi indicated that according to the quotas assigned to Kuwait, 9,000 pilgrims will depart Kuwait for hajj, affirming that all procedures have been completed to provide counters for pilgrims to coordinate and overcome any difficulties and provide all facilities for campaigns and airlines for visitors to Kuwait International Airport and pilgrims.

Every year, millions of Muslims travel to Makkah to



KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute employees pose for a photo in front of the institute's mobile clinic.

close adjustment, as well as leaflets about (Dasman Switch) application which is a free health application for mobile phones to help consumers take better nutrition choices while shopping

through providing simple health information about packaged products and proposing more healthy alternatives by scanning the product's barcode.



MAKKAH: Pilgrims arrive at Mina, where they spend the night before travelling to Arafat in this file photo from 2022. — KUNA

perform the hajj, which involves a series of rituals and acts of worship. The hajj is a complex and physically demanding pilgrimage. Pilgrims must make the intention before entering the state of ihram to perform hajj, where men must wear the prescribed attire, consisting of two seamless white cloths, while women can wear any modest and loose-fitting garments.

Upon arriving in Makkah, pilgrims perform tawaf, known as the "arrival tawaf", and this involves circling the Kaaba seven times, beginning from the Black Stone and following it with two units of voluntary prayer behind Maqam Ibrahim if possible. After completing tawaf, pilgrims should proceed to perform saee, which involves walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, following the footsteps of Hajar, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH).

On the eighth day of the Islamic month of Thulhijja, pilgrims head to Mina and spend the day and night there in preparation for the following day's rituals, praying the

five daily prayers, including the shortened and combined prayers. On the day of Arafat, pilgrims will travel to the plain of Arafat before noon and perform wuquf, to stand in earnest supplication, remembrance of Allah and reflection, seeking forgiveness and mercy. They will stay in Arafat until sunset.

After sunset, pilgrims proceed to Muzdalifah and spend the night there collecting pebbles for the stoning ritual to be performed the next day. Stoning the devil is done by throwing pebbles at the three pillars which symbolizes Satan, starting with the smallest pillar (Jamarat al-Ula), followed by the middle pillar (Jamarat al-Wusta), and finally the largest pillar (Jamarat al-Aqaba). After stoning, some may sacrifice an animal.

After stoning, pilgrims return to Makkah to perform tawaf al-ifadah, then perform saee once again. They then return to Mina and spend the 11th and 12th of Thulhijjah there and continue to stone the pillars each day after the afternoon prayer.

Local

Crown Prince urges MPs to put differences aside, focus on reforms

There is no room to waste time on conflicts: Sheikh Mishal

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah urged parliament members to focus on reforms "for the sake of Kuwait" with the objective of meeting aspirations of citizens to achieve prosperous future.

"We are facing a new phase" during which MPs should focus on reforms, a phase full of aspirations and hopes with the ultimate objective of achieving a prosperous future under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Deputy Amir said at the inauguration of the first ordinary session of the 17th term of the National Assembly on Tuesday.

He underlined that there was "no room to waste time" on conflicts and settling of scores, triggering crises and irresponsible practices, which were a source of dismay and an obstacle for achievements. "We will not allow this to happen," he stressed.

"We are confident of your awareness to achieve aspirations of citizens in order for our nation to remain a beacon for humanity, a hub for

His Highness the Crown Prince's call for MPs:

- Focus on reforms for the sake of Kuwait and meeting citizens' aspirations.
- There is no room to waste on conflicts which became a source of frustration and obstacles for achievements.
- Activate cooperation with the government in order to address all sources of tension.
- Give the government enough time to achieve goals and use constitutional tools wisely.
- Consider social justice in their demands, which should maintain, develop and diversify the wealth of the nation.

diplomacy and a pioneer in development," he said. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince, who noted the world praised the democratic practice in the State of Kuwait, urged MPs to activate cooperation with the government in order to address all sources of tension.

"You should promote democratic practices, focus on boosting the supervisory role of the National Assembly, activate the legislative role to achieve aspirations of citizens and give the government enough time to accomplish and to wisely use constitutional tools - if there are any - in order

to maintain the genuine practice of democracy," he added.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince urged lawmakers to consider "social justice" in their demands, which should maintain, develop and diversify the wealth of the nation ... as well as accomplish delayed legislations that serve the nation and people ... and be responsible to deal with different circumstances in line with the interest of the country." He also called upon citizens to contribute to the development of the nation and maintaining its national unity. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks at the National Assembly on Tuesday. — KUNA

Democratic approach achieved only through unity: Prime Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said that the democratic approach can only be achieved with the unity of the people of Kuwait. This came during his speech in the opening of the first ordinary session of the 17th term of the National Assembly on Tuesday.

"We are living in a new era that needs a new vision of national work based on the foundations of reform, commitment to wisdom, and the effective participation and joint work to achieve the aspirations of the people," His Highness the Prime Minister said. "Justice, the rule of law, seriousness in enforcing it on everyone without exception, equal opportunities for all citizens, fighting corruption and eliminating it from its sources, preserving public money and consolidating the state of institutions, are all basic pillars that the government is keen to respect and work to achieve," His Highness added.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad said that positive cooperation based on the principle of open and democratic dialogue in accordance with the provisions of the constitution together constitute the supporting basis for putting the relationship between the two authorities on the right track in a manner that ensures the stability of the state, achieves its higher interests and advances the fundamentals of its renaissance.

Moreover, the premier noted that the government looks forward to a fruitful relationship with the new parliament and will present its program of work in implementation of the provisions of Article 98 of the constitution, including all the priorities of the next period, which are realistic and feasible for implementation according to a specific timetable in order to ensure meeting the aspirations of citizens.

"We are aware of the impact of the dangerous current conditions the region and the world are facing. Therefore, it is our responsibility to take serious reform measures to protect Kuwait's stability," His Highness the Prime Minister said. He underlined the need for real partnership and co-



KUWAIT: Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes the oath during the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly in Kuwait City on June 20, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

operation in protecting the country's unity, refraining from dispute and de-escalating tensions between the two authorities.

Work program

As part of its duties in accordance with article 98 of the Kuwaiti constitution, the government will present a program on priorities that need to be executed within a specific time frame, including development issues, he noted.

The program includes taking serious measures to establish economic zones north, south and west of the country, with a total space of 19 square kilometers, to provide environmental, storing, commercial and industrial services with international partnerships, while also allowing the private sector to achieve developmental goals as part of the Kuwait 2035 vision, His Highness said.

The program is also involved with means of achieving transparency and integrity in the government's work. This includes fighting corruption, protecting public money and bringing to justice those who violate the law, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad affirmed.

Meanwhile, he called on both the government and the National Assembly to achieve economic reform through executing laws that support monetary policy, in the light of the unstable conditions in international oil markets.

"Our reform and development journey must occur in a democratic environment for the benefit of our country and the Kuwaiti people," he added. The upcoming phase is challenging and tough, thus serious cooperation between the government and the assembly is much needed to overcome these difficulties, His Highness concluded. — KUNA

MPs eager to work with government: Parliament Speaker

KUWAIT: Freshly re-elected Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Tuesday affirmed MPs' desire to cooperate with the government to tackle agreed-upon issues and attain the aspirations of the people of Kuwait.

Saadoun, a veteran legislator, lauded the government's affirmation with respect to the ministers' willingness to cooperate with the parliament, emphasizing necessity of pursuing coordination on agreed-upon proposals. He expressed gratitude to the MPs and the Kuwaiti people for responding to appeal by the political leadership to "choose soundly," in the parliamentary election, labelling as unprecedented the outcome of the 2023 election. Saadoun indicated that he sensed the enormous responsibility on his shoulders as chairman of the assembly. The experienced senior lawmaker added that he believed "he was not the best of the attendees for manning the post," and that it was destiny that he won it, again. A contender, MP Dawood Marafie, had withdrawn from the contest for the speakership, leaving Saadoun uncontested. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Member of Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks at the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly.



KUWAIT: Member of Parliament Jenan Bushehri takes the oath during the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly on June 20, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwaiti women applaud as they attend the opening ceremony of the 17th National Assembly.



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun gives a speech at the National Assembly on Tuesday.

New Assembly names committee members

KUWAIT: Members of the National Assembly, during the first ordinary session of the 17th legislative term held Tuesday, named members of several parliamentary committees. Kuwait Times has compiled a list of the committees and the members of parliament comprising them.

Committee to Prepare the Response to Amiri Speech
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Hamad Al-Obaid
MP Bader Al-Enezi

Financial and Economic Affairs Committee
MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri
MP Bader Al-Mulla
MP Abdullah Fahhad
MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa
MP Abdullah Al-Anbaei
MP Dawood Marafie
MP Bader Al-Enezi

Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Muhammad Al-Sayer
MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari
MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi
MP Jenan Bushehri
MP Mubarak Al-Tasha
MP Jarrah Al-Fouzan

Interior and Defense Committee
MP Khaled Al-Otaibi
MP Khaled Al-Tammam
MP Majed Al-Mutairi
MP Bader Al-Shemmari
MP Mohammad Al-Ajmi

Petitions and Complaints Committee
MP Hamdan Al-Azemi
MP Mohammad Hayef
MP Khaled Al-Otaibi
MP Khaled Al-Tammam
MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi

Health, Social Affairs and Labor Committee
MP Bader Al-Enezi
MP Saad Al-Khanfour
MP Majed Al-Mutairi
MP Hani Shams
MP Fahad Al-Azemi

Foreign Relations Committee
MP Marzouq Al-Hubaini
MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari
MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi
MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf
MP Shuaib Shaaban

Public Utilities Committee
MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf
MP Dawood Marafie
MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah
MP Mohammad Al-Ajmi
MP Ahmad Lari
MP Fahad Al-Masoud
MP Fares Al-Otaibi

Education and Culture Committee
MP Hamad Matar
MP Jenan Bushehri
MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi
MP Hamad Al-Alyan
MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah

Budgets Committee
MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa
MP Fahad Al-Masoud
MP Saud Al-Asfour
MP Osama Al-Zaid
MP Adel Al-Damkhi
MP Bader Al-Mulla
MP Hamad Al-Matar

Public Funds Protection Committee
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Muthalhal Al-Mudhaf
MP Meteb Al-Enezi
MP Jarrah Al-Fouzan
MP Hamad Al-Alyan

Sports and Youth Committee
MP Bader Al-Enezi
MP Majed Al-Mutairi
MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf

Bedoons Committee
MP Hani Shams
MP Bader Al-Enezi
MP Fahad Al-Azemi
MP Hasan Jowhar
MP Ahmad Lari

Human Rights Defense Committee
MP Fahad Al-Azemi
MP Falah Al-Hajeri
MP Mohammad Hayef
MP Adel Al-Damkhi
MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri

News in Brief

PACI urges people
to ignore fake links

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) warned on Tuesday citizens and residents of online hackers impersonating the authority through fake links. PACI, in a press release, urged the public to ignore such fake links, assuring that the authority does not send messages requesting updates of citizens and residents' personal information. — KUNA

Kuwait donates \$970,000
to Pakistan flood victims

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan is donating \$970,000 to the National Disaster Management Authority of Pakistan to support the victims of the devastating floods that recently swept the country. Kuwait's Ambassador to Pakistan, Nassar Al-Mutairi, said in a statement Tuesday that this donation is part of the country's direct financial contributions, in addition to other financial contributions that have been channeled through specialized UN agencies. Kuwait has already contributed to various relief activities to support flood victims, with donations exceeding \$2 million that were distributed to the affected areas. Mutairi expressed hope that these concerted efforts will have an impact in alleviating the suffering of those affected. — KUNA

Sudan to get \$6m from
Kuwait to back relief efforts

GENEVA: Kuwait pledged Monday to provide \$6 million to back non-governmental Kuwaiti humanitarian institutions working in Sudan. The announcement was made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nassar Al-Hain during a high-level international donors conference for Sudan held in Geneva Tuesday. Since the eruption of Sudan's crisis, Kuwait has sent over 120 tons of urgent relief and medical aid to Sudan, he said. The step comes out of Kuwait's humanitarian and ethical responsibilities, he elaborated, expressing Kuwait's commitment to, and solidarity with, international efforts aiming to back humanitarian situation in Sudan and neighboring countries. — KUNA

Harnessing dyslexia: How one woman embraces differences, conquers challenges

Learning how your brain works key to living with condition

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: In 2nd grade, Kasia Kayat was diagnosed with dyslexia, which was picked up by her mother while reading a book. One day, Kayat's mother brought a book they usually read together and opened a random page. This is where Kayat could not continue reading, because she used to memorize the words rather than actually read them. "You normally pick it up between grades 1, 2 and 3. This is the most evident time, and mine was picked up in grade 2 by my mother, not by my teachers. My teachers thought I was fine, but I had a very good memory and was able to memorize everything and fake my way through it," said Kayat.

Dyslexia is a neurological condition that affects one's ability to read and write. It affects individuals in different ways and can vary in severity. Some individuals may struggle with phonetic awareness, making it difficult to recognize letter sounds and blend them together to form words, whereas others may have difficulty with fluency, which means they struggle to read smoothly and quickly. Additionally, some may face issues with comprehension, where they struggle to understand the meaning of what is being read. However, it is important to note that dyslexia does not affect intelligence or potential.

"I don't like the term, as it makes it seem like a learning disability. It actually helped me become a really good problem solver. A person with dyslexia has to understand their brain with dyslexia. I have learned to view this condition as my brain func-



Kasia Kayat

tions differently. Before that, when I was trying to study like everyone else, I was not succeeding, because my brain does not function in that way," Kayat told Kuwait Times.

Unlike others, Kayat could not just sit down to read a book and memorize the information. She needed pictures, videos, music and songs. She also needed to make big colorful spider diagrams to draw the information. "This is how information sticks in my brain. I cannot just read something; I have to make notes. It is a very long process as I have to go over and over and over because repetition is very important," she explained.

Kayat advises people with dyslexia to figure out how their brain functions and what works better with their brain and stick with that, rather than trying to do what everyone else does. "Even though I am dyslexic, this does not mean that every dyslexic person studies the same way I do. You have to learn your method. Some people can just sit down and read a book even with dyslexia — they might take long to understand the information because they struggle with reading, but they can still get by. When I was still learning how to use my brain, I had to walk up and down. I needed move-

D Y S L E X I A

ment; I needed a bouncy ball because I needed to move; I could not just sit still for hours to study. I always needed movement, I needed sounds, I used to click my fingers while studying, I would rhyme, I would use acronyms," she recalled.

When Kayat was first diagnosed, she was severely dyslexic, but now she is able to read. "It definitely affected my academics. I was usually an average student. But after I learnt how to use my brain, I do not think I faced issues at university. Another thing was that I was always mixing up colors and numbers, reading them the wrong way around because your brain functions from right to left and not left to right. So, when I see the number 37, my brain would think 73. I had to train my brain that it is the opposite way around," she said.

Ultimately, Kayat said the best thing for a person with dyslexia is to accept it, because there is no medication that one can take to make it better. Therefore, one has to deal with their dyslexic brain. She further emphasized on the necessity of figuring out how a dyslexic brain functions. "Sometimes I feel really angry at my brain, as it gets real foggy and I have short attention spans, and I cannot force it to focus. So, basically you need to learn your brain, learn what works for it, and learn when you need to stop and when you need to take a break."

AU, Huawei launch Datacom Lab on AU campus

KUWAIT: Following the signing of their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Huawei, and the College of Engineering at the Australian University (AU) have launched a Datacom Lab at the university's campus. The lab seeks to expand Huawei's digital training programs in collaboration with AU to enhance youth employability and to give them the opportunity to benefit from training in computer networking skills, the demand for which is growing. Moreover, the new computer networking lab also aims to promote practical skills training for a broader audience.

Prof Isam Zabalawi, president of AU, announced that AU is interested in collaborating more with Huawei, as it is a leading information and communication technologies company in Kuwait and the region. In addition, he further emphasized the importance of including new technological topics in our educational system.

For his part, the deputy CEO of Huawei Kuwait, Che Long, said that Huawei is looking forward to more beneficial projects with academic institutions



in Kuwait, and especially with AU, and that this lab is a first step towards achieving this goal.

Dr Mohamed Abdul Niby, Dean of the College of Engineering at AU, announced that the Datacom

Lab will be a great place for experimenting, innovating, and demonstrating networking technologies and methodologies for the university community as well as the community at large.

NBK staff volunteer to donate blood

KUWAIT: As a part of its social responsibility, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a blood donation campaign for its staff, on the occasion of the World Blood Donor Day. NBK staff voluntarily went to the mobile blood bank to donate blood. NBK provided transportation for the staff to go and donate.

On this occasion, Joanne Al-Abduljaleel, NBK Public Relations Manager, said: "NBK always goes far in serving the community. The blood donation campaign demonstrates NBK's lasting commitment to the community and to its Corporate Social Re-



Joanne Al-Abduljaleel

sponsibilities Program."

"NBK's initiative is a commitment towards all patients who are in dire need of blood and is held to support the blood bank in Kuwait," she added.

The Blood Bank team commended NBK's initiative and its continuous cooperation in serving the community in the philanthropist field.

NBK strongly supports health care awareness. Throughout the years, NBK also organized several annual social awareness programs including dental checkups, blood pressure tests, weight checkups, mental health and breast cancer awareness.



Traffic department revokes 360 licenses

KUWAIT: The Traffic Department revoked around 360 drivers' licenses over the last three months due to the license holders exceeding 50 points in the traffic points system. The points system, which penalizes drivers for 90 violations, is also linked to the "Mobile ID" application, sources said. Instructions were sent to traffic departments in the six governorates to strictly enforce permanent license suspensions for those who exceed the maximum allowed number of points, which has been set at 50.

People who accrue 14 points get their license suspended for three months. After the first suspension, a driver who gets 12 points gets a six-month suspension, followed by a nine-month suspension for those who get 10 points after the second suspension. After

the third suspension, a driver who gets eight points would have his license suspended. Finally, a license is permanently revoked if the driver gets six points after the fourth suspension.

Anyone with a suspended license won't be allowed to drive and a message indicating that their license has been withdrawn will appear on the "Mobile ID" app. When a license is permanently revoked, its restoration requires approval by Traffic Department Director General, and in case of approval, the violator will have to sit for a driving test just like anyone getting the license for the first time.

The traffic department said using a mobile phone while driving will get the driver two points. The highest number of points for a violation is four, including reckless driving, lack of attention, breaking red light and over speeding. Recorded traffic violations points that are not enough to lead to suspension will be deleted from the department's system one year after the driver pays the associated fine.



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China urges closer ties as Germany looks beyond Beijing

Iran exiled oppn furious after Paris police block rally

Page 6

Page 7

\$1.5bn pledged to curb Sudan's slide into 'death and destruction': UN

Security, stability of Sudan 'is our own stability and security': Egypt's FM

GENEVA: Donors at a UN conference on Monday pledged close to \$1.5 billion to combat the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and help its neighbors host refugees fleeing the fighting. Sudan is descending into death and destruction at unprecedented speed, UN chief Antonio Guterres warned as he urged donors to step in and curb the unfolding catastrophe.

The conference comes midway through a three-day ceasefire which appeared to have brought calm to the capital Khartoum, after the failure of earlier truces to secure aid corridors. "Today, donors have announced close to \$1.5 billion for the humanitarian response to Sudan and the region," the UN's humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said, closing the conference hosted in Geneva.

"This crisis will require sustained financial support and I hope we can all keep Sudan at the top of our priorities," UN refugees chief Filippo Grandi added. "It is very important these contributions be clearly allocated and disbursed as quickly as possible because we're really short of funds."

More than two months into the fighting, the United Nations is worried the crisis could spill over and destabilize neighboring African states. "The scale and speed of Sudan's descent into death and destruction is unprecedented," UN Secretary General Guterres told the conference.

"Without strong international support, Sudan could quickly become a locus of lawlessness, radiating insecurity across the region." Since April 15, the army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has been battling the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan

Daglo, after the two fell out in a power struggle. The death toll has topped 2,000, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project said.

Hundreds of kilometres west of Khartoum, up to 1,100 have been killed in the West Darfur state capital El Geneina alone, according to the US State Department, blaming "primarily" the RSF. A record 25 million people — more than half of Sudan's population — need aid, the UN says. Roughly 2.5 million people have been uprooted across Sudan by the war, which has seen 550,000 seek refuge in neighboring countries, according to UN figures.

Around \$3 billion needed

While Griffiths highlighted donors' generosity, the amount pledged Monday was less than half of what humanitarians have said is needed this year to respond to the needs. The UN has two appeals for tackling the crisis — the humanitarian response within Sudan, which needs \$2.6 billion this year, and the regional refugee response set at \$470 million.

Both were less than 17 percent funded going into Monday's conference. Qatar's prime minister told the conference there was "no military solution" to the conflict, as he pledged \$50 million.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani urged the warring parties to "put the aspirations of the Sudanese people in the forefront". The United States pledged the most at \$550 million, followed by Germany with \$162 million and the European Commission on \$151 million, according to the UN. Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said the conflict risks a humanitarian crisis that could spill over the borders. He said the



KHARTOUM: A man walks in a street in Khartoum. Donors at a UN conference on Monday pledged close to \$1.5 billion to combat the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. — AFP

security and stability of Sudan "is our own stability and security".

Relative calm in Khartoum

UN human rights chief Volker Turk called the Sudan crisis a "powder keg" and a "reckless, senseless conflict taking place in a context of total impunity", with "utter indifference for human life and dignity" at its heart.

The temporary ceasefire was a chance to end the "sea of suffering", he told the UN Human Rights Council. Several Khartoum residents told AFP they heard no

air strikes, artillery or other fighting on Monday, a rare respite for the war-weary Sudan suffering shortages of medical care, electricity, water and other essentials.

But the International Committee of the Red Cross said in a tweet that the "ceasefire was not respected". An operation it carried out to transfer wounded soldiers to a hospital "had to be aborted after gunshots sounded in the immediate proximity of our convoy", it said.

The army and the RSF have accused each other of violating the ceasefire. On Monday, RSF leader Daglo alleged "con-

tinuous violations" of the ceasefire by its rivals, while the army accuses RSF of breaking the ceasefire and "killing 15 and injuring dozens of civilians" in Darfur.

The UN, African Union and east African regional bloc IGAD, in a joint statement ahead of the donors' meeting, expressed particular concern about "the rapidly deteriorating situation in Darfur". They said the conflict had "taken on an ethnic dimension, resulting in targeted attacks based on people's identities and subsequent displacement of communities". — AFP

US and China eye stability, no breakthroughs

BEIJING: The United States and China looked to set up a safety net for their intensifying rivalry during a visit to Beijing by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, but the trip achieved only general promises and no breakthroughs on hoped-for military talks and flashpoint issues. Both President Xi Jinping, who met Blinken on Monday at the end of his 11 hours of talks in Beijing, and President Joe Biden saluted the long-awaited trip as a sign of progress following months of soaring tensions.

"It was clear coming in that the relationship was at a point of instability, and both sides recognized the need to work to stabilize it," Blinken told reporters in Beijing. US officials have repeatedly spoken of expanding communication to establish "guardrails" in the relationship to prevent misunderstandings from descending into conflict.

But Blinken acknowledged that the United States did not achieve one of its wishes most crucial to avoiding miscalculations — a resumption of dialogue between the two militaries. And the two powers remained far apart on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy that Beijing has not ruled out seizing by force.

Blinken insisted the United States wanted to preserve the status quo and "responsible management

of the Taiwan question" as he raised concerns about "provocative" moves by Beijing. China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, told Blinken that on Taiwan there was "no room to compromise or concede" by Beijing, which has carried out military drills twice since August including after a defiant visit to Taipei by Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the House of Representatives.

Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said Beijing was increasingly on guard as Taiwan approaches elections next year and that Blinken's remarks sounded like "boilerplate placeholders". "The two sides have basically agreed to explore the possibility of stabilizing the bilateral relationship. There is no certainty they will achieve that goal," she said.

Glaser noted that while the United States speaks of managing the growing rivalry, Xi again spoke of avoiding competition between major powers. "I think accepting competition is necessary in order to stabilize the relationship. So I see this gap between the two sides that has yet to be narrowed, and I don't know if it will be," she said.

Yun Sun, director of the China programme at the Stimson Center, said the United States shared blame for the failure to restart dialogue in the military realm, an area where a crisis is most likely to erupt.

The Biden administration — which the rival Republican Party is eager to portray as weak on Beijing — has refused Chinese requests to lift sanctions on its new defence minister, General Li Shangfu, which were imposed under a US law that targets arms purchases from Russia. — AFP

Six dead in Ecuador gang shooting

GUAYAQUIL: Six people were killed and eight wounded Monday in an apparent gang shootout in Guayaquil, a port city in Ecuador terrorized by a wave of violence blamed on a spiraling drug war, authorities said.

Police Colonel Marcelo Castillo told AFP that six people had died in Guayaquil's second mass shooting this month, which appeared to have been a settling of scores between rival gangs. The prosecutor's office later said eight others had been wounded and taken to local hospitals, while no one had so far been arrested. Such attacks have become ever-more frequent in Ecuador, especially in Guayaquil, as rival gangs ramp up the fight for drug markets and routes in the country's overcrowded prisons and on the streets — leaving a trail of corpses in their wake.

More than 420 prisoners have died in vicious fighting between rival criminal groups in Ecuadorian prisons since February 2021, many beheaded or burned alive. Widespread corruption among guards has allowed inmates to obtain guns and explosives. As the lawlessness spreads, there have been several car bomb explosions in Ecuadorian cities, and bodies discovered hanging from pedestrian bridges — some without heads.



GUAYAQUIL: Relatives of those killed in an armed attack wait outside the police morgue in southern Guayaquil, Ecuador. — AFP

The country is also increasingly plagued by sadistic kidnappings, with criminals sending hostages' fingers to their loved ones to pressure them into paying more ransom. In Monday's shooting, Castillo said the attackers arrived in a black vehicle in a populated neighborhood in the early hours. "Four or five got out" and opened fire, despite several people being in the street.

"It is pure retaliation for previous acts of violence," the police colonel said. "They kill each other without mercy." He added that one of those killed had a record of "criminal association" and one of the wounded was known for involvement in drug trafficking. Some 132 spent cartridges were found at the scene, said Castillo. — AFP

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Wildfires, floods fail to budge Greeks towards voting for Green

Greeks were, and still are, preoccupied with daily survival

ATHENS: Wildfires, floods and climate change have failed to budge Greeks towards voting Green for over a decade, but a new coalition hopes to break through deep-rooted scepticism in Sunday's national elections.

While environmental parties surge elsewhere in Europe, Greeks "view the environment as a little bit of a luxury," says Vasiliki Grammatikogianni, a co-chair of the Green and Purple alliance. A 'Green wave' that saw environmental parties achieve unprecedented success at the 2019 European elections "didn't touch Greece," admits Grammatikogianni, a veteran environment journalist.

"The Greek people were, and still are, preoccupied with daily survival," she says from the coalition's temporary base in a century-old hotel opposite the Athens meat market. While Green politicians are coalition partners in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg, their Greek counterparts have trouble even getting as far as parliament.

That is unlikely to change in Greece's national elections on June 25 - not a single environment party is polling remotely near the three percent threshold required to enter the chamber.

In contrast, Greens in Austria, Germany and Luxembourg won between 13.9 and 15.12 percent in the last national elections, while in Finland and Ireland they scored 7 and 7.1 percent respectively.

"For many years the Green parties in Greece have suffered from personal conflicts which led to internal divisions and marginalized us," says Vula Tsetsi, secretary general of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament.

"We need to show how climate protection is not an additional burden on people suffering from inflation and the high costs of living, but a solution," she told AFP. Including eco-feminists, pro-European Volt party federalists, animal rights proponents, Pi-

rate Party of Greece politicians and other activists, Green and Purple is the official heir to over 30 years of Green party tradition in Greece.

Green politicians were actually part of the 2015-2019 leftist government of prime minister Alexis Tsipras, who took on Greece's EU-IMF creditors and nearly crashed the country out of the euro.

But the experience arguably did more harm than good, with the Tsipras government controversially signing hydrocarbon exploration agreements in the Ionian Sea, a key habitat for dolphins, loggerhead turtles and the endangered Mediterranean monk seal. "It was a mistake that harmed the (movement)," says Lefteris Ioannidis, who was at the time a dissenting member of the Ecologist Greens party in the coalition under Tsipras.

Founded in 2002, the Ecologist Greens were for decades the most successful of Greece's pro-environment parties, in a political scene that often treats ecology as an afterthought.

In their best showing at the European Parliament elections of 2009, they picked up nearly 179,000 votes and elected a single Eurodeputy. Three years later, they increased their share to over 185,000 votes -- but fell tantalizingly short of entering parliament by just 0.07 percent.

Right or left labels

Ioannidis - formerly mayor of Kozani, a northern city long marred by lignite pollution - says the Greek electorate traditionally sees itself as either right or left-wing. In theory, Greeks should need little urging to root for the environment.

In 2018, over 100 people died in the coastal suburb of Mati near Athens in the country's deadliest fire disaster. Three years later, a heatwave followed by wildfires destroyed 103,000 hectares (255,000



ATHENS: Members of Greece's new Green and Purple alliance formed for the upcoming elections, sit at one of their party's kiosk in Athens. A coalition of Greens, the pro-European citizens group Volt, ecofeminists, animal rights proponents and other activists, Green and Purple are backed by the European Greens and will attempt to enter Greece's parliament for the first time in over 30 years. — AFP

acres) nationwide and claimed three lives in a disaster the government directly blamed on "climate crisis". But in the 2019 European election, a resounding Green success across the continent, environmental parties in Greece scored fewer votes than a celebrity ex-mayor who was on trial at the time over the Mati fires. "There is a stereotype that Greens are only good on environmental issues," says Nikos

Chrysogelos, who represented the Ecologist Greens at the European Parliament from 2012 to 2014.

Losing thousands of young professionals who emigrated abroad during the Greek debt crisis also hurt, he argues. "But it's clear that Greens... also talk about people, society, the economy," the veteran activist said, who alongside Ioannidis now campaigns for Green and Purple. — AFP

Bolsonaro's political future at stake in Brazil trial

BRASILIA: Far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro risks being banned from running for office for eight years when Brazil's top electoral court tries him starting Thursday on charges stemming from his attacks on the nation's voting system.

The case before the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) stems from a televised meeting Bolsonaro held with foreign diplomats in July 2022 — in the midst of his ultimately failed reelection campaign — at which he presented a litany of undocumented accusations against Brazil's electronic voting system.

The TSE's seven judges are due to begin delivering their verdicts on charges the former president abused his office and misused state media by holding the meeting at the presidential palace, which was attended by representatives of the European Union, France, Spain and other countries, and carried live on public television. Insiders say the court is almost sure to convict the ever-divisive Bolsonaro, 68, who lost the October 2022 elections to veteran leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and now stands to lose his right to run in the next presidential elections, in 2026. "The only question-mark is how many (judges) will decide against him," a judiciary source told AFP.

'Fix the flaws'

Bolsonaro, who trailed Lula throughout the race, convened the meeting at the Alvorada Palace, the official presiden-

tial residence, after months of attacking allegedly rampant security shortfalls in the electronic voting machines Brazil has used since 1996.

Backed by a PowerPoint presentation — but no hard evidence — he spent nearly an hour making his case to the assembled diplomats, saying he wanted to "fix the flaws" in the system to ensure the "transparency" of the elections.

"We still have time to resolve the problem, with the help of the armed forces," he said. Prosecutors cried foul, accusing Bolsonaro of violating fair-play election laws. They asked the TSE to bar him and his running mate, army reserve General Walter Braga Netto, from running for office for eight years. Bolsonaro's accusations surged to the forefront again on January 8, when his supporters ran riot in the presidential palace, Supreme Court and Congress a week after Lula's inauguration,

insisting the elections had been fraudulent and demanding the military intervene.

Bolsonaro 'martyr'?

A conviction for Bolsonaro could fragment the right, which remains a powerful force in Brazilian politics. Bolsonaro narrowly lost the runoff election by 1.8 percentage points, and conservatives currently dominate Congress. But there is no obvious heir to the man known as the "Tropical Trump" if he is sidelined in 2026. "There's a real risk of division in the right-wing and far-right camp," said political analyst Leandro Consentino of the Insper institute in Sao Paulo.

But Bolsonaro could use a conviction to cast himself as a "martyr," he added. "Bolsonaro will try to maintain his hard-line base by painting himself as a victim of political persecution," he said. "He will

be an important asset to attract votes for whoever ends up being the (right-wing) candidate."

Bolsonaro has already begun positioning himself pre-verdict. "No one is going to change how we act," he said last week. "Whatever happens, we're proudly preparing to seek alternatives."

It is just one on a long list of legal headaches for Bolsonaro. He also faces five Supreme Court investigations that could send him to jail, including for allegedly inciting the January 8 attacks.

Federal police are meanwhile investigating allegations an aide faked a Covid-19 immunization certificate for vaccine-skeptic Bolsonaro, and that the former president tried to illegally import an estimated \$3.2 million in diamond jewelry given as a gift to first lady Michelle Bolsonaro by Saudi Arabia in 2021. — AFP

Iran exiled oppn furious after Paris police block rally

PARIS: A major exiled Iranian opposition group on Tuesday expressed fury after Paris police refused to grant permission for a major rally next month, on the grounds it risked creating tensions and being the target of an attack. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), a coalition that includes the People's Mujahedin (MEK) group outlawed by Tehran, alleged

that the de facto ban on the rally was the result "pressure" on France by the Iranian government.

The NCRI, which calls for the overthrow of Iran's clerical leadership, had asked permission for the rally in Paris on July 1, with tens of thousands of supporters expected from France and across Europe. Paris police did not grant approval for the rally as it is "likely to generate disturbances to public order because of the geopolitical context", a Paris police source, asking not to be named, told AFP.

"In addition, the terrorist risk should not be overlooked and the holding of such an event would make ensuring its security, but also the security of the sensitive guests, extremely complex," the source said. Authorities in 2018 foiled an attack against a major NCRI

rally outside Paris. An Iranian diplomat was convicted of terror offences by a Belgian court over the thwarted attack, but was last month swapped for a Belgian aid worker held by Tehran.

The NCRI claimed that Paris was giving into pressure from Tehran as France was concerned over the fate of four French nationals held by Iran in what activists call a deliberate strategy of hostage-taking. "The banning of the Iranian rally represents a disgraceful act against democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and succumbing to extortion and hostage-taking by the religious dictatorship ruling Iran," the NCRI said.

It added that it would "employ all legal and political avenues to challenge and file a complaint against this un-

justifiable prohibition", denouncing the "regime's pressure on France". The group had been hoping in the rally to use the momentum created by protests against the clerical leadership inside Iran that erupted in September after the death of Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly violating the strict dress rules for women.

The protests inside Iran have abated but still continue sporadically. The MEK regards itself as the most significant Iranian opposition group outside the country. A controversial organization regarded as a cult by detractors, it is far from having universal support among the Iranian diaspora. But it does enjoy the support of several high-profile former US and European officials such as the former US vice president Mike Pence. — AFP

Deputy Amir opens new Assembly...

Continued from Page 1

constitution and that he wanted to explain why he was not contesting the speaker's post and was going to congratulate Saadoun after his election. He stressed nothing will prevent him from expressing his views. He reiterated his objection and rejection of the appointment of the defense minister, saying his appointment violated the law.

In his speech, HH the Crown Prince warned that time should not be wasted in more crises and disputes. "We insist that there is no more room for wasting efforts, time and potential in conflicts, settling scores, fabricating crises and irresponsible practices that have become the subject of resentment" among the people. HH Sheikh Mishal said in his opening speech. "We will not allow vision to miss its path and things to get confused," he warned.

HH the Crown Prince said the Kuwaiti people have responded positively to "correcting the path and are aware that reforms are the way to development and stability". He emphasized everyone in the country is working towards the same goal and to serve the same interests under our great nation. "Today, we are before a new era" under the banner of work and reforms for the sake of Kuwait and to achieve the aspirations of the people, he said. HH Sheikh Mishal called on members of the Assembly "to activate

constructive cooperation with the government to remove all causes of tension" that have obstructed work and achievement.

HH the Prime Minister said the Kuwaiti people have rejected tensions through the ballots, and vowed that he was prepared for cooperation with legislators to achieve the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people and speed up the process of comprehensive reforms in all fields. Sheikh Ahmad also reiterated his commitment to the provisions of the constitution, which call for safeguarding freedoms and rights of the people and establishing a balance between the executive and legislative authorities.

The prime minister also said his government will submit its program of action soon and will call for establishing three economic zones in the north, west and south of the country with a total area of 19 sq km. He said the government is ready to include in its program proposals by MPs as long as they are in line with priorities and within financial capabilities. The premier also vowed to carry out a comprehensive program of economic and financial reforms.

The Assembly later unanimously elected MPs Mubarak Al-Tasha as secretary of the house and Mohammad Al-Huwailah as the Assembly observer. The Assembly also elected members of permanent committees. The Assembly also formed a five-member committee to investigate the Eurofighter and Caracal deals. Its members are MPs Adel Al-Damkhi, Hamad Al-Matar, Hamad Al-Mudlej, Majed Al-Mutairi and Muhallal Al-Mudhaf. It also elected a committee for strengthening values.

exercising their "legitimate right to self-defense."

The sixth Jenin fatality, Amjad Aref Jaas, died from his gunshot wounds on Tuesday, a Palestinian health ministry statement said. More than 90 Palestinians were wounded in the hours-long raid, according to health officials, while the Zionist military said eight security personnel were wounded. After the firefight between Zionist forces and Palestinian militants ended on Monday, the Palestinian health ministry announced Zionist troops killed a 20-year-old near the West Bank city of Bethlehem. Zakaria Mohammed Al-Zaoul was shot in the head in the town of Husan, the ministry said. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported the military used live fire, tear gas and stun grenades during the clashes with young Palestinians. — AFP

Kuwait denies player abused...

Continued from Page 1

between the players. The match was stopped by the referee in the 70th minute in order to protect the players from potential injuries," said the statement.

On Monday, the FAI issued a statement on Twitter saying racism was the reason. "The FAI regrets to announce that today's U21 international against Kuwait has been abandoned after a racist remark was made by a Kuwaiti player towards one of our substitutes,"

Air, sea search for sub missing...

Continued from Page 1

the submersible and their families," OceanGate said in a statement. Mike Reiss, an American television writer who visited the Titanic wreck on the same sub last year, told the BBC the experience was disorientating. The pressure at that depth as measured in atmospheres is 400 times what it is at sea level. "The compass immediately stopped working and was just spinning around and so we had to flail around blindly at the bottom of the ocean, knowing the Titanic was somewhere there," Reiss said.

"But it's just so pitch dark that the biggest thing under the ocean was just 500 yards away and we spent 90 minutes looking for it." He told the BBC that everyone was aware of the dangers. "You sign a waiver before you get on and it mentions death three different times on page one. This isn't a coach holiday or something. Things go wrong." OceanGate Expeditions charges \$250,000 for a seat on the Titan.

Harding, a 58-year-old aviator, space tourist and chairman of Action Aviation, is no stranger to daredevil antics and has three Guinness world records to his name. A year ago, he became a space

tourist through Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin company. In his Instagram post, Harding said how proud he was to be part of the latest mission. "Due to the worst winter in Newfoundland in 40 years, this mission is likely to be the first and only manned mission to the Titanic in 2023," he wrote. "The team on the sub has a couple of legendary explorers, some of which have done over 30 dives to the RMS Titanic since the 1980s including PH Nargeolet," the post added.

Shahzada and Suleman Dawood hail from one of Pakistan's richest families that runs an investment and holding company headquartered in Karachi. Shahzada is the vice chairman of the subsidiary company Engro, which has an array of investments in energy, agriculture, petrochemicals and telecommunications. The Titanic hit an iceberg and sank in 1912 during its maiden voyage from England to New York with 2,224 passengers and crew on board. More than 1,500 people died. The wreckage is in two main pieces 400 miles off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. It was found in 1985 and remains a lure for nautical experts and underwater tourists.

Without having studied the craft itself, Alistair Greig, professor of marine engineering at University College London, suggested two possible scenarios based on images of the Titan published by the press. — AFP

4 Zionists shot dead near West...

Continued from Page 1

The shooting comes a day after Zionist forces launched a raid in the West Bank city of Jenin, in which six Palestinians were killed.

A spokesman for the Palestinian militant group Hamas, Hazem Qassem, described Tuesday's shooting as a "response to the crimes of the (Zionist) occupation" in Jenin and elsewhere. Tariq Selmi, spokesman for the Islamic Jihad militant group, praised a "heroic commando operation" and described it as Palestinians

International

China urges closer ties as Germany looks beyond Beijing

China and Germany should all the more work closely together towards world peace

BERLIN: China's premier on Tuesday urged closer cooperation with Germany to shore up a struggling global economy, at a time when the European export powerhouse is seeking to reduce its reliance on the Asian giant. Li Qiang, on his first trip abroad since he was named China's prime minister, also underlined the emphasis Beijing places on improving relations with the European Union as criticisms from the bloc grow louder.

Burned by its reliance on Russian gas and hurt by supply chain disruptions during the pandemic, Germany and the European Union overall have been intensifying efforts to "de-risk" from China. Addressing the press after talks, Scholz also underlined Berlin's move to diversify its trading partners, saying that Germany is "committed to actively broadening our economic relations with Asia and beyond". But Li argued that "the global economic recovery lacks a growth dynamic".

"China and Germany, as influential and big nations, should all the more work closely together towards world peace and development," he said, adding that Beijing also wants to bring ties with the EU "to a higher level".

Mistrust

Export giant Germany, by virtue of its economic might, has always enjoyed special ties with China. Under former chancellor Angela Merkel, Berlin took a pragmatic approach of talking up economic opportunities while keeping less flattering opinions on rights and freedom behind closed doors.

That made China a key market for Germany's exporters while also allowing Berlin to take in prominent human rights activists like Liu Xia, apparently without suffering any retaliatory consequences. But the coronavirus pandemic raised doubts about the wisdom of relying on a far-flung partner with its own huge domestic needs for essentials from medication to surgical gowns to masks.

Russia's war on Ukraine turned the approach of economic rapprochement on its head, and also put the spotlight on self-ruled and democratic Taiwan, which China views as its territory and has vowed to retake one day - by force if necessary.

'Systemic rival'

Days ahead of Li's visit, Germany in its first national security strategy, called Beijing a "partner,

competitor and systemic rival". The blueprint also accused China of acting against German interests, putting international security "under increasing pressure" and disregarding human rights.

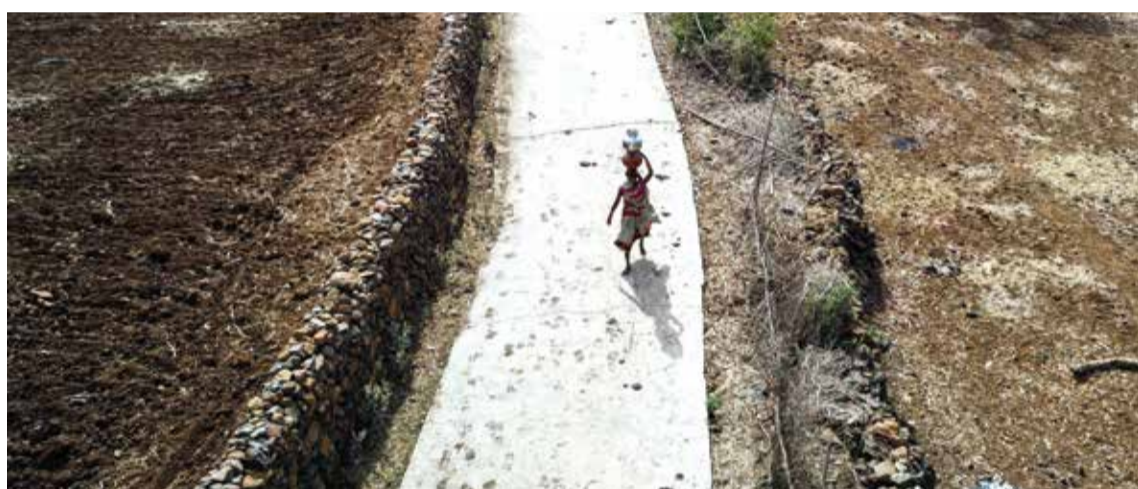
The latest report published Tuesday by Germany's intelligence agency also cited China as the "biggest threat in relation to economic and scientific espionage and foreign direct investments in Germany". But German industry finds Berlin's pivot easier said than done.

After all, China remains Germany's biggest trading partner. But that also "means that if there are major upheavals between China and the West or even a war over Taiwan, the German economy as a whole will be severely endangered," warned Spiegel.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has signalled that the way to handle the delicate situation was to boost cooperation with China on areas on which both sides can agree, such as the climate - something which both sides gamely took up on Tuesday. "China and Germany should become green partners," said Li, while Scholz added that "close cooperation in the fight against climate change was a particular concern for us today." - AFP



BERLIN: (Left to right) German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, China's Premier Li Qiang and German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck arrive for the German-Chinese Forum for Economic and Technological Cooperation in Berlin. - AFP



JABALPUR, India: A woman carries drinking water in an earthen pot after collecting it from a handpump on a summer afternoon in a village in Madhya Pradesh state on June 19, 2023. - AFP

India vows to tackle heatwave deaths as temperature soars

NEW DELHI: India's health minister said Tuesday the government will work to mitigate deaths from surging temperatures after reports of several fatalities caused by a severe heatwave this week. India's north and east have seen scorching temperatures of up to 46 degrees Celsius (114.8 degrees Fahrenheit) this week, with health authorities reporting a spate of heat stroke hospitalizations and deaths.

Scientists say such hot spells are becoming harsher and more frequent across South Asia as a result of climate change. Top officials met Tuesday to address "problems arising out of the scorching heat across the country and the preparedness for public health", health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Twitter.

The Indian Council of Medical Research had been "directed to make short term and long term plans to avoid deaths due to heat wave and heat

stroke in the future", he added. Officials from Bihar's disaster management agency said Tuesday it had confirmed nine people had died of heat stroke in the eastern state.

Bihar State Health Society executive director Sanjay Kumar Singh said around 375 people had been admitted to different government hospitals for various heat-related ailments. Officials in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh are probing the deaths of nearly 60 people that media reports attributed to searing temperatures in Ballia district.

However, deputy health minister Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh said that it was not possible to say whether all the deaths were due to the heat, as some had pre-existing ailments. Rising temperatures are making Indian summers ever more scorching, particularly in urban areas full of concrete trapping the heat.

At least eleven people died of heat stroke in the western state of Maharashtra in April after an estimated one million spectators waited for hours in the sun at a government event. At the same time, India depends heavily on fossil fuels to power its economy and has found its reliance on dirty energy hard to kick, despite increasing global pressure. - AFP

Advocate for Sikh state shot dead in Canada

OTTAWA: A campaigner for a Sikh nation to be carved out of India's Punjab state who was wanted by Indian authorities was shot dead in Canada, police said Monday. Federal police said in a statement that a man was found in his pickup truck in the parking lot of the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara temple in Surrey, British Columbia, around 8:30 pm on Sunday, "suffering from apparent gunshot wounds."

"The man died of his injuries at the scene," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police added. Police did not initially identify the victim, but later said he was 45-year-old Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the temple's president who advocated for the creation of a Sikh state known as Khalistan. The later police statement said they were releasing his identity "in hopes of advancing their investigation." "We understand there is a lot of speculation regarding the motive of this homicide, but we are dedicated to learning the facts and letting the evidence lead our investigation," said Timothy Pierotti of the police's Integrated Homicide Investigation Team.

Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism offenses and conspiracy to commit murder, which he reportedly denied to Canadian media. He had been warned by Canada's spy agency about threats against him, according to the World Sikh Organization of Canada, which said that he was "assassinated in a targeted shooting."

It pointed to the killings or suspicious deaths of other prominent Khalistan activists in recent months: Avtar Singh Khanda, in Britain, and Paramjit Singh Panjwar, in Pakistan. India's Punjab state - which is about 58 percent Sikh and 39 percent Hindu - was rocked by a violent Khalistan separatist movement in the 1980s and early 1990s, in which thousands of people died.

Today, the separatist movement's most vocal advocates are primarily among the Punjabi diaspora. India has often complained to foreign governments, including Ottawa, about the activities of Sikh hardliners among the Indian diaspora who, it says, are trying to revive the insurgency. - AFP

Taliban carry out second public execution

KABUL: A convicted murderer was shot dead Tuesday in the grounds of a mosque in provincial Afghanistan, officials said, the second public execution since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021. "He was executed in public in the town of Sultan Ghazi Baba, centre of Laghman province, so that he could suffer and become a lesson for others," said a statement from provincial information officers.

Although public executions were common during the Taliban's first rule from 1996 to 2001, the only other one they have carried out since returning to power was in December last year in Farah province.

There have been regular public floggings for other crimes, however, including theft, adultery and alcohol consumption. Officials named the murderer as "Ajmal, son of Nascem", adding he had killed five people. An official at the provincial information and culture department told AFP around 2,000 people watched the execution - including relatives of Ajmal's victims - and that the sentence and execution were carried out in accordance with sharia law.

Afghanistan's Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada last year ordered judges to fully implement all aspects of sharia - including qisas punishment,

which equates to "an eye-for-an-eye". "I saw the criminal being executed for qisas after the victim's family did not forgive him," a witness to Tuesday's execution told AFP.

"He was shot, if I didn't count it wrong, six times. I could not see if he was dead or not, but he was later taken by ambulance," said the witness, who asked not to be named. A provincial official said Ajmal was shot with an AK-47 by an executioner rather than a relative of the victims, which qisas allows.

'A lot of fear'

In the execution carried out in Farah in December, the father of the murder victim pulled the trigger himself on his son's killer. "For such crimes it is good that people should see and always have the fear before doing such inhuman acts," Tuesday's witness told AFP. "There was a lot of fear. It was very emotional. We are not used to such things." In a statement, Afghanistan's Supreme Court said all avenues of appeal had been exhausted in Ajmal's case, and the final decision to carry out the execution was made by the Supreme Leader.

"Extraordinary research was done by the Supreme Leader and it was discussed with the scholars in a big gathering," the statement said. "At the end, the order of qisas for the murderer was approved and the order of implementation of qisas was given."

It said Ajmal had killed five people "in two phases". He shot dead four people at a house in Laghman province, before killing another man elsewhere. It was not clear when the murders happened. - AFP



SOLUKHUMBU: The Khumbu glacier is pictured at the Everest base camp in the Mount Everest region of Solukhumbu district. Himalayan glaciers providing critical water to nearly two billion people are melting faster than ever before due to climate change. - AFP

Himalayan glaciers melting 65 percent faster: Study

KATHMANDU: Himalayan glaciers providing critical water to nearly two billion people are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, scientists warned Tuesday. The glaciers disappeared 65 percent faster from 2011 to 2020 compared with the previous decade, according to a report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). "As it gets warmer, ice will melt, that was expected, but what is unexpected and very worrying is the speed," lead author Philippus Wester told AFP. "This is going much faster than we thought."

Glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region are a crucial water source for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions, as well as for another 1.65 billion people in the river valleys below, the report said. Based on current emissions trajectories, the glaciers could lose up to 80 percent of their current volume by the end of the century, said the Nepal-based ICIMOD, an inter-governmental organization that also includes member countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar and Pakistan.

The glaciers feed 10 of the world's most important river systems, including the Ganges, Indus, Yellow, Mekong and Irrawaddy, and directly or indirectly supply billions of people with food, energy, clean air and

income. "With two billion people in Asia reliant on the water that glaciers and snow here hold, the consequences of losing this cryosphere (a frozen zone) are too vast to contemplate," said ICIMOD's deputy chief Izabella Kozziell.

'Too vast to contemplate'

Even if global warming is limited to the 1.5 to 2.0 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels agreed to in the Paris climate treaty, the glaciers are expected to lose a third to a half of their volume by 2100, the peer-reviewed report said.

"It underscores the need for urgent climate action," Wester said. "Every small increment will have huge impacts and we really, really need to work on climate mitigation... that is our plea." Wester said improving technologies and previously classified high-resolution satellite imagery meant predictions could be made with a good degree of accuracy. The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 C since the mid-1800s, unleashing a cascade of extreme weather, including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts and storms made more ferocious by rising seas.

Hardest hit are the most vulnerable people and the world's poorest countries, which have done little to contribute to the fossil fuel emissions that drive up temperatures. Amina Maharjan, a livelihoods and migration specialist at ICIMOD, said communities do not have the support they need.

"Most of the adaptation is communities and households reacting (to climate events). It is inadequate to meet the challenges posed by climate change," Maharjan said. "What is going to be very critical moving forward is anticipating change," she said. - AFP

Indonesia arrests nearly 500 human trafficking suspects

JAKARTA: Indonesian police have this month arrested nearly 500 suspects involved in the trafficking of more than 1,500 victims, officials said Tuesday, as Jakarta cracks down on human smuggling. Indonesia is one of the largest migrant worker-exporting nations in Southeast Asia, with hundreds of thousands from the poorest parts of the archipelago nation leaving the country every year through unofficial routes in search of higher-paying work.

Several shocking cases have highlighted the issue of human trafficking in the country in recent years and police created a human trafficking task force this month to ramp up efforts to stem the exploitation of Indonesians. National police spokesman Ahmad Ramadhan told AFP authorities had rescued 1,553 victims in the last two weeks before they were trafficked out of the country.

"Within a short period of time, we managed to rescue this many people, but there are more people who have already left Indonesia," he said. Between June 5 and 18, police arrested 494 suspects and five major traffickers were still "being hunted down", he said.

Many of the victims were rescued from illegal shelters on course to be trafficked as maids, boat crew or prostitutes, with several cases of child exploitation also included. The United Nations says between 100,000 and one million people are sold into sex work or forced into labor every year in Indonesia. International alarm is growing over internet scams in the region that are often staffed by trafficking victims tricked or coerced into promoting bogus crypto investments. Jakarta has moved to increase probes, prosecutions and convictions for human trafficking, and has made efforts to repatriate victims trafficked to other Southeast Asian nations. - AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2023

Boeing and Airbus score new billion-dollar orders in Paris

Paris Air Show back with climate, defense in focus



LE BOURGET: A Boeing 777x is displayed at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport, on June 20, 2023. — AFP photos

LE BOURGET: Global airliner rivals Boeing and Airbus notched up new orders from Algeria and the Philippines at the Paris Air Show Tuesday, after the European manufacturer snagged the biggest-ever single civilian contract. Philippine Airlines will buy nine of Airbus' A350-1000 widebody planes, while Air Algérie snapped up eight of Boeing's medium-haul 737 MAX-9 aircraft. At list prices - usually higher than discounted bulk orders - the Airbus deal is worth \$3.3 billion and Boeing's \$1.0 billion.

With both plane builders' order books well stocked, Philippine Airlines can expect delivery from 2025 while Air Algérie will have to wait until 2027. Faced with growing demand for long-haul planes, Airbus is pushing to increase production of the A350, its latest airliner, setting a target of nine per month by the end of 2025.

Meanwhile, Boeing's sales of the 737-MAX appear to be hauling it out of a slump triggered by both COVID and the aircraft's lengthy grounding after two fatal crashes. Irish low-cost carrier Ryanair in May ordered 300 of the planes. Earlier Tuesday, Australian carrier Qantas confirmed it would buy nine of Airbus'

smaller A220 jets, the manufacturer said. Tuesday's deals have yet to match the 500-plane order made with Airbus by Indian low-cost carrier IndiGo, at a list price of \$55 billion. Those planes from the A320 family are not expected to be delivered until 2030-35.

Defense in focus

Military and civilian aircraft streaked across the sky as the Paris Air Show returned after a four-year COVID-induced hiatus, with a big crowd including Ukrainian military officials and the French president. Organizers have billed the biennial event as the "recovery airshow" after the coronavirus ravaged the sector and the event was cancelled in 2021. This year's airshow has a new focus on defense following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, along with the industry's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, with French President Emmanuel Macron arriving in a helicopter partly using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Huge traffic jams around Le Bourget airport outside Paris were testament to the interest in this year's show, as aircraft makers field hundreds of orders and airlines brace for a near-record



LE BOURGET: The cockpit of a Boeing 737 Max is seen during the International Paris Air Show at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport, on June 20, 2023.

number of passengers this year. The Ukraine conflict has also prompted countries to step up military spending, which could benefit aerospace defense firms. While Russia has been excluded from the event, Ukrainian military officials toured the huge exhibition space at Paris-Le Bourget airport, some tak-

ing photos of missiles on display.

Le Bourget offers a forum to announce deals with some 2,500 firms lining up to show off their latest planes, drones, helicopters and prototypes such as flying taxis. Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury, who heads France's aerospace industry association GEFAS, called it "the

return of the good old times of the excitement of the show".

Macron was welcomed as he opened the event with an aerial display including Airbus' latest A321 XLR airliner, civilian and military helicopters and a jet fighter. Businesspeople and uniformed military visitors from around the world watched the action or headed into the guarded private spaces of the major firms' stands. With 125,000 square meters of exhibition space - the equivalent of nearly 18 soccer pitches - around 320,000 visitors are expected during the week-long event.

Big deals

Along with the Farnborough airshow in England, which takes place in even numbered years, Le Bourget is a key sales event for the civil and defense industries. Airbus and rival Boeing compete fiercely in announcing orders for aircraft running into the billions of dollars. Both industry heavyweights are also battling to solidify supply chains as they increase production to meet growing demand. At least 158 planes, helicopters and drones will be on display, from the latest long-haul commercial jets to the F-35, a US stealth fighter. — AFP

Global warming pits geese against farmers in Finland

PARIKKALA: With a cacophony of honks sounding like a hailstorm, tens of thousands of hungry geese blanket a lush green field in Finland with their black flocks. "There's probably around 20 to 30 hectares behind me, it is easily eaten in a day," cattle farmer Kari Pekonen tells AFP. In Finland's eastern Karelia region, home to boreal forests and wetlands, climate change is pushing local farmers into conflict with wildlife. "Many farmers in this region have completely lost faith in the fairness of society," Pekonen says.

Two decades ago, few Barnacle geese stopped in Finland to feed during their migration north across the Arctic, where they nest, from their wintering areas in the Netherlands, Germany and beyond. But now they number hundreds of thousands in Finland. This has led to harsh competition for arable land between the geese and farmers. Of his 250 hectares of grassland meant to feed his cows, Pekonen says the geese now eat around 85 percent, causing him to lose around two-thirds of his income.

He points to the ground and says the grass should be up to his shins by now. But instead, all that remains is stubble. "It is an unsustainable burden for this region," he says. The third generation in his family to raise beef cattle, Pekonen has had to give up many of his cows—from 300 two years ago he now has fewer than a hundred. This year will determine what he will do in the future.

Migration changing 'radically'

To safeguard their crops without harming the birds, farmers have tried solar-powered laser cannons that scare the geese away, drones acting as birds of prey, and even loudspeakers blasting the geese's own panic screams. But results have been mixed, experts say, as the geese quickly learn to ignore the threats. Like many migratory birds, the medium-sized black-



PARIKKALA: A flock of Barnacle geese fly over a field in Parikkala, Finland. With a cacophony of honks resembling the sound of a hailstorm, tens of thousands of hungry geese blanket a lush green field in Finland with their black flocks. — AFP

and-white Barnacle geese are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Each spring, the geese travel from their wintering areas in continental Europe to lay eggs in the tundra of the Arctic islands of Novaya Zemlya in Russia and Svalbard in Norway.

In spring, the geese prefer to feed as close as possible to their northern nesting areas before departing on their final leg across the Arctic Ocean. Northern Europe's cold springs meant the geese used to prepare for the journey further south. But warming temperatures are pushing the flocks northward. "The migratory stop-over sites of Barnacle geese have changed radically," explained Teemu Lehtiniemi, research director at conservation group BirdLife.

Although there are various reasons for the new route, like the decline in agriculture on the Russian side of Karelia, an important factor is the warming climate. "Thanks to global warming, the best place to prepare for the final trip is moving further and further north," Lehtiniemi said. Barnacle geese faced extinction in the 1970s as their numbers dwindled to around 10,000 largely due to hunting. Since then, the species has been protected by international agreements and their numbers have skyrocketed to over a million. — AFP

Modi to talk tech, trade on US visit

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to the United States to meet with President Joe Biden and address Congress, with military and technological ties on the agenda as his hosts seek a regional counter to China. The leader of the world's most populous nation will also receive all the pomp of a state dinner at the White House on Thursday — only Biden's third since his inauguration.

Hailed by New Delhi as a "historic" chance to "expand and consolidate" ties, the visit comes at a time of rising concerns on human rights and democratic backsliding under the Hindu nationalist leader. But Washington is seeking to boost ties with a potential regional ally to counter an increasingly assertive China. Analysts expect landmark announcements in clean energy and strategic technology, including a deal to jointly produce fighter jet engines.

'Deep alignment'

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, on a visit to New Delhi earlier this month, announced an "ambitious new roadmap for defense industrial co-operation" with India. It has been linked to a likely announcement, expected at this week's summit, of a long-discussed multibillion-dollar plan to co-produce the jet engines in India. New Delhi has been trying to become less dependent on Russian military hardware by diversifying imports and boosting domestic production. With many countries wooing Modi, Washington hopes its co-production and technology offers will help secure a key market.

Ashok Malik, India head of The Asia Group advisory firm, said US-India ties were defined by "pragmatism and deep alignment at the government level", with "very strong" economic and business links. India is important as "a growing power" in a region "where China is becoming unusually assertive", New Delhi-based Malik told AFP. After a deadly clash with China along their disputed Himalayan border in 2020,

India rapidly expanded its Washington ties and is already part of the Quad grouping alongside Australia, the United States and Japan.

India's huge market and potential as an alternative to China-dependent supply chains make it attractive, but its ties with Moscow remain an irritant for Washington. New Delhi has not condemned Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and has ratcheted up its oil imports from Russia. Donald Camp, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that while the United States will push India for "some further action" on Russia, it "has not seemed to be a huge impediment in the development of the (US-India) relationship over the last year or so".

Modi will also meet Secretary of State Antony Blinken — who on Sunday visited Beijing on the highest-level trip by a US official in nearly five years. Kicking off his US trip on Wednesday with a mass yoga demonstration at the UN headquarters in New York, Modi will also meet top US CEOs to make a fresh investment pitch before India's national elections next year. Samir Saran, president of New Delhi-based think tank the Observer Research Foundation, said that "despite the very contrasting personalities of the two leaders", the Biden-Modi summit was expected to result in tighter ties. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Flags of India adorn lampposts on Pennsylvania Avenue outside of the White House in Washington, DC. US President Joe Biden will be hosting India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a State visit. — AFP

Zain's 'Tamam' platform in Saudi Arabia awarded

'Best Personal Finance Solution' in Middle East

DUBAI: Zain, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that its "Tamam" financing services operation in Saudi Arabia has been selected as the 'Best Personal Finance Solution' by Entrepreneur Middle East Magazine, at its 2023 Middle East Fintech Awards event held in Dubai recently.

With the aim to increase financial inclusion in line with the Kingdom's 'Vision 2030' Financial Sector Development Plan, Tamam was established in 2019 under the Saudi Central Bank's Regulatory Sandbox program. Following 18 months of extensive proof-of-concept testing, on December 31, 2020, Tamam attained the first consumer micro-financing commercial license awarded in the Kingdom and the region to offer micro-loans via a fully digital customer experience on a mobile app.

Tamam offers the fastest response financing services in Saudi Arabia, providing individuals with the opportunity to receive Sharia-compliant loans without physically visiting a bank location. The platform's end-to-end application and award process takes just minutes from the time of downloading the app to the loan amount being paid out.



Yousef Al Musaelem, Tamam CEO

Commenting on the award, Tamam CEO, Yousef Al Musaelem said, "We are extremely proud of the work we do at Tamam in driving financial and digital inclusion across the Kingdom. We believe firmly that everyone deserves fair and equal access to financial services and take our participation in the Kingdom's Vision 2030 Financial Sector Development Plan extremely seriously, with

the aim of bringing as many individuals as possible into the digital economy."

Key features of Tamam

As one of Saudi Arabia's most innovative micro-financing digital institutions, Tamam's solutions cater to the evolving financial needs of its customers. The platform's products include instant

approvals; short-term financing; and fully digital, quick, easy, and secure solutions.

Potential customers can apply easily, using the Tamamapp, receive rapid approval, and take advantage of the flexible conditions and easy processes.

Loans are provided to Saudi nationals and residents, without the requirement of a salary transfer or guarantor, with a finance amount up to SAR 50,000 available for a 24-month tenure. Tamam is passionate about its vision of becoming a leader in delivering innovative fintech solutions, supporting the socio-economic development of Saudi Arabia and beyond.

About Zain Group

Zain is a leading telecommunications operator across the Middle East and Africa providing mobile voice and data services to over 53 million active customers as of March 31, 2023. With a commercial presence in 7 countries, Zain operates in: Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and South Sudan. In Morocco, Zain has a 15.5% stake in 'INWI', through a joint venture. Zain is listed on Bursa Kuwait (stock ticker: ZAIN).



Erdogan's ally points to 'painful' rate hike

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's influential ruling coalition partner said Tuesday that the government needed to take "painful" economic recovery measures that included interest rate hikes. MHP party leader Devlet Bahçeli's comments delivered important political cover for Erdogan's new economic team to pursue a more conventional approach to cure Turkey's accumulating woes. Turkey's annual inflation rate hovers near 40 percent and its central bank reserves stand at historic lows after two years of Erdogan's unorthodox economic policies.

Erdogan appointed market-friendly economist Mehmet Simsek as finance minister and former Wall Street executive Hafize Gaye Erkan as the head of Turkey's central bank after winning a hard-fought re-election last month. Both have promoted conventional policies that include interest rate hikes to combat inflation - the opposite of the approach favored by Erdogan. The Turkish leader said last week that he "accepted" the changes that his new economic team would like to pursue. But Erdogan added that he still believed that high interest rates contribute to inflation and that his views on economics have not changed.

Bahçeli echoed those remarks. "The MHP's view on interest rates is clear, it has not changed. In theory and practice, an increase in interest rates is a political choice that discourages investment, hinders production, and makes the need for credit more expensive," he told his party members in parliament.

Markets drop; China rate cut underwhelms

LONDON: Asian and European stocks mostly fell Tuesday, as China's smaller-than-forecast interest rate cut failed to dispel worries over its flagging powerhouse economy. Sentiment was also subdued before the return of Wall Street traders from a long holiday weekend. London stocks firmed on the eve of critical UK inflation data and ahead of Thursday's expected interest rate increase from the Bank of England. Frankfurt and Paris slid one week after the European Central Bank also lifted rates but the US Federal Reserve hit pause, while both flagged more hikes. World oil prices meanwhile advanced and the dollar wavered against rival currencies.

'Headwinds for global economy'

"Developments in China, where the central bank cut its reference interest rate by ten basis points, continue to point to a slower-than-predicted post-pandemic recovery in the world's second-largest economy," said ActivTrades analyst Ricardo Evangelista. "With China's economy struggling to regain momentum, the headwinds for the global economy get stronger," he warned.

The People's Bank of China reduced its benchmark five-year rate by 10 basis points, less than the



ANKARA: Shoppers buy fruits and vegetables at a food stall in a market in the historical Ulus district of Ankara. — AFP

"However, there are short-term and sometimes painful measures that need to be taken for Turkey to achieve economic stability, and it has become inevitable to bear the current burden."

Litmus test

Bahçeli's remarks come two days before the central bank holds one of its most important policy meetings in years. Erdogan sped through a series of central bankers before finding one willing to push down the policy rate well below that of inflation. A resulting currency crisis set off a new wave of inflation that saw consumer prices grow at an annual rate of 85 percent late last year. Turkey's main interest

rate now stands at 8.5 percent - still 31.1 percentage points below the annual rate of inflation.

Analysts see Thursday's meeting as a litmus test for how much leeway Erkan has to raise rates. Bahçeli plays an outsized role in Turkish politics despite representing a fringe ultranationalist party that picked up 10 percent of the vote in last month's polls. His alliance with Erdogan has enabled the president's Islamic-rooted AKP parliament to control parliament and push through policies without the need for the opposition's support. Bahçeli often voices ideas that eventually become part of Erdogan's ruling strategy. The two hold regular private meetings setting out Turkey's course. — AFP



SEOUL: A delivery worker prepares his trolley at Namdaemun Market in Seoul on June 20, 2023. — AFP

15 points expected, though it did meet forecasts for a 15-point reduction in the one-year rate. Traders were left disappointed by Beijing's lack of action to kickstart the country's lumbering economic recovery. The move came after the PBoC had last week lowered two other key rates and pumped billions into financial markets.

In reaction Hong Kong stocks dropped more than one percent, with tech firms - which are sus-

ceptible to higher borrowing costs - taking the brunt of the selling, while property companies also dropped. Shanghai was also in negative territory, but Tokyo eked out gains. Tuesday's retreat extended this week's losses that were fuelled by frustration at the lack of detail from China on measures to boost the economy, which has failed to recover since painful zero-COVID measures were removed at the end of 2022. — AFP

natural gas from the North Field East Expansion Project to China over a period of 27 years," Kaabi told a signing ceremony in Doha. "This will become the second LNG (liquefied natural gas) sale and purchase agreement to China within the North Field East Expansion Project." By expanding activities at North Field, which has the world's biggest natural gas reserves and extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory, Qatar is raising its LNG production by 60 percent-plus to 126 million tons a year by 2027.

CNPC signed a separate agreement for a five percent interest in North Field East, the equivalent of one gas-liquefying complex producing eight million tons of LNG a year. "It lays a solid foundation for the energy cooperation between the two sides in the next three decades," CNPC chairman Dai Houliang said in a statement. "CNPC will continue to actively discuss with QatarEnergy all-round cooperation across the hydrocarbon industry chain and other areas like green and low carbon energies," he added.

The value of the deals was not announced. Qatar,

whose gas riches have made its per-capita gross domestic product among the highest in the world, has struck a series of major agreements surrounding the North Field expansion. Earlier this month, QatarEnergy agreed a 15-year supply deal with Bangladeshi state firm Petrobranga, and last month it awarded a \$10 billion contract to France's Technip Energies and Consolidated Contractors Company for the engineering, procurement and construction of the North Field South project.

In April, Sinopec became the first Asian firm to get a stake in the North Field East expansion, also gaining a five percent stake. Although much of its gas is sold to Asian countries, in November Qatar announced its first major deal with Germany, selling up to two million tons annually for 15 years. The talks took several months as Germany resisted the long-term contracts that Qatar normally demands to justify its massive investment. Russia's invasion of Ukraine increased pressure on the German government to find new sources of supply. — AFP

Amid housing crunch, Toronto cutting into once-protected lands

TORONTO: A billboard at the foot of a field on Toronto's far outskirts heralds the coming construction of new homes, but it also highlights a broken promise never to permit encroachment into this vast green space, and the backlash which has ensued. Among the many anti-development protesters, a group led by concerned grandmothers has staged demonstrations outside Ontario lawmakers' offices decrying the loss of swaths of this so-called "Greenbelt" around Canada's largest metropolitan city. "My (trust) in the democratic process is destroyed by this move," says protestor Christine Hutchinson.

A resident of Oakville, west of Toronto, she adds that she is, however, heartened to see pushback from several area municipalities affected by the policy switch. By opening 3,000 hectares for new housing in recent months, Doug Ford, the province's conservative leader with close ties to local developers, went back on a 2018 election pledge not to touch what the foundation tasked with its conservation describes as "the world's largest" greenbelt.

The horseshoe-shaped 810,000-hectare ring of fertile farmlands, forests and wetlands edge Toronto and nearby cities that hug the north and west shores of Lake Ontario - the most densely populated and industrialized region of Canada. A mix of private and public lands, they have been protected since 2005 in an effort to limit urban sprawl. "These lands should be used to feed the local population, as food supply problems increase with climate change," said Brigitte Sopher, a resident of Whitevale, close to one of the new building areas.

The Ford government has designated 15 locations to build 50,000 homes and contribute to the goal of adding 1.5 million new residences in Ontario by 2031. To justify his reversal, Ford cited soaring real estate prices and a flood of newcomers needing to be housed, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government aims to boost annual immigration to Canada to 500,000, the majority of whom are likely to settle in large urban centers.

Edge of urban boundaries

The Canadian housing crunch is most acute in the Toronto area, which is expected to see its population rise from 6.8 million to 10.2 million in the next 25 years, according to government projections. The average price of a house in Ontario, meanwhile, has almost tripled since 2011 and rent for a two-room apartment now exceeds Can\$2,500 (US\$1,800) monthly. The greenbelt lands "play a vital role for flood protection. We know that with climate change we will face more risks of extreme weather and by doing so, the rainwater is going to end up in our basements," said Mike Schreiner, the first and only Green Party member of the Ontario legislature.

They also "help to filter the waterways that come down from all the rivers from the region and that end up in Lake Ontario, where we pump our drinking water," adds Mark Winfield, a professor of environmental and urban change at York University in Toronto. Opponents of development in the greenbelt point to an Ontario government report that states there is sufficient land available outside the greenbelt to achieve its housing objective. — AFP



TORONTO: A housing development is seen on the edge of the Ontario Green Belt in the Greater Toronto Area of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ontario. A billboard at the foot of a field on the far outskirts of Toronto heralds the coming construction of new homes, while highlighting a broken promise never to permit encroachment on this vast green space, which has provoked a public outcry. — AFP

Qatar inks 2nd gas supply deal with China

DOHA: Qatar announced a second 27-year supply deal with a Chinese company on Tuesday as it expands production from the world's biggest natural gas field. The agreement, to supply four million tons annually to the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), matches the terms of a November deal with China's Sinopec as the longest ever seen in the industry. Asian countries led by China, Japan and South Korea are the main market for Qatar's gas, which has been increasingly sought by European countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine early last year.

"Qatar will supply four million tons annually of

Business

With record unemployment, China's youths confront bleak job market

Over 7.7 million applicants take civil service exam

BEIJING: Rather than celebrating finishing university, this summer Chinese graduates shared photos of themselves theatrically throwing their degrees into bins, underscoring the bleak outlook as youth unemployment sits at a record high. The jobless rate could rise even further this summer, analysts warned, providing another headache for the government as it tries to jumpstart the country's sluggish post-COVID economy. With well-paid jobs few and far between, young people told AFP they were opting to remain in university, while others are scrambling for limited government jobs as opportunities in the private sector dry up.

Sampson Li, who graduated this month with a master's degree in software engineering, was looking for work but has given up to apply for a doctorate instead. The 24-year-old told AFP he passed three rounds of interviews at a major tech company in Shenzhen, dubbed China's Silicon Valley, before the employer said it had frozen recruitments. "Three other companies asked me to take a lower pay than the market rate," he said. "I can't survive with that salary in this city."

Data released last Thursday by the National Bureau of Statistics showed May's unemployment rate for people aged 16-24 hit 20.8 percent, an increase on the previous record of 20.4 percent hit in April. Larry Hu, Macquarie Group's chief China economist, warned that the figure could increase further in July when 11.6 million more college graduates start looking for work. "Corporates are reluctant to hire because of soft consumer demand, while consumers are reluctant to spend because of the weak labor market," he told AFP. "As a result, policy is the only game changer at this stage."

State crackdown

At a State Council meeting in April, Premier Li Qiang pledged to ensure stable employment opportunities for young people. "We have to take

measures to stabilize the scale of employment in manufacturing and foreign trade enterprises, optimize university curriculums, and improve the quality of vocational education and skills training based on the market demand," Li said.

However, a hoped-for raft of stimulus measures for the economy, including help to boost the jobs market, fell flat, as did an interest rate cut Tuesday, which was less than expected. One of the reasons China's once-freewheeling private sector is seeing much slower growth is because of a sweeping government crackdown on property companies, tech giants and private tutoring firms. "While Beijing runs a state-led economy, private companies provide up to 80 percent of China's urban jobs," Yu Jie, a senior China research fellow at the London-based think tank Chatham House, wrote.

These sectors relied on "young people willing to work long hours for lower salaries", she said. Liu Qian, armed with a degree in fintech, has been job hunting for the past six months. "There were dozens of fintech start-ups when I entered university, but many have disappeared over the past two years after the government tightened rules governing the sector," she said. "My parents now want me to study for the civil services exam, to see if I can get a job in a state-owned company." The odds are tough, though.

More than 7.7 million applicants took the civil service exam this year, to qualify for about 200,000 government jobs at national and provincial levels, state media reported. Frustration over the fierce competition for any well-remunerated work has fuelled the online memes of throwing away degrees, with graduates also posting photos of themselves sprawled on the ground or in various poses of despair. The pictures are a reference to the now-prevalent counterculture of "lying flat" — young people rejecting the rat race of urban living for a simpler, less professionally ambitious life.

China's imports of Russian oil highest since invasion

BEIJING: Chinese imports of Russian oil last month hit their highest level since Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Beijing's customs data showed Tuesday. China is Russia's largest economic partner, with trade between them reaching a record \$190 billion last year, according to Chinese customs data. And in May, China imported 9.71 million tons of oil from Russia, detailed customs data showed, up from 5.4 million tons in February 2022 and 6.3 million the

following month.

The figures show that imports of Russian crude by China since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine have almost doubled. They are in line with trade figures released this month that showed China's trade with Russia soaring to levels not seen since February 2022. Trade between the two countries last month was worth \$20.5 billion, data from Beijing showed, with Chinese imports from Russia worth \$11.3 billion.

During a summit in March, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin pledged to boost trade to \$200 billion in 2023 as they hailed their "no limits" partnership. And Russian energy deliveries to China are set to grow by 40 percent this year, Deputy Prime Minister

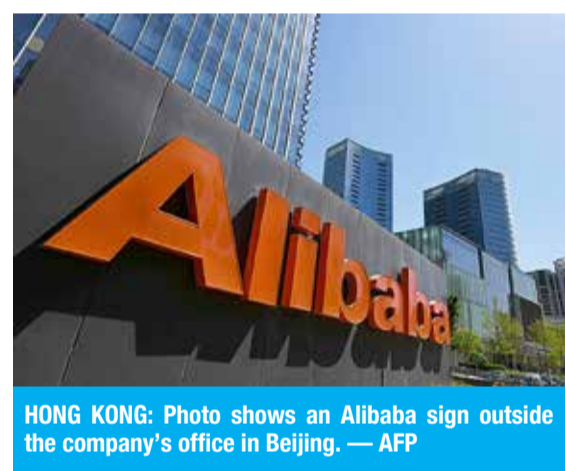
Alexander Novak said last month. Beijing says it is a neutral party in the Ukraine war, but has been criticized by Western countries for refusing to condemn Moscow and for its close strategic partnership with Russia.

'A new era'

Speaking on Russia's economy this month, President Putin admitted that the second quarter of last year had been "the most difficult" as the West punished his country with unprecedented sanctions. Analysts say China holds the upper hand in the relationship with Russia, and that its sway is growing as Moscow's international isolation deepens. China and Russia have in recent years ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic

contacts, with their strategic partnership having only grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine.

In February, Beijing released a paper calling for a "political settlement" to the conflict, which Western countries said could enable Russia to hold much of the territory it has seized in Ukraine. During their March summit in Moscow, Xi invited Putin to visit Beijing and the two leaders declared that ties were "entering a new era". And last month, the Chinese leader offered his "firm support" on Moscow's "core interests" at a meeting with Moscow's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, during the highest-level visit by a Russian official to China since last year's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP



HONG KONG: Photo shows an Alibaba sign outside the company's office in Beijing. — AFP

Chinese tech giant Alibaba names new CEO, chairman

BEIJING: Chinese tech giant Alibaba said Tuesday it will replace its top boss, in a surprise move at the e-commerce titan as it looks to recover from years of slow growth caused by weak consumer spending and a regulatory crackdown. The move comes as the market leader prepares to undergo a fundamental reorganization of its sprawling business operations, which span cloud computing, e-commerce, logistics, media and entertainment, and artificial intelligence.

Under the reshuffle, Joseph Tsai will serve as chairman and Eddie Wu as CEO — replacing Daniel Zhang, who holds both roles. Both appointments will take effect on September 10. Zhang said in a statement it was the "right time" for him to step down as Alibaba looks to implement a full spin-off of its advanced cloud computing unit. The executive has played a vital role in the company's success in the past decade, spearheading the now hugely popular Singles' Day shopping festival since its first edition in 2009.

After the transition, Zhang will continue to serve as chairman and CEO of Alibaba Cloud Intelligence Group, the company said. Alibaba has hit on hard times as Beijing imposed tighter restrictions on the domestic tech sector, while weak consumer spending saw it record its third consecutive quarter of single-digit revenue growth earlier this year. And in a shock announcement, Alibaba said in late March that it would split into six business groups — one of the most significant overhauls of a leading Chinese tech firm to date. Zhang said at the time that the restructuring would give the individual business units the ability to pursue independent financing and public listing plans.

'Smart move'

Jeffrey Towson, partner at TechMoat Consulting, said in a call that this week's shake-up "looks like the second half" of that reorganization. "The biggest growth engine that Alibaba has outside of its e-commerce business is their cloud business," Towson said. Making this Zhang's sole focus "is a smart move," he added. Incoming chairman Tsai said in a statement that Zhang had "demonstrated extraordinary leadership in navigating unprecedented uncertainties affecting our business over the past few years".

Tsai, a company veteran who was part of its founding team, brings extensive experience in various finance-related roles, including as former Alibaba chief financial officer. Given that background, Li Chengdong, founder of Beijing-based tech-focused think tank Dolphin, told AFP that Tsai's appointment as chairman would likely "facilitate communication with Wall Street investors and maintain confidence in the stock price". — AFP

China's central bank cuts two benchmark interest rates

BEIJING: China's central bank on Tuesday cut two benchmark interest rates, following several similar measures in recent days in a bid to counter the post-COVID growth slowdown in the world's second-largest economy. Last week, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) lowered two other key rates and pumped billions into financial markets, as fresh data showed the economy continued to struggle.

The policy easing moves are the most significant yet by leaders who are trying to invigorate growth after recent indicators showed a hoped-for strong recovery after years of lockdowns was running out of steam. China's efforts contrast with those in the United States and other Western countries, which have been forced into a series of interest rate hikes while reducing money supply to tame inflation.

On Tuesday, the one-year Loan Prime Rate, which serves as a benchmark for corporate loans, was reduced from 3.65 percent to 3.55 percent, the PBoC said in a statement, while the five-year LPR, which is used to price mortgages, was cut from 4.3 percent to 4.2 percent. Officials last Thursday lowered the medium-term lending facility (MLF) rate — the interest for one-year loans to financial institutions — 10 basis points to 2.65 percent. The PBoC also said it was offering 237 billion yuan (\$33 billion) to banks through the medium-term lending facility "to maintain reasonable and sufficient liquidity in the banking system".

Weak indicators

China has released a slew of weak economic indicators in recent weeks, leading to increased calls for stimulus measures. Youth unemployment rose to a record 20.8 percent in May, while exports sank for the first time since February, official data shows. Top economist and government adviser Liu Yuanchun this month called for regulators to cut borrowing costs further to ease the financing burden on

Hyundai raises annual EV sales goal to 2 million

SEOUL: Hyundai Motor said Tuesday it aims to sell two million electric vehicles a year by 2030, raising its target from the 1.87 million it set last year as the market for clean-energy vehicles continues to soar. It also announced plans to invest a total of 109.4 trillion won (\$85 billion) from 2023 to 2032 to focus on "future businesses, such as au-

tonomous driving, hydrogen, robotics and advanced air mobility."

The South Korean carmaker — one of the world's largest — is under pressure in the United States and Europe to boost local production of clean vehicles and cut down on its dependence on China-made components and battery minerals. Chips, which have become crucial components for modern vehicles, became scarce as the Covid-19 pandemic shut down factories in China and elsewhere in Asia, causing shortages that are only recently being absorbed by supply chains. Hyundai aims to "achieve a successful transition to electrification by efficiently and effectively leveraging

its long experience in vehicle production and sales," it said in a statement.

"With global EV demand growing faster than market forecasts, Hyundai Motor is raising its 2030 sales target from 1.87 million units to two million units," it added. It said it planned to boost production of EVs in the EU and United States, citing growing demand — but also in a likely response to growing incentives in such markets for locally-produced vehicles. If the firm reaches the new goal, its electric vehicles, including luxury brand Genesis, would account for 34 percent of its worldwide sales in 2030 — up from just eight percent this year, Hyundai said.

The company, however, is currently being probed in the United States for issues related to its popular Ioniq 5 electric SUV model. A total of 30 complaints were received about the model completely or partially losing propulsive power, the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said Saturday. Hyundai's Tuesday announcement comes after US automaker Ford embarked on a restructure with the goal of producing two million electric vehicles a year by the end of 2026. Toyota Motor, on the other hand, has also announced a plan to sell 1.5 million battery electric vehicles per year by 2026. — AFP



CHONGQING: People attend a job fair in China's southwestern city of Chongqing. Unemployment among Chinese youths jumped to a record 20.8 percent in May, the National Bureau of Statistics said as the economy's post-COVID growth spurt fades. — AFP

Skills mismatch

There is generally a mismatch in skills possessed by young job seekers and the demands of the labor market, Chatham House's Yu said. The services sector, for example, remains a rare bright spot with millions travelling and dining out after three years of pandemic restrictions were lifted last December. But the lack of opportunities for vocational training means young people are ill-equipped to work in it, Yu said.

Many of the jobs that are available are poorly

paid and arduous. Tan Yong, 17, moved to Shenzhen from neighboring Meizhou last year after dropping out of high school. He first found work at an assembly line making air conditioners, but was forced to leave after six months when the production line moved to Vietnam. Now Tan works as a rider for a food delivery company. "The work is difficult, and we make less than five yuan on most deliveries," he said. "But many young people don't want to work in factories where you need to stand for nearly seven hours." — AFP



BEIJING: A woman rides an electric scooter down a street in Beijing on June 20, 2023. — AFP

small and medium-sized private businesses. Reports have in recent days said Beijing is lining up a series of measures targeting multiple areas of the economy, particularly the real estate sector, which makes up a huge portion of gross domestic product.

China's six largest state-owned commercial banks cut interest rates for savers this month to boost spending, according to announcements on their websites, after a request by the central bank. But cutting interest rates alone is "unlikely to trigger a jump in household or corporate borrowing and spending", analysts from Capital Economics wrote in a note on Friday. "In the short-run, the most effective way for officials to boost demand is to direct

state entities to spend more," the analysts wrote.

At the same time, "with no 'easy fix' on the horizon, the property market's weakness and its negative impact on the rest of the economy will likely persist", said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management, in a note on Tuesday. China's debt-laden property sector — a key driver of the country's economy — is struggling to climb out of a record-breaking slump after authorities narrowed the industry's access to credit in 2020. To revive a struggling sector, the government has adopted a more conciliatory approach since November, with targeted support measures for the most financially sound developers — with mixed results. — AFP

Lifestyle



This picture shows the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) in the Chateau de Versailles, in Versailles, west of Paris, on June 19, 2023. — AFP photos



Detail of a curtain in the salon.



Armchairs in the salon.

Versailles reopening MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S PRIVATE ROOMS

The chateau of Versailles will reopen the private rooms of Queen Marie-Antoinette as part of its ongoing 400th anniversary celebrations. The restored apartments will reopen to the public on June 27, featuring 100 sq m of luxurious living space where France's last queen played with her children and received friends. It is the final part of a restoration of the Queen's Hamlet and Trianon, a series of cottag-

es and getaways built away from the main palace. It gives a "new understanding of history, with this paradox between public and private life, etiquette and intimacy, an extraordinary summary of history within a few square meters," said Catherine Pegard, who runs the palace. The palace, which welcomed nearly seven million visitors last year, dates to late 1623 when King Louis XIII ordered

the expansion of a small hunting lodge on the 800-hectare site. "This anniversary is primarily aimed at expressing the continuity of history at Versailles for these past 400 years and to show that we will continue to open and restore (parts of the palace) and bring them to life," said Pegard. Marie-Antoinette's apartments include a boudoir, library and billiard room. She accessed the refuge through a secret door hidden in her official bedroom.

The palace is also preparing a new gallery dedicated to its history, to open in September. "At Versailles, the work never ends," said Pegard, who has overseen a wide array of restorations since taking over in 2011. These have included the Buffet d'eau Fountain, the apartments of Louis XV's son, the Dauphin Louis-Ferdinand, as well as those of his favorite mistress, Jeanne du Barry — who is the center of a new film starring Johnny Depp as the monarch, that was filmed at the palace. - AFP



This picture shows the bedroom of Queen Marie-Antoinette de Habsbourg-Lorraine, wife of France's King Louis XVI, in the Chateau de Versailles.



A monogram bearing the initials of Queen Marie-Antoinette in her private apartments in the Chateau de Versailles.



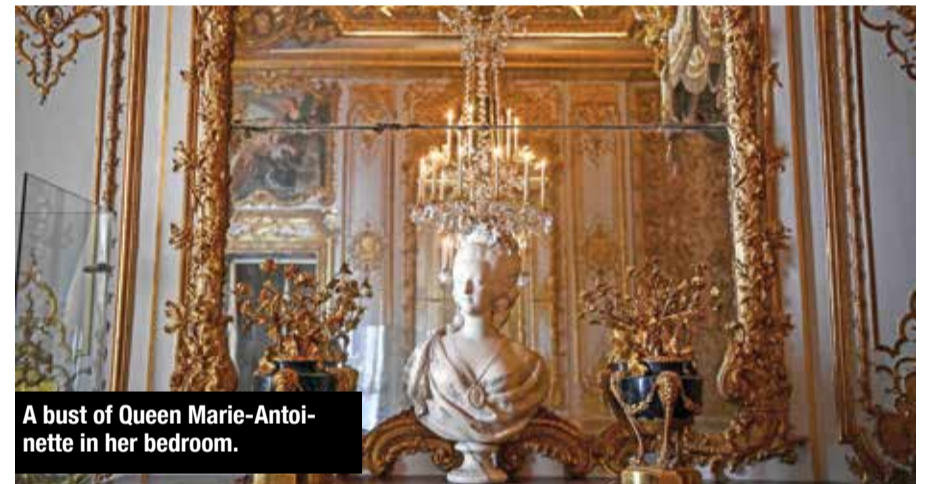
This picture shows a library, part of the private apartments of Queen Marie-Antoinette.



Furniture in a salon, part of the private apartments of Queen Marie-Antoinette.



A sitting area in the salon.



A bust of Queen Marie-Antoinette in her bedroom.

FRANCE PLEDGES TO COMBAT 'OVERTOURISM'

Faced with surging numbers of visitors to historic landmarks and natural treasures, France wants to put a lid on the tourist crowds that flood in each year — though officials recognize it won't be easy. Tourism minister Olivia Gregoire unveiled Sunday a plan to regulate visitor flows at the most popular sites and lay out a strategy against "overtourism". She said France, the world's biggest tourist destination, particularly needed to better manage the peak-season influxes that threatened "the environment, the quality of life for locals, and the experiences for its visitors".

The issue is urgent for prime destinations worldwide as international travel surges after Covid-19 lockdowns. Many of the most revered French sites, such as the Mont-Saint-Michel abbey in Normandy, say they are being overwhelmed by the number of visitors. On the famed Channel beach of Etretat — which saw a tourism surge thanks to the plot of the hit Netflix detective series "Lupin" — the 1,200 residents see up to 10,000 tourists a day in the high season.

"This massive influx ends up trampling and eroding the cliffs and endangers the beach cliffs," said Shai Mallet, co-head of the Etretat Tomorrow residents' association. She also laments the lack of local economic benefits, with visitors staying just a few hours, maybe grabbing an ice cream but not always frequenting restaurants or hotels. The government's announcement comes as Paris, which is grappling with a housing shortage in part because homeowners prefer short-term rentals to tourists, said

last week it expects 37 million tourists this year, just short of the pre-pandemic level of 38.5 million in 2019.

Limits are already being set, with officials capping day visits to the gorgeous Brittany island of Brehat at 4,700 during the peak summer months. And the Calanques national park near Marseille said it will maintain for the next five years a free reservation system for visiting the



Hikers and tourists sit and bathe on a beach in Calanque de Sugiton in Parc National des Calanques in Marseille.

renowned Sugiton coves that was first implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The site, reachable by a one-hour hike, now lets in just 400 people per day in July and August, compared with up to 2,500 previously.

"There is no miracle solution for every region but once you know who's coming at what times, you can have local mar-

keting strategies — like not advertising during the high season — or pricing strategies that encourage people nearby to come in the off-season," said Simon Thiriot of the Eurogroup Consulting advisory group.

'Lack of data'

For now, the government will set up an industry monitoring group to identify

crowds," she said.

One key goal will be to enlist social media "influencers" to spread the word on the risks of overtourism, for example by encouraging people to seek sites off the beaten path or make trips outside the summer months. But higher lodging taxes or access fees could also be in store to help communities cope with the costs of welcoming the throngs of visitors. "We

80 percent of annual tourism activity is concentrated on just 20 percent of the country — hence the push to encourage visitors to discover less well known parts of France. "There's a real effort that can be made at the national level to encourage people to discover other regions" than the French Riviera or the southwestern coast and Biarritz, said Didier Chenet, head of the GHR hotel and restaurant



People walk on a path leading to Mont-Saint-Michel.

the most at-risk sites and craft strategies for encouraging off-season visits. "France is the world's main tourist destination, but we have a serious lack of data," Gregoire, the minister, told the Figaro daily. "It's up to the government, working hand in hand with regional officials and tourist sites, to implement measures for informing tourists and locals, and to help manage the

have to protect fragile areas — we've lost 30 percent of our biodiversity in 25 years," said Didier Arino, head of the Protourisme advisory group. "We need a concerted tourism development strategy so that this influx spreads itself out in terms of destinations and seasons," he told AFP.

The government acknowledges that

association. "These days we're seeing more cruises on the canals of Burgundy or Dordogne, wine tourism in the Loire, or more visitors at the Beauval zoo combined with visits at the Loire valley castles," he said. — AFP



Visitors queue outside the castle of Chambord in Chambord, central France.



Visitors queue in front of the Louvre's Pyramid to visit the Louvre Museum in Paris. - AFP photos



Pedestrians climb to the top of a cliff in Etretat, northwestern France.

Lifestyle



Head of repatriation Te Arikirangi Mamaku-Ironside (center), repatriation programme manager Te Herekiele Herewini (right) and repatriation researcher Susan Thorpe. — AFP photos



Remains of indigenous Maori are on a dais during a powhiri ceremony at the marae of the Te Papa museum in Wellington, following the repatriation of the remains from museums overseas.



Mamaku-Ironside takes part in a powhiri ceremony.

NEW ZEALAND BRINGS STOLEN, TRADED INDIGENOUS REMAINS HOME

Snatched by grave robbers or traded by settlers as macabre curiosities, the remains of New Zealand's Indigenous people are slowly being brought home after centuries overseas. After British explorer Captain James Cook arrived in New Zealand in 1769, some European settlers developed a grim fascination with the remains of indigenous Maori people and Morioris, who are native to the Chatham Islands.

To colonial traders, the biggest trophies to be had were the tattooed heads of indigenous warriors and leaders. In the name of crude scientific research, grave robbers also plundered indigenous human remains from burial sites across the country, mostly during the 19th century, which is still a source of anger and grief for many New Zealanders. Since 2003, experts from New Zealand's Te Papa national museum in Wellington have scoured the globe to locate them.

"It's important for all indigenous people, whose ancestors were either traded or collected and taken overseas, that the remains come home," Te Herekiele Herewini, who manages the museum's repatriation program, told AFP. He said

the program has retrieved the remains of nearly 900 Indigenous people, and estimates the remains of between 300 to 400 more are still housed in institutions around the world. "We are working hard to bring them home," he said.

'Like a crime ring'

Last week, the remains of 95 ancient New Zealanders, along with six mummified tattooed heads, arrived home from seven institutions in Germany. In Maori culture, the skulls, bones and other body parts are referred to as tupuna, or ancestral remains. Getting the remains home is more than a matter of logistics. Copenhagen-based Te Arikirangi Mamaku-Ironside, head of repatriation for Te Papa, works to find out which museums still have indigenous remains and negotiate their release.

"It's a massive jigsaw puzzle trying to work out where New Zealand's ancestral remains are now kept — whether in state museums or private collections," he told AFP. "A grave robber may have taken from one location, but their collection could have been distributed to several museums in several countries or continents. "As the program goes on, the picture becomes a lot clearer."



Participants attend a powhiri ceremony following the repatriation of remains.

Mamaku-Ironside explained that New Zealand's early colonial museums often exchanged artefacts with overseas collectors, with remains ending up in foreign museums. "There was a network of exchange," he said. "It was kind of like a crime ring — except it wasn't actually considered illegal because it wasn't considered unethical

back then to trade in human remains. They were viewed as specimens." Mamaku-Ironside says his initial approach involves contacting institutions to ascertain what remains are stored in their collections. Part of his role is to "establish and confirm" which items "were actually illicitly collected and traded from New Zealand".

'Healing the trauma'

"It's very important not to approach as an angry Maori, but to say that in the spirit of friendship we are going to work together, so we understand each other," Mamaku-Ironside said. The government-backed program, which covers the logistics and costs of repatriation, is a delicate process with a spiritual aspect.

Before their release, Mamaku-Ironside will request time alone with the ancestral remains. "We introduce ourselves — just so they know who we are — then we lay down our purpose, to help create a pathway for them to return home. It's very spiritual, very emotional," he said. After they arrive in Wellington, the remains are returned to their iwi, or tribe, after a powhiri ceremony to mark their return. That's when Mamaku-Ironside feels his job is done. "It's about healing the trauma," he said, "having had ancestors stolen — ripped away from their homes. "Even after they have passed away, their journey continues. "It doesn't finish until they are returned to their communities." — AFP

Every week, the beat of African drums ricocheting through the streets of Nicosia allows Ibrahim Kamara to momentarily forget his arduous quest for asylum — even if just for the length of a song. Kamara, 29, reached the capital of Cyprus five years ago from The Gambia. Like some new migrants to the Mediterranean island, he arrived with nothing. Initially living with around a dozen people crammed into a tent at a park, he recalled: "It was really difficult. We didn't have food or water," and had to queue to drink from a public fountain.

Cyprus last year had the European Union's highest per capita number of first-time asylum applications, according to EU data. Strolling through the capital's historic old town one morning, Kamara peered into the window of a music shop and was immediately hit with nostalgia at the sight of an African drum called a djembe. "The djembe had, like me, a long road that it took from home to here in Cyprus," he said. Kamara could not afford to buy the instrument at the time, but was gifted one at a later date.

Inspired by the djembe, which means "to bring people together" in Bambara, a language widely used in West Africa, he set up a music workshop with the help of Project Phoenix, a European non-governmental organization that supports migrant-led projects. "It gave me hope again," added Kamara, who is still waiting for a response to his asylum application. The additional income he earns from the workshops has allowed him to rent a pleasant shared apartment. But above all, he said, thanks to the drums he has been able "to bring the people together and connect the local communities" — migrants and Cypriots.

'Common humanity'

Kamara said it "hasn't always been



Music gives hope to African asylum seekers in Cyprus

easy" in Cyprus, where nearly five percent of the 915,000 inhabitants are asylum seekers and 1,500 requests are filed each month, according to the Cypriot government. He recalled that one day, at a bank, "I stood next to someone in a queue; he pulled away from me and put on a mask." The workshops are an innovative way for Cypriots to overcome such reactions and better get to know newcomers. "They have great capabilities to teach us their culture and who they are and what kind of talents they have," said Panayiota Constanti, who started attending the sessions a year and a half ago. At the same time, "we have to welcome them", she said.

Similarly, Isaac Yossi, who goes by "Big Yoss" on stage, created the

music ensemble Skyband, wanting to bridge the gap he felt with locals after arriving in the island nation three years ago from Cameroon. Together with six other asylum seekers from his home country and the Congo, they play concerts at restaurants, weddings and private parties — fusing African rhythms with Cypriot music in an homage to a "common humanity". "At first, people are skeptical about seeing migrants play (music). But when I start singing in Greek, their perspective of us changes," said Isaac, an acoustic guitar in hand at a rehearsal session after practicing the popular song "Tha Mai Edo" by Greek artist Konstantinos Argiros.

The singer and guitarist learned Greek, the language spoken by the majority in the Republic of Cyprus,

which controls the southern part of the island. Turkish is spoken in the northern area controlled by the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), only recognized by Ankara. For Maria Demosthenous, 43, a piano teacher and Skyband's agent, the island does not create enough opportunities for migrants to show off their talents. "When you say 'refugee', you never think that these refugees can entertain you or can make good music," said the Cypriot. "Africans have music in their souls." They need to be seen as individuals, the people "who they used to be before" they migrated, she said. — AFP

Tate indicted for human trafficking in Romania

Online influencer Andrew Tate, his brother and two women were indicted in Romania on human trafficking and rape charges, prosecutors said Tuesday, six months after they were detained. Police arrested Tate, 36, and his brother Tristan, 34, and the two Romanian women late last year. Under preventive detention at first, they were placed under house arrest at the end of March.

The anti-organized crime prosecution's unit (DIICOT) "ordered the indictment" of the four defendants for offenses including "setting up an organized criminal group... trafficking in persons... rape", they said. The brothers deny all the accusations. If found guilty, they would face years in prison. "While this news is undoubtedly predictable, we embrace the opportunity it presents to demonstrate their innocence and vindicate their reputation," Tate's media team said in a statement.



Andrew Tate (right) and his brother Tristan Tate.

It added the indictment "allows us to present a comprehensive body of evidence, diligently collected and prepared over time, which will undoubtedly substantiate the brothers' claims of innocence". Prosecutors have applied for the defendants to stay under house arrest — which is now subject to a court's ruling.

Sexual exploitation

"It was held that, in early 2021, the four defendants formed an organized criminal group with a view to committing the crime of trafficking in persons on the territory of Romania, but also in other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom," DIICOT said in a statement. DIICOT said the organized criminal group sexually exploited seven victims "through acts of physical violence and psychological coercion".

"They were sexually exploited by members of the group by forcing them to engage in pornographic acts with a view to producing and disseminating such material via social media platforms," DIICOT said. — AFP



Ibrahim Kamara, a 29-year-old migrant who arrived at the capital of Cyprus five years ago from Gambia, plays the djembe with his students during a diversity fair in Nicosia on May 14, 2023. — AFP photos



Members of the music ensemble Skyband practise ahead of an event in Nicosia on June 17, 2023.

Lifestyle



Rats caught by a group of rat hunters in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC, on June 3, 2023. - AFP photos



Rat hunters and their dogs search for rats in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington.



A rat runs away from rat-hunting dogs.



Sheisty Zen King, a Jack Russell terrier, runs through a tunnel as he trains to hunt rats, at the Academy Dog Training in Silver Spring, Maryland, on May 18, 2023.



"Blue Collar" cat Rue.



Henry, a lurcher, catches a rat.



Teddy Mortiz, known as "Grandma Death", aged 75, places a rat in a bag.



Washington recruits dogs and cats in war on rodents

On a hot June night, revelers descend on Washington's Adams Morgan neighborhood, a nightlife and dining hotspot in the US capital. But they aren't the only ones profiting from the good weather. Also out in number are the city's rapidly growing population of rats, which prowl the alleys behind the restaurants, bars and clubs, feasting on leftovers tossed out in the trash. The rodents' merrymaking comes to a swift halt amid a flurry of barks, gnashing teeth and splattered blood: The result of a hunt involving a dozen humans and their hounds out on a weekly "ratting" expedition. "Good boy, Henry!" Marshall Feinberg, a 28-year-old dog trainer, cries out as his lurcher claims the night's first kill.

The District of Columbia consistently makes the top five list of America's rattiest cities, a problem made worse by warming winters, a rising population,

hounds dart beneath dumpsters in pursuit of their quarry.

Diverse dogs, humans

Like their dogs, the humans are a diverse lot: Black and white, old and young. Some are from the city or its suburbs while others have traveled from neighboring states, after connecting with fellow ratting enthusiasts through social media. Bomani Mtume, a 60-year-old retired police officer who's here with Barto, his Cairn Terrier (the same breed as Toto from "The Wizard of Oz"), joined the group in March just as it started out. "When we first hunted, they didn't even run – they just looked at the dogs," he said of the rats, explaining the predation that has since made them more skittish. "Even dogs that don't know each other start working together, it's a beautiful thing," he adds.

anything. "Primitive but effective," she adds. Spry and full of stamina, Moritz stamps her feet at a dumpster to redirect an escaping rat back towards the dog pack. A longtime breeder, she helped establish a lineage of dach-

the city's rodent problem – so too are cats, which prey mainly on mice. Lisa LaFontaine, president of the Humane Rescue Alliance, told AFP her organization started the "Blue Collar Cats" program for the city's feral feline pop-



A rat hunter picks up a rat caught by Henry, a sighthound.

hounds that team up with falcons to hunt rabbits, and are now used in ratting. Over the course of three hours, the team racks up more than 30 kills, before disposing of them in trash cans. "What you saw basically was the definition of teamwork. It was dogs and people working together and trying to do good pest control to help our city," says Feinberg.

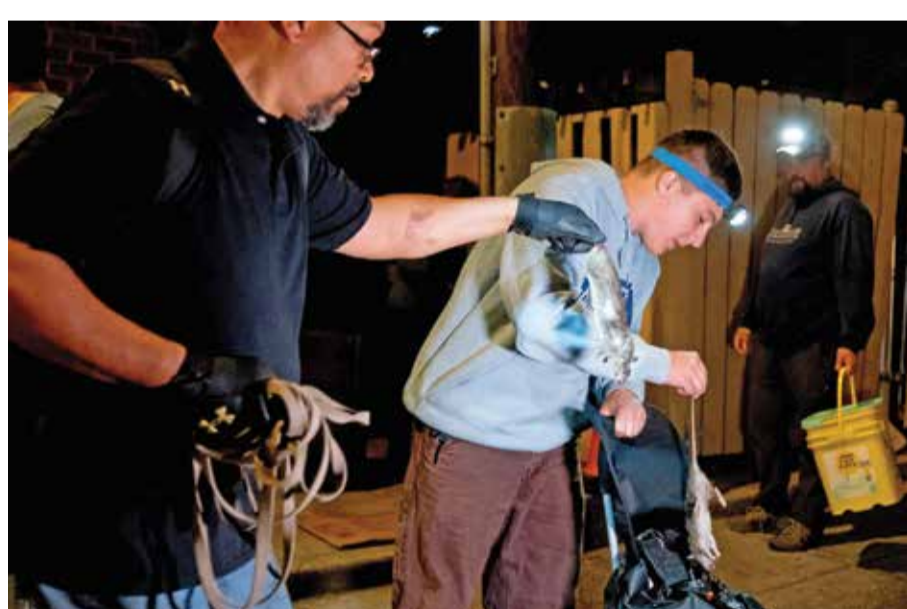
Rodentologist Bobby Corrigan told AFP that while there was little scientific data yet to validate the efficacy of ratting, such practices date back hundreds of years when dogs were trained for pest control at farms. "There's no doubt about it – these days, dogs are making a resurgence in being used as a rat control tool," with commercial demand rising. Moreover, said Corrigan, poison has been shown to harm species such as hawks and owls, and snap traps can take days to kill rats, making hunting the more humane option.

A beloved employee

Dogs aren't the only hunters tackling

ulation in 2017, and had now matched 400 strays to local businesses. "We conceived this program as a way to give the cats the lives that they had always had, but do it in a way where they had all the vaccines they needed," she said. They also receive a dedicated caretaker, shelter, a reliable food source and are neutered to prevent mating.

Twenty minutes out of the city in the town of Alexandria, Rue the cat has helped keep at bay the mice that once ransacked bags of birdseed and fertilizer at the Greenstreet Growers garden center. "She kills some of the mice, but she's just as much as a deterrent," explains Tim Williams, director of operations, who estimates the business' losses have shrunk to 10 percent of what they once were. Rue considered a star employee, and has a following on Instagram. "It's a fantastic twofold benefit of having the cat here, everyone loves seeing her," says Williams. - AFP



Bomani Mtume, 60, hands rats to Justuce, 15, to place in a bag while rat hunting.

and outdoor dining areas made permanent after the Covid pandemic. There were nearly 13,400 calls to a city hotline for rat issues in 2022, up around 2,000 on the year before, according to local media reports. Now, some residents are fighting back. The putrid stench of garbage mixed with urine fills the air as the posse pushes forward. Their dachshunds, terriers and sight-

Teddy Moritz, a 75-year-old nicknamed "Grandma Death", is something of a legend in the hunting dog community, and has brought her son and teenage grandson with her from Delaware. "It's a good way to organically control rats," she says, explaining rat poison takes several days to exterminate the vermin, while dogs quickly snap their spines, preventing them from feeling



Rat hunters walk with their dogs.



Greenstreet Gardens Director of Operations Tim Williams holds "Blue Collar" cat Rue inside the gardening center in Alexandria, Virginia, on June 1, 2023.



Harrison places his dog Dickie, a dachshund, in a trash bin to check for rats.

Sports

Olympics organizers in turmoil after police raid headquarters

Prosecutors probe 'illegal conflict of interest, misuse of public funds'

PARIS: Police raided the headquarters of the Paris 2024 Olympics on Tuesday just over a year before the opening ceremony of the quadrennial sporting showpiece. Raids were carried out at the headquarters of the committee, which is known as Cojo, and at the offices of Solideo, the body in charge of the Olympic construction sites. Prosecutors (PNF) confirmed to AFP that they had authorized the raids in connection to two separate ongoing investigations.

A spokesman for prosecutors said the probes concerned "illegal conflict of interest, misuse of public funds and favoritism". The first investigation was launched in 2017 involving the anti-corruption and financial crime investigators concerning a series of contracts signed off by "several powerful decision makers linked to the Games, notably the Cojo and their predecessors GIP 2024 (the bidding committee)," said the prosecutors. The second investigation was opened in 2022 and allocated to the BRDE, the financial brigade of the Parisian police.

They are looking into suspicions of conflict of interest and favoritism. The PNF acted after the French Anti-Corruption Agency (AFA) raised red flags over several deals signed off by Cojo and Solideo. According to a source close to the case it involves "consultancy contracts" on "different topics." Another source told AFP that one of the two investigations surrounded Edouard Donnelly, executive director of operations for Cojo who is also a service provider for the Games via his company RNK. Cojo and Solideo said they were "cooperating fully with the investigators in order to facilitate their investigation."

'Whiter than white'

The IOC said they had taken note of the raids. "We have been informed by Paris 2024, that they are cooperating fully with the authorities in this matter,"

a spokesperson said. The French sports ministry declined to comment. This is the first such raid on the organizing committee's headquarters. Two reports by AFA in 2021 highlighted "risks affecting probity" and "conflicts of interests" which it warned could impinge on the "whiter than white" image of the Games that the head of the organizing committee, Tony Estanguet, wished for.

AFA inspectors said the procedure for purchases was "imprecise and incomplete" and emphasized that there "exists sometimes potential situations of conflicts of interests which are not overseen correctly." The inspectors drew attention to criminal cases involving the past two Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo.

They remarked that the "risks to probity being observed are plentiful in the context of major sporting events." David Roizen, a French expert in public policy and sport, told AFP the raids would harm the Paris organizers' image. "In the eyes of the general public, these raids are catastrophic. (The organizers) have lost their credibility, especially in their duty to set a good example," he said. "It might turn out they have done nothing wrong, which I hope is the case for the prestige of the Olympics, but it is going to be a thorn in their side until the Olympics."

The raids are the latest drama to affect French sports in the past year. In May, Brigitte Henriques surprised many by resigning as the president of France's National Olympic Committee. Henriques' departure led the IOC to call for "everybody to take responsibility so that the internal arguments that have affected the CNOSF these past few months cease." A successor is yet to be named to the body, which does not have any direct involvement with organizing the Games. Several federations — football, rugby, gymnastics and tennis —



SAINT-DENIS: A security member stands at the entrance of the headquarters of the Paris 2024 Olympics (Cojo) headquarters on June 20, 2023. — AFP

have also become embroiled in scandals.

There have been two high-profile resignations as a result — the octogenarian president of the French Football Federation, Noel Le Graet, stepped down in February following accusations of sexual and psychological harassment. That came just two months after France lost in the final of the football World Cup

in Qatar. Former sports minister and national rugby coach Bernard Laporte also quit his role as president of the French Rugby Federation in January after being convicted of corruption — months away from France hosting the men's Rugby World Cup. The Paris Olympics will open on July 26, 2024 and run until August 11. — AFP

Watson questions PGA Tour, LIV deal in open letter

LOS ANGELES: United States golf legend Tom Watson called on the PGA Tour to provide full details of its merger with the Saudi backers of LIV Golf on Monday, saying the deal had left a slew of unanswered questions. In an open letter sent to PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, eight-time major champion Watson said the bombshell agreement announced on June 6 had been brokered "without due process."

The 73-year-old former US Ryder Cup captain posed a series of questions to Monahan in the letter while asking whether the merger was driven by financial necessity. "What does acceptance of this partnership mean to the Tour? What do we get? What do we give up?" Watson asked. "Why was this deal done in such secrecy and why wasn't even one of the players who sits on the Tour's Policy Board included?"

Under the deal announced earlier this month, the PGA Tour and DP World Tour have joined forces with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which has bankrolled the upstart LIV Golf circuit. Watson acknowledged that the rise of LIV Golf had threatened the PGA Tour's business model, while creating "unprecedented obstacles and battles of both moral and financial consequence." Watson asked whether the tie-up with Saudi's PIF — a government controlled fund which reportedly manages assets worth \$650 billion — was the only way to ensure the PGA Tour's long-term survival.

"Is the PIF the only viable rescue from the Tour's financial problems? Was/is there a plan B?" Watson asked. "And again, what exactly is the exchange? We need clarity and deserve full disclosure as to the financial health of the PGA Tour and the details of this proposed partnership." Watson also fired a broadside at the "hypocrisy" of the PGA Tour in embracing LIV's Saudi backers. — AFP



Kuwait athletes win first medal in Berlin Games

KUWAIT: Kuwait's athletes Hajar Al-Rashidi and Rawan Al-Balhan won the first medal for Kuwait in the doubles Bocce competitions of the Berlin 2023 Games, winning the bronze medal by defeating Germany and Australia. Deputy Director General of Public Authority for Sport Bashar Abdallah congratulated both players and praised the outstanding presence of the delegation during the opening ceremony. Bashar conveyed the greetings of Director General of PAS Yousuf Al-Baidan, who instructed that the team must be supported. Abdallah expressed confidence in Kuwait's team.



When is eSport not an eSport? Olympic event puzzles gamers

SINGAPORE: ESports has long been derided as "not a real sport". But now, an Olympic-organized event is being dismissed by competitive gamers as not real eSports. Many long-time backers of big-money digital contests, which are edging their way towards elite-level recognition, are puzzled by the choice of games at the inaugural Olympics Esports Week that kicks off in Singapore on Thursday. Instead of well-established gaming titles, it will feature 10 simulated sports, among them archery, baseball, chess and taekwondo.

Aficionados are concerned with the choice of virtual sports — that is, digital recreations of real-world events — rather than eSports, which are essentially video games played at an elite competitive level. With popular video games such as "Counter-Strike" and "DOTA 2", eSports has been booming over the past decade. It has penetrated pop culture and social media, its tournaments filling stadiums and pulling millions of online viewers.

Matthew Woods from eSports marketing agency AFK said the disappointment over the Olympics Esports Week "spawned from the fact that none of the games selected were games that anybody in the industry really considered to be eSports". Malaysian professional eSports coach Khairul Azman Mohamad Sharif agreed, saying he found the list baffling. "I don't think these sports games should be highlighted at the competition compared to top

eSports games, considering these types of sports are already physically contested," he said.

'Olympic values'

The only saving grace for some is that the shooting event will involve the globally loved "Fortnite", but in a version without its kill-or-be-killed "Battle Royale" mode. That modification is because the International Olympic Council (IOC) cannot feature titles that go against Olympic values, so a lot of popular video games with violence are out.

The IOC officially recognized eSports as a sport in 2017 and has been in discussions with industry players about inclusion on the most prestigious stage. Such changes tend to happen slowly but the IOC has opened new frontiers recently, with skateboarding at the Tokyo Games and breakdancing at Paris 2024. ESports will be a medal sport for the first time at the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou.

Describing the list of games as "a very sensible first approach", vice-president of the Global Esports Federation and CEO of British Esports Chester King said the Singapore event would be a positive step in eventually putting popular video games on the Olympic roster. "This is the first event and we've got to make sure all the stakeholders in the IOC accept it and like it," he said. Bryan Tan, a partner at law firm Reed Smith, which specializes in eSports and media, said the event in the city-state "is also a testing ground to iron out the kinks involved in bringing eSports to the Olympic level".

IOC sports director Kit McConnell told AFP that the choices were made to support virtual sports. "This is why we have focused first on virtual and simulated sports games in the competition series," he said. He added that selected games had



SINGAPORE: People stand in front of a digital screen displaying a banner for the Olympic Esports week at Suntec City convention and exhibition hall in Singapore. — AFP

to be inclusive with no technical barriers to entry and have gender equality, which is "often not yet the case in the field of competitive gaming". If popular video titles do make it to the Olympic level with top players, the Games will stand to potentially draw millions of fresh viewers.

But a major challenge could be navigating intricate relationships with publishers of popular games. AFK's Woods said publishers are "commercial enterprises which own the IP that their games are built on and therefore have an unlimited amount of influence into who hosts events and how this is done". While there are no concrete plans now for eSports to be included as medal events at the Olympics, the Singapore event will be watched closely to see what sort of reception it garners. "I think it will be fascinating to see how it is received. Much of this will no doubt come down to the altered format of the games," said Woods. — AFP

US hero Balogun tells Arsenal 'no more loans'

LAS VEGAS: Arsenal striker Folarin Balogun found the target as the United States won the CONCACAF Nations League and then took aim at his club's hierarchy, saying he will not accept another loan move. Balogun, who switched his national team allegiance from England to the US last month, spent last season on loan at French Ligue 1 club Reims where he impressed with 21 goals. He further added to his growing reputation with a clinical strike on Sunday to seal a 2-0 win for the US against Canada, winning a medal in just his second game for his new team.

The 21-year-old said he now plans to take some vacation time but made clear he is not in the mood for another temporary transfer. "What I can say is that I definitely won't go on loan again," he said. "I'm not sure (about) the discussions that are going to take place, I'm not sure what's going to happen. But I'm just committed to now, I try to stay present. I obviously want to enjoy the moment with my team and my family," he said. The New York-born striker moved to England aged two and joined Arsenal's youth system, spending a six-month spell on loan at Championship club Middlesbrough in 2022. Despite his breakthrough season in France, he will face a tough battle to break into the starting line-up at the Emirates where Brazil international Gabriel Jesus is the first choice centre-forward. Arsenal also have another promising young striker in Eddie Nketiah and that situation has led Balogun to be linked with European clubs such as Inter Milan and AC Milan. — AFP

Sports

Man Utd fan fined, banned for mocking Hillsborough tragedy

White admits displaying threatening or abusive writing

LONDON: A Manchester United fan was fined and banned from football in the UK for four years on Monday, for wearing a replica shirt mocking the Hillsborough disaster. Police received a number of complaints about James White's shirt with the figure "97" and the words "Not Enough" on the back at the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium earlier this month. It referred to the 97 fans of United's arch rivals Liverpool who were victims of a crush during an FA Cup semi-final match at the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield in April 1989.

White, 33, admitted a single charge of displaying threatening or abusive writing likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. "It is hard to imagine a more... offensive reference to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster," judge Mark Jabbitt told him when he appeared in court in northwest London for sentencing. Jabbitt fined White £1,000 (\$1,280) with a £400 victim surcharge and ordered him to pay £85 in court costs.

He also banned him from attending football for four years. Manchester United banned White indefinitely from Old Trafford and all club activities, calling the message on his shirt "despicable". "Mockery of Hillsborough and other football tragedies is completely unacceptable and the club will continue to support firm action to

eradicate it from the game," the club said. White was arrested after photographs of him wearing the shirt were posted and shared online, prompting his arrest by police. When questioned, he initially claimed the shirt was a reference to his grandfather, who died aged 97 and "didn't have enough kids", the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said.

Douglas Mackay, CPS national lead prosecutor for sport, said it was working closely with football authorities, police and clubs to stamp out the "appalling and horrendous incidents of tragedy chanting and gesturing". "We are sending a clear message that we call on so-called fans to stop this vile behavior of a minority which has a terrible impact on the bereaved and communities," he added. "If they do not then they face the risk of being excluded from the game they claim to love."

Last week, a Tottenham fan was banned from football for three years for making gestures mocking the Hillsborough tragedy during a match at Liverpool's ground in April. The Premier League also promised to act after supporters of United and Leeds traded sickening chants about the 1958 Munich air disaster that killed eight players from the Old Trafford club, and the death of two Leeds fans in Istanbul in 2000. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Nottingham Forest fans display a banner to mark the 34th anniversary of the Hillsborough Disaster during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Anfield in this file photo. — AFP

Chairman expects Man City's global influence to grow

LONDON: Manchester City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak has warned his club's rivals that the treble winners' influence will grow even stronger after their historic season. Pep Guardiola's side became only the second English club to win the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup in the same season. It was the culmination of a remarkable era for City since they were taken over by their Abu Dhabi-based owners. Khaldoon believes City's sustained success will benefit not only the Manchester side, but also the worldwide network of 13 teams purchased by the club's owners.

Known as the City Football Group (CFG), they have clubs in locations including New York, Melbourne and Yokohama, and this year brought Brazilian outfit Bahia. CFG intends to invest considerably in all of those operations, including players, coaches, facilities and academies. "It's always about

growth. You grow, you pause, you get things in order, and then you start the next step, one step at a time. We're not going to stop," Khaldoon told City's media channels on Tuesday.

"We're going to keep bringing happiness to every community and every club we have in the world, and hopefully we'll keep bringing success in every club and team we have around the world. "It's been a great journey over the last 15 years but I'm excited about the future and it's about now, the next 10, 15 years too." City have won seven Premier League titles since 2012, including five in the last six seasons. However, in February City were charged with 115 alleged breaches of the Premier League's financial fair play regulations dating back to 2009 and accused of not cooperating in an investigation.

The club's latest new infrastructure project is now in the pipeline with plans recently submitted to increase capacity at the Etihad Stadium to more than 60,000. The expansion is part of a multi-million pound development which includes the construction of a hotel, shops and food and drink outlets as well as a new 3,000-capacity covered fan zone. "It's very exciting," Khaldoon said. "Every year there's always something new, every



ISTANBUL: Manchester City's Emirati chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak poses with the European Cup trophy as Manchester City celebrate winning the UEFA Champions League final football match between Inter Milan and Manchester City at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul. — AFP

year, because there's always a need to improve and evolve and grow. We don't stand still. "We're always in growth mode, we're never in contentment and pause and 'let's just milk the asset.'" — AFP

City chairman 'frustrated' by financial cloud

LONDON: Manchester City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak has voiced his frustration that financial fair play charges are overshadowing the club's success on the pitch, vowing to air his "blunt views" when he can. Pep Guardiola's team won a historic treble of the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup last season - becoming just the second English side to manage the feat. City were charged in February with 115 alleged breaches of the Premier League's financial fair play regulations dating back to 2009 and accused of not cooperating in an investigation.

Guardiola last month said he does not want a cloud hanging over his side's achievements and hopes for a resolution as soon as possible. Khaldoon, speaking to in-house club media, said he could not comment in detail on the charges for legal reasons but would have a "conversation" when the process was complete. "I'll give you my very blunt views, I promise you that," he said. "I have very strong views on that, but I am going to be unfortunately very restrained today."

"It's very frustrating because it takes so much from the great work that's happening at this club and it's happening not just on the football pitch. The football pitch - what these players have achieved this year, the treble, is incredible." Khaldoon said City, who have won five of the past six Premier League titles, were "very well run". "Today, the value of this group is over \$6 billion," said. "We've created so much value - we've brought in world-class investors. Why? Because we have a commercial machine here that is one of the best in the world."

Khaldoon believes City are the top football brand globally. "We can go on for half an hour right now with me just giving you data in terms of net spend over the last season, net spend over the last three years, over the last five years, over the last 10 years," he said. "Look at every single one of them and just look at these as the facts and compare us to our competition and then people will throw at us 'you're the biggest spenders', 'you have the biggest squad'. "I wish people can just pause and ask the question and get the facts and then comment." — AFP

Chelsea and Nkunku seal \$80 million deal

LONDON: Chelsea sealed their swoop for France forward Christopher Nkunku from RB Leipzig in a deal worth a reported £63 million (\$80 million) on Tuesday. Nkunku had already agreed a pre-contract with the Premier League club in December and has now rubber-stamped his move to Stamford Bridge. The 25-year-old has put pen to paper on a lucrative six-year contract with the Blues, who are embarking on a close-season overhaul as they look to bounce back from a dismal campaign. "Chelsea is delighted to announce Christopher Nkunku will join the club from RB Leipzig ahead of the 2023/24 season," a statement on the Blues' website said.

Nkunku is one of the rising stars of European football and scored 23 goals in 36 games for Leipzig last season. He is the first major signing since Mauricio Pochettino was confirmed as Chelsea's new manager at the end of May. "I am incredibly happy to be joining Chelsea. A big effort was made to bring me to the club," Nkunku said. "I am looking forward to meeting my new coach and team-mates and showing the Chelsea supporters what I can do on the pitch."

Nkunku, a graduate of the famed French national football academy at Clairefontaine, spent four years at Paris Saint-Germain before moving to Leipzig in 2019. He made his name with the German club and was voted Bundesliga player of the season in 2021-22 after scoring 20 goals and providing 15 assists in the league. The versatile forward bagged a further 23 goals this season to help Leipzig secure a third-place finish in the Bundesliga and scored in their German Cup final win against Eintracht Frankfurt.



BERLIN: Leipzig's French forward Christopher Nkunku blows up a balloon as he celebrates after scoring the 1-0 goal during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) final football match RB Leipzig v Eintracht Frankfurt in Berlin. — AFP

'Creativity and versatility'

Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley, Chelsea's co-sporting directors, said: "Christopher has proved himself one of the standout attacking players in European football over the past two seasons and will add quality, creativity and versatility to our squad." Nkunku earned his France debut last year and has been capped 10 times. He was ruled out of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar with a leg injury. "Having played in Ligue 1 and the Bundesliga, I now want to play in the Premier League, one of the strongest leagues in the world," Nkunku said. "I am very excited for this challenge and will be proud to wear the Chelsea shirt."

Bidding farewell to Leipzig, Nkunku wrote a heartfelt message on the club's website: "Now it's time for me to say 'Au Revoir' Leipzig. I am incredibly grateful to RB Leipzig and everyone at the club - my team, the coaching staff, the staff and most importantly the fans. I had four years in Leipzig which I will never forget," he said. "I represented my country while at RB Leipzig, I have developed extremely well from a sporting and personal perspective and we have now been able to crown this time with two German cup wins. "RB Leipzig will always have a permanent place in my heart. I hope there will be a chance in the future to come back to Leipzig as a guest and play in front of the great fans again." — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, **Leena Castalino**, holder of Passport No. M6714512, do hereby change my name to Leena (as given name) Castalino (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Leena Castalino and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3810) 20-06-2023**

I, **Khøjema**, holder of Indian Passport No. V3753960, having permanent address Rajasthan, India - 314026, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Khøjema (given name) and Gadi (surname). **(#3809) 20-06-2023**

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

England demolish N Macedonia 7-0

Mbappe lifts France; Hakans hits hat-trick as Finland maul San Marino 6-0



SAINT-DENIS: France's forward Kylian Mbappe (right) reacts as Greece's midfielder Manolis Siopis falls during the UEFA Euro 2024 group B qualification football match between France and Greece on June 19, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: Bukayo Saka scored a hat-trick as England demolished North Macedonia 7-0 in Euro 2024 qualifying on Monday, while Kylian Mbappe's re-taken penalty gave France a narrow victory over Greece. Harry Kane swept England ahead at Old Trafford before Saka stole the show with two superb finishes either side of Marcus Rashford's goal.

Saka completed his treble early in the second half, Calvin Phillips added another and Kane then struck again from the spot as England won their fourth straight match in Group C. "It's a feeling I can't put into words. I can't describe how I'm feeling right now. I'm so happy," Saka told Channel 4. "It's been a really long season. It's the end of the season now. I couldn't have ended it in a better way."

England top the section on a maximum 12 points, six ahead of Ukraine, who are second after a 1-0 win over Malta in Tirana was secured by Viktor Tsygankov's second-half penalty. European champions Italy are nine points adrift in third but have played just twice. France also kept up their 100 percent record in Group B with a 1-0

win over Greece in Paris, which propelled the World Cup runners-up six points clear of their opponents.

Mbappe saw his initial spot-kick saved by Odysseas Vlachodimos, but the France striker made no mistake with his second attempt after encroachment by a Greek defender. Greece finished with 10 men as Kostantinos Mavropanos was sent off, having escaped red earlier when he caught Antoine Griezmann in the face with his studs and gave away the penalty. "We did what we needed to win this match. I'm very pleased with what the players have done in this difficult period," France coach Didier Deschamps told TFI. "There's less experience than there was six months ago, but there's quality."

Wales in trouble

Mikey Johnston, Evan Ferguson and Adam Idah scored as the Republic of Ireland picked up their first points of the campaign with a 3-0 home victory over minnows Gibraltar. Wales face a difficult task to qualify after a second loss in four days, going down 2-0 in Turkey following

the dismissal of midfielder Joe Morrell late in the first half. Hakan Calhanoglu had his penalty saved before Umut Nayir and Arda Guler struck in the final 20 minutes to keep Turkey top of Group D.

Wales are five points behind Turkey in fourth place, level with Nations League runners-up Croatia, who have two games in hand. Armenia are second after Tigran Barseghyan converted a stoppage-time penalty to snatch a 2-1 win against lowly Latvia in Yerevan. Finland lead a tight Group H in which the top four are separated by only two points. Substitute Daniel Hakans bagged a hat-trick in Finland's 6-0 mauling of San Marino, the world's lowest-ranked side, with Glen Kamara, Benjamin Kallman and Teemu Pukki also on target.

Kazakhstan are level on nine points in second after winning 1-0 away to Northern Ireland. Abat Aimbetov's late goal fuelling their surprise qualification push. Slovenia and Denmark drew 1-1 in Ljubljana as Andraz Sporar opened the scoring for the hosts only for Rasmus Hojlund to level before the interval.



MANCHESTER: England's midfielder Bukayo Saka (right) shoots past North Macedonia's defender Gjoko Zajkov to score their fourth goal during the UEFA Euro 2024 group C qualification football match. — AFP

Valentin Mihaila stunned Switzerland with two late goals as Romania fought back for a 2-2 draw in Lucerne after Zeki Amdouni's brace

had put the Group I frontrunners in control. Zionist entity saw off Andorra 2-1 while Belarus beat Kosovo by the same scoreline in Budapest. — AFP

Pakistan footballers to play in India for first time since 2014

KARACHI: Pakistan's national team players have been given visas for India, officials said, where they will take on the hosts on Wednesday in their first

match on Indian soil since 2014. The South Asian neighbors will kick off the South Asia Football Federation (SAFF) Championship. The two countries rarely play home matches against each other in any sport due to long-running political tensions made worse by the Mumbai terror attacks of 2008.

The participation of Pakistan in the Bengaluru event has raised hopes Islamabad will take part in the ICC World Cup cricket tournament hosted by India later this year, having earlier threatened to boycott the event. "As devoted sportsmen, we understand the

power of sports in transcending political boundaries and fostering strong relationships between nations," Pakistan captain Yousaf Butt told AFP. He was speaking from Mauritius, where Pakistan has taken part in a four-nation event.

"We will put in a worthy performance despite zero sleep and jetlag - and off the field will try to win hearts to ease the tension." The 32-strong touring party only received their visas late Monday. The last time Pakistan played football in India was in 2014, when they drew a two-match series, but they also

faced off in the SAFF Championship in Bangladesh in 2018, with India winning 3-1.

Football is popular in both nations but dwarfed by cricket. Despite the millions in revenue bilateral cricket matches would earn, the last time they played on home soil was when Pakistan toured India for five limited-overs matches in 2012. The eight-nation SAFF Championship kicks off Wednesday, with Pakistan in Group A alongside India, Kuwait, and Nepal, and Group B featuring Lebanon, Maldives, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The final is scheduled for July 4. — AFP

New Zealand-Qatar friendly abandoned after racism claim

PARIS: An international friendly between New Zealand and Qatar was abandoned in Austria on Monday after the former claimed one of their players was racially abused by an opponent. New Zealand did not return for the second half of the match after an incident that occurred shortly before the break with them leading 1-0. "Michael Boxall was racially abused during the first half of the game by a Qatari player. No official action was taken so the team have agreed not to come out for the second half of the match," the New Zealand football federation tweeted. New Zealand Football chief executive Andrew Pragnell said the sports body fully supported "the

action of our players".

"We never want to see a match abandoned but some issues are bigger than football and it is important to make a stand," he said in a statement. "There is no room for racism in football." Qatar coach Carlos Queiroz said New Zealand's captain came over at half-time to inform him they would not be resuming the game. "The facts are the following. Apparently two players on the pitch exchanged words," Queiroz told Qatari sports channel Alkass. "The New Zealand players decided to support their teammate. All our team decided to support our player."

"The staff of New Zealand also support the statement of the New Zealand player. We support our player and they decided to abandon the game with no witnesses. "The referee did not (hear the exchange), the benches, coaches nobody (heard), just an argument between two players." Queiroz said he expected FIFA would investigate the matter. "Let's allow the football authorities to take a decision about what happened," he added. "I think this case will be under the

observation of FIFA, for sure, because I ask the coach, the referees... nobody (heard anything)."

Second game abandoned

In a separate incident, also in Austria, a game between the Republic of Ireland Under-21s and Kuwait Under-22s was cut short after an Irish player was allegedly the target of racism. "The FAI regrets to announce that today's U21 international against Kuwait has been abandoned after a racist remark was made by a Kuwaiti player towards one of our substitutes," the Football Association of Ireland wrote on Twitter.

"The FAI does not tolerate any racism towards any of our players or staff and will be reporting this serious matter to FIFA and UEFA." Jarrah Al-Ateeqi, director of the Kuwait team, said the friendly was brought to a premature end in the second half due to "roughness and excessive tension between the players". Al-Ateeqi explained that "the match was stopped at the 70th minute to protect the players from injuries". — AFP



New Zealand's defender Michael Boxall