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**3** Film on Syrian refugee's Canadian success story gets Kuwait premiere



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## Paris climate summit opens with call for 'finance shock'

World Bank to offer repayment 'pause' • \$100bn IMF target met for climate, poverty funds



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pose for a photograph as they arrive at the Palais Brongniart for the New Global Financial Pact Summit on June 22, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: The leaders of France and Barbados joined forces on Thursday to push for an overhaul of the international financial system at a summit aimed at charting a fresh approach to tackling poverty and climate change. French President Emmanuel Macron, who is hosting the two-day conference in Paris, invited Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley to co-headline the event, which seeks to improve the lending system for developing countries.

The summit comes amid growing recognition of the scale of the financial challenges ahead, with warnings that the world's ability to curb global warming at tolerable levels is reliant on a massive increase in clean energy investment in developing nations. In his opening remarks, Macron told delegates that the world needs a "public finance shock" — a global surge of financing — to meet these challenges. "Policymakers and countries shouldn't ever have to choose between reducing poverty and protecting the planet," he said.

Many economies are staggering under a growing debt burden after successive crises in recent years, including COVID-19, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, spiking inflation and the spiraling cost of weather disasters. Leaders of major oil and gas economies are in attendance, such as Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman. The Kuwaiti delegation is headed by Finance Minister Manaf Al-Hajeri, as representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and includes Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Mohammad Al-Judaei.

Mottley, whose Caribbean island nation is threatened by rising sea levels and tropical storms, has become a powerful advocate for reimagining the role of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in an era of climate crisis. "What is required of us now is absolute transformation and not reform of our institutions," Mottley said. Barbados has put forward a detailed plan for how to fix the global financial system to help developing countries invest in clean energy and boost resilience to climate impacts. "We come to Paris to identify the common humanity that we share and the absolute moral imperative to save our planet and to make it livable," said Mottley.

The head of the World Bank said Thursday the lender planned to introduce a "pause" mechanism for debtor countries in the event of them being hit by a crisis. Ajay Banga told the summit that the multilateral lender would adopt a new approach that "significantly expands the World Bank's toolkit".

Continued on Page 6

### 'Debris' found in search for missing sub



MUMBAI: Art school students give final touches on June 22, 2023 to a painting depicting five people aboard a submersible named Titan that went missing near the wreck of the Titanic. — AFP

BOSTON: A "debris field" has been discovered by an underwater robot searching near the wreck of the Titanic for a missing submersible with five people on board, rescuers said Thursday. The development came after rescuers insisted that the multinational mission to locate the craft was still focused on finding the crew alive despite fears that the vessel's oxygen may have run out. "Experts within the unified command are evaluating the information," the US Coast Guard said in a tweet.

The coast guard said the debris field was found "within the search area by an ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) near the Titanic". It did not give more details but said it would hold a press briefing in Boston. Two more robots were deployed Thursday in the hunt for the Titan sub, lost somewhere in a vast swathe of the North Atlantic between the ocean's surface and nearly four kilometers below.

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### Biden, Modi hail 'defining partnership'

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Thursday hailed a "defining partnership" with India as he rolled out the red carpet for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sealing major defense and technology deals as Washington bets big on New Delhi as a counterweight to China. Modi is being feted with the pomp of a state visit, only the third of Biden's presidency, in a calculated show of full-throated US support — despite quiet unease over India's refusal

to break with Russia and what rights groups see as growing authoritarianism by the Hindu nationalist leader.

With around 7,000 Indian-Americans gathered on the White House's South Lawn to cheer him on, Modi, sporting a flowing white kurta with a sky-blue jacket, walked a red carpet to a military salute as Biden welcomed him. "I have long believed that the relationship between the US and India will be one of the most defining relationships of the 21st century," Biden said. "The challenges and opportunities facing the world in this century require that India and the United States work and lead together," he said.

Modi, India's most powerful prime minister in decades, said that the two

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden meets India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Oval Office of the White House on June 22, 2023. — AFP

### Iran FM rounds out Gulf tour with UAE visit

DUBAI: Iran's foreign minister on Thursday concluded a three-day tour of Gulf Arab neighbors with a visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he held talks with the country's president. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's visit to the UAE followed stops in Qatar, Kuwait and Oman — the latest in a flurry of diplomatic moves by Tehran as it seeks to reduce its isolation, improve its economy and project strength.

On Thursday, he discussed "bilateral relations

and ways to enhance cooperation" in a meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, the official WAM news agency reported. Amir-Abdollahian extended an invitation from President Ebrahim Raisi for Sheikh Mohammed to visit, Iran's foreign ministry said. He later met with his Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, who emphasized "the significance of establishing an international approach to multilateral action based on cooperation and partnership," WAM said.

During the visit, Iran and the UAE also signed an agreement to expand air transport services between the two countries and increase trade and tourism opportunities, it added. Gulf Arab countries are seeking to ease tensions with Iran, fueled in recent years by the conflicts in Yemen and Syria.

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ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan meets Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on June 22, 2023. — AFP

### Musk, Zuck call out each other for cage fight

PARIS: Tech titans Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk are in a fierce business rivalry that has spilled over into a playground spat, with the two men offering to fight each other in a cage. Months after Musk took over Twitter, Zuckerberg's Meta hinted it was planning to

launch its own text-based social media platform — essentially a direct rival. Musk has trolled Zuckerberg ever since with messages on Twitter, telling his fans this week: "I'm up for a cage match if he is lol."

Zuckerberg, who has followed the trend of tech bosses getting buff and posting martial arts videos, responded on Wednesday on his Instagram Stories with a screenshot of the message and a response: "Send me location." Meta confirmed to AFP that Zuckerberg's message was genuine. The exchange has provoked mirth on social media with plenty of fight predictions — Zuckerberg emerging as the clear favorite.

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Mark Zuckerberg



Elon Musk



## Local

# Kuwait urges utilizing social media, AI to modernize Arab content, widen reach

## Information Ministers' Council approves unified Arab media website

**RABAT:** Ministry of Information Undersecretary Nasser Al-Mheisen said Kuwait is keen on promoting the media's role in preserving the national identity and combatting the transborder extremist ideology.

"Media plays a key role in protecting the young generation against extremism and promoting the values of tolerance and coexistence among members of the community," he said in a speech to the 53rd ordinary session of the Arab Information Ministers' Council being hosted by Morocco.

He called on Arab media organizations to keep abreast with the latest developments of information technology. Noting that social media networks have a growing impact on the various segments of the community, Mheisen urged rational utilization of these networks to serve the interests of individuals and communities. He added that sound use of artificial intelligence could also serve the noble objectives of media amid accelerated changes

and transformations worldwide.

"The State of Kuwait backs every effort to modernize the Arab media," Mheisen said, noting that Kuwait sponsored the seventh session of the Arab award for excellence in environment media themed "climate change and the future." Reiterating the call for a fair, durable settlement to the Palestinian question based on the relevant UN resolutions, he said Kuwait maintained firm support to the struggle of Palestinian people for regaining their legitimate rights at international fora.

Mheisen is attending the current session of the Arab Information Ministers' Council, which opened Wednesday, as representative of Kuwait's Minister of Information.

### Outcomes of the meeting

The Arab Information Ministers' Council endorsed on Wednesday all draft resolutions relating to media support to the Palestinian people and to the efforts meant to preserve the legal, historical and

spiritual status of the holy city of Jerusalem. The Council mandated its Secretariat to follow up the implementation of the integrated observatory and portal project as a means of Arab media leverage overseas. The Secretariat is also tasked with overseeing the launching of the single website of the Arab electronic media, proposed by Watani Al-Emarat Foundation of the UAE. The Council approved a resolution on the Arab media roadmap for sustainable development 2030, including the executive procedures and single strategy for dealing with international media corporations. It also approved a recommendation to name Kuwait City as Arab Media Capital 2025 and appreciate Kuwait patronage of Arab media award. The Council session elected the members of the Council's Executive Bureau for the coming two years with Saudi Arabia getting the presidency, Egypt, the vice presidency and Kuwait, Morocco, Bahrain, Libya, Palestine and Algeria serving as members of the Bureau. — KUNA



**RABAT:** Ministry of Information Undersecretary Nasser Al-Mheisen speaks at the 53rd ordinary session of the Arab Information Ministers' Council being hosted by Morocco. — KUNA

## AI to ease, not steal jobs: Digital professionals

By Munirah Al-Fayez

**KUWAIT:** Despite fears of artificial intelligence (AI) taking over people's jobs, three digital professionals in Kuwait are optimistic about the technology, they told Kuwait Times.

Alaa Murtadha, a computer engineer, said she chose this field of work because she has been interested in digital professions for as long as she can remember. She believes that digital professions, although challenging like many others, give people who work in the field many opportunities for growth and innovation.

Murtadha said AI can be useful in multiple ways that can "help us rather than take over", which makes her feel secure in her job rather than worried. According to her, as the world becomes more and more digital and remote working becomes more prominent, digital professions will become more and more advantageous and needed in the Kuwaiti workforce.

Digital professions are fun and challenging, according to software engineer Khaled Al-Fayez. Fayez said he chose this profession because he is learning a lot in a constantly evolving field that keeps his brain working. According to Khaled, AI is used "to enhance his skills" and help him do his job faster by removing tedious and repetitive work that he would otherwise have to do as a developer.

But Fayez recommends people to not depend on



AI in their jobs, otherwise they will not learn. He added that if a digital professional does not learn, they will not be able to spot mistakes made by AI, pointing out AI technology is not mature enough to meet our demands and exact requirements. Fayez concluded by stating that we only know what the present of AI is and imagining the future of this tech is "speculative and not realistic".

Farah Al-Abduljader said she has always wanted to learn graphic designing. She said she started freelancing as a graphic designer in her second year of university. According to her, AI is a tool that helps designers visualize their art, using it as a tool rather than becoming dependent on it. Learning how to communicate with AI, according to Abduljader, is an

important skill that will help digital professionals use it wisely. According to her, graphic design is unique, because you can choose your own style. She discovered that graphic design is wildly self-taught and is a skill that grows the more you work on it. She sees that graphic design is needed in Kuwait in marketing, packaging, logos, branding and much more. According to her, digital professions "will make you see the world differently".

To conclude, it seems like many people who are very knowledgeable in the digital world have already started using AI to become more efficient in their work. They are viewing it as a tool that will help them in their job rather than a technology that will take over their job.

## Kuwait University launches new language classes

**KUWAIT:** The language center and the faculty of arts at Kuwait University are developing an Arabic-as-a-second-language program for diplomats to be taught free of charge, said a university official Thursday.

The initiative is considered the first of

its kind. Director of the language center at Kuwait University Dr Khalid Al-Fadhli said following an orientation meeting for ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, cultural annexes and charitable organizations from across the world. The center is also adding Korean and Chinese language classes to its line-up as of the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year, said Fadhli. He added that preparations are underway for including Turkish and Indian language courses. The goal, Fadhli said, is for all language courses to be offered as

electives for all university students. "Kuwait University is home to students from more than 85 countries around the world," said Dr Dari Al-Huwail, Acting Dean of Student Affairs. "This indicates the university's leading role in attracting students and helping them interact with Kuwaiti culture."

The meeting held Thursday, Acting Dean of Admission and Registration Dr Rawa al-Jarallah said, is an opportunity to enrich the educational experience at Kuwait University.

"Kuwait University has cultural

and academic relations with various countries of the Arab and Western world, which helps Kuwait University students develop their skills and introduces them to new cultures," she said.

Fadhli said that the Arabic language program for non-native speakers is one of the main pillars of Kuwait University's efforts to open up to other cultures from various countries around the world. The three-semester program, he said, enrolls a large group of students and allows them to attend classes through a flexible timetable.



## Kuwait sends two ambulances in aid aircraft to Sudan

**KHARTOUM:** A military cargo aircraft, carrying nearly 15 tons of medical assistance, arrived at Port Sudan Airport on Wednesday as part of the Kuwaiti humanitarian air corridor for Sudan. The aid cargo, which includes two ambulances donated by Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR), food and clothes, translate into action the sovereign instructions for helping the brotherly people of Sudan, KSR Director General Abdulaziz Al-Obaid said. This is the second aid flight

from Kuwait this week and the 16th since the launching of the Kuwaiti humanitarian air corridor aiming to alleviate the suffering of the people of Sudan from the ongoing conflict.

Earlier this week, Kuwait urged the warring parties in Sudan to restore calm and stability, practice self-restraint, engage in peaceful dialogue and put the interests of the Sudanese people above all considerations. Counsellor of Kuwait Mission to the UN Office in Geneva Abdullah Al-Khubaizi highlighted, in a speech on Tuesday to an enhanced interactive dialogue held by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on the situation of human rights in Sudan, the linkage between political stability and economic recovery.

Khubaizi expressed profound concern over the impacts of the armed conflict on the humanitarian situation in Sudan, saying that the crisis led to in-

creasing waves of internal displacement and exodus into neighboring countries.

"The State of Kuwait reminds the warring parties of the need to respect the provisions of the international humanitarian law and human rights law, and empower the international aid agencies to deliver assistance to impoverished people," he added.

UNHRC interactive dialogue is part of the 53rd regular session of the UNHRC to continue until July 14. The opening session heard a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk who regretted that "the reckless, senseless conflict in Sudan was taking place in a context of total impunity which had resulted in a human rights and humanitarian crisis."

That crisis is "unfolding at an alarming rate, on a devastating scale and with a complexity not seen before in the country," he said. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti officials pose for a photo with the country's sixteenth aid plane to Sudan. — KUNA photos

## The stinky truth: How to beat bad breath

Dr Saad Al-Saleh  
Sabah Al-Salem North Polyclinic

**A**s a dentist, I have seen many patients in Kuwait who are concerned about bad breath, also known as halitosis. Bad breath can be an embarrassing problem that affects many people, but fortunately, there are several ways to improve your oral health and stop bad breath.

One of the most effective ways to stop bad breath is to practice good oral hygiene. This includes brushing your teeth at least twice a day, flossing daily, and using a tongue scraper to remove bacteria from the tongue. It is also important to brush your tongue, as this is where bacteria tend to accumulate. I recommend using a soft-bristled toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste to help keep your teeth and gums healthy.

Staying hydrated is another important step to stop bad breath. When your mouth is dry, bacteria can thrive and cause bad breath. Be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially after eating or drinking sugary or acidic beverages. You can also try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free mints to stimulate saliva production and keep your mouth moist.

Eating a healthy diet is also crucial to stop bad breath. Avoiding foods that are high in sugar, such as candy and soda, can help prevent bacterial growth and bad breath. Instead, try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, which are high in fiber and can help scrub your teeth and gums clean.

Smoking is a common cause of bad breath, as it can dry out your mouth and increase your risk of gum disease. Smoking not only affects your breath but also your overall health. Smoking can cause several oral health problems such as gum disease, tooth decay, and oral cancer. If you smoke, quitting can help improve your breath and your oral health. I strongly recommend quitting smoking as it can have a positive impact on your overall health and wellbeing.

If you have persistent bad breath despite practicing good oral hygiene, staying hydrated, and eating a healthy diet, it is important to see a dentist or healthcare provider. They can help identify the underlying cause of your bad breath and recommend appropriate treatment, such as medication or mouthwash.

In addition to these tips, I advise my patients in Kuwait to schedule regular dental check-ups and cleanings to maintain their oral health. Regular dental visits can help detect and prevent oral health problems before they become serious.

In conclusion, bad breath is a common problem that can affect anyone, but with proper oral hygiene, hydration, diet, and quitting smoking, you can stop bad breath and improve your oral health. As a dentist, I encourage you to take care of your teeth and gums and schedule regular dental check-ups to maintain your oral health and prevent bad breath. Remember, a healthy smile is a happy smile!

## Heat in Kuwait to soar in coming days: Meteorology

**KUWAIT:** Weather in Kuwait is forecast to be quite hot in the coming days but temperature will drop by some degrees at night, the meteorology department reported on Thursday. Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, the weather monitor, told KUNA that Kuwait would be affected by the seasonal Indian low wave, along with dust-triggering northwesterly winds that will lower visibility.

Temperatures Thursday were forecast to drop to 31-33 degrees, but will soar Friday to 47-49 degrees in daytime and will get warmer on Saturday, hitting 48-50 degrees. — KUNA

Local

# Film on Syrian refugee's Canadian success story gets Kuwait premiere

Canadian envoy lauds Kuwait for generosity towards refugees



KUWAIT: Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait, is seen during her opening remarks.



Executive Producer of the film Chadi Dali. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly Clements.



Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah.



Ambassador Aliya Mawani, Kelly Clements and Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah watching the film.



Officials and people in attendance at the screening pose for a photo.



A scene from Peace by Chocolate.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the occasion of World Refugee Day, UNHCR in collaboration with the Embassy of Canada to Kuwait organized the screening of the award-winning film "Peace by Chocolate" at Grand Cinemas at Al-Hamra Shopping Center. In her opening remarks, Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Aliya Mawani praised the deep and longstanding relationship between Canada and UNHCR. "We understand the importance of responsibility-sharing and international solidarity in responding to the needs of refugees. We are all affected by migratory flows, and it is important to collaborate and stay united to find solutions and offer protection to refugees," she said.

Mawani said her country has a long tradition of welcoming refugees from all over the world. "All the people who come are part of our societies. As they contribute to Canada, our country becomes stronger and richer. Canada always makes sure they are included and have the education and support they need, and this is what this year's theme of World Refugee Day is about — 'Hope Away from Home'. To have hope, refugees need a meaningful way to create and build new lives," she said.

Regarding screening "Peace by Chocolate" in Kuwait, Mawani noted: "Kuwait has a very humanitarian tradition and is very supportive of refugees

financially. It is a big donor, and we saw this after the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Kuwait was one of the major donors — not just the government, but also the people of Kuwait."

"I'm so thrilled for the Kuwait premiere of this Canadian film whose central themes are love, inclusion and hope. The story of the Hadhad family is but one story — a very Canadian story — but is multiplied by millions of stories around the globe that demonstrate the resilience of refugees and the communities that host them, and what's possible when we come together," Mawani mentioned. "Since our Syrian resettlement commitment was announced in November 2015, Canada has resettled a total of 44,650 Syrian refugees. We have committed to resettling another 140,000 refugees between 2023-2025, in addition to 40,000 Afghan refugees by the end of this year," she added.

UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah stressed this occasion is a stand of solidarity with more than 100 million people around the world who were forced to flee their homes due to war, violence and persecution, especially as the world lives in a moment of unprecedented displacement. She added this day is not only a commemoration of World Refugee Day, but rather a tribute to their courage in the face of unimaginable conflicts and challenges, which requires all

to take serious and pivotal action.

"While we gather here today in Kuwait, the center for humanitarian action, I call for the support of UNHCR and their efforts in securing and improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable and displaced people. We can make a difference," Sheikha Rima said.

Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly Clements expressed her appreciation to the government of Kuwait for its generosity and contributions. "These partnerships open doors to new opportunities for refugees and those who are away from their homes. Currently, more than 110 million people are forcibly displaced, and the sequence of protracted and new displacement situations has reached unprecedented levels in history," she said.

"The star of the story, Tareq, was among the first group of refugees to be resettled in Canada in response to the ongoing conflict and escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria. The Canadian government's plan paved the way for Tareq and his family's journey. Tareq and his family were able to rebuild their chocolate company, offering a range of confections carrying messages of peace, which have resonated with chocolate lovers worldwide," she pointed out.

Executive Producer of "Peace by Chocolate" Chadi Dali noted there are

many success stories in Canada, the world, and even in Kuwait, "but we chose this story because the family went to a small city of 5,000 people yet succeeded in reaching the world from this place". "We are thinking of producing and adopting success stories. The success stories mustn't be documentaries because they no longer attract Generation Z. The story must be a drama and inspire people to succeed," he explained.

Dali said that the film was shown in most international cinemas. "The film is not just a great success story for the Hadhad family, who opened a chocolate factory and achieved international recognition. It is a success story for a country like Canada, which provided them with opportunities, and a success story for the Canadian people, who embraced this family and helped them integrate and succeed," he said.

"The film has received 13 awards from its participation in over 25 international film festivals," Dali said, praising Sheikha Rima. "Success is not only to be a goodwill ambassador for the UNHCR, but to work with great and organized efforts to collect more than \$20 million to help refugees and be among one of the 100 most influential women in America. This is what Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah did when she was in America and is still doing this mighty work and much more here in Kuwait. Hats off!"

## Assembly office determines dates of next sessions

KUWAIT: The assembly office approved at its meeting on Thursday a proposal submitted by the General Secretariat of the National Assembly on the dates of upcoming assembly sessions. The seven sessions, the office decided, will not be held on dates that fall within the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

A statement after the meeting, which was chaired by Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun, determined that the sessions will be held on July 11, 12, 13, 18, 25, 26 and 27.

The assembly office also approved the re-appointment of Khalid Abu Salib as secretary general of the National Assembly. It also decided not to renew the contracts of non-Kuwaiti consultants working in the General Secretariat of the National Assembly and hire Kuwaiti consultants in their place.

The office has also tasked Mohammad Al-Mutair, Mubarak Al-Tasha, Mohammad Al-Huwaila and Khalid Abu Salib to conduct a study and submit a report on general secretariat issues, including the appointments, contracts of employment and other administrative and financial matters.

The office decided to cancel administrative appointment, promotion and transfer decisions issued by the 2020 Council during the period following the cancellation of the 2022 Council appointment.

### Setting priorities

The government-parliament coordination committee met Thursday to set priorities for the July 4 National Assembly session agenda.

Another meeting will be held to decide all issues to be discussed in the coming sessions after determining priorities of parliamentary sessions. The Parliamentary priorities committee will send urgent letters to committees and MPs to find out the most important topics included in the program MPs agreed upon before the opening session.

The government-parliament coordination committee to decide parliamentary priorities includes Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Essa Al-Kandari, Oil Minister and State Minister for Economic Affairs Saad Al-Barrak, Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, and Minister of Justice, Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Ruguba.

Also Thursday, the Constitutional Court, headed by Chancellor Fouad Zuweid, set July 5 as a date for considering appeals lodged against the recent parliamentary election results. Nine appeals have been filed so far, with some demanding a recount of ballots. — Agencies

## To some people, discount season feels like a scam

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The prices of accessories, clothing and related products are falling due to plenty of summer discounts and offers, in addition to the advent of Eid Al-Fitr, when people usually buy new outfits for themselves and their children, not to mention the travel season is in full swing. The affordable prices are attracting buyers from all segments of society and of all ages to well-known retail outlets that are providing good deals at tempting rates.

But it has been noticed by buyers that these discounted products include lots of stocked items, outdated designs, items for winter, and in some cases, of low-quality fabrics. Kuwait Times asked people whether they are truly benefiting from the high sale season that takes place twice a year, and are retailers really providing good deals that include new designs or items in demand.

Eyad Abdullah said buyers usually take advantage of the discounts these retail markets are offering. But he pointed out some popular retail outlets since the past few years are providing customers overstocked items. "Popular items are usually not included in the sale," he said. He said the trick is in the attractive offers they give to people, even for old items.

"I bought a shirt a year ago for around KD 15 with a nice fabric. Now the same item without a variety of



sizes is for around KD 3 only. If I hadn't bought it before, for sure I will buy it now if I find my size," he said. He said discounts on old designs is not a scam, but "the real scam is that they don't offer us at the same time items with new designs or products that people want to buy".

"People get obsessive about shopping during sale periods, and that's how retail shops are taking advantage of them. Some places offer defective items on sale, and they tell us there are discounts," Amina Abdulrahman said. Maryam Al-Aqeel told Kuwait Times she used to spend lots of money during the sale season, as she thought she was winning by buying discounted items. "Over time, I noticed I was buying

things I don't need just because they were discounted. I also became aware that most of the things I need are not discounted," she said.

Abdulrahman pointed out that in recent years, she and many of her family members have realized that after the discount season, in-demand items come back to shops without any offers or discounts. And because people want these items, they buy them even if they are overpriced, she said. Consumerism in Kuwait has been rising for many reasons, including the spread of retail outlets, an obsession to own everything and abundant cash flows. Kuwait Times visited several retailers in local malls to ask whether the discounts they offered were a farce, but they refused to talk.

## News in Brief

History exam 'direct',  
'average': MoE official

KUWAIT: Wednesday's history final exam was "direct, clear and only tested students on the material they were taught," said an official with the education ministry in a statement posted on its Instagram account. The statement, which got over a hundred of mostly angry comments, comes after grade-12 students in the literary stream took to social media to air their frustrations with the exam, as reported by Kuwait Times. One student described the exam as "difficult and meant to waste students' future". History mentor for the Hawally educational area Walid Mohammed Al-Wahabi said the exam was at the "level of the average student". He added that there had been no complaints recorded about the exam up until the time the statement was posted.

Social affairs, Awqaf to give  
out sacrificial meat to shelters

KUWAIT: The Social Affairs Ministry is cooperating with the Awqaf Secretariate General to sacrifice 20 animals for Eid Al-Adha this year to be distributed to various departments of the social care sector at sheltering homes, including nursery, adolescents and elderly. Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Social Care at the Social Affairs Ministry Hamad Al-Khaldi said the project is among the most important annual projects that is carried out by the awareness and guidance department according to Islamic Sharia rules, as it is a ritual urged by Islam.

Man on Interpol list  
arrested at airport

KUWAIT: Kuwait authorities arrested an Egyptian-Turkish National who was detained a few days earlier upon arriving in Kuwait based on a memo issued by the Interpol. He was deported to Turkey following interrogations.

Cultural performances bring Chinese  
arts, history closer to people of Kuwait

Event 'good platform' for deeper Kuwait-China ties: Envoy



KUWAIT: Chinese officials, performance teams and members of the audience pose for a group photo following the performance held Wednesday as part of the China(Shandong)-Kuwait Culture and Tourism Event 2023.



By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The Chinese Embassy in Kuwait organized an art performance during the China (Shandong)-Kuwait Culture and Tourism Event 2023 on Wednesday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. A delegation from China's Shandong province has come to conduct cultural exchanges with the Kuwaiti side as part of joint efforts to implement the important consensus reached by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during their meeting in December last year.

At the opening ceremony, Ambassador Zhang Jianwei said Shandong is the home province of the great Chinese mentor and philosopher Kong Zi. It is also the birthplace of Confucianism, which has a profound cultural heritage. Among the performances held, many have been winners of international awards and offered as a unique cultural gift during Xi's and other Chinese leaders' foreign visits. Zhang expressed his gratitude to the Amiri Diwan of Kuwait that allowed holding this event at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, also thanking the Ministry of Information, the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their great support to the event.



Zhang then quoted President Xi, saying: "Culture can bring people closer, and art can connect countries around the world." He added: "I believe China (Shandong)-Kuwait Culture and Tourism Event will be a good platform for Chinese and Kuwaiti people to deepen exchanges and enhance friendship."

The performances were related to Chinese culture, arts and history, besides integrating perfor-

mances inspired by the past, present and future that showcased creativity, elegance and a great deal of effort that impressed the audience, who enjoyed watching, applauding and documenting the wonderful performance through videos and pictures. The show introduced Chinese culture in a distinctive and beautiful way to the audience and people of Kuwait.

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LuLu opens new  
fresh market  
in Kuwait City

KUWAIT: LuLu Group, the leading retailer in the region opened its new fresh market in Kuwait. The new store, which is also the thirteenth in the country, was officially inaugurated by Sheikh Hamad Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Royal Family Member at Jawharat Al-Khaleej Complex in the presence of Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group and other dignitaries.

Located in the heart of Kuwait City and in close proximity to landmarks such as Safat Square, Souq Mubarakiya and Kuwait Liberation Tower, the new LuLu Express Fresh Market is easily accessible from all sides and provides ample parking space for the convenience of shoppers.

The 25,000 square feet store features a modern interior and the latest concepts in premium retailing



that offer customers easy convenient access, wide product range and quick service. It offers an extensive range of products, including groceries, non-food goods, fresh, chilled, and frozen foods, dairy items, fruits and vegetables, meat, and fish as well as an in-house kitchen and delicatessen. The store also features a wide range of health and beauty products, household items, home furnishing, toys, and luggage.

Also present on the occasion were Saifee Rupawala, CEO of Lulu Group, Mohamed Haris, Lulu Kuwait Director, Sreejith KS, Regional Director of Lulu Kuwait and other top officials.



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## Ukrainian strike hits Crimea bridge

'There will be more' attacks in Russian-controlled territory: Ukraine military



**BAKHMUT:** Ukrainian servicemen of the 57th Brigade fire BM-21 'Grad' multiple rocket launcher towards Russian positions at a front line near Bakhmut in the Donetsk region. — AFP

**MOSCOW:** A Ukrainian strike damaged a bridge that connects south Ukraine to the annexed Crimean peninsula, a Russian official said on Thursday as tensions again rose over a Moscow-held nuclear power plant.

Fighting has increased in occupied parts of Ukraine's south and east with the start of Kyiv's long-awaited offensive and that has included strikes far behind enemy lines. "During the night a strike hit the Chongar bridge. There are no victims," Sergei Aksyonov, the Russia-installed governor of Crimea, said on Telegram.

The bridge connects Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, to a part of the Ukrainian region of Kherson that is held by Moscow. Another pro-Russian official in Moscow-controlled regions of Ukraine, Vladimir Rogov, said a second strike had damaged a disused bridge nearby.

The Kremlin announced last year that Kherson was also part of Russia, even as fighting was raging there. Ukraine recaptured the regional capital shortly after. The Russia-installed governor

of Kherson, Vladimir Saldo, said that Ukrainian strikes had hit "bridges" near Chongar, next to photos of what appeared to be gaping holes in a bridge. Crimea has been regularly targeted by strikes, mostly using drones, over recent months. Moscow last year blamed Ukraine for a blast on the main bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian mainland.

### 'Blow' to Russian logistics

Ukraine's deputy head of the Kherson region said the strike on the bridge was of "great importance". "Firstly, it is a blow to the military logistics of the occupiers," the official, Yuriy Sobolevskyi, said on social media.

"Secondly, the psychological impact on the occupiers and the occupying authorities is even more important. "There is no place on the territory of Kherson region where they could feel safe," he added. Ukrainian military intelligence spokesman Andriy Yusov told local television "there will be more" attacks in Russian-controlled territory.

Prior to Ukraine's recapture of Kherson last No-

vember, its forces repeatedly carried out long-range precision strikes on the nearby key Antonivskiy bridge. The strike overnight on Wednesday came days after Ukrainian forces claimed limited gains in a highly touted counter-offensive to recapture territory that Russia took under its control after launching its large-scale offensive last February.

But Russia said on Thursday that Ukrainian forces in eastern and southern Ukraine were temporarily limiting their efforts to reclaim Moscow-held territory. "After conducting active hostilities over the past 16 days and having suffered significant losses, the enemy has reduced its activity and is currently regrouping," Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, in comments carried by Russian news agencies.

### 'This is another lie'

Separately the Russian FSB security service said it had detained a group of saboteurs recruited by Ukraine, who were planning attacks on railway infrastructure in the partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region.

The Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine is home to Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which has been a flashpoint of fighting and the subject of talks between Russian officials and Kyiv's allies. "Intelligence services have received information that Russia is considering the scenario of a terrorist act at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant — a terrorist act with the release of radiation. They have prepared everything for this," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media.

The Kremlin rejected Zelensky's assertion that Russian forces could be orchestrating a radiation leak, pointing to a recent visit to the facility by the head of the United Nations' nuclear agency, the IAEA. "This is another lie. There were just contacts with the IAEA at the site — a very high assessment from the IAEA," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Moscow meanwhile announced that IAEA director general Rafael Grossi would be arriving in the Russian region of Kaliningrad to meet the head of Russia's nuclear agency. — AFP

## Heavy shelling rock Khartoum as fighting rages on

**KHARTOUM:** Explosions rocked Khartoum on Thursday, more than two months after fighting broke out between two rival Sudanese generals, with each side accusing the other of attacks on civilians. Witnesses in the east of the capital reported artillery fire, while others in the northern suburbs said there was heavy shelling from an army barracks, with the force of the blasts shaking the walls of houses.

Fighting since April 15 between the regular army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) headed by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has claimed more than 2,000 lives.

The latest in a series of ceasefires that have all been systematically violated ended on Wednesday morning, and fighting resumed within minutes. The three-day US and Saudi-brokered ceasefire had brought a brief respite to the millions of civilians trapped by fighting and suffering shortages of medical care, electricity, water and other essentials.

### Darfur fighting rages

The army accused the RSF of "taking advantage of the truce to mobilize its forces and commit several violations against civilians". The RSF in turn

accused the army of fabricating a video of a rape attack, alleging "one of the actors appeared in the uniform" of the armed forces, "proving their guilt".

The deadliest fighting has raged in Darfur, a vast region on Sudan's western border with Chad. In Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state, the army and paramilitary fighters clashed using "all types of weapons", residents told AFP on Wednesday evening. In Darfur, home to ethnic African groups as well as Arab tribes, the conflict has "taken an ethnic dimension", the United Nations has warned.

In El-Obeid, North Kordofan state, witnesses reported hearing "artillery fire" on Wednesday. The chief of the UN's World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on Wednesday confirmed "46 attacks on health care since the start of the fighting". He said about two-thirds of health facilities in areas affected by the war are "out of service," and warned that "the risk of epidemics will only increase" with the rainy season that began this month.

The WHO said around 11 million people needed health assistance and voiced concerns about attempts to control ongoing epidemics of measles, malaria and dengue.

At a donors' conference in Geneva on Monday, the international community pledged to raise \$1.5 billion in aid for Sudan and neighboring countries, but that amounted to less than half of the estimated needs. "Those pledges are generous, yet they total only half of what the UN estimates is required to address humanitarian needs in the country and its neighbors," said Will Carter of the Norwegian Refugee Council. — AFP



**BEIJING:** A man swims with his dog in a canal in Beijing on June 22, 2023. Swathes of northern China sweltered in 40-degree heat, weather data showed, as parts of Beijing and the nearby megacity of Tianjin recorded their highest temperatures for years. — AFP

## Beijing temperatures near record as extreme heat sweeps China

**BEIJING:** Beijing on Thursday appeared to log its hottest June temperature since reliable records began, according to weather data and local media reports, as swathes of northern China sweltered in 40-degree heat.

Scientists say rising global temperatures — caused largely by burning fossil fuels — are aggravating extreme weather worldwide, and many countries in Asia have experienced deadly heatwaves and record temperatures in recent weeks. At the Nanjiao weather station in southern Beijing, considered a benchmark for temperatures in the capital, the mercury hit 41.1 degrees Celsius (106 degrees Fahrenheit) at 3:19 pm (0719 GMT) on Thursday, the local Beijing News reported, citing an information service operated by the national weather bureau.

The figure is half a degree higher than the station's previous record of 40.6 C taken in June 1961, according to the state-backed media outlet. "Today has become one of Beijing's hottest days since complete records have been available," the outlet said.

Other weather stations around the capital chalked up even higher temperatures, with Tanghekou in northern Beijing notching 41.8 C early Thursday afternoon, becoming the hottest place in the country,

according to state media. China's national weather service did not immediately confirm whether official temperature records had been breached. Along Beijing's canals, residents sought respite from the searing heat by swimming and splashing around in the water.

In nearby Tianjin — home to over 13 million people — temperatures in the city centre also soared, with the western Xiqing district logging its hottest ever June day with 40.6 C. Nationwide, some 17 weather stations "recorded record high temperature extremes" on Thursday, according to the National Meteorological Center (NMC).

"It never used to get this hot in June before, but now it's so hot my hands are trembling," wrote one user on the Weibo social media platform. "Are there three suns blazing over Beijing right now? It's hot enough to cause a breakdown," wrote another.

The scorching heat has coincided with the Dragon Boat Festival, a time when many Chinese go outside and socialize. High temperatures are forecast to persist across northern China throughout the three-day public holiday, especially around Beijing and parts of the Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang regions.

"These current high-temperature weather systems are affecting large areas and persisting for a long time," state broadcaster CCTV said Thursday. Authorities have urged people to limit their time outdoors and warned of the heightened risk of heatstroke and other health complaints.

Beijing's weather authority issued an orange warning for extreme heat and urged people to "avoid exercising outdoors for long periods... and take effective measures to shield from the sun". — AFP



**KHARTOUM:** A boy crosses an empty road on his bicycle in southern Khartoum, as renewed artillery exchanges rocked the Sudanese capital again with the country's warring generals resuming fighting just minutes after the latest US and Saudi-brokered ceasefire expired. — AFP

## International

# One still missing after Paris building blast injures 50

## Shockwave knocked out windows up to 400 metres away

PARIS: One person was still missing on Thursday after a blast ripped through a building in central Paris, while six others were in critical condition receiving urgent treatment in hospital as rescuers sifted through wreckage. Prosecutors said around 50 people were injured in the explosion and building collapse on the Rue Saint Jacques street, potentially caused by a gas leak. "Among the two people who were being sought in the rubble, it turned out that one had already been admitted to hospital," the prosecutor's office said.

"The search continues for the second," it added, cautioning: "These figures could still change." The blast occurred on Wednesday afternoon in the city's fifth arrondissement, close to the Luxembourg Gardens and at the edge of the Latin Quarter, a top tourism area in the French capital. "It was terrible. I thought it was an earthquake. Everything shook," Violeta Garestean, a caretaker in a nearby building, told AFP on Thursday after sweeping up glass in the courtyard. "A lot of windows were broken. We've had to put up plastic sheets because it's raining," she said.

The shockwave knocked out windows up to 400 metres (440 yards) away. It sparked a major fire that caused the building — housing a private fashion school called the Paris American Academy — to collapse. According to the mother of one of the students, writing on the school's Facebook account, the classrooms were empty at the time because students were attending a Paris Fashion Week show.

"The toll could have been higher," Paris deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire told FranceInfo radio. Some 70 fire engines and 270 firefighters battled the blaze before it was contained. On Thursday, the security cordon had been reduced, allowing journalists and gawkers closer to the heap of rubble in front of the structure, just opposite the Val-de-Grace military hospital. A single fire hose was still sporadically spraying the remains of the building, while some of the nearby shops had reopened.

### 'Strong smell of gas'

The mayor of the fifth arrondissement said a gas explosion was behind the blast, and several witnesses and resident told AFP they had smelled gas just before it occurred. But officials said they did not yet have enough evidence to determine the cause of the blast with certainty. "One of my colleagues noticed a strong gas smell and went outside to look," Philippe Delorme, the head of France's Catholic Education association, whose offices are adjacent to the collapsed building, told RMC radio on Thursday.

"Just when our accountant was dialling the emergency number" of the gas company, "the explosion occurred". "Obviously we are counting on the victims to give us the first elements for investigating and understanding what happened," Paris Prosecutor Laure Beccuau said at the scene.

The blast also caused extensive structural damage to two adjacent buildings, whose residents had



PARIS: Smoke billows from rubbles of a building at Place Alphonse-Laveran in the 5th arrondissement of Paris. A major fire of unknown origin broke out on June 21, 2023 in a building in central Paris, part of which collapsed, injuring 50. — AFP

to be evacuated. There have been several incidents of gas-related blasts in the French capital. In January 2019, a suspected leak in a buried gas pipe destroyed a building on the Rue de Trevise in the ninth arrondissement, killing four people including two firefighters. The shock wave blew out scores of near-

by windows, and dozens of evacuated families have yet to return to their homes as reconstruction work continues. Much of the street still remains off limits four years after the disaster, and legal wrangling over the cause of the blast has held up millions of euros in compensation for the victims. — AFP

## Zionist entity destroys alleged attacker's home

NABLUS: Zionist entity forces on Thursday demolished the home of a Palestinian accused of killing a soldier in the occupied West Bank, which has been hit by a new outbreak of violence. This week, at least 17 people have been killed in the territory, in Zionist military incursions or in attacks by Palestinians or Zionist settlers.

So far this year, more than 200 people have died in violence linked to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Soldiers entered Nablus, a Palestinian city in the north of the West Bank, during the night and left at dawn after destroying Kamal Jouri's home in an apartment building, witnesses told AFP. The army said it "demolished... the home of Kamal Jouri, the terrorist who carried out a gun attack" in October which "caused the death of soldier Ido Baruch".

Jouri was arrested in February and is in Zionist custody along with Osama Tawil, who is also accused of taking part in the attack and whose home was destroyed on June 15, the Zionist army said. The army said that during the operation to demolish Jouri's home, "rioters opened fire on the soldiers, causing damage to a military vehicle".

The Zionist entity regularly destroys the homes of Palestinians who carry out deadly attacks against Zionist. It argues it is a deterrent, though critics say it amounts to collective punishment. The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967.

Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the territory is now home to around 490,000 Zionists who live in settlements considered illegal under international law. Deadly violence has flared in recent days in the northern West Bank, a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups where Zionist entity has stepped up military operations.

The northern West Bank has seen a spate of attacks on Zionists as well as attacks by Jewish settlers on Palestinian communities over the past week. On Monday, an Zionist military raid in the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin left seven people dead, including an Islamic Jihad fighter and

two 15-year-olds. The army, which fired missiles from a helicopter to clear the way for its troops, encountered strong resistance. On Tuesday, four Zionists were killed when two Palestinian gunmen attacked a petrol station near the Eli settlement. The assailants were shot dead. In response, Netanyahu's office said his government would fast-track settlement expansion at Eli, despite repeated calls by the United Nations for the Zionist entity to halt such construction.

Zionist anti-settlement organization Peace Now said Netanyahu's announcement was intended "to appease fervent and fanatic settlers". On Wednesday, Zionists poured into the Palestinian village of Turmus Ayya, between Ramallah and Nablus, setting fire to houses and vehicles, witnesses and the Zionist army said.

One Palestinian was killed, either during the attack or in the chaos that followed during clashes with Zionist police. Journalists reported seeing houses set on fire and injured people being evacuated by ambulance. Later, the Zionist military killed three members of a "terrorist cell" in a rare West Bank drone strike on Wednesday evening, it said in a statement. — AFP



NABLUS: People inspect the demolished house in Nablus in the occupied West Bank on June 22, 2023, after Zionist forces blew up the interior of a house belonging to a Palestinian man imprisoned in Zionist entity. — AFP

## Paris climate summit opens...

Continued from Page 1

The most important measure would be offering "a pause on debt repayments so countries can focus on what matters when a crisis hits and stop worrying about the bill that is going come," he added. The idea has been promoted by Mottley. She has sought to highlight how heavily indebted developing countries are unable to respond to natural disasters, as well as international crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or inflation sparked by Russia's war against Ukraine.

Caribbean islands like hers are increasingly vulnerable to tropical storms which can devastate homes and property, as well as livelihoods linked to the vital tourism industry. The World Bank, the sister organization of the International Monetary Fund, is a top public lender for countries to finance their infrastructure and other projects.

While France has pitched the conference as a consensus-building exercise, it has sought to show the summit can also deliver some tangible progress. One key announcement came from IMF director

Kristalina Georgieva, who said a pledge to shift \$100 billion of liquidity boosting "special drawing rights" into a climate and poverty fund had been met. "Ultimately it is the future of humanity that is being discussed here," she told reporters.

Separately, a group of wealthy nations and multilateral development banks have promised to mobilize €2.5 billion (\$2.7 billion) to help Senegal reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, President Macky Sall said. The deal is the most recent in a series of so-called "just energy transition partnerships", with \$8.5 billion promised to help South Africa wean itself of coal-fired power, \$20 billion for Indonesia and \$15.5 billion for Vietnam.

Outlining the challenges facing developing countries, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said more than 50 nations were now in or near debt default, while many African countries are spending more on debt repayments than on healthcare. Guterres said the post-World War II global financial system was failing to rise to modern challenges and now "perpetuates and even worsens inequalities".

Macron also said he was hopeful that a pledge to deliver \$100 billion a year in climate finance to poorer nations by 2020 would finally be fulfilled this year — although actual confirmation the money has been delivered will take months if not years. — AFP

run" Twitter alternative. The Tesla and SpaceX boss bought the social media firm for \$44 billion before sacking much of its staff and allowing banned right-wing conspiracy theorists back onto the platform — sending advertisers fleeing. Musk defended his handling of Twitter at an event in Paris last week, saying advertisers had come back and he had eliminated almost all bots.

In an interview earlier this month with US podcaster Lex Fridman, Zuckerberg was asked to say something positive about Musk's handling of Twitter. After an eight-second pause for thought, he said Musk had "led a push early on to make Twitter a lot leaner", a move he said was good for the industry. Zuckerberg announced thousands of job cuts at his firm months after Musk did so at Twitter. — AFP

operation in the past day, and sonar has picked up unidentified underwater noises. Organizers of the response — which includes US and Canadian military planes, coast guard ships and teleguided robots — are focusing their efforts close to the sounds. The noises, heard Tuesday and Wednesday and which have been described as sounding like "banging", raised hopes that the passengers are still alive, though experts have not been able to confirm their source.

The French research ship Atalante deployed an unmanned robot able to search at depths of up to 6,000 m below water on Thursday, the US Coast Guard tweeted. Experts have called the Victor 6000 "the main hope" for an underwater rescue. The Canadian vessel Horizon Arctic also deployed a robot that had already reached the ocean floor. — AFP

## Biden, Modi hail 'defining...'

Continued from Page 1

countries "are committed to work together for the global good and for global peace, stability and prosperity". "Our strong strategic partnership is a clear proof of the power of democracy," said Modi, who unlike most of India's post-independence leaders spoke Hindi rather than English on the global stage.

Modi will later address a joint session of Congress and return to the White House for a gala dinner, with First Lady Jill Biden tapping a star Californian plant-based chef, Nina Curtis, to cook for the strictly vegetarian prime minister. The White House said the two leaders will take questions from the press, while stopping short of calling the event a press conference. Modi has nearly always avoided unscripted interactions with reporters during his nine years in office.

In one of the biggest agreements of the visit, described by a US official as "trailblazing", the United States signed off on a technology transfer for engines as India begins producing homegrown fighter jets. General Electric will have the green light to produce its F414 engines jointly with state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics. A US official said India would also buy MQ-9B SeaGuardians, high-precision armed drones. India in 2019 broke precedent with an airstrike in Pakistani territory against an alleged extremist camp.

Washington hopes a tighter defense relationship will help wean India off Russia, New Delhi's primary military supplier during the Cold War. India has refused to join Western efforts to isolate Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and instead has seized on the crisis to buy discounted Russian oil. In one long-running point of contention, India has been angered by US sales of F-16

fighter jets to its historic rival Pakistan.

In another agreement, US chip giant Micron will invest \$800 million in a semiconductor assembly and testing plant in India, which is expected to reach \$2.75 billion after contributions from New Delhi. A US official said the plant would help diversify supply chains of advanced semiconductors, as Biden leads a concerted effort to deny exports of top-end chips to China. Micron nonetheless also recently announced a \$600 million investment in a factory in China.

India, a growing power in space, also agreed during Modi's visit to join the Artemis Accords, a US-led multinational effort to put a human back on the Moon by 2025. As part of the cooperation, India's space program will work with NASA on a joint mission to the International Space Station next year, the White House said.

The United States has been seeking a closer relationship with India since the late 1990s, seeing the billion-plus democracy as like-minded. But Modi has also faced growing criticism for treatment of religious minorities, the opposition and independent media, with the State Department pointing to police and vigilante violence against Muslims and Christians. Biden touched lightly on concerns, telling Modi that religious pluralism was among "core principles" for both the United States and India "even as they have faced challenges throughout each of our nations' histories". Modi replied that both nations "take pride in their diversity".

Three prominent leftwing Democrats including Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and two Muslims, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, said they would boycott Modi's speech to Congress. Saying the US Congress should not invite leaders with "deeply troubling human rights records", Ocasio-Cortez said she would stay away to show support for "pluralism, tolerance and freedom of the press." Dozens of other Democrats in a letter urged Biden to raise concerns "in an honest and forthright way", although they stopped short of boycotting and backed closer ties with India. — AFP

## Musk, Zuck call out each other...

Continued from Page 1

"Please god let this happen," technology journalist Taylor Lorenz wrote on Twitter. "The best Musk-Zuckerberg cage match is one in which two men enter and no men leave," wrote podcaster Bennett Tomlin. The two men have baited each other for years with opposing views on everything from politics to artificial intelligence. But their new business rivalry has supercharged the animosity.

Musk responded angrily to a recent claim by a Meta official that there was appetite for a "sanely

## 'Debris' found in search...

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Based on the sub's capacity to hold up to 96 hours of emergency air, rescuers had estimated that the passengers, which include fee-paying tourists, may have run out of oxygen in the early hours of Thursday. But as that possible deadline passed, US Coast Guard Rear Admiral John Mauger said rescuers were "fully committed" to search operations. "People's will to live really needs to be accounted for as well. We're going to continue searching," he told NBC's Today show.

A surge of assets and experts have joined the

## Iran FM rounds out Gulf tour...

Continued from Page 1

In a dramatic shift, China brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March to restore ties after a years-long rupture.

Iran's nuclear activities are also an issue of mutual concern, as Tehran seeks to revive a 2015 deal with major powers granting it sanctions relief in return for restrictions aimed at preventing it from acquiring a weapons capability — an ambition it has always denied. Iran said last week it had been engaged in

indirect negotiations with the United States through Oman, with nuclear issues, US sanctions and a possible prisoner swap on the agenda.

The following day, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, said he had met with diplomats from three European countries in Abu Dhabi to discuss a number of issues, including his country's nuclear activities. In 2018, the United States under then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear accord, prompting Iran to begin backing away from its own commitments a year later, including by stepping up its enrichment of uranium. The administration of US President Joe Biden launched talks to revive the deal in 2021, but the process has stalled amid on-off negotiations. — AFP

## International

# Staged online videos feed Islamophobia in Modi's India

## Video-makers say clips are just meant as 'entertainment' and to make money

**SITAPUR:** The acting is dire and the scenarios fake, but staged videos are peddling disinformation and fanning sectarian tensions in India, which has seen rising Hindu radicalization under nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One such five-minute film purported to show a Muslim man mixing toilet cleaning liquid into a street snack, before being "confronted" by passersby. The video got more than five million views on Facebook. Another, seen more than 3.5 million times on YouTube, depicts a fruit-seller — a trade taken up by many Muslims — cheating customers out of pomegranates before being accosted and assaulted. "Before buying anything from Muslim Jihadis, watch this video of a Muslim fruit seller," the accompanying caption says.

### Millions of followers

Asked about the impact their work may have, the video-makers say the clips are just meant as "entertainment" — and to make money. The toilet cleaning liquid video was made by Narendra Verma, who has a Facebook page with 55,000 followers and runs a successful YouTube channel.

The smartly dressed 28-year-old told AFP that his videos can make his six-member team 250,000 Indian rupees (\$3,000) a month from YouTube and Facebook, depending on how many views they get. "Everyone has different responsibilities, from writing the script of the video to shooting it and later editing and uploading it," he said. "We make these videos (to make) people aware so that they can avoid such incidents happening for real in society," he added. Raju Bharti runs a YouTube channel with 2.89 million subscribers and has uploaded hundreds of videos, including the one of the "Muslim fruit-seller". He denies accusations of inciting hatred.

"We make videos about digital fraud, child kidnapping and how shopkeepers or hawkers cheat common people," he told AFP. "Our aim is not to hurt the sentiments of any religion or community, we just want to make people aware."

## Bolsonaro faces political ban as Brazil trial opens

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's electoral court began delivering its ruling Thursday on charges ex-president Jair Bolsonaro broke the law with his unproven allegations against the voting system, a case that could eliminate him from the 2026 presidential race. The Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) is trying the far-right former president on charges he abused his office and misused state media when, in July 2022 — three months from elections he would go on to lose — he convened foreign diplomats for a meeting at which he insisted Brazil's electronic voting machines were susceptible to large-scale fraud.

Bolsonaro, 68, did not attend the trial in Brasilia. He will be following it from the southern city of Porto Alegre, where he will be holding political meetings, his press office told AFP. At the July meeting in the presidential palace, which was broadcast live on public TV, Bolsonaro spent nearly an hour making his case to the assembled ambassadors, armed with a PowerPoint presentation but no hard evidence.

Prosecutors say the event violated electoral law, given that it was held during the polarizing campaign for the October 2022 elections, which Bolsonaro narrowly lost to his leftist arch-rival, now-President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Insiders say Bolsonaro will almost certainly be convicted, incurring an eight-year ban on running for public office. The ex-army captain reiterated Wednesday that he had done nothing wrong. "There was no criticism or attack on the electoral system" at the meeting, he told journalists. "I simply explained how elections work in Brazil." However, he appeared

## Britain celebrates Windrush 'versary

**LONDON:** Britain on Thursday celebrates the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush ship bringing workers from the West Indies, but with the bitter legacy of a wrongful deportation scandal still fresh. Known as the "Windrush generation", thousands of people came to the UK at the invitation of the British government between 1948 and the early 1970s to fill shortages of key workers following World War II.

Mostly from Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago, they received indefinite leave to remain, but many who did not apply for passports later found themselves targeted by immigration laws intended to create a "hostile environment" for illegal immigrants. Many lost jobs, homes, health care, pensions and benefits because they could not produce paperwork, while others were taken into custody or forced to return to the Caribbean.

Five years after the scandal sparked outrage, many of those affected are still waiting for the promised compensation. Seventy-five years ago on June 22, 1948, several hundred migrants, mainly from the British colony of Jamaica, disembarked from the Empire Windrush ship at the port of Tilbury east of London. "Welcome home," ran the headline in London's Evening Standard newspaper.

### 'Immeasurable contribution'

Three-quarters of a century later, the anniversary is a chance for the UK to "recognize and celebrate the immeasurable contribution that they, their children and their grandchildren have made to this country", King Charles III said. "Once in Britain, they worked hard, offering their skills to rebuild a country during peacetime

### 'Hindu brothers'

Experts say videos like these are shared widely to reinforce negative stereotypes and conspiracy theories about the roughly 210 million Muslims in the world's most populous country. One with 1.2 million views features a man disguised in a burqa — a garment worn by some Muslim women — being pursued with a "stolen" child under his arm. "Burqa hides terrorist activities. Burqa promotes crime. Burqa should be banned in India," the caption reads.

Others show Hindu women who have supposedly been duped into marrying a Muslim, a common trope with the Hindu far-right. These videos are often included in social media campaigns to economically boycott or attack Muslims, or when communal tensions flare. "Wake up... Hindu brothers and sisters, wake up now or never, the economic boycott is the only option for these Jihadis," one user wrote in response to the toilet cleaning liquid clip.

### Disclaimers

Some content-makers took down their videos after they went viral and were subsequently debunked by AFP and other fact-checking organizations. When his toilet cleaning liquid video exploded, Verma started getting calls from the media and had to speak to the police.

He was "scared", he said, and has since switched to more innocent themes, like pranks or dancing. Some producers try to circumvent social media rules by posting quickly disappearing "disclaimer" messages that the content is staged.

Producers then class the videos as "entertainment" on social media, said Paranjay Guha Thakurta, a journalist, author and film-maker who tracks misinformation and hate speech. "This is the real loophole... Even after being shared with a false claim, they can spread misinformation by just putting a disclaimer," he said. When videos are taken down, they can often reappear.



**BRASILIA:** Brazilian former President Jair Bolsonaro speaks to the press as he leaves the Federal Senate in Brasilia on June 21, 2023. Former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro faces a trial that could disqualify him from holding public office for eight years and leave him out of the 2026 Brazilian elections. — AFP

to be coming to terms with his likely fate. "Practically everyone's saying I'm going to lose," he told CNN Brasil. But "we want to keep working, stay active, collaborating to build Brazil's future. We have a lot to contribute."

### Trump parallels

Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL) posted a video on Twitter of the former president cracking jokes and taking pictures with the crew of his flight to Porto Alegre Thursday morning before takeoff. The TSE's seven judges are unlikely to finish reading their rulings Thursday, sources said. Further hearings have been scheduled for June 27 and 29 if necessary — and the case could be extended even longer.

Bolsonaro can appeal to the Supreme Court if



**LONDON:** Britain's King Charles III (left) meets with members of the choir from the St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls following a service at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, west of London on June 22, 2023, for young people, to recognize and celebrate the Windrush 75th Anniversary. — AFP

and seeking opportunities to forge a better future for themselves and their families," he said in the foreword of a book accompanying a display of portraits.

To mark the anniversary, Charles will attend a service for young people at St George's Chapel on the royal family's Windsor estate, west of London. For surviving members of the Windrush generation and their descendants, however, the scandal that erupted in 2018 remains an open wound. "It just felt like another trauma. It's just so unfair," said Yvonne Josiah, 61, who was born in London but whose mother came to the UK in the late 1950s. "I grew up in a community of black people that came here, that were hard working... They didn't come here to rely on social housing... They weren't rebellious. They wanted to just live a quiet life, to work hard to achieve something, they wanted better for their children," she told AFP. — AFP



**SITAPUR:** In this picture taken on January 9, 2023, content creator Narendra Verma (C) speaks with his team members during the shooting of a scripted video in Sitapur, in India's Uttar Pradesh state. The acting is dire and the scenarios fake, but staged videos are peddling disinformation and fanning sectarian tensions in India. — AFP

### 'Significant steps'

Asked about the videos mentioned in this story, Facebook parent company Meta said it was investigating them. YouTube, Twitter and the Indian government did not respond to requests for comment. "We don't allow hate speech on our platform, and we remove it when we find it or are made aware of it," Meta said in an emailed statement.

Meta said it removes content that violates "Community Standards", reducing the distribution of stories marked as false by third-party fact-checkers, and "informing people so they can decide what to read, trust and share". One of Facebook's partners is AFP, which has a global team of journalists, including in India, who debunk misinformation as part of Meta's third-party programme. AFP debunked the toilet cleaning liquid video as "false information" on

convicted. His 2022 running mate, army reserve General Walter Braga Netto, is also on trial, though prosecutors have recommended he be acquitted. Bolsonaro, who trailed Lula throughout the 2022 race, said at the meeting with diplomats that he wanted to "fix the flaws" in the electronic voting system Brazil has used since 1996, questioning the transparency of the elections.

"We still have time to resolve the problem, with the help of the armed forces," he said. The 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.

Both Bolsonaro's unsubstantiated allegations of election fraud and the attack on the capital drew widespread comparisons to his political role model Donald Trump and the latter's bid to hang onto power after his loss in the 2020 US presidential election.

### 'Large base'

Bolsonaro, who spent three months in the US state of Florida after his election loss, has made few public appearances since returning to Brazil in March to serve as honorary president of his Liberal Party (PL). But the man dubbed the "Tropical Trump" remains a powerful force in Brazilian politics, where conservative parties hold a strong majority in Congress.

Bolsonaro "has a large base that is very much influenced by him," said political scientist Marco Antonio Teixeira, of the Getulio Vargas Foundation. Even if convicted, "he'll act behind the scenes and use his vote-winning power and influence to help other candidates," he said. But Bolsonaro faces a raft of other legal woes, from five Supreme Court investigations that could potentially send him to jail — including over the January 8 attacks — to police probes into allegations of a faked COVID-19 vaccination certificate and diamond jewelry snuck into the country from Saudi Arabia. — AFP

## Reborn graveyard is life's achievement for Burkina man

**OUAGADOUGOU:** The graveyards of Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, are as bleak as they are notorious. Lying neglected between piles of rubbish and weeds are tombstones that may have been used for animal sacrifice, or graves that have been ripped open.

Repelled one day by what he saw at a cemetery in Nagrin, a district in the south of the city, one man thought he would do a little tidying-up. Today, after 14 years' labour, the graveyard has been transformed. Not a weed is in sight. A fountain has been installed for ritual ablutions and the site boasts a hearse service and free toilets. A map is proudly on show at the entrance.

The home of the dead has been reborn. The single-minded volunteer is Boukary Pagmoukda, a man in his fifties known locally as "the mayor of the cemeteries". Far from looking funereal, his weathered face becomes wreathed in smiles when he is asked to speak about his work. "I buried my younger brother here 14 years ago," he said in a raspy voice. "I started to do some digging, and it was hard work — there were too many weeds. I started to do some cleaning up in the cemetery in Nagrin, then in Kamboisin, followed by Tenga, and in the end I came back to Nagrin to work. If you go around all the cemeteries, Nagrin is No. 1 for tidiness." Pagmoukda said he was unpaid for his efforts, and survives through donations from mourners. "Before, this place wasn't fenced off and there was a lot of crime," said Gael, a construction worker, who had come for a burial. "If you go to other graveyards (in Ouagadougou), it's not kept up like this." — AFP

Facebook, marking posts sharing the video as such.

As per Facebook policy, those posts received lower distribution and were linked to AFP's article debunking them. However, keyword searches on Facebook and other social media platforms found several posts containing the video still available.

Thakurta said that many Indians often like and share videos that confirm their biases, without checking their veracity. "We need to cultivate social awareness among people. Social media awareness... (has) to be a part of our education syllabus," he told AFP. He added that while laws to regulate social media existed, they were not effectively implemented in a country of 1.4 billion people and 600 million smartphones. "These (social media platforms) are being used or misused to spread Islamophobia and hate against Muslims in India," he said. — AFP

## Ireland's debate on neutrality derailed by anti-NATO protest

**DUBLIN:** A public debate on Ireland's international security policy, including its long-standing military neutrality, was disrupted by an anti-NATO demonstration in its opening session on Thursday. Protesters shouted "No to NATO" and unfurled a red banner reading "NATO wars millions dead" moments before an address by foreign minister Micheal Martin at University College Cork.

The consultation, which ends next Tuesday, follows the decision by previously non-aligned Finland and Sweden to reappraise decades of neutrality in the face of Kremlin aggression. But the debate in Ireland over pursuing NATO membership has stoked passions and threatened to divert the course followed by successive governments since the outbreak of World War II.

According to national broadcaster RTE, Martin called the protesters "undemocratic" and accused the demonstration of "trying to shut down debate" before the group was led away by police. Dozens of protesters also gathered outside the university, where they held banners and placards reading "Stay neutral, oppose war" and "fight war not wars".

Last week President Michael Higgins, whose role in Irish politics is largely ceremonial, accused the government of "playing with fire" by raising the issue. The head of state told the Business Post newspaper that Ireland was at a "most dangerous moment" in foreign policy and described its present position as "one of drift".

### 'Mistake'

Martin said on Thursday that the consultation was not "a binary discussion on the issue of neutrality". But he emphasized Russia's "brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine", had "fundamentally changed the geopolitical and security landscape in Europe".

"Ireland is no different. To shy away from doing so — or to do so behind closed doors — would be a fundamental mistake and an abrogation of responsibility," he added. The countrywide public consultation concludes in Dublin next week.

Some 1,200 members of the public have registered to attend and there have been more than 300 submissions to the forum, which will hear from international security experts, members of civil society and NGOs.

Ireland spent 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) on defence in 2022, well below other European Union members and is accused by critics of relying on its neighbors for security. The country's small, 8,500-strong defence force has traditionally engaged in international peacekeeping. More than 500 personnel are currently deployed overseas, the bulk engaged with the United Nations mission in Lebanon.

### Cyberthreats

Following the sabotage of Nord Stream gas pipelines beneath the Baltic Sea last year, the frequent presence of Russian naval vessels off the Irish coast has raised concerns from the Irish government, EU and NATO over potential interference with vital transatlantic cables.

Ireland has just six offshore patrol vessels supported by two maritime patrol aircraft, according to the Royal United Services Institute, to monitor Ireland's exclusive economic zone, which makes up 16 percent of EU territorial waters. — AFP

# Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2023

## Drones steal spotlight at Air Show

‘Unpiloted aircraft are the future’



LE BOURGET: Photo shows Delair UX11 fixed-wing mapping drone displayed during the International Paris Air Show at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport. — AFP photos

LE BOURGET: Drones of all shapes and sizes designed to carry more and more weapons or directly deliver explosives are everywhere at the Paris Air Show, matching the scale of their deployment on Ukrainian battlefields. One French firm, Turgis and Gaillard, is showing off an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that it hopes will be snapped up by the country's army - until now reliant on American-made Reaper models. Weighing in at 5.5 tons and able to stay aloft for up to 24 hours, the Aarok drone "fills a capacity gap in the French armed forces, we had the best of everything in France as far as radars, missiles, sensors go, everything except the plane itself," managing director Patrick Gaillard said.

With development costs so far "more than 10 million euros" (\$11 million), the production model should be "less expensive" than the Reaper (up to \$20 million per unit) and will have no American components, avoiding onerous export authoriza-

tions. That characteristic could fit in with President Emmanuel Macron's controversial ambition for European "strategic autonomy" from other poles of world power including the United States. Falling into the Medium Altitude, Long Endurance (MALE) class, the Aarok can carry out surveillance or hit a target to within two meters from 35 kilometers away.

### Europe lags behind

The staff at General Atomics' stand aren't worried to see new competitors on the market. "All sizes of unpiloted aircraft are the future," said the firm's marketing chief Mark Brinkley, in Paris to show off the latest Reaper MQ-9B currently being delivered to Britain. At the Airbus stand, the European manufacturer boasts a mock-up of its Eurodrone, for which it scored a 7.1-billion-euro contract in February. The Berlin-led project launched in 2015



LE BOURGET: Sogitec's drone flight simulator displayed during the International Paris Air Show at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport.

is supposed to provide German, French, Italian and Spanish armed forces with drones comparable to the Reaper. But its first flight is scheduled only in 2026, with actual deliveries two years later - a full 25 years after the American aircraft hit the market. There was better news at the airshow for French manufacturer Safran, which snagged a Greek order for four of its Patroller UAVs, while first deliveries to the French army will arrive this summer.

### Self-detonating drones

France and other European nations are also "quite behind" in developing self-detonating drones, also known as loitering munitions, said French senator Cedric Perrin, who has written several reports on the weapons. "This is a big deal, so industry is getting more and more interested in it," he added. Major defense manufacturer KNDS said Monday that it had been chosen alongside two

other firms to develop a French loitering munitions device comparable to the US-made Switchblade, boasting a range of 80 kilometers. First tests should come "within 18 months", the companies said.

Meanwhile, a Zionist company BlueBird Aero Systems on Wednesday trailed a self-detonating drone it said could land a 2.5-kilogramme explosive within one meter of its target. The ecosystem surrounding UAVs also offers business opportunities, with Sogitec - a branch of aerospace giant Dassault - soon to complete a simulator known as Genius to train pilots on different types of drones. A demonstration allows users to zoom around a map and fly over an imaginary airport with three helicopters parked on the tarmac. Other training scenarios covering infrastructure, desert or residential areas are also on offer. "We can create hand-made environments for the customer," said product chief Stephane Morelli. — AFP

## US approves 'lab chicken' for sale

WASHINGTON: The United States has granted its first ever approvals to two companies to sell chicken grown directly from animal cells, becoming only the second country to allow lab-grown meat to be offered to consumers. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved food safety systems at facilities of Upside Foods and Good Meat, a spokesperson for the agency told AFP Wednesday, with the companies adding the products would be available soon at select restaurants.

Both Upside Foods and Good Meat were cleared on safety grounds by the Food and Drug Administration in November, and the USDA last week reviewed and approved their product labels to ensure they were not misleading. "This approval will fundamentally change how meat makes it to our table," said Uma Valeti, CEO and founder of Upside Foods, in a statement. "It's a giant step forward towards a more sustainable future - one that preserves choice and life." Josh Tetrick, CEO of Good Meat, the cell-cultured food division of Eat Just, added its "cultivated meat" was now "approved to sell to consumers in the world's largest economy." Producing the meat in large, high-quality volumes is expensive.

But, following approval, Upside processed its first order, placed by three-Michelin-star Chef Dominique Crenn's restaurant Bar Crenn in San Francisco. Good Meat, meanwhile, started production of its first batch that will be sold to celebrity chef and philanthropist Jose Andres. Andres will sell the product at a yet-to-be-revealed restaurant in the capital Washington. Several start-ups are aiming to produce the so-called lab-grown meat, which would allow humans to consume animal protein without the associated environmental harms of farming or animal suffering.

The products differ from plant-based substi-



UNKNOWN: This handout picture shows a meal made of cultured chicken for JW Marriott hotel. A US regulatory agency has granted its first ever approvals to two companies to sell chicken grown directly from animal cells, paving the way for lab-grown meat to be sold to consumers. — AFP

tutes such as soy burgers that mimic the texture and flavor of meat but do not contain any animal protein. Eat Just was the first to receive authorization to make artificial meat, in Singapore in 2020. While succeeding in the general lab-meat market has proven complicated, some companies have set their sights on pet food, whose consumers are less picky. Bond Pet Foods, a Colorado start-up, is creating animal protein from a microbial fermentation process to feed dogs.

### Eco-friendly? Perhaps not

Lab-grown meat involves first harvesting cells from a living animal or a fertilized egg, to establish a cell bank that can be kept for decades in deep freeze.

They are then cultivated in steel tanks where they are fed nutrients similar to what animals would eat. After several weeks, the result product is "harvested" from the tank and molded into shapes, such as chicken filet or satay.

While lab-grown meat has been billed as an environmentally friendly alternative, researchers from the University of California, Davis pushed back against this assumption in a study out last month, which hasn't yet been peer reviewed. They found cultivated meat's environmental impact is likely to be "orders of magnitude" higher - at least in the case of beef, based on production methods. This is because of the energy required and greenhouse gasses emitted across all stages of production. — AFP

## Church of England divests from all oil and gas majors

LONDON: The body that manages the Church of England's multi-billion-pound endowment fund on Thursday said it was excluding all oil and gas majors from its investment portfolio. The Church Commissioners for England, which operates the £10.3-billion (\$13.2-billion) fund, excluded 20 companies from its list of financial assets two years ago. Now it said it would bar "all remaining oil and gas majors" and others in the sector unless they met targets set by the 2015 Paris climate accords by the end of this year.

The decision means the Church will divest its stakes in BP, Ecopetrol, Eni, Equinor, ExxonMobil,

Occidental Petroleum, Pemex, Repsol, Sasol, Shell, and Total. "None are aligned with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, as assessed by the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI)," a statement read. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who also chairs the Church Commissioners for England, said Christians had "a duty to protect God's creation".

Welby, a former oil company executive, added: "Energy" companies have a special responsibility to help us achieve the just transition to the low-carbon economy we need. "Some progress has been made, but not nearly enough. The Church will follow not just the science, but our faith — both of which call us to work for climate justice." First Church Estates Commissioner Alan Smith said the decision to divest "was not taken lightly" but energy majors had been too slow to act. "If any of these energy companies come into alignment with our criteria in the future, we would reconsider our position. Indeed, that is something we would hope for," he added. — AFP

## Pakistan to lease part of Karachi port to UAE for \$220m

KARACHI: AD Ports Group of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed an agreement Thursday to take over the running of part of Pakistan's main Karachi docking facility in a deal worth an immediate \$220 million, the company said. The deal will come as a shot in the arm for Pakistan, with the economy on the brink of collapse and the government desperate for big-ticket foreign investment to help service crippling debt.

AD Ports Group has formed a joint venture with another UAE company, Kheel Terminals, to take over berths from Karachi Port Trust (KPT),

the state-owned handling agency. Karachi Port is Pakistan's oldest and busiest, with 33 berths, and the UAE deal will see the joint venture lease four of them for the next 50 years. "The JV will undertake significant investments in infrastructure and superstructure over the next 10 years," an AD Group statement said.

Plans include deepening the berths to allow for bigger ships to dock, extending the quay wall, and increasing the container storage area. As a result, the terminal will be able to handle ships capable of carrying up to 8,500 containers, and capacity will increase from 750,000 to a million containers a year, the statement said. The bulk of development is planned for 2026. The UAE is a major contributor to Pakistan's economy in the form of grants, loans and direct investment, and has previously bailed out a government that for months has been on the brink of defaulting on its debt. — AFP

## Kuwait money supply up 0.3%

KUWAIT: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Thursday that the broad money supply (M2) went up by 0.3 percent last May to settle at KD 39.6 billion (around \$130.6 billion). Local banks' private sector deposits increased by 0.6 percent to settle at KD 36.2 billion (around \$119.4 billion), said the CBK's economic research department in a release to KUNA, including statistical tables.

Private sector deposits in foreign currency dropped by 2.8 percent to reach KD 1.7 billion (around \$5.5 billion), while total local banks claims on the CBK represented by CBK bonds rose by 6.2 percent, settling at KD 3.4 billion (around \$11.2 billion). Total local banks' assets fell by 0.1 percent to record KD 84.9 billion (around \$280 billion), while the net foreign assets decreased by 0.2 percent to KD 10.4 billion (around \$34.3 billion).

Meanwhile, time deposits with the CBK settled, in May, at KD 2.6 billion (around \$8.5 billion), whereas balance of utilized cash credit rose by 0.1 percent to KD 52.2 billion (around \$172.5 billion). Average interest rate on one-year treasury bonds settled at 4.5 percent in November, while financing of Kuwaiti imports went up 75.9 percent to reach KD one billion (around \$1.8 billion), and US Dollar exchange rate against Kuwaiti Dinar rose by 0.1 percent to 306.7 fils. Narrow money supply indicates total volume of money in circulation including notes, coins and operational money deposits, whereas the broad money supply includes time deposits and saving accounts, as well as liquid money. — AFP



## Business

# IMF, World Bank under pressure to boost climate change financing

## Tackling the interlinked challenges of poverty and climate change

WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank officials are joining dozens of economic leaders for a two-day summit in Paris, aiming to tackle the interlinked challenges of poverty alleviation and climate change. The meetings, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, have been billed as an opportunity to refocus the global financial architecture to better address the vast scale of financing needed to meet the world's climate targets by the end of the decade. The summit has also brought focus on the IMF and World Bank's own climate change policies, amid calls for multilateral development banks (MDBs) to do more to help developing economies access funds to both adapt to climate change and deal with its consequences.

### Insufficient funds

Both the IMF and World Bank have introduced policies in recent years to help countries deal with the climate transition. Last year, the IMF launched

its Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST), with just over \$40 billion in funds at its disposal, to offer longer-term loans to finance projects related to these issues. Bangladesh, Barbados, Costa Rica and Rwanda are the first countries to benefit. And at the World Bank, former president David Malpass lauded moves under his watch to double climate financing to \$32 billion and to put in place a global warming action plan for the period of 2021 to 2025.

His successor, Ajay Banga, used his inaugural address to call on the bank to "pursue both climate adaptation and mitigation," among other issues. "Change is appropriate for the World Bank," Banga said. "It isn't a symptom of failure or drift or irrelevance, it is a symptom of opportunity, life, and importance." But both institutions admit that their financing capacities are currently insufficient to meet the needs of developing economies, which the IMF estimates will be well over a trillion dollars per year by 2025.

### Institutional reforms

The United States, European Union and others have been pushing a series of reforms to the IMF and World Bank since late last year. These include proposals to reform the governance of the MDBs to ensure a greater role for major emerging markets and developing economies, and to expanding their missions to integrate climate change financing.

The goal is to make progress on these reforms by the next annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank, which take place in October in Morocco. The World Bank's primary objective is to promote long-term economic development and poverty reduction, while the IMF looks to promote global macroeconomic and financial stability by providing financial and technical assistance and policy advice.

Some developing countries have voiced concerns that these reforms could lead MDBs to prioritize climate change over poverty alleviation.

The most significant breakthrough so far came at the IMF and World Bank spring meetings, when agreement was reached to boost the World Bank's lending capacity by up to \$5 billion per year for 10 years. However, this was achieved primarily by increasing the bank's leverage, and not through the provision of additional funding from World Bank member countries.

### More to do

Even if the reform process is successful, the IMF and World Bank's leaders have stressed that international financial institutions cannot by themselves meet the enormous needs of the most vulnerable countries. Banga centered his campaign for the World Bank presidency on greater private sector involvement in financing the climate transition.

"There is not enough money without the private sector," the former Mastercard chief executive told reporters in March, adding that the

World Bank should set up a system that could help share risk or mobilize private funds to achieve its goals. Heading into the summit, there were hopes that progress could be made on a stalled two-year-old pledge by wealthier countries to recycle \$100 billion in IMF special drawing rights (SDRs) from rich countries to vulnerable economies.

SDRs are foreign exchange reserve assets awarded to countries based on how much they contribute to the IMF. The stalled plan, which some European countries resisted, was for wealthier countries to lend these foreign exchange reserve assets to the IMF, which could in turn lend them to developing economies. Ahead of the summit, France and Japan announced that they would redeploy 30 percent of their SDRs for this purpose. Media reports suggest that the Paris summit could yield a breakthrough in pledges from other countries, which would help hit the \$100 billion target. — AFP

## In a policy U-turn, Turkey hikes rate

ISTANBUL: Turkey on Thursday pivoted away from years of unconventional economics promoted by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as the central bank nearly doubled its key interest rate to fight inflation and steady the troubled lira. The bank hiked the rate to 15 percent from 8.5 percent in its first meeting since Erdogan filled his government with investor-backed faces after winning tight May polls. "Monetary tightening will be further strengthened as much as needed in a timely and gradual manner until a significant improvement in the inflation outlook is achieved," the central bank said.

The bank also promised to "simplify and improve" policies that past Erdogan governments

used to try and weather Turkey's worst economic crisis since the 1990s. The bank's policy-setting committee "will continue to take its decisions in a predictable, data-driven and transparent framework," it said in a statement. Fitch Ratings said it expected the policy rate to reach 25 percent by the end of the year.

### Economic overhaul

Erdogan still defends his markets-defying idea that high interest rates contribute to — rather than cure — rising consumer prices that have been Turkey's bane for the past five years. The Turkish leader pushed the central bank to start slashing interest rates two years ago as part of a "new economic model" that focuses on job creation and economic growth. The policy badly backfired. The annual inflation rate reached 85 percent late last year and the central bank burned through most of its reserves trying to prop up the lira — down 90 percent against the dollar over 10 years — from even bigger falls.

Erdogan was forced into his first election runoff

and then orchestrated one of his trademark policy reversals after extending his two-decade rule until 2028. He appointed respected economist Mehmet Simsek as finance minister and former Goldman Sachs director Hafize Gaye Erkan as the head of the nominally independent central bank. Turkish media said Simsek agreed to join the government only after winning assurances that he would be free to steady the ship as he saw fit. Erdogan said last week that he "accepted" that his new team would pursue policies that contradicted his own firmly held beliefs.

### Borrowed time

Simsek's presence has already made an impact. The lira has lost an additional 15 percent against the dollar since the May 28 election runoff — a sign that the central bank is slowly unwinding its costly currency defense. Simsek and newly appointed vice president Cevdet Yilmaz — a technocrat also admired by investors — jetted to petrodollar-rich Abu Dhabi on Thursday to drum up new investments and loans. But investors who initially cheered Erdogan's

new appointments now worry about how long the Turkish leader's patience with his new team will last.

Many point to the grim experience of Naci Agbal — a market-friendly central banker whom Erdogan fired four months into his attempts to raise rates in late 2020 and early 2021. Some analysts encourage the new team to act quickly and then brace for the possible political fallout. Others suggest that Turkey's economic problems are too complex to address at the same time. One of Turkey's most costly programs involves a bank deposit protection scheme that Erdogan rolled out in late 2021.

It commits the government to cover any losses lira deposits incur from the currency's depreciation against the dollar. That means that a quick return to a free-floating exchange rate could put an even bigger burden on the strained budget. Many expect Simsek to gradually phase out the scheme. Erdogan said Wednesday that he was putting his trust in his new appointments. "We have placed very heavy responsibilities on our economy management. We have established a strong, harmonious and competent team," he said. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY UPDATE

WEEK ENDED ON 22 JUNE 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	937	941	947	934	13	16,321,782	4	0.43%	-8.34%	940	958	14.8	1.90	3.5%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	266	263	267	261	6	29,140,890	-1	-0.38%	-12.05%	261	270	13.8	1.26	3.6%	1.33
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	172	170	174	169	5	18,331,426	-2	-1.16%	-5.10%	169	173	20.8	0.57	2.2%	1.18
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	197	211	211	197	14	15,100,737	14	7.11%	1.16%	202	212	19.1	0.77	3.7%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	740	749	750	740	10	43,807,968	9	1.22%	0.11%	744	762	22.1	1.90	1.8%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	638	638	643	635	8	10,688,180	5	0.79%	-15.25%	618	642	46.7	2.86	0.9%	1.22
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	127	128	130	126	4	6,168,265	3	2.40%	-15.79%	125	129	-	0.60	3.9%	1.79
204	National Investments	Financial Services	207	205	212	204	8	12,885,841	0	0.00%	-13.50%	203	214	-	0.85	13.7%	1.94
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	131	134	136	130	6	44,088,613	4	3.08%	19.64%	132	137	23.8	0.81	0.0%	0.96
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	111	108	113	106	7	29,349,890	-2	-1.82%	-4.21%	106	110	10.4	0.79	3.6%	1.13
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	151	150	157	150	7	56,981,656	1	0.67%	12.78%	146	151	10.5	1.14	4.9%	1.65
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	63.8	65.4	65.8	63.6	2.2	8,926,990	2.5	3.97%	-12.68%	63.4	65.5	-	0.40	14.0%	1.25
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	117	116	120	116	4	24,522,097	-1	-0.85%	10.63%	115	119	11.1	0.83	2.5%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	840	836	858	830	28	3,410,734	-7	-0.83%	4.50%	825	856	17.6	1.92	1.6%	1.06
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	103	105	105	102.0	3.0	15,052,081	3	2.94%	9.35%	102	105	16.9	0.64	2.8%	0.58
501	National Industries	Financial Services	205	204	208	203	5	6,190,744	1	0.49%	-1.29%	200	206	-	0.94	2.3%	1.55
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,140	1,148	1,160	1,135	25	333,883	8	0.70%	-5.51%	1,090	1,149	12.3	1.06	5.3%	1.02
506	HEISCO	Industrials	644	668	669	641	28	1,632,816	22	3.41%	8.97%	651	668	23.0	1.66	3.0%	1.02
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	808	755	817	750	67	3,903,023	-52	-6.44%	-5.63%	750	769	11.3	1.45	7.9%	0.95
603	Agility	Industrials	636	628	648	623	25	20,911,575	-10	-1.57%	-12.78%	618	656	22.7	0.88	0.0%	1.53
605	Zain	Telecommunications	521	518	522	514	8	12,271,454	-2	-0.38%	-7.99%	512	528	11.1	1.75	6.7%	0.69
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,510	3,718	3,725	3,460	265	1,100,630	218	6.23%	10.91%	3,694	3,804	10.1	3.25	10.3%	0.63
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	205	200	206	197	9	2,453,510	-4	-1.96%	-1.48%	198	206	-	0.86	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,857	1,860	1,920	1,843	77	797,416	5	0.27%	-2.11%	1,860	1,910	21.9	14.87	4.3%	1.39
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	87.4	87.7	90.9	86.9	4	77,049,089	0.7	0.80%	15.39%	86.3	90	10.1	1.01	5.6%	1.37
821	Warba Bank	Banking	216	211	218	210	8	22,284,062	-5	-2.31%	-7.52%	207	212	31.9	1.17	1.4%	1.14
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	481	525	540	481	59	8,657,950	45	9.38%	33.59%	519	541	-	1.51	2.3%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	408	429	454	408	46	12,964,049	9	2.14%	15.95%	420	445	39.9	1.70	3.5%	0.74
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	186	199	202	186	16	8,660,119	12	6.42%	5.85%	195	201	16.2	1.99	8.6%	0.46
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,810	1,860	1,869	1,807	62	745,899	56	3.10%	-9.36%	1,855	1,900	21.7	7.03	4.6%	0.97
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,005	1,000	1,029	993	36	1,962,267	-20	-1.96%	24.22%	995	1,010	12.6	3.87	5.8%	0.32

\*As of end of week closing

## Business

# BoE hikes rate half-point as high inflation persists

## UK inflation rate 'the highest among G7 rich nations'

**LONDON:** The Bank of England Thursday lifted its key interest rate by a half-point to five percent to tackle stubbornly high UK inflation despite such a move worsening a cost-of-living crisis. The higher-than-expected hike to a 15-year high was the 13th increase in a row. "There had been significant upside news in recent data that indicated more persistence in the inflation process," the Bank of England (BoE) said minutes from a regular policy meeting. The decision came one day after data showed UK annual inflation remained at 8.7 percent in May, defying expectations of a slowdown. The UK inflation rate is the highest among G7 rich nations. Prior to the data, markets had expected a smaller quarter-point increase.

### Global hikes

The half-point lift was in stark contrast to the Federal Reserve, which last week pressed pause on US rate hikes after a sharp easing in the country's inflation. The European Central Bank last week raised its borrowing costs by a quarter point. The Swiss and Norwegian central banks hiked their rates on Thursday. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made slashing the pace of price rises a priority for his Conservative government as it heads into a general election next year. Traders anticipate UK interest rates will hit six percent by the end of the year, and could push Britain into recession according to analysts. Sunak wants inflation reduced to five percent by the end of the year, or about half the level at the start of 2023.

The BoE began lifting its key interest rate from a record low of 0.1 percent at the end of 2021, with inflation starting to creep up as economies slowly emerged from COVID lockdowns. UK inflation went

on to strike a 41-year peak at 11.1 percent in October on rampant energy bills, after major oil and gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022. Core inflation, which strips out food and energy costs, spiked in May to 7.1 percent - the highest in more than three decades.

Following the latest BoE decision, finance minister Jeremy Hunt defended the need for higher rates even if they compounded the cost-of-living crunch. "Core inflation is higher in 14 EU countries and interest rates are rising around the world, but the lesson from other countries is that if you stick to your guns, you bring inflation down," said the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Two of the bank's nine policymakers voted Thursday for no change, arguing that "the energy price shock and other global cost-push shocks" such as surging food prices would continue to reverse this year.

Governor Andrew Bailey voted to hike. "Bank of England policymakers are feeling the heat... with core inflation increasingly hot and sticky, which is why they've opted to super-size the rate hike," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown. "Investors are trying to assess whether today's big bazooka now, might be enough to stem further rate hikes or whether more will still be necessary."

### Housing turmoil

Commercial lenders tend to match the central bank's rate moves on their home loans. As a result, UK mortgage rates and rents are surging, biting deep into disposable incomes while pay rises fail to keep pace with inflation. The BoE Thursday said that the "full impact" of its 13 rate rises "would not be felt for some time" in the mortgage market. Policymakers



**LONDON:** Shoppers enter a general store in the Soho area of London. The Bank of England on Thursday lifted its key interest rate by a half-point to five percent to tackle stubbornly high UK inflation despite such a move worsening a cost-of-living crisis. — AFP

"also recognized that it had become more important to consider developments in the rental market".

The BoE hikes have also sent the UK government's long-term borrowing costs soaring. However, those who can afford to save benefit from

increased fixed returns on investments. The central bank is tasked by the government to keep UK annual inflation close to a target of two percent. Thursday's move brings its rate to the highest level since the 2008 financial crisis. — AFP

## Europe airlines hit by 'greenwashing' complaint

**PARIS:** European airlines have been hit by a consumer complaint filed with the EU's executive arm accusing the 17 companies of greenwashing, the practice of making misleading climate-related claims. The European Consumer Organization, or BEUC, said Thursday the claims made by the airlines breach EU rules on un-

fair commercial practices. The BEUC called for a Europe-wide investigation and for airlines to "stop making claims that give consumers the impression that flying is sustainable".

"We urge authorities to take the matter into their hands and crack down on this greenwashing practice seriously misleading consumers," BEUC deputy director general Ursula Pachl said in a statement. "Airlines must stop giving consumers the false impression that they are choosing a sustainable transport mode," Pachl said. Greenwashing is when companies use

deceptive claims to convince the public that its products or operations are environmentally friendly.

The complaint targets Air Baltic, Air Dolomiti, Air France, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Eurowings, Finnair, KLM, Lufthansa, Norwegian, Ryanair, SAS, SWISS, TAP, Volotea, Vueling and Wizz Air. The BEUC said airlines are misleading consumers by charging them more to contribute to the development of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), which are "not market-ready" and will only represent a minor share of a plane's fuel mix once they finally

become widely available.

The group also denounced claims that paying extra credits can "offset" or "compensate" for a flight's CO2 emissions. An Air France-KLM spokesman said the Franco-Dutch group was "paying increased attention to the precision of these messages" and that it was the world's biggest buyer of sustainable aviation fuels last year. Germany's Lufthansa said it plans to slash its net emissions by half by 2030 compared to 2019 levels and has a "constant dialogue" with customers. — AFP



**BRUSSELS:** EU commissioner for internal market Thierry Breton speaks during a press conference at the EU headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

## EU 'enforcer' visits Twitter, Meta as new rules loom

**SAN FRANCISCO:** The EU commissioner in charge of enforcing Europe's new landmark rules on online content is heading to San Francisco on Thursday to ensure that the big platforms are ready. The two-day visit by Thierry Breton comes just weeks before the European Union's Digital Service Act (DSA) comes into full force for the world's biggest platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, both owned by Meta, as well as TikTok and Twitter. Breton will meet with Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter owner Elon Musk, who took over the highly influential platform late last year.

All eyes are on Musk, who since taking ownership of Twitter has, sometimes abruptly, modified many rules about what language is allowed on the site, even if it is found offensive or delivers hate and misinformation - in direct opposition to the EU's new rules. Breton also plans to meet in California with Sam Altman, the chief executive of OpenAI, the tech company behind ChatGPT as well the boss of AI chipmaker Nvidia.

EU lawmakers are in final negotiations to complete the AI Act, another proposed European law with the potential for imposing huge influence on US big tech companies. "I am the enforcer. I represent the law, which is the will of the state and the people," Breton said to Politico last month when announcing the trip. In an effort to reassure the Europeans, Musk has accepted that Twitter undergoes a DSA "stress test" to see if his platform will reach the EU's standards, though the results will not be public. On a visit to Paris last week, Musk said he had every intention of meeting the demands of the DSA. But with Twitter's payroll cut to the bone and content moderation teams decimated, observers doubt whether Musk is in a position to stand by his commitment.

### 'Easy target'

The DSA is one of the most ambitious legislations on controlling online content since the advent of social media, putting major obligations on how the world's biggest platforms deal with the free flow of speech. Like the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, the DSA is expected to become a global benchmark as governments worldwide struggle to find ways to rein in the excesses of social media.

To meet the new rules, Twitter, Meta, TikTok and other platforms will have to invest heavily on building compliance teams just at a time when big tech companies have been firing staff, including their content moderation workforce. Under the DSA, 19 platforms have been designated as "Very Large Online Platforms," which will be subject to specially designated rules beginning on August 25, when the full force of the regulation will take effect. — AFP



## NBK 'the Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility in Middle East'

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was named "Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility in the Middle East" by Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2023. This award was in recognition of NBK's exceptional contributions to community service, advancement of financial literacy, and dedication to empowering youth and women. NBK's recognition resulted from meeting several criteria, encompassing its dedication to serving the community, advancement of financial education, and empowerment initiatives for youth and women. The evaluation also considered NBK's strategic programs, influential partnerships, and contributions to education, culture, women's empowerment, and society's overall well-being.

Furthermore, NBK's emphasis on fostering an inclusive work environment, nurturing employee growth and development, and incorporating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices as a fundamental component of its ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) frame-

## Switzerland central bank hikes rate in inflation fight

**ZURICH:** The Swiss central bank hiked its interest rate by a quarter point on Thursday, saying inflationary pressure had increased again over the medium term. "The Swiss National Bank is tightening its monetary policy further and is raising the SNB policy rate by 0.25 percentage points to 1.75 percent," the cen-

tral bank said in a statement.

"In doing so, it is countering inflationary pressure, which has increased again over the medium term. "It cannot be ruled out that additional rises in the SNB policy rate will be necessary to ensure price stability over the medium term." The SNB said inflation had declined significantly in recent months, and stood at 2.2 percent in May. It attributed the decrease to lower inflation on imported goods, notably lower prices for oil products and natural gas.

The SNB put its new forecast

for average annual inflation at 2.2 percent for 2023 and 2024, and 2.1 percent for 2025. "The lower oil and gas prices and the stronger Swiss franc are having a dampening effect over the short term," the SNB said. From 2024 onwards, the new forecast is higher than the one issued in March, despite Thursday's policy rate increase, due to "ongoing second-round effects, higher electricity prices and rents, and more persistent inflationary pressure from abroad", the bank said. "Without today's policy rate increase, the inflation forecast

would be even higher over the medium term."

The SNB said it was willing to be active in the foreign exchange market, with the focus in the current environment on selling foreign currency. Analysis firm Capital Economics said the rate hike was in line with market expectations, but the upward revisions to the inflation forecast for the next two years "strongly suggest that there will be at least one more hike in this cycle", possibly in September. "It is pretty clear that policymakers expect to raise rates further," it said. — AFP



Lifestyle

The iconic Glastonbury Festival opened its doors on Wednesday, with a torrential downpour threatening to turn the famous site into a mudbath for the 200,000 music fans set to descend on a farm in southwest England to see acts including Arctic Monkeys, Guns N' Roses and Elton John. While able to draw the biggest performers from every genre and generation, the long-running annual festival is equally known for hosting thousands of small acts and for the leftfield events across the huge Worthy Farm site, and for the mud.



Glastonbury founder Michael Eavis travels in a Land Rover as festivalgoers arrive.

Ancient local legends add a sense of mystique, with the first day coinciding with the Summer Solstice, when thousands descend on nearby Glastonbury Tor and Stonehenge to greet the sunrise on the longest day of the year. Early birds arrived through Tuesday night, dragging tents, rucksacks and booze as they waited for the gates to open. They quickly suffered a heavy dose of Glastonbury's notoriously fickle weather, but the forecast for the next five days is more promising.

The main acts will start performing on Friday, with UK indie giants Arctic Monkeys headlining that evening on the main Pyramid Stage. The coveted Saturday night headline slot this year belongs to veteran US rockers Guns N' Roses.

'Mother of all send-offs'

After Paul McCartney closed out last year's show, the festival will again roll back the years with Elton John headlining on Sunday. The 76-year-old singer-songwriter said he "couldn't be more excited" to make his debut at Britain's best-known festival as he winds down a glittering live career. John last month



A general view on the first day of the Glastonbury festival in the village of Pilton in Somerset, southwest England, on June 21, 2023. - AFP photos

played his final gigs in the United States as part of his "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" world tour, which is due to end in Stockholm on July 8.

"This will be the final UK show of Elton's last ever tour, so we will be closing the festival and marking this huge moment in both of our histories with the mother of all send-offs," said organizer Emily Eavis, whose father Michael started the British event in the 1970s. More than 100,000 standard tickets for this year's festival sold out in just over an hour, despite the price rising to £335 (\$427) this year.

Other headliners on the Pyramid

Stage include singer Lizzo, rapper Lil Nas X, post-punk icon Blondie and "rickroller" Rick Astley, highlighting the festival's eclectic and light-hearted ethos. Other big-name performers on the bill are Lana Del Rey, Queens of the Stone Age and Kelis. Dairy farmer Eavis first organized the festival in southwest England in 1970, the day after Jimi Hendrix died, and fans who came to see acts including Marc Bolan and Al Stewart paid £1 each for entry and received free milk from the farm. The festival was held intermittently in the 1970s and it wasn't until the 1990s that it really began to acquire its current status.

Controversy

Glastonbury was due to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2020, but those plans were put on hold by the COVID pandemic. A virtual event was held two years ago, and it finally returned in person last year. Despite being firmly in middle age, the festival still has huge cultural power and moments of controversy. A successful headline spot can catapult bands to superstardom.

Legendary performances from Radiohead in 1997, Coldplay in 2002 and Muse in 2004 helped elevate them to their current heights. There was controversy in 2008 when rapper Jay-Z was

given a headline slot, but doubts were dispelled after he delivered one of the most memorable sets ever. The festival has had its darker moments, with 235 people arrested in 1990 after travelers started fighting with police.

Integral to the festival's development was the late Arabella Churchill, granddaughter of Winston Churchill, who set up and then ran the Theatre and Circus fields at the event. As a result, the festival developed a diverse reputation and the 900-acre site now encompasses various thematic areas. - AFP



Emily Eavis officially opens the gate to welcome festivalgoers.



A festivalgoer attends the first day of the Glastonbury festival.



Festivalgoers arrive to attend the Glastonbury festival.

'Don't steal our voices': Dubbing artists confront AI threat

Voice actors around the globe are mobilizing against the unregulated use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate and clone human voices that they fear poses a threat to their livelihoods. "We're fighting a very big monster," said Mario Filio, a Mexican artist who has done voiceovers for Hollywood star Will Smith, the Obi-Wan Kenobi character in Star Wars and the party-loving lemur King Julien in the animated movie "Madagascar".

Campaigning under the slogan "Don't steal our voices", more than 20 voice acting guilds, associations and unions from Europe, the United States and Latin America have created the United Voice Artists coalition. It represents the faceless voiceover artists and narrators of commercials, movies, audiobooks and video games who fear that their voices will be replaced by machines, or even cloned by artificial intelligence without their consent.

"The indiscriminating and unregulated use of artificial intelligence is a risk that could lead to the extinction of an artistic heritage of creativity and wonder, an asset that machines cannot generate," according to the group, which says its members include the US National Association of Voice Actors (NAVA) and Latin America's Organization of United Voices.

"Our voices are our livelihood," NAVA vice president Carin Gilfry said in a statement last month. "And if we don't have control over how those voices are used, we can't make a living," she added. Voice artists were already competing with text-to-speech technology that turns written words into synthetic voice. Now artificial intelligence has brought a new threat.



Mexican announcer Mario Filio works at a recording studio in Mexico City on April 26, 2023. - AFP photos

Thanks to machine learning, software can compare a voice sample with millions of existing ones, identifying patterns that generate a clone. "It's fed by voices that we've been providing for years," said Dessiree Hernandez, president of the Mexican Association of Commercial Announcers. "We're talking about the right to use your voice without your consent," she added.

'Adapt or disappear'

Platforms offer human sounding text-to-speech services for a fraction of what

professionals would charge. One, revoicer.com, says that it does not intend to replace human voiceovers, but to offer a quicker and cheaper alternative. Although they continued to be hired, voice actors suspect that companies are using their voices to build up their archives. The artists are seeking tools to track their voices in the face of sophisticated piracy.

They want laws to prevent recordings of their voices being used to develop AI without their consent, and also support setting quotas for human voiceovers, said Colombian voice artist Daniel Soler de la Prada. In the future, audiences could hear a famous actor's voice in several languages but with the intonation of a dubbing artist, Filio said. While that could generate employment and benefits for the public, voice artists "need to charge what's fair", he added.

Mexican voice artist Maclovia Gonzalez said that she would only sign a contract with an AI company if it provided enough information about how the content would be used. "I want to be part of this revolution, but not at any price," she said. Art Dubbing, a company that has received several requests from clients to use synthetic voices, faces a dilemma: "Adapt or disappear," said its Mexican founder, Anuar Lopez de la Pena. Filio for his part said that he stopped recording for many clients for fear of hurting his colleagues' livelihoods. But he is skeptical that artificial intelligence will replace voice actors completely because the machines have "no soul," he added. - AFP



Colombian speaker Daniel Soler de la Prada speaks during a recording session at a studio in Bogota on May 18, 2023.



Mexican female announcer Dessiree Hernandez speaks during a testing session at a recording studio in Mexico City.



A student performs a test in a recording studio at the "Sige" dubbing and locution school in Mexico City on May 6, 2023.

New generation of Moroccan filmmakers shines at Cannes

A new, young generation of Moroccan filmmakers last month stepped into the limelight to make its debut at France's Cannes Film Festival - snatching three prestigious awards. "The Moroccan films screened at Cannes represent some of the best in the history of cinema in Morocco," said film critic Bilal Marmid, who covered the two-week festival on the French Riviera. Director Asmae El Moudir, 32, won the coveted prize for directing in the Un Certain Regard section for her film "Kadib Abyad" ("The Mother of All Lies").

The documentary explores her family's unspoken past during the nation's so-called Years of Lead, a period from the 1960s to the 1980s characterized by the repression of political dissidents under King Hassan II. Lacking archival footage from the time, the filmmaker built a miniature set that recreated her childhood neighborhood in Casablanca with figurines to narrate her family's story against the backdrop of the bloody suppression of the city's "bread riots" in June 1981. "Making this film took me 10 years and allowed me to reconcile with this past, even if it was violent," Moudir, whose family members were featured in the film, told AFP.

'A childhood dream'

"Being at Cannes is a childhood dream come true. Being selected is wonderful, but winning a prize is even more so," she said. Director Kamal Lazraq, 38, also used Casablanca as the setting for his first feature film "Les Meutes" ("Hounds"), which won the jury prize in the Un Certain Regard section. The film takes viewers on a hellish night in the city's suburbs as a father and son try to make a corpse disappear after a kidnapping goes wrong.

Lazraq describes it as a "feverish road movie traversing Casablanca" featuring two non-professional actors, Ayoub Elaid and Abdellatif Masstouri. "I

like to start on a blank page and build the film with my actors because they bring a lot from their life and experiences," Lazraq told AFP after returning from the festival. "I try to leave them a certain amount of freedom to create something authentic and intense." After the screening, "we had the impression that the film had been understood as it should be ... It's great comic relief", added the director, noting that it had been a "long and difficult" shoot. "The films are all very, very different... I hope



Moroccan film director Kamal Lazraq walks in a cinema in Casablanca. - AFP

it will encourage young people to embark on this adventure," he added.

His hope resonates with Zineb Wakrim, a 22-year-old director who was awarded third place in the student film award La Cinef for her short film "Ayyur" ("Moon" in Amazigh, Morocco's Berber language). She paints a portrait of two teenagers with a rare genetic disease whose sufferers, known as "moon children", are hyper-sensitive to sunlight. Showing her film at Cannes was "a great victory for youth", said the graduate of The Superior School of Visual Arts of Marrakech (ESAF). - AFP

## Lifestyle

## Fans hail 'dark' storyline as new Final Fantasy title released

The eagerly awaited new game in the best-selling Final Fantasy franchise came out on Thursday, with fans hailing its high-spec action graphics and grown-up storyline. "Final Fantasy XVI", the latest title in the long-running Japanese series, was released on the PlayStation 5 and is expected to boost sales of the Sony console, analysts said. Producer Naoki Yoshida has cited US television megahit "Game of Thrones" as inspiration for the game, an expansive tale of magical monsters controlled by warring factions.

Violent fights and sex scenes feature alongside classic franchise tropes including missions to find crystals and cute running birds ridden by the characters. In Tokyo, 37-year-old Naoto Nishimori, who stopped to pick up a copy on his way to work, said he has played every game in the influential role-playing series. He was happy when he heard that Yoshida — renowned for reviving the popular online title Final Fantasy XIV — had been picked to produce the new game.

"I saw that and my hopes for this really went up. I have been really looking forward to this one," he told AFP, also praising its state-of-the-art graph-



A man watches a video trailer for Final Fantasy XVI as it went on sale at an electronics store in central Tokyo on June 22, 2023.

ics. Yuan, a 21-year-old student who declined to give his surname, said he was attracted by the game's storyline, which has a "darkness" that makes it "uniquely appealing". Final Fantasy is one of the world's top-selling game franchises, with more than 173 million copies sold globally according to publisher Square Enix.

It debuted on the original Nintendo console in 1987 but developers switched to the rival PlayStation a

decade later, bringing the franchise a huge new following. The series is famous for reinventing itself with each self-contained game, with 2D monster battles evolving over the decades into real-time combat gameplay.

## 'Pseudo-medieval'

Fans in other countries also rushed to download the title or purchase it at stores. In Seoul, 23-year-old Jo Young-min said the game should be

a success because "Japanese culture is quite popular and also because Final Fantasy already has a hardcore fan base". Daniel Ahmad, director of research at gaming industry analysis firm Niko Partners, told AFP that Thursday's release would be a boon for Sony. The company's PlayStation 5 hit shelves in November 2020 but was initially hard to get hold of because of supply chain issues, in part due to China's COVID lockdowns.

"We expect the combination of increased supply for the PS5, positive feedback for the Final Fantasy XVI demo, and the release of the first major third-party exclusive title for the console to drive PS5 sales growth over the next month," Ahmad said. The Metacritic website, which collates reviews from critics, gave it a score of 88 percent, lower than the 96 percent enjoyed by "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom", the last blockbuster game release.

Specialist site Eurogamer gave it three stars out of five, praising the "smart combat system" but criticizing the "ponderous pseudo-medieval soap opera, with some of the grandest bosses and dullest sidequests in FF history". Unlike the older titles, which usually feature a



A shop attendant holds a poster for Final Fantasy XVI, the latest version of the video game franchise Final Fantasy, developed and published by Square Enix, at a PlayStation pop up store in Seoul on June 22, 2023. — AFP

roster of characters who gain power and skills as the story unfolds, Final Fantasy XVI has one protagonist — called Clive. The character's voice actor, Ben Starr, told the Radio Times that he had "loved" the reaction to the name. "To a lot of people, especially British people, the name Clive doesn't necessarily feel very heroic," he said. — AFP

## Pharrell breaks down barriers between fashion and music

Paris became a playground for Pharrell Williams and his celeb friends at his debut show for Louis Vuitton, collapsing the distance between fashion, music and money-spinning publicity. Williams is the first musician to be put in charge of designing clothes for a major luxury brand with an eye-popping €20 billion (\$22 billion) in revenue last year. He has experience working with fashion houses in the past, but the bosses at Louis Vuitton were clearly also interested in the guestlist he could put together. And he did not disappoint on Tuesday night with the likes of Beyonce, Rihanna, LeBron James, Lewis Hamilton and many more in the front row.

"We try to speak to different clients," Louis Vuitton boss Pietro Beccari told AFP just before it started. "With the media echoes from tonight, people that have never heard of Vuitton... maybe they'll push the door of one of those stores and come and see." Big extravaganza shows are nothing new — brands have spent millions on lavish set designs and celebrity guests going back to the 1990s and beyond.



Pharrell Williams

But Williams took it up a notch, composing a new uptempo song, "JOY (Un-speakable)" performed by full gospel choir, and ending the night with a concert by Jay-Z at which he also sang, all in the highly Instagrammable environs of the Pont Neuf over the River Seine. "It's a pretty monumental moment. You can rarely predict big moments in fashion but when you have the combination of cultural force like Pharrell and cultural brand like Louis Vuitton you know something interesting is going to happen," Imran Amed, founder of the Business of Fashion news site, told AFP.

## 'A new wind'

Trying to find out what people actually thought of the clothes is tricky. Fashion sites, heavily dependent on advertising from the brands, rarely question design choices anymore. But Williams largely played it safe, leaning heavily on LV's classic Damier check pattern, though putting it in some bold new primary colors. There were a lot of pixelated looks and some camouflage vibes that Williams has nicknamed "damoilage".

"By revisiting the accessories and leather goods that have made LV so successful, Pharrell Williams demonstrates that he understands the challenge and the codes of this iconic house," Pierre Alexandre M'Pele, editor of GQ France, told AFP. Some things felt fresh. While gender mixing has become common in fashion, it remains rare in the big labels which have separate artistic directors for menswear and womenswear. "By parading women for his first collection, Pharrell Williams is blowing a new wind at Louis Vuitton where until then, male and female models were separated," said M'Pele. — AFP



A garment which belonged to a crewmember of the German destroyer Admiral Graf Spee.

## Titanic passenger's letter to be auctioned in Uruguay

A letter written by a Uruguayan passenger on the Titanic will go on auction in Montevideo next week with a starting price of \$12,000, an auction house has announced. The Titanic continues to inspire intrigue to this day, with a frantic search now under way for a tourist submersible that went missing Sunday on its way to see the wreck nearly four kilometers below the surface of the North Atlantic.

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 wreck was found in 1985. The letter to be auctioned on June 30, was written by 71-year-old businessman Ramon Artagaveytia Gomez (1840-1912) to his brother Adolfo on two pages, one of them covered in writing on both sides.

It was sent from Queenstown, Ireland, on the transatlantic cruise ship's last mainland mail stop just four days



This combination of pictures shows a three-page handwritten letter written by Ramon Artagaveytia, one of the three Uruguayan passengers travelling on the RMS Titanic, to his brother Adolfo on April 11, 1912. — AFP photos

before the sinking, according to the Zorilla auction house. In the moisture-stained missive, Artagaveytia Gomez marvels at his opulent first class surroundings, writing: "everything is

The Graf Spee's captain, Hans Langsdorff, scuttled the battleship — one of the Third Reich's largest — on Dec 17, 1939, following the Battle of the River Plate, off the coast of Montevideo. The



A full-dress jacket which belong to machinist corporal Gottfried Link, crewmember of the Nazi German destroyer Admiral Graf Spee.

new and rich." The letter included a handwritten note added by the recipient: "The last letter that my dear brother Ramon wrote."

The letter should sell for between \$15,000 and \$25,000, according to Zorilla. It will be sold with other historic items that include artifacts from another vessel sunk in the Atlantic: The Nazi battleship Admiral Graf Spee.



Carl Zeiss Jena binoculars belonging to the German destroyer Admiral Graf Spee.

Nazi warship was used to attack commercial vessels in the Atlantic until it was intercepted by two British cruisers and one from the New Zealand navy. The auction items include a pair of battleship binoculars and a crewmember's dress jacket. — AFP

## Lost Rembrandt portraits to be sold after 200 years

As family heirlooms go, it doesn't get much better than a pair of Rembrandt portraits that the world had forgotten about for 200 years. A British family "rather casually enjoyed" the oil paintings by the 17th century Dutch master until an expert from Christie's auction house spotted them. Now the last pair of Rembrandt portraits to remain in private hands are set to fetch between £5 million and £8 million when they go under the hammer at Christie's in London next month.

"I first encountered these pictures a few years ago on a routine valuation and was stopped in my tracks," Henry Pettifer, International Deputy Chairman of Old Master Paintings at Christie's, told AFP as the paintings went on display in Amsterdam. "I was really staggered to discover that the pictures had never really been researched and never been addressed in any of the literature on Rembrandt over the course of 200 years."

The 20-cm-high oval portraits, believed to date from 1635, depict an elderly plumber named Jan Willemsz van der Pluym and his wife Jaapgen Carels. The couple, painted in an unusually intimate style for Rembrandt, were friends of the artist's family and hailed from his hometown of Leiden in the Netherlands.



Gallery assistants hold two paintings attributed to Dutch artist Rembrandt ahead of their presentation at Christie's auction house in Amsterdam on June 21, 2023. — AFP

## 'Casually enjoying'

An ancestor of the current owners bought the paintings at auction at Christie's in 1824, where they were listed as Rembrandts, and they have remained in the same collection ever since. "They've been sitting quietly and enjoyed by the owner's family over the course of two centuries... rather casually enjoying them very much," said Pettifer.

After spotting them, "forensic" work began on verifying that they were genuine. "Essentially the pictures were unknown, initially to be treated with

a great deal of caution, but obviously needed to be examined and researched in great detail," he said. The auction house enlisted help from art experts, including from Amsterdam's famed Rijksmuseum. "We were fortunate enough that they had their scientific team really very carefully look into them for nearly two years," Christie's expert Manja Rottink told AFP.

Experts looked at the line of ownership of the paintings, which are mentioned in an inventory of the oldest daughter of the portrait subjects, said Rottink, the senior international

specialist of old master paintings at Christie's.

## 'Very exciting'

They also checked Rembrandt's signatures, including whether they had been done at the time in wet paint, and comparing the artistic style to his other works. "The conclusion was that indeed they are by the artist... it was sort of overwhelming how enthusiastic everyone was about this find," she said. As the smallest known portraits by Rembrandt, they have also shed new light on the style of the artist, who at the time was better known for much larger portraits commissioned by wealthy families. "These are something slightly different, something much more intimate," said Pettifer.

The newly discovered Rembrandts, which Christie's describes as "one of the most exciting discoveries we have made in the Old Masters field in recent years", have also been on tour in New York and London, where they will go under the hammer on July 6. While it remains to be seen whether the buyer will be private or a museum, one thing about the auction is certain. "They've been intact all their lives so we're selling them together," said Pettifer. — AFP

## 'Divas' come to London for major new V&amp;A exhibition

From 19th-century opera singers to the youngest modern pop superstars, "divas" are taking center stage at a major new exhibition in London. From Saturday until April 7 next year, the Victoria & Albert Museum will be showcasing the stories of dozens of performers who have become feminist icons and anti-racism campaigners. "DIVA" includes more than 250 exhibits, including photographs, posters, magazines, film and video clips, as well as an accompanying soundtrack.

But the focus of the in-depth look at the mold-breaking talents on display is some 60 outfits that defined their distinctive image. On show are Josephine Baker's sequined costumes from the early 20th century as well as Stella McCartney's designs for the young American singer Billie Eilish. There are also gowns by major designers worn on the red carpet of film premieres and at award ceremonies.

"From the early 19th century opera singers that commissioned their own couture gowns to the kind of contemporary catwalk, from the Met Gala to the stage, the diva look and the diva expressing themselves through fashion is incredibly important" curator Kate Bailey told AFP. The exhibition takes visitors on a journey across two centuries of female empowerment, from the first use of the Italian word meaning "goddess" to describe opera greats such as soprano Adelina Patti. She was the best-known woman in 19th-century Britain after Queen Victoria.

Being classed as a diva allowed women rare independence at the time — and made them pioneers in the struggle for equality with men. The concept then evolved to the stage, with dancers such as the American Isadora Duncan and actresses such as France's Sarah Bernhardt. — AFP



This photo taken on June 14, 2023 shows Afghan chef and restaurant owner Waheed (left) and Hamid Khan preparing the traditional chainaki lamb stew, cooked in teapots, inside a restaurant in Koch-e Kafuroshi in Kabul. - AFP photos



Cook Kumail fills teapots with ingredients to prepare the traditional chainaki lamb stew.



An Afghan worker carries bread on a tray inside the restaurant.

# Afghan cook pours his heart into 'teapot' lamb stew

In the kitchen of his Kabul restaurant, one of the last cooks to master the Afghan culinary art of "chainaki" stuffs chunks of lamb and fat into about 200 tiny teapots to simmer for hours atop a clay stove. From dawn onwards, Waheed is a study in concentration as he checks the pots time and again – making sure each is marinating with the precise proportion of fat rendered.

Once the pots are bubbling to his satisfaction he adds salt and lentils, before bathing the contents in a to-

taste of the customers arriving in a few hours. Waheed took over the restaurant aged just 25 after his father died – and confesses his own dish isn't quite as good. "No pupil can replace his teacher, just as we can't replace our father," he says.

But he expects the family business may end when he calls it quits, as none of his 10 children wants to follow on. "They're studying at school. They don't have the patience to do this work," he says. After five hours of closely super-



Chef and owner Waheed adjusts his hair as his workers prepare onions, garlic, tomatoes and peppers.

mato-colored sauce and secret spices. "The recipe has been the same for over 60 years, passed down to me by my father," says Waheed, 45, who prefers to give only one name. "He himself inherited it from his father. I haven't changed a thing."

With the fire crackling, the teapots – many decades old, chipped or missing handles – are covered with a sheet as the contents simmer away. The heat quickly fills the restaurant and the heady smell of stewed lamb hangs heavy in the air. Only then can Waheed take a break to tell his story. He dropped out of school at 13 to hang around the kitchens in his father's restaurants before being handed the secret recipe – which he worries may be revealed to his competitors through media coverage.

### Some like it fat

The lamb stew he makes gets its name from the teapot – "chainak" in several local languages – in which it is cooked. "I don't add any vegetable oil," he says, but the amount of lamb fat in each pot varies according to the

vised cooking the chainaki is ready and the customers – many already sitting cross-legged on platforms – can finally enjoy their meal.

The stew is poured onto plates, eaten with ubiquitous unleavened Afghan bread, and washed down with lashings of green tea. It costs 200 Afghanis (\$2.30) a serving. "When I eat it, I feel energetic until the evening," says Zabihullah, who has been a regular for 15 years, visiting up to three times a week. "It's so delicious and tasty," adds Ghulam Usman Tarin, a more recent convert.

Over the years Waheed has served Afghan celebrities, politicians, as well as the few foreigners that seek out his humble restaurant – and he puts his money where his mouth is, eating it himself every day. He is usually sold out shortly after lunch, but then it is straight back to work as he carves up a sheep carcass for meat and fat to make the next day's serving. "I'll keep doing it as long as I am strong enough," he says. - AFP



Afghan chef Hamid Khan prepares the traditional chainaki lamb stew.



Customers eat chainaki lamb stew.



Afghan chef and restaurant owner Waheed cuts lamb meat.



Customers eat the traditional chainaki lamb stew.



This photo taken on June 13, 2023 shows artisan cheesemaker Rachanikorn "Kai" Srikong displaying various cheeses from goat milk for tasting at Little Goat Farm and Cheesery in the central Thai province of Nakhon Pathom. - AFP photos



Rachanikorn drains milk curds to make cheese.

## Cheesemaker spreads joy in tropical Thailand

Thailand is renowned for its vibrant street food and luscious tropical fruits, but Rachanikorn Srikong is on a mission to make a new addition to the menu – cheese. Vivid green rice paddies and fruit orchards cover the kingdom's countryside but dairy accounts for a tiny proportion of agriculture and cheese has not traditionally been part of the Thai diet. Rachanikorn is part of a small but growing community of cheesemakers attracting attention from top chefs in Michelin-starred restaurants in the capital Bangkok.

After growing up in rural Thailand eating little dairy, she had to learn from scratch what good cheese should taste like. When she started out some seven years ago, she felt "like a blind painter", unable to judge the quality of her work. "I paint very beautifully, people say: 'Oh yeah your cheese is very delicious.' But I am blind, I cannot see my picture,"

she tells AFP. "My mother never fed me with cheese when I was young. She fed me tofu with rice."

From a herd of around 30 goats, Rachanikorn produces 15 varieties of cheese, some with a local twist, such as coatings of bamboo ash, wild rice and pandan leaves. The 47-year-old studied cheesemaking books and "read until I could smell it". But ultimately she found her connection to the punchy flavors of goat's cheese through the pungent, distinctively Thai condiment pla dak – fermented fish paste.

"I grew up with pla dak. That is the way I understand how fermented food gives us umami amino acids (just like cheese)," Rachanikorn said. "That



Rachanikorn prepares cheese from goat milk.



Rachanikorn tends to her goats at Little Goat Farm and Cheesery.

umami makes you happy and relates with what your mother feeds you (in childhood)... your brain will connect the smell with this umami, with love."

### 'Fail, fail, fail'

On her small farm in Nakhon Pathom, an hour's drive from Bangkok, Rachanikorn lives in a modest wooden hut, but her herd enjoys a palatial double-storey barn under the shade of trees, carefully positioned to catch breezes. Making cheese in Thailand, where the weather is hot and humid almost all year round, is no easy task. "If I use the culture from Europe or France the bacteria suffer from the hot climate," Rachanikorn explains.

The early days were hard and she "had to fail in every way you can fail", she says. Even after one success, "the second, third, fourth, 10th (attempts) – fail, fail, fail, fail". But as a self-confessed "science nerd", she relished the challenge of getting bacteria to behave, and persevered. After weeks of careful preparation, she hand-delivers her product to more than 10 high-end restaurants in Bangkok, including four with Michelin stars. The best thing about cheesemaking, Rachanikorn says, is making "people smile". "Life is good, cheese makes it better." - AFP

## Sports

# Tsitsipas crashes out of Halle as 'alien' Medvedev reaches last 8

## Wimbledon champion Rybakina upset by Vekic in Berlin

## News in Brief

### Kuwait defeat Nepal 3-1

**NEW DELHI:** Kuwait National football team defeated Nepal with a score of 3-1 on Wednesday in the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship. The Championship kicked off on Wednesday in the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bangalore city. Ibrahim Khalid, Shabaib Al-Khaldi, Muhammed Dahham netted first, second and third goals respectively for Kuwait against Nepal. Eight teams are participating in the SAFF Championship and Kuwait, Nepal, India and Pakistan are drawn in Group A, while Lebanon, Maldives, Bhutan and Bangladesh are drawn in Group B. India took on Pakistan in the remaining matches of the first round of the group A. In the second round of the group, Kuwait will take on Pakistan on Saturday, while India will face Nepal. In Group B, Lebanon played against Bangladesh while Maldives locked horns with Bhutan in the first round of match. In the second round of Group B matches, Bhutan will take on Lebanon and Bangladesh will meet Maldives on Sunday. — KUNA

### Barcelona condemn racist abuse

**MADRID:** Barcelona on Wednesday condemned the racist abuse suffered by Nigerian player James Nnaji during their Spanish basketball championship final victory over bitter rivals Real Madrid. The incident comes as Spanish sport wrestles with the global outcry sparked by racism aimed at Real's Brazilian football star Vinicius Jr. "FC Barcelona strongly condemns the racist insults suffered by first-team basketball player James Nnaji before game three of the final," Barcelona said in a statement. "The club expects a firm response from the ACB (Spanish basketball league) against any racial or verbal insults." Images of the arrival of the FC Barcelona bus at the Wizink centre in Madrid, where Tuesday's match took place, showed several Madrid fans hurling insults at the Barcelona players. According to local media, Nnaji was the target of racist insults. "I want to talk about what happened here with James Nnaji, I think it's regrettable. I hear a lot about Vinicius and now it's us who have to talk about what's going on," said Barcelona basketball coach Sarunas Jasikevicius. — AFP

### Cincinnati go 8 points clear

**LOS ANGELES:** Cincinnati trounced Toronto 3-0 to move eight points clear at the top of Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference on Wednesday. Goals from Colombian international Santiago Arias, Argentine midfielder Luciano Acosta and Senegalese striker Dominique Badji sealed a victory for in-form Cincinnati. The Ohio club now lead the Eastern Conference with 43 points from 18 games and have lost only once this season. The victory extended Cincinnati's lead at the top of the East, with second-placed Nashville slumping to a 1-0 defeat to Montreal elsewhere on Wednesday. Arias fired Cincinnati into the lead after 35 minutes, prodding home a rebound from close range after a corner sowed panic in the Toronto six-yard box. Acosta made it 2-0 in the 54th minute, punishing a blunder by Toronto goalkeeper Greg Ranjitsingh, whose attempt to play a pass out from the back went straight to Cincinnati's Marco Angulo on the edge of the penalty area. Angulo squared to Acosta who blasted home an emphatic finish. — AFP

### Arsenal set to sign Havertz

**LONDON:** Arsenal are set to sign Chelsea forward Kai Havertz after reportedly agreeing a £65 million (\$82 million) fee for the German on Wednesday. Havertz will be allowed to discuss contract terms and undergo a medical at Arsenal after their London rivals accepted the lucrative offer. The 24-year-old has emerged as a top target for the Gunners in recent weeks as they look to improve a squad that finished second in the Premier League last season. After three inconsistent years with Chelsea, Havertz is on course to become Arsenal's first signing of the close-season. It is believed Chelsea's owners want to avoid letting players enter the final two years of their deals and Havertz, whose contract runs out in 2025, has not agreed an extension. Mateo Kovacic left Chelsea for treble winners Manchester City on Wednesday, while N'Golo Kante has agreed to sign for Saudi Arabian side Al-Ittihad. Having joined Chelsea from Bayer Leverkusen in 2020, Havertz has scored 19 goals in 91 Premier League appearances. — AFP

### Crusaders hunt magnificent 7

**WELLINGTON:** The Canterbury Crusaders aim to secure a seventh straight Super Rugby title and a triumphant swansong for talismanic All Blacks-coach-to-be Scott Robertson this Saturday. But the in-form Waikato Chiefs could spoil the party. Having lifted silverware with the Crusaders each season since he took charge in 2017, this is Robertson's last game before leading the New Zealand national side after the Rugby World Cup. With a host of All Blacks on display, tickets for the final at the Chiefs sold out FMG Stadium in Hamilton. Robertson knows to expect a rough reception from the home crowd. "It's going to be hostile, it's going to be passionate," he told reporters on Thursday. "You know you are walking into a pressure environment. Crusaders love these moments." Victory would complete the set of seven consecutive titles for the Crusaders—including 2020 and 2021 when they won a domestic competition for New Zealand's five teams with the borders shut due to COVID-19. — AFP

**BERLIN:** Stefanos Tsitsipas crashed out of the Halle grass court tournament on Wednesday as top seeded Daniil Medvedev made the quarter-finals despite admitting grass court specialists seem like "aliens" to him. World number five Tsitsipas lost 7-6 (9/7), 7-5 to Chilean Nicolas Jarry, ranked 28 in the world. It marks the third consecutive time the Greek has been knocked out in the second round of the Wimbledon warm-up tournament. In Wednesday's late match, home favorite Alexander Zverev defeated Canadian Denis Shapovalov in straight sets, 6-2, 6-4.

Zverev, the 26-year-old Olympic gold medalist, made the finals at Halle in 2016 and 2017 but lost to Roger Federer on both occasions. He will next face Jarry. Earlier on Wednesday, Medvedev defeated Serbian Laslo Djere 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, with the world number three overcoming losing a tight second set to win with ease. "Grass is so tough for me," said Medvedev. "You can actually play a perfect match and lose on two tie-breaks, so it's a little bit strange for me."

"When I see top players like Roger Federer, from one side they can seem like aliens but you try to see the best in them, and how they are able on this surface, where it's sometimes tricky to beat anyone, to have so many titles. Wimbledon, Halle, whatever. It's just amazing and that's what I try to watch. Happy to win and looking forward to the next matches." The former world number one and 2021 US Open champion was runner-up on the Halle grass in 2022, losing to Hubert Hurkacz in straight sets in the final.

Medvedev has struggled on grass in his career so far and has never reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon. He will next face Spanish eighth seed Roberto Bautista Agut. He missed last year's tournament at the All England Club due to Wimbledon's ban on Russian and Belarusian players competing. Medvedev has won five ATP titles already this year, but was beaten by Sebastian Korda in the Australian Open third round and was dumped out in the French Open first round for the fifth time in seven appearances.

### Vekic upsets Rybakina

Meanwhile, Elena Rybakina suffered a setback in

## Paris Olympic budget's issues could force cuts

**PARIS:** The 2024 Paris Olympics are coming in significantly over budget because of an "incomprehensible lack of understanding of the complexity of the IOC's specifications", France's Court of Audit has found. The court's latest report, which was sent to AFP on Wednesday, said the Paris bid committee "underestimated" the costs of staging the Games at the time of the bid and warned that cuts might be needed before next summer.

"Further measures to reduce service levels will be required to ensure final budgetary equilibrium," said the report adding that "substantial uncertainties remain concerning the final level of resources." The report also highlighted difficulty securing enough bids from private security firms, sponsorship shortfalls, the difficulty in working out total costs and delays in finishing construction, particularly of transport infrastructure.

The budget for the organizing committee, known as Cojo, around 3.3 bil-

lion euros at the time of the successful bid in 2017, rose to 4.4 billion euros by the end of 2022. The report estimated that "two-thirds" of the increase "resulted not from management drift or ill-considered changes to the project, but from an obvious underestimation of the bid budget and an incomprehensible lack of understanding of the complexity of the IOC's (International Olympic Committee) specifications".

The report said budget revisions for 2022, by an extra 400 million euros, partly due to inflation, "were carried out transparently and rigorously" by Cojo. The report comes just after French authorities carried out a series of raids on Cojo, Solideo, the body in charge of the Olympic construction sites, and other companies with ties to the Games. A source close to the case told AFP that the searches on Tuesday and Wednesday, were part of two preliminary investigations by the French National Financial Prosecutor's Office into the contracts awarded for the Paris Olympics.

Meanwhile, the audit report said it was concerned over local sponsorship deals, which are budgeted to bring Cojo 1.24 billion euros. Some "337.2 million euros remain to be secured, which means it is imperative to conclude the partnership with (French

## Kuwait's Disabled Fencing team heads to Warsaw

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's National Disabled Fencing team left for Warsaw, Poland, for a training camp in preparation for the World Fencing Cup Championship that will start July 4th until the 10th. Kuwait's delegation is headed by Ahmad Al-Mutawa and has 10 players. The players include: Fahad Al-Bastaky, Ayesha Mubarak, Suleiman Al-Tamimi, Khuloud Al-Mutairi, Al-Anoud Hamid, Abdallah Al-Haddad, Farraj Al-Dousary, Salem Abdelhadi, Awrad Al-Saffar, and Abdallah Al-Enezi.

Coach Khalid Al-Sarraf aims to raise their technical level to the best level possible during the short period through daily training in addition to friendly matches. The chairman of the Paralympic fencing

## IOC guarantees boxing's place at the Olympics

**LAUSANNE:** The International Olympic Committee on Thursday withdrew its recognition of boxing's governing body, the IBA, but said the sport would be on the program at the 2024 and 2028 Games in Paris and Los Angeles. The IOC executive board voted by 69 votes to one, with 10 abstentions, to expel the International Boxing Association (IBA) from

the Olympic Movement in a seismic move for the sport. The IOC's decision brings to an end four years of sparring between the Olympic body and the under-fire custodians of a sport that has appeared at every Games since 1904. The IBA was suspended by the IOC in 2019 for multiple corruption scandals.

The IBA, whose president is Umar Kremlev of Russia, has also come under attack for its governance, financial transparency and sustainability. "The IOC has constantly and patiently tried to help in the three areas of concern," IOC director general Christophe De Kepper said at the IOC session in Lausanne. "There has been a constant



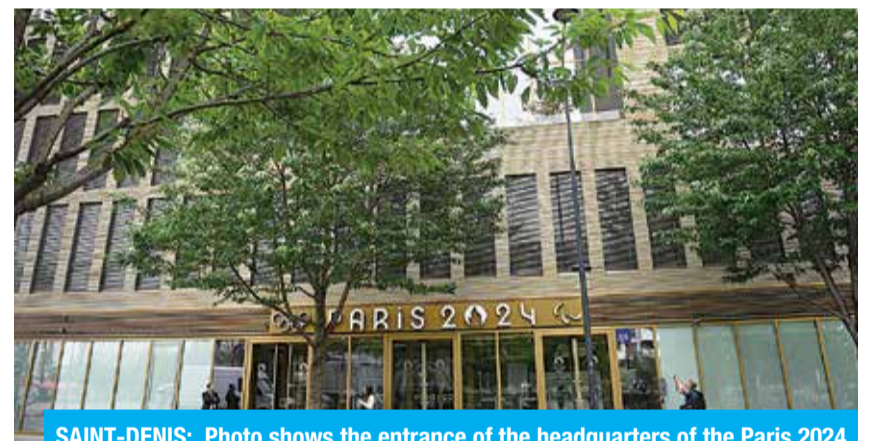
Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas plays a backhand return to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz Garfia during their men's singles quarter final match on day ten of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on June 6, 2023. — AFP

the build-up to her Wimbledon title defense when she was knocked out of the Berlin WTA event by Donna Vekic on Wednesday. Vekic, ranked 23 in the world, beat the second-seeded Kazakh 6-7 (1/7), 6-3, 6-4 to make it through to the quarter finals. An Australian Open finalist in January, the 24-year-old Rybakina was one of the favorites for the French Open but pulled out early due to illness.

"I'm really happy to not only beat her, but to be in the quarter-finals here," said Vekic who faced down 15 aces off the racquet of the Kazakh. "I stayed in the moment. I was just trying to play the next point, the next game. She was serving unbelievable today. She's definitely, I think, the best server on the women's tour right now. She was serving really big, so I

was like, 'Just stay with her; your chances will come,' and they did."

French third seed Caroline Garcia defeated Australian Jaimee Fourlis 6-3, 6-2 on her first appearance on the Berlin grass. The 2022 US Open semi-finalist broke her opponent three times in the first meeting between the two players. She has now won 25 matches in 2023. Elina Avanesyan defeated Anna Blinkova 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 to make the quarter-finals in an all-Russian duel. Czech Petra Kvitova also sealed her place in the final eight, defeating Argentinean Nadia Podoroska 6-1, 6-1 in a dominant performance. The WTA tournament in Berlin, taking place just two weeks before the start of Wimbledon, features nine of the world's top 10-ranked women. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Photo shows the entrance of the headquarters of the Paris 2024 Olympics (Cojo) headquarters.— AFP

luxury giant) LVMH, announced for 140 million but still not signed," said the report. The report reiterated a request that "all costs" be "consolidated" because it was impossible to establish a clear total bill.

The court also expressed concern at the failure of Cojo to attract enough bidders for private security contracts. Despite "the combined efforts of the Cojo, the State and the professional sector, there is a real risk that several calls for tender will remain unsuccessful," it said. The report added that "the now-probable recourse to internal security forces and the armed forces to

make up for this shortfall must therefore be anticipated."

The report also fretted about failure to complete metro train improvements and extensions on time as well as continuing issues afflicting public transport in the region. "These infrastructure projects remain essential to ensure the smooth flow of traffic during the Games", said the report. The report also urged Solideo to take "reinforcement measures" to ensure the completion of "certain structures affected by delays" such as the athletes' village, media village, and at least one arena. — AFP



sports committee, Turkey Al-Shimmari, hoped the team would make the best achievements possible. He said the "World Cup enjoys the interest of all world

countries, and the top-ranked are keen on participating in it, making competition very tough for both men and women."

lack of drastic revolution throughout the many years. It is a situation of no return." De Kepper added: "The IBA was unable to provide the elements to allow the lifting of its suspension. "It is not possible to reach any other conclusion than agree with the IOC's analysis. The only conclusion is to withdraw recognition."

**Olympic place guaranteed**  
The IOC has put in place the 'Paris Boxing Unit' to ensure qualification and hosting of the sport at the 2024 Paris Olympics. De Kepper said he "guarantees" boxing will also be on program for the Los Angeles Games in 2028. IOC chief Thomas Bach, shortly

before introducing De Kepper, told the session that "we have an extremely serious problem with the IBA".

"We do not have a problem with boxing. We do not have a problem with boxers," Bach said. "If we had a problem with boxers there would not have been a competition in Tokyo. There would be no boxing competition in Paris." Bach added: "We highly value the sport of boxing but unfortunately we have an extremely serious problem with the IBA because of their governance. "Because we value the sport of boxing so much, we believe the boxers fully deserve to be governed by an international federation with integrity and transparency." — AFP

Sports

# Relegated Hertha face daunting future despite financial reprieve

## Indebted Hertha face increasingly competitive second tier

**BERLIN:** Struggling Hertha Berlin face an uncertain future despite a decision to allow postponed repayment of a high-interest loan, which effectively ensured a German FA (DFB) operating licence next season. Relegated at the end of the season after several years treading water, indebted Hertha face an increasingly competitive second tier. The club negotiated an extension on the 40-million-euro (\$43-million) loan, initially due for repayment in 2023, until 2025, clearing the way for the DFB to approve the club's license on Monday.

Failing to secure a license would have meant relegation to the fourth tier. Making matters worse, cross-town rivals Union Berlin qualified for the Champions League on a comparative shoe-string after just four seasons in the top division. That Union look set to take on the European elite at Hertha's 75,000-seat Olympic Stadium highlights the unmet potential.

### 'Only mistakes'

When millionaire Lars Windhorst bought a 37.5 percent stake in 2019, he promised to take Hertha to the top of German football. Four years later, Hertha were relegated despite spending an estimated 374 million euros (\$412 million) on players. In May, returning manager and club legend Pal Dardai criticized the costly arrivals for being "satisfied with their life, their car and their chic looks" rather than the club's plight.

In March, Windhorst sold his stake to 777 Partners, who also own Spain's Sevilla, Italian side Genoa and Belgium's Standard Liege. While the American private investment company have taken over Hertha, and their debts, the multi-club ownership

model means the amount of capital available is unclear. Daniel Trousil, from fan organization Hertha Freunde Berlin Sud, told AFP he was "composed and prepared" for Hertha's "painful" relegation, which "had been hinted at over the past four years."

The 45-year-old said "since the arrival of Windhorst and the unexpected wealth, only mistakes have been made", calling the millionaire's reign "restless and disturbing". Another fan, Sven Schloesinger, 52, said: "the club and its management burned all investor capital through haphazard player purchases, building a team which was not ready for the first division and was rightly relegated." Trousil shares the sentiment, saying "at the end of these serious chains of mistakes, there's relegation".

### No 'second Hamburg'

Dardai's decision to stay as coach is also a positive. The no-nonsense manager wants to build a future around Hertha's talented juniors. In the medium term, Hertha's hopes of financial stability rely heavily on a return to the top division. Twice in the past 25 years Hertha have come up immediately after relegation, but fan Tim Haas fears things are different this time. "It's not like the last couple of times when you're relegated and then you're the favorite to go up." The 33-year-old Berliner said the Bundesliga presented "a completely different economic situation" this time.

Heavyweights Schalke and Hamburg are also pushing for promotion in a division which contains several other traditional top-flight clubs such as Nuremberg, Hannover and Kaiserslautern. The Hamburg example is particularly worrying for Hertha fans. The former Champions League win-

ning forward to playing a World Cup in France. "It's bound to be magnificent," he said. "I don't want to get ahead of myself, but I think it'll be the best ever, given the commitment of the French."

### Enjoy the caviar

In 2015, Imhoff scored three tries as the Pumas reached the semi-finals before losing to Australia. "When you're an outsider like we are, you're motivated by everything that's said about you. We eat dirt, as they say, so that when we taste the caviar, we can enjoy it. "We will give everything to write history," he added. "In a player's head, there's always the hope, the belief, that you can be world champion. When you dream of it, when it's within your grasp, why not give everything to get there?"

Argentina kick off their campaign in Pool D against England on September 9 in Marseille before facing Samoa and then neighbors Chile and finally Japan. "Our group isn't an easy one," he said. "We have to win every match, except that the decisive matches come very early, so after the first two weeks, we'll already have an idea."

Argentina beat England 30-29 at Twickenham the last time the two met, the start of a sequence of results last November that cost England coach Eddie Jones his job. "We want to be in the quarter-finals,

leader despite the economic and logistics problems the country faces. South Africa is now crushing the African eSports scene, thanks to numerous investments, followed by Egypt and Morocco, then to a lesser extent by Senegal, Ivory Coast and Kenya. But Nigeria has something to make its neighbors swoon because its strengths - and its challenges - are immense.

Immense especially in size: it is the most populous country in Africa with more than 215 million inhabitants, renowned for being competitive in business, sports and music. And three-quarters of the population is under 25. In Lagos, in the midst of the din of the tournament he was supervising, Kunmi Adenipebi explained it was almost impossible to know exactly how many players there are in Nigeria. "Some say there are 60 million players in Nigeria. We did a survey and we know one thing for sure: there are at least 3 million players," said Adenipebi, chief of operations at Gamr, which organized the event.

The potential pool of Nigerian players is enormous: broadband internet penetration has reached 48 percent, almost all via smartphone, and it continues to grow. This is only the beginning, however, as Nigeria will be the second most populous country in the world at the end of the century with nearly



**BERLIN:** In this file photo, Hertha Berlin's flag wavers stand on the pitch near giant letters reading 'Berlin' during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Hertha Berlin and VfL Bochum in Berlin. — AFP

790 million inhabitants, just behind India, according to Lancet projections.



Juan Imhoff

and we can be. But we're also not going to lie to ourselves and say that we've got an easy group and that because we beat England at Twickenham, we're going to beat them again. On the contrary, I think we'll have to work hard." For the first time, there are three South American teams at the World Cup with Chile making their debut and Uruguay playing for the fifth time. "We're trying to share everything we've learned with our neighbors to help the countries around us progress," said Imhoff. — AFP



**LAGOS:** Gamers rehearse to play during eSports tournament in Lagos. — AFP

790 million inhabitants, just behind India, according to Lancet projections.

But, between widespread poverty, power cuts and the poor quality network, Nigeria remains a colossus with feet of clay. It has few professional players even if there are more and more since the global Covid pandemic, Adenipebi said. "Esport is a beautiful opportunity for our youth and to pull people out of poverty." — AFP

## Imhoff returns for World Cup hoping to write Pumas history

**PARIS:** Juan Imhoff, recalled by Argentina after being left out in 2019, is sure that the Rugby World Cup in his adopted home of France is "bound to be magnificent". The 35-year-old back, who has played for Racing 92 in Paris since 2011, was part of the Pumas squad at the 2011 and 2015 World Cups but was dropped in 2019 when Argentina opted not to select any players based abroad. He said attracting the notice of coach Michael Cheika, who took over in March 2022, has been an objective.

"I really want to be part of the Argentine national team, and that was one of my motivations at club level this year: to be the best I can be at Racing and give the Pumas coach doubts," he told AFP. "My absence in 2019, even if it was for political reasons made me change my way of seeing things, and you realize what you have when you don't have it anymore. "I'm not the fastest, the most talented, the best player, but I'll be the most committed". He said he was look-

## Nigeria struggles with dream to rule Africa's eSports

**LAGOS:** At the very last second, the Lagos professional gamer wins his battle of "Street Fighter", sending the crowd into roars of joy, a scene unimaginable a few years ago in Nigeria, where the eSports is now in full bloom. In a room decked out in futuristic decor in an upscale district of Nigeria's economic capital Lagos, several thousand visitors gathered for a giant video game tournament on Saturday. Whipped up by an emcee, crowds of young spectators cheered all day in front of the competitors whose games were interspersed with concerts of local Afrobeats stars, Victory and Crayon. Competitors battled it out in popular eSports games like "Call of Duty: Mobile", "Street Fighter" and "FIFA".

The bling of the "Nigerian-style" show lived up to the ambitions of Africa's leading economy as it looks to establish itself as an eSports - electronic sports -

## Southampton hire Martin as manager

**LONDON:** Russell Martin vowed to lead Southampton back to the Premier League after being hired as the relegated club's new manager on Wednesday. Martin has moved to Southampton from fellow Championship side Swansea on a three-year contract. The 37-year-old oversaw Swansea's 10th place finish in the Championship last season and has been entrusted with the task of lifting the Saints back into the top-flight.

"It's a privilege to accept this opportunity at Southampton, a club with such a long and rich history," Martin said. "My aim is to get this club back where it belongs, in the top flight of English football. "I am ready for this challenge and will give everything to achieve this aim and to give the supporters a team that makes them proud. I'm thrilled to be here and cannot wait for the work to begin."

Martin, who spent two years with Swansea after starting his managerial career at Milton Keynes Dons, replaces Ruben Selles at St Mary's following the Spaniard's sacking at the end of the season. Selles was Southampton's third manager of a troubled campaign that featured the dismissal of Ralph Hasenhuttl in November and the exit of Nathan Jones in February after just 14 games.

It is understood former Scotland and Norwich defender Martin had agreed to become Southampton boss in May, but the move was held up by a dispute over the amount of compensation due to Swansea. Leicester, also relegated from the Premier League this season, were interested in Martin, but Southampton secured his signature as they target promotion in their first Championship season since 2012. "Russell was the stand-out candidate throughout our recruitment process," Southampton chairman Henrik Kraft said.

Jason Wilcox agreed to join Southampton as director of football in January, but officially starts work next week as he prepares to link up with Martin. "Russell has shown fantastic qualities in his managerial career so far and is someone who we believe will thrive in the great environment we have here at Southampton," Wilcox said. "He is a fantastic fit for what we are trying to achieve, with a strong record of developing and nurturing young, talented players to fulfill their potential and deliver results on the pitch." — 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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Sneid Al-Gar	22531908
Bhaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

**I, Husain**, holder of Indian Passport No. P2217948, having permanent address MP, India - 452012, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Hussain** and surname: **Dharwala. (#3814) 23-06-2023**

**I, Ummehani Hatim**, current name Saya holder of Indian Passport No. T3300581, having permanent address 501, B7, Bramha Majestic, Nibm Road, Kondhwa, Pune, Maharashtra, India

411048, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name **Ummehani Saifee** and surname **Maipurwala. (#3813) 22-06-2023**

**I, Ebrahim Gulam Hussain Shikari** (current name in Passport), holder of Indian Passport No. U0747346, having permanent address Mohammediya Colony, PO Galiakot, Durgapur, Rajasthan, India, Pin Code No. 314026. Residing in Kuwait at

present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Ibrahim** and surname: **Shikari. (#3812) 22-06-2023**

**I, Shahanas Riyas**, holder of Indian Passport No. T5333279, having permanent address Kerala, India, PIN.670141, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Shehnaz** and surname: **Azmin. (#3811) 22-06-2023**

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## Kuwaitis shine at Special Olympics

Kuwait athletes grab 3 gold and 3 silver medals



Fans support Kuwaiti athletes in the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

Kuwaiti biker Manar Al-Alawi won the gold medal in cycling competition. — KUNA photos

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti athletes have won three gold and three silver medals in biking, weightlifting and equestrian contests as part of competitions of the Special Olympics Summer Games held in Berlin. Speaking to KUNA, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Special Olympics Hana Al-Zawawi said this big achievement came due to intensive training and cooperation of technical and administrative teams with the Kuwaiti athletes to raise the country's status at international arenas.

The second day of the competition witnessed a noticeable progress of the Kuwaiti team amid a strong competition from other participating teams, she said, noting that all Kuwaiti athletes have high fitness, which enabled them to offer brilliant performance. Salman Shehab

snatched two gold and two silver medals in weightlifting, Manar Al-Alawi won one gold in cycling, while Basma Al-Bosaili grabbed silver in equestrian, Al-Zawawi said. Shehab stressed, in a similar statement to KUNA, keenness of the trainer on preparing him for the competition that enabled him to win four medals. Athlete Al-Alawi dedicated this achievement to Kuwait and its wise leadership as well as all Kuwaitis. She added that she would partake in 5-km and 10-km races. For her part, Al-Bosaili said she could get the silver medal despite heavy rains during the contest. Kuwait's total medals in the competition have risen so far to seven in the first and second days. On Monday, Kuwaiti athletes Hajar Al-Rashidi and Rawan Al-Balhan won the bronze in the Bocce doubles competition. — KUNA

### Mourinho given 4-match ban for insulting referee



AS Roma's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho

**LAUSANNE:** Jose Mourinho has been suspended for four European matches for insulting referee Anthony Taylor after Roma's Europa League final defeat by Sevilla. UEFA announced on Wednesday. The Portuguese confronted Taylor in a car park following Roma's penalty shoot-out loss after a 1-1 draw in Budapest. Mourinho has been banned from "the next four UEFA club competition matches in which he would otherwise participate, for directing abusive language at a match official", European football's governing body said. His team will play in the Europa League group stage next season.

Roma have also been fined 50,000 euros (\$54,744) and banned from taking away fans to their next European match "for the lighting of fireworks, throwing of objects, acts of damage and crowd disturbances". The Italian club were also fined 5,000 euros over the "improper conduct of their team" and ordered to "contact the Hungarian Football Federation within 30 days" to agree a settlement regarding damages caused by their supporters in the stadium. Taylor was harassed by Roma fans at Budapest airport with his family the day after

the controversial final.

An Italian man was charged with affray after the ugly clash. Referees' body PGMOL said: "We are appalled at the unjustified and abhorrent abuse directed at Anthony and his family as he tries to make his way home from refereeing the UEFA Europa League final." Taylor booked 13 players, seven of them from Roma, while the bad-tempered game was littered with delays due to the unusually high number of fouls. It was Sevilla's seventh Europa League triumph and the first European final defeat of Mourinho's managerial career.

Sevilla were not punished by UEFA despite having also been charged over a pitch invasion and the behavior of their fans and the players. West Ham were also fined 58,000 euros and cannot take fans to their first two Europa League away games next season following their Europa Conference League triumph over Fiorentina. The Italian club's captain Cristiano Biraghi suffered a head injury inflicted by a cup thrown by a West Ham supporter. West Ham, who won the final 2-1 in Prague, were also sanctioned for a pitch invasion. — AFP

### Butterfly king Milak to miss championships

**BUDAPEST:** Kristof Milak, who won two golds at the 2022 world swimming championships, said Wednesday he will skip this year's event in Japan claiming: "I am currently neither physically nor mentally in a position to be among the best in the world." The 23-year-old Hungarian won two butterfly golds last year before home fans. He is also the world record holder and Olympic champion in 200m butterfly and won the 2019 world title in the event. "It is with a very heavy heart that I have made a decision," he said in a statement posted by his club, Honved, on Facebook. "I will not compete in the World Championships in Fukuoka in July - as much as I would like to continue my winning streak."

Milak said that he was trying to understand a dip in his form. "I am looking for the satisfactory answer myself as to why it happened this way," he said in a statement posted by his swimming club, Honved, on Facebook. "I could not even approach one hundred percent of my performance, which is essential for peak performance, and I



ROME: Hungary's Kristof Milak competes in the Men's 100m butterfly final during the LEN European Aquatics Championships in Rome. — AFP

don't like to settle for less." The Budapest showpiece was the first of three world championships in 19 months with Fukuoka in July followed by Doha in February 2024. The Paris Olympics follow in the summer.

Two of Hungarian's main rivals, American Caeleb Dressel and Australian Kyle Chalmers have talked in the last year about their battles with mental health issues, but Milak stressed that was not a problem for him. "This is a very deep

valley, but I want to emphasize that all of this is not accompanied by any despair," he said in the statement. "I accepted it, and I sincerely hope that everyone else can also accept that in an athlete's career, there can be such a period when you have to step back, recharge, and then be ready for the biggest challenges again." Milak concluded his statement on a positive note: "Fear not: I will be back soon." — AFP

### First Olympic Esports Week kicks off

**SINGAPORE:** The first-ever Olympic-organized Esports Week kicked off in Singapore on Thursday, but an IOC official said there is currently no plan to include video games in the Olympic program. The International Olympic Committee officially recognized eSports as a sport in 2017 and has been in discussions with industry players about inclusion on the most prestigious stage. Esports will be a medal sport for the first time at the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou.

The four-day event in Singapore is the "first step" in bringing the eSports community and the sports community together, Vincent Pereira, the IOC's Head of Virtual Sport told AFP. Over 20,000 tickets have been issued, and 131

players are coming from 64 countries, he said. But he said there is currently "no discussion about integrating real traditional eSports and video games into the Olympic program". "I think today we are not at this stage, we are not thinking about it." There is a possibility that "virtual active sports" such as cycling or taekwondo could be part of the Olympic program one day, he said.

"The opportunity of integrating virtual sports into the Olympic program is something that we have already discussed with some federations and the next opportunity could be LA (2028), but for now we are exploring discussions." Many in the gaming community were baffled that many of the most established gaming titles were not part of the event. Instead of popular games such as the first-person shooter game "Counter-Strike" and "DOTA 2", a battle arena game, it features 10 simulated sports, among them archery, baseball, chess and taekwondo.

The shooting event will involve the

globally loved "Fortnite", but in a version without its kill-or-be-killed "Battle Royale" mode. Pereira ruled out the inclusion of first-person shooter games in future events as the promotion of violence goes against Olympic values. "For us, there is the clear limitation that the first people shooting will never be integrated into our competition. We can understand that the perception can be different but we cannot have these games promoting Olympic values," he said.

For athletes competing in Singapore, the event was an opportunity to meet with some of their peers in person, after years of competing in virtual events. "It's massive," said James Barnes, a 32-year-old cycling finalist from South Africa. "I never thought that my cycling... would bring me to an event like this, of this calibre, so for me, it's a lifetime goal achieved," he added. "It's really special for me because it's Olympics... it's really cool to be here," said Kaj de Bruin, an 18-year-old finalist from the Netherlands in the Gran Turismo racing event. — AFP