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\$10,000 trade-in support



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## Hajj pilgrims gather in Mina

Worshippers to spend night in tent city before heading to Arafat

### Amir sends Eid greetings



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan on Monday relayed Eid Al-Adha greetings from HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Kuwait's citizens and residents, wishing them happy Eid amid amity, security and safety. The Amiri Diwan seized this blessed opportunity to convey greetings to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on this occasion. HH the Amir also wished both Arab and Muslim worlds a blessed Eid, security and stability, praying to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait

and its people from all evils and grant them security and safety under the nation's wise leadership.

HH the Crown Prince's Diwan on Monday relayed Eid Al-Adha greetings from HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad. HH the Crown Prince also wished Kuwait's citizens and residents happy Eid amid amity, security and safety, praying to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people from all evils and grant them security and safety under the wise leadership of HH the Amir. HH the Crown Prince also wished both Arab and Muslim worlds a blessed Eid Al-Adha. — KUNA

**MINA:** Hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims walked or rode buses Monday to a giant tented city near Makkah for the climax of the annual hajj that Saudi officials say could break attendance records. After performing the ritual circumambulation of the Kaaba at Makkah's Grand Mosque that Muslims pray towards each day, worshippers set off for Mina, about seven kilometres away, in suffocating heat.

Pilgrims in robes and sandals, many carrying umbrellas against the beating sun, undertook the journey on foot or crowded onto hundreds of air-conditioned buses provided by Saudi authorities. They will spend the night in white tents in Mina, which every year hosts the world's largest encampment, before the hajj's high point on Tuesday: Prayers at Mount Arafat, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered his final sermon.

"My dream has come true," said Jami-la Hammoudi, a 62-year-old Moroccan school teacher. "I will pray for everyone," she told AFP after arriving in the tented city. Shortly after midday, pilgrims packed most of the tents, which contain two to three beds and are fitted with water and food. Many were overcome by the experience as they fulfil a lifelong dream at the sites where Islam began.

Saudi officials say this year's hajj — one of the five pillars of Islam — could be the biggest in history. After 2.5 million attended in 2019, numbers were capped in 2020, 2021 and 2022 because of the COVID pandemic. As part of the safety measures, helicopters



MINA: Pilgrims arrive in Mina, near Islam's holy city of Makkah, on June 26, 2023 for the annual hajj pilgrimage. — AFP

and AI-equipped drones have been deployed to monitor the flow of traffic towards Mina, which sits in a narrow valley flanked by rocky mountains. A small fleet of self-driving buses, seating up to 11 people, is in operation between the sites of the rituals, including Makkah — Islam's holiest city — Mina and Muzdalifah.

One of the biggest risks this year at the hajj, which follows the lunar calendar, is heat, especially after maximum age re-

strictions were removed. Habbia Abdel Nasser, a Moroccan woman who was performing the rituals with her husband, needed urgent medical treatment near the Grand Mosque because of the heat. "The weather is very hot here compared to Morocco, and we feel exhausted," said her husband, 62-year-old businessman Rahim Abdel Nasser, as he poured water on her head to cool her down.

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### UN warns on synthetic drugs

**VIENNA:** The cheap, easy and fast production of synthetic drugs has radically transformed illicit drug markets around the world, with "lethal results", the UN warned Sunday. Criminals continue to exploit conflicts and global crises to expand drug production, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its annual report. Globally, more than 296 million people used drugs in 2021. — AFP

#### Aston agrees US-Saudi EV deal

**LONDON:** Aston Martin on Monday announced a deal with US-Saudi electric vehicle specialist Lucid Group to help make the British group's luxury "green" cars. California-based Lucid will supply technology, including battery systems, for cash and shares worth about \$232 million, Aston said. The deal would make Lucid a minority shareholder with a stake of about 3.7 percent. — AFP

#### Hezb shoots down Zionist drone

**BEIRUT:** BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah movement said it downed on Monday a Zionist drone in southern Lebanon near the border. The Iran-backed group "shot down a (Zionist) drone that entered Lebanese airspace... near Zibqin in the south", Hezbollah said in a statement. Zionist warplanes and drones regularly violate Lebanon's airspace, while Hezbollah for years has been sending drones towards the Zionist entity. — AFP

### Russia papers over cracks after revolt

**MOSCOW:** Russia tried to present a return to business as usual Monday for both the Kremlin and the Wagner mercenary army that challenged President Vladimir Putin's authority in an aborted weekend mutiny. Putin did not directly address the dramatic events, but made a video speech to a youth forum dubbed the "Engineers of the future"

and praised companies for overcoming "severe external challenges".

Wagner headquarters in Saint Petersburg said it remained open for business, and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the private military firm would continue to operate in Mali and the Central African Republic. Wagner's owner Yevgeny Prigozhin was branded a traitor on Saturday when he led the capture of a southern military headquarters overseeing Russia's Ukraine campaign and sent an armed column towards Moscow in a bid to overthrow the defense ministry top brass. But, after triggering Russia's worst security

Continued on Page 6

### Montreal has worst air of any major city

**MONTREAL:** Forest fires in Canada left Montreal blanketed with smog on Sunday, giving it the worst air quality of any major city in the world, according to a pollution monitor. Quebec province's most populous city had 'unhealthy' air quality according to IQAir, which tracks pollution around the globe, as hundreds of wildfires burned across the country. Environment Canada issued smog warnings in several Quebec regions due to the fires, saying, "high concentrations of fine particulate matter are causing poor air quality and reduced visibilities," with conditions to persist until Monday morning.

The agency urged residents to avoid outdoor activities and wear face masks if they must go outside. Outdoor pools and sports areas have been closed and multiple outside events, including concerts and sports competitions, have been cancelled due to the unhealthy smog. "It's really like a fog, except it's smoke from the forest fires. It's really hard to breathe, and it stings the eyes a bit too," said 18-year-old Fauve Lepage Vallee, lamenting that a festival she was due to attend had been cancelled.



MONTREAL: Montreal's skyline is pictured from Jean Drapeau Park with smog caused by wildfires on June 25, 2023. — AFP

There are 80 active forest fires in Quebec, according to Quebec's forest fire protection agency, SOPFEU, with several growing over the weekend due to dry weather and high temperatures. "The extent of the smoke is making it particularly difficult for air tankers and helicopters to be effective," SOPFEU said. However, "significant amounts" of rain are expected on Monday or Tuesday in the northwest of the province, it added.

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### Indian clock tells story of most populous nation

**MUMBAI:** India's first population clock, made up of 10 white numbered cards on a large green metal board, attracts curious passersby who watch it record the story of the world's most populous nation. The clock — manually updated every day according to projected estimates and akin to a cricket scoreboard in appearance — was first erected in 1982 when India was home to more than 684 million people, according to the 1981 government census.

That figure more than doubled in the following decades. India grew rapidly to overtake China at the top of the population ranks with more than 1.42 billion people, according to a United Nations projection in April. "An extra slot had already been made in the clock, expecting that we were going to cross one billion," said Professor Chander Shekhar at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai, where the clock is located.

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# High school graduates happy, proud to raise Kuwait's name high

## Support from family, time management key for success

**KUWAIT:** Several top achievers among high school graduates expressed their pride in their achievement to raise Kuwait's name, promising to continue the road of education and exert all efforts to serve Kuwait and its people.

In statements following a ceremony honoring high school students and held under the auspices of Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani, the outstanding students said that the key to success is time management and using the Internet for research instead of relying only on textbooks or private tuitions.

Nouf Al-Ajmi, who won first place among Kuwaitis in the literary section, said, "What I am experiencing now is a feeling of gratitude to everyone who has supported me, including my parents or people at school, until I achieved this honor." Al-Ajmi was first among Kuwaitis in the arts sector. "I thank God Almighty for His blessings, and I will continue my journey to obtain a PhD to be a faculty member at Kuwait University."

She explained how she prioritized time management between studying, entertainment and spending quality time with her parents. "The important thing is to completely separate between study times and other things," she said, pointing out that she relied on multiple means for studying, such as taking private lessons for some subjects, taking notes and others.

Al-Ajmi said her advice to future high schoolers is to not give in to stress. "Stay calm, follow up on your studies and manage time," she said, praising her parents' role in creating a good atmosphere for studying and supporting her throughout the year.

For Arwa Al-Mutairi, her parents' endless support was key to her success. "Thanks first and foremost to Allah Almighty and His blessings which helped me achieve my dream," said Mutairi who finished fifth overall in the arts sector (special education). "A word of thanks and appreciation must also be addressed after Him to all those who helped me, including teachers who gave me their time to achieve excellence."

She pointed out the important role her parents played throughout her life, extending her sincere thanks to them. "Also, I would like to thank my be-



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti top students pose for a photo with Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani at an event held to celebrate their outstanding achievement. — KUNA

loved Kuwait, and everyone who worked to provide special education schools with everything we need to help us learn and make educational achievement," she said. She stressed that she would continue her studies and seek knowledge to obtain the highest academic degree in the field of Islamic education and teach it to university students.

### Expected result

Reem Al-Bader, who ranked 10th in the scientific sector among Kuwaitis, said that she was expecting to get high mark especially since she organized her time well and allocated at least two hours of studying a day since the beginning of the school year, which she extended to three and four hours when the tests approached. She pointed out that

she depended on herself to study and sometimes looked up videos on YouTube to assist her understand some topics. She also credited the support of parents, especially her mother "who helped me a lot to achieve success as well as provide the proper atmosphere for studying."

Bader explained that she will complete her studies in the field of biomedical engineering, saying that it is "a specialization that combines the scientific subjects that I was studying, and I plan to continue studying for a PhD in the same specialization."

Bader Al-Failakawi from Al-Najat Private School, who finished sixth among Kuwaitis in the scientific sector, expressed his happiness with the Ministry of Education's gesture to honor outstanding students, pointing out that this honor is an incentive for them

to continue the march of excellence. He stressed that his family had the biggest role in helping him reach this stage by providing the appropriate atmosphere for him. He also credited time management, giving himself adequate time for study and leisure. He pointed out that he intends to complete his studies in the Kingdom of Bahrain specializing in human medicine, saying that he plans to study with his father who is studying the same specialty in the fifth year, noting that his father encouraged him to study medicine.

As for Mohammed Al-Amir from Yusuf bin Issa School who placed fifth among Kuwaiti students in the science sector, he said that he was happy with this achievement "which came as a result of hard work over the past years and with the support of parents and teachers." — KUNA

## Couples share their experiences with 'quiet divorce'

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** "Quiet divorce" is a term that popped up recently on social media platforms, reflecting the gradual decline of a marriage until the couple drifts apart. Several people spoke to Kuwait Times describing their experiences in "silent marriages".

Um Rayan told Kuwait Times "quiet divorce" exists in many houses in the Middle East due to the

wrong marriage culture. "Many Arab women quit the marriage by doing the bare minimum to maintain a relationship. This happens due to many reasons, and one of them is the wrong marriage concept our society forces on us. The signs of silent divorce can start small, like not having food together and escalate to sleeping in separate rooms," she added.

Um Rayan is one of many wives who are in a "quiet divorce" situation to maintain a good environment for her three children. "Our traditional society requires both of us to be married even if the relationship has ended, just for the children, which I believe are more affected by seeing such an unhealthy marriage," she said.

Regarding the signs, she said emotional and physical connections will fade; there will be no meaningful communication or intimacy; taking the relation-

ship for granted, and partners will not share their thoughts and feelings, where the focus will be only on children or work.

Mohammad Kadry said "quiet divorce" can be avoided by talking it through. "Me and my wife had a frozen period where our emotions faded away. At first, we were stubborn about our situation, and we took each other for granted. But after we reached a deep dark side, a friend advised me to seek help from a marriage counselor for guidance," he said.

"Step by step our communication was facilitated. When you are calm, the conversation about your concerns will be beneficial. Sometimes we just have to take time to reflect on our own feelings and needs; understand what specifically is causing unhappiness in the marriage and how it is affecting us," he added.

Abu Abdullah agreed with Kadry, affirming that

open communication can help express concerns and desires, but sometimes it can be too late unless both are willing to listen and be honest and open. "In my first marriage, I had many troubles. My ex-wife was not cooperating — she just asked for her needs without listening to what actually could fix our marriage. What I discovered from my second marriage is that it takes two to fix a relationship," he explained.

Abu Abdullah pointed out that a logical strategy can improve communication, deepen understanding and find ways to reconnect. "I discovered activities for both wife and husband can release their home stress. My first wife was only focused on her being a wife and me; we were traditional and never thought of spoiling ourselves with things and activities we need for better mental health," he said.

## EU Chargé d'Affaires sends greetings on Eid Al-Adha

**KUWAIT:** The European Union's Chargé d'Affaires in Kuwait Gediminas Varanavicius released a statement expressing greetings on the advent of Eid Al-Adha. "On behalf of the EU Delegation to the State of Kuwait, I would like to wish HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti people, and Muslims around

the world a blessed Eid Al-Adha," he said in the statement. "I would also like to congratulate all those who will complete the hajj this year. This is my third time marking Eid Al-Adha since arriving in Kuwait in September 2020. Over the years, I have immensely enjoyed learning more about this religious celebration and its associated traditions, which reinforce the universal values of compassion and generosity. Eid Al-Adha Mubarak!"



Gediminas Varanavicius



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**MINA:** Kuwaiti pilgrims arrive at Mina on Monday to spend the night before heading to Mount Arafat on Tuesday. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti hajj mission provides support for pilgrims in Mina

**RIYADH:** The Kuwaiti hajj mission arrived on Monday to Mina to host Kuwaiti pilgrims who arrived there on the day of "Tarwyah", which is the day that precedes Arafat Day; the most important of the hajj rituals. Members of the Kuwaiti hajj delegation arrived at the location allocated to them in Mina, as pilgrims flocked there all while praising Allah and performing "takbeer" in unison following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Pilgrims spent the night in Mina before heading to Mount Arafat on Tuesday. The Kuwaiti hajj mission aims to facilitate pilgrimage for Kuwaiti



pilgrims and provide guidance and full support to them through its headquarters dedicated to the holy sites. Mina, which becomes lively only at the time of hajj between Makkah and Muzdalifah, is located seven kilometers away to the northeast of the Grand Mosque. — KUNA

## Local

# Kuwaitis suffer from lack of purpose in jobs unrelated to field of study

## Public sector jobs leave workers feeling undervalued despite benefits

By Ghadeer Ghloum

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti citizens face various challenges in their professional lives, including working in a place that is irrelevant to their degree. Despite a plethora of opportunities available in the state, many locals end up in careers unrelated to their field of study, resulting in a significant lack of motivation and purpose. Kuwait has been known for its emphasis on education and human development, with a majority of its citizens highly educated and holding various degrees and qualifications.

However, despite their education and qualifications, many Kuwaiti citizens are expressing their dissatisfaction with their jobs in the public sector due to lack of relevance and proper utilization of their skills and knowledge. Sara, a Kuwaiti who has been waiting to be hired for more than a year, shared her struggles with Kuwait Times.

"I graduated as a computer engineer from one of Kuwait's best universities. However, after applying for a job in the public sector, I got a job as an ICT teacher in a public school. I did go for the interview and took the exam, but found the whole thing

was completely irrelevant to my field of study. The programs and the curriculum were all different from what I studied as a student of computer engineering," she said.

The public sector in Kuwait is known for its stability and attractive benefits, which makes it a popular employment option for many citizens. However, the focus on job security often comes at the expense of job satisfaction and career growth opportunities. As a result, many Kuwaiti citizens with degrees and qualifications find themselves working in positions that have little or no connection to their field of study, leaving them feeling unfulfilled and undervalued.

"When an individual has to work in a field they have no interest in, they may feel a lack of enthusiasm towards their job and lack the drive to excel. Simply put, employees are more likely to work harder when they genuinely enjoy their job," Sara explained. In addition to reduced motivation, Kuwaitis who work in jobs unrelated to their field of study may also experience a lack of purpose. Since they are not working in their chosen profession, they may feel like they are not making a meaningful difference

in their work. This lack of purpose can have a negative impact on their mental and emotional well-being, leading to depression, anxiety and other psychological challenges.

"I applied for another job, and the employers there told me the process is going to take a long time. They advised me to try and find another job for the time being, until they call me back. I knew then that I needed wasta (connections) to get hired in this place, because one of the main issues with the public sector in Kuwait is the lack of emphasis on merit-based promotions and recognition of skills and qualifications," Sara said.

Kuwaiti citizens' complaints about the irrelevance of their jobs in the public sector with their degrees and qualifications are not unfounded. They reflect the need for better recognition of qualifications and skills, merit-based promotions, opportunities for training and development and a proper utilization of knowledge and expertise. Addressing these issues would improve job satisfaction, motivation and the overall development of the country.

Normally, employees desire to have an adequate relationship with their job. They long to have a sense



of purpose, grow their career and strive to reach new heights that provide them with a sense of fulfilling their role as humans in society. Such feelings are more prevalent in individuals who work where their degree is relevant.

## Zain recognized for contributions to Grand Mosque

**KUWAIT:** Zain recently welcomed a delegation from the Grand Mosque of Kuwait in an official visit to recognize the company's efforts and contributions in serving guests and worshippers at the mosque during the last ten days of the Holy Month of Ramadan and Eid Prayers.

During the visit, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti and Zain's Corporate Relations team welcomed the Director of the Grand Mosque's Administration, Ali Abdullah Shadad and his team to the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The delegation expressed its thanks to Zain for its continuous partnership with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Grand Mosque's Administration.

Every year, in the last ten days of the Holy Month of Ramadan and specifically during Qiyam prayers, Zain shares the spiritual atmosphere of this blessed period of time with worshippers by offering hospitality services to lighten the hot weather conditions and providing golf carts to facilitate transportation between parking areas and the Grand Mosque. The company also shared the cherished Eid breakfast meal with worshippers at the mosque during Eid Prayers to celebrate the



**KUWAIT:** Director of the Grand Mosque Ali Shadad is seen with Waleed Al-Khashti and Zain's team.

blessed and joyous occasion.

Zain has always been keen on organizing interactive social initiatives during Ramadan to recognize and support the various segments of the Kuwaiti community, reflecting Islamic values to enrich the spirit of giving and strengthen the bond between community members.

Zain recently announced a new collaboration with

the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to present its annual complimentary roaming promotion for the hajj season, offering its top roaming plan for free to all postpaid and prepaid customers who are registered in Kuwait's certified hajj campaigns. With this initiative, the company keeps pilgrims in touch with their loved ones at no cost by enjoying Internet and voice calls at hajj locations in Saudi Arabia.

## Foreign Minister heads to Europe on official visit

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah took off on Monday on an official European trip that includes France, Italy, Austria and Hungary. The Kuwaiti top diplomat is set to conduct several meetings with senior officials in each country to enhance bilateral ties, in addition to political discussions. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen with officials as he heads for an official European trip. — KUNA

## Municipal Council postpones raising communications fees

**KUWAIT:** The Municipal Council referred on Monday a proposal to increase the fees for issuing a license to build a communications tower, station, or antenna to KD 200, to a municipal committee.

The proposal also suggests amending a Municipal Council decision which details the fees due for services performed by the municipality.

The council postponed looking into the proposal until it was rewritten in legal terms. It said the proposal will be reviewed again upon the completion of regulations pertaining to communications that the council is working on.

During its meeting on Monday, the council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Mehri, approved the request of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport to allocate open rainwater catchment basins, open water channels, underground water connections, an earth cover and rainwater drainage paths around the Abdali housing area, as well as around the Salmi housing development area, in Al-Na'ayem, Al-Na'ayem industrial area and um Al-Naqa residential area.

Also approved Monday was a request from the Kuwait Investment Authority to allocate five sites for the establishment and management of public warehouses for food, medicines, medical supplies and other purposes in Shuwaikh, Mina Abdullah, Doha, Shadadiya and the area around the airport. — Agencies



Abdullah Al-Mehri



**KUWAIT:** Firefighters extinguish a fire which erupted in a truck carrying flammable materials on Al-Ghazali Road.

## Huge truck fire prompts calls for regulation

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is calling for enforcing regulations to organize the movement of trucks at rush hour.

The calls came after Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) managed to put out a fire that engulfed a truck on Al-Ghazali Road on Monday afternoon.

The Department of Public Relations and Media of the Kuwait Fire Force said the Central Operations Department directed fire brigades to the site upon

receiving a report of the incident. Investigations revealed that the truck was laden with flammable materials, said KFF in a statement to KUNA. The blaze caused heavy traffic in the area, with some people reportedly stuck on the road for over an hour before getting to their destinations.

According to a statement posted on KFF social media accounts, Sheikh Talal has directed the Head of the Kuwait Fire Force, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, and all the concerned authorities in the country to work on regulating the movement of trucks transporting highly flammable materials during rush hour and issuing the necessary recommendations and decisions in this regard. The interior minister thanked fire brigades for their efforts and heroic deeds in fighting the fire and ensuring it doesn't spread to other buildings.

### In my view

## Cooperation for the sake of Kuwait



Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

"Homeland is giving" — this is not a slogan written on a flag or under a state's seal; rather it is an ancient human reality, a great value that still exists on earth. On every national event, legislative or government change, all must remind the new officials to have mercy on the homeland and fear Allah. The homeland is not a given position or a recommendation by some people. The homeland is not an affiliation with a family, tribe or sect, as many are the poor who were more beneficial to the country than people who had well-known names and ranks.

Today, we face a reality we are attempting to ignore — a reality imposed on us by old and new events. Since the bounty of oil gushed from under our feet and sustenance overflowed in our hands, it brought out the worst in some people, and the fight for influence and control of sources of spending began. The struggle then evolved to become a political dispute that divided the country and attracted supporters, and in the midst of a fierce struggle, many forgot they all came out of the same womb, the womb of the homeland, and that they lived a common history and absorbed the same culture — an ignorance that has been there for long, and a struggle that produced struggles.

This dispute created supporters, mercenaries and strife seekers, to a point that the dispute became an arrow directed at the heart of Kuwait. Amidst all the struggles, Kuwait emerges as a loving mother that appeals to its children to return to the way their grandfathers used to manage any dispute with means of brotherhood, tolerance and understanding, excuse each other over differences and for the law to be their guide and wisdom their goal. To return to being close and cooperate, regardless of how far apart their views and opinions are and cooperate for the sake of Kuwait.

In order to be in touch with reality, man remains the man in every place and time, as there are some people who were harsh on Kuwait and exchanged it, in their hearts, with money or authority. They became more harmful to Kuwait than its enemies. They will not vanish from our lives because they are part of life in every era. They will not succeed or scale new heights as long as the people are vigilant and as long as hearts remain full of love for the homeland.

The homeland is not a granted paper — it is history and culture, nights and dreams. There are those who think if they remove Kuwait from their chests and join the conspiracy to bring it down with corruption and bribes, they will be victorious in the power struggle. They do not know that the homeland is in their breaths, and when they spread corruption or encourage it, they will stop breathing and kill themselves.

Kuwait is a value that will not be satisfied with the ink of this world. Kuwait today knows its children, as whoever wipes his sweat for its sake or lights a candle in its path or is sincere in his job to raise its status, will be its son. We know him and he knows us. But for one who sees Kuwait just like a milch cow, living in it and waiting for its udder to dry up to escape from it, and does not respect laws and does not seek its prosperity and glory, then he is not her son. We know him and he knows us.

Kuwait knows its children; it also knows pretenders. It knows us all, and does not need proof from us and will not ask us for witnesses. Boys and girls of Kuwait are those who love Kuwait — love of work and loyalty, not the love of songs and chants. They do not stop giving no matter how bad hardships become. They believe in Kuwait that will remain, Kuwait of history and giving. These are Kuwaitis and they are the people of Kuwait. They do not need recommendations or for anyone to select them. Kuwait knows and loves them. So, congratulations for the love of Kuwait!

## News in Brief

Foreign ministry warns of  
fraudulent WhatsApp calls

KUWAIT: A group of people have been posing as Kuwait's Ambassador to Yemen to extort money from citizens and residents in Kuwait. Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Monday that the impersonators have been calling people from hacked Kuwaiti numbers through WhatsApp. They would then threaten those who pick up their calls with claims that they would report them to the authorities if they didn't pay certain amount of money to people outside the country. The ministry called on people in Kuwait to exercise caution and refrain from interacting with such suspicious calls. Anyone who gets one of these calls, the ministry said, must not respond to the fraudsters' demands in any way and immediately inform authorities. — KUNA

3 stores closed for licensing  
violations in Industrial Ardiya

KUWAIT: Three shops have been closed and five violations were issued in an inspection campaign carried out by the Farwaniya Municipal Audit and Follow-up Department in the Ardiya industrial area. The stores were closed due to a variety of violations related to licensing, said Nasser Al-Rashidi, an official with the department, in a statement. They included putting up an advertisement without the required license, not complying with the requirements under which the store's license was issued, not placing the operation license in a prominent location and employing workers with an expired health certificate. Four warnings were also issued during the inspection tour, said Rashidi. He called on shop owners to abide by the requirements and controls put in place by the municipality to avoid fines and penalties, which could lead to administrative closure.

Eid prayers to be  
held in 46 mosques

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs announced that Eid Al-Adha prayers will be held on Wednesday at 5:06 am in 46 mosques spread across the country, in addition to mosques where Friday prayers are held. The mosques are distributed across the governorates as follows: 10 in Assima governorate, six in Hawally, eight in Farwaniya, six in Jahra, five in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and 11 in Ahmadi. — KUNA

CSC to nominate 2,500  
people for government jobs

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission said Monday it will be nominating about 2,500 male and female citizens for jobs in the public sector. The names of those nominated will be announced after the Eid holiday on Thursday, July 6. This number includes graduates of colleges and holders of certificates and specialized courses.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A family stands at the edge of the water on a beach in Kuwait City. Temperatures in Kuwait have been on the rise over the past few days and are expected to reach 46 degrees Celsius during the Eid Al-Adha holiday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Addiction treatment center to  
soon start rehabilitating youth

## Admin arrangements delaying rehabilitation services in correctional facilities

KUWAIT: The addiction treatment center's new extension will have 100 beds designated for youth who need rehabilitation, said Director of the center Dr Adel Al-Zayed on Monday.

"It will be the first time that youth will be treated at the center, which only treated those over 21 years old in the past," he said in a speech during an event held to mark World Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking under the patronage of the Minister of Health. Once ready early next year, the 300-bed building will also have capacity for 200 females.

The inauguration of the extension will mark the beginning of improvements to the center's outpatient clinic and the continuous care clinic, said Zayed. The center will also provide more support to volunteer organizations, including a program run by the Bashayer Al-Khair Association.

## Rising recovery rate

The number of people recovering from addiction has been on the rise, said Zayed, with recovery rates reaching 40 percent since rehabilitation services have been added to the center. The increase, which he said is comparable to international recovery rates, doesn't only reflect the center's efforts, but also the positive examples set by patients who have previously made recoveries, he added. Zayed stressed the center's keenness to constantly communicate with those recovering from addiction and follow up on their recovery journeys.

He highlighted the existing cooperation between the center and the Department of Correctional Facilities at the Ministry of Interior to provide rehabilitation services within correctional facilities, but said the partnership is still in the process of being implemented due to some administrative arrange-



KUWAIT: The addiction treatment center held an event to mark World Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Monday. — KUNA

ments. Dr Hussein Al-Shatti, a psychiatrist and head of the medical department at the center, said: "The drug problem is a complex issue globally and affects millions of people and may cause harm to their physical and psychological health, so this day comes as a means to enhance work and cooperation to achieve a world free of drug abuse."

World Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, he said, aims to bring attention to the importance of treating people with addiction with respect

and empathy, providing evidence-based services and scientific research, in addition to finding alternatives to punishment, prioritizing prevention and leading with compassion. He explained that the legal provision of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is one of the most important factors contributing to increased abuse rates. He added that men are more vulnerable to addiction and misuse of narcotic substances, but women are more likely to move from abuse to addiction. — KUNA

## CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Journalists Association  
mourns the death of journalistJamal Mahmoud  
Bakheet Abdel Menem

member of KJA

who passed away  
on Sunday, June 25, 2023.

*We pray that his soul rests in peace  
and that his family finds patience  
in these difficult times.*

Drug use skyrockets  
as treatment demands  
remain unmet: Report

VIENNA: The cheap, easy, and fast production of synthetic drugs has radically transformed illicit drug markets around the world, with "lethal results", the United Nations warned Sunday.

While more people are battling drug addiction, criminals continue to exploit conflicts and global crises to expand drug production, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its annual report. "We are witnessing a continued rise in the number of people suffering from drug use disorders worldwide, while treatment is failing to reach all of those who need it," said UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly. "We need to step up responses against drug trafficking rings that are exploiting conflicts and global crises to expand illicit drug cultivation and production, especially of synthetic drugs, fueling illicit markets and causing greater harm to people and communities."

New estimates of people who inject drugs are higher than previously estimated, found the report, adding that this is caused by

GCC chief urges  
backing efforts  
to fight drugs

RIYADH: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said on Monday it is essential to support official efforts exerted to fight the scourge of drug abuse. This came in a press release issued

by the GCC Secretariat-General marking the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, or World Drug Day, which falls on June 26. Budaiwi spoke highly of the efforts of the GCC agencies concerned in general and the international community in particular to fight this serious phenomenon. He added that fighting drug abuse necessitates more effective international cooperation and shared efforts on the part of governmental and civilian agencies, reiterating the GCC member states' commitment to promoting international coordination in this field. — KUNA



Jassem Al-Budaiwi

treatment services and other interventions falling short due to record numbers of displaced people. The new data put the global estimate of people who inject drugs in 2021 at 13.2 million, 18 percent higher than previously estimated. Globally, over 296 million people used drugs in 2021, an increase of 23 percent over the previous decade.

The number of people who suffer from drug use disorders skyrocketed to 39.5 million, a 45 percent increase over 10 years. The report highlighted how socioeconomic conditions drive drug challenges, the environmental devastation and human rights abuses caused by illicit drug economies and the rising dominance of synthetic drugs. The report indicated that youths are more susceptible to drug abuse disorders and stressed that priority must be given to public health, prevention and access to treatment.

The demand for treating drug-related disorders remains largely unmet, according to the report. Only one in five people suffering from drug-related disorders were in treatment for drug use in 2021, with widening disparities in access to treatment across regions. The report further underscores the need for law enforcement responses to keep pace with agile criminal business models and the proliferation of cheap synthetic drugs that are easy to bring to market. It argued that large inequalities in access and availability of controlled drugs for medical use persist, particularly for pain management. The disparity is particularly prevalent between the global North and South and across urban and rural areas, making some people feel the negative impact of drugs more than others. — Agencies



Myanmar fails to halt surge in drug trafficking

## Eight dead in gang violence in Ecuador

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# Russia mutiny raises questions on Wagner overseas operations

Yevgeny Prigozhin is expected to go into exile in Belarus



This screengrab made from undated video footage released by the Russian Defence Ministry on June 26, 2023 show Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (centre) gesturing between officers as they look at a map in an undisclosed location. — AFP

**PARIS:** Russian mercenary group Wagner has been seen for years as an armed extension of Moscow's influence in Syria and Africa but these overseas operations have now been called into question by its leader's failed revolt against the Kremlin. After calling off his troops' advance toward Moscow, Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin is expected to go into exile in Belarus. But now questions hover over the future of the group's operations in more far-flung places, where observers say it profits greatly from exploiting natural resources and propping up regimes sceptical of, or hostile towards, the West such as in Mali and Central African Republic.

Moscow has sent initial indications that business will continue as usual, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying operations will continue in both African nations. But Rob Lee, of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, wrote on Twitter, that the "greatest effects from this event may be felt" in the Middle East and Africa.

"Wagner has a large presence across Africa, which benefits and depends on the Russian government/military. "Would the Kremlin allow the same dynamic to continue if Prigozhin and Wagner are based in Belarus?" he added.

It is a question no-one can answer with certainty. "It's a mystery, and it depends on how (the Russian authorities) want to compartmentalize what's going on in Africa and what's going on everywhere else," Michael Shurkin, director of programmes for the Africa-focused consulting firm 14 North, told AFP. "Russia might think that what they (Wagner) are doing in Africa is worth continuing because it serves Russians interests as well," he continued.

### Codependent

What is likely, however, is that Prigozhin and Putin would have raised the subject before agreeing that the mercenary boss would go into exile rather than face charges over the mutiny. Wagner depends heavily on the Rus-

sian defence ministry for deliveries of troops, equipment and weapons to its theatres of activity.

And Moscow needs Wagner to help keep a grip on the troubled areas where it operates — and where Russia is keen to undermine Western influence. In Syria, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Wagner's mercenaries—from Russia, former Soviet republics and Syria itself — acted as "special forces" on the ground alongside Moscow's regular army after it intervened in the country's civil war in 2015.

They are allegedly still present today, in smaller numbers, near oil wells and in the provinces of Hama and Latakia. In Africa, Wagner fighters have also been identified in Libya, Mozambique and Sudan.

They are on the front lines in insurgency-hit Mali — whose junta insists it employs only "Russian instructors" — as well as in the Central African Republic, where a Wagner executive manages the security of President

Faustin Archange Touadera.

The group brings back "gold and minerals from Sudan, the Central African Republic and Mali, which Putin needs to keep his economy on life support", said a European military source. The European Union subsequently imposed fresh sanctions on Wagner, targeting several of its senior representatives in the African country.

On Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron accused Russia of being "a destabilizing force in Africa through private militias who come to prey on and commit abuses on civilian populations".

### 'Uncertainty and hesitation'

Lavrov said on Monday in an interview with RT that Wagner members were working as "instructors" in Mali and the CAR at the request of the two governments. "This work, of course, will continue," he said, adding that the revolt would not affect Russia's ties with "partners and friends".

Wagner's headquarters in Saint Pe-

tersburg meanwhile insisted the company was working "in normal mode". "Visibly, in Bangui and Bamako, there's uncertainty and hesitation about what's happening," said Maxime Audinet, of the Strategic Research Institute at the Paris Military School (IRSEM), in reference to the authorities in the Central African Republic and Mali.

"The Prigozhin network has become the dominant element of Russia's presence in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years," Audinet said. "We can expect the fragile balance between Russian state and non-state actors on the continent to be shaken up."

It could take time for the dust to settle. "Unless there's cooperation with the (Russian) defence ministry, I don't see how the group can continue to operate there," said Pauline Bax, deputy director of the Africa programme at the International Crisis Group. But Putin "can't send Russian soldiers in Wagner's place. I can't see the group pulling out of the continent straight away." — AFP

## Mitsotakis back as Greek premier

**ATHENS:** Conservative leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis embarked Monday on his second term as Greece's prime minister with a vow to accelerate institutional and economic reforms, after voters handed him a huge election victory for the second time in five weeks. Crediting Mitsotakis and his New Democracy party for bringing economic stability to the erstwhile EU debt laggard, voters gave the conservatives their widest winning margin in almost 50 years on Sunday. "No adversary, absolute dominance of Mitsotakis," headlined centrist newspaper Ta Nea.

Holding 158 seats in the 300-seat parliament, Mitsotakis was sworn in as Greece's prime minister after officially receiving the mandate to form a government from head of state, President Katerina Sakellaropoulou.

"It is an honor to take on the responsibility of a new mandate of four years," he told the president, adding that "we will begin working hard on the major reforms". "We will begin working hard for big reforms," he told the president, underlining that he had pledged to "put in place major changes during the second four-year mandate". Among his campaign pledges is pouring money into the country's public health system — which was stretched to its limits by the COVID-19 pandemic — and improving railway safety after the deaths of 57 people in a February train collision that was Greece's worst rail disaster.

Congratulations had poured in from world leaders swiftly after Mitsotakis's victory. "I look forward to continuing our close cooperation on shared priorities to foster prosperity and regional security," said US President Joe Biden in a statement. French President Emmanuel Macron also promised to work together towards "a stronger and more sovereign Europe," while Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani called Mitsotakis's re-election "a sign of political stability that is good for the whole Europe".

### 'Judgement'

The 55-year-old former McKinsey consultant and Harvard graduate, who steered the EU nation from the pandemic back to two consecutive years of strong growth, had already scored a resounding win in an election in May.

But having fallen short by five seats in parliament of being able to form a single-party government, he refused to try to form a coalition, in effect forcing 9.8 million Greek voters back to the ballot



ATHENS: Greece's newly re-elected prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (R) stands with his wife Mareva Grabowski-Mitsotakis (2R) and his children Kostandinos (L), Dafni (2L) and Sophia (C) during his swearing-in ceremony at the presidential palace in Athens. — AFP

boxes. The gamble paid off, with his New Democracy party consolidating its win from the May 21 vote, while its nearest rival, the left-wing Syriza party of former premier Alexis Tsipras, saw a loss of tens of thousands of voters compared to just a month ago.

Tsipras, acknowledging a "serious political defeat", said he was leaving his political fate to the "judgement" of Syriza members. For many Greeks, Tsipras is the prime minister who nearly crashed Greece out of the euro, and who reneged on a vow of abolishing austerity to sign the country on to more painful bailout terms.

To the dismay of centrists, Sunday's strong swing to the right was also accompanied by the return of the far right into parliament. Spartiates (Spartans), which is endorsed by the jailed former spokesman of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, will make an entrance in parliament after crossing the three-percent threshold.

Spartiates and another two small nationalist parties with anti-migration policies garnered between them nearly 13 percent of the vote. For Tsipras, the strongest showing of Greek hard-right parties in decades was a "visible" threat to democracy.

Mitsotakis is due to unveil his cabinet later Monday, though names were already circulating even before the last votes were counted. Mitsotakis' trusted troubleshooter George Gerapetritis is being tipped as foreign minister.

A professor of constitutional law, Gerapetritis was enlisted in March to deal with the train tragedy, as well as a wiretapping scandal that implicated the prime minister's office last year. The former foreign minister, Nikos Dendias, a political moderate, is expected to move to the defence ministry. — AFP

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## International

# Police fire tear gas at opposition HQ as Sierra Leone vote tally continues

## Vote tallying gets underway across the country, but results not yet announced

FREETOWN: Police in Sierra Leone fired tear gas at the main opposition party's headquarters on Sunday evening, authorities said, as voters awaited the results of a fiercely fought general election. Opposition All People's Congress (APC) presidential candidate Samura Kamara said on Twitter that live bullets had also been fired at his office inside the party headquarters in the capital Freetown.

Sidie Yahya Tunis, a spokesman for the APC, told AFP that one woman had died in the incident. "She was downstairs in the medical unit — she's a nurse — we have a little health clinic in our office, that's where she was working," he said.

Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, a prominent APC member bidding for a second term as Freetown mayor, tweeted photos from inside the building showing people taking cover on the floor. "I am in the APC Party office and we are under fire," she wrote.

In a statement, the Sierra Leone Police said that members of the APC had paraded through Freetown "announcing to the public that they had won" the elections. They attracted "a huge crowd" of supporters outside the headquarters, who "started harassing passers-by", the force said. "When the situation became unbearable, the Police had to fire teargas canisters so as to disperse the crowd which was harassing people on the road," it added. Vote tallying got underway across the country earlier on Sunday, but results have not yet been announced. Voting during Saturday's presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections was mostly peaceful.

But on Sunday, chief electoral commissioner Mohamed Konneh outlined a number of districts where he said polling staff had been attacked by members of the public. Also on Sunday, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) of President Julius Maada Bio alleged in a statement that "top-ranking members" of the APC had attacked its polling agents.

On Saturday evening, senior members of the op-

position party told AFP that violence had taken place near several polling centres in Freetown. The head of the Office of National Security, Abdulai Caulker, said at a press conference that he was not aware of those alleged incidents.

Clashes also broke out outside APC's headquarters on Wednesday after the party called for "peaceful" nationwide protests. Sixty-six people were arrested Wednesday across Freetown, police said. The APC has also alleged that its supporters were attacked while campaigning in rural parts of the country. Some level of political violence is typical of Sierra Leonean election campaigns.

### 'Concerned'

On Sunday evening, the European Union Election Observation Mission said it was "concerned about the ongoing tabulation process". "Considering the highly polarized political environment and prevailing mistrust, it is imperative that the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone provides full transparency during the tabulation of results," chief observer Evin Incir said in a statement.

The Carter Center, which also sent an observation mission, said Sunday evening it was concerned "about reports indicating a lack of transparency during parts of the tabulation process". Kamara of the APC alleged in a statement earlier on Sunday that the electoral commission was making it "impossible for us and other political parties to compare, reconcile and verify" tallying. The APC has for weeks accused the electoral commission of bias in favor of the governing party, raising speculation that it is laying the groundwork for a court challenge of the results — a tactic both parties have used in the past.

Konneh of the electoral commission said in a press conference that the party's demands were "practically impossible" given the scale of the tallying. Many polling stations opened and closed late in



FREETOWN: Soldiers of the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces patrol the streets in Freetown on June 26, 2023. Police in Sierra Leone fired tear gas at the main opposition party's headquarters, as voters awaited the results of a fiercely fought general election. — AFP

Freetown on Saturday, with voting officially ending at 11:30 pm (2330 GMT), according to Konneh. He said it had been "one of the best election days" in recent history, "if not the best". Results are expected within 48 hours of the vote.

### Key players

Twelve men and one woman were running for president, but incumbent Bio's main challenger is Kamara of the APC. Bio narrowly beat Kamara in a runoff in 2018. Both main parties said they were confident of victory in statements on Sunday.

Some 3.4 million people were registered to vote, the electoral commission said. Presidential candi-

dates must secure 55 percent of valid votes for a first-round win. Turnout has ranged from 76 to 87 percent over the past three elections.

Voters will also elect members of parliament and local councils under a new proportional representation. A June 14 poll by survey group Institute for Governance Reform forecast that Bio would win 56 percent of the vote, with 43 percent for Kamara.

Another poll, conducted by the newspaper Sierra Eye and two local data groups, forecast 38 percent for the incumbent and 25 percent for his main challenger. The elections are being closely followed in West Africa, a region recently dominated by coups and turmoil. — AFP



YANGON: A police official holds a pack of drugs before a destruction ceremony to mark the "International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking" in Yangon on June 26, 2023. — AFP

## Myanmar fails to halt surge in drug trafficking

YANGON: Myanmar junta authorities said they torched almost half a billion dollars worth of illegal drugs on Monday but warned they were failing to stop a surge in the production and trafficking of narcotics. Head-high piles of heroin, cannabis, methamphetamine and opium were burned in the commercial hub Yangon, AFP reporters said, in an annual spectacle to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Televised torchings also took place elsewhere in the country, with a total of \$446 million of narcotics going up in smoke, according to junta officials. But in a rare admission, the head of Myanmar's Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control said its efforts to crush the multi-billion-dollar trade were having no impact. "Even though countless drug abusers, producers, traffickers and cartels were arrested and prosecuted, the production and trafficking of drugs have not declined at all," Soe Htut told the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper.

The "Golden Triangle" border region between Myanmar, Laos and Thailand has long been a hotbed of illegal drug production and trafficking, particularly of meth and opium. This includes Myanmar's Shan state - Southeast Asia's primary source of meth, according to the UN - home to a patchwork of ethnic rebel groups and militias aligned with the country's army.

Analysts say the military, which ousted an elected government and seized power in 2021, is not serious about ending the lucrative trade. The army is "actually the ultimate protection cartel of the trade, and have been for many years", independent analyst David Mathieson told AFP.

The burning comes as the United Nations reported record seizures of crystal meth last year in Myanmar and said opium poppy farming had seen a revival in the chaos unleashed by the coup. More than 23 tons of crystal meth were seized in Myanmar in 2022, the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime said earlier this month.

Wholesale and street prices for meth across Southeast Asia were falling or at record lows, it said. "The most powerful regional trafficking networks are able to operate with a high degree of certainty they can and will not be stopped," it said.

Opium poppy production in Myanmar also ramped up dramatically following the coup, the office said in January, as political and economic turmoil drove farmers to cultivate the crop. The area of land used for opium poppy is now at just over 40,000 hectares, the UN said - around half the size of New York City. Authorities in neighboring Thailand said they destroyed 32 tonnes of illicit drugs, mostly meth, with a value of around \$607 million. — AFP

## Russia suffers legal setback in Australian embassy standoff

CANBERRA: Russia's bid to build a new embassy near Australia's parliament suffered a legal blow on Monday, with a top court backing the government's effort to seize the land. Australia has blocked Russia from building a new embassy in Canberra, after intelligence agencies warned it could be used as a base to spy on lawmakers.

Russia last week launched a last-minute injunction to hold on to the land, while dispatching a mystery diplomat to squat there as the legal tussle played out.

But Australia's high court ruled on Monday morning that Russia had to vacate the site, at least until the case returns to court for more detailed legal arguments. The squatter-diplomat was seen exiting the site soon after the ruling, before being whisked away in a diplomatic vehicle. "The court has made clear that there is no legal basis for a Russian presence to continue on the site at this time," Australian Prime

minister Anthony Albanese told reporters. "We expect the Russian Federation to act in accordance with the court's ruling." Russia bought the lease to the land from the Australian government in 2008, and in 2011 was granted approval to build its new embassy there. But the Australian government announced last week it was tearing up that agreement. Australia's parliament passed laws specifically aimed at stopping a Russian embassy from being built on the site, which sits about 400 metres (440 yards) from the parliamentary precinct.

"The government has received very clear security advice as to the risk posed by a new Russian presence so close to Parliament House," Albanese said.

"We are acting quickly to ensure the lease site does not become a formal diplomatic presence," Albanese on Monday also announced a new package of military assistance for Ukraine - including 28 M113 armored personnel carriers and an undisclosed amount of 105mm howitzer rounds.

"We support international efforts to ensure Putin's aggression fails and that Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity prevails," Albanese said. The package did not include Hawkei light armored patrol vehicles or more Bushmaster infantry vehicles - both of which Ukraine had requested. — AFP



SYDNEY: Pro-Russia and pro-Vladimir Putin activists demonstrate outside Kirribilli House, an official residence of Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, in Sydney as they protest against the Australian government's decision to block the construction of a new Russian embassy building in Canberra. — AFP

## Serbia frees 3 captured Kosovo police officers

PRISTINA: Serbia freed three Kosovo police officers taken into custody by its security forces earlier this month, Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti said Monday, after a court ordered the trio's release. The move follows weeks of soaring tensions between the two sides, after rioting in northern Kosovo saw more than 30 NATO peacekeepers injured in late May.

"We confirm that the 3 kidnapped police officers have been released. Even though we are joyous that they get to return to their families, this abduction consists of a serious human rights violation & must be reprimanded," Kurti wrote on social media.

Kurti's announcement came as a Serbian court said the three had been indicted but their detention had also been "terminated". "The higher tribunal... has confirmed the indictment against the aforementioned and brought a ruling that the detention of the indicted be terminated," read a statement by the higher court in Serbia's Kraljevo, where the case was heard.

The arrest of the three policemen started a war of words between the Kosovo government and Serbia, with Pristina saying the three men had been kidnapped. Belgrade, however, accused the three of crossing into its territory.

Kurti's government has sought to crack down on what it says is rampant smuggling across its northern frontier, accusing Serbia of using organized crime and black market trade to control Serb-majority areas of north Kosovo. The prime minister said the "kidnapping" of its police was likely "revenge" for the arrest of an alleged Serb paramilitary leader in Kosovo this month, whom Kurti claimed was a major figure linked to the smuggling gangs.

### High tensions

Tensions have been skyrocketing between the arch rivals following Pristina's decision last month to install ethnic Albanian mayors in four Serb-majority municipalities. France, Germany and the United States have urged both Pristina and Belgrade to dial down the tensions, while the US openly slammed the Kosovo government's decision to install the mayors. The European Union held crisis talks mediated by foreign policy chief Josep Borrell last week, hoping to ease tensions. However the meeting did not appear to score any breakthroughs, with the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia not meeting face to face.

"After four hours meeting, I think the two leaders understand the severity of the situation," Borrell said. "But obviously, they are in different situations, different approaches, different interpretations." The dispute was the latest in a long list of incidents to rock the area since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 - nearly a decade after NATO forces helped push Serbian forces out of the former province during a bloody war that killed around 13,000 people, most ethnic Albanians. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Chained Indians rescued

NEW DELHI: About a dozen shackled workers in India were rescued from "torture" in a chain gang digging wells for 12 hours a day without wages, a government rights body said Monday. The case has shone new light on the long-outlawed practice of bonded labor, dubbed "debt slavery" by rights campaigners, in which debtors are forced to work to pay back borrowed cash while interest keeps mounting. The reports of the 11 labourers from Maharashtra state emerged after one slipped his chains, told the Maharashtra police about the use of "torture" and brought them to free the others on June 17, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said. "They were forced to work for 12 hours a day without any wages to dig a well," NHRC said in a statement. It also said they were chained to stop them from escaping, were fed once a day and forced to defecate where they worked. Police had arrested four people but the NHRC said more had to be done than the "mere rescue by the police and arrest of some of the accused". The NHRC said the case "grossly violated" the 1976 abolition of the bonded labour system. — AFP

#### Man killed for 'blasphemy'

KANO: An angry mob in the northern Nigerian city of Sokoto has killed a Muslim man for alleged blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), police and local residents said. Usman Buda, a butcher at the city abattoir, "was mobbed and attacked by some Muslim faithfuls (who) inflicted serious injuries on him", Sokoto state police spokesman Ahmad Rufa'i said on Sunday. Blasphemy attracts the death penalty under Islamic law, or sharia, which operates alongside common law in a dozen predominantly Muslim states in northern Nigeria. In many cases, the accused are killed by mobs without going through any legal process. The attackers fled when police arrived at the scene and Buda was taken to hospital but he was confirmed dead, Rufa'i said. Police are seeking the perpetrators, he said. Buda, a Salafi Muslim, was stoned and beaten to death by his colleagues following an argument, fellow butcher Isa Danhili said. "It all started when some young beggars came around asking for alms for the sake of Allah and the Prophet," he told AFP. When Buda disapproved of the children begging there was a heated argument, he said. — AFP

#### IS fighters killed in army raid

KIRKUK: An Iraqi soldier was killed and an officer wounded during a counter-terrorism raid in Iraq that also killed three suspected Islamic State group fighters, Baghdad's security forces said. Sunday's military operation in Kirkuk province, north of the Iraqi capital, targeted "three figures of the terrorist group Daesh in the Turkelan region," the security forces said in a statement, using the Arab acronym for IS jihadists. After the suspected IS members were identified, Iraqi troops approached and a clash erupted, added the statement late Sunday. The jihadists "were surrounded and killed, the explosive belts they were wearing were detonated", it said. IS jihadists seized swathes of Iraq and neighboring Syria in 2014, declaring a "caliphate" which they ruled with brutality before their defeat in late 2017 by Iraqi forces backed by a US-led military coalition. Despite the setbacks, the extremist group can still call on an underground network of fighters to carry out attacks on both sides of the porous border, the United Nations says. On June 11, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and four others wounded in a pre-dawn attack west of Kirkuk blamed on IS. — AFP

## Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023

# ‘Economic warfare’: Yemenis still struggling despite ease in fighting

## Grinding economic crisis puts holiday cheer on hold



SANAA: A farmer waits for customers at a livestock market in Sanaa ahead of Muslim festival of Eid Al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice. — AFP photos

ADEN: At a livestock market in war-battered Yemen, goats and sheep meant to be slaughtered for the Muslim Eid Al-Adha holiday are happily munching on hay, instead of leaving with a buyer. The market trader Eiad Al-Alimi expected better business this year, following a lull in fighting and renewed efforts to end Yemen's eight-year-long conflict. But a grinding economic crisis - marked by a collapsed currency and deepened by import bans and attacks on critical oil infrastructure - has put holiday cheer on hold.

"We had high expectations," Alimi told AFP from the southern city of Aden, the stronghold of the ousted government, as dozens of unsold sheep grazed behind him. "We expected things to improve, the lives of citizens to improve," he said. "But unfortunately, everything is still expensive - even more so than before." Clashes in Yemen between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition have reduced sharply since a UN-brokered truce began in April last year, even though it lapsed in October.

But talks towards a political solution appear stalled and there is no sign of a peace dividend for the embattled residents of the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country. The economy has continued its downward spiral, leaving many Yemenis

battling to survive as living conditions deteriorate. "People can't even afford to buy basic foodstuffs," said Amer Mohamed, a teacher from Aden who was shopping at the livestock market. "How can they afford" sheep or mutton, he asked. "Even those who were able to buy a sacrificial animal for Eid last year will only be able to buy half an animal this year."

### 'We are almost dead'

Yemen's economy was already in crisis before the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa in September 2014, prompting the Saudi-led military intervention the following March. Hundreds of thousands of people have died in the fighting or from indirect causes such as lack of food or water, in what the United Nations calls one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. More than two-thirds of the population live in poverty, according to the UN, including government employees in Houthi-controlled areas who have not been paid in years.

The UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, said "economic warfare" between the opposing parties has compounded the country's problems. "While the parties have taken some steps forward, they have unfortunately also taken steps backward," he told the Ye-

men International Forum in The Hague this month. "Economic escalatory measures and countermeasures taken by the parties have further damaged Yemen's already struggling economy."

At the end of last year, Houthi drone attacks on government-run oil terminals halted hydrocarbon exports, the main source of income for the Saudi-backed authorities. This aggravated the collapse of the Yemeni rial, further limiting the government's ability to finance basic services and the salaries of civil servants. "There is no electricity, no water, no salaries," said Waheeb Dawood, an Aden resident. "We are almost dead, not alive," he told AFP from a street market, where vendors outnumbered customers in the days leading up to the Eid holiday.

### 'Pervasive corruption'

Already beleaguered by war, Yemen's private sector suffers from "pervasive corruption" as well as double taxation by the warring parties, according to a World Bank report in April which forecasts a recession and 16.8 percent inflation this year. Areas under rebel control, which are home to nearly 80 percent of the population, are facing severe economic woes despite the easing of a maritime and air blockade long imposed by Saudi Arabia.



SANAA: Cattles eat at a livestock market in Sanaa ahead of Muslim festival of Eid Al-Adha.

"There is indeed a truce on the military and political level, but the battle has intensified in the economic sphere," said Moustafa Nasr, president of the Yemeni Studies and Economic Media Center, a civil society group.

Despite the opening of shipping lanes to the Houthi-held port of Hodeidah, "the entry of goods imported from ports controlled by the government has been pro-

hibited", worsening shortages and inflation, he explained. In Hodeidah in western Yemen, Hassan, a former civil servant who asked not to use his full name, said he had started selling ice cream to support his family. Having received no salary in years, he said he will have to sell his car to cover the costs of this year's Eid celebrations. "I can't afford to pay for gas anyway," he said. — AFP

## Indonesians cash in on TikTok live selling spree

JAKARTA: Indonesian livestreamer Christine Febriyanti stood in a room crammed with clothes in Jakarta, hawking colorful garments to hundreds of viewers on a TikTok livestream for a local fashion brand. "For the Vitamin C kind of girls, you'll fulfill all of your nutrient needs with these orange pants," the 25-year-old told the sales session.

Her pitch is part of a clamor for TikTok shopping in Indonesia, where users spent more money on the app than anywhere else in Southeast Asia over the past year. The region is a bright spot for TikTok, owned by Chinese tech firm ByteDance, following months of intense scrutiny in the United States and other nations over users' data security and the company's alleged ties to Beijing.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew announced plans last week to invest billions of dollars in Southeast Asia, where it counts 325 million users, of whom 125 million are in Indonesia. As TikTok Shop grows in popularity, with Indonesians buying more than a third of goods sold in Southeast Asia over the past year, entrepreneurs are flocking to the platform to promote a range of tech, fashion and homemade products. They are drawn to TikTok's e-commerce features that allow them to sell through livestreams or open online stores.

Febriyanti's 20-strong online retail employer Monomolly reported a 30 percent increase in revenue since kicking off a TikTok livestream drive last year, according to spokesperson Nadya Paramitha. The platform's algorithm has jumpstarted the company's business, according to employees. It has allowed sellers to "reach new markets randomly" instead of relying on interest-based search results on rival apps, said TikTok sales manager Chelvyana Onggo Winata.



JAKARTA: Photo shows Monica Amadea (center), owner of a TikTok sales channel called Monomolly, and her employees offering merchandise through a TikTok livestream in Jakarta. — AFP

### Cookies and entertainment

It isn't just companies that are using the platform. DIY home streamers Panji Made Agung and his wife Astari Gita used to rely on their families to survive. But they now sell as many as 1,000 cookie jars a month through TikTok livestreams, making 25 million rupiah (\$1,700). Their viewers and sales ramped up because of their personalities, said Gita, who often flirts with her husband and makes him feel uncomfortable on camera. "We discovered selling products alone would not work. It has to touch people's emotions. It has to be entertaining," Gita said.

"They like our real-life humor as a couple and Agung being awkward." TikTok Shop has capitalized on the Indonesian market, amassing more than two million sellers since it launched in 2021. It takes one percent commission and a charge of 20,000 rupiah (\$0.13) for every item sold, building a growing market share against more established and bigger rivals. Indonesia represented 42 percent of TikTok's \$4.4 billion regional gross merchandise value (GMV) last year, according to Singapore-based consultancy Momentum Works. — AFP

## Cash-strapped Lanka to restructure debt

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan authorities have declared a five-day closure of financial markets from Thursday ahead of a controversial move to restructure the government's domestic debt amounting to more than \$51 billion. The restructuring affects government bonds in line with an IMF bailout agreed in March, after Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt in April last year and declared bankruptcy.

A parliamentary official said lawmakers were expected to meet on Tuesday to discuss holding a special session of the legislature later this week to approve debt restructure plans. Central bank governor Nandalal Weerasinghe said authorities had ordered that Friday will be a holiday, on top of existing religious holidays on Thursday and Monday and the weekend. He told local television networks that it would be unhealthy for markets to remain open while the debt restructuring was being discussed in parliament.

"Markets should not function when sensitive debt

restructuring is discussed," Weerasinghe told the Hiru TV network. "We hope to complete the restructuring process within these five days." Weerasinghe said deposits of individuals would not be affected, but the government plan is to restructure treasury bills and bonds held by commercial banks and pension funds. The government is still in talks with its foreign creditors to restructure external debt, a key condition to continue with the four-year \$2.9 billion IMF rescue package.

The government had expected foreign debt restructuring by last August, but it was held up as the country's main bilateral creditor, China, was initially reluctant to take a haircut and instead offered more loans to pay off old debts. More than \$14 billion of the total foreign credit is bilateral debt to foreign governments, 52 percent of which is owed to China. Under IMF conditions, the government must reduce its domestic and foreign debt servicing by more than half to balance its books and emerge from the island's worst economic crisis. The country ran out of foreign exchange to pay even for the most essential imports earlier last year sparking unprecedented shortages of food, fuel and medicines. — AFP



COLOMBO: A cargo ship departs from the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) in Colombo. — AFP



## Business

# German business morale falls more than expected

## Court approves claims over illegal diesel exhaust software

**BERLIN:** German business sentiment fell more than expected in June, a key survey showed Monday, as the clouds gathered over Europe's largest economy. The Ifo institute's confidence barometer, based on a survey of 9,000 companies, fell for the second month in a row to 88.5 points from 91.7 points in May. Analysts surveyed by financial data company FactSet had expected a reading of 90.8 points. The weak score is the latest in a series of concerning data out of Germany, after the economy slipped into recession around the turn of the year.

The country's leading economic institutes, including Ifo, now expect the economy to shrink by 0.2 percent over the course of 2023, as the outlook darkens. "Weakness in the manufacturing sector is steering the German economy into turbulent waters," said Ifo president Clemens Fuest. Expectations for the economy among manufacturers fell to their lowest point since November last year, Fuest said. "Hardly any industry has been left untouched by this development," he said.

Weak growth in China and the United States, as well as steep interest rate hikes in response to rising consumer prices were "weighing on German company sentiment," said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the ING bank. "The optimism at the start of the year seems to have given way to more of a sense of reality," Brzeski said. The continuation of the war in Ukraine, an ageing population and the cost of transitioning to renewable energy were also dragging on the German economy, he said. "With several short and long-term challenges, growth will remain subdued at best" in the coming years, Brzeski said.

### Diesel exhaust software

Meanwhile, a top German court on Monday opened the way to further compensation claims

against carmakers that installed illegal diesel exhaust treatment software, following a landmark European ruling. Diesel owners with the "thermal window" program would be entitled to a payout if their vehicles risked being taken off the road, said the German Federal Court of Justice (BGH). The decision followed a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in March that consumers had a right to compensation if their vehicles had the software installed. The ECJ left it to German courts to determine the exact scope for claims.

The illegal program reduced or even completely deactivated emissions filtering when temperatures were below 15 degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit) and higher than 33 degrees Celsius. Carmakers long argued that their use of the software was necessary to protect the engine - even if it made the car more polluting.

But experience showed that car owners "would not have bought the vehicle at the agreed price" had they known about the software, according to the BGH. The buyer of the vehicle incurred damages when its use was threatened by "an impending operating restriction or ban", the court in Karlsruhe said. As such, successful claimants would be entitled to between five and 15 percent of the price of the automobile in compensation. Automakers had to demonstrate they did not "intentionally or negligently" install the software to avoid a payout, the court ruled.

### 'Millions of consumers'

The original ECJ judgment came after a German court in Ravensburg asked it to weigh in on a case brought by the owner of a Mercedes-Benz vehicle equipped with the "thermal window" software. German judges had until now set high hurdles for damages, asking plaintiffs to prove that the car



BERLIN: People walk around automotive equipment before the annual general meeting of German carmaker Volkswagen in Berlin. — AFP

manufacturer had intentionally harmed the buyer rather than merely being negligent. German consumer lawyer Claus Goldenstein, who represents some 50,000 claimants in emissions-cheating cases, said the BGH ruling could benefit "millions of consumers in Europe".

"It has never been easier to assert claims for damages than it is now," Goldenstein said in a statement, predicting a "wave of lawsuits" in Germany. The

"thermal window" software issue is different from the scandal that erupted in 2015 when Volkswagen admitted to installing illegal defeat devices in millions of diesel cars to dupe emissions tests. The software behind the so-called dieselgate scandal made cars seem less polluting in the lab than they were on the road. The revelation led to a flood of lawsuits against the German giant, and has likewise ensnared other carmakers. — AFP

## Stocks and ruble drop as traders eye Russia

**LONDON:** The ruble reached a 14-month low against the dollar and major equity markets slid Monday after an aborted weekend mutiny in Russia that stoked concerns about stability in the nuclear-armed country. While the advance by the Wagner mercenary force led by Yevgeny Prigozhin was called off before it reached Moscow, analysts said the rebellion showed President Vladimir Putin's grip on power was more fragile than previously thought. It also added to unease on trading floors, where investors last week reversed a recent rally in stocks owing to concerns about ever-rising interest rates aimed at fighting stubbornly-high inflation. The ruble hit 85.37 to the dollar - a level last seen in April 2022 shortly after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The ruble went on to recover slightly Monday.

The dollar was down against the euro, pound and haven yen. Gold, also a refuge investment, jumped about half-a-percent in value. Oil prices rose as Russia is a major producer, but concern about demand owing to the impact of rate rises kept gains limited, while futures for European natural gas jumped. The revolt came after Prigozhin had railed for months against the Russian military's handling of the war in Ukraine. But Wagner mercenaries returned to their base Sunday after Putin agreed to allow Prigozhin to avoid treason charges and accept exile in neighboring Belarus.

However, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the events exposed "real cracks" in Putin's rule. The agreement halted an escalation of the crisis but observers warned that markets were susceptible to any further instability in Russia. "Even though the Prigozhin mutiny may not cause larger market movements directly, this could quickly change depending on how the political situation in Russia unfolds in coming months," Erik Meyerson, at SEB AB, said. "Markets will likely become more sensitive to internal political matters in Russia."

### Interest rates

Investors were also keeping tabs on comments from Federal Reserve officials, hoping for clarity on their monetary policy plans after boss Jerome Powell last week warned interest rates would likely keep rising. His comments dealt a blow to hopes the bank had come to the end of its tightening cycle, and came as authorities elsewhere announced further hikes. There is a growing worry among investors that the tightening cycle around the world could hammer the global economy, with the euro-zone already in recession.

A survey Monday showed German business sentiment fell more than expected in June, as the clouds gathered over Europe's largest economy, also in recession. The Ifo institute's confidence barometer, based on a survey of 9,000 companies, fell for the second month in a row. There is also a focus on China and leaders' support plans for the world's number two economy as its recovery from years of zero-COVID restrictions falters. Traders were left disappointed by last week's lack of detail on how to kickstart growth, with a market rally sparked by Chinese interest rate cuts running out of steam. — AFP

## South Africa minister accused of hindering green transition

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa's energy minister was accused of failing to back the country's energy transition on Sunday after he "snubbed" a billion-dollar green hydrogen deal launched in partnership with the Netherlands and Denmark. The country's biggest opposition party said energy minister Gwede Mantashe had not signed an agreement on the fund, which was approved and launched anyway on Tuesday. South Africa is facing a power crisis with scheduled outages that last up to 12 hours a day, and the move has sparked a renewed debate on the transition to cleaner energy.

The transition has been mired with infighting among the government, which has a long history of support from labor unions representing mine workers. According to South Africa's Sunday Times newspaper, Mantashe said he "refused" to sign a memorandum of understanding on the deal. The opposition Democratic Alliance said it was "unacceptable" and called for the minister's removal from office.

"Mantashe's recent decision to snub the top-level meeting... with European leaders to launch a European-funded green-energy initiative is deeply concerning", the party said. "We cannot afford a recalcitrant and ideologically compromised minister at the helm of the energy portfolio," it added, accusing Mantashe of "hindering the much-needed rapid and just energy transition".

Despite being invited, Mantashe did not attend the deal's launch at business forum in Pretoria, opting to attend a separate energy summit hosted by a leading trade union federation. Energy ministry spokesman Nathi Shabangu told AFP the minister's absence did not signal his disagreement with the deal, insisting that he simply did not sign "because he had not seen the MOU he could not sign on what he had not seen".

The blended finance fund will "accelerate the development of a green hydrogen sector and circular economy," the president's office said earlier this week. Mantashe has in the past been vocal in his support for the coal lobby, saying last year that ditching coal too quickly was not in the country's best interests, citing economic damage and job losses. Since 2021, South Africa, which is one of the world's top 12 carbon emitters, has secured billions of dollars in international loans and grants to support a green transition. The coal-rich but energy-starved country generates about 80 percent of its electricity through coal, relying on 15 ageing coal-fired power plants. — AFP



NEW YORK: People walk by the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — AFP

## Official calls for 'impartial' review into bank failures

**WASHINGTON:** A senior Federal Reserve official has criticized proposals to increase bank capital requirements and called for an "independent and impartial" investigation into the rapid failure of US banks earlier this year. Fed governor Michelle Bowman said Sunday that a recent report into banking failures put together by the US central bank's vice chair for supervision, Michael Barr, was "not reviewed by the other members of the Board prior to its publication."

"Troublingly, other Board members were afforded no ability to contribute to the report's content," she told a conference in the Austrian city of Salzburg in prepared remarks. "There is a genuine question whether these efforts provide a sufficient accounting of what occurred," she added. Barr's report called for greater banking oversight while admitting to the Fed's own failures in its oversight of the failed California lender Silicon Valley Bank (SVB). Bowman's comments highlight the division at the top of the Fed over the best path forward on bank regulation following the swift collapse of regional lenders including SVB, which failed following a bank run by concerned depositors in March.

### 'Unintended consequences'

Speaking in a Congressional hearing on Thursday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell addressed reports that regulators are considering raising capital requirements for some US banks by as much as 20 percent. "The capital requirements will be very, very skewed to the eight largest banks," he said, adding that there may also be some capital increases for other banks. But he said that "none of this should affect banks under \$100 billion (in assets)."

On Sunday, Bowman said there was "room to improve bank supervision for large banks," adding that such reform efforts should be "informed by an impartial and independent review of what led to the failures." "We must be circumspect about what went wrong, deliberate about what to fix, and cognizant of unintended consequences," she said. "Misperceptions and misunderstandings about the root causes, of the bank's failures could cause 'real harm to banks and their customers, to the financial system, and to the broader economy,'" she added.

Bowman said she expected that an independent review into the matter would "find improvements to supervision, revisions to liquidity requirements, or improvements to bank preparedness to access liquidity are more effective than increases in capital for a broad set of banks." "It is abundantly clear that regulatory and supervisory reform is on the way," she said. "But we should ensure that changes ultimately promote a safe and sound banking system." — AFP



TOKYO: People shop at a supermarket in Tokyo. - AFP

## Companies to get first carbon accounting rules

**PARIS:** Companies around the world will soon have a uniform set of standards on sustainability issues after the body governing international accounting rules published on Monday its first guidelines on reporting greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, most large companies report how many tons of carbon they emit into the atmosphere each year, but the data is often not reliable.

The poor quality of data and lack of common standards allows companies to burnish their climate credentials, or to greenwash their reputations. The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation launched an effort in 2021 to fill that gap, creating a special board to work on

sustainability disclosure standards. On Monday, the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) issued its first standards - IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 - that will be available for use from next year. "The standards will help to improve trust and confidence in company disclosures about sustainability to inform investment decisions," the ISSB said. "And for the first time, the standards create a common language for disclosing the effect of climate-related risks and opportunities on a company's prospects," it added.

Countries are adopting measures to achieve carbon neutrality by mid-century in the hopes of limiting the increase in global temperatures at 1.5 degrees Celsius in line with the 2015 Paris climate pact. This is creating a patchwork of regulations for firms to comply with and the financial stakes in the transition are becoming more and more important, both for the firms and their shareholders. IFRS accounting standards are required in many countries, while many companies in other countries use them in order to better tap international finance.

The ISSB believes that a number of states, including Japan and Britain, will quickly make the new climate standard mandatory, and hopes China, which boasts the world's second-largest economy, will adopt it as well. The European Union is working on its own standards, which will also include biodiversity and human rights, and the ISSB hopes they will be compatible. The standards ensure "that what they are actually doing is detailed in a common language for all the companies", Emmanuel Faber, the former chief executive of French food company Danone, who led the effort to come up the rules, told AFP. They also define how companies measure their direct and indirect emissions, using a method that is widely used but until now has not been mandatory - the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. The standards also require companies to audit their emissions data and ensure their climate strategy is adopted by the top management. While the ISSB, at least initially, is not going as far as the European Union, Kate Levick, the associate director for sustainable finance at independent think tank E3G, said creating common baseline standards is positive. — AFP

# Japan-backed fund offers \$6.2bn to buy chip firm JSR

## Deal would 'enable acceleration and reform' in chip sector

TOKYO: A fund backed by Japan's government has offered to buy out JSR Corp, a firm central to the manufacture of semiconductors, in a deal worth \$6.2 billion, the company said Monday. JSR said in a statement its board was in favor of the deal, which would privatize a company that is a key producer of compounds vital to the manufacture of semiconductors.

Japan Investment Corporation (JIC), the fund behind the deal, hopes to finalize it by December, but there are regulatory procedures that make a precise timeline hard to predict, JSR said. "This is truly an exciting day for JSR," company CEO Eric Johnson told reporters after the announcement. "With JIC, we aim to be a catalyst for reform in the semiconductor

materials space, as well as to improve the biopharmaceutical capabilities" both domestically and globally, he said.

The deal, he added, would "enable acceleration and reform" in the chip sector. JIC is an investment fund founded in 2018, with the government as the majority investor, along with smaller private-sector partners. The 0.9 trillion yen offer comes as Tokyo, along with many governments, tries to stabilize supply chains for the chips that are central to the modern economy. The tiny slices of silicon are found in all types of electronics - from LED lightbulbs and washing machines to cars and smartphones.

They are also critical to core services such as healthcare, law and order and util-

ities. Globally, semiconductors are forecast to become a \$1-trillion industry by 2030. But pandemic disruption and tensions with China have raised concerns globally about the risks in existing chip supply chains. Countries from France to Israel have been looking for ways to incentivize chip-making at home, or take greater control of production. In April, the European parliament and EU states agreed a plan to boost local chip production and build a global market share in the key industry.

And in May, Micron said it would invest \$3.6 billion to produce next-generation semiconductors in Japan after the country's prime minister met with some of the world's biggest chipmakers. Japan has already agreed to pour half a billion dollars

into a new project to develop and make next-gen chips domestically. That deal involves eight major companies, including Sony, SoftBank and Toyota, who are partnering in a new firm called Rapidus that hopes to begin mass production by 2027. TSMC and Sony have also inked their own partnership for a \$7 billion plant in Japan.

JSR is a market leader in the manufacture of materials including photoresists for circuit formation, which are central to producing semiconductors. It controls around 30 percent of the global market for photoresists, according to Bloomberg, and along with two other Japanese firms almost completely dominates production of two other key ingredients used to make displays and chips. Rumors of the

possible acquisition deal had been circulating for days, and JSR stock closed up 21.64 percent to 3,934 yen ahead of the company's announcement.

Travis Lundy, an analyst at Quiddity Advisors who publishes on SmartKarma, said the JIC offer made sense "given Japanese government's efforts to grow the semiconductor industry". "JIC is starting here. It would surprise me quite a bit if that is where they stopped," he added in a note published when rumors of the deal first emerged. Chips have also emerged as a key source of tension between Washington and Beijing, with the United States leaning on Japan and the Netherlands this year to curb exports of semiconductor technology. — AFP

## \$2.5bn investment an 'opportunity' for S Korea: Netflix CEO

SEOUL: Netflix's \$2.5 billion investment in South Korea is an "opportunity" for local business, the streaming giant's CEO said, as he played down a dispute with local internet companies over network usage. South Korea is one of Netflix's biggest suppliers of television series and films, and boss Ted Sarandos said it was "investing for the long term" in the country, which has given the company global hits Squid Game and The Glory.

Outlining how the \$2.5 billion - announced in April in Washington while Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was on a state visit - would be spent, Sarandos praised the "amazing partnership between the Korean creative community and Netflix". "But I believe we're just scratching the surface of what's possible," he added, vowing to invest heavily in training South Korea's next generation of storytellers, in addition to boosting funding for original shows. "We have to invest in their talent collectively as an industry. Between 2022 and 2025, for example, one in five Netflix titles in Korea will have come from a first-time writer or director," he said.

But South Korea's service providers have accused Netflix, which launched in the country in 2016, of free-riding on their networks - paying the standard rate, despite the significant traffic congestion it has caused. Netflix sued SK Broadband in 2020, asking the court to confirm that it has no obligation to pay network usage fees to SK Broadband. However, the court ruled with the Korean firm, saying it was "reasonable" for Netflix to be "obligated to provide something in return". Netflix has appealed.

SK Broadband filed a separate suit against Netflix in 2021 arguing it should have to pay for costs from increased network traffic and maintenance work because of a surge in viewers for its content. The case is ongoing. Sarandos said he wouldn't call the current legal dispute a "conflict". "I would say that there's opportunity as businesses evolve. There's a clear, direct and symbiotic relationship between creative companies like ours and internet industries," the told reporters in Seoul. "We've invested about a billion US dollars in developing this open connect system which improves and reduces the cost of delivery of bits around the world."

He stressed Netflix has about 18,000 servers across 6,000 locations in 175 countries that "make the internet move faster and more efficiently", and the investment will only continue. "I'd say that the opportunity to work together to create a better consumer experience for the internet, for content, for general joy of consumers is something we should be doing together." Over the past few years, South Korean content has taken the world by storm, with more than 60 percent of Netflix viewers watching a show from the country in 2022, company data showed. — AFP

## Sri Lankan govt scraps monkey business plan

COLOMBO: Bankrupt Sri Lanka's government on Monday said it was scrapping plans to export around 100,000 endangered monkeys to China following an outcry and a court case by animal lovers. The toque macaque is endemic to Sri Lanka and common on the island of 22 million people but is classed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list. Agriculture minister Mahinda Amaraweera said in June that China wanted the



## Harvesting wheat in land that preserves Palestinian identity

GAZA: As soon as the ears of wheat turned golden, Palestinian people headed to their fields to start a long-awaited harvest season that symbolizes their identity and heritage, which shows the extent of their adherence to their lands located near the eastern and northern borders of the Gaza Strip, a distance away from the Zionist separating fence.

The wheat season is considered one of the most vital crops in Palestinian food due to its great nutritional and economic value, as they call it "yellow gold." The number of dunams cultivated with wheat is estimated at 15,000, and it produces about 2,000 tons annually. However, its production does not meet the needs of Palestinians who depend on importing it from abroad considering how Palestinian farmers suffer from the dangers of frequent shootings from the Zionist occupation forces along the borders. — AFP

## Kenya's Ruto signs contentious tax bill into law

NAIROBI: Kenyan President William Ruto on Monday signed into law a bill that raises taxes on a wide range of items, the presidency said, defying criticism that it will pile more economic hardship on citizens. The new tax package was approved by parliament last week and will double tax on fuel to 16 percent and introduce a new housing levy, a move expected to have a ripple effect in a country hamstrung by high inflation. "President Ruto has assented to the finance bill. Signed at State House," the presidency said in a message to journalists, accompanied by pictures of him signing the document.

Ruto, who took office in September after a bitterly fought election, is seeking to fill the government's depleted coffers and repair a heavily-indebted economy inherited from his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta, who splurged on major infrastructure projects. Kenya is now sitting on a public debt mountain of almost \$70 billion or about 67 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and repayment costs have jumped as the shilling sinks to record lows of around 140 to the dollar. The new law — expected to generate more than \$2.1 billion — will hike taxes on basic goods and services including food and mobile money transfers.

People who earn 500,000 shillings (\$3,600) a month will now pay 32.5 percent in income taxes while those making 800,000 shillings (\$5,700) will pay 35 percent, up from the current 30 percent. Sales tax for small businesses has also been tripled to three percent. One of the most contentious provisions is a 1.5 percent levy on the salaries of all tax-paying Kenyans that will be matched by employers to fund an affordable housing program. A new five percent withholding tax for digital content creators has also been introduced.

monkeys for 1,000 zoos across the country, describing the move as a solution to the animals destroying crops.

But on Monday, Sri Lanka's Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) told the Court of Appeal that it had decided not to go ahead with the export and that the action filed by 30 wildlife and environmental activists could be terminated. "A state attorney informed court on behalf of the DWC that no monkeys will be exported to China or elsewhere," a court official told AFP.

Wildlife enthusiasts welcomed the government's decision not to go ahead with the exports. "This is an excellent outcome for wildlife conservation in Sri Lanka," they said in a brief statement. The proposed sale to China came as it faced its worst-ever economic crisis. No financial details were made available. Sri Lanka



Palestinians harvesting wheat manually near Gaza Strip border.



Wheat spikes collected in preparation for flail. — KUNA photos



NAIROBI: A client has her hair plaited at a beauty salon in Nairobi. Kenyan President William Ruto is seeking to repair a heavily-indebted economy inherited from his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta, who ramped up borrowing to fund a spurge on costly infrastructure projects. — AFP

### 'Mistake and an experiment'

The opposition led by Ruto's rival Raila Odinga has threatened fresh demonstrations over the tax package, saying it will strain already squeezed incomes. "Our position remains that the bill is a mistake and an experiment Kenyans can ill afford," Odinga's spokesman Dennis Onyango told AFP on Monday. "We had hoped that Ruto could call for its review before signing it," he said, adding that Odinga's Azimio alliance will announce its next step at a rally on Tuesday.

Earlier this year, the opposition staged several anti-government protests over the cost of living crisis which degenerated sometimes into deadly street clashes between police and demonstrators. At least a dozen protesters were also arrested this month during a march

against the tax proposals. Critics accuse Ruto of rowing back on promises made during the August 2022 election campaign, when he declared himself the champion of impoverished Kenyans and pledged to improve their economic fortunes. But the 56-year-old rags-to-riches businessman has defended the taxes, saying the housing fund will construct homes for the poor and create employment. Kenyans are already feeling the pinch from soaring prices for basic necessities, along with a sharp drop in the value of the local currency. Economic growth slowed last year to 4.8 percent from 7.6 percent in 2021, reflecting the global fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the worst drought in four decades buffeting the vital agriculture sector. The Law Society of Kenya has vowed to challenge the finance law in court this week. — AFP



ANURADHAPURA: A monkey plays on overhead electric power cables in a street in the north-central town of Anuradhapura. — AFP

Lifestyle



A staff of Hisa Franko restaurant prepares a Slovenian dish in Kobarid. — AFP photos



A chef preparing the “Fermented lentil pancake (dosa), goat kid, salty yoghurt, curry leaves and wild water cress” dish of the Hisa Franko restaurant in Kobarid.



The Hisa Franko restaurant's staff prepare Slovenian dishes in Kobarid.

# ‘CRAZY’ GOOD: STAR CHEF ANA ROS PUTS SLOVENIA ON FOOD MAP

When Ana Ros started as a chef in Slovenia, all she had were some cookbooks and a bit of a “crazy” personality, as she herself puts it. Now the self-taught cook — who was named the world’s best woman chef in 2017 — has her two Michelin stars tattooed on her fingers, and is helping make her small Alpine homeland one of Europe’s prime gastronomic destinations.

Ros quickly found she had a talent for “matching crazy flavors”, like coffee pasta with sea bass, lemon foam and basil, one of the early dishes that helped make her name. “Like a painter sees colors, the chef sees flavors, and I was always very well known for using very strong flavor combinations,” the 50-year-old told AFP at her restaurant in the Soca valley close to the border with Italy.

Hisa Franko — which Ros has been running for the last 20 years — currently ranks 32nd in the World’s 50 Best



Slovenian chef Ana Ros, who runs the two-star Michelin restaurant Hisa Franko, poses at her restaurant in Kobarid.

Restaurants list. But it is not the only restaurant of note in the country sandwiched between Italy, Austria and Croatia. The Michelin guide recommends 58 there, saying Slovenia “is asserting itself as a gastronomic destination whose potential and quality are constantly improving.”

### ‘Cooking from scratch’

And a large part of that is down to innovative chefs like Ros, who has also featured in Netflix’s “Chef’s Table” series. Hisa Franko was a family inn serving traditional fare when Ros’s partner at the time, Valter Kramer, took it over from his parents in 2002. Ros decided to join her husband in the restaurant, following her heart rather than pursuing her ambitions to pursue a diplomatic career in Brussels.

“At the beginning, it was just like cooking for survival... I started cooking from scratch,” said the chef. Right from the start, Ros developed a particular way of making “flavors hit your mind”. “Because my food is all about my character. A bit crazy... still childish” to some extent, she said.

Ros said her food is a combination of understanding the regional traditions and seasonality, but also her own personality. After years of hard work, news about the remote restaur-

ant with a talented woman chef started spreading, and Ros is now regarded as one of the world’s best in a field still dominated by men.

“Sometimes you look like an exotic animal,” she said. “But of course, the picture is changing with the new generation, who are super talented and super ambitious.” Hisa Franko now has a team of 40 people from around 20 countries working in her kitchen and she plans to open a bistro in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana. The day she talked to AFP, her kitchen was turning out a starter of deer heart, oyster, kiwi and beetroot with mountain greens.

### ‘Like a big family’

The country’s cuisine “is one of a kind” and deserves a place on the culinary map, according to Lior Kochavy, a founder of a weekly street food festival in the capital that also brings together leading restaurants. “You will never be bored. There is all

the time something new to try,” he said. With Slovenia a melting pot of Latin, Slavic and Germanic influences, other chefs also say they attract diners by honoring traditions, seasonality and sourcing food locally.

“We’ve always tried to make sure the distance between the field and the plate is as short as possible,” said Tomaz Kavcic, who runs the one-star Michelin Gostilna pri Lojzetu (Lojze’s Inn). “In the past that might not have been appreciated much, but now it is very valued,” he told AFP. His menu “writes itself with just the products we see” from the restaurant’s terrace on a vineyard-covered hill. Ros, too, said Slovenians have “always been using nature as their market.” “Farmers and foragers — you grow with them, you learn from them, you teach them. It’s kind of like a big family,” she said. — AFP



The entrance of the Gostilna pri Lojzetu restaurant (Lojze’s Inn) at the Chateau Zemono, with a one Michelin star sign (red) in Zemono.



A general view of the Hisa Franko restaurant in Kobarid.



The Hisa Franko restaurant’s head chef Melle Simon (right) prepares a Slovenian dish in Kobarid.

## Prince William launches new UK homelessness initiative

Britain’s Prince William on Monday unveiled a new UK-wide initiative aiming to show that “homelessness can be ended for good” through collaboration between public, private and voluntary sectors. William, 41, the heir to the throne, and his charitable Royal Foundation will help give six flagship locations across Britain “space, tools, and relationships” to work on preventing homelessness locally.

Announcing the five-year program, called Homewards, in Lambeth, south London — one of the six places selected — the prince said it will “put collaboration at the heart of the response”. “I believe that we have a unique opportunity to develop innovative new solutions and scale tangible impact,” he told an audience at a community centre offering mental health support.

“This will inspire belief throughout the UK — and beyond — that homelessness can be ended for good. Promising a “transformative approach” to the issue, William said the initiative will rely on “locally led coalitions of committed people, organizations and businesses”. He hopes it will ultimately make home-

lessness “rare, brief, and unrepeatable” in the targeted areas, which can then serve as models for the rest of the UK.

The initiative will provide access to an unprecedented network of “best-in-class expertise, partners and funders at a local and national level”, his Kensington Palace office said. That includes up to £500,000 (\$635,000) of flexible seed funding in each location that can be accessed to support the delivery of their action plans, it added.

William, who noted he first visited a homeless shelter aged 11 with his late mother, Princess Diana, launched the scheme alongside new research suggesting that one in five people

in Britain have some experience of homelessness. The prince is doing a two-day nationwide tour to the six places chosen, announcing their locations as he goes. But Graham Smith, chief executive of the anti-monarchy group Republic, argued William and other “super-rich royals who live in multiple palatial homes” reflect worsening UK economic inequality that drives most homelessness. “Homelessness is the result of government policy and lack of investment, it isn’t something that can be resolved by charity or royal patronage,” he said. — AFP



Britain’s Prince William, Prince of Wales (left) and Britain’s Catherine, Princess of Wales (center) smile as they arrive in a horse-drawn carriage, part of the Royal Procession on the fourth day of the Royal Ascot horse racing meeting in Ascot, west of London. — AFP

## US Coast Guard launches probe into Titanic sub tragedy

The US Coast Guard said Sunday it had launched an investigation into the cause of the underwater implosion that destroyed the small submersible Titan, with the loss of all five people aboard during a dive to the Titanic wreck. The Coast Guard said it had created a marine board of investigation (MBI), its highest level of probe, for this drama and ultimately tragedy in the North Atlantic that drew worldwide attention.

“My primary goal is to prevent a similar occurrence by making the necessary recommendations to enhance the safety of the maritime domain worldwide,” Jason Neubauer, the Coast Guard’s chief investigator and leader of this probe, told a press conference in Boston. “The MBI is already in its initial evidence-collection phase, including debris salvage operations at the incident site,” he added.

Neubauer said the US probe could also make recommendations on the possible pursuit of civil or criminal sanctions “as necessary.” Titan was reported missing last Sunday and the Coast Guard said Thursday that all five people aboard the submersible had died after the vessel suffered a catastrophic implosion.

A debris field was found on the seafloor, 1,600 feet (500 meters) from the bow of the Titanic, which sits more than two miles (nearly four kilometers) below the ocean’s surface and 400 miles off the



This undated image courtesy of OceanGate Expeditions, shows their Titan submersible launching from a platform. — AFP

coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Canada, which helped in the search for the submersible, said Saturday it was carrying out its own probe.

The Canadian-flagged Polar Prince cargo vessel towed the Titan out to sea last weekend but lost contact with it about an hour and 45 minutes after the submersible launched into the ocean depths. The announcement of the implosion ended a multinational search-and-rescue operation that captured the world’s attention since the tourist craft went missing. — AFP

## Lifestyle



British legendary singer Elton John performs on the Pyramid Stage on day 5 of the Glastonbury festival in the village of Pilton in Somerset, southwest England. — AFP photos



British legendary singer Elton John performs on the Pyramid Stage on day 5 of the Glastonbury festival.



British legendary singer Elton John embraces US singer Jacob Lusk (right) during a performance on the Pyramid Stage.



US singer Brandon Flowers is introduced as he arrives to perform a duet with Elton John on the Pyramid Stage.



US singer Stephen Sanchez performs during a set from British legendary singer Elton John on the Pyramid Stage.



Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl (center front), Josh Freese (center back), Nate Lendel, performing as The Churnups, play on the Pyramid Stage.

## 'EMOTIONAL' ELTON JOHN CLOSES OUT GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

Elton John gave the final concert at Britain's legendary Glastonbury Festival on Sunday, bringing down the curtain on the annual spectacular with what could be his final UK performance. "I never thought I'd ever play Glastonbury," he told the crowd. "It's a very special and emotional night for me — it might be my very last show in England, in Great Britain, so I'd better play well and entertain you."

The 76-year-old pop superstar is winding down a glittering live career with a global farewell tour, having played his last concerts in the United States in May ahead of a final gig in Stockholm on July 8. Glastonbury, Britain's best-known music festival, has been hosted on a farm in southwest England for five decades.

Before John took to the main Pyramid Stage on Sunday night, anticipation was high among fans. "Elton's a legend," PhD student Giles Briscoe, 26, told AFP ahead of the set, wearing a replica of the iconic baseball outfit John wore at his famous 1975 concerts at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. "The fact that he's going to perform on such a big stage, at such a historic moment of his career, is such a big event."

John did not disappoint, kicking the show off with "Pinball Wizard" — a role he memorably played in The Who's rock opera "Tommy" — before reeling through some of his biggest hits, including "Candle in the Wind", "Crocodile Rock" and an intense "I'm Still Standing". John dedicated "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" to his "friend" and "inspiration" George Michael, who died on Christmas Day in 2016, and who would have turned 60 on Sunday.

### 'Incredible journey'

David Furnish had told Sky News ahead of the concert that John would not stop making music after the farewell tour ends next month, and would start work on a new studio album later this year. He also teased Sunday's performance, saying it would be "very special", and "not just another day in the office". Indeed, John was joined on stage by several surprise guests: first off, the London Community Gospel Choir and Jacob Lusk of the soul-pop group Gabriels.

Next up was Stephen Sanchez, with John singing one of the 20-year-old American's songs. He later shared the stage with Brandon Flowers of The Killers for "Tiny Dancer", and with Rina Sawayama for "Don't Go Breaking My Heart". He closed out the set with a

soaring rendition of "Rocket Man", complete with fireworks. During the concert, John thanked his fans "for 52 years of amazing love and loyalty".

"It's been an incredible journey and I've had the best, best time. I will never forget you — you are in my head, my heart and my soul." John's UK swansong caps days of big-name performances in front of more than 200,000 fans at Glastonbury, including veteran US rockers Guns N' Roses, who were making their debut at the long-running festival in the coveted Saturday night headline slot.

They rocked through their extensive catalogue during a two-hour-plus set, playing hits including "Knockin' On Heaven's Door", "Sweet Child O' Mine" and "November Rain". Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl, whose band played a

so-called secret slot Friday, joined them onstage to help play a special rendition of "Paradise City".

Other acts playing this year included UK indie giants Arctic Monkeys, singer Lizzo, rapper Lil Nas X, post-punk icon Blondie and "rickroller" Rick Astley, highlighting Glastonbury's eclectic ethos. On Saturday a supportive crowd sang along as Scottish singer Lewis Capaldi, who suffers from Tourette's syndrome, struggled to finish his set. He announced he would take a break, after previously cancelling gigs to recuperate over health concerns.

### No mud

Dairy farmer Michael Eavis first organized the festival 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. It was held intermittently in the 1970s, but it wasn't until the 1990s that it really began to acquire its cult status. While able to draw the biggest performers from every genre and generation, it is equally known for hosting thousands of small acts and leftfield events across the huge Worthy Farm site, as well as for often rainy and muddy conditions.

That has not proved a problem this year, with Britain in the midst of a prolonged dry period leaving much of the country scorched. 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. — AFP



British legendary singer Elton John performs on the Pyramid Stage on day 5 of the Glastonbury festival.



British band Arctic Monkeys performs on The Pyramid Stage.

## 'Spider-Man' swings back to top of the box office

Jostling for the top three spots in North American theaters this weekend were the same films from last week, with "The Flash" overtaken by the latest "Spider-Man" iteration. The debut of the raunchy comedy "No Hard Feelings," as well as that of "Asteroid City," the latest offering from cult director Wes Anderson, failed to get past last weekend's top-earning films, although analysts said they performed well for their respective genres.

Sony's "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" took in \$19.3 million over the weekend, according to Sunday estimates from Exhibitor Relations, bringing its domestic total to more than \$317 million, with showings in international theatres pushing the cumulative global earnings to \$560 million. The film, a sequel to 2018's "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" and the latest spin on the Marvel Comics superhero, picks up the story of half-Black, half-Latino Miles Morales, voiced by Shameik Moore.

Pixar's animated immigrant fable "Elemental," which also held last week's No. 2 spot, earned \$18.4 million, bringing its total to \$65 million. Warner Bro's "The Flash" took the third spot, earning

\$15.2 million a week after it opened at number one, bringing its box-office war chest to \$87.6 million so far.

"No Hard Feelings," Sony's R-rated offering starring Jennifer Lawrence, debuted this weekend in fourth place. The movie's \$15.1 million haul is "a good opening for an original romantic/sex comedy, at above average levels for the genre," said analyst David A. Gross, writing for industry newsletter FranchiseRe.

"After a long decline between 2015 and 2022, romantic/sex comedies are growing again," Gross said, with "Joy Ride" and "Barbie" coming out next month. Amid the spin-offs and sequels dominating the box office this weekend, Paramount's "Transformers: Rise

of the Beasts" brought in \$11.6 million, for fifth place.

Next in line, following a limited release last week, was Focus Features' "Asteroid City," from off-beat director Anderson, for \$9 million. While that's a far cry from \$120 million netted by "Spider-Man" its opening weekend, it represents "a very good opening for a specialty independent comedy," Gross said. Rounding out the top 10 were:

"The Little Mermaid" (\$8.6 million)  
"Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" (\$3.5 million)  
"The Blackening" (\$3 million)  
"The Boogeyman" (\$2.5 million)

—AFP



## Human remains found near site where actor Julian Sands went missing

Hikers found human remains in California's Mount San Antonio area, local authorities said, around the same area where British actor Julian Sands went missing five months ago. The remains were discovered in the wilderness on Saturday morning, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department said in a statement.

"Civilian hikers contacted the Fontana Sheriff's Station after they discovered human remains" near the mountain, it added. The body was taken to the coroner's office to be identified, with the process expected to be completed next week. Sands, who shot to fame in 1985 for his role in "A Room with a View", went missing in January on the 10,000-foot (3,000-meter) Mount San Antonio, known locally as Mount Baldy, just outside the city of Los Angeles.

The 65-year-old is an experienced hiker who has previously described himself as happiest "close to a mountain summit on a glorious cold morning." California was hit by a succession of heavy storms in December and January that brought heavy snow to mountain ranges, including to Mount San Antonio.

The peak where Sands disappeared

is the highest in the San Gabriel Mountains and a popular destination for Los Angeles residents. San Bernardino County Sheriff at the time said it was increasingly treacherous, with eight known deaths between 2017 and 2022. The actor's brother, Nick, said two weeks after search efforts began that he had accepted Sands would not be found alive. "He has not yet been declared missing, presumed dead, but I know in my heart that he has gone," he had said, according to English local media in Yorkshire, where the brothers grew up. — AFP



Actor Julian Sands attends the GREAT British Film Reception at the British Consulate General's Residence, in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Lifestyle



# Skin on show at Paris menswear week

**P**lunging necklines, short-shorts and bottoms peaking out — this has been a menswear week in Paris with plenty of skin on show. From upstart brands such as Egonlab to famed houses Hermes and Loewe, designers have been keen to lay things bare for a more liberated male clientele. Tiny shorts were the signature look at the Hermes show Saturday.

“Guys have nice legs too,” creative director Veronique Nichanian told AFP. “It’s time to see their legs!” The backless look — already sported on red carpets by a few celebrities such as actor Timothee Chalamet — cropped up on a few catwalks this week.

Loewe gave it an ironic twist, with an outfit that featured a completely bare back, but a huge rectangular bag carried like a shield on the front. Things were particularly spicy at Egonlab, the young label by French duo Florentin Glemarec and Kevin Nompeix, who are known for their genderless aesthetic.

They had suit jackets with a square neckline revealing the whole chest and very low waist trousers that offered a shot of the bottom. “There’s a lot of skin this season,” Glemarec told AFP.

“We wanted to free ourselves from all the codes, especially in tailoring, to replace it with something more creative, more fun,” added Nompeix. The idea, they said, is to encourage people “to no longer be afraid of their bodies, to no longer hide behind clothes and instead use them to transcend who we are”.

It was also about bare feet at Dries Van Noten on Thursday, where everything from sequined shorts to formal coats and suits were paired with flip-flops. “I like having this naked side, with



Models present creations for the Hermes Menswear Spring-Summer 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris. — AFP photos

transparencies, plunging necklines, but also on feet,” the Belgian designer told AFP backstage. It represents “a new form of elegance”, he added. Buyers were impressed. “Dries Van Noten never disappoints, but this season was an exceptionally strong collection,” said Simon Longland of British department store Harrods.

**‘Carnal being’**

There was a similar vibe with the hotly tipped new Franco-Turkish designer Burc Akyol, showing for the first time as part of the official fashion week calen-

dar. One of his signature pieces — the slitted, baggy trousers left plenty of hairy leg on show. “I’ve always found that people who hide the body in their design are in body denial,” he told AFP. “I like to exist as a carnal being.” Spain’s Arturo Obegero had his models bare-chested or in a sort of jumpsuit ending mid-thigh.

He imagined an “evening surfer” on the River Seine with a “romantic silhouette”, he told AFP. There were also flashes of skin at Bluemarle and Givenchy. — AFP



## Hollywood actors buy stake in F1’s Alpine Racing

**H**ollywood actors Ryan Reynolds, Rob McElhenney and Michael B. Jordan are among a consortium that has bought a 24 percent stake in Formula One team Alpine Racing. Alpine’s parent company Renault announced on Monday that the group will invest 200 million euros (\$218 million) for their stake, valuing the team at \$900 million, to help Alpine’s “growth strategy and sporting ambitions”. “Deadpool” star Reynolds and “It’s Always Sunny In Philadelphia” creator McElhenney have already enjoyed success with sporting investments as owners of football club Wrexham.

Backed by major investment, the Welsh side were promoted to the fourth tier of the English Football League in April for the first time in 15 years. “Creed” and “Black Panther” star Jordan also has a stake in Premier League club Bournemouth.

Reynolds’ Maximum Effort production company has teamed up with Otro Capital and RedBird Capital Partners, who recently took control of AC Milan and have a stake in Fenway Sports Group, owners of Liverpool and the Boston Red Sox. “Alpine F1 team will benefit from the investor group’s collective expertise and track record

in the sports industry,” said a statement released by the Renault Group. Alpine’s F1 engine-making entity in the suburbs of Paris is not part of the transaction and will remain entirely owned by Renault.

Since the Renault team was rebranded as Alpine in 2021, they have managed one Grand Prix victory and two other podium finishes. Alpine finished fourth in the constructors’ championship last season and sit fifth in the standings eight races into the 2023 season. — AFP



## Sports

# Sri Lanka thrash Ireland in World Cup qualifying

## Lanka power into Super Six stage with crushing 133-run win

**BULAWAYO:** Sri Lanka powered into the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifying tournament with a crushing 133-run win over Ireland on Sunday that eliminated their opponents. Scotland also made it three wins from three in Group B as they beat Oman by 76 runs, with both teams joining Sri Lanka in reaching the next round. Opener Dimuth Karunaratne made a run-a-ball 103 and Sadeera Samarawickrama hit 82 as Sri Lanka compiled an imposing total of 325 all out off 49.5 overs after being put in to bat in Bulawayo.

Mark Adair took 4-46 and Barry McCarthy claimed 3-56 but Ireland's pace spearhead Josh Little conceded 78 runs in eight wicketless overs.

"If I get a start, I want to go for the big one," said Karunaratne. "In the morning, there was something for the bowlers, but when the swing stops we can get some boundaries. I was waiting for that... don't try to hit them hard, just time them well." Karunaratne and Samarawickrama put on 168 for the third wicket after Kusal Mendis was trapped lbw first ball by McCarthy.

Charith Asalanka (38) and Dhananjaya de Silva (42 not out) also chipped in as Ireland sought to limit the damage in the closing overs. Ireland needed a victory to keep their qualification hopes alive, but they lost experienced opener Paul Stirling for six and the wheels soon came off. Captain Andy

Balbirnie's dismissal reduced Ireland to 57-3 and Lorcan Tucker was bowled for a duck the next over before Wanindu Hasaranga pinned Harry Tector in front for 33.

Curtis Campher, who made a century in the gut-wrenching loss to Scotland, briefly countered in his knock of 39 but once he top-edged to the wicket-keeper Ireland were all but doomed. "We knew they had good spinners and they bowled well and cleaned us up," said Balbirnie. "Hugely disappointing not to get to the Super Sixes but you've got to move on." Hasaranga finished with 5-79, giving the Sri Lankan leg-spinner 16 wickets in three qualifiers so far in Zimbabwe. In the group's other game, Brandon

McMullen smacked 136 off 121 balls - his first ODI century - and skipper Richie Berrington added 60 as Scotland set Oman a target of 321.

Oman slumped to 72-4 in response before wicketkeeper Naseem Khushi made an entertaining 69. He was one of five wickets to fall to Chris Greaves as the leg-spinner picked up 5-53 and Oman ended well short on 244-9. "We've had three different matchwinners which shows our character," said Berrington, whose side take on Sri Lanka in their final group game. "We know the importance of every point, so Tuesday's going to be a big one against Sri Lanka. We have a lot of belief and know we need to get better with every game." — AFP

## News in Brief

### Ostapenko claims Open title

**BIRMINGHAM:** Jelena Ostapenko won a battle of two former French Open champions beating Barbora Krejčíková 7-6 (10/8), 6-4 to win the Birmingham Open on Sunday. Krejčíková had sailed into the final without dropping a set with her progress in the English Midlands enough to ensure she will return to the world's top 10 on Monday. But Ostapenko showed no sign of fatigue from her more draining route to the final as the Latvian claimed her first title of the season. "I played five great matches, this was the only match in two sets thankfully because every match was really tough," said Ostapenko. "It's a great preparation for Wimbledon." Neither player dropped serve in the first set as Ostapenko finally got the upper hand in a marathon tie-break slamming a forehand winner down the line on her fourth set point. The 2017 French Open champion then looked on course to cruise to victory in the second set as she led 5-1. — AFP

### Bublik secures Halle title

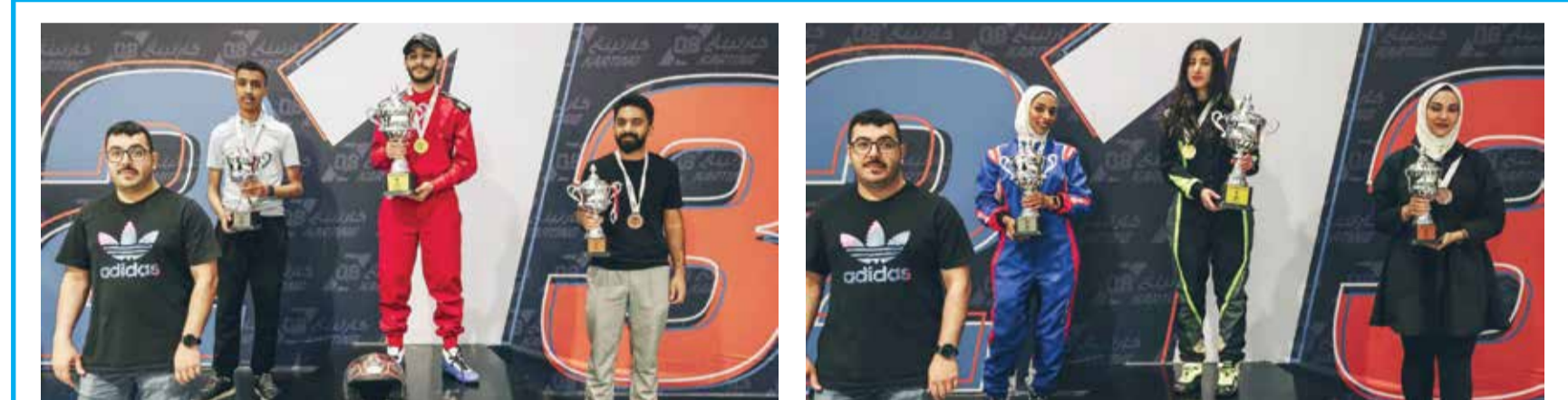
**HALLE WESTFALEN:** Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik defeated third seed Andrey Rublev in three sets to win the biggest title of his career at the Halle Open on Sunday. Bublik won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in the final of the traditional Wimbledon warm-up tournament in Germany. The Kazakh took the first set after breaking Rublev in his opening service game. Rublev responded by winning the second set in similar fashion but Bublik raced 3-0 ahead in the decider before clinching his second ATP title. "This means the world to me, I've been struggling for a year and a half now. It was hard work," he said of his 95-minute triumph. The 48th-ranked Bublik faced a difficult path to the final, making his way past Borna Coric, Jan-Lennard Struff and Jannik Sinner, before downing home favorite Alexander Zverev in the last four. "I was walking through the little hall of fame here before entering the court for the very first time," recounted the 26-year-old. "I was like 'wow, the different names, a lot of guys I'm familiar with.' — AFP

### Zimbabwe rout USA

**HARARE:** Sean Williams hit 174 off 101 balls as Zimbabwe crushed the United States by 304 runs Monday at the Cricket World Cup qualifiers, the second biggest winning margin in terms of runs in ODI history. Hosts Zimbabwe made their highest one-day total with a mammoth 408-6 off 50 overs and then bowled out the USA for just 104 to seal a fourth straight win in Group A. They narrowly missed breaking the record for the biggest margin of victory in a one-day international, set at the start of the year when India thrashed Sri Lanka by 317 runs in Thiruvananthapuram. Wicketkeeper Joylord Gumbie struck a steady 78 at the top of the order but Williams played the starring role as Zimbabwe stepped on the accelerator once the stand-in captain arrived at the crease. Williams hit 21 fours and five sixes before he was caught in the deep in the penultimate over, with Sikanadar Raza scoring 48 off 27 balls and Ryan Burl hammering 47 off just 16 deliveries. — AFP

### Modric extends Real contract

**MADRID:** Veteran Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric will stay at the club for another season after renewing his deal until June 2024, the Spanish side said Monday. Modric, 37, remains a key player for Madrid and decided to stay despite strong interest from Saudi Arabia, looking to recruit him at the end of his previous contract, which expires this month. The Croatian follows Toni Kroos, Dani Ceballos and Nacho Fernandez in extending his time at Madrid this summer. "In his 11 seasons defending our shirt, he has played 488 games and won 23 trophies," said Real Madrid in a statement. Modric has lifted the Champions League five times with Madrid since joining in 2012 from Tottenham, as well as La Liga on three occasions and two Copas del Rey. Turning 38 in September, 2018 Ballon d'Or winner Modric faces stiff competition next season at the Santiago Bernabeu. Madrid signed England international Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund for over 100 million euros (\$109 million) earlier in June, while Kroos, Ceballos, Eduardo Camavinga, Aurelien Tchouameni and Fede Valverde are jostling for places. — AFP



## Summer Karting Championship ends in style

**KUWAIT:** The Summer Karting Championship concluded on Saturday. 100 drivers of both genders participated in the event. Competition was fierce from start to finish. The final results as follows: The adult youth category was won by Fawaz Yousuf, followed by Abdulrahman Al-Dhafiri and Abdulmajid Shaaban. In the girls category, Iman Shams-Al-Deen was first, while Fatima Al-Shuwaieq and Shareefa Baqer were second and third respectively. In the young youth, Yaqoub Al-Zanki took the first position; Hussein Al-Shimmari grabbed second while Mishal Al-Shaalan took third.

For the young girls: Alaa Faisal grabbed first; Zahraa Hassan (second) and Jinan Hamid Bushehri



took third. The winners of the top three places were awarded their medals and prizes. The Chairman of the Board of the Kuwait Karting Club, Dr Hamid Bushehri, congratulated the winners and wished all

good participants luck in the coming events. He said the Karting Championship came on time, as it took place with the start of summer break, which is a time children are in dire need of filling their free time.

## Bagnaia wins MotoGP; Heartache for Binder

**ASSEN:** Francesco Bagnaia took another step towards defending his world MotoGP title, winning the Dutch MotoGP at Assen on Sunday to extend his lead in the championship. Pole-sitter Marco Bezzecchi took second with Brad Binder in third only for KTM's South African rider to pick up a penalty for exceeding track limits that knocked him off the podium. Demoted to fourth Aleix Espargaro was the beneficiary of Binder's misfortune with the hapless South African suffering exactly the same fate in Saturday's sprint.

Bagnaia takes a 35-point lead over Jorge Martin into the summer break, with racing resuming in early August at the British Grand Prix in Silverstone, with Bezzecchi a further point behind. "It's fantastic! It wasn't easy, they were pushing a lot behind," said the Ducati factory race winner. "I was on the limit. 'I love this track, this crowd - Assen, you are fantastic!'"

Bagnaia became the first back-to-back winner of the Dutch MotoGP since his Italian compatriot and mentor, Valentino Rossi, in 2004-2005. Bezzecchi bemoaned a poor getaway. "I lost time at the start, then it took me a while to pass Brad, but overall I'm really happy," he said. A full house with 105,000 fans at a sweltering hot 'Cathedral of Speed' - one of the jewels in MotoGP's crown - watched Binder get a



**ASSEN:** Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia leads ahead of Red Bull KTM Factory Racing's South African rider Brad Binder and Mooney VR46 Racing's Italian rider Marco Bezzecchi (left) during the Dutch MotoGP. — AFP

blistering start. The KTM rider surged into the lead at turn one past a trio of Ducatis - Bezzecchi, world champion Bagnaia and Luca Marini.

Binder's teammate Jack Miller made an early exit, the Australian crashing out at the end of the opening lap. He was quickly followed by a crash between French duo Johann Zarco and Fabio Quartararo, as up

front Bagnaia nicked the lead off Binder. The race lost a fourth rider with only three laps completed when Maverick Vinales parted company with his Aprilia. Binder was keeping close tabs on Bagnaia, with Bezzecchi in hot pursuit as Enea Bastianini slipped out of contention. As the midway point of the 26-lap race approached Miguel Oliveira was forced to retire his Aprilia. — AFP

## Ogier edges Rovanner to win Safari Rally

**NAIVASHA:** France's eight-time world champion Sebastien Ogier patched up his rear tailgate with a bin liner en route to edging Toyota teammate Kalle Rovanner to win the Safari Rally in Kenya on Sunday. Ogier, who isn't driving a full season, came home just 6.7 seconds ahead of the 22-year-old Finn as Toyota claimed the first four places with Elfyn Evans rounding out the podium and Takamoto Katsuta finishing in fourth. It was the 39-year-old Ogier's third victory from just five starts so far this season, his second in Kenya after 2021 and his 58th career win in the World Rally Championship.

Rovanner's second place saw him consolidate his place atop the drivers' standings. He is 41 points ahead of Evans and 42 in front of Ogier and Ott Tanak. Belgium's Thierry Neuville (Hyundai), who had been second in the standings ahead of the Safari Rally, finished in eighth on Sunday. However, he was then later disqualified. Organizers said Neuville had "conducted illegal reconnaissance activities during the rally". He is now down in fifth place in the title race, 47 points behind Rovanner. Victory for Ogier was far from a given, however, as he clipped a tree and ripped off his car's entire rear tailgate. He patched the gap using a bin liner to keep dust at bay.



**NAKURU:** France's Sebastien Ogier and co-driver France's Vincent Landais steer their Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 Hybrid during the WRC Safari Rally Kenya, part of the FIA World Rally Championship, in Nakuru, Kenya. — AFP

"Unbelievable! Look at that, even on the Power Stage I got a stone on the windscreen!" Ogier said. "We had a lot of issues to face but it could have been a more comfortable rally for us in terms of pace. A lot of misfortune but we brought it home." Title-defending Rovanner added: "You always want to fight

for the win but we did our best starting first car on the road, so regarding that I think it's not fully bad. "Good points for the season anyway." The World Rally Championship returns to Europe next month when the super-fast gravel roads of Rally Estonia host round eight from July 20-23. — AFP

Sports

# China's Yin Ruoning wins Women's Championship

## Yin grabs \$1.5 million top prize

NEW YORK: China's Yin Ruoning sank a 10-foot birdie putt on the final hole on Sunday to win the Women's PGA Championship for her first major title. The 20-year-old from Shanghai fired a four-under par 67 to finish 72 holes at Baltusrol on eight-under 276 and defeat Japan's Yuka Saso by one stroke. Yin took the \$1.5 million top prize and became only the second woman from China to win a major title after Feng Shanshan, who captured the 2012 Women's PGA crown. "It's amazing," Yin said. "It's just unreal." Saso, a 22-year-old Philippine-born Japanese star who won the 2021 US Women's Open, birdied the par-5 18th to match Yin for the lead at 7-under on the rain-soaked layout at Springfield, New Jersey.

Yin answered by landing her approach 10 feet from the hole and rolled in the tension-packed birdie putt for the victory in the year's second women's major tournament. "After the tee shot I saw Yuka make an incredible birdie here, I knew I had to make birdie at this hole to win the championship and I'm glad I did it," Yin said. An early afternoon storm halted play for almost two hours, but after play resumed Yin birdied the 13th and 14th to grab a share of the lead, parred the next

three holes as rivals faltered, and won at the last after hitting every green in regulation in the final two rounds.

"For last couple days, my ball striking was perfect," Yin said. "I only missed six greens in four days so I think my ball striking was pretty good. My goal for today, just no three-putts. And I did it too. I didn't think too much. Just no three-putts. Because last few days I made five bogeys and four of them were three-putts." A third-place pack on 278 included Spain's Carlota Ciganda, Sweden's Anna Nordqvist, China's Lin Xiyu, American Megan Khang and Northern Ireland's Stephanie Meadow. Japan's Ayaka Furue, South Korean Jenny Shin and American Rose Zhang shared eighth on 279.

Yin had joined Feng as the only Chinese women to win an LPGA title when she captured the LA Open in April. Among those unable to match Yin down the stretch was Lin, who shared the lead when the storm struck. "It's pretty amazing," Lin said of Yin's victory. "She's young and she's so talented. She's definitely really good at dealing with pressure. It's great to see that." Yin rents a house in Orlando from Lin and said she hadn't thought about how her

rent might now get higher. "Actually, I'm thinking about buying her house right now," Yin said.

### 'I've got goosebumps'

Shin and Lin were deadlocked atop the leaderboard when play resumed after the storm but seven others were within two strokes. Lin held the lead alone after Shin made a bogey at the eighth and kept it until Yin birdied the 13th and 14th and Saso made her fourth birdie in six holes at 15 to share the lead on 7-under, although Saso stumbled with a bogey at 16.

Lin found water off the tee at the par-5 18th and closed with a bogey to leave Yin alone in the lead. Saso responded with a tap-in birdie at 18 to share the lead, setting the stage for Yin's closing heroics. "I actually kind of felt that I was going to make it and I made it," Yin said. "It's a very weird feeling." She joined a list of major winners at Baltusrol that includes Jack Nicklaus, Phil Mickelson and women's icon Mickey Wright. "I've got goosebumps," Yin said. "They're all legends. I'm glad that I can be part of it." Yin hopes her victory can boost golf in China. "I think it means a lot," Yin said. "I think it's going to push a lot of kids to play golf." — AFP



SPRINGFIELD, New Jersey: Yin Ruoning of China poses for a photo with the trophy after winning the KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Baltusrol Golf Club on June 25, 2023 in Springfield, New Jersey. — AFP

## Koulibaly begins Chelsea exodus to Saudi Pro League

LONDON: Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly became the latest star name to head to Saudi Arabia on Sunday as he joined Al-Hilal from Chelsea, the Premier League club confirmed. Koulibaly joined the Blues just last year from Napoli for a reported £33 million (\$42 million). However, the 32-year-old struggled in the Premier League as Chelsea finished 12th - their lowest league finish since 1994.

"Kalidou Koulibaly has left Chelsea after completing a permanent transfer to Saudi Professional League side Al-Hilal," Chelsea said in a statement. "We would like to thank Kalidou for his contributions on and off the pitch during his time at Stamford Bridge and wish him well for the next stage of his career." Backed by the nation's sovereign wealth fund, the Saudi Pro League is luring big names from the major European leagues with the promise of huge salaries. Cristiano Ronaldo's move to Al Nassr in January started the trend.

His former Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema and French World Cup winner N'Golo Kante of Chelsea have recently joined Al-Ittihad. Chelsea could be set to further profit from the Saudi investment. Goalkeeper Edouard Mendy is reportedly close to joining Al Ahli, while Moroccan winger Hakim Ziyech is on the brink of a move to Al Nassr. The English club need to sell players before the end of the month to try and comply with financial fair play regulations after spending over £500 million on new signings over the past 12 months. — AFP



RIYADH: In this handout picture released by the Saudi Al-Hilal football club on June 25, 2023, Senegalese Kalidou Koulibaly (left) poses for a picture at the Al-Hilal stadium in Riyadh after signing a three-year contract with the Saudi club. — AFP

## Kipchoge sets sights on 'Olympic treble'

KAPTAGAT: Two months on from his disappointing performance at the Boston marathon, Eliud Kipchoge tells AFP he is determined to keep on writing history — and secure a third Olympic marathon crown next year. The Kenyan widely regarded as the greatest marathon runner of all time has set himself many challenges in his dazzling career, and remains insatiable despite his two Olympic titles, his world record of 2:01:09 in Berlin in 2022 and an incredible 15 wins in 18 marathons he has entered.

He broke the mythical two-hour barrier over the 26.2 mile distance in Vienna in 2019, with a time of 1:59:40, but the feat was not recognized as an official world record as it was not in open competition. Victory has eluded the 38-year-old in the Boston and New York marathons, which if he won would make him the first man to have all six major titles under his belt. "The priority now is to focus on the Olympics and win a third time. The other (challenges) will come later," Kipchoge says in an interview with AFP at the renowned Kaptagat training camp in Kenya's Rift Valley.

His two Olympic marathon gold medals in 2016 and 2021 put him at level pegging with Ethiopia's Abebe Bikila (1960, 1964) and Waldemar Cierpinski-

ki of East Germany (1976, 1980). A third gold at the Paris Olympics in 2024 would make Kipchoge the undisputed marathon giant at the Games, and bring him a victory steeped in symbolism.

The French capital was the city where he won his first international crown in 2003 at the age of 18, clinching the 5,000 metres world championship title ahead of sporting legends Hicham El Guerrouj of Morocco and Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele. However, Kipchoge does not rule out giving up on his other goals. "If time comes in to hang the racing shoes, I will say bye to other big things in sport."

### 'I know myself'

Sitting on a shaded bench in the Kaptagat camp where he has lived and trained for several months a year for 20 years, Kipchoge looks back on his poor showing in Boston on April 17, where he dropped from the lead group in the 30th kilometre and ended up finishing sixth.

This rare failure dampened his spirits. "I'm trying to forget what has happened in Boston. It's caught in my mind... but I believe that what has passed has passed." With his lifelong coach Patrick Sang, he has analyzed the reasons for his disappointing performance, saying "it's mostly the hamstring".

He brushes aside concerns about his difficulties on hilly courses such as Boston and New York and which will also confront him in Paris.

"It is not really a concern, but I respect every-

body's thoughts," he says. "I think it was a bad day and every day is a different day. I'm looking forward for next year. Everybody can write anything, you have no control. But I know myself."

### 'Want to be an inspiration'

Kipchoge is now preparing for his final marathon of the year. "I'm doing well. My training is going on in a good way," he says.

But he has not yet disclosed which event it will be — Berlin on September 24, Chicago on October 8 or New York on November 5. "At the end of July, I will know where to go."

He is following his usual training programme, eating up more than 200 kilometres a week on the red dirt tracks of Kaptagat forest, 2,400 metres above sea level. Among his 20-odd training partners at the camp at the time of the AFP interview were Kenya's new 1,500m and 5,000m world record holder Faith Kipyegon and two-time New York marathon winner Geoffrey Kamworor.

As the respected dean of Kenyan athletics, Kipchoge is happy to see the emergence of 23-year-old compatriot Kelvin Kiptum, who won the London Marathon in April in 2:01:25, the second fastest time in history and just 16 seconds away from his own world record. "I want to be an inspiration and I trust my breaking the world record twice is an inspiration to many young people. I trust they will want more and even beat my records." — AFP

## Barca, Gundogan ink two-year deal

BARCELONA: Ilkay Gundogan has signed for Barcelona on a free transfer at the end of his Manchester City contract, the Catalan club said Monday. The German midfielder, 32, has agreed a two-year deal with the option for a year's extension and a release clause of 400 million euros (\$436 million). "He is bringing his presence, nose for goal and reading of the game which has made him one of the best midfielders of the past decade," said Barcelona in a statement.

Gundogan has been an influential presence for Pep Guardiola's City side since joining in 2016, captaining the team to a stunning treble this season. The midfielder netted twice in the FA Cup final win over rivals Manchester United and Guardiola admitted City were trying to renew his deal. Manchester City are poised to seal the arrival of Mateo Kovacic from Chelsea to help replace Gundogan, who won five Premier League titles during his time at the club, as well as helping them earn their first ever Champions League win this season.

"This club made me realize all my dreams and I will forever be thankful for this opportunity," Gundogan told Manchester City's club website. "I will carry City always in my heart. Once a blue, always a blue." Gundogan was the first signing Guardiola made after arriving at City, joining for around 20 million pounds (\$25 million). He moved to City from Borussia Dortmund, where he won the Bundesliga and German Cup in 2012.

Gundogan scored 60 goals in 304 appearances for the club, winning 12 major trophies. "Ilkay has been tremendous, absolutely tremendous," said City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak. "To be the captain of this club in this historic treble, lifting the Premier League first and then the FA Cup and then the Champions League, he will go down in the folklore of Manchester City forever." City's director of football Txiki Begiristain highlighted Gundogan's mental attributes. "Ilkay's intelligence, leadership and commitment to the club - both on and off the field - has been an inspiration to everyone," said Begiristain. — AFP



German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan

# 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
lbn 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
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## Change of Name

I, **Kherunnisa**, holder of Indian Passport No. T0703469 having permanent address Hussaini Colony, Partapur, Banswara District, Rajasthan, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Kherunnisa (given name) Mulla Yahya (surname). **(#3817) 26-06-2023**

by declare that henceforth my name will be read as Antony Paul (given name) Cheruvalkaran Francis (surname). **(#3817) 26-06-2023**

I, **Antony Paul** Cheruvalkaran Francis, holder of Indian Passport No. T6762519 having permanent address in Kerala, India, Pin 680317, residing in Kuwait at present, here-

I, **Saddikali**, holder of Indian Passport No. L9757454 having permanent address Mohammadpura Temba, Sagwara, Dungarpur, Rajasthan, Pin - 314025, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Saddikali and (surname) Pachlasawala. **(#3816) 26-06-2023**

## Mexico crush Honduras 4-0

### Haiti stun Qatar 2-1 in Gold Cup



HOUSTON: Qatar's goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham (center) fights for the ball with Haiti's forward Frantzdy Pierrot (right) during the CONCACAF 2023 Gold Cup Group B football match between Haiti and Qatar in Houston, Texas. — AFP

MIAMI: Luis Romo struck twice as Mexico crushed Honduras 4-0, while a stoppage time winner from Frantzdy Pierrot gave Haiti a 2-1 victory over Qatar in the CONCACAF Gold Cup on Sunday. Jamaica held the United States to a 1-1 draw in the opener on Saturday and then Trinidad and Tobago defeated St Kitts and Nevis 3-0 in the other group A game on Sunday in Fort Lauderdale. Mexico, the record eight-times winner of the tournament for North and Central America and the Caribbean, came into the clash with Honduras in Houston after firing Argentine coach Diego Cocca and appointing Jaime Lozano on an interim basis.

Cocca was dismissed after the Nations League semi-final 3-0 defeat to the United States and El

Tri made the perfect start to Lozano's reign. It took just 51 seconds for Mexico to find the target when Romo collected a clearance, took one touch and then, from the edge of the box, drilled the ball into the bottom corner.

Roma made it 2-0 in the 23rd minute when Jesus Gallardo headed a corner towards him and he nodded the ball past Honduras keeper Luis Lopez. Orbelin Pineda, produced a clever one-two, on the edge of the box with Henry Martin, bursting into the area before blasting home. Luis Chavez completed the rout with a toe-poked finish in the 64th minute as the 66,500, overwhelmingly Mexican, crowd celebrated their team's timely return to form.

In group B's other game, Qatar, featuring as a

guest team in the tournament for the second time, took the lead in the 20th minute through Yusuf Abdurrisag. Haiti keeper Alexandre Pierre dropped a high cross and in the resulting scramble Mostafa Meshaal slipped the ball back to Abdurrisag who curled the ball into the far corner. The Caribbean nation, whose team operate at just a fraction of the budget of the 2022 World Cup hosts, drew level on the stroke of half-time from the penalty spot.

Pierrot's shot hit the outstretched arm of defender Tarek Salman and Duckens Nazon made no mistake with the penalty kick. Derrick Etienne hit the post for Haiti, who pushed forward in search of a late winner and they were rewarded late in stoppage time when Carneji Antoine broke down the left and squared

for Pierrot who slotted in the winner. Heavy rain in South Florida delayed the start of the all-Caribbean clash at Inter Miami's DRV PNK stadium and when Trinidad and St Kitts took to the field, there were still heavy patches of water.

Alvin Jones opened the scoring two minutes before the break with a well-taken effort, chesting down a lofted ball from Neveal Hackshaw and firing home. Ajani Fortune doubled the lead with a solo effort in the 65th minute, jinking past two defenders before firing into the bottom corner from the edge of the box. An own goal from Jameel Ible, who turned in a low Levi Garcia cross, completed a comfortable win for Trinidad. Mexico were facing Honduras in Group B later on Sunday. — AFP

## Kuwait's Al-Mansour wins swimming gold

CAIRO: Kuwait's Mansour Al-Mansour won Monday the gold medal in the 50 meters underwater race in the World Junior and Masters Finswimming Championships, held in Cairo, with the participation of 36 countries. In remarks to KUNA, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation and head of the technical committee in the Kuwaiti Diving Federation, Hani Bin Hussain, affirmed that this medal is the first international gold medal for Kuwait in this game for the age group between 34-39 years.

Bin Hussain dedicated this victory to His High-

ness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah and the Public Sports Authority, praising the support they provided to all Kuwaiti participants. On Sunday, Kuwaiti swimmer Abdulaziz Al-Raish won the silver medal in the men's 100-meter bi-fins finswimming competition in the CMAS Finswimming World Championship.

"This is the first-ever silver medal for Kuwait in the CMAS World Finswimming Championship for the age category 30-34 years," head of Kuwait's delegation and head of the technical committee of the Kuwaiti Diving Federation Hani bin Al-Hussein told KUNA. Al-Raish also came fourth in the men's 50-meter bi-fins finswimming category. — KUNA



Kuwait's Mansour Al-Mansour



Kuwaiti swimmer Abdulaziz Al-Raish wins silver medal.

## Alcaraz wins Queen's, returns to world No 1

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz will return to world number one after beating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 on Sunday to win his first title on grass at Queen's Club. The Spaniard's fifth title of the season moves him back ahead of 23-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic at the top of the rankings. "It means a lot to have my name on the trophy," said Alcaraz after joining the likes of Rafael Nadal, Pete Sampras and John McEnroe as former winners at Queen's. "It's special for me to play here. So many legends have won here so to see my name on the trophy surrounded by the great champions for me is amazing."

Alcaraz was playing on the grass for just the third tournament of his career. The 20-year-old has failed to get past the fourth round in two previous attempts at Wimbledon, but his impressive showing suggests he will be the biggest threat to Djokovic securing an eighth title at the All England Club next month. Despite Djokovic's Wimbledon record, Alcaraz will now be the top seed for the third Grand Slam of the season. "It helps a lot to come into Wimbledon as num-

ber one, the top seed. It's amazing but once again it wouldn't be possible without the support of all the people through the whole week," added Alcaraz.

After battling past French lucky loser Arthur Rinderknech in the first round, the US Open champion did not drop a set in his final four matches at Queen's. De Minaur had dumped out Andy Murray and world number six Holger Rune on his route to the final. But the Australian was left to rue Alcaraz's ability to win the big points in a tight contest. "It's been a great week for me," said De Minaur. "We were close but weren't able to get it done today. Too good by Carlos." De Minaur had two break points for the chance to serve for the first set when he led 4-3.

Alcaraz responded, though, to hold serve and immediately break the world number 18 in the next game before serving out for the set. He then needed lengthy treatment as he had strapping applied to his right quad. However, Alcaraz's movement did not seem affected as he again pounced with his only break point to move ahead 3-2 in the second set. Two rare errors gave De Minaur some hope in the final game as Alcaraz found himself 0-30 down. But his booming serve dug him out of trouble as four straight points secured the title and a return to world number one. — AFP



LONDON: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the trophy after winning against Australia's Alex de Minaur at the end of their men's singles final match on June 25, 2023. — AFP