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to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



4 730,000 people in Kuwait suffer from infertility



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16 Support for Vinicius after Real star suffers La Liga racial abuse



Cleric defends expat rights, calls to reopen family visas

Group blasts opposition as opportunists • Tribesmen freed on bail

NEWS IN BRIEF

Holiday from Arafat Day till July 2

KUWAIT: The Cabinet announced on Monday the Eid Al-Adha holiday in the public sector will be from Arafat Day (likely on Tuesday, June 27) till Sunday, July 2, 2023. The Cabinet also reviewed the latest updates on the Entertainment City and Failaka Island resort projects carried out by the Touristic Enterprises Company, calling on state departments to provide all facilities so that both projects are completed as soon as possible. (See Page 3)

Third-place finisher endorses Erdogan

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday secured the endorsement of an ultranationalist whose third-place finish helped force Turkey's first election runoff. Sinan Ogan met the Turkish leader on Friday and held separate negotiations with allies of opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu. "We will support the People's Alliance candidate, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in the second round of the elections on May 28," he told reporters in nationally televised remarks. — AFP

Omani novel wins top prize

ABU DHABI: Omani poet and novelist Zahran Alqasmi was named on Sunday winner of the prestigious International Prize for Arabic Fiction with his book "The Water Diviner". Alqasmi, 49, will receive \$50,000, and the prize committee will provide funding to translate the novel into English, organizers of the annual award said on their website. Alqasmi, who has published four novels and 10 poetry collections, is the first Omani winner of the prize, now in its 16th year. — AFP (See Page 11)

Raisi replaces longtime security chief

TEHRAN: Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi on Monday appointed a Revolutionary Guards general as the new secretary of the country's top security body, replacing longtime chief and leading Gulf mediator Ali Shamkhani. "Ali Akbar Ahmadian was appointed as the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council by the decree of the president," the official presidential website reported. Shamkhani, an ethnic Arab, had been credited with defusing Iran's years-long tensions with some Gulf nations. — AFP

Meta hit with record €1.2bn fine

DUBLIN: Facebook owner Meta has been fined a record €1.2 billion (\$1.3 billion) for transferring EU user data to the United States in breach of a previous court ruling, Ireland's regulator announced on Monday. The Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC), which acts on behalf of the European Union, said the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) had ordered it to collect "an administrative fine in the amount of 1.2 billion euros". — AFP (See Page 8)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A religious scholar on Monday strongly defended millions of expats living in the country, saying they have been a target of discrimination in Kuwait. In a video message to Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the scholar, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Awadhi, said prejudiced people in Kuwait are falsely blaming all problems on expats. "May God help you over the loud voices of bigots in the country who falsely claim that expats are the cause of all disasters in Kuwait, when the truth is exactly the contrary," he said.

Awadhi said there are exceptions among expats, but in most cases it is the "corrupt citizens" who facilitate matters for them to commit crimes, adding that some Kuwaitis create problems and law-abiding, respected expats pay the price. Sheikh Awadhi appealed to the interior minister to ease conditions for expats to be able

to bring their wives and children to the country, which has increasingly become a second home for expats.

Meanwhile, an independent group representing businessmen on Monday strongly criticized the Kuwaiti opposition, accusing them of serving their own selfish interests and ignoring national interests. The group, called Kuwait Diwanias Alliance, said in a statement that true constructive national opposition is absent in Kuwait and what we are witnessing "is a group that opposes everything except things that serve their own selfish interests".

The statement added that true opposition is the one that aims at achieving reforms and development and not create disputes and crises. The group also called on the government to be effective and decisive in regaining control of the state based on a plan for comprehensive reforms. Also, the public prosecution freed several tribesmen who were detained for taking part in outlawed tribal primaries on bail of KD 1,000 each.



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Awadhi

Kuwait Airways employees strike for better pay

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Workers' Union of Kuwait Airways and Subsidiaries organized a two-hour partial strike on Monday in protest against low salaries, non-disbursement of rewards to frontline workers, tampering with workers' rights and squandering their earnings. Head of the union Talal Al-Hajeri said the partial strike is a first step, and in the event that employees' demands are not met, they will resort to escalatory steps, including stopping air traffic until all demands are approved.

Hajeri explained salaries of Kuwaiti employees at Kuwait Airways do not exceed KD 800, while new foreign employees are given salaries of up to KD 4,000, in addition to KD 250 in road allowance. He wondered why a road allowance is given in a small country such as Kuwait.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways employees stage a two-hour partial strike on May 22, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zionists kill 3 Palestinians in West Bank

JERUSALEM: Zionist forces killed three Palestinians Monday in a raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. In a statement, the Palestinian health ministry identified the three men killed in Balata camp in Nablus as Muhammad Abu Zaytoun, 32, Fathi Abu Rizk, 30, and Abdullah Abu Hamdan, 24.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party, said in a statement that the three were among the group's "fighters". The group's emblem was wrapped around the foreheads of the men in a morgue, while their bodies were shrouded in the Palestinian flag. Palestinian presidency spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh described the killings as a "veritable massacre" and charged that repeated Zionist raids and attacks by settlers constituted a "major war crime and a collective punishment". He said "silence" from the United States had emboldened Zionists to escalate attacks, calling on Washington to "immediately intervene to stop the (Zionist) madness that will drag

the region toward explosion". The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and its forces regularly launch incursions into Palestinian cities, which are nominally under the control of Abbas' Palestinian Authority. Deadly military operations have surged in recent months across the Palestinian territory.

Witnesses told AFP Zionist forces raided several houses in the camp overnight. Gunfire and loud explosions rocked the camp, the witnesses said, adding that a house was demolished. Following the raid, Palestinians inspected the rubble of a damaged building and salvaged belongings.

Continued on Page 6

Mission with Saudi astronauts docks with ISS

WASHINGTON: A SpaceX capsule carrying two Saudi astronauts docked with the International Space Station on Monday, as part of a private mission chartered by Axiom Space. Rayyanah Barnawi, a scientist who became the first Saudi woman to go into space, and Ali Al-Qarni, a trained fighter pilot, are the first two people from their country to go to the orbital outpost.

"It was a lovely ride," said mission commander Peggy Whitson, a former NASA astronaut who made the voyage three times in the past, adding: "It was the softest docking I've ever felt." The fourth crew member is American businessman John Shoffner.

About two hours after docking, the capsule's hatch will be opened to allow the four to enter the ISS, where they will join the seven astronauts already on board (three Russians, three Americans, and an Emirati). The SpaceX rocket took off from Florida on Sunday, and the trip to the ISS, which flies around 400 km above the Earth, lasted about 16 hours.

Continued on Page 6



This handout photo shows the Ax-2 crew docked to the International Space Station on May 22, 2023. — AFP



Abdulkarim Abdulqadir's legacy celebrated by artists, literati

Event held by writer Taleb Al-Refai to commemorate late singer

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Writer Taleb Al-Refai hosted a gathering to commemorate Kuwaiti singer Abdulkarim Abdulqadir at his home on Sunday, as part of the 11th season of his cultural gathering.

The event was attended by composer Anwar Abdullah and poet Khaled Al-Bathaal, in addition to other artists and literati. Refai began the meeting with a moment of silence to express his sadness on the loss of singer Abdulqadir, and read Surat Al-Fatiha for his soul, as Muslims do for their deceased.

Refai then welcomed his guests to the cultural gathering and expressed his wish that Abdulqadir should have been among the attendees. He also spoke about his days with Abdulqadir and his friendly relationship with him. Like Refai, Bathaal, who was a close colleague of Abdulqadir, spoke about his memories with him. He said they were not only work colleagues, but also brothers and friends.



People attending the event pose for a group photo at Taleb Al-Refai's house.



"Abdulqadir's influence is not limited to his time and generation, but has spanned six generations"

He also spoke of Abdulqadir's high morals and good behavior with his friends and family, as he has a high level of kindness and compassion, along with romantic and gentle qualities.

In addition, Bathaal mentioned Abdulqadir's interaction with his poetry, where he could feel and react to every word that he sang. He also said Abdulqadir's influence is not limited to his time and generation, but has spanned six generations, having an impact on both the older and younger generations.

Abdullah expressed his condolences on the loss of Abdulqadir, speaking about his generosity, kindness and humanity while dealing with people



Composer Anwar Abdullah (left) and Author Taleb Al-Refai are seen at the event hosted by the author to commemorate late singer Abdulkarim Abdulqadir.

and especially himself, as Abdullah narrated his experiences and interactions with Abdulqadir. Abdullah also spoke of Abdulqadir's artistic and musical works and showed some of Abdulqadir's written works to the attendees.

Najm Al-Ghareeb, author of a book on Ab-



Khaled Al-Bathaal (left) and Anwar Abdullah are photographed during the event.

dulkadir, believes writing this book was a deserving project for someone like Abdulqadir due to the quality of his artistic works and for being a good person. Despite the fact that Abdulqadir did not encourage Ghareeb to write the book, Ghareeb insisted on writing it, as he saw that



Writer Taleb Al-Refai — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Abdulqadir's works must not be forgotten.

Refai noted that Abdulqadir was not a musician or a person who had studied music, but instead developed a musical taste. He agreed with Bathaal that Abdulqadir is loved by younger generations too, and not only the older ones.

Voters urged to replace lost citizenship documents

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior reminded citizens registered on electoral lists that voting will only be allowed with the original Kuwaiti citizenship certificate or a replacement for a lost or damaged one issued by the ministry.

The General Directorate of Nationality and Kuwaiti Travel Documents called on citizens who did not apply to obtain a replacement for a lost or damaged nationality certificate to do that as soon as possible.

The applicant must attend in person with their original civil ID or a recent certificate from the Public Authority for Civil Information and four personal photos measuring 6x4. Applicants can come anytime during the official working hours of the General Directorate of Nationality and Kuwaiti Travel Documents in Dajeej.

MoH shuts down violating private health facilities

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health has shut down and withdrawn the licenses of a number of private health facilities, which includes five private health centers, 40 medical clinics, as well as 20 private pharmacies.

The decision was issued by Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi based on recommendations given to him following monitoring campaigns done by inspection committees, as well as the results of the investigations of the Medical Responsibility Authority.

The ministry explained that the pharmacies were shut down after committing violations of the law regulating the pharmacy profession. Upon investigation, the ministry found that some of these pharmacies are managed by people other than the person whose name was on the license issued for the pharmacy.

With regard to the closure and withdrawal of licenses for medical centers, the ministry said they were found breaking regulations related to the practice of the medical profession and supporting professions. They also violated previously issued decisions regulating the work of the private medical sector.

The ministry affirmed keenness to apply the law, and to impose a deterrent penalty for each violator, as there is no room for complacency in the health and safety of citizens.

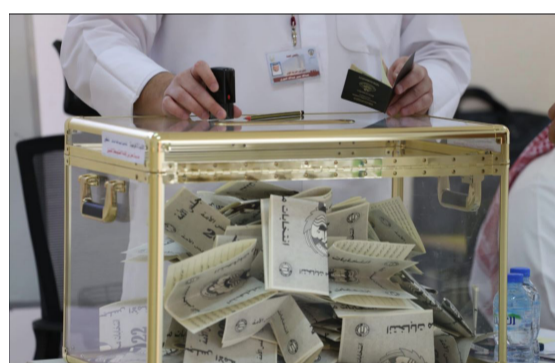
Fake accounts distorting Kuwait's election race

KUWAIT: Kuwait, on June 6, is scheduled to hold its 2023 National Assembly elections, with many vying for a seat to become the people's representatives. As election candidates campaign to earn voters' trust, fake accounts have popped-up on the internet and social media platforms, distorting the democratic process in Kuwait. Such fake accounts make it very difficult to discern between real and false information, which may cause voters some concern.

Undersecretary for Press, Publications, and Print at the Ministry of Information Lafi Al-Subai'e told KUNA that those behind the fake accounts are individuals or groups that mean harm to Kuwait and its democratic establishments.

Such accounts aim to confuse voters and turn them against their own people, he asserted. The fake accounts are used to affect public opinion and cause controversy via posting untrue data and information. About 95 percent of candidates have twitter accounts that could be used to look into their programs and political thought process, indicated Subai'e. He said that the best way to deal with fake accounts was not to interact with them, but report them to the proper authorities.

Head of the Kuwait Association of Information Security (KAIS) Safa Zaman went into details on how fake accounts work. Some fake accounts use bots to gain followers and likes, making them



KUWAIT: This file photo shows a ballot box from a previous parliamentary election in Kuwait. Kuwaitis will head to the polls on June 6.

appear legitimate to the masses, she revealed. "Spoofing", on the other hand, is a fake personal account of a well-known individual or a celebrity used to scam people, said Zaman who affirmed that such accounts would sometimes steer controversy and cause trouble in real life.

She expressed disappointment that some accounts were being used by election rivals to taint the image of other candidates, warning that social media has been very effective in global politics, namely in the US, which caused in 2016 the rise of Donald Trump to the presidency and his fall in 2020.

On how to handle fake accounts and prevent hacking, official at the Interior Ministry's cyber-crime department Lt Col Ammar Al-Sarraf said that there was a specialized unit dedicated to combating fraud whether in Kuwait or abroad.

He stressed the need to contact the 97283939 WhatsApp service to report cyber violations and acts of hacking to prevent the

Factbox

How fake accounts work during elections

- Some fake accounts use bots to gain followers and likes, making them appear legitimate to the masses.
- Fake accounts affect public opinion and cause controversy via posting untrue data and information.
- Some accounts are being used by election rivals to taint the image of other candidates.

What to do when encountering fake accounts:

- Contact Kuwait's specialized unit dedicated to combating fraud on Whatsapp at 97283939.
- Don't interact with the account

proliferation of fake accounts and the use of legitimately hacked accounts in spreading false information.

Shariyan Al-Shariyan, head of the Kuwait Bar Association, affirmed that it was important to counter the spread of fake accounts on all social media platforms. Voters are following the road to elections via the internet, he said, so it is very important to counter any false claims and information to safeguard the integrity of elections. He went on to say that Kuwait is the land of freedom of speech and expression and those fake accounts were not part of the healthy political discourse, adding that such accounts focused on achieving immediate gains without really bothering about the grave consequences. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent volunteers will help elderly citizens cast their vote in the coming election. — KUNA photos

150 KRCS volunteers to support elections

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) said it recruited 150 volunteers to support the state's various entities in organizing the 2023 National Assembly elections, according to KUNA. The

volunteers, from the young to the seniors, are eager to participate in Kuwait's celebration of democracy via providing assistance during the elections. Anwar Al-Hasawi, the society's deputy chairman of the board, told KUNA that volunteers would be tasked with providing first aid medical assistance during the election in coordination with the Ministry of Health in addition to assisting senior voters in their journey to cast their vote. The volunteers have been trained to coordinate with each other, as well

as with members of the state apparatus to make the upcoming elections a success.

Head of Public Relations at KRCS Khaled Al-Zaid stressed in a statement to KUNA the importance of the society's involvement in the procedure to organize the elections. He noted that the KRCS volunteers were involved in previous elections, commending the state's keenness on involving the society in running the democratic process on the ground.



Local

Cabinet pushes to complete building Entertainment City, Failaka resort

Committee approves 'civilized' national celebrations guideline

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Cabinet reviewed the latest updates regarding the projects to build the Entertainment City and Failaka Island's resort development which are to be carried out by the Touristic Enterprises Company. The Cabinet urged state departments to provide all facilities so that both projects could be completed as soon as possible. This came during the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

After the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel said: The Cabinet touched on the results of the participation of the Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the Arab 32nd Summit, which was held in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah. The cabinet stressed that the State of Kuwait reaffirms its support for Arab League Council Resolution No 8914, welcoming the final statement of the Jeddah meeting and the statement of the Amman meeting. It also expressed hope that Syria's return to the Arab League will help end the crisis and the suffering of the Syrian people.

The Cabinet confirmed the dates for the Islamic Eid Al-Adha holiday, where state bodies nationwide will be closed starting from Arafat Day on Tuesday June 27 until Sunday July 2, with work resuming the following day on Monday. Discussing current developments around the world, the cabinet condemned the storming and ransacking of the residence of the Kuwaiti military office chief in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, in addition to the Qatari embassy, slamming these incidents as "acts of aggression" that target diplomatic missions. The Cabinet went on to urge authorities in Sudan to take appropriate measures aiming to protect diplomats in the African country, while ensuring that such incidents do not occur again.

Committee decisions

Meanwhile, the Cabinet was informed of a decision not to renew for senior officials in the Ministry of Defense, Kuwait Municipality, Municipal Council and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. The decision aims to open more opportunities for qualified national candidates to assume leadership positions in state departments.

In other news, the permanent committee for na-



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting on Monday. — KUNA

tional celebrations approved the procedural guideline for the 2024 national celebrations to make sure that ceremonies are held in a professional and civilized manner, according to a press statement

released Monday. The guideline includes plans to organize activities covering various domains including the entertainment, social, cultural, sports, education and other fields. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Guest of Honor Jana Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb lights a lamp to inaugurate the ceremony.



Chief Guest Dr Manelisi Genge (center) is honored.



Dancers perform during the event.



Guest of Honor Jana Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb (center) is honored.

ICSK celebrates Kuwait Times' Jana Al-Naqeeb

KUWAIT: The Indian Community School rolled out a carpet of welcome for the budding talents of the ICSK family on the ceremonial occasion of Arts Fest - Paradigm 2023 on May 17 and 18. The inaugural ceremony witnessed a sea of talents and the excitement was palpable. The occasion was graced by the esteemed presence of the Chief Guest Dr Manelisi Genge, Ambassador of South Africa to Kuwait and guest of honor Jana Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, Public Relation and Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News.

The celebration began with recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by a prayer song. The gathering paid tribute to the nations by honoring the National Anthem of Kuwait followed by Indian National Anthem.

Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK presented a cordial welcome to the audience. He motivated the students to identify, nurture and develop their artistic ambitions. Nriya Samarpan,

Department of Bharatnatyam welcomed the audience with an enthralling classical dance, a replication of India's rich culture. The event was formally inaugurated with the lighting of a lamp by the Chief Guest Dr Manelisi Genge and Guest of Honor, Jana Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb accompanied by Hon Chairman Shaik Abdul Rahiman and Dr V Binumon.

Dr Manelisi Genge inspired the future leaders with his words of wisdom and appreciated the artists and the teachers for their remarkable contributions. Jana Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, in her address encouraged the young minds to keep exploring creative ideas and master the talents they have. Ruth Ann Toby enchanted the audience with her melodious voice. True to the theme, the vivacious dancers and versatile musicians of ICSK set the floor on fire with their energetic performances and this was a reflection of their passion and hard work. The vote of thanks was presented by Susan Rajesh, Vice Principal of ICSK Senior.

Annual arts festival

The 2-day annual arts festival witnessed a plethora of mesmerizing onstage and offstage performances simultaneously run on 3 different stages with more than 1300 students competing in 71 varied events. The literary genius of ICSK, through their vivid imagination and love for words transported the readers to their inner world in the Essay and Story Writing Com-

petition. Extempore showcased the oratory skills of the geniuses. The master chefs of the school competed in the salad making competition.

The budding artists brought alive their creativity and talents in drawing, painting, clay modeling and jewelry making, teaser and digital card making competitions. The closing day awestruck the audiences with the marvelous rendition of the talents in various competitions like folk and classical dances, songs, instrumental and band competitions, fashion show and standup comedy.

sponsible for combating and confronting this problem. While security institutions have commitments, intellectual, scientific, media and educational institutions also have a major responsibility to build correct concepts and sound human values and immunize society against deviant ideas. "Your interaction and contribution to the success of this workshop embodies the spirit of solidarity and partnership in preventing terrorism and confronting it in all its forms and shapes, as everyone has a stake in confronting this phenomenon, which has become a threat to the manifestations of life, human existence and the sanctity of property," Jasir said.

Deputy US Chief of Mission James Holtsnider expressed his pride and satisfaction to introduce the US attorney for the southern district of Texas, Alamdard Hamdani. Holtsnider said Hamdani is one of the best in the US with decades of experience across all aspects of the US legal system. He stressed this training is going to focus on the task force module, which is the module that gained prominence in the US in the 1940s and has expanded over many decades, and is very useful for information sharing.

"I am the 24th attorney of the southern district of Texas. I am the top prosecutor in the southern district of Texas that encompasses 44,000 square miles (15,000 km) with 9 million people. The biggest city is Houston, which is a multicultural city that has ev-



(From left) Advisor and Deputy Director of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Adnan Al-Jasir, Deputy Chief of Mission James Holtsnider and US Attorney Alamdard Hamdani speak during the workshop. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

everything from healthcare to the oil industry," Hamdani said. He said he had the privilege of being in the Department of Justice for 15 years, where he worked in national and security matters and public and official corruption matters. Hamdani also handled drug cases and human smuggling and trafficking cases. "I am especially excited to be here in Kuwait to share what I know with you and learn from you," he said.

US-Kuwait workshop enhances cooperation to fight terrorism

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The United States Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) organized a workshop with the Kuwait Public Prosecution titled "The Task Force Model of Investigation and Prosecution". The workshop took place at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies on Monday. The goal of the workshop is to enhance the capabilities of prosecutors in combating organizational crime, including terrorism, terror financing and money laundering.

During the workshop, Adnan Al-Jasir, advisor and deputy director of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, said this workshop is part of the annual program that was agreed upon in cooperation with OPDAT. The importance of this workshop lies in the urgent need to enhance cooperation at national, regional and international levels to combat terrorism and its motives. All societies and their various institutions are re-

Big turnout at MoH blood donation drive

KUWAIT: A blood donation drive that started Monday at the Kuwait Blood Bank witnessed large turnout as citizens and expatriates contributed in big numbers to help the campaign become successful, the Ministry of Health said. The campaign is organized to help improve the strategic stock of blood units in Kuwait, the ministry said in a statement Monday at the launch of the blood donation drive.

It comes following a recent controversial decision by the health ministry to impose charges on blood units for expats. According to the decision, the ministry said it would charge KD 20 per bag of blood for expat patients if they have legal residency and KD 40

for visitors. Patients who secure a donor are exempt. Many have decried the decision as discriminatory, with some saying they would not be donating blood because it will be "sold" to patients.

On Monday, Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department at the ministry Dr Reem Al-Radwan said that blood and emergency stocks in Kuwait were in "very excellent" conditions, noting that the current reserve is at levels that cover the needs of hospitals in the country. She further indicated that blood donation campaigns will continue until July. "The ministry organized last week a number of donation campaigns in cooperation with the ministries of defense and interior and a number of companies with the aim of increasing the strategic stock and covering the hospitals' needs for blood," she said.

General Manager of Wafra Financial Services Wisam Al-Sairafi said that previous blood donation campaigns succeeded in collecting hundreds of blood bags. The numbers are expected to increase in the current campaign. —Agencies



KUWAIT: Officials oversee the blood donation drive held at the Kuwait Blood Bank Monday. — KUNA

In my view

Is anxiety related to drug use in Kuwait?



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

Six to seven individuals frequent Kuwait Center for Mental Health, according to Director Dr Khuloud Al-Ali, which is a large number for a small country. What makes the issue more dangerous is that 60 percent of patients suffer from anxiety disorders.

There is difference between anxiety, which is a normal human attribute, and anxiety disorders. Natural anxiety means awareness and behavioral elements combine to create an unpleasant feeling that is linked to discomfort, fear or hesitation. Normal anxiety is mostly accompanied by behaviors that reflect tension and discomfort, and of course there is no human being who has not gone through such moments, but it is a natural reaction that gets over when the event ends.

But pathological anxiety or anxiety disorders are a collection of mental disorders that are accompanied by a feeling of fear and worry. This anxiety may be continuous in the form of fear and panic towards future events, similar to the concept of neurotic personality.

So, are there differences between people suffering from anxiety disorders? The answer comes from genetics, which reveals there are personalities that have genes that make them more likely to suffer from pathological anxiety than others, but this genetic defect is not very common. Some studies have said there are external factors that are stronger than genetics in making some people anxious, most important of which is drugs or alcohol addiction.

So we are facing a major pathological phenomenon. Medicine has confirmed its link to alcohol and narcotics use, so it is time to ask whether pathological anxiety is due to drug use in our society. This question needs to refer to the numbers revealed by the director of Kuwait Mental Health Center to reach a scientific conclusion that reveals all aspects of the problem.

Pathological anxiety halts a human being's contributions and makes them introverted and unable to use their abilities. Here is the danger of this disorder on development, especially if we understand that most patients are young. Many experts have warned against intoxicants and drug abuse, and we are now seeing diseases linked to them spreading among us.

We really need today, more than any time, to confront addiction.

News in Brief

Municipal Council
fires expat workers

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council terminated the services of all expatriate consultants and legal professionals in the General Secretariat on Monday. The names included a senior specialist, legal specialists, and a legal researcher. These positions will be Kuwaitized as soon as possible. The contracts will be terminated as of May 22. The period from May 22 to August 21 is considered a warning period for the terminated employees.

Fire force controls
yacht fire at Kout

KUWAIT: Firefighters controlled a yacht fire in Kout harbor. The Kuwait Fire Force public relations and media department announced. The KFF stated: "the Central Operations Department directed fire brigades from the Shuaiba Bahri and Fahaheel fire stations to the site of the incident. Upon the arrival of the teams, it was found that the fire started in a 40-foot yacht, and the fire was fought and extinguished without any injuries."

57 residency, work
law violators caught

KUWAIT: The General Directorate of Residency Affairs Investigations was able to arrest 57 violators of the residence and work law of various nationalities in Khaitan and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh as well as at the Capital Governorate. The arrests were part of intensified security campaigns. The interior ministry's media department announced that they have referred all violators to the competent authorities in order to take the necessary legal measures against them.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A seagull stands on a wooden post at a pier in Kuwait City while another flies away towards the Arabian Gulf. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

730,000 people in Kuwait
suffer from sterility: Doctor

Connection found between digestive system diseases and infertility

By Abdullatif Al-Sharaa

KUWAIT: Around 730,000 people in Kuwait are estimated to be suffering from sterility, Consultant Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash said.

Hashash's estimation is based on the global rate which stipulates that one of every six persons worldwide suffer from the medical condition. She pointed out that there is a link between the digestive system diseases, sterility, and infertility among people of both genders, referencing studies done by the World Health Organization (WHO) in April 2023 in this field which she says confirm this connection.

Treatment of digestive system diseases may open the door for a new hope, especially for those who suffer from unknown causes of sterility and infertility, she said. Among diseases that contribute to reduced fertility are ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, celiac, H Pylori (Stomach Germ) and

liver diseases, she said, noting that failure to follow a proper diet program could also be a cause.

Since sterility affects one out of six persons around the world. Hashash said that the number of people affected with sterility is about 9.5 million out of the 57 million in the Gulf region.

She explained that H Pylori could lead to infertility due to its effect in causing cell damage, adding that the global rate of infection with the disease reaches up to 50 percent. She further indicated that one of the lead causes of sterility are Crohn's disease, an inflammatory bowel disease that causes chronic inflammation of the gastro-intestinal tract, and chronic ulcerative colitis which is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease in which abnormal reactions of the immune system cause inflammation and ulcers on the inner lining of the large intestines. Those diseases cause vitamin deficiency, indigestion and bad absorption.

Another cause, Hashash said, is

celiac disease, which is a condition where the immune system attacks the tissues when person consumes gluten. The disease leads to reducing fertility among women by 8.4 percent due to deficiency in folic acid, zinc, and selenium which weakens fertility hormones LH (luteinizing hormone) and FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone).

As for men, the deficiency of folic acid, Vitamin A and E weaken sperm production and Androgen resistance, she added. Liver disease is also another condition that could lead to infertility, she said, noting that there are about 30 to 70 percent of women with liver cirrhosis who have an interruption in the menstrual cycle. Liver disease leads to change in sex hormones causing the menstrual cycle to stop, while in men it reduces the testosterone hormone, she explained.

Obesity is considered another possible cause due to oxidative stress that reduces the production of hormones and reduces the implan-



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash

tation of the fetus in the uterus, she said. Hashash said that bad diet and eating foods rich in fats cause a slowdown of sperm movement and numbers among men.



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Air quality in
Shuaiba within
standards: EPA

KUWAIT: The air quality in the Shuaiba Industrial area is within international standards, the Environment Public Authority said on Monday.

The concentration of air polluting gases, said the authority, doesn't exceed those stipulated by the country's air quality regulations.

The remarks come after local media reported last week that the concentration of nitrogen dioxide, which forms when fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas or diesel are burned at high temperatures, is double that allowed by Kuwaiti standards.

Inspection and control teams from the Air Quality Monitoring Department of the authority conducted a tour of the factories in the eastern and western Shuaiba industrial zone to ensure that they comply with the environmental requirements related to air pollution. Director of the air quality department at the authority Sharif Al-Khayat told KUNA in a statement.

The teams surveyed the area in order to avoid the transmission of any pollutants or odors that cause inconvenience to residents of neighboring residential areas, especially with Kuwait currently being affected by humid southeasterly winds.

According to news reports, Kuwait's supreme council for the environment issued a decision to pause the authorization of industrial projects in western Shuaiba due to the country being mostly affected by northern and northwesterly winds. The di-



rection of the wind reportedly means that pollutants travelling from western Shuaiba would reach residential areas in Ali Sabah Al-Salem and the chalets area. The decision has improved the environmental conditions in the country, reports said.

Khayat told KUNA that the teams took air quality readings from nine different locations from southern to northern Shuaiba Industrial area to measure the levels of hydrocarbon vapors, ammonia, formaldehyde, hydrogen sulfide gas and nitrogen oxides and compare them with the permissible standards. All readings came back within the range determined by the authority, he said.



KUWAIT: Inspection and control teams from the Air Quality Monitoring Department of the environment authority conduct a tour of the factories in the eastern and western Shuaiba industrial zone. — KUNA photos



Modi lands in Sydney eyeing economic ties

UK interior minister denies impropriety over speeding ticket

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PORT MORESBY: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) and Papua New Guinea's Defence Minister Win Bakri Daki (R) show documents after signing a security agreement as Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape (C) looks on at the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation at APEC Haus in Port Moresby. — AFP

Papua New Guinea, US sign security pact

Washington vies with China's expanding footprint in the Pacific region

PORT MORESBY: Papua New Guinea (PNG) signed a defence pact with the United States on Monday, giving US forces access to its airfields and ports as Washington vies with China's expanding footprint in the Pacific region.

Washington has growing concerns about China's rise in the Pacific, where it is trying to woo nations with an array of diplomatic and financial incentives in return for strategic support. Defence Minister Win Bakri Daki inked the deal with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken before the start of a US meeting with the leaders of 14 South Pacific island states in the capital Port Moresby.

"A defence cooperation agreement is done," Prime Minister James Marape said at the signing ceremony, adding the Pacific island was "elevating" its relationship with the United States. Blinken said under the "fully transparent" deal each of the two nations would be able to board the other's vessels, share technical expertise and "better patrol" the seas together.

"The agreement that we reached, the work that we are doing, is not about any other country," he told reporters at the end of the meeting. "It's about

our relationship with the Pacific islands and the shared vision we have for this region." Washington's diplomatic overtures in the Pacific received another boost on Monday after it renewed a key strategic pact with the island of Palau.

In a sign of the intensifying rivalry over the South Pacific, Blinken was not the only representative of a major power aiming to counter Beijing's growing economic, political and military presence. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew into town just hours before him on the eve of his own meeting, asserting his nation's role as a regional power.

"We support a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. We respect the sovereignty and integrity of all countries," Modi told Pacific leaders. After making the first visit to the country by an Indian premier, Modi tweeted it was a "historic" trip.

By signing the security deal with PNG, Blinken will also expand the US military's capacity to deploy in the region. Beijing has snapped up mines and ports across the Pacific, and last year inked a secretive security pact with the neighboring Solomon Islands that allows China to deploy troops to the country.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning on Monday said Beijing would not object to "normal exchanges" between nations but must be on guard for the use of cooperation "as a pretext for engaging in geopolitical games" in the Pacific.

The United States fears that a Chinese military foothold in the South Pacific could outflank its facilities on Guam, and make the defence of Taiwan more complicated in the event of a Chinese invasion. The State Department said the pact with PNG would "increase stability and security in the region".

"Port Moresby is no longer the sleepy diplomatic outpost it once was," said Gordon Peake, a senior adviser for the Pacific Islands at the United States Institute of Peace. "While China might not be mentioned anywhere in the document, it's an important subtext in this story of deepening US-PNG relations."

Marape last week said the deal would offer Washington movement in the country's waters in return for access to US satellite surveillance to battle "illegal activities on the high sea". The deal would not prevent him from signing similar agreements with other

nations, including China, he said. The agreement has prompted student protests at several universities, PNG's biggest newspaper the Post Courier reported, over fears it gives US forces too much autonomy at some of the country's key entry points.

In Port Moresby, scores of students gathered at the University of Papua New Guinea into the evening, with some setting tyres on fire. A private security guard at the university said stones were being thrown at passing vehicles.

Security was high in the capital on Monday, with roads blocked and bomb squad cars stationed around its downtown beach area close to where the leaders were meeting. Officers were also patrolling nearby waters on speedboats and jet skis.

Blinken replaced Joe Biden at the meeting after the US president cancelled the trip to take part in debt ceiling talks in Washington. On top of the deal, the US pledged to PNG \$45 million in funding to tackle organized crime, climate change and HIV/AIDS, as well as protective equipment for its military, the State Department said. — AFP

At least 20 dead in Guyana school dormitory fire

GEORGETOWN: At least 20 people were killed and several injured Sunday in a school dormitory fire in Guyana, the government said in a statement, with the nation's president calling it a "major disaster." "This is a major disaster. It is horrible, it is painful," the South American nation's President Irfaan Ali said Sunday night.

The death toll had risen to 20 and several people were injured in the fire at the Mahdia Secondary School in central Guyana, the government statement said. "We have lost many beautiful souls in that

fire," it added. "We ask that our prayers continue to be with these children, their families, and communities."

Ali said he had ordered arrangements be made in the capital Georgetown's two major hospitals "so that every single child who requires attention be given the best possible opportunity to get that attention."

Private and military planes have been sent to Mahdia, located about 200 kilometers (124 miles) south of Georgetown, as the region is affected by heavy rains. "Five planes have already taken off to Mahdia to support the regional health officials with additional medical supplies and medivacs," the government statement said.

"At this moment, seven children are prepared to be medivac to Georgetown." At least one plane with three evacuees arrived in Georgetown, according to an AFP journalist.

The government said officials were supporting efforts at Ogle airport in the capital to "receive the critical patients and coordinate an emergency plan of action." "A full-scale medical emergency action plan has been launched," it added. Natasha Singh-Lewis, an opposition MP, called for an investigation into the fire's cause. "We need to understand how this most horrific and deadly incident occurred and take all necessary measures to prevent such a tragedy from happening again," she said.

Guyana, a small English-speaking country of 800,000 people, is a former Dutch and British colony which recently discovered it holds the world's largest per capita oil reserves. Among the poorest nations in South America, it hopes the discovery will help spur rapid development. The country boasts the second-highest percentage of forest cover on Earth. — AFP



GEORGETOWN: Children rescued during a Mahdia secondary school dormitory fire are transferred by medical personnel, firefighters and policemen to hospitals in Georgetown, Guyana. — AFP

India's G20 tourism meet begins in Kashmir under tight security

SRINAGAR: A G20 tourism meeting began on Monday under tight security in Indian-administered Kashmir, as New Delhi seeks to project an image of normality in a region wracked for decades by violence. Both China and Pakistan have condemned holding the event in the disputed Muslim-majority territory, which is split between New Delhi and Islamabad, both of whom claim it in full.

Over the decades an insurgency seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan has seen tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels killed. But India wants to show that what officials call "normalcy and peace" are returning to the region after New Delhi revoked its limited autonomy in 2019 and took direct control, imposing an extended lockdown. Dissent has been

criminalized, media freedoms curbed and public protests limited in what critics say is a drastic curtailment of civil liberties by Indian authorities. Since the lockdown, the rebels have largely been crushed - although young men continue to take up arms - and the annual death toll, once in the thousands, has been on a downward trend, with 253 fatalities last year.

Now India is promoting tourism in the region - home to spectacular mountain scenery - and welcome signs at the airport declare it "paradise on earth". More than a million Indian citizens visited last year, to the delight of local tourism businesses. In the past, said Indian science and technology minister Jitendra Singh, a similar event to the G20 meet would have been accompanied by a call from Islamabad for a general strike, "and the shops would be shut in Srinagar".

But now people were "going about with their activity". "The common man walking in the streets of Srinagar today wants to move on," he told the meeting's first event. "He's seen two generations having got lost at the altar of these incompatible times."

Police said last week that security had been

beefed up "to avoid any chance of terrorist attack during the G20", and on Monday soldiers and armored vehicles were deployed at multiple locations in Srinagar. But many checkpoints - wrapped in metal mesh and barbed wire - were dismantled overnight, and some paramilitary police stood hidden behind G20 advertising panels in what appeared to be an effort to minimize the security forces' visibility.

The three-day gathering is taking place at a well-guarded complex on the shores of Dal Lake in Srinagar. Residents have chafed under the stepped-up security measures, with one describing the situation as "just a facade" on Monday. Hundreds have been detained in police stations and thousands, including shopkeepers, have received calls from officials warning against any "signs of protest or trouble", a senior official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

To visit Kashmir, foreign journalists require special permission, which is not normally forthcoming, though it has been granted for the G20 meeting. The permits are valid only for coverage of the event itself and limited to the city of Srinagar. — AFP



SRINAGAR: Delegates attend the G20 tourism meeting in Srinagar on May 22, 2023. A G20 tourism meeting began on May 22 under tight security in Indian-administered Kashmir, as New Delhi seeks to project an image of normality in a region wracked for decades by violence. — AFP

International

North Korea, Ukraine top agenda for EU talks in Seoul

South Korea and Europe mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties

SEOUL: Two European leaders met South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol for a summit in Seoul Monday where they discussed trade agreements, Ukraine, and North Korea's banned weapons programmes.

European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are on their first visit to the East Asian country as South Korea and Europe mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

"South Korea and the European Union are important cooperative partners that share the universal values of freedom, human rights, and the rule of law, and over the past 60 years, cooperation has developed in all areas, including politics, economy, and the global agenda," Yoon told a joint news conference after the talks.

The leaders agreed to increase cooperation in the face of global threats that include the war in Ukraine and North Korea's banned weapons programmes, according to a joint statement. They condemned North Korea's "repeated illegal ballistic missile launches as well as its ongoing nuclear development and references to the possible use of nuclear weapons" and expressed support for Seoul's efforts to persuade Pyongyang to give up such weapons.

"We shared the understanding that North Korea's nuclear and missile development poses a serious threat to global security beyond the Korean Peninsula, and agreed to closely cooperate for the international community's united response to North Korea's provocations," Yoon said.

The trio of leaders also agreed to boost trade ties with more talks on issues "including supply chain resilience and... export controls and economic coercion". South Korea is one of the world's largest pro-

ducers of crucial computer chips, securing supplies of which has become a key issue internationally, with the United States and China locked in a fierce battle for control of the chips market.

Ramon Pacheco Pardo, a professor of international relations at King's College London, said economic security was a key discussion, with "supply chain resilience" a priority for both Europe and South Korea.

"The EU would like to ensure greater investment, joint research and greater cooperation in sectors such as semiconductors, electric batteries or AI, where South Korea and other international firms are seen to be ahead of Europe," Pardo told AFP. "Also, both sides remain committed to the (World Trade Organization) in a way that China and the US are not, and they will want to discuss how to reinforce trade multilateralism."

Ukraine agenda

The leaders also "discussed support for Ukraine to meet financial, material, security and humanitarian needs", the statement said. South Korea, the world's ninth-largest arms exporter, has sent humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and sold tanks and howitzers to Poland—a key ally for Kyiv as it battles Russia's invasion.

Seoul has a long-standing policy of not providing weapons to active conflict zones, although Yoon has hinted that this could change. The president's office warned last month that Seoul's decision on whether to send military aid to Kyiv depended on Russia's actions.

A large attack against civilians could tip the balance, it said. The leaders called for increased collective pressure on Russia and reaffirmed their

paid the fine and I took the points," she told reporters. "In relation to the process... what I will say is that, in my view, I'm confident that nothing untoward has happened."

Sunak was asked about the Sunday newspaper reports while at the G7 leaders' summit in Japan and said he did not know the "full details" of the case. Downing Street later said that "of course" he had full confidence in Braverman.

But the Mirror newspaper said on Monday that one of its reporters had asked her special media adviser six weeks ago about the speeding offence and was told it was "nonsense". Sunak's spokesman told reporters that integrity and professionalism were "core values" in government and the prime minister was "in regular conversation" with Braverman.

He declined to say when the pair last spoke and confirmed that he had already had a conversation with his ethics adviser, as calls mounted for a formal probe. "The prime minister is availing himself of all the information" after returning from the G7 in the early hours, he said, adding: "The prime minister believes in proper processes."

The general secretary of the FDA union which represents senior officials, Dave Penman, said: "Civil servants are publicly funded... They're not there to support the personal interests of a minister. They don't do their shopping, they don't look after their children and they don't sort out their speeding fine." — AFP

considering Kuwait Airways is not a private airline owned by individuals, but a government carrier.

Chief Instructor of Pilots at Kuwait Airways Captain Mowaffaq Al-Maoud warned there will be no flights next week if their demands are not met or if employees are prevented from organizing another sit-in. Maoud added that Kuwait Airways employees still do not know whether they fall under the private sector or the government. "If we belong to the private sector, labor support must be disbursed. If we belong to the government sector, we demand equitable salaries and rights with other government sectors," he said.

Earlier, the company's labor union had called on employees for a "civilized" partial strike that does not drift into chaos. The union indicated the aim of the strike was to deliver a peaceful and civilized message and that the national carrier will not be exposed to risk of operational safety.

Late Sunday, Kuwait Airways has assured its customers that the partial strike will not affect passenger movement or airport operations. The national carrier affirmed it is coordinating with the interior ministry and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to achieve this goal. It urged customers to abide by their flight schedules and follow up messages sent to them about any changes. It also appealed to customers to communicate with the airline's official channels for any inquiry.

I have, and now maybe just fly among the stars."

The mission is not Saudi Arabia's first foray into space. In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an air force pilot, took part in a US-organized space voyage. "I reflect on my experience in space many years ago, and I am happy that Saudi Arabia has returned to space once again," he told AFP at a watch party for the Ax-2 launch in Riyadh. "God willing, this is just the beginning."

The space mission involving a Saudi woman is the latest move by the country, where women only gained the right to drive a few years ago, to re-vamp its ultraconservative image. The oil-rich Gulf kingdom established the Saudi Space Commission in 2018 and launched a program last year to send astronauts into space.

Scores of flag-waving Saudis gathered at the launch party in Riyadh beneath a massive white tent for the blast-off countdown. Jawaher Al-Sabhan, who came to the event with her 11-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, said the moment gave her "indescribable feelings". "I love space and exploration in general, and I love my children knowing about space and the advantages of exploring it," she said. — AFP



SEOUL: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol (C) speaks as Charles Michel (L), President of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen (R), President of the European Commission, look on during a joint press briefing after their meeting at the Presidential Office in Seoul. — AFP

commitment to stand by Ukraine. Yoon held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of the G7 in Japan on Sunday, following a meeting with Zelensky's wife, Olena Zelenska, in Seoul last week.

During his meeting with Zelensky in Hiroshima, Yoon promised additional non-lethal aid to Ukraine, including demining equipment and ambulances, at the request of the Ukrainian president, according to South Korea's presidential office. — AFP

UK interior minister denies impropriety over speeding ticket

LONDON: UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman on Monday denied any impropriety over the handling of a speeding ticket that has again put her at the centre of ministerial rule-breaking allegations. Her boss, Rishi Sunak, promised to restore integrity to government when he became prime minister last year, after the turbulent premierships of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss.

But Braverman—a Brexit hardliner criticised for her rhetoric on immigration—has found herself facing calls for an ethics inquiry, after allegedly asking officials to set up a one-to-one driving awareness course instead of taking penalty points.

That has led to opposition claims that she may have breached the ministerial code of conduct by requesting non-political civil servants to help deal with a private matter. Braverman, who resigned under Truss for using her personal email to send an official document to a colleague, downplayed the row, just hours before she was due to face lawmakers in parliament.

"Last summer, I was speeding. I regret that. I

Kuwait Airways employees strike...

Continued from Page 1

Hajeri spoke about the continuous disregard for Kuwaiti employees' dues, adding the union is keen on preventing employees from entering into disputes with foreign colleagues. "But what's clear is that the administration's policy is intentional in its provocation of Kuwaiti employees to lead them into mistakes with their new colleagues, which will expose them to accountability and legal actions against them," he alleged.

The union's secretary Fahd Mansour Ajmi said repeated claims that were submitted to the company's board of directors were repeatedly ignored. He said this partial strike came as a result of an extraordinary general assembly meeting that was held recently, where it was approved to pay a salary increase to a certain number of senior department officials and not the rest of Kuwaiti employees, indicating that when the decision was objected, the response from the board of directors to the objectors was to go back to government employment. Ajmi appealed through the media to the Cabinet to restore the rights of the strikers, con-

Mission with Saudi astronauts...

Continued from Page 1

This mission, named Ax-2, is the second fully private mission to visit the Space Station, following a first in April 2022. The members of Ax-2 will stay about 10 days and carry out about 20 experiments. One of them involves studying the behavior of stem cells in zero gravity.

"Being the first Saudi woman astronaut, representing the region, it's a great pleasure and honor that I'm very happy to carry," Barnawi said at a recent press conference. She added that, aside from the research she will carry out on board, she was looking forward to sharing her experience on the ISS with kids. "Being able to see their faces when they see astronauts from their own region for the first time is very thrilling," she said.

A career fighter pilot, Qarni said he has "always had the passion of exploring the unknown and just admiring the sky and the stars". "It is a great opportunity for me to pursue this kind of passion that

Greece eyes new vote as PM seeks absolute majority

ATHENS: Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said Monday he was seeking a new vote as soon as on June 25 in order to obtain a ruling majority, a day after his party won national elections that failed to produce a single-party government.

The conservative New Democracy party of Mitsotakis trounced its rivals in Sunday's vote, with a 20-point lead over its nearest contender—Syriza, led by leftist Alexis Tsipras. Voters handed the conservatives their best result since 2007, crediting the party with bringing economic stability back to a nation once known as an EU laggard.

"Shock and awe", headlined left-wing daily Efsyn on Monday, summing up the feeling shared by both New Democracy and Syriza voters, while pro-government Proto Thema noted that the double-digit margin was the widest seen since 1974.

The "political earthquake" hailed by Mitsotakis sent the Athens stock market to its highest in almost a decade. But the win fell five seats short of an outright majority, leaving Mitsotakis with the option of either seeking a coalition or calling a new vote.

The 55-year-old Harvard graduate on Monday declined power sharing, telling President Katerina Sakalloropoulou, who handed him the mandate to form a government, that it was not possible to form a coalition under the current parliamentary line-up.

Greece should head for new elections "as soon as possible," he said. Following Mitsotakis' rejection, Greece will continue going through the motions required under the constitution—with the president then handing similar mandates to Syriza and then third-placed socialist party Pasok-Kinal. — AFP

The bids are also doomed to failure, given Sunday's result. Hours after the vote, Tsipras, too, had set the stage for a new vote, saying the next battle will be "critical and final". A senior judge will eventually be named interim prime minister and call for new elections.



ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (L) leaves the presidential palace in Athens after Greek president handed him the mandate to form a government. — AFP

In power over the last four years, former McKinsey consultant Mitsotakis steered the country through the pandemic which devastated Greece's vital tourism industry. On his watch, the erstwhile EU economic headache has enjoyed a post-Covid revival, booking growth of 5.9 percent in 2022.

With unemployment and inflation falling, and growth this year projected at twice that of the European Union average, Greece's outlook was a far cry from the throes of the crippling debt crisis a decade ago.

Mitsotakis' term however was blighted by a wire-tapping scandal as well as a train crash that claimed 57 lives in February. The government initially blamed the accident—Greece's worst-ever rail disaster—on human error, even though the country's notoriously poor rail network has suffered from years of under-investment. Nevertheless, neither the accident nor the wire-tapping scandal appeared to have dented support for his conservatives—who scored a far bigger win than that predicted by opinion polls ahead of the vote. Despite the massive protests that broke out in the aftermath of the rail crash, the transport minister at the time, Kostas Karamanlis, was reelected on Sunday.

Under a new electoral law that comes into play in the next ballot, the winner can obtain a bonus of up to 50 seats. Based on Sunday's showing and that calculation, New Democracy is virtually assured of a victory. — AFP



BALATA: Mourners march with the bodies of Palestinians killed overnight in the Balata camp on the outskirts of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on May 22, 2023. — AFP

Zionists kill 3 Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

The Hamas militant group, which rules the blockaded Gaza Strip, described those killed as "freedom fighters". "Hamas reiterates that resisting the (Zionist) occupation is a legitimate right for the Palestinian people in their quest for freedom," the group said in a statement.

Densely-populated Balata is home to some 27,000 people, making it the largest camp in the West Bank, according to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). The Zionist army also reported clashes in an operation in Jenin, north of Nablus. Zionist forces arrested three suspects in Jenin and seven others in other parts of the West Bank, it added. The latest raids come just over a week into a fragile Gaza ceasefire after a five-day cross-border conflict between the Zionist entity and the Islamic Jihad group. — AFP

International

India's prime minister Modi lands in Sydney eyeing economic ties

Over 18,000 expected at an event on Tuesday evening to welcome Modi

SYDNEY: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew into Australia on Monday, aiming to strengthen economic ties by tapping into his country's fastest-growing diaspora.

Modi landed in Sydney, the last stop on his Asia-Pacific tour, looking to assert India's role as a regional power in the face of China's growing influence.

Indians are the second-largest diaspora community in Australia after the British, with 673,000 Indian-born citizens living in the country of 26 million. "The diaspora is the most important bridge in the India-Australia bilateral business relationship," said Jodi McKay, national chair of the Australia India Business Council.

"Prime Minister Modi understood that long before Australia was able to grasp that," she told AFP. Two-way trade between India and Australia was valued at Aus\$46.5 billion (US\$31 billion) last year and is likely to increase after a free-trade deal came into effect in December. Australia and India hope to sign a broader economic pact this year, McKay said, as their ties have expanded beyond resources to areas such as renewable energy and technology.

US President Joe Biden had to cancel a planned summit in Australia so he could rush back to Washington and negotiate with Repub-

lican opponents on the US debt crisis. That has left the stage in Sydney open to Modi.

'Euphoria'

At Sydney's Qudos Bank Arena, organisers said 18,000 people were expected at an event Tuesday evening to welcome Modi, who is facing general elections back home next year.

"Look, there's going to be euphoria," said Jay Shah, a director at the India-Australia Diaspora Foundation, which is organising the show.

Asked about Australian media reports of divisions within India and the diaspora under Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP, Shah said he could not understand such claims being made of the world's largest democracy.

"We respect all the diverse views," he told AFP. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will attend the stadium event, addressing a crowd that few Australian politicians could muster, before hosting Modi at a summit on Wednesday.

Modi's trip comes as China expands its diplomatic, financial and military footprint in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the weekend, the Indian leader joined a Quad summit in Japan with the leaders of the United States, Japan and Australia, aimed at countering Beijing's growing assertiveness.

Modi landed in Australia hours after holding a summit with 14 South Pacific states in Papua



SYDNEY: A diplomat greets India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (R) as he arrives at the Sydney international airport on May 22, 2023, to begin his three-day official visit to Australia. — AFP

New Guinea—the first visit to the Pacific nation by an Indian premier. "We share your belief in multilateralism. We support a free, open

and inclusive Indo-Pacific. We respect the sovereignty and integrity of all countries," Modi told Pacific leaders. — AFP

Thai coalition agrees plans but silent on royal insult reform

BANGKOK: Thailand's government-in-waiting on Monday announced ambitious plans to rewrite the constitution, end military conscription and allow same-sex marriage, but made no mention of highly controversial proposals to change royal insult laws.

The eight-party coalition, headed by the progressive Move Forward Party (MFP), inked a deal outlining nearly two dozen policies on which they all agree. MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat said again on Monday that he was confident of becoming prime minister, but he faces an uphill battle because of opposition within the military-allied Senate to his plans to reform lese-majeste legislation. "It's another historic moment that shows we can transform the government to democracy peacefully," Pita told reporters, noting the deal was being signed on the ninth anniversary of the military coup that brought Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha to power.

"The purpose of this MOU (memorandum of understanding) is to collect the agenda that all parties agree and are ready to push in government and parliament." MFP and fellow opposition outfit Pheu Thai dominated the May 14 election, in which voters delivered a humiliating defeat to ruling conservative army-linked parties.

Monday's wide-ranging agreement—which gives only broad policy topics—includes a commitment to rewrite the 2017 constitution, which was drawn up by the then-ruling military junta headed by Prayut. But it contains no mention of plans to reform the



BANGKOK: Move Forward Party leader and prime ministerial candidate Pita Limjaroenrat listens to questions from press whilst sitting with coalition partners at the signing ceremony for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) amongst eight Thai political parties in agreement to form a new government. — AFP

royal defamation laws that shield King Maha Vajiralongkorn from criticism.

Pita insists MFP will not back away from its campaign pledge to change the law, but the stance is spooking Thailand's conservative royalist-military establishment. Even discussing lese-majeste reform was taboo until recently, and the issue could scupper Pita's chances of taking the top job.

His coalition has 313 of the 500 lower house seats—a comfortable majority for day-to-day governing. But the vote to choose a PM also includes the 250-seat Senate, whose members were all hand-picked by Prayut's junta. Several have said they will

not vote for Pita because of the lese-majeste issue.

Pita insisted he was confident he would become prime minister, saying the coalition was working to win senators over. "We have a negotiation team and I think they are lessening their concerns," he said.

The deal also covers plans to tackle the monopolies and oligopolies that dominate some sectors of the Thai economy, notably in brewing and other alcohol production.

Plans to replace compulsory military service with a voluntary system also appear, along with a pledge to regulate cannabis more strictly after it was legalised last year. — AFP

"The reasons for the ration cuts are lack of funding. We need urgently \$56 million to restore the full ration (\$12)," Kun Li said. There was no immediate reaction from Bangladeshi authorities. Aid groups said the cut in March caused hardship in the overcrowded camps, where malnutrition was already rampant.

Khin Maung, who heads the Rohingya Youth Association inside the camps, told AFP the new food cut decision came as a surprise to the refugees and that it would lead to hunger. "It's a shameful action by the United Nations," he said.

"I think it is political. Some people have said it is a ploy to send Rohingyas back to Myanmar." Aid workers said the move could worsen security in the camps, which last year saw scores of deadly drug-related clashes between Rohingya criminal groups.

and two autonomous areas.

For over four decades, the federation largely prospered compared to other socialist nations, with its citizens able to travel abroad and enjoy comfortable living standards at home. But following Tito's death in the early 1980s, the country began to tear at the seams. Nationalism returned with a vengeance, sparking a series of wars in which more than 130,000 died. Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia were carved from the ruins, while Kosovo has struggled for decades for its own independence. Yugoslavia was relegated to the dustbin of history and the ambitious goal of uniting the disparate ethnic and religious groups in the region under a single identity lay in tatters. But for those nostalgic for the prosperity and salad days of their youth, being Yugoslav carries a powerful meaning. "I am Yugoslav... It will be like that until my death," said Zivko Mitrev, 78, who travelled from Northern Macedonia to put flowers on Tito's grave.

'Resistance'

The rebirth of the Yugoslav identity is still in its infancy but is increasingly palpable, especially in Serbia. During the country's last census, in 2022, approximately 27,000 people declared themselves Yugoslavs, up from 23,000 in 2011 -- a rare jump in numbers for a country with a falling population.

For many, it is also a form of protest. "I see Yugoslavism as a type of resistance, a more responsible and more natural form of anti-nationalism," Viktor Ivancic, a prominent journalist from Croatia, told local media. "If someone can be a Serb or a Croat based on their nationality, then I can be a Yugoslav based on my lack of nationality." In Serbia, authorities recognise around

UN and foreign diplomats have urged the Bangladeshi government to drop a ban preventing Rohingya working outside the camps in the surrounding Cox's Bazar region. Experts have warned, however, that this could stoke resentment among the local population and further discourage the Rohingya from returning to Myanmar.

After several failed repatriation attempts, Myanmar has launched a pilot project to resettle around 1,100 Rohingyas to a border township. A team sent by Myanmar authorities is expected to visit the camps this week in an effort to convince the refugees to return. But Rohingyas who visited the resettlement villages this month told AFP they have serious misgivings, with one saying: "We don't trust the Myanmar government one percent." — AFP

Militants blow up empty Pakistan girls' schools

PESHAWAR: Militants detonated explosives inside two empty girls' schools in northwestern Pakistan overnight, destroying nine classrooms but causing no casualties, officials said Monday.

Girls' education has long been contentious for some regional militants, including the Pakistan Taliban, notorious for shooting then-schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai as she campaigned for schooling in 2012.

The twin attacks on the girls' schools took place on Sunday night in the Hassu Khel and Gul Mosaki areas of North Waziristan, both around 20 miles (32 kilometres) from the border with Afghanistan. "Militants planted improvised explosive devices in the two government middle schools for girls, which exploded late in the night," said senior local administration official Rehan Gul Khattak.

He said six classrooms in Hassu Khel and a further three in Gul Mosaki were destroyed. "It was surely done by militants but we don't know yet which group was involved," Khattak told AFP.

District police officer Salim Riaz confirmed the incident and said "a full-scale investigation" had been launched. North Waziristan has historically been a hive of militancy, and was the target of a long-running Pakistani military offensive and US drone strikes during the post-9/11 occupation of Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban surged back to power in Kabul in 2021, Pakistan has witnessed a dramatic uptick in militancy, with most attacks focussed in border regions.

The Pakistan Taliban—known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—remain among the most active groups in the area. It was formed in 2007 by Pakistani militants who splintered off from the Afghan Taliban to focus their fight on Islamabad for supporting America's invasion.

TTP fighters once held sway over swathes of northwest Pakistan but were turfed out by the army after 2014, the same year Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize for her campaign. — AFP

UN food agency to cut rations for Rohingya refugees

DHAKA: The United Nations food agency said Monday lack of funding has forced it to cut food aid for around one million Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh for the second time in three months. Rations would be cut from \$10 per person per month to \$8 from June 1, World Food Programme spokesperson Kun Li told AFP in an email.

The full ration of \$12 had already been cut in March.

'Future Yugoslavs' emerge in Serbia to resist nationalism

BELGRADE: Every year, a small group of elderly people in well-worn World War II uniforms bedecked with Communist paraphernalia queue in Belgrade to pay their respects to their former leader, Josip Broz Tito. But decades after the bloody breakup of the Yugoslav federation, a younger contingency has also begun to fill the ranks to commemorate Tito's death and pine for the loss of a socialist federation that once united a divided region.

Amid the virulent nationalism that is common in Serbia and across much of the Balkans, these young people are embracing the "Yugoslav" identity of old. A growing number went so far as to register as "Yugoslav" during a recent census in Serbia. Ivan Cveticovic, a 23-year-old economics student in Belgrade, was among the declared Yugoslavs. One of his parents is Croatian, the other Serbian—"a mixed marriage"—so he does not consider himself to be more one nationality than the other. "In the Balkans, we share the same language, history and mentality," he told AFP. "Being Yugoslav is just natural for me."

The rise and fall

Formed in the ashes of World War II by Tito and his band of socialist partisans, Yugoslavia stretched from the Adriatic coast bordering Italy to the frontier with Greece to the south, comprising six republics



BELGRADE: Photograph shows a man holding a Yugoslav flag in front of a memorial complex dedicated to former President of Communist Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito in Belgrade. — AFP

20 ethnic minorities. This entitles the communities with public funding to help preserve their culture, along with certain electoral advantages at the ballot box. Some, like the popular Serbian author and radio host Dasko Milinovic, are hopeful this official status will be extended to the Yugoslavs, who outnumber about half of the official listed minorities. For Milinovic, Yugoslavia's dissolution decades ago should stand as no barrier to recognising the group.

"The kingdom of Ruthenia died a long time ago but the Ruthenians still exist. "Wallachia has been gone for a while. "The Roma, as far as I know, never had a country but they are still Roma," he told AFP. Over a decade ago, Serbian officials dismissed a formal bid to recognise Yugoslavs, citing a lack of "language, alphabet and literature." — AFP

Fire destroys Philippine post office building

MANILA: A huge fire destroyed a historic post office in the Philippine capital Manila, injuring seven people, officials said Monday. More than 80 fire trucks were sent to the decades-old landmark after the blaze broke out late Sunday, the Bureau of Fire Protection said.

Thick, black smoke billowed hundreds of metres into the sky as flames gutted the neo-classical Manila Central Post Office that overlooks the Pasig River. It took firefighters more than seven hours to get the inferno under control.

"The whole building has burned down from the basement all the way to the fifth floor," Postmaster General Luis Carlos told DZBB radio. The cause of the blaze was being investigated, he said.

Fire brigades from across the capital deployed personnel to fight the blaze. The damage bill is estimated at 300 million pesos (\$5.4 million), the fire bureau said. Six out of the seven people injured were firefighters. Originally built in 1926, the post office was once considered the "grandest building" in Manila, according to its website.

It was destroyed in World War II as US forces recaptured the capital from Japanese occupation forces, and rebuilt in 1946. The Philippine National Museum declared the building an "important cultural property" in 2018. Letters, parcels and the postal agency's entire stamp collection were in the building and are likely destroyed, Carlos said. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023

India's CB pulls highest value banknotes from circulation

Decision to withdraw Rs 2,000 ripples through markets, businesses

MUMBAI: India's central bank sought to calm the public after its decision to withdraw its highest-value currency notes from circulation triggered alarm about financial stability. The Reserve Bank of India announced on Friday that it would eliminate Rs 2,000 (\$24) notes, instructing the public to exchange or deposit them at banks by the end of September.

The RBI added the notes would remain legal tender, though it did not clarify for how long. The cash withdrawal, which begins on Tuesday, echoed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's controversial decision in 2016 to invalidate Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes overnight, which were equivalent to more than 80 per cent of currency in circulation. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday downplayed comparisons with the demonetization in 2016, calling the Rs 2,000 note withdrawal part of regular "currency management operations".

"Let me clarify and re-emphasize that it is a part of the currency management operations of the Reserve

Bank. For a long time, the Reserve Bank has been following a clean note policy," said Das.

"From time to time, RBI withdraws notes of a particular series and issues fresh notes...we are withdrawing the Rs 2,000 notes from circulation but they continue as legal tender."

The RBI governor added that the September deadline had been granted so that the "process will be taken seriously". Das emphasized that Rs 2,000 notes were primarily issued in circulation to quickly replenish the value of money which was being taken out from the system.

The RBI governor was referring to the botched 'demonetization' process initiated in 2016 by the central bank where old Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes were taken out of the system. Purportedly a crackdown on illicit and untaxed "black money", the dramatic move forced people around the country to rush to banks to trade in their notes. "I do not expect a rush to the bank branches," he said. "There's no reason

to rush to the bank." The RBI said Rs 2,000 notes were introduced as a temporary measure to boost cash supplies after the 2016 demonetization and that it had stopped printing them in 2019. The notes were not "commonly used for transactions anymore", the central bank said, adding that they accounted for about 10 per cent of currency in circulation. Analysts said although the announcement was unlikely to disrupt India's economy as in 2016, it would ripple through markets as businesses and households handed in their notes. The rupee weakened 0.05 per cent against the dollar in morning trading in India on Monday. Economists and businesses have fiercely debated the legacy of the demonetization policy. While it helped funnel money into the formal financial sector, it caused enormous pain to cash-reliant small businesses that weighed on growth for years afterwards, according to some experts. The RBI did not cite corruption as a justification for its latest move to recall the Rs2000 notes. — Agencies



AMRITSAR: A man poses with Indian 2,000 rupees currency notes outside a bank in Amritsar on May 20, 2023. — AFP

Biden, McCarthy to resume US debt talks

WASHINGTON: Anxieties were mounting in Washington ahead of President Joe Biden's meeting with Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy over negotiations to raise the US debt ceiling, less than two weeks before a key deadline to avoid a disastrous default. After a weekend of near deadlock, Biden arrived back in Washington late Sunday, cutting short a trip to Asia to resume talks ahead of the US Treasury's June 1 deadline for Congress to authorize more borrowing. Ahead of their Monday afternoon meeting, Biden and McCarthy spoke as the president flew back to the United States on Air Force One. "It went well," Biden told reporters of the phone call as he arrived at the White House Sunday night. "We'll talk tomorrow."

And earlier in the day, McCarthy had said the conversation was "productive" — in contrast to the sharp words exchanged in a previous round of negotiations. Still, the two sides seemed far from a final compromise, as Biden said Sunday that Republicans' latest demands for spending cuts as a condition for raising the US government borrowing authority were "frankly unacceptable." "It's time for the other side to move from their extreme positions," he said at a press conference before leaving the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan. And in a tweet, Biden maintained that he was categorically opposed to slashing social and healthcare assistance.

"I will not agree to a deal with House Republicans that protects billions in subsidies for Big Oil while putting the healthcare of 21 million Americans at risk," Biden said. And for his part, McCarthy said his position remained unchanged. "Washington cannot continue to spend money we do not have at the expense of children and grandchildren," he said on Twitter after talking to Biden.

'Something outrageous'

In his comments in Japan Biden voiced hope that "we can reach an agreement." However, he cautioned he could not "guarantee that they wouldn't force a default by doing something outrageous." Biden said he was looking into an obscure constitutional clause in the 14th Amendment, which states that the validity of public debt "shall not be questioned" — and potentially authorizing the president to circumvent Congress and raise the debt ceiling himself.

"I think we have the authority. The question is could it be done and invoked in time," he said, noting the likelihood of legal challenges to this and the rapidly approaching debt deadline. The Treasury Department says the government could run out of money and default on payments on its \$31 trillion debt as early as June 1 if Congress, where Republicans control the House of Representatives, does not authorize more borrowing. — AFP



WASHINGTON: A poster at a bus shelter shows the national debt in Washington, DC, on May 21, 2023. — AFP



DUBLIN: People walk by Meta's office in the business and financial sector of Dublin City centre on October 7, 2021. Facebook owner Meta has been fined a record 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion), Ireland's regulator announced May 23, 2023. — AFP

Meta hit with 1.2bn euro fine over EU rules

DUBLIN: Facebook owner Meta has been fined a record 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) for transferring EU user data to the United States in breach of a previous court ruling. Ireland's regulator announced on Monday. The Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC), which acts on behalf of the European Union, said the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) had ordered it to collect "an administrative fine in the amount of 1.2 billion euros".

The DPC has been investigating Meta Ireland's transfer of personal data from the EU to the United States since 2020. It found that Meta, which has its European headquarters in Dublin, failed to "address the risks to the fundamental rights and freedoms of data subjects" that were identified in a previous ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

The CJEU interprets EU law to make sure it is applied in the same way in all member states. In response, Meta said it was "disappointed to have been singled out" and the ruling was "flawed, unjustified and sets a dangerous precedent for the countless other companies". "We intend to appeal both the decision's substance and its orders including the fine, and will seek a stay through the courts to pause the implementation deadlines," Meta president of global affairs Nick Clegg and chief legal officer Jennifer Newstead said in a blog post.

"There is no immediate disruption to Facebook in Europe," they added. Meta said it hopes to see the US and EU adopt a new legal framework for the use of personal data in the coming months, following an agreement in principle last year, which could allow it to continue its data transfer practices.

Fourth fine

EU regulators have hit Meta with four fines in six months — and three this year — over data breaches by its Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook services. In January, the DPC fined the social media giant 390

million euros for breaking data rules in its use of targeted advertising on its apps.

In March, Meta was made to pay 5.5 million euros for breaching the GDPR with its WhatsApp messaging service. Online trader Amazon was fined 746 million euros in Luxembourg in 2021 for infringing the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

In the latest case, the DPC had initially wanted to force Meta to suspend the offending data transfers, saying that a fine "would exceed the extent of powers that could be described as being 'appropriate, proportionate and necessary'". But its peer regulators in the EU, known as Concerned Supervisory Authorities (CSAs), disagreed and said it should be "subject to an administrative fine", the DPC said.

With no hope of consensus, the Irish body referred the objections to the EDPB, which ruled that Meta Ireland must suspend future transfer of personal data to the United States and pay a fine.

'Strong signal'

Clegg and Newstead said the EDPB decision to overrule the DPC "raises serious questions". "No country has done more than the US to align with European rules via their latest reforms, while transfers continue largely unchallenged to countries such as China," they added.

But EDPB chair Andrea Jelinek characterized Meta's infringement as "very serious" and called its data transfers "systematic, repetitive and continuous". "The unprecedented fine is a strong signal to organizations that serious infringements have far-reaching consequences," she added.

Privacy activist Max Schrems, who set off a decade of legal battles with his challenge against Meta over the movement of EU data to the United States, welcomed the decision. "Ever since Edward Snowden's revelations on US big tech aiding the (National Security Agency) mass surveillance apparatus, Facebook (now Meta) was subject to litigation in Ireland," said his organization, the European Centre for Digital Rights. But Schrems said far harsher sanctions could have been used as Meta had "knowingly broken the law to make a profit". "It took us 10 years of litigation against the Irish DPC to get to this result... and risked millions of procedural costs," he added. "The Irish regulator has done everything to avoid this decision," he added. — AFP

Biggest fines under EU privacy law

PARIS: The European Union rolled out its mammoth data privacy regulation five years ago this week, and has since handed down billions in fines. Ireland's data watchdog smashed the record for an individual fine on Monday when it demanded 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) from Meta over its transfers of personal data between Europe and the United States. Here are some of the worst offenders of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):

Meta: Undisputed fine king

Mark Zuckerberg's social media firm — owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp — has racked up roughly two billion euros in fines. Breaches by Meta have included a mega-leak of some 533 million phone numbers and emails, mishandling children's data and repeatedly failing to give a legal basis for its data collection.

Meta, along with the likes of Google, Twitter and LinkedIn has its European headquarters in Ireland, a low-tax regime that has courted big tech. The Irish privacy watchdog has been reluctant to hand down big fines but said in a statement on Monday that the EU's central authorities had ordered it to collect 1.2 billion euros from Meta.

Austrian campaign group NOYB said it had spent millions in a decade-long legal battle to force the Irish watchdog to tackle the case. "It is kind of absurd that the record fine will go to Ireland — the EU Member State that did everything to ensure that this fine is not issued," said NOYB's Max Schrems.

US giants: In Meta's shadow

Luxembourg lit a torch under the Silicon Valley data industry in 2021 by slapping Amazon with a record fine of 746 million euros. The country, whose low-tax policies have led campaigners to label it a tax haven, refused to give details of its decision at the time, only providing a brief statement after Amazon revealed the fine in its regulatory filings.

The online retail giant had been sued by a European consumer group claiming personal data was collected for ad-targeting without permission.

However, Amazon denied any breach and promised to appeal. It is unclear whether the fine has been paid. Google has faced plenty of GDPR pain too. France's data watchdog hit the search giant with 50 million euros in fines for a lack of transparency on its Android mobile operating system in 2019 — the biggest such fine of that year.

Clearview AI: Widespread penalties

Clearview AI may not be a household name, but it claims to own billions of photos of people's faces that it sells as a searchable AI-powered database to law enforcement and other clients. It scrapes the images from the web, often from social media accounts, without asking permission. Privacy watchdogs in Greece, Italy, France and the UK have all hit the US firm with fines totaling roughly 70 million euros, and regulators in Germany and Austria have declared it illegal.

The firm has consistently said it has no offices or clients in Europe and is not subject to EU privacy laws. The status of the fines is unclear. France issued a penalty of five million euros recently, accusing the firm of failing to pay the initial fine.

Public bodies, hacks

In the early days of the GDPR, several watchdogs cracked down on public institutions, raising profound questions about the regulation's scope. Bulgaria fined its own tax authority around three million euros in 2019 after hackers stole the details of millions of people. — AFP

Business



DEMOKAYA, Sudan: A Sudanese man shows freshly-harvested gum arabic resin on the tip of a "sunki", in the state-owned Demokaya research forest some 30km east of El-Obeid. — AFP photos



DEMOKAYA, Sudan: Gum arabic resin is pictured on the branch of an acacia tree, in the state-owned Demokaya research forest some 30km east of El-Obeid, the capital city of the central Sudanese wilayet (state) of North Kordofan.

Sudan war hits gum arabic business

Sudanese exports account for 70% of global raw gum supplies

KHARTOUM: Sudan's war has left farmers of gum arabic, a vital ingredient for global industry including fizzy drinks, bereft of local buyers but a trade group assures global stocks are — for now — sufficient.

The golden blobs of resin tapped from thorny acacia trees are an emulsifying agent used in everything from soft drinks to chewing gum and pharmaceuticals. Sudan is the world's largest producer of the raw gum which is a major source of foreign currency for the northeast African nation. The sector has survived repeated conflicts, a warming climate and decades of sanctions. But now, since war between two generals began on April 15, "producers are grappling with disaster," Adam Issa Mohammed, a gum arabic trader, told AFP in El Obeid, the North Kordofan state capital 350 kilometers (220 miles) southwest of Khartoum.

The city is one of the main local markets for Sudanese gum arabic growers. Other farming sectors are also coping with a wartime lack of buyers as fuel shortages hinder transport to market, and prices soar. However, given its importance to Sudan's economy, and the five million Sudanese which the industry supported, the war's impact on gum arabic is particularly significant.

'No one is buying'

Battles between army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy-turned-rival General Mohamed Hamdan Daglo have killed around 1,000 people, uprooted more than a million from their homes, and further devastated an already-crippled economy. The bulk of the conflict has been in the capital Khartoum, parts of which have been reduced to smoldering rubble, as well as the western region of Darfur. Witnesses have also reported fighting in El Obeid.

Further east, closer to the Ethiopian border, the Gedaref area and its acacia trees have been spared the fighting but gum arabic farmers are still affected.

"We have large quantities we need to sell, but no one is buying because exporters and distributors can't find any transport companies willing to risk their trucks," according to the trader, Adam Issa Mohammed. A gum arabic producer, Ahmed Mohammed Hussein, said the absence of buyers has led to a price collapse of around 60 percent. "The price of a ton has gone down from 320,000 Sudanese pounds to 119,000 (\$627 to \$233)," Hussein told AFP. The risk is clear: everything including customs and cargo processing has to go through the

war zone of Khartoum. Truckers who venture onto the road not only risk their lives but spend much of their time scrambling for petrol. Even if they find it, the price per liter is now 20 times what it was before the war.

At the ports, however, it is business as usual, according to Sudan's port authority, which told AFP "imports and exports are operating normally." But Othman Abdelsalam, an employee of a shipping company in Sudan who has viewed the data, said numbers are down. He told AFP "exports from Darfur and Kordofan via Khartoum — particularly gum arabic — have suffered a strong impact" since the war started. Sudan's gum arabic belt extends from Gedaref, through Kordofan, across the country to Darfur in the west.

According to the Hamburg-based Association for International Promotion of Gums, which brings together importers, processors and producers, there is no current supply threat to industry users of gum arabic. "Member companies keep sufficient stocks of gum arabic imported from Sudan and other countries in their warehouses, so that possible interruptions in supply... can be absorbed," it said in a statement. The group added that Chad and Nigeria are among alternate pro-

ducers, so "immediate supply bottlenecks are not to be expected because of the current events in Sudan." Industry players within Sudan or elsewhere could not, however, say how long global stocks can last.

Sudanese exports accounted for 70 percent of global raw gum supplies, according to pre-war data from AFD, the French agency for development. Gum arabic exports from Sudan totaled 88,000 tons in 2021, earning \$110 million, according to central bank figures, the latest official data available. Mostafa Al-Sayyed Khalil, who heads the Gum Arabic Council of Sudan, said his figures show export of 60,000 tonnes in 2022, which he considers an underestimate. Khalil was not able to project the war's impact. Even before the conflict, low prices in local markets pushed many farmers to cut down their trees for building materials or firewood. Others left their lands entirely to work in nearby gold mines. Aly Verjee, a researcher at Sweden's University of Gothenburg, said fighting across Sudan has affected other sectors, leading to the country's "partial deindustrialization" and a much poorer future. That leaves gum arabic increasingly crucial. — AFP

EU's next food fight: Regulating gene-edited crops

BRUSSELS: Extreme weather caused by climate change has damaged food production across Europe. Confronted with a deteriorating situation, divided European Union decision-makers are debating new rules for genetically modified crops.

Last year's drought ravaged the continent's farms, starving everything from Spanish olive harvests to Hungary's maize and sunflower crops, Italian and Romanian corn fields to France's dairy production.

Some argue the answer to Europe's problems is deregulating gene modification techniques to produce better crops. Others claim this would be a "smokescreen" to avoid having to radically change the way the bloc farms. Supporters say seeds produced using gene editing techniques are less vulnerable to drought and disease — and require less water.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, will propose a law in July that will loosen the rules on plants produced by certain new genomic techniques (NGTs), branded by critics as simply "new genetically modified organisms (GMOs)". The proposals will open a new battlefield among the EU's 27 member states — with drought-hit countries especially in favor — and between EU lawmakers.

The new techniques are a mix of genomic editing tools that alter a plant's genetic make-up without the addition of foreign genetic material, unlike "transgenic" GMOs that include DNA from other species.

The commission says the current rules on GMOs including permission and labeling are "not fit for purpose" for the new technology. "Plants produced by

new genomic techniques can support sustainability," the EU's health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, said last month. The proposals, she said, "will strongly signal to farmers, researchers and industry that this is the way forward in the EU".

'Magnificent tool'

In a document from February seen by AFP, the commission looked at whether it should treat traditional seeds and those produced using the new techniques, with modifications that could in theory have happened naturally, as the same. France, severely affected by drought last summer, backs changing the rules. In April, French Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau expressed his concerns over what he called Europe's "delay", arguing there should be a push to allow biotechnology that gives Europe the tools to deal with climate change by producing more resistant seeds.

Late last year, his Spanish counterpart, Luis Planas, hailed the techniques as a "magnificent tool to have seeds that need less water and fertilizer". Other countries are more wary. In March, Austria criticized



PARIS, France: French Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau leaves the Elysee presidential palace after the weekly cabinet meeting, in Paris. — AFP

Higher costs

Ryanair said profits were also lifted by "advantageous" fuel hedges. Airlines bet against volatile oil prices by hedging, or taking a defensive position on futures markets. Total operating costs, however, spiked 75 percent to 9.2 billion euros, while the group also faced a net loss in the fourth quarter of 154 million euros. Monday's results come two weeks after Ryanair ordered 300 Boeing 737 MAX jets worth over \$40 billion for delivery from 2027, alongside a major recruitment drive which it hopes will drive massive expansion. The company is targeting an 80-percent jump in annual passenger traffic to 300 million travelers by 2034, compared with 2023.

It plans to recruit more than 10,000 new cabin-crew members, engineers and pilots, to help meet the goal. Ryanair's key British rival EasyJet had reported last week that it slashed net losses in the first half of its financial year, or six months to March. EasyJet, which logged three annual losses in a row due to the

commission study that it claimed was based on "assumptions" rather than scientific data and called for a comprehensive analysis of any environmental and health risks. Cyprus, Germany, Hungary and Luxembourg support that position.

The powerful European farming lobby group Copacogeca supports the new rules.

"If we need to supply society with food in Europe, and if we want to be self-sufficient, then we need to adapt rules," said Thor Gunnar Kofoed, chair of the seed working group at Copacogeca.

Parliament divided

A majority of EU lawmakers support relaxing the rules. The European Parliament's biggest political group, the conservative European People's Party (EPP), opposes any binding target to cut pesticides but pushes for new rules on the "innovative" technology that would "stimulate research, investment and jobs". Pascal Canfin, a French centrist MEP and the chairman of the parliament's environment committee, said the new biotechnology could "be part of the useful solutions for the agricultural transition" if they help avoid using chemical pesticides.

But unlike the EPP, he supports a cap on pesticides. Left-wing parties in the EU parliament are resisting specific laws for NGTs, insisting that the new technology already comes under current wide-ranging rules on GMOs. The forthcoming battle over the draft law, which will have to be negotiated between the member states and parliament, is likely to focus on safeguards. The Greens want a full risk assessment to avoid unintended effects and force producers to ensure detection and traceability methods, and make labeling compulsory. Labelling would put off consumers who prefer GMO-free food, said Mute Schimpf, a campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe, who criticized the reform. "This proposal is a smokescreen to avoid the debate we should have on shifting to a truly sustainable farming system," she said. — AFP

pandemic, has predicted a rebound to annual profit as holidaymakers shrug off Britain's cost-of-living crisis.

'Robust' summer demand

"Demand for European summer leisure travel looks robust," said Olly Anibaba, analyst at research group Third Bridge. "Despite inflation weighing on consumer spending, European consumers are still opting for leisure travel over other forms of entertainment."

The sector is flying high after a tumultuous period sparked by the COVID pandemic, which erupted in early 2020 to ground flights, sparking massive job cuts and huge losses. Anibaba cautioned that ultra-low air ticket prices may not return to the aviation industry, as it grapples with rising jet fuel prices and fallout from sky-high inflation. "Ryanair and other airlines have signaled that the era of ultra-low fares might be coming to an end. They are preparing customers for potential price increases." — AFP



A Ryanair operated Boeing 737 passenger aircraft, from Tangier, taxis on the tarmac after landing at Toulouse-Blagnac airport, southwestern France. — AFP

Ryanair flies back to profit as sector recovers from COVID

LONDON: Irish no-frills airline Ryanair rebounded back into bumper annual net profits, boosted by a "strong" post-COVID recovery despite spiking costs, it said Monday. Ryanair became the latest European aviation giant to log a return to the black as travelers return to the skies after the pandemic and shrug off high inflation, mirroring British Airways owner IAG, Franco-Dutch group Air France-KLM and Germany's Lufthansa.

Profit after taxation soared to 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) in the 12 months to the end of March, after a net loss of 355 million euros in its previous financial year, Dublin-based Ryanair said in a results statement. It had narrowed losses in the prior 2021/2022 fiscal year, boosted by the lifting of coronavirus lockdowns.

"Over the last year we have seen a very strong post-COVID traffic recovery," said chief executive Michael O'Leary in video remarks published alongside the results. "People have been locked up for two years and wanted to go back to travelling." Revenues more than doubled to 10.8 billion euros on rising fares, as the group reported "strong market share gains" in Italy, Poland, Ireland, Spain and elsewhere in Europe. Passenger traffic leapt 74 percent to 168.6 million travelers, with fares 10 percent above pre-COVID levels. "Traffic is now running at 13-14 percent ahead of our pre-COVID volumes, but profitability is still running slightly behind where we were pre-COVID," added O'Leary.

British, US law firms unveil \$3.4bn merger

LONDON: British law firm Allen & Overy and US peer Shearman & Sterling on Monday unveiled a merger to create a global titan with combined revenues of \$3.4 billion (3.1 billion euros). "Allen & Overy and Shearman & Sterling today announced a planned merger to... combine two of the world's most prestigious law firms to create an integrated global elite firm," the pair said in a statement.

The new group, called Allen Overy Shearman Sterling or A&O Shearman, was "truly a game-changing moment for both firms". And it will be "the only global firm with US law, English law, and local law capabilities in equal measure", they added.

The merged firm will have around 3,900 lawyers and about 800 partners across a total of 49 offices worldwide. "This merger is driven by clients' needs for a seamless global offering of the highest quality and depth to support them in navigating an increasingly complex legal, regulatory, and geopolitical environment," the statement read.

Wim Dejonghe, senior partner at Allen & Overy, said the deal was an "exciting step" for both groups who wanted to offer "the best of both firms, regardless of geography".

Adam Hakki, senior partner at Shearman & Sterling, added that the merger would allow it to "dramatically accelerate our ability to meet (clients') needs in an increasingly complex environment". — AFP

Britain cuts stake in NatWest bank

LONDON: Britain has further cut its stake in bailed-out banking giant NatWest to below 40 percent, the lender said Monday as it eyes a full return to the private sector. The government has sold off more shares for almost £1.3 billion (\$1.6 billion), taking its holding to just under 39 percent from about 41 percent, NatWest said in a statement.

The bank purchased the shares for 268.4 pence each, which was the closing level on Friday. That values the lender at about £25.4 billion. The transaction "demonstrates positive progress on the... path to privatization", said chief executive Alison Rose.

London retained a significant stake after it rescued NatWest from collapse during the global financial crisis. The lender, known at the time as Royal Bank of Scotland, received £45.5 billion of taxpayers' cash in the world's biggest banking bailout at the height of the 2008 meltdown.

Following a lengthy turnaround, the government had last year cut its stake to below 50 percent for the first time since the rescue. Monday's news comes one month after the lender posted surging first-quarter net profit thanks to rising interest rates in the wake of soaring inflation.

Profit after tax jumped 52 percent to nearly £1.3 billion (\$1.6 billion) in the January-March period from a year earlier. The sector has been boosted as higher interest rates attract savers and also increase returns on loans. — AFP

Florida law bars hiring of undocumented workers

Future of off-the-books labor force in US sits in limbo

MIAMI: Benjamin Perez cleans houses in Miami for a living. Like tens of thousands of others in the Florida workforce, he toils without legal papers. The future of this off-the-books labor force today sits in limbo due to a recently approved immigration law.

Conservative Florida Governor Ron DeSantis on May 10 signed what he called the "strongest anti-illegal immigration bill in the nation" to bar undocumented workers from taking jobs in the southern US state. Starting July 1, businesses with 25 or more employees will be required to use the federal E-Verify system to check the legal status of all new employees.

Businesses would face heavy fines for defying the law and employing undocumented migrants. Perez, 40, has lived and worked in the United States for two decades but finds his future uncertain. He left his native Mexico looking to earn more as a skilled mason. An injury caused him to change jobs. He lives in downtown Miami with his Nicaraguan wife and a nephew of hers, Joel Altamirano. All three work. None of them enjoy legal status. "For those of us who come without papers, the desire to work remains but the paths to finding a job have become narrower," says Perez, who asked to use a pseudonym lest migratory authorities catch him.

"The American Dream is just that—a dream," he adds. "The government corners us more each day. This time, it is without mercy. We practically are worthless."

'Devastating effects'

Florida, the third most-populous US state, has 22.2 million residents, and 772,000 of them are undocumented migrants, according to the Migration Policy Institute think tank. Many of them work in vital sectors of the state economy such as agriculture, construction and hospitality.

Blocking them will have severe economic consequences, warns Samuel Vilchez, director in Florida of the American Business Immigration Coalition, which advocates for better integration of migrants in the economy. "It really targets our businesses and hinders them from their ability to create new jobs... and provide the services they're seeking to provide," Vilchez said.

"It goes against what we know is good for the economy, and it will have devastating effects on Florida." According to the Florida Policy Institute, the state's economy could potentially drop by \$12.6 billion, or 1.1 percent, if all undocumented workers were removed from payrolls. Florida also would face losses in state and local tax revenue and reduced overall economic activity.

Uncertainty created by the new law already ripples at job sites even though it has yet to go into effect and does not apply to existing employees or mandate that known undocumented workers be turned in. "Where I work, a lot of people have left. They've moved to other states. There's a lot of fear about the law," says Altamirano (another pseudonym), a 38-year-old construction worker.

'Unfair'

DeSantis, who looks likely to challenge former president Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination, has gained traction by pushing a conservative agenda on issues like education, abortion and illegal immigration. Last week, he accused Democratic President Joe Biden of "reckless border policies" and touted the new law as a tool to combat crime and drug trafficking associated with illegal immigration. Perez and Altamirano deplore the fact that authorities lump them in with criminals, and complain that they are victims of DeSantis's political



HOMESTEAD, Florida: A migrant worker works on a farm land in Homestead, Florida on May 11, 2023. DeSantis on May 10 signed what he called the "strongest anti-illegal immigration bill in the nation" to bar undocumented workers from taking jobs in the state. — AFP

ambitions. "All the politicians want their share of the cake and we pay the cost," Perez says. "We came here to work, send money to our families, spend it here and pay taxes. This is unfair."

If the law prevents them from holding jobs, they say they will leave Florida and start from scratch elsewhere in the United States. They will adapt, once again. Returning to their home countries is not in their

plans. Family members rely on their remittances and, in Altamirano's case, returning to live under Daniel Ortega's authoritarian government in Nicaragua is untenable. Perez dreams that the country where he has toiled for so many years would one day officially recognize his presence. "For the United States, we don't exist," he says. "The United States was built by people from all over, and I am one of them." — AFP

Nigeria's outgoing president opens major oil plant

LAGOS: Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari Monday commissioned an oil plant billed as Africa's largest oil refinery, after years of delays and a week before stepping down from office. Built by Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote in the commercial hub of Lagos, the refinery—with the ability to process 650,000 barrels a day when at full capacity—should begin operations in June.

For decades, Africa's most populous nation and one of the continent's largest crude producers has depended on imports to meet local demand because of under-performing state-run refineries. Nigeria swaps crude worth billions of dollars for gasoline it then subsidizes for its domestic market.

It has caused a huge drain on foreign exchange at a time of dwindling oil revenue following the coronavirus pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. The new facility, lying on 2,635 hectares (6,500 acres) of land at the Lekki Free Zone and costing an estimated \$19bn according to local media, could be a game changer. The refinery, which was first scheduled to open in 2021, will "stop the drainage of foreign exchange" and "create massive employment," a senior manager with Dangote who did not want to be named told AFP.

He said the project will "meet the entire requirements of Nigerians," and serve needs around the world. "We have (the) capacity to export the products to any part of the world. We have two vessels to bring in the crude, three vessels to export it to any part of the world," he said. —AFP

Gulf Bank prepares students from AU for the job market

KUWAIT: As part of its various initiatives to consolidate the principles of sustainability in society, and as part of its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, Gulf Bank welcomed a group of students from the Australian University in Kuwait (AU) at its head office, to take part in the Job Shadowing training program. The students were introduced to Gulf Bank's Corporate Communications team, where they received a thorough introduction about the team members and their various job tasks. This was followed by an interactive workshop, where the students were divided into two teams—with a mission to plan and organize a specific event, by distributing responsibilities amongst themselves. The teams determined how to take advantage of the available resources, in order to support the event and ensure its success.

The Corporate Communications team carefully listened to the students and answered their various questions regarding the different job tasks at the bank. This helped to provide the students with a greater understanding about the differences between university and work life, and how to smoothly transition from one stage to the next.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications, Maysoon Al-Attar, explained: "We were very pleased with the creativity and high academic level of the students participating in the program. Their eagerness to be well-prepared for the labor market, was impressive." Al-Attar pointed that the Job Shadowing program is a cooperation with INJAZ Kuwait, which aims to support the next generation of young leaders and provide them with the skills required by the labor market, amidst the rapid developments in various economic sectors.



Al-Attar emphasized that Gulf Bank is keen to fulfill its social responsibility towards youth, especially those at high school or university levels, including recent graduates. She further indicated that the bank provides youth with basic concepts related to business—enabling them to explore their professional interests, and the available opportunities; in addition to the ways in which they can develop their job skills. The Job Shadowing program is one of Gulf Bank's sustainability initiatives, and as Al-Attar expressed, "is a brilliant way of exposing youth to the real working environment where they are able take part in several tasks alongside full-time employees so that they gain better practical understanding of how businesses operate, in order for them to make better career decisions".

The program prepares students to be entrepreneurial thinkers in their approach to work – by introducing them to the skills required in the job market, and through demonstrating the importance of professionalism when developing their career path. Hence, the students' visits are a vital part of the Job Shadowing program.

Additionally, the visits aim to showcase the different career clusters and potential job positions, and

to understand the importance of career research and preparation. Students are also given the opportunity to learn about the importance of networking and relationship building with businesspeople, to understand the relevance between their education and future careers, and to realize the benefits of soft skills and ethics in the workplace.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



KEMS-Zajil Telecom hosts 'Your Digital Solutions Partner' event

KUWAIT: KEMS-Zajil Telecom, a Kalaam Group Company and first Kuwait's leading ISP Provider since 1991 serving critical market segments like Banking, Finance & large Enterprises successfully hosted its flagship event "Your Digital Solutions Partner".

The event launched the new branding of KEMS-Zajil Telecom and showcased the brand transition from consumer centered brand to a more Enterprise focused brand offering extended portfolio of next-gen digital solutions tailored to the needs of businesses of all siz-

es and verticals across the region. With a new CEO on board KEMS-Zajil Telecom is all set to lead the digital transformation in Kuwait and announced its radical shift from an ISP Provider to Digital Solutions Partner in growing the company to be more agile and aligned to focus on business and government sectors in the Kuwait market.

The flagship event is the first step for the newly transitioned brand KEMS-Zajil Telecom towards establishing a stronger presence in Kuwait as a digital solutions partner driving digital transformation by launching cutting edge solutions and services with innovative value propositions across Connectivity, Voice & Communication, Cloud, Cybersecurity, Managed Networks, ICT, Datacenter, IoT & Big Data.

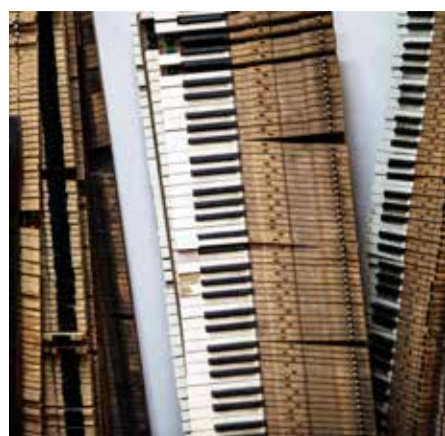
The event served as an effective platform for audience to interact with key solution partners, industry leading experts and explore how



KEMS-Zajil Telecom is currently investing in their core network, enhancing customer SLAs, digitizing service delivery and customer support to build an effective marketplace to ease the customer

transformation journey. KEMS-Zajil Telecom key solution partners that attended the event are Motorola, Netapp, Quadron, Nanodems, Allied Engineering Group and Mitel.

Lifestyle



Piano's keyboards are pictured at the Painodrome.



Artist and Musician Tim Vincent-Smith, Co-director of Painodrome, a charity centre aiming at refurbishing and repairing pianos, poses for photographs in his atelier.



Artist and Musician Tim Vincent-Smith, Co-director of Painodrome, a charity centre aiming at refurbishing and repairing pianos, poses for photographs in his atelier.



Volunteer staff member Shona MacArthur plays a piano at the Pianodrome.

British musician finds his forte: Saving unwanted pianos

In a deserted former department store near the port of Leith in Edinburgh, Tim Vincent-Smith reaches inside a grand piano's open top, his fingertips lightly plucking at the taut strings. The piano is one of hundreds rescued by the musician and his team of volunteers, as homes around Britain discard the instruments in favor of more space.



Artist and Musician Tim Vincent-Smith, Co-director of Painodrome, a charity centre aiming at refurbishing and repairing pianos, poses for photographs in his atelier in a former department store near the port of Leith.

Vincent-Smith's aim is to refurbish as many pianos as possible before putting them up for "adoption". Those beyond repair are turned into art or furniture.

"I discovered that there were loads of pianos going to the dump and so I started making furniture — a window seat and a kind of high bed with a staircase — and then the pianos just kept

on coming," he told AFP. As the instruments flooded in, Vincent-Smith realized that many were still "pretty good", and so he and his bandmate Matthew Wright decided to found Pianodrome, to rescue as many as possible. "If you are lucky, you may find a beautiful antique piano which has a good action and tone, holds its tuning and is a pleasure to play," he said. "The best thing for an old piano is to find a new home."

Piano smashing

Britain has a piano-making tradition dating back more than 200 years, boasting some 360 manufacturers at its peak in the beginning of the last century. The country was a supplier to the world, including great Western classical composers such as Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt and Johann Christian Bach — the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach. The instruments were once central to British social life and identity, taking pride of place in homes and also local pubs, where they were used for rousing beer-fuelled singalongs.

But as homes shrank in size and stairways grew narrower, it became increasingly difficult to shift pianos in narrower spaces. Television and then later electronic pianos began providing an alternative source of nightly entertainment, leaving traditional pianos to gather dust in the corner of living rooms. Homeowners even started finding innovative — if destructive — ways to get rid of the instruments: in the 1950s and 1960s, competitions were



This combination of pictures shows pianos from the following brands (from top left to down right): "John Brinsmead & Sons - London", "Obermeier", "F. Rosener - Berlin", "Angelus - Squire", "Strauss", "Studholme & Sons - London", "Clifford - London", "C. Bechstein", "Challen", "Collard & Collard - London", "Rinnermann - Berlin", "John Breadwood & Sons - London", "Waldberg - Berlin", "Broadwood White & Co - London", "Bernard Brock - London", "Dale Forty - London", "Abbey", "Hoffmann", "Boyd-London", "H. Lange & Co - Berlin", "Monington & Weston - London", "Harrington - London", "A. Lenz - Berlin", "Minerva", "Maxime Freres - Paris & London" displayed on February 9, 2023 at the Pianodrome, a centre aiming at refurbishing and repairing pianos located in a former department store near the port of Leith in Edinburgh, Scotland. — AFP photos

held to smash pianos to pieces with sledgehammers.

Vincent-Smith first came across dumped pianos when he started building furniture 20 years ago. At the time he was living and working at the Shakespeare and Co. bookshop on the banks of the River Seine in Paris. The owner would send him to local skips to collect wood planks to be used to make shelves, benches and beds for the itinerant staff who worked in the shop beloved of writers such as Ernest Hemingway. Vincent-Smith said he was often stunned at the quality of the pianos that were being dumped around the French capital.

'A beautiful thing'

After he started Pianodrome, a piano was brought all the way to Edinburgh

from the city of Plymouth in southwest England and appeared unusable. "All the keys were stuck together because it got a bit damp," he said. "I just filed the edges off the lead weights with a mask on so I didn't poison myself. And then when the keys could move, we discovered that it sounded really nice."

"I started to be a bit more careful about it and got all the notes working — it ended up being our sort of concert piano." Pianos that cannot be restored are pulled apart and turned into sculptures, furniture or art. One of Vincent-Smith's artworks, a six-metre (nearly 20-foot) elephant tusk structure outside Pianodrome's base, aims to highlight what society considers to be waste.

Pianodrome now holds regular events where the derelict shop is trans-

formed into a concert hall in an amphitheatre built entirely from upcycled pianos. There are also open sessions where enthusiasts can try out the pianos. When they find one they like, they can "adopt" it and take it home in return for an optional small donation. As the sound of the strings of the concert piano reverberate through the old shop, Vincent-Smith raises his head and nods once — the piano is repairable. "A piano is just an example of something that our society considers to be waste but can be used to great purpose," he said. "So I guess what I'd like to say is to folk — if you're thinking of getting rid of your piano, think about keeping it, it's a beautiful thing, a piano." — AFP



Volunteers push a piano at the Painodrome.

Omani novel on water wins top Arabic fiction prize

Omani poet and novelist Zahran Alqasmi was named on Sunday winner of the prestigious International Prize for Arabic Fiction with his book "The Water Diviner". Alqasmi, 49, will receive \$50,000, and the prize committee will provide funding to translate the novel into English, organizers of the annual award said on their website. "The Water Diviner" tells the story of Omani villager Salem bin Abdullah, hired by his community to find groundwater reserves.

It touches on issues of water scarcity and extreme weather events such as floods. "The Water Diviner" by Zah-

ran Alqasmi explores a new subject in modern fiction: water and its impact on the natural environment and the lives of human beings in hostile regions," Mohammed Achaari, chairman of the judges' panel, said in a statement. Alqasmi, who has published four novels and 10 poetry collections, is the first Omani winner of the prize, now in its 16th year.

He was announced this year's winner at a ceremony in the United Arab Emirates' capital of Abu Dhabi. In an interview for the prize's website, Alqasmi said the book had an additional focus: "on how women also caused changes in the life of the main protagonist." Five other shortlisted authors, from Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya and Egypt, will each receive \$10,000, the organizers said. The award is supported by oil-rich Abu Dhabi, which has taken steps to position itself as a cultural hub. — AFP



Omani poet and novelist Zahran Alqasmi.

Cuban poet, playwright Arrufat dies at 87

Cuban poet and playwright Anton Arrufat, a renowned and multi-faceted writer who won his country's top literature prize, has died at age 87, the culture ministry announced Sunday. Born in Santiago de Cuba, Arrufat, also a member of the Cuban Academy of Language, as a youth was keen on literature and theatre and then studied languages at the University of Havana. "Sad news for Cuba: the great poet, storyteller and playwright Anton Arrufat, National Literature Award (2000) has passed away," the culture ministry said. No cause of death was given. Author of numerous plays, novels, essays and poems, Arrufat won the literary award from the official Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba in 1968 for "Seven Against Thebes," an allegory of the island's political life of the time, currently considered a fundamental work of Cuban theater.

But as a gay man he then fell out of favor due to the institutional rejection generated by this work, which was branded as counterrevolutionary and did not reach a stage in Cuba until 2007. At the end of the 1960s and part of the 1970s, during a five-year

time known on the island as the "Grey Period," authorities established that the moral parameters for a reliable worker were to be revolutionary and heterosexual — two things that Arrufat was not. "Yes, (I was) 'parameterized' (sidelined), that is the word that was used" and "I never was told why," Arrufat said in an interview with AFP in September 2022, shortly before Cuba approved a new Code of the Families that gave the green light to equal marriage rights.

The writer, who was held for 14 years in the basement of a municipal library, unable to publish any text, then evoked that grey period that ostracized Cuban intellectuals, when the Soviet model was temporarily imposed on Cuba, the only one-party Communist state in the Americas. "I had to suffer through things that a writer in this country had not experienced," added Arrufat.

He also recalled in the interview his adventures with great Cuban writers, also noted for their homosexuality, such as Jose Lezama Lima (1910-1976) and Virgilio Pinera (1912-1979), who died in isolation without seeing their texts in bookstores and theaters again. — AFP



Cuban writer Anton Arrufat at his home in Havana, September 15, 2022, during an interview with AFP. — AFP

Lifestyle



(From left to right) Opera singers Olesya Petrova, Christian Van Horn, George Gagnidze, conductor Paolo Carignani, Jorge de Leon and Leah Crocetto pose backstage after the final performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center.



Actors prepare during the final performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center.



Actors perform during the triumphal march scene in Act 2 at the final performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center. — AFP photos

War Horse: Classic 'Aida' at Met Opera takes a bow

After more than 260 performances, the Metropolitan Opera this week retired its "Aida" staging, phasing out one of the company's last remaining holdovers from the last century. The production, which premiered in December 1988, has been praised as a faithful rendition of Giuseppe Verdi's tragic saga that has long wowed audiences with its mammoth sets and extravagant costumes. But the presti-

atrics, with live horses, dance troupes and multiple processions. The scene won cheers again at Thursday's night's finale featuring Soprano Leah Crocetto as the Ethiopian slave Aida and Tenor Jorge de Leon as the Egyptian military commander Radames, war-doomed lovers in ancient Egypt.

Met General Manager Peter Gelb said a new staging to be presented in the 2024-25 season, would also be

Lost world

Aida was first presented in 1871 amid a period of European fascination with Egypt following key archeological discoveries. Quaranta, an Oscar-winning film art director, wanted to convey "monumentality," but also "a certain sense of decadence," he told AFP in an email interview. "The ancient civilization was disappearing, as if buried by desert sand only to be rediscovered centuries later," he said. The show's palate includes gold and a sun-bleached tan evoking a stony lost-world quality. On opening night, Quaranta recalled in particular the throng in the second act when the Egyptian Princess Amneris' room is lowered and replaced with a descending stage of soldiers in a row with their backs to the audience, ushering in the march scene. "There was roaring applause," said Quaranta, adding that at first you could not hear the music.

Quaranta acknowledged "disappointment" at the production's retirement, but expressed gratitude at the long run. "I understand the theater's need to come up with another production with a different directorial and scenic point of view than that production," he said. "However, I hope that the set design, furniture and props, as well as the costumes, will be preserved: it would be nice to re-propose this production to the next generation, maybe in 20/30 years."

Changing mores

Aida's score includes soul-searching arias, soft love duets and fractious trios, as well as thunderous war anthems of

overwhelming power. In key moments, the opera's main characters - Aida, Radames and Amneris - are set apart from a booming chorus, underscoring the personal turmoil in a warmongering society. Conductor Paolo Carignani praised the staging as "very respectful of every part

the first piece performed in Spanish in nearly a century. Gelb said 19th Century classics pose challenges because works from that period "may have values that are not acceptable today." The goal is to ensure the Met "is a vibrant living opera house... not a museum,"



Actors perform during the final performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center.

gious New York cultural institution has been repositioning itself, showcasing more modern works by women and non-white composers and updating classics to appeal to younger audiences.

The outgoing spectacle, the brainchild of English director Sonja Frisell with sets by Italian designer Gianni Quaranta, has become known especially for a triumphant march scene in Act II, a 15-minute tour de force of the-

"spectacular," comprising sets of underground catacombs and tombs, along with eye-catching lighting effects not around in Frisell's day. While Frisell's production is "much beloved," Gelb concluded "it would be very stimulating to have a new production." The new production will be directed by Tony-winning theater director Michael Mayer and feature African American soprano Angel Blue as Aida, Gelb said in an interview this week.



(From left) US actress Janae Collins, US actor Jesse Plemons, US actor Robert De Niro, US director Martin Scorsese, US actress Lily Gladstone, US actor Leonardo DiCaprio and US actress Cara Jade Myers pose during a photocall for the film "Killers of the Flower Moon".

Robert De Niro compares his evil new character to Trump

Robert De Niro couldn't help but take a jab at Donald Trump in Cannes on Sunday, saying his character in the new film embodied the same kind of "evil" as the ex-president. The legendary actor, 79, stars alongside Leonardo DiCaprio in Martin Scorsese's epic "Killers of the Flower Moon", which premiered to rave reviews at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday. He plays a real-life dignitary from 1920s rural America, William Hale, who built trust with local Osage Indians and then orchestrated dozens of murders in order to steal their oil-rich land.

"I don't understand a lot about him — why he betrays them," De Niro admitted to reporters in Cannes. "But we became a lot more aware after the murder of George Floyd with systemic racism and

that's what this is," he said, referring to the police killing that sparked the Black Lives Matter protests. "It's the banality of evil, it's the thing we've got to watch out for. We all know who I'm going to talk about — I won't say his name," De Niro continued.

But a few moments later, the long-time Trump-hater couldn't hold back. "It's like with Trump — I had to say it," he said to laughter from the reporters. "There are people who think he could do a good job. Imagine how insane that is." DiCaprio has received particular praise for his performance as a weak-willed man torn between his love for his Osage Indian wife and the evil plot in which he becomes embroiled.

'Love, trust and betrayal'

Calling the three-and-a-half-hour film "a reckoning with our past", the star was gushing with praise for Scorsese, saying: "He's able to expose the humanity of even the most twisted characters you can imagine. "Marty's perseverance and ferocity to tell the truth, no matter how ugly... is masterful." Scorsese said the film, which is due for general release in October, was not "a whodunnit — it's a who didn't do it". Adapting a best-selling nonfiction book, he chose to focus less on the criminal investigation which helped forge the FBI, preferring to focus on the central, poisonous love affair between DiCaprio's character and his wife, played by Lily Gladstone.

"It was a template for that tragedy of love, trust and betrayal of the indigenous people," Scorsese said. Asked about still taking such risks in his filmmaking at the age of 80, Scorsese drew laughs from the crowd by saying: "What else am I going to do?" De Niro said the world had seen enough films where "the good guy goes south or to Indian country and saves the day. This is much more important." — AFP



US actor Robert De Niro (left) and US director Martin Scorsese talk during a photocall for the film "Killers of the Flower Moon".



US actor Robert De Niro poses during a photocall for the film "Killers of the Flower Moon" at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. - AFP photos

First Sudan director at Cannes 'heartbroken' by new war

"The war never ends. Tomorrow it will start again," remarks a character in "Goodbye Julia", the first Sudanese film ever selected for Cannes. It explores the racism fueling decades of conflict in the country, and director Mohamed Kordofani admitted to "contradictory feelings" about walking the glitzy red carpet of the Cannes Film Festival while his fellow Sudanese are cowering from bombs. The irony is not lost on Kordofani, who did not expect his debut feature to coincide with the breakout of a new conflict in Sudan.

"Right now I am stranded in Cannes," he joked in an interview with AFP on a seaside terrace overlooking a flotilla of yachts, before adding on a serious note that he was "heartbroken" by the conflict and the fact he could not go home. "The bombing needs to stop," said the former aircraft engineer, who packed in his career to start a film production company. "Goodbye Julia" is playing in the Un Certain Re-

gard category in Cannes, a segment focusing on young, innovative talent. The film starts in 2005 after the end of an earlier bout of fighting, between Khartoum and the separatist south, and ends as South Sudan gains independence in 2011. It tells the story of how a covered-up murder brings a southern Sudanese woman, Julia, into contact with a northern Sudanese woman, Mona, and her overbearing conservative husband.

'My own transformation'

The two women's friendship is complex, and the racist undercurrent between Arabs and black Africans that stalks the Middle East and North Africa is on stark display. Mona's husband refers to the southerners as "slaves" and "savages", and she is forced to confront her own ingrained racism, while gender roles are also explored. Kordofani said he was inspired by how his own views had changed over the

past decade. "I started to review how I was behaving in my previous relationships. I reviewed my own racism."

He said discrimination was so deeply ingrained in Sudan that "to this day, I don't know if I'm completely not racist." While racism is not at the heart of Sudan's current conflict, Kordofani said the film's message was still relevant, as the country lurches from one broken ceasefire to the next, and residents hunker down with barely any food or supplies. "I don't think the war will end unless we change. We the people, not the government. We need to be equal and we need to be inclusive, and we need to learn to coexist." Critics have warmly received "Goodbye Julia", with Screen calling it "a gut-wrenching and emotionally rewarding tale". The Hollywood Reporter said it had "shades of a thriller" and praised Kordofani's "fine direction." — AFP



(From left to right) Actor Ger Duany, producer Amjad Abu Alala, producer Mohammed Alomda, director Mohamed Kordofani, director of photography Pierre de Villiers, editor Heba Othman, actresses Eman Youssef and Siran Riak, cast members of Sudanese movie 'Goodbye Julia' walk the red carpet for the screening of 'May December', during the 76th Cannes Film Festival. - AFP photos



(From left) Sudanese actress Siran Riak, Sudanese actress Eiman Youssef, Sudanese director Mohamed Kordofani, South Sudanese actor Ger Duany and Sudanese producer Amjad Abu Alala pose during a photocall for the film "Goodbye Julia".



Sudanese director Mohamed Kordofani poses during a photocall for the film "Goodbye Julia".



(From left to right) Unidentified guest, actress Siran Riak, film director Mohamed Kordofani, actress Eman Youssef and producers Mohammed Alomda and Amjad Abu Alala, cast members of Sudanese movie 'Goodbye Julia' walk the red carpet for the screening of 'May December', during the 76th Cannes Film Festival.



Against the stream:

Iraqi artist battles to save boating tradition

Young Iraqis row a flotilla of traditional wooden boats down the Tigris river in Baghdad, celebrating an ancient nautical heritage in the now drought-stricken country. Once a common sight across Iraq's southern streams and marshlands, the elongated boats with tapered bows and sterns known as meshhouf have been around "since the time of the Sumerians", said event organizer Rashad Salim. But the elegant water craft have long been vastly outnumbered by modern, motorized vessels and are threat-

ditional boating culture. Salim, 62, is a painter, sculptor and eco-artist with a taste for adventure who in his youth joined the famed Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl on a long sea voyage in a traditional Iraqi reed vessel. Five years ago, Salim set out to find Iraq's last meshhouf makers, locating them in Huweir on the edge of Iraq's famed Mesopotamian marshes, where eventually he would place orders for the construction of new vessels. Salim then went to nautical clubs and helped create teams that would

'Connect with environment'

The youthful pilots alternated paddle strokes on the left and right. Some, with only a few weeks' practice in the lead-up to the event, struggled to hold the course. The meshhouf is part of "the history and heritage of the country", said one of them, Omar Youssef, 21, who has previous experience with sailing and windsurfing. Those sports "depend on the wind, you have to keep the balance with your body", he said, whereas powering the meshhouf works the "shoulders and arms".

Seven meshhouf clubs have been founded in Baghdad, the central province of Babylon and parts of southern Iraq, with funding from Britain and the Aliph Foundation, which works to protect cultural heritage in conflict zones. Iraq is still recovering from decades of dictatorship and war, but it faces an additional peril. The United Nations ranks it as one of the world's five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change.

Iraq endures blistering summer heat and frequent dust storms. Declining rain as well as upstream dams have reduced the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers where ancient civilizations flourished. Salim bemoaned the "terrifying" state of the rivers which suffer from rising "water salinity and pollution". A major aim for him, he said, is to enable young Iraqis to "connect with the environment".

'Revive the heritage'

Salim hails from a prominent family of artists and diplomats — being the son of artist Nazar Salim and the nephew of famous sculptor and painter Jawad Salim. His love for traditional Iraqi boats

dates back to 1977, when he was the youngest crew member aboard the Tigris, a ship constructed of river reeds by Heyerdahl, the Norwegian adventurer. To prove that the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus

Valley were in contact across the seas, they embarked on a 143-day voyage spanning 6,800 kilometers (4,225 miles), from Iraq through the Gulf and the Arabian Sea to Pakistan and on to Djibouti. In 2013, Salim took part in another expedition of traditional boats, organized by the group Nature Iraq, that sailed 1,200 kilometers along the Tigris from southern Turkey to Iraq's far south. Salim would also love to revive Iraq's traditional round boat made of woven reeds, the guffa, which resembles a wicker basket that spans more than two meters (six feet).



A man rows a newly-constructed traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat in the area of al-Huwait in the sub-district of al-Madinah in Iraq's southern Basra province.

linging project financially viable and create jobs. One of Iraq's traditional boat builders is Zouheir Raisan, 40, who lives by the marshes in Huweir, 400 kilometers south of Baghdad. Business had stopped in the 1990s but was slowly revived four years ago, a change the father of eight welcomes to supplement his main job as a truck driver. Under the shade of a mudhif reed structure, he was sawing boards and helping his cousin nail them to a boat frame. He said he remembers helping his father and brothers make meshhoufs, some measuring up to 11 metres long. Other countries, he said, are sending experts "in search of this heritage, to encourage its rebirth," he said. "Why don't we bring it back to life ourselves?" — AFP



In this picture people row traditional "meshhouf" boats in the Tigris river in Baghdad. — AFP photos

ened further as Iraq's waterways suffer from droughts linked to climate change. Iraq must save "from extinction an essential facet of our civilization which has existed for four or five millenia", said Salim, co-founder of Safina Projects, which works to preserve Iraq's tra-

teach young people how to navigate the gondola-like vessels. The flotilla on the Tigris in Baghdad was a landmark event in Salim's efforts - 18 of the boats took to the water on a spring afternoon as part of a cultural festival.



A carpenter shaves wood as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter saws off a piece of wood as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter hammers beams as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter uses an electric saw to cut wood as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter measures a plank as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter uses an electric saw to cut wood as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.



A carpenter uses an electric saw to cut wood as he builds a traditional "meshhouf" wooden boat at a workshop.

Sports

Gill ton trumps Kohli's 101 as Bangalore knocked out of IPL

HOLDERS Gujarat Titans kick Royal Challengers out

BENGALURU: Shubman Gill hit an unbeaten 104 to trump Virat Kohli's record century as holders Gujarat Titans knocked Royal Challengers Bangalore out of the IPL with a six-wicket victory on Sunday. The result allowed five-time winners Mumbai Indians to fill the fourth and final play-off spot after they hammered Sunrisers Hyderabad by eight wickets in the first match of the day.

Gill starred in the final group match with a 52-ball knock that steered Gujarat to victory with five balls to spare. Gill hit the winning six to raise his second straight ton. His hundred was the event's third of the day after Cameron Green's match-winning 100 for Mumbai and then Kohli's 101 not out. "As a bowler, Gill doesn't give you a chance," Gujarat skipper Hardik Pandya said of his star batsman, who put on a key 123-run stand with Vijay Shankar, who made 53. "Other batters also get confidence from it."

Kohli hit his second successive hundred and seventh in the IPL to overtake Chris Gayle's six and steer Bangalore to 197-5 in a match that started an hour late due to rain in Bengaluru. The effort was in vain as Kohli's wait for an elusive IPL title goes on for another year. "A lot of people think that my T20 cricket is declining, I don't feel like that at all. I think I am playing

my best T20 cricket again," said Kohli after an innings which featured 13 fours and a six. "I'm just enjoying myself. This is how I play T20 cricket."

'Unbelievable Virat'

Mumbai will play Lucknow Super Giants, who became the third team to make the play-offs on Saturday, in the eliminator next week. Table-toppers Gujarat and second-placed Chennai Super Kings will clash in the first qualifier on Tuesday. The winner of Qualifier 1 will head straight to the final in Ahmedabad on May 28 and the loser will play the winner of the eliminator. Kohli started strongly in a 67-run opening partnership with skipper Faf du Plessis, who made 28 to stay on top of the batting chart with 730 runs.

Kohli, who made a match-winning 100 in Bangalore's previous game, had moved behind Du Plessis in the batting list with 639 runs but Gill toppled the senior star to take second spot with 674 runs. "Virat played an unbelievable knock to give us a chance and thought that was a good score," said Du Plessis. "But Shubman played incredibly well to take the game away from us." In the first match, Green starred for Mumbai with his first ever T20 century as he hit a 47-ball unbeaten 100 to drive his team home with two overs to spare.



BENGALURU: Royal Challengers Bangalore's captain Faf du Plessis (left) greets Gujarat Titans' Shubman Gill at the end of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Gujarat Titans on May 21, 2023. — AFP

Green, a big buy for Mumbai for \$2.11 million in the auction, stood out with eight fours and eight sixes. After Rohit Sharma's departure, Green kept up the charge and put on an unbeaten partnership with Suryakumar Yadav, who hit 25, to register their eighth win in 14

group matches. Medium-pace bowler Akash Madhwal set up victory with figures of 4-37 to check Hyderabad to 200-5, a total that looked to go bigger but for some disciplined bowling. Hyderabad, led by Aiden Markram, took the wooden spoon in the 10-team table. — AFP

News in Brief

Lyon retain women's title

PARIS: Lyon, the record eight-time winners of the UEFA Women's Champions League, retained the French title on Sunday with a 1-0 victory away to rivals Paris Saint-Germain. They began the day three points ahead of PSG at the top of the table with one game remaining after this one, and so knew a victory would secure a 16th domestic title overall. A hard-fought encounter at the Parc des Princes was decided by an 88th-minute goal from substitute Signe Bruun, as the Danish international forward headed in a cross by Amel Majri. Lyon have now won the league in all but one of the last 17 years, the exception being when PSG pipped them in 2021. Sunday's victory secured a domestic double as it came a week after they also beat PSG in the French Cup final. Lyon won the Champions League for the eighth time last year, but were knocked out in the quarter-finals this season, losing on penalties to Chelsea. — AFP

Golden Knights win thriller

LOS ANGELES: The Vegas Golden Knights snatched another overtime thriller with a 3-2 victory over the Dallas Stars to take a 2-0 lead in their National Hockey League Western Conference finals series on Sunday. Chandler Stephenson swept home a close range rebound after defenseman Shea Theodore's powerful shot after just 1min 12sec of overtime to seal a dramatic come-from-behind victory for the Knights. Dallas, beaten in overtime in game one on Friday, had looked poised to level the series after leading for most of regulation after goals from Miro Heiskanen and Jason Robertson. But the T-Mobile Arena erupted with roars of relief and delight minutes before the end of the third quarter when Jonathan Marchessault tied it at 2-2 after a clever pass off the boards. Vegas carried that momentum into overtime and Stephenson grabbed the winner to leave a shattered Stars team with little room for error if they are to haul themselves back into the series. — AFP

Pumas triumph in London

LONDON: Australia booked their place at the Paris 2024 Olympic Sevens rugby tournament on Sunday as Argentina won the concluding London leg of this season's World Sevens Series at Twickenham. Victory in the seventh-pace play-off against Great Britain, meant Australia wrapped up fifth place in the overall standings to qualify for next year's Games. It looked as if Australia had missed out when they were beaten by Fiji in the quarter-finals earlier on Sunday. Samoa, their closest challengers, were already into the semi-finals and then led Argentina. Had they won that match then a place at the Games would have been theirs and, but for a forward pass that led to a disallowed try, Samoa would have booked their place in both the Twickenham final and the Olympics. Argentina, however won the match and that opened the door for Australia. After all the tension, Nathan Lawson ran in a hat-trick of tries as Australia hammered Great Britain 34-5 to secure Olympic qualification via the World Series for the first time. — AFP

Medvedev wins clay title

ROME: Daniil Medvedev beat Holger Rune 7-5, 7-5 to win the Italian Open on Sunday, his first trophy in a clay court tournament and a major boost ahead of the French Open. Medvedev, who had been 0-3 in Rome prior to this year's edition, claimed his fifth title of the season and 20th of his career. "I always want to believe in myself and I always want to win the biggest tournaments in the world," said former world number one Medvedev who knocked out 2017 champion Alexander Zverev and 2022 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas on his way to the final. "But at the same time, I didn't think I could win a Masters 1000 on clay in my career because usually I hated it, I hated playing on it. I didn't feel good on it and nothing was working." Sunday's final was the first in Rome since 2004 without either Rafael Nadal or Novak Djokovic. "When I came here I felt so good in practice and I told my coach, 'I don't know what is happening but I am feeling amazing, so let's see how it goes'," added Medvedev. — AFP



Koepka takes PGA for fifth major title

ROCHESTER: Brooks Koepka outdueled Viktor Hovland and Scottie Scheffler in a back-nine battle Sunday to win the PGA Championship for his fifth major title, giving Saudi-backed LIV Golf a milestone major triumph. The 33-year-old American captured his third PGA Championship and became the first player to win a major since joining LIV, firing a three-under par 67 to finish 72 holes at Oak Hill on nine-under 271.

"This is probably the sweetest one of them all because all the hard work that went into it," Koepka said. "This one is definitely special." Norway's 11th-ranked Hovland, chasing his first major title, and American Scheffler, last year's Masters winner and the new world number one, shared second on 273. "I put up a good fight. I played great today," Scheffler said. "I gave the guys on top of the leaderboard something to think about. But Brooks just played some fantastic golf this week. He played too good this weekend for me to catch up to him."

There were a smattering of boos for Koepka as he walked onto the 18th green to make the concluding putts for the title, a sign of the bitter acrimony that has engulfed golf since the launch of the LIV circuit last year. But Koepka calmly finished off an impressive romp, his first major win since 2021 right knee surgery sidelined him for most of the past two seasons. "I hear it all," Koepka said. "I just don't care. That's sports. You've got to be mentally tough."

Thinking of the rehabilitation and recovery made Koepka emotional as he walked off the 18th green. "I look back at where we were two years ago," Koepka

Kuwait Triathlon Club players grab seven gold medals

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Triathlon Club and Federation players collected seven gold and two silver medals during their participation in Sharm El-Shaikh Championship (Africa Cup) and the Arab Championship that was recently concluded in Egypt. In the Arab age groups

said, "I'm so happy right now. I'm at a loss for words. But this is the coolest thing." Koepka's victory puts him among the winningest 20 men in major history. "It's incredible," said Koepka. "I'm not sure I even dreamed when I was a kid I would win this many." Australia's Cam Davis and American Kurt Kitayama shared fourth on 277 with another LIV player, American Bryson DeChambeau.

Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy shared seventh on 278 with Austrian Sepp Straka. Koepka was among the stars who jumped from the PGA Tour to breakaway LIV Golf, which offered record \$25 million purses for 54-hole events, despite concern over Saudi Arabia's human rights record. The PGA banned LIV talent from its events, with a legal fight between them due in court next May. In the meantime, the majors have provided the only outlet for competition between players from the rival tours.

In all, there were six major winners from LIV in the field of 156 with a combined 15 major crowns, none of them won since joining the upstart circuit, including Australian Cam Smith's British Open title last July. "We haven't forgot how to play golf," Smith said. "We're all great golfers out there." Koepka led entering the final round at last month's Masters but, in his words, "choked" away the green jacket, finishing second to Spain's Jon Rahm but taking lessons in mental attitude. "I definitely wouldn't have won today if that didn't happen," Koepka said.

In the closing drama, Hovland was undone by a 9-iron from a fairway bunker at 16, where he embedded his ball into the bunker wall and went on to make double bogey. Koepka sank a birdie putt at 16 from just inside five feet to reach 10-under and lead by four. "I thought I handled myself pretty well," Hovland said. "Pretty unfortunate on 16 but I don't feel like I gave it away. Brooks deserved to win. He hit a lot of great putts and a lot of great shots." — AFP



Triathlon championship, the gold medal was won by Noura Al-Barrak, Fai Al-Mulla, Loulwa Al-Refai, Huda Al-Saleh and Jassim Al-Rujaib. Rujaib grabbed gold medal in the duathlon.

The silver medal of the age groups of the Arab championship was won by Saleh Al-Ruzaihan and Jassim Al-Rujaib. Huda Al-Saleh won the gold medal of the age groups of the Africa Cup championship. Head of the delegation to the championships Sufyan Al-Khalil lauded the achievement of Kuwait's athletes in both the Arab and African events, adding that the achievement was due to hard work by the players and support of the triathlon federation. Al-Khalil thanked the club, federation, Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Olympic Committee for supporting the national team.

Dhoni mania as IPL heads into tense final week

NEW DELHI: Chennai Super Kings host Gujarat Titans on Tuesday in front of a home crowd desperate to see MS Dhoni win another Indian Premier League in what could be his farewell week to cricket. A packed house is expected at Chennai's M A Chidambaram Stadium and all eyes will be on the 41-year-old Dhoni. Four-time champions Chennai host table-toppers Gujarat in the first play-off of this season's IPL, with the winner going into Sunday's final. The loser goes into another playoff match.

Fans have turned up in large numbers at every venue to watch Dhoni, the Chennai skipper and former India captain who is expected to retire from cricket at the end of this campaign. He retired from national duty in 2020. Dhoni has kept fans guessing and not explicitly said he expects to call it quits when the end of the season arrives at some point over the next week. The wicketkeeper-batsman has reinvented himself this term as a lower-order batsman coming in at number eight. "This is what my job is," he said after hitting a nine-ball 20 in a late cameo to help Chennai defeat Delhi earlier this month. "I have told them (his team) this is what I am supposed to do, don't make me run a lot, and it has been working." Dhoni's likely farewell is one of a number of sub-plots heading into the final week of the Twenty20 extravaganza.

Opponents Gujarat have extended their fairytale journey from winning the crown in their debut season last year to making the play-offs once again. "Last year we did well, everything went our way," said skipper Hardik Pandya, who then guided Gujarat to the top of the 10-team table in the regular season this year.

"This year was a different challenge for us. We were expecting people to challenge us. The boys showed tremendous character." Opener Shubman Gill has led the way with his 680 runs, second only in this IPL to Faf du Plessis at Bangalore on 730, but with a chance now to grab the Orange Cap for top-scorer. He struck his second straight ton on Sunday to play another match-winning role for a team which triumphed in 10 of their 14 group matches. If Gujarat make the final they will again enjoy home advantage playing at the 132,000-capacity stadium in Ahmedabad.

On Wednesday, five-time champions Mumbai Indians, led by India skipper Rohit Sharma, take on Lucknow Super Giants in another playoff. The winner of that match will play the loser of Chennai-Gujarat on Friday for a spot in Sunday's final at the world's biggest cricket stadium. Mumbai rode on Australian all-rounder Cameron Green's maiden T20 century in a crushing win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday to sneak into the playoffs. — AFP

Sports

Haller toasts Dortmund's 'beautiful' title chance after battling cancer

Borussia Dortmund - one win to grab Bundesliga title

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund striker Sebastian Haller said his side were achieving "something beautiful" after a 3-0 victory at Augsburg on Sunday sent them within one win of the Bundesliga title. "It's just unbelievable. If someone told me I would be in this situation six months ago, I wouldn't have believed them," an emotional Haller told DAZN. Haller was diagnosed with testicular cancer shortly after signing with Dortmund and underwent four rounds of chemotherapy and two operations, missing six months before returning in January. Dortmund sat in sixth place in January, but have lost just one of their 18 matches in the league since Haller returned. Dortmund are now two points clear with one match remaining, a rare occurrence after a decade of Bayern Munich dominance. The final round of games kick off at the same time next Saturday. To lift the Bundesliga shield for the first time since 2011-12, Dortmund will need a victory at home against Mainz only if Bayern win at Cologne.

mund dominated and Augsburg were reduced to 10 men late in the first half, the game was scoreless until the 58th minute, when Haller pounced on an error by a defender to score the opener. He added another from a rebound with the clock winding down, sending the visiting fans into raptures. Julian Brandt struck in injury time to seal the result.

'Happy and proud'

"We're very happy, but not completely satisfied," Dortmund manager Edin Terzic told DAZN. "We've got a next step we need to take". A "happy and proud" Haller told DAZN: "We've got a huge chance to achieve something big." Dortmund, who came into the game knowing victory would put them in control of the title race, but made the trip without injured midfielder Jude Bellingham, were winless on the road since February.

Dortmund, who had scored 11 goals in their past two games, controlled the first half but could not find a breakthrough, Haller forcing a fingertip save from Tomas Koubek. Shortly before half-time last-man Felix Uduokhai earned a red card, bringing down Donyell Malen on the edge of the penalty box. Augsburg

manager Enrico Maassen said "the red card was the crucial moment... you can give it, but that's a hard decision."

Haller finally broke through for the visitors, snapping up a loose ball before spinning and threading the ball into the far corner. With just over five minutes remaining, Haller pounced on a rebound from a Marco Reus shot to put Dortmund 2-0 up, sending the visiting fans into a chant of "German champions, only Dortmund". With the clock winding down, Dortmund captain Mats Hummels was helped off the field after taking a boot to the face. The centre-back's replacement, Nico Schlotterbeck, put the ball through for Brandt to score a third.

Stuttgart stay alive

Earlier, a goal and two assists from substitute Chris Fuehrich gave Stuttgart a massive boost in their relegation fight, with a 4-1 win away at Mainz. Brought on with 30 minutes remaining and the scores locked 1-1, Fuehrich laid on a goal for Serhou Guirassy just two minutes later, before adding one of his own. The winger set up another goal in injury time for Tanguy Coulibaly to take his side from the relegation places to the safety of 15th.

In Sunday's late game, Bayer Leverkusen



AUGSBURG: Dortmund's French forward Sebastian Haller (left) celebrates with his teammate Dortmund's German forward Marco Reus after the German first division Bundesliga football match between FC Augsburg and BVB Borussia Dortmund on May 21, 2023. — AFP

gave away a two-goal lead with two defensive errors to draw 2-2 against Borussia Moenchengladbach at home. Europa League semi-finalists Leverkusen were cruising after first-half goals to Amine Adli and Kerem Demirbay, but

gave the ball away in front of goal twice to let Gladbach score twice. Leverkusen were reduced to ten men late in injury time when Piero Hincapie saw straight red for a horrible challenge on Gladbach's Julian Weigl. — AFP

Napoli stun Inter, continue Serie A title party

ROME: Napoli continued their Serie A title party on Sunday with a 3-1 home victory over 10-man Inter Milan that jeopardized the visitors' Champions League hopes. Inter remained third in the table but only a point ahead of Lazio, who visit Udinese in the late game, and two clear of AC Milan. Yet with two finals looming - against Fiorentina in the Italian Cup on Wednesday and Manchester City in the Champions League on June 10 - coach Simone Inzaghi made eight changes from the team that beat AC Milan in the second leg of their European semi-final last Tuesday.

Inter's task became even tougher when veteran centre back Roberto Gagliardini picked up a second yellow card in the 41st minute. Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa put Napoli ahead after 67 minutes, spinning and volleying a shot into the corner of the net. Inzaghi threw on some regular starters and one of them, Denzel Dumfries, set up Romelu Lukaku for a close-range equalizer after 82 minutes.

Napoli skipper Giovanni Di Lorenzo curled a 20-metre shot into the top corner to restore the lead three minutes later. As Inter pressed desperately, Gianluca Gaetano finished off a Napoli count-



NAPLES: Napoli players acknowledge the public at the end of the Italian Serie A football match between Napoli and Inter on May 21, 2023. — AFP

er-attack with his first league goal for the club deep into added time. Inter's European chances could be enhanced on Monday when second-placed Juventus face a second Italian Football Federation ruling on illicit transfer activity. An original 15-point deduction was later revoked by the country's highest sports court.

Fiorentina, who also have two cup finals coming up, against West Ham in the Conference League as well as the Italian Cup, drew 1-1 at Torino in the afternoon. Luka Jovic, who started on the bench, gave Fiorentina the lead but Antonio Sanabria levelled for the hosts. Earlier, Cremonese's brief stay in Serie A came to an end when Spezia and Lecce, the teams just above the relegation zone, played out a

goalless draw. Lecce on 33 points and Spezia, on 31, are still not safe. Both can be caught by Hellas Verona, currently in the third relegation position, with 30 points and two matches remaining.

Spezia pulled seven clear of Cremonese who return to Serie B after one season in the top flight. Bottom side Sampdoria were already doomed. Cremonese's fate was effectively sealed on Saturday when they were thrashed 5-1 at home by Bologna. The first two promotion places to Serie A have been locked up by Frosinone, the Serie B champions, and Genoa. The third will be the winner of the play-offs, for which six clubs are in the running: Bari, Parma, Cagliari, Sudtirolo from Bolzano, Reggina and Venice. — AFP

derby league win, Roebuck was sent off for a reckless challenge on Nikita Parris just before half-time. But United's failure to clear a corner allowed City's Filippa Angelakou to send in a looping cross that somehow found its way into the net in the 68th minute. It looked as if United's title challenge was about to evaporate until Garcia's cool finish from Vilde Boe Risa's knockdown in the 91st minute kept them in the hunt.

Earlier, first-half goals from Guro Reiten and outgoing captain Magdalena Eriksson earned Chelsea a 2-0 win at home to London rivals Arsenal. Both Eriksson and partner Pernille Harder are leaving Chelsea at the end of the season, the pair linked with a move to German giants Bayern Munich. "I love you guys," Eriksson, a 29-year-old defender, told Chelsea's supporters as she was honoured in a presentation alongside Harder. —AFP

Heavyweight champ Fury looking at bout in Australia

MELBOURNE: Britain's world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury says he is seriously exploring the possibility of a fight in Australia. The unbeaten Fury is currently in the country to support close friend and former WBO heavyweight champion Joseph Parker in his bout against Faiga Opelu on Wednesday.

"I'm looking to do a fight here so I will be going up and down the country looking at different stadiums over the next few days," Fury told Fox Sports television. "I'm 100 percent serious." The 34-year-old Fury, who boasts a record of 33 wins from 34 fights with one draw, is visiting Australia for the first time. Fury hasn't fought since retaining his World Boxing Council title with a decisive stoppage over British rival Derek Chisora in December, with nothing else yet lined up.

There have been on-off talks with Oleksandr Usyk, who holds the WBA, IBF and WBO titles. "I'm looking to fight some big fights this year and next year," Fury said in Melbourne, adding that negotiations with the Ukrainian Usyk are ongoing. "We have an undisputed fight on the horizon for all the belts against Oleksandr Usyk," he told Fox Sports. "That has been in talks now for well over a year. There's also other big fights, so we're working on some possibilities at the moment."

One of them could be against China's Zhang Zhilei or fellow Briton Joe Joyce if Usyk fails to materialize. Zhang upset Joyce with a sixth-round stoppage in London in April, taking his WBO interim title and with it the mandatory position to face the sanctioning body's full champion Usyk. Joyce has activated his rematch clause and Fury is eyeing a possible clash against the winner. "We were supposed to talk about fighting Zhang but Joe Joyce has activated his rematch clause so them two will now have a rematch and maybe the winner will get a chance to fight me later on," he said. — AFP

Man United take English women's title to last day

LONDON: Manchester United's Lucia Garcia took the Women's Super League title race to the last day of the season with a dramatic stoppage-time winner in a 2-1 derby victory over Manchester City on Sunday. United had to defeat their local rivals to prevent Chelsea from wrapping up a fourth successive English women's title following a 2-0 win over Arsenal earlier in the day.

But even though City were a player down for more than

half the match after goalkeeper Ellie Roebuck was sent off, United left it late to record a first WSL victory over their local rivals, Chelsea, bidding for a domestic double after their Women's FA Cup final win over United at Wembley, are now two points clear at the top of the table.

But should United win away to Liverpool on Saturday and Chelsea lose at bottom-of-the-table Reading, it will be the Red Devils celebrating the title. "We have one more game to win," United manager Marc Skinner told Sky Sports. "Yes we have already made history, broken records, gone to our first Cup final, qualified for the Champions League, but if you settle at that then I am not doing my players the service they deserve." United were ahead in less than two minutes in Sunday's derby thanks to Hayley Ladd's superb 20-yard strike.

And in a further boost to United's hopes of a first WSL

goalless draw. Lecce on 33 points and Spezia, on 31, are still not safe. Both can be caught by Hellas Verona, currently in the third relegation position, with 30 points and two matches remaining.

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Classifieds

Change of Name

I, **Mohammed** Khalid Noor Mohamed, holder of Passport No. R2315837 do hereby change my name to Mohammed Khalid Noor Mohamed Sheikh for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammed Khalid Noor Mohamed Sheikh and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#3538) 23/05/2023

I, **Athi** Muralidaran, holder of Indian passport No. L4538347 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Shree Murugan

Kudil, Plot No. 41, Brindavan street, Indra Nagar Trichy-620021, India. And presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is Muralidaran and surname is Athi. (#3537) 23/05/2023

I, **Mohammad** Shahabuddin s/o Mohammad Aleeh Khan, holder of Indian passport No. L7923811 resident of Vill & post Bahadurpur Dist. Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh, India. And recently residence at Adiliya, Block 2, Street 23, House 15 Kuwait. And has change my name Mohammad Shahabuddin to Mohammad Shahabuddin Khan

as Mohammad Shahabuddin (Given name) and Khan (surname) here in after in all my dealing and documents. I will be known by name of Mohammad Shahabuddin Khan. (#3536) 23/05/2023

I, **MURTAJA**, holder of Indian Passport No: S9914200 having permanent address VP Moham-medipura, near Fakri Well Sagwara Distt: Dungarpur, Rajasthan, Pin: 314025, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name: MURTAJA and surname: LALJIWALA. (#3535) 22/5/2023.

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

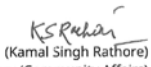
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507

Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401



NOTICE
May 16, 2023

Mr. Lakshaya Gupta, Indian national, son of Mr. Naresh Kumar Gupta, resident of 1003 Urban, Estate II, Hisar - 125005, Haryana and Ms. Rawan Salim Mahmoud Abu Hamdan, Jordanian national, daughter of Mr. Salim Abu Hamdan, resident of Al Jubeiha, Yajoz Street, Amman, Jordan both presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).


 (Kamal Singh Rathore)
 First Secretary (Community Affairs)
 and Marriage Officer,
 Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

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

Real star suffers racial abuse

La Liga now 'belongs to racists,' says Vinicius



VALENCIA: Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior reacts during the Spanish league football match between Valencia CF and Real Madrid CF on May 21, 2023. — AFP

BARCELONA: Football and beyond rallied around Vinicius Junior on Monday, demanding action against racism, after the Real Madrid star was abused once again in Spain's La Liga. The 22-year-old Brazilian international forward was targeted during a 1-0 defeat at Valencia on Sunday and was later sent off. Vinicius issued a strongly worded statement afterwards saying that La Liga "belongs to racists" and several Brazilian players past and present offered their support.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva condemned the abuse, telling a news conference at the close of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan: "He was attacked. He was called a 'monkey'." Vinicius has frequently been targeted in La Liga and the latest incident came at Valencia's Mestalla when he was racially abused by a home supporter. Vinicius stood in front of fans behind the goal and pointed to the apparent culprit. Play was delayed for several minutes in the second half.

Referee Ricardo de Burgos Bengoetxea spoke to stadium officials, who made an announcement calling for racist insults to stop before play resumed around 10 minutes later. In his post-match report, the refer-

ee wrote that a fan shouted "monkey, monkey" at the player. Vinicius was sent off in added time at the end of the game for hitting Hugo Duro during a brawl, with Valencia triumphing through Diego Lopez's first-half goal. Vinicius left the pitch making a gesture with his hands indicating Valencia were heading down to Spain's second division.

Stop the game, says Ancelotti

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said Spanish football needed to be prepared to halt matches. "The Spanish league has a problem, and Vinicius is not the problem. Vinicius is the victim. There's a very serious problem," Ancelotti said. "The fact I thought about taking him off because of the racist atmosphere does not seem good to me," Ancelotti told reporters. "What has happened today has happened before, but not like that, it's unacceptable."

Vinicius has been racially abused at several stadiums this season in Spain and an effigy of him was hung from a bridge in the Spanish capital by Atletico Madrid fans. La Liga have filed legal complaints to Spanish authorities on multiple occasions this season, with the league pledging on Sunday to do so

again after investigating. However, Ancelotti said it was not helping. "What has happened? Reports, and nothing at all has come from it. The solution is to stop the game," said the veteran Italian.

Writing on Instagram, Vinicius said Spain was viewed as "a country of racists" in his homeland. "The prize for the racists today is that they have sent me off. It's not football, it's La Liga," he said. "The league that once belonged to Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, Cristiano (Ronaldo) and Messi now belongs to racists," added Vinicius. La Liga said in a statement that they were investigating the incident and would take legal action if a hate crime had been committed. The Spanish top flight said they have been "proactive" in previous cases of racism against Vinicius, filing nine complaints with relevant authorities and prosecutors.

'Love and support'

Vinicius has received widespread support. Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said he heard "monkey noises" after about 20 minutes of the game and said he would have walked off with Vinicius if the Brazilian chose to stop playing. "If Vini wants to keep playing, we keep playing, but if Vini says he's

not playing any more, I'm leaving the pitch with him because we cannot tolerate these things," Courtois told Movistar. Former England defender Rio Ferdinand said Vinicius needed more protection from Spain's football authorities. "I see pain, I see disgust, I see him needing help," he wrote on Instagram.

There was anger among many in Brazil. President Lula called for FIFA and the Spanish league to take "serious measures". "It's unjust that a poor kid who's done so well in life, who may be on his way to becoming the best in the world - he's certainly the best at Real Madrid - gets insulted at every stadium where he plays," he said in Japan.

On Twitter, Brazilian Football Confederation president Ednaldo Rodrigues said: "Vini Jr, you have our love and support, and that of all Brazilians." The forward's fellow Brazilian international Richarlison, retired legend Ronaldo and music icon Gilberto Gil were among those who condemned the racist treatment he has received in Spain. "Another episode of racism in La Liga. And once again Vini Jr is the victim. How long will this last?" the 46-year-old Ronaldo wrote on Instagram. "As long as there's impunity and complicity... Enough." — AFP

Heat on brink of NBA Finals

MIAMI: The Miami Heat knocked the stuffing out of the Boston Celtics on Sunday, powering to a 128-102 victory to take a 3-0 stranglehold on the NBA Eastern Conference finals. The Heat, who host game four on Tuesday, are one win away from reaching the NBA Finals. The Celtics though are battling the weight of history — no NBA team has rallied from 0-3 down to win a best-of-seven playoff series.

Heat talisman Jimmy Butler scored 16 points and Bam Adebayo scored 13. But it was point guard Gabe Vincent who led the way, connecting on 11 of 14 shots from the field, including six of nine from three-point range, on the way to a game-high 29 points for Miami. Duncan Robinson added 22 points off the bench for Miami, who are vying to become just the second eighth-seeded team, after the 1999 New York Knicks, to reach the NBA Finals. Unlike in their first two wins of the series in Boston, there would be no need for the Heat to claw back a double-digit deficit to triumph.

In front of a pumped-up crowd at Kaseya Center in Miami, the Heat dominated, Boston unable to build on an early three-point lead in the face of a total team effort from the hosts on both ends of the floor. Boston star Jayson Tatum scored 14 points and Jaylen Brown added 12, but Tatum made just one of his seven three-point attempts and Brown missed all seven of his as the Celtics connected on just 11 of their 42 three-point attempts. Miami led by as many as 33 in the third quarter, shooting 56.8 percent from the field as they limited the Celtics to less than 39.8 percent.

"As you can tell, the rim was as big as the ocean for everybody," said Adebayo — who thrilled the crowd with a pair of alley oop dunks and a spin around Brown for a one-handed slam. "(We were) making the extra pass, making the right pass and everybody played together." Caleb Martin scored 18 points off the bench for Miami. Max Strus chipped in 10 and the Heat didn't miss a beat when veteran Kevin Love departed after less than five minutes with an injury. The Heat closed a fast-paced, physical first quarter



MIAMI: Cody Zeller #44 of the Miami Heat drives to the basket against Luke Kornet #40 of the Boston Celtics during the fourth quarter in game three of the Eastern Conference Finals on May 21, 2023. — AFP

on a 9-2 scoring run to lead 30-22 and pushed their lead to as many as 22 points in the second quarter.

Boston managed to cut the gap, but with the Celtics again struggling from three-point range and with turnovers, Miami's 61-46 halftime lead represented the biggest halftime deficit faced by Boston this post-season. There would be no re-set for the Celtics in the third quarter. Miami out-scored them 32-17 in the period to take a 93-63 lead into the fourth. Tatum and Brown combined for just three baskets in the third, Miami's dominance evident on back-to-back Boston possessions midway through the third — Adebayo blocking Tatum's shot on one and Martin coming up with a steal to set up a Strus three-pointer. — AFP

Mbappe's PSG party delayed

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain all but secured the Ligue 1 title on Sunday as a Kylian Mbappe brace gave them a 2-1 win away to Auxerre that left the Qatar-owned club six points clear at the top of the table with two games remaining. PSG had hoped to officially confirm a second straight championship triumph, and a ninth in the last 11 seasons, but they needed closest rivals Lens to slip up earlier in the day.

Lens won 3-1 at Lorient, and so PSG still require one point from their final two matches to secure a French record 11th title overall. However, a goal difference advantage of 16 over Lens means they are almost certain to win the title even if they end the season level on points with their closest rivals. PSG, whose final two matches are away at Strasbourg and at home to Clermont, will move ahead of Saint-Etienne's previous record of 10 titles which they equaled last year.

Mbappe's goals both came in the first eight minutes in Burgundy as he moved on to 28 for the season, two ahead of Lyon's Alexandre Lacazette on top of the Ligue 1 scorers' chart. He struck in the sixth minute, collecting a Fabian Ruiz pass and turning home defender Gauthier Hein inside out before shooting high into the net.

It was 2-0 two minutes later, as Hugo Ekitike left a Lionel Messi pass for Mbappe to rifle in a shot from the edge of the area. Auxerre saw Rayan Raveloson hit the bar late in the first half and Lassine Sinayoko pulled one back six minutes after the break. "My players have their hands on the trophy. Now we need to finish on a high in the next two matches and lift the trophy at home on the last day," PSG coach Christophe Galtier told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

Galtier and PSG have come in for criticism during a challenging second half of the season, in which they have lost six times in Ligue 1 and were knocked out of the Champions League by Bayern Munich in the last 16. "When we look back and analyze the season, we had a very difficult period after the World Cup with injuries to key players," Galtier added. "Our squad was severely weakened in big games and that led to us playing badly, but believe me, it is still a performance to win the league."

Lens came from behind to win their game and move a step closer to securing a place in next season's Champions



AUXERRE: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (center) misses a goal during the French L1 football match between AJ Auxerre and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on May 21, 2023. — AFP

League group stage. Romain Faivre put Lorient ahead inside six minutes, pouncing to score after Lens goalkeeper Brice Samba was put under pressure at a throw-in. Yet Lens came roaring back to record a fifth straight victory, equalizing when a Florian Sotoca shot deflected in on 20 minutes. Adrien Thomasson capitalized on poor defending to put Lens in front five minutes later, with captain Seko Fofana wrapping up the points late on.

Lens have won nine of their last 10 games, the exception being a 3-1 defeat away to PSG. They have been chiefly focused on securing second place and direct qualification for next season's Champions League group stage, a level the club last appeared at two decades ago. They are five points ahead of third-placed Marseille with two games to go. Third place enters the Champions League in the third qualifying round. "There is no such thing as 'almost' in the Champions League in the mind of a coach," said prudent Lens manager Franck Haise. "You are either qualified or you're not, and for the moment we are not."

Rennes kept alive their hopes of qualifying for Europe as Amine Gouiri scored a hat-trick in their 5-0 win at already-relegated Ajaccio. Rennes remain sixth with two games left, and with only the top five qualifying for Europe. However, they are just a point adrift of Lille and three behind fourth-placed Monaco, who they face next. Folarin Balogun, who this week switched international allegiance from England to the United States, scored his 20th Ligue 1 goal this season for Reims as they drew 2-2 with Angers. — AFP