

Polestar 2  
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\$10,000 trade-in support



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## Kuwait's ambassador to US stresses lasting bond between two countries

Kuwait float participates in National Memorial Day Parade



WASHINGTON: (Left) Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah delivers a speech at the National Memorial Day Parade. (Right) Kuwait's float takes part in the parade. — KUNA photos

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah stressed on Monday the "lasting bond of friendship and loyalty" between Kuwait and the US as the nation marks National Memorial Day. "It is a pleasure to be given the opportunity to represent my country, the State of Kuwait, in a ceremony to honor the sacrifices of the United States armed forces," Sheikha Al-Zain said in remarks at the National Memorial Day Parade.

"I stand before you today, representing the good people of my nation and reaffirming that we will never forget the human stories of service and sacrifice as exemplified by the brave men and women of the US armed forces on or off the battlefields. Trust that we cherish and hold dear the strong and lasting bond of friendship and loyalty between our two nations. It is a bond forged by war, strengthened by peace and further cultivated by mutual trust and respect," she added.

Furthermore, Sheikha Al-Zain mentioned the soon to be constructed Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial. "A special memorial is getting ready to be constructed in the heart of the US capital, Washington, to further commemorate the efforts of our American heroes," which is scheduled to be unveiled in 2025, she said. Kuwait participated in the parade, which is the largest Memorial Day event in the nation, with a float that

passed on Constitution Avenue to convey deep appreciation for those who served and those who fell in the fight to liberate the country.

Over 5,000 people marched in the parade, which is considered the largest Memorial Day event in the nation. It is a day "to honor, remember and pay our respects to all those who served and sacrificed, on and off the battlefield," Sheikha Al-Zain said. — KUNA

## 207 candidates to run in polls after withdrawals close

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Only 207 candidates were left in the fray as withdrawal of hopefuls closed on Tuesday, the interior ministry announced, a drop from the 305 candidates who contested the Sept 2022 elections. As many as 254 candidates including 21 women had registered to run for the 50-seat National Assembly, but 40 of them withdrew and five were barred by the interior ministry, mainly over their criminal records, while two candidates failed to complete the necessary legal procedures of registration.

More than a third of the candidates are former MPs and members of the scrapped 2022 Assembly. Under Kuwaiti law, withdrawal of candidates ends seven days before the election day, which is on June 6. The snap polls, the second in less than nine months, were called after HH the Amir dissolved the Assembly elected in 2020 for the second time after the constitutional court reinstated after its first dissolution in August 2022.

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## Kuwait to deport Filipinos housed at embassy shelter

KUWAIT: The Talha deportation detention center received 230 Filipinos following the evacuation of the Philippines Embassy shelter in cooperation and coordination between the embassy, Public Authority of Manpower and residency affairs detectives from the

interior ministry. The 230 workers of both genders were transferred to the PAM shelter from the embassy shelter on Tuesday, the first of three batches of Filipinos that will be sent to the deportation center, where they will be fingerprinted as part of procedures to deport them. The embassy will bear all the costs of the air tickets and they will be deported within 72 hours after reaching Talha detention center.

Following the correctional measures taken by the interior ministry and PAM to start evacuating the shelter, Kuwait Union of Domestic

Labor Offices (KUDLO) said this is the first serious step taken to remedy the issue of Filipino helpers, which has been marred by several mistakes in the past years that caused repeated stoppages in bringing in helpers from the Philippine side, with Kuwait countering by halting the issuance of new visas for Filipinos.

"We warned against the negative repercussions of helpers crowding the Philippine Embassy buildings, which may affect the relations between the two friendly countries. We asked officials of the two countries

to find deep-rooted solutions for this problem as quickly as possible, but to no avail. We had called to activate the legal role of the manpower authority and allow those there to enter the center and receive care until they are deported, as government authorities are doing now," the KUDLO statement said. The union urged the interior ministry to quickly complete the deportation process of all batches without obstacles so that all domestic helpers can return to Manila as quickly as possible.

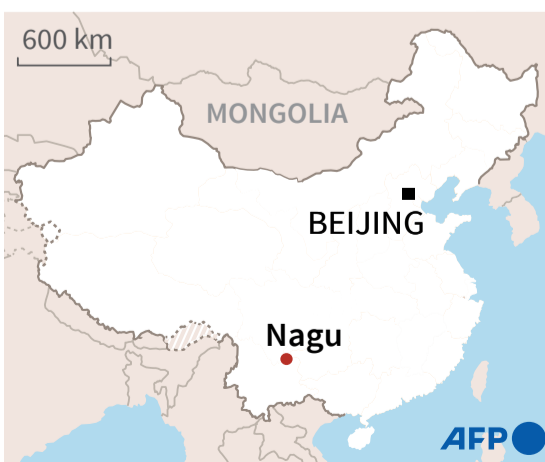
## China makes arrests after mosque clashes

BEIJING: China deployed hundreds of police and made arrests in a mostly Muslim southwestern town after clashes erupted over the planned partial demolition of a mosque, witnesses told AFP. The town of Nagu, Yunnan province, recently pushed ahead with plans to raze four minarets and the dome roof of the Najaying Mosque, a resident said on Monday, requesting anonymity.

The area is home to a sizable enclave of Hui, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group who have come under pressure in the face of a broad crackdown. On Saturday, dozens of officers wielding truncheons and riot shields repelled a crowd outside the mosque that was hurling objects at them, videos circulating on social media and the witness said.

"They want to proceed with forced demolitions, so the people here went to stop them," a local woman who also asked not to be identified told AFP. "The mosque is home for Muslims like us," she said. "If they try to knock it down, we certainly won't let them. Buildings are just buildings — they do no harm

## China clashes



to people or society. Why do they have to destroy them?" Police have made an unspecified number of arrests over the incident and several hundred officers remained in the town as of Monday, the two witnesses said. People in areas around the mosque

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## Saudi kidnapped in Lebanon freed in 'special operation'

BEIRUT: A Saudi national who had been kidnapped in Beirut has been freed in a "special operation" by the Lebanese army near the border with Syria, the military said Tuesday. Soldiers had also raided homes in Baalbek in connection with the abduction, as well as a location in the eastern city where the illicit stimulant drug Captagon was being produced, the army said in a statement.

"An army intelligence patrol managed to free kidnapped Saudi national Mashari Al-Mutairi during a special operation on the Syrian border," it said in a separate statement. Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi told a news conference nine people had been arrested over the kidnapping, and that Mutairi was "doing well". The Saudi ambassador to Beirut, Walid Bukhari, thanked Lebanon for its efforts to swiftly free the man.

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# Google Cloud key for Kuwait's digital transformation: Official

## Cooperation first of many with large-scale companies

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has been undergoing a digital transformation recently, fueled by the government's commitment to modernizing the country's infrastructure and improving the lives of its citizens. One major step of this transformation has been the implementation of cloud services across various sectors of the government. The implementation of cloud services is a key aspect of the state's digital transformation plan, which aims to create a knowledge-based society, where information and communication technologies are used to improve the quality of life of Kuwaiti citizens and businesses.

Cloud services also have the potential to provide greater access and enhanced development for educational and health resources, as promised previously during a media roundtable with Google Cloud in Kuwait. The long-term benefits of increased efficiency, productivity and innovation make it a worthwhile investment. As Kuwait continues to expand its technological capabilities, it will be well positioned

to become a leader in the region's digital landscape.

To look further into cloud servers and their impact on improving citizens and residents' life quality in Kuwait, Kuwait Times interviewed Dr Ammar Al-Husaini, Deputy Director General at the Central Agency for Information Technology. "We all agree that cloud computing is one of the main enablers of digital transformation, which is about providing better services to citizens and users. Therefore, our role as the Central Agency for Information Technology is to make sure we provide the right infrastructure and the right systems, in order to provide citizens and residents of Kuwait better services. Google Cloud, other hyperscale cloud services, and in general, all technologies are enablers. In the end, all we are looking forward to is to basically provide better services for people who live in Kuwait," he said.

Implementing cloud-based systems has been instrumental in creating a more efficient and responsive government in the state. By moving government services to cloud-based platforms, citizens can access services online, making the process much



Dr Ammar Al-Husaini

quicker and more convenient. With e-government services, citizens and residents of Kuwait will be able to make payments online and access important documents anywhere and at any time. As a result, this will reduce the need for in-person visits to government offices, thereby eliminating long queues and wait times.

Moreover, Kuwait's potential for digital transformation is not stopping at this point. "Google Cloud is our first agreement, and there will be other agreements with other big companies to support Kuwait's digital transformation. We did not only choose Google, but Google is our first deal and it will be followed by other agreements," Husaini said.



Implementing Google Cloud services across various sectors of the government has been a major step in the country's digital transformation. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Committee tasked with encouraging youth to work in private sector

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Cabinet approved, in its meeting held Monday, forming a committee tasked with creating job opportunities for national cadres at the non-government agencies. This came during the Cabinet's weekly meeting held at Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The Cabinet decided to task the Public Authority of Manpower - in coordination with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as the relevant bodies - to study legally and financially handing out social allowance to the owners of microenterprises and to present to the Cabinet, within a month a report about the necessary appropriate steps and procedures that encourage youth to work in the private sector, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel said after the meeting.

This shows the Cabinet's endeavors to achieve its vision and plans aimed at increasing the national work force at the private sector and providing them with incentives to join the non-government agencies, he said. The step also seeks to find new job openings



**KUWAIT:** Cabinet issued a decision to task committee with creating job opportunities for youth in the private sector during its meeting Monday. — KUNA

to the Kuwaiti youth and enhance innovation and competitive work, he noted.

The Cabinet was also briefed on the recommendation of the Economic Affairs Committee on a draft law approving the amended final account of the State's financial administration for the fiscal year 2021/2022, and the

Cabinet decided to approve the draft law and submit it to His Highness the Crown Prince, in preparation for its referral to the National Assembly. On regional and international political affairs, the Cabinet expressed its sincere congratulations to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his re-election as the

### Details on the committee:

- The Public Authority of Manpower, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as the relevant bodies were designated by Cabinet for the task.
- The committee will study the legal and financial aspects of giving social allowance to the owners of microenterprises and find ways to create job opportunities for youth in the private sector.
- The Cabinet's decision came following a request from First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to pay an allowance to microentrepreneurs.
- The committee will submit a report within a month from May 29 with the necessary appropriate steps and procedures that encourage youth to work in the private sector.

country's leader for a third term in office. The ministers wished President Erdogan every success in his mission, and further success and prosperity to Turkey and its people. — KUNA

### News in Brief

#### Mubarak Al-Rashidi's murder suspect gets longer detention

**KUWAIT:** The court has renewed the detention of the man accused of killing Mubarak Al-Rashidi for a month. Public Prosecution has charged the man with premeditated murder, a more stringent charge compared to his previous charge of kidnapping. The man had denied murdering Rashidi during the prosecution's investigation. The case has preoccupied Kuwaiti public opinion since Rashidi went missing in Kabd region last March. Officers from the Criminal Security Sector found Rashidi's body on Sunday in Salmi desert area after a long search operation lasting 74 days. The man charged with murder has been a suspect since the beginning, sources said. So far, the man in custody remains the only suspect in Rashidi's murder. This could change pending the results of an investigation being carried out by Egyptian authorities into an Egyptian national who witnessed the crime. There is a possibility that other accomplices will emerge after the completion of the investigations and collection of evidence.

#### Teachers to be honored for COVID-19 years

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Teachers Society plans to host a ceremony to honor teachers for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, who were never honored due to the COVID-19 closures. The matter was discussed during a recent meeting with the Education Ministry's Acting Undersecretary for Educational Development Dr Ghanem Al-Sulaimani, the society's president Hamad Al-Houli said on Tuesday. "It is imperative to honor distinguished teachers for their efforts in helping elevate students' academic gains," Houli said, adding that ministry officials have been very cooperative with the society's idea of honoring the teachers.

#### Biometric scan center launched for oil sector

**KUWAIT:** A biometric scan center for oil sector employees has been opened to help staff members save time and effort, the Union of Petroleum and Petrochemical Industries' employees announced Tuesday. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation CEO Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saoud Al-Sabah, CEOs of KPC subsidiaries and Interior Ministry officials attended the opening ceremony for the center, the union's president Mohammad Al-Otaibi said. Otaibi expressed gratitude to First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and Interior Ministry officials for their efforts that led to opening the center "which will be of much help for oil sector employees who can visit the dedicated center instead of going through overcrowded centers around the country."



**KUWAIT:** Participants in a seminar of fake accounts organized by KUNA. — KUNA photos

## Everyone responsible for combatting fake accounts: Experts

**KUWAIT:** Participants in a seminar organized by KUNA on fake or anonymous accounts on social media, their impact on society, public opinion, and ways to confront them, recommended on Monday to bolster efforts to confront and curb rumors. Hosts in the session, which was attended by KUNA Director General Dr Fatima Al-Salem, and Ministry of Information Assistant Undersecretary for the Press, Publications and Publishing Sector Lafi Al-Subaie, called for the importance of obtaining information from its official sources, in addition to monitoring the concerned agencies in the country for everything that is published on social networking sites, particularly in terms of false information.

The speakers, which also included representatives of the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, and Kuwait Red Crescent Society, explained that confronting fake accounts is everyone's responsibility, represented in the commitment of individuals not to publish any false information without verifying its official source in order to avoid legal accountability. Subaie stressed on the Ministry of



Lafi Al-Subaie



Othman Al-Ghareeb

Information's keenness to confront fake accounts and take all measures with media outlets that raise rumors and false news.

He added that the ministry has licensed 554 social media accounts publishing news and is in the process of regulating what gets published through them and setting various regulatory conditions in case of violations.

Colonel Othman Al-Ghareeb from the General Department of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior said that the department's role lies in raising awareness of the dangers of cybercrime and its impact on society, underlining the ministry's keenness to confront fake accounts. Ghareeb stated that the ministry is working to educate individuals



Ammar Al-Sarraf

about the importance of obtaining information from official sources in the country, such as the Ministry of Information and KUNA.

Acting Head of Support Services at the Department of Electronic and Cybercrime, Lt Col Ammar Al-Sarraf said that fake accounts may serve specific agendas, so people should avoid interacting with them and ensure they obtain information from reliable official sources. Sarraf said anyone who encounters a fake account spreading false information can confidentially report them to the department through WhatsApp or email. He stressed the need to ignore fake accounts that spread rumors and avoid providing them with information, as "it is possible to be deemed an accomplice if you provide these accounts with defamatory or liable information." — KUNA

- The Ministry of Information licensed 554 social media accounts publishing news and is in the process of regulating what gets published through them and setting various regulatory conditions in case of violations.
- **Lt Col Ammar Al-Sarraf:** Anyone providing fake accounts with defamatory information could be deemed an accomplice.
- **Lafi Al-Subaie:** People must avoid publishing false information without verifying the source to avoid legal accountability.
- **Colonel Othman Al-Ghareeb:** The Ministry of Interior is planning educational campaigns to raise awareness of how to best deal with fake accounts.



## Prime Minister receives disability authority's new director, deputy director

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development, Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Jassem Al-Baghli, who presented to him the newly appointed Director General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs Dr Bibi Hamad Al-Omairi and Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs Dr Nahed Abdulrazzaq Al-Atiqi. His Highness the Prime Minister reiterated

the importance of providing all facilities for citizens with disabilities, including setting up designated offices for them at all state departments to solve any difficulties that they face. His Highness the Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of coordination between the Ministry of Social Affairs and state departments, so that cooperation can be established between them and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs to focus efforts on meeting the needs of citizens with disabilities.



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Dr Bibi Hamad Al-Omairi, Minister Mai Jassem Al-Baghli, HH Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Dr Nahed Abdulrazzaq Al-Atiqi are seen during their meeting Tuesday.

# Women's society hosts introductory conference for female candidates

## MP hopefuls talk political instability, women's rights



**KUWAIT:** Parliamentary candidates, seen in this photo, showcased their platforms at the introductory conference. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



People listen to the candidates speak during the conference.

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The Women's Cultural and Social Society held an introductory conference on Monday featuring a number of women candidates running in the coming National Assembly elections. The conference was titled "Women's Role in Changing the Political Scene", where the candidates reviewed their electoral programs and discussed the main causes, they are willing to adopt when they reach the Assembly.

Candidate from the third district and former representative in the annulled 2022 Assembly Jenan Bushehri said the country's political stability is the most important factor that should be taken into account to achieve a better future for Kuwait. She said with the current instability, it is impossible to resolve any problems or open files that are slowing the country's development and impeding reforms.

"The stage of political stability requires political reforms, the most important of which is our electoral law, which strengthens individual actions in the National Assembly, and this is one of the reasons for the deterioration of political work in Abdullah Al-Salem

Hall. The time has come for a review of the electoral system, in addition to setting up a supreme electoral commission. Everyone is talking about fraud and forgery, so it is time to set priorities for political reforms for the next stage," she added.

Bushehri explained that despite the short time representatives had in the scrapped Assembly, women's issues were and are still one of the most important causes she is working on with other women candidates. She mentioned that in the previous Assembly, she and representative Alia Al-Khaled succeeded in submitting a law on civil rights of children of Kuwaiti women, as the women's society had a big role in it. "Women's issues are numerous, and all of them should be on the table in the coming Assembly," she said.

On the other hand, Bushehri pointed out the government is responsible for submitting its program, while Assembly representatives are responsible to help the government in setting laws and legislations or at least amend the current ones to be able to implement its program. She added the government should be held accountable if it shirks its responsibilities.

"The current political scene shows all existing women's laws are due to the efforts of Kuwaiti women and not Assembly members, as they deserved it and changed the political scene in Kuwait. Therefore, we hope for more women to reach the Assembly," Bushehri said. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Bushehri urged Kuwaiti youth to vote in the elections. "Whatever the country is suffering from, the Kuwaiti people can rise and achieve development on June 6."

Candidate Alia Al-Khaled stressed the main issues the government should focus on are education and the economy. "These are two sides of the same coin. There will be no economy without education, and no education without a real and successful economy," she said. Khaled said the current generation suffers from old laws and legislations that are away from their efficiency, as the world today is in the middle of the great industrial revolution, and the country is late in reaching it.

The conference included a number of new women hopefuls — first district candidates Aziza Al-Bannai and Anood Al-Enezi, fourth district candidates Anwar Al-Qahtani, Fahima Al-Rashidi and Noor Al-Mutairi, second district candidate



Jenan Bushehri speaks at the event.

Wedad Al-Habib and third district candidate Salwa Al-Saeed. The new candidates are adopting most Kuwaiti women's issues, whether women's political rights and rights of children of Kuwaiti citizens, in addition to their claims for better equal opportunities for women in Kuwait to reach the parliament and hold senior positions.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti and ASEAN delegates are seen during their meeting Tuesday. —KUNA

## Kuwait, ASEAN discuss enhancing cooperation

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met on Tuesday with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) officials to discuss various

topics of common interest. During the meeting, the foreign minister expressed Kuwait's interest in enhancing cooperation with ASEAN in various fields, including economic development. Both sides also exchanged experiences in the fields of security, culture, education, health, employment and many issues of common interest, as well as the latest regional and international developments. — KUNA

## Candidates urged to highlight rights, needs of disabled

**KUWAIT:** Experts concerned with disability affairs urged members of the upcoming National Assembly to fulfill the hopes of people with disabilities and meet their needs to overcome the obstacles they face. In separate statements, the experts told KUNA that people with disabilities place a lot of hope on the parliament to enact leg-

islations concerning their vital needs. In this regard, Director of the Legal Affairs Department and Spokesperson of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs Mubarak Al-Badah said the authority guarantees the rights of people with disabilities to participate in politics equally as others, through candidacy or choosing their representatives. The authority is keen to improve their participation in the elections and make it easier for them to enter polling centers in partnership with civil society institutions, noted Badah, adding the authority seeks to amend laws concerning people with disabilities. Sign language interpreter Bader Karam called

## Media training helps election candidates influence voters

**KUWAIT:** Media figures and academics affirmed on Sunday National Assembly candidates should be trained in media to influence voters with their ideas. In a statement to KUNA, multiple media academics said that certain media skills acquired through training courses help candidates attract public attention and the acceptance of voters. Professor of Media at Kuwait University Dr Khaled Al-Qahs said that each candidate needs a media personality to convince voters with their ideas, as well as intellectual and cultural characteristics especially in the legislative and constitutional aspects and public affairs issues.

Qahs added that candidates must acquire the ability to deal with various media platforms, appear in media conferences and interviews and speak about public issues. Journalist Bassam Al-Jazzaf said that candidates' most important characteristic is to maintain a positive and honest image in the voter's head. The ability to converse, negotiate, persuade, respond to arguments and confront the media and the public is achieved by intensive training sessions.

Media figure Eid Al-Rashidi said media training gives candidates the ability to influence others and evoke their feelings as well as have confidence



Khaled Al-Qahs



Eid Al-Rashidi



Bassam Al-Jazzaf

in what they say. He also emphasized the need to develop training programs for candidates that are exposed to pressure and contribute to their media success and confidence in what they present and discuss.

Rashidi stated that the best advice to give any candidate was to provide good content for the issues raised, choosing

a good media platform to convey ideas and having alternative plans to deal with any issue in addition to clarifying the electoral message. — KUNA

on the candidates to have an interpreter in their election campaigns for people with disabilities to better communicate with them. Karam pointed to the necessity of providing service offices for people with disabilities at all state institutions to guarantee their rights as equals.

Vice President of the Board of Directors of Harek Association Eman Al-Khalidi said the association is interested in delivering the demands of people with disabilities to parliamentary candidates. Khalidi expressed Harek's hope, the first public benefit association concerned with the affairs of people with mobility disabilities, that the next parliament raises the issues of people with

disabilities and their demands. Vice President of the Kuwaiti Association for Follow-up of Disabled Issues Kholoud Al-Ali said the association seeks to amend the law for people with disabilities as well as the law for Kuwaiti women who take care of disabled persons from non-Kuwaiti husbands, in addition to seeking to achieve their demands as well as that of their parents. Ali pointed out the necessity for the association to communicate with state institutions and decision-makers in explaining the rights of people with disabilities and integrating them with society in schools and government jobs, especially since they are capable of creativity and success. — KUNA



Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432

ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301

CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220

ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

## News in Brief



Dr Buthaina Al-Mudhaf

## MoH developing plan to adapt to climate change

KUWAIT: Health Ministry Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr Buthaina Al-Mudhaf said Kuwait is committed to facilitating a flexible health system that will be able to face the effects of climate change. Al-Mudhaf who spoke at 76th meeting of the World Health Assembly being held in Geneva until May 31, said Kuwait is working on evaluating the health system in regards to climate change and health and the development of a national adaptation plan in this regard. She said Kuwait will join Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH), a World Health Organization initiative which aims at building sustainable health systems that are able to adapt to climate change.

## 54 activities don't need office for licensing

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammed Al-Aiban issued a ministerial decision determining 54 commercial activities that don't require a physical office for a license. The business needs to be run by one person only and the person with the license must be the director of the company. The activities include sale of software, commission trading and the sale of greeting cards. They also include research and experimental development in natural sciences, engineering and astronomy, in addition to jewelry design and working as a tour guide. — KUNA

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This aerial photo shows the Arabian Gulf and the Kuwait City skyline on a cloudy day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Climate change to 'significantly' affect Kuwait, Arab region

## Arab countries struggle in transitioning to more sustainable economies: Experts

KUWAIT: Kuwait must be prepared to face climate change and its effects on all walks of life, experts said during the launch of the Climate Change Conference organized by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

One of the biggest challenges ahead is the rising temperatures, which could reach 60 degrees Celsius. The experts called for combatting excessive heat through greening projects.

Bader Al-Saad, Chairman of the Board and Director General of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, said the Arab region is one of the most affected regions by climate change and its negative repercussions on the economy. He said the world is rushing to face this dangerous phenomenon, especially as droughts, wildfires, and melting glaciers and sea ice are becoming increasingly more frequent.

Saad said the Arab region produced 5.3 percent of the world's greenhouse gases between 2016 and 2018, compared to 80 percent in industrial countries.

Although the region produces proportionately less greenhouse gases than the rest of the world, people in the region are some of the most affected by the climate disaster when compared to those in industrial regions, he said.

## Financial challenges

The majority of Arab countries face difficulties diversifying their economies away from fossil fuels and towards more sustainable industries, said Saad. The process requires large investments — 11 Arab countries will need an estimated \$71 billion to meet their carbon emission reduction targets by 2023.

United Nations Undersecretary General and Ex-

ecutive Secretary of Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rula Dashti said the future looks "scary". The World Meteorological Organization warned this month that global temperatures will rise in the next five years to unprecedented levels, noting that temperatures in Kuwait and Iraq may reach 54 degrees Celsius.

She pointed out that Kuwait is one of the countries that will be significantly affected by climate change through the unprecedented increase in temperatures, which makes it among the hottest countries in the world.

Over the past decade, she said, Arab countries have received only \$35 billion in climate assistance from international organizations, less than 6 percent of the amount required to meet the needs of 11 Arab countries over the next ten years.

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KUWAIT: Acting Deputy Director General of the fund Iman Abdulrazzak and Prime Minister of Mongolia Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene tour the health center with officials. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti and Mongolian officials pose for a photo in front of the center.

## Mongolia health center opens with Kuwaiti funding

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development participated on Monday in the opening of a national center for the treatment of orthopedic injuries and burns in Mongolia, funded by a grant from Kuwait provided in 2006 and managed by the fund.

Acting Deputy Director General of the fund Iman Abdulrazzak said in a press release that the center, which was opened in the presence of Prime Minister of Mongolia Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, plays an important role in strengthening healthcare services there.

Abdul Razzaq explained that the center was built through an \$8 million grant. She said the grant covered all construction work and the installation of the latest medical equipment necessary to enable the center to provide high-quality care. The center, she

added, will provide specialized care for burn patients in addition to advanced treatment options for orthopedic injuries through comprehensive medical services and rehabilitation for 250 patients.

"The center helps reduce the number and frequency of Mongolian citizens travelling abroad for high-cost treatment, which constitutes an economic burden on the country," said Oyun-Erdene.

He added that the center will provide high-quality medical services in addition to performing complicated surgical operations, thereby reducing the percentage of deaths caused by burns. He thanked the Kuwaiti government and the fund for their contribution. The opening ceremony of the center was attended by the ambassador of Kuwait to Mongolia Mohammed Al-Mutairi and a number of ministers, officials and dignitaries.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has given Mongolia four loans amounting to KD 7.23 million (about \$77 million) for the energy and transport sectors. Mongolia paid back 78 percent of these loans, amounting to KD 7.18 million (about \$8.60 million). — KUNA





Serbs gather again in northern Kosovo after violent clashes

## Armed groups clash in streets of Tripoli

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# Drones hit Moscow in rare attack

Eight drones were used in the attack, five of them were downed, three disabled



KYIV: Police experts examine fragments of a missile after Russia fired a barrage of missiles for the second time in 24 hours, in an unusual daytime attack targeting the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes, in Kyiv. — AFP

**MOSCOW:** A swarm of drones hit Moscow on Tuesday in an unprecedented attack, while Russian drones struck Kyiv for a third straight day as Ukraine gears up for a major offensive against Russian forces.

The Russian defence ministry blamed Kyiv for the attacks that saw three drones crash into residential buildings in Moscow. Officials said no one was seriously injured and there was only "minor" damage to buildings. The Russian defence ministry said that eight drones were used in the attack, adding that five of them were downed and three disabled.

Of the three that hit residential buildings, two crashed into high-rises located in Moscow's affluent southwest, while a third damaged a residential building in a suburb of the capital. The other drones fell outside Moscow. Some of the debris was found around 15 kilometres from President Vladimir Putin's Novo-Ogaryovo residence.

One video shared on social media showed an explosion followed by a column of smoke rising into the sky. Two drones were intercepted over the Kremlin earlier this month but Tuesday's attack was the first time that unmanned aerial vehicles hit residential areas of Moscow, hundreds of kilometres from the front lines in Ukraine.

The raids are likely to be seen as a psy-

chological blow and a major embarrassment for the Kremlin, which has gone to great lengths to say the protracted conflict in Ukraine does not pose a threat to Russians. The Kremlin insisted that there was no "threat" to Russians, adding that Putin was being informed of the attacks in "real time".

### 'No fear'

Moscow also said it believed the attack was a "response" by Kyiv to a recent Russian hit in Ukraine. "It is completely clear that we are talking about response acts by the Kyiv regime to very effective strikes on a command centre (in Ukraine)," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, without clarifying where the Russian strike took place.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said Kyiv had "no direct relation" to the Moscow attacks. Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said two people had sought medical assistance after the raid but "no-one has suffered serious injuries".

The residents of buildings damaged in the strikes were briefly evacuated. On Profsoyuznaya Street, a residential building with a blown-out window was cordoned off by police but the atmosphere was calm, with children playing outside and locals walking

their dogs, an AFP correspondent saw.

Some of the residents were moved to a nearby school, where they drank tea and watched a Soviet-era movie. Valentin Yemelyanov, a 50-year-old IT worker, who lives on the same street but closer towards the centre of Moscow, said there was "no fear or panic".

"The damage is minimal," he told AFP. He said he was "not surprised" by the drone attack, given the escalation of the conflict. "It is obvious that things are going this way," Muscovites told Russian journalists that a drone had also crashed into an apartment on the 14th floor of a high-rise on Leninsky Prospekt but did not explode.

### Explosions

Andrei Vorobyov, the governor of the Moscow region, said several drones had also been downed near the capital. "This morning the residents of certain districts in the Moscow region could hear explosions. It was our anti-air missile defence system," he wrote.

"Several drones were shot down while approaching Moscow," he added. Since the start of Russia's assault on Ukraine, drone attacks have hit targets outside Moscow, including military installations located far from the front.

Yevgeny Prigozhin — the head of mercenary group Wagner, whose forces are fighting in Ukraine — accused the defence ministry of inaction, releasing a new statement peppered with swear words.

Also on Tuesday, Ukraine said it had downed 29 out of 31 drones, mainly over Kyiv and the Kyiv region in the latest Russian barrage — the third on the Ukrainian capital in 24 hours. On Monday, Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv, sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack following overnight strikes.

The latest barrages landed as the Ukrainian capital was still recovering from a drone attack at the weekend, the biggest since Russia began its campaign in Ukraine in February last year. Kyiv received its first shipments of US-made Patriot surface-to-air missile system in April and US President Joe Biden on Monday suggested more aid was to come.

Asked about Russia's barrage of attacks on Kyiv, Biden told reporters, "It's not unexpected." "That's why we've got to continue to give Ukraine all that it needs." Kyiv has been preparing a counter-offensive, although its timing and focus have been the subject of months of speculation. — AFP

## ICC's Khan calls to tackle DR Congo war crimes

**BUKAVU:** The International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Karim Khan called on Monday for "a new way of working" to tackle war crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Armed groups have plagued much of mineral-rich eastern DRC for three decades, a legacy of regional wars that flared in the 1990s and 2000s, and underreported conflicts simmer elsewhere in the vast central African nation.

The ICC, operating since 2002, launched its first investigations in the northeastern Ituri region in 2004. The court since handed down three final sentences for crimes committed in the DRC. "We've had cases, we've had convictions — but there is a truth staring at us in the face... the rapes have not stopped, the crimes have not stopped," Khan told reporters after meeting Denis Mukwege.

Mukwege won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for his work on behalf of rape victims, and the two met at his hospital in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province. The ICC prosecutor, who also planned to visit Ituri, will complete his stay in the DRC in Kinshasa where he will meet with the authorities.

"The message is: we need to find a new way of working in my view, not in the same way that we've been doing since 2004," the prosecutor said. He called for "stronger partnership" between the government, provincial governors, civil society, the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations to show a common will to put an end to crimes.

Mukwege did not speak publicly during the visit, but has consistently called for an end to impunity and for "transitional justice" to stop the spiral of violence that has plagued eastern DRC since the 1990s. In the courtyard of his hospital, representatives of victims had gathered to welcome the ICC prosecutor, holding banners calling for justice.

"SOS Justice — we mourn our innocent brothers and sisters massacred en masse during the so-called liberation wars," read one of the signs. "At the ICC, we are only asking for justice," Felix Bafulwa, 63, whose father and brother were killed on October 28, 1996, told AFP. Neema Cikambasi, 43, recalled how rebels killed 11 members of her family that same day in October 1996. "The people killed were all buried in three mass graves." — AFP

## New truce, new battles in Sudan as civilians remain trapped

**KHARTOUM:** Fighting flared again in Sudan on Tuesday despite the latest ceasefire pledges of the two warring generals that are meant to allow desperately needed aid to reach besieged civilians. Both the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces formally agreed late on Monday to extend by five days a US and Saudi-brokered humanitarian truce that was frequently violated over the past week.

Since the extension was announced, more fighting was reported by residents, including "clashes with various kinds of weapons in southern Khartoum" and fighting in Nyala in the state of South Darfur. The army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, paramilitary RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, again accused each other of violating the truce and claimed to only be responding to enemy aggression.

The war has killed at least 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. More than a million have been displaced and nearly 350,000 have fled to other countries, the UN says. Residents have been hiding from street combat and roaming looters in the capital city of more than five million, nearly 700,000 of whom have fled, according to the United Nations.

Since the fighting broke out on April 15, both generals have committed to a series of truces. Although some Sudanese have used relative lulls in the fighting to escape, aid has only been allowed to trickle in. The United Nations warned on Monday that Sudan has become one of the highest alert areas for food insecurity, requiring "urgent" action from the international community.

The rainy season is set to start soon, threatening to make parts of the vast northeast African country inaccessible and raising the risks of malaria, cholera and water-borne diseases.

### Malnourished children

Sudan was already poverty-stricken before the war, with a third of its 45 million-strong population relying on aid. Long power cuts were a daily reality and the healthcare system already on the verge of collapse. After more than six weeks of brutal warfare, over half the population — 25 million people — are in need of aid, according to the United Nations. Among them are 13.6 million children, including 620,000 suffering from severe acute malnutrition, "half of whom may die if not helped in time".

Entire districts of Khartoum no longer have running water, electricity is only available for a few hours a week, and three quarters of hospitals in combat zones are out of service. What few health facilities still operate have practically run out of medicines and equipment and have to purchase fuel at up to 20 times its pre-war price to keep generators running.

Humanitarian aid workers have been pleading for weeks for access to worst-hit Khartoum and Darfur to replenish depleted and looted supplies. But with staff and transport blocked by fighting and shipments stuck in customs, aid agencies have so far only managed to deliver small quantities of food and medicine to conflict areas.

### Fears of 'civil war'

The situation is particularly dire in Darfur, the vast western region already ravaged by two decades of war and civil strife, where about a quarter of Sudan's population lives. Activists and observers warn that Darfur civilians continue to be attacked, entire districts have been burned to the ground, and tens of thousands have been forced to flee into neighboring Chad.

Amid the chaos, the region has been all but cut off



KHARTOUM: People fleeing violence wait for their buses before departure from al-Sittin (sixty) road in the south of Khartoum on May 30, 2023. Fighting flared in Sudan on May 30, where warring generals agreed to extend a frequently breached ceasefire to try and deliver urgent humanitarian aid to desperate civilians. — AFP

from the world, with only sporadic access to power and the internet. The UN has warned for weeks that fighting in Darfur's major cities between the army and the RSF has also drawn in local militias, tribal fighters and armed civilians.

Darfur's governor Mini Minawi, a former rebel leader, has urged citizens to "take up arms" to defend their property. Sudan could descend into "total civil war", warned the Forces for Freedom and Change, the main civilian bloc ousted from power by Burhan and Daglo in a 2021 coup.

"We must arm ourselves," a Darfur resident told AFP. "It's an impossible situation. People are completely alone, they're being attacked in their homes and they can't do anything." Another resident contacted by AFP warned that statements urging civilians to join the fighting are "totally irresponsible" and "a very dangerous call that can lead us into civil war". — AFP



## International

# In war-torn Sudan, volunteers turn schools into hospitals

## Hospital provides free general medical care and other services

**OMDURMAN:** In a Sudanese school turned makeshift hospital, a volunteer doctor hooks up a patient lying on a desk to an intravenous drip while nurses hand out medicines donated by neighbors.

As war has raged for six weeks and shuttered or destroyed many clinics, this school building in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city across the Nile, has become an emergency healthcare centre. A chalk message written on a blackboard outside says the volunteer-run field hospital provides free general medical care, minor operations and other services.

The volunteer medics treat children and people with diabetes, hypertension and other chronic illnesses, which are "now 10 times deadlier than bullets," said the doctor, Mohammed al-Taher.

Young activists have taken matters into their own hands since fighting erupted on April 15 between the army led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

In times of relative peace, the activists, known as local "resistance committees", used to organize pro-democracy protests. Now they collect water and food and run makeshift clinics for patients with nowhere else to go.

The public health sector has long been fragile in Sudan, where 65 per cent of the population lives in poverty. Now it faces compounded challenges, with three quarters of hospitals in combat zones out of service, according to the country's doctors' union.

### 'Bring medicine'

The fighting has left 12,000 dialysis patients at risk of dying as hospitals have run out of medication and fuel to power generators, the union said.

Since the war erupted, at least 1,800 people have been killed. More than a million have been displaced

within Sudan and nearly 350,000 have fled to other countries. The fighting has also led many health professionals to flee and driven a "real brain drain", says the UN World Health Organization.

Remaining medical staff are now teaching volunteers to tend to the wounded. "We train young people in first aid in case they are faced with wounded people in the midst of combat," Taher said. Maha Mohammed is one of many volunteers looking after fellow Sudanese citizens in need. She runs the small field hospital's pharmacy, its shelves sparsely stocked with medicine and serum bags. The young woman in a black abaya pleaded for "more donations" as the bulk of food and medical aid have either been looted or remain stuck at the sites of violent battles.

### 'This war will pass'

The fighting has impeded the delivery of the humanitarian aid that 25 million people — over half the population — now desperately need, according to the UN. Aid workers, who count 18 deaths among their ranks, say it is difficult for aid to flow despite the multiple ceasefires that have been agreed and quickly violated.

In a "major breakthrough", the World Food Programme said Monday that it had begun reaching thousands of Khartoum's trapped residents.

Mohammed said that "we must help each other before expecting foreign help. I urge people who have medicine at home to bring it here."

At the hospital, two women stood behind a window, registering new patients lined up in the courtyard. "Our neighborhood is under fire, many hospitals had to close," volunteer Ashraf told AFP. "So people come here to get free treatment from doctors in the neighborhood." There are fears that the summer rainy season will soon bring seasonal epidemics



**OMDURMAN:** Relatives stand by a patient at a makeshift emergency room set-up by Sudanese volunteers in a school building in Omdurman, the capital's twin city, amid ongoing fighting between the forces of two rival generals. — AFP

like malaria, which wreaks havoc in Sudan every year, while a shortage of drinking water could drive a cholera outbreak.

The rains will also make parts of Sudan hard to reach, according to aid agencies. But Ashraf remained optimistic that his home country, which has

been ravaged by multiple civil wars and military coups since gaining independence in 1956, will also overcome the current turmoil.

"This war will pass," he said. "We have seen many crises in Sudan, and each time we think: This will be the last. But this one will end too." — AFP

## Armed groups clash in streets of Tripoli

**TRIPOLI:** Gunshots rang out in Libya's capital on Monday following hours of fighting between two armed groups both aligned with the divided country's UN-backed government, local medics and media reported. Several residents in Tripoli were lightly wounded in the clashes which began Sunday night and spread across several neighborhoods. Fighters from rival militias — the Al-Raada Force and the 444 Brigade, both of which are loyal to interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah's Tripoli-based

government — clashed after a member of the 444 Brigade was arrested. Libyan television and online media showed videos of the fighting posted online by social media users. An elderly man "was injured in the arm by shrapnel as he fled his home in Ain Zara by car", the Tripoli Rescue Service said on its Facebook page, also condemning damage to ambulances during the gun battles.

On Sunday, armored vehicles and fighters were seen deploying in Jabra Street, a busy commercial area in the capital's east, and the central Ras Hassan residential district. After a lull in the fighting, heavy and light weapons fire was heard, along with ambulance sirens, in the eastern suburbs of Ain Zara and Fornaj until 3:00 am (0100 GMT) Monday, according to an AFP correspondent.

The University of Tripoli said Monday it was forced to "close its doors" and suspend exams as a

could lay waste to entire industries.

The latest statement, housed on the website of US-based non-profit Center for AI Safety, gave no detail of the potential existential threat posed by AI. The center said the "succinct statement" was meant to open up a discussion on the dangers of the technology. Several of the signatories, including Geoffrey Hinton, who created some of the technology underlying AI systems and is known as one of the godfathers of the industry, have made similar warnings in the past.

Their biggest worry has been the rise of so-called artificial general intelligence (AGI) — a loosely defined concept for a moment when machines become capable of performing wide-ranging functions and can develop their own programming. The fear is that humans would no longer have control over superintelligent machines, which experts have warned could have disastrous consequences for the species and the planet. Dozens of academics and specialists from companies including Google and Microsoft — both leaders in the AI field — signed the statement. It comes two months after Tesla boss Elon Musk and hundreds of others issued an open letter calling for a pause in the development of such technology until it could be shown to be safe. However, Musk's letter sparked widespread criticism that dire warnings of societal collapse were hugely exaggerated and often reflected the talking points of AI boosters. — AFP

political reforms, calling to amend a number of laws seen as restricting political freedoms. Mutairi proposed to amend a controversial law that bars for life those convicted for political crimes from contesting parliamentary polls, and another calling to approve allowing groups to run in elections.

The former lawmaker also proposed to amend a law that bars courts from hearing cases related to citizenship disputes, and also called for amending a law that governs the constitutional court to prevent dissolving National Assemblies. As candidates feel that some Kuwaiti voters appear to be no longer interested in the election process because polls have been frequently repeated in the past few years, they continued to appeal to voters. Hamad Al-Mudlej, a member of the 2022 Assembly, called on Kuwaiti voters to turn out in large numbers to prevent what he called forces of corruption from controlling the Assembly.

Contacted by AFP on Tuesday, an official in Tonghai's publicity department denied the Internet outages, but declined to comment further. China has sought to more tightly control religion since President Xi Jinping came to power a decade ago, and in its crackdown on Muslims, Beijing claims it is working to combat terrorism and extremist thought.

An estimated one million Uyghurs, Hui and other Muslim minorities have been detained in the western Xinjiang region since 2017 under a government campaign that the United States and rights groups have called a genocide. And while the impact on communities outside Xinjiang has been milder, many have seen their mosques demolished or "coercively renovated" to match official notions of Chinese aesthetics, said David Stroup, an expert on the Hui at Britain's University of Manchester. — AFP

## Zionist entity revives flashpoint W Bank settlement

**BURQA:** Zionist entity started reviving a flashpoint outpost settlement in the occupied West Bank on Monday, AFP journalists said, constructing a building at the site which has drawn international attention. Using a truck, diggers and an earth roller, work got underway to erect a portable building at the northern West Bank site.

AFP journalists saw Zionist soldiers guarding around 20 people carrying out construction work at the Homesh site, which Zionist entity evacuated nearly two decades ago. The latest development comes weeks after the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged his government had no plans to reconstruct the site, after a parliamentary vote on the matter sparked ire abroad.

It was hailed as a "moving historic moment" by Zionist's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir — an extreme-right settler. Lawmakers in March voted to annul part of a law which banned Zionists from living in areas of the West Bank which the state evacuated in 2005, the same year Zionist entity withdrew from the Gaza Strip.

"The government has no intention of establishing new communities in these areas," Netanyahu's office said in March. Zionist's military occupation of the West Bank has been in force since the 1967 Six-Day War. Neither the army nor the defence ministry commented on their role in Monday's developments at Homesh when contacted by AFP.

The civilians at the site refused to discuss the matter when approached by AFP journalists. The United States, Zionist entity's top ally, said this month it was "deeply troubled by the Zionist government's order

legislator Ali Bouzribah, from the rival eastern parliament, whose home had reportedly been hit in strikes three days earlier.

The eastern-based Parliament on Monday denounced the strikes against Zawiya, saying it was an operation to "settle political scores rather than fight against traffickers as claimed" by the Dbeibah government. In response, the US embassy in Tripoli said it was monitoring the situation with "concern amid reports of weapons being used in civilian areas and the potential for further violence". "Libyan leaders should do everything they can to de-escalate and take every precaution to protect the lives of civilians," it tweeted.

Britain branded as "unacceptable" the use of weapons that put civilian lives at risk, and called on all those involved to de-escalate, its embassy said on Twitter. — AFP

## Experts warn AI poses 'risk of extinction'

**PARIS:** Global leaders should be working to reduce "the risk of extinction" from artificial intelligence technology, a group of industry chiefs and experts warned on Tuesday. A one-line statement signed by dozens of specialists, including Sam Altman whose firm OpenAI created the ChatGPT bot, said tackling the risks from AI should be "a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war".

ChatGPT burst into the spotlight late last year, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts. The program's wild success sparked a gold rush with billions of dollars of investment into the field, but critics and insiders have raised the alarm. Common worries include the possibility that chatbots could flood the web with disinformation, that biased algorithms will churn out racist material, or that AI-powered automation

## 207 candidates to run in polls after...

Continued from Page 1

The fire department said on Tuesday it has completed its preparations to provide protection to some 119 election centers set up at schools in the five electoral districts. Although the election campaign picked up some steam in the past few days, it has remained way below the intensity seen in previous elections. Many candidates have not even set up election headquarters and have preferred to address rallies either at hotels or social halls.

Former MP Saud Al-Mutairi proposed what he described as a national charter for comprehensive

## China makes arrests after mosque...

Continued from Page 1

had struggled intermittently with Internet outages and other connectivity issues since the clashes, they added. A notice issued Sunday by the Tonghai government — which administers Nagu — said it had opened an investigation into "a case that severely disrupted social management and order". The notice ordered those involved to "immediately stop all illegal and criminal acts", vowing to "severely punish" anyone who refuses to turn themselves in. Those who voluntarily surrender before June 6 will be treated with leniency, the notice added.



**BURQA:** Zionist settlers erect a tent at the outpost of Homesh in the occupied West Bank. Zionist settlers started reviving the flashpoint outpost settlement in the occupied West Bank, which had been evacuated nearly two decades prior, constructing a building at the site which has drawn international attention. — AFP

that allows its citizens to establish a permanent presence in the Homesh outpost". — AFP

Washington and the wider international community view Zionist settlements built in the Palestinian territories as illegal and a barrier to peace. The European Union last week pressed Israel to "cease the policy of settlement expansion" and condemned increased settler violence against Palestinians. — AFP

## Saudi kidnapped in Lebanon freed...

Continued from Page 1

A senior Lebanese security source had told AFP late Monday that unidentified assailants dressed as security personnel and driving a four-wheel-drive vehicle had kidnapped the Saudi national on the Beirut seafloor, where he had been in a restaurant. Prime Minister Najib Mikati congratulated the army on the "great effort deployed to release him and arrest those involved in the kidnapping". According to Saudi government-owned television channel Al-Ekhabriya, the kidnappers had demanded a ransom. Lebanese security forces frequently target parts of the Syrian border area in connection with

drug trafficking. Most of the Middle East region's Captagon is produced in Syria and Lebanon and smuggled to its main consumer market in the Gulf.

Kidnappings of foreign nationals have been rare in recent years in Lebanon, which since late 2019 has been facing devastating economic crisis that has impoverished the population. In July last year, a Saudi national was abducted on arrival at Beirut airport. Since 2021, Saudis have had to obtain their government's permission before travelling to Lebanon due to strained diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Riyadh returned its ambassador to Beirut in April 2022, just over five months after recalling him amid a diplomatic dispute pitting Lebanon against several Gulf monarchies. Relations between Beirut and Gulf Arab states had become strained over the growing regional influence of Lebanon's pro-Iranian movement Hezbollah. — AFP



## International

# Serbs gather again in northern Kosovo after violent clashes

## Five Serbs were arrested for taking part in clashes: Kosovo police

**ZVECAN:** The situation in northern Kosovo remained tense Tuesday as ethnic Serbs continued to gather in front of a town hall in Zvecan after violent clashes with NATO-led peacekeepers left 30 soldiers injured. The NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) soldiers wearing full riot gear have put a metal barrier around the municipal building in Zvecan and are stopping several hundred Serbs from entering, an AFP journalist at the scene said.

Three armored vehicles of the ethnic Albanian Kosovo police — whose presence always stirs controversy in Serb-majority northern areas — remained parked in front of the town hall. Serbs — who account for about six percent of Kosovo's population — boycotted last month's elections in northern towns where they are in a majority, allowing ethnic Albanians to take control of local councils despite a minuscule turnout of under 3.5 percent of voters.

Many Serbs are demanding the withdrawal of Kosovo police forces, as well as the ethnic Albanian mayors they do not consider their true representatives. Tensions flared after Serbs tried to force their way into the Zvecan town hall on Monday, but were repelled as Kosovo police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd.

KFOR at first tried to separate protesters from the police, but later started to disperse the crowd using shields and batons. Protesters responded by hurling rocks, bottles and Molotov cocktails at the soldiers. A total of 30 peacekeepers were wounded in the clashes, including "fractures and burns from improvised explosive incendiary devices", KFOR said. Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic said 52

demonstrators were hurt, three of them "seriously". Five Serbs were arrested for taking part in the clashes, according to Kosovo police.

### 'Unprovoked attacks'

KFOR said the soldiers responded "to the unprovoked attacks of a violent and dangerous crowd" whilst carrying out its mandate in an impartial manner. "To avoid the clashes between the parties and to minimize the risk of the escalation, KFOR peacekeepers prevented threats to the lives of Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians," KFOR said.

"Both parties need to take full responsibility for what happened and prevent any further escalation, rather than hide behind false narratives." Kosovo police Tuesday described the situation in the north on Tuesday as "fragile but calm", and called citizens "not to fall prey to calls for violent protests and provocations."

"The security situation in the north of the country has escalated and degraded to the point of endangering people's lives," police said. Vucic met Tuesday in Belgrade with ambassadors of the so-called Quint — five powerful NATO members that focus on the Western Balkans — but also announced meetings with representatives of Russia and China. "One-sided moves from Pristina bring violence against Serb community, which distances us from lasting peace and stability in the region," Vucic wrote on Instagram after the meeting with Western diplomats. "Swift withdrawal of false mayors and members of Pristina's so-called special forces is a condition of preserving peace in Kosovo."



**ZVECAN:** NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) soldiers, wearing full riot gear, place metal fences around the municipal building in Zvecan, northern Kosovo on May 30, 2023, a day following clashes with Serb protesters demanding the removal of recently elected Albanian mayors. — AFP

### 19 Hungarians hurt

NATO strongly condemned the attacks against KFOR troops, adding that such actions were "totally unacceptable". A total of 19 wounded soldiers belonged to a Hungarian KFOR contingent. Four of them needed hospital treatment "due to shrapnel injuries" and one soldier needed to be operated on, but "none of them is in a life-threatening condition," Hungarian ambassador to Pristina Jozsef Benze said. Belgrade placed its army on high alert last week

when tensions flared, and ordered forces towards the frontier with Kosovo. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, and Belgrade and its allies Beijing and Moscow have refused to recognize it, effectively preventing Kosovo from having a seat at the United Nations.

Serbs in Kosovo remained largely loyal to Belgrade, especially in the north, where they make up a majority and reject every move by Pristina to consolidate its control over the region. — AFP



**US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin**

## China declines meeting with US defense chief

**WASHINGTON:** Beijing has declined a US invitation for a meeting in Singapore between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu, the Pentagon said. "Overnight, the PRC informed the US that they have declined our early May invitation for Secretary Austin to meet with PRC Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu in Singapore this week," Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder said Monday in a statement, referring to the People's Republic of China.

"The PRC's concerning unwillingness to engage in meaningful military-to-military discussions will not diminish (the Defense Department's) commitment to seeking open lines of communication with the People's Liberation Army," he said. When asked about the meeting, the Chinese foreign ministry would not confirm that Beijing had declined the invitation. "The US knows clearly why there are currently difficulties in military communication between China and the US," spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular press conference on Tuesday.

"The US should earnestly respect China's concerns of sovereignty, security and interests, immediately correct its incorrect actions, show sincerity, and create the atmosphere and conditions for China-US military dialogue," she said. A senior US defense official described the declined invitation as "just the latest in a litany of excuses," saying that since 2021, China has "declined or failed to respond to over a dozen requests from the Department of Defense for key leader engagements, multiple requests for standing dialogues, and nearly ten working-level engagements."

Li was sanctioned by the US government in 2018 for buying Russian weapons, but the Pentagon says that does not prevent Austin from conducting official business with him. Austin is due to travel to Singapore later this week to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue, a defense summit where he met Li's predecessor Wei Fenghe last June. — AFP

## Broader national security law takes effect in Macau

**HONG KONG:** Macau's new national security law took effect on Tuesday, imposing wider restrictions on political opposition and civil society in the Chinese city. The gambling hub has a separate legal system from the Chinese mainland, largely based on Portuguese law, and national security legislation was first enacted in 2009.

Macau's government said the amendments were designed to catch up with similar legislation in China and Hong Kong, with an emphasis on stepping up prevention of foreign interference. The casino hub's original national security law laid out seven major crimes, including treason, secession, subversion, theft of state secrets and foreign collusion, with punishments of up to 25 years in jail.

The amendments expand the offence of secession to cover non-violent acts, while subversion is stretched to punish opposition to any central government department and China's ruling ideology. Restrictions on "foreign political organizations or groups" have been

## Malaysia search ship suspected of looting WWII wrecks

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's coast guard said on Tuesday authorities were questioning the crew of a Chinese vessel detained on suspicion of looting two British World War II shipwrecks. Officers discovered unexploded shells upon boarding the Chinese-registered vessel, which was detained for illegal anchorage at the weekend, said Nurul Hizam Zakaria, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency chief in Johor state.

"Our investigation is now directed to where these cannon shells originated from. Right now, we have officers from multi-agencies searching the big ship," he told AFP. Nurul Hizam said the vessel from the city of Fuzhou had a crew of 32 comprising 21 Chinese nationals, 10 Bangladeshis and one Malaysian, some of whom were in coast guard custody for questioning.

"This case also involves the discovery of explosives," he said. China's foreign affairs ministry said the Chinese embassy in Malaysia was in close communication with local authorities "to understand the situation". It asked Malaysia to handle the case "fairly and in accordance with the law". Beijing also asked

Malaysia to protect the rights and safety of Chinese citizens. A senior Malaysian maritime official told AFP on condition of anonymity that the pieces of metal and shells could have originated from two sunken British warships.

More than 800 British sailors were killed when the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were torpedoed by Japanese aircraft in the South China Sea. The attack on December 10, 1941, happened three days after Japan attacked the US fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Photos and a video shared by the Malaysian coast guard showed large pieces of corroded metal and shells, as well as a large crane and gas torches used to cut metal on board the ship. The shells could also be linked to the discovery of unexploded World War II-era ordnance at a jetty in Johor on May 19, the maritime agency said in a statement Monday.

Nurul Hizam said the maritime agency would not tolerate any form of illegal salvage activities in Malaysian waters. "Our national treasure must be protected and preserved," he said, describing looting as "an uncivilized act".

Britain's Ministry of Defence condemned the "desecration" of maritime military graves after reports that scavengers had targeted two WWII wrecks, the BBC said Saturday. Malaysia's New Straits Times newspaper reported in recent weeks that illegal salvage operators had targeted high-grade aluminium and brass fixtures from the two British warships. — AFP



**This undated photo released by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency on May 30, 2023, shows a Chinese vessel after anchoring near Tanjung Siang on the waters of the Malaysia's Johor state. — AFP**

widened to cover those operating outside Macau including non-political groups.

Macau police also now have extraterritorial jurisdiction to pursue suspects outside the city. National security suspects can be subject to communications surveillance and restricted from leaving Macau for up to five days upon court orders. The government said the changes were necessary to keep pace with security issues, especially after Beijing rolled out a new wide-ranging security law for the mainland in 2015.

China also in 2020 imposed a national security law on Macau's neighbor Hong Kong, which has a separate legal framework inherited from the British. That law has quelled political dissent after massive and at times violent democracy protests the year before.

### 'Even greater pressure'

Critics say Macau's broadening of the security offences along with the new surveillance and detention powers could further curtail liberties and rights, which were already subject to stringent controls. Former Macau legislator Au Kam-san, who is also a veteran democracy activist, said the expansive amendments could allow space for arbitrary law enforcement.

"The law enacted in 2009... might have left the authorities feeling that they got a useless tool as they never made any security prosecution," Au told AFP. "The more flexibility given to law enforcement is ob-

viously damaging to human rights and press freedom."

Au co-founded the Democratic Development Union, a pro-democracy group, but quietly disbanded it late last year. The ex-legislator said the security law amendments were "a backdrop against the decision".

"Civil society here has never been strong," he said. "Now the amendments have caused even greater pressure." Macau's Journalists Association criticized the amendments for "multiplying the risk of speech crime" and "introducing uncertainty on what constitutes unlawfulness deep into everyday life".

"If the authorities... turn society into one filled with political censorship and unchallengeable police power, we are afraid that Macau's hard-earned harmony and stability will be undermined," it wrote in a submission to the government in October during a public consultation period.

But the city's secretariat for security defended the changes after the consultation period ended. Only 0.4 percent of more than 111,000 opinions they collected disagreed with them, it said. The amendments were passed this month by Macau's rubber-stamp legislature with unanimous support.

They are separate from a national security clause added to the city's gambling law last year that tightened control over the lucrative industry. That clause gave Macau's leader grounds to revoke land concessions from casinos. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Three murders per hour

**JOHANNESBURG:** Almost three people were murdered every hour in South Africa during the first three months of the year, according to police statistics released on Tuesday. Some 6,289 people were killed in the country — which has one of the world's highest murder rates — between January and March, up 3.4 percent on the same period last year. Yet, Police Minister Bheki Cele, who has long been under fire over the rampant crime, said the overall picture was improving. "We are gradually gaining back the ground from criminals," Cele told a press conference. Child murders were down 20 percent, he said. Rapes also saw a slight 2.8 percent decline, with a still staggering 10,500 cases reported in the first quarter of 2022. Cash-in-transit robberies instead experienced a "stubborn increase" of more than 20 percent, with 64 cases reported, Cele said. Common robberies, assaults and attempted murders were also on the up. — AFP

#### 10 Mexicans killed

**MEXICO CITY:** A highway gun attack on security forces in northern Mexico left 10 people dead on Monday, authorities said. "Civil Force personnel were attacked with bullets by subjects who were traveling aboard three armored trucks," Nuevo Leon Public Security Secretary Gerardo Palacios wrote on Facebook. Ten criminal suspects were killed and four officers injured, he added. The attack took place along a highway between Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas states, a region hit by violence connected to organized crime. Roads between the two states have been the scenes of kidnappings, disappearances and robberies. Mexico has counted more than 340,000 killings and some 100,000 disappearances — most attributed to organized criminal gangs — since the launch of the government's controversial anti-drug operation in 2006. — AFP

#### Smuggling migrants

**ATHENS:** Five Greek border police officers were arraigned Tuesday as suspected accomplices of a smuggling network that illegally brought migrants into the country from Turkey. The five men appeared before a prosecutor in the northeastern city of Orestiada, a day after the police department's internal affairs division said they had been arrested on suspicion of taking bribes and breach of duty. They are accused of helping to smuggle an unknown number of migrants on at least 12 occasions in the Didymoteicho area in northeastern Greece, the police said in a statement. "An investigation so far has shown that the officers had been in contact with networks operating in a neighboring country at least since October, and allegedly carried out actions or omissions aimed at facilitating the entry of (non-EU) nationals into our country," it said. — AFP

#### Three dead in hospital fire

**VIENNA:** Three people died Tuesday in a fire at a hospital just south of Austria's capital, a spokeswoman said. "The cause of the fire could not yet be determined with certainty," said the spokeswoman for the hospital in Modling, about 14 kilometres (9 miles) from Vienna. The fire broke out at the hospital at around 1:00 am local time (2300 GMT on Monday), according to a statement from the regional health agency. Authorities said 33 vehicles, 170 firefighters and a Red Cross team were dispatched to put out the blaze, which was brought under control after two hours. Uninjured patients were transferred to other facilities and an investigation has been launched, they said. — AFP



# Business

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2023

## World at 'tipping point of new computer era'

AI products unveiled; OpenAI chief calms job loss fears



**TOKYO:** Visitors watch a demonstration of a Unitree Go1 robot dog at a booth by Japanese AI company Automagi during the three-day 7th AI Expo, part of NexTech Week Tokyo 2023, Japan's largest trade show for artificial intelligence technology companies, at Tokyo Big Sight. — AFP photos

**TAIPEI:** Nvidia chief Jensen Huang said the world was at "the tipping point of a new computer era" as he unveiled a raft of AI-related products Monday in his first public speech in four years at a Taiwan tech trade show. The US firm, which specializes in chips coveted in the artificial intelligence boom, saw its value surge to nearly \$1 trillion last week, after the company's quarterly earnings report blew past expectations. Nvidia is known for creating graphics chips long coveted by gamers but which have become engines for the kind of complex processes involved in artificial intelligence, known as accelerated computing.

Its chips are a central ingredient to the generative AI revolution, capable of delivering the computing heft needed to churn out complex content in just seconds from data centers around the world. In Taipei on Monday, the Taiwanese-American CEO expressed excitement to be back at the Computex forum, one of the largest trade shows for the sector. "Our first live event in almost four years! I haven't given a public speech in four years — wish me luck!" he said.

Huang's two-hour presentation introduced a diz-

zying host of new products — including an AI supercomputer platform called DGX GH200, which he said is now "in full production". "We're so excited that Google Cloud, Meta and Microsoft will be the first companies in the world to have access," he added. "They will be doing exploratory research on the pioneering front, the boundaries of artificial intelligence, with us." The new supercomputer will — in theory — help the tech industry as it seeks to create more AI-related products, which require more complex computing tasks.

"This is really one of the first major times in history a new computing model has been developed and created," he said, referring to accelerated computing. "We have now reached the tipping point of a new computing era." Founded 30 years ago by Huang, Nvidia was initially a star in the video game world. The Silicon Valley-based company has since built its reputation on making graphics processing units (GPUs), which ramp up image quality and vanquish response lag time for gamers. Its shares soared more than 25 percent Wednesday after an earnings report showed the AI trend is fuelling demand for its sophisticated chips.

### Calming job loss fears

Meanwhile, the boss of OpenAI, the firm behind the massively popular ChatGPT bot, said that his firm's technology would not destroy the job market as he sought to calm fears about the march of artificial intelligence (AI). Sam Altman, on a global tour to charm national leaders and powerbrokers, said in Paris that AI would not — as some have warned — wipe out whole sectors of the workforce through automation. "This idea that AI is going to progress to a point where humans don't have any work to do or don't have any purpose has never resonated with me," he said.

Asked about the media industry, where several outlets already use AI to generate stories, Altman said ChatGPT should instead be like giving a journalist 100 assistants to help them research and come up with ideas. ChatGPT burst into the spotlight late last year, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts. Microsoft later laid out billions of dollars to support OpenAI and now uses the firm's technology in several of its products — sparking a race with Google, which has made a slew of similar announcements.



**TAIPEI:** Nvidia founder and chief Jensen Huang speaks during the Computex 2023 in Taipei on May 29, 2023.

Altman, a 38-year-old emerging star of Silicon Valley, has received rapturous welcomes from leaders everywhere from Lagos to London. Though earlier this week, he seemed to annoy the European Union by hinting that his firm could leave the bloc if they regulate too severely. He insisted to a group of journalists on the sidelines of the Paris event that the headlines were not fair and he had no intention of leaving the bloc — rather, OpenAI was likely to open an office in Europe in the future. — AFP

## France to open first electric car battery factory

**BILLY-BERCLAU:** France launched its first battery factory for electric cars on Tuesday, taking a big step in its race to build up a sector dominated by China. Building up the battery industry is at the heart of President Emmanuel Macron's "reindustrialization" plan for France, with a clutch of factories set to emerge in the north of the country over the next three years.

The "gigafactory" opening in Billy-Berclau is owned by Automotive Cells Company, a partnership between French energy giant TotalEnergies, Germany's Mercedes-Benz and US-European automaker Stellantis, which produces a range of brands including Peugeot, Fiat and Chrysler. French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire and the country's energy transition and industry ministers will attend the inauguration, along with German and Italian officials. The heads of Mercedes, Stellantis and TotalEnergies were at the event.

The factory is the length of six football pitches. Production is due to begin this summer. Elected officials and business leaders hope to turn the Hauts-de-France region into "Battery Valley" — the electric car industry's answer to Silicon Valley. Sino-Japanese group AESC-Envision is building a plant near the city of Douai which will supply French automaker Renault from early 2025. French startup Ver-



**PAS-DE-CALAIS:** Employees monitor control screens at the gigafactory of Automotive Cells Company (ACC), a joint venture of Stellantis, TotalEnergies and Mercedes, during its inauguration on May 30, 2023. — AFP

kor is scheduled to begin production at a facility in Dunkirk from mid-2025 while Taiwan's ProLogium has also chosen the coastal city for its first European factory, with output to start in 2026.

### China, US competition

Europe is racing to step up its production of batteries and electric vehicles as the European Union has set a 2035 deadline to phase out the sale of new fossil fuel cars. Around 50 battery factory projects have been announced in the EU in recent years.

The French government has set a target of producing two million electric vehicles per year by 2030, according to the economy ministry. The ministry said the ACC plant will supply 500,000 vehicles per year by then. China is the world leader in electric car battery production and also dominates the production of the raw materials needed to make them. Europe also faces stiff competition from the United States, which is heavily subsidizing the sector through the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$370 billion in clean energy incentives. — AFP

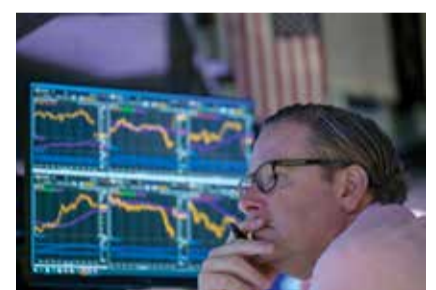
## Stock markets wobble

**LONDON:** Stock markets wobbled Tuesday as a deal to hike the US debt ceiling and avoid a painful default goes to a vote in Congress this week. President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy hammered out an agreement at the weekend that saw both sides give ground, a week before a June 5 deadline when the government is expected to run out of cash to pay its bills.

While the deal provided some relief to markets, the two leaders must convince waverers on both sides to back the deal, with the House expected to vote Wednesday followed by the Senate. "A deal may have been struck on the debt ceiling, but it's not fully calmed nervousness on financial markets," noted Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown.

### Dissenting voices?

"Clamour from dissenting voices on both sides of the political divide are rising, ahead of a crucial Congressional vote. Nevertheless, the US does appear to be inching towards agreement," added Streeter. Ultra-conservative Republicans feel McCarthy should have secured far deeper spending cuts in exchange for raising the debt ceiling and allowing the government to keep borrowing.



**NEW YORK:** Traders work the floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York.

The left wing of the Democratic Party is equally unhappy that Biden agreed to any spending limits at all. Still, the US president and House speaker were optimistic. "I never say I'm confident what the Congress is going to do. But I feel very good about it," Biden said Monday, adding that he had spoken to lawmakers.

Asian and European markets were mixed Tuesday. Wall Street, which was closed for Memorial Day on Monday, will give its first reaction to the deal when it opens Tuesday. Hong Kong and Shanghai edged up after recent losses fuelled by worries about the Chinese economy as the post-lockdown recovery fades, while there were also gains in Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul and Mumbai. But Sydney, Wellington, Taipei, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta retreated. London declined as dealers returned from a long weekend, while there were also losses in Paris but Frankfurt rose. — AFP



## Business

# Norway sovereign fund to reject all-male boards in Japanese firms

## Promoting diversity and gender equality

OSLO: Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest, will from now on vote against the nomination of all-male boards in Japanese companies, a senior fund official said Tuesday. In a bid to promote diversity and gender equality, the fund, currently worth more than 15 trillion kroner (\$1.34 trillion), already rejects nominations to boards for companies in Europe and North America that do not include at least two women.

Japan, where the business world has long been very male-dominated, had been given a grace period. "Of the developed markets, we hadn't started to vote

against companies in Japan, because they were so far behind that we really would have hit a large number of companies," Carine Smith Ithenacho, head of governance and compliance at the fund, told AFP.

In 2021, the fund gave Japanese companies "two years to improve," she added. Women in Japan have high levels of education but very few hold senior positions in the business world and politics. According to business daily Nikkei, women hold only around 10 percent of board positions in Japanese companies. "This year, we said that in (Japanese) companies that don't

even have one woman on the board, we'll also start to vote against and we'll make that clear before the voting season" in June, Ithenacho said.

Based on nominations made last year, more than 300 Japanese companies could be affected. In March, the fund already voted against the nomination of the chairman of the board of electronics group Canon. Japan is the second-biggest single recipient of the fund's investments after the United States. The fund held stakes in 1,533 Japanese companies worth a total of some \$57 billion, represent-

ing 4.9 percent of all its stockholdings at the end of 2022. The Asian country, which will host a Group of Seven meeting on gender equality on June 24-25, has vowed to raise the number of women in board positions to 30 percent by 2030. That is the same minimum level stipulated in a diversity document published by the fund in 2021. The fund voted against 171 nominations in the United States and Europe last year due to its gender equality policy. One unusual case was that of lingerie group Victoria Secret, because of an absence of men on the board. — AFP

## Spanish government gets inflation boost

MADRID: Spanish inflation slowed in May due mainly to lower fuel costs, preliminary data showed Tuesday, boosting the government ahead of an early general election in July. Inflation reached 3.2 percent year-on-year in May, down from 4.1 percent in April and 3.3 percent in March, according to INE, the national statistics institute. The drop was mainly due to lower fuel prices and a more moderate rise in the price of food, INE said in a statement. Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy, fell for the third consecutive month to 6.1 percent year-on-year, down from the 6.6 percent recorded in April.

"We see that falling energy and food inflation is also starting to spill over into other parts of the economy," ING economist Wouter Thierie wrote in a research note. "Although inflationary pressures are still very high, deflationary pressures are mounting," he added. The latest inflation figures come a day after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez unexpectedly called a snap election for July 23 after his Socialist party suffered a drubbing by the right in weekend local and regional polls.

His leftist coalition government has implemented a series of measures to bring down inflation in Spain which hit a record 10.8 percent in July. It slashed the value-added tax on essential foods such as bread, milk, fruit and vegetables, and introduced free rail travel passes. "Social democratic measures work and benefit the social majority of this country. That is



MADRID: A woman waits to get food in front of the Aluche neighborhood association local in Madrid in this file photo. — AFP

what the far right can't stand," Sanchez tweeted in a reference to the fierce opposition to his government from far-right party Vox.

Spain's inflation rate of 3.2 percent in May is one of the lowest in the euro-zone, where it averaged 7.0 percent in April, the last month for which figures are avail-

able. Polls suggest the main opposition conservative Popular Party will win the next general election but will need the support of Vox to form a working majority in parliament. The PP won the largest number of votes in Sunday's local elections and seized six regions that had been led by the Socialists. Vox also made gains. — AFP

## 'Day of reckoning': Turkish economy's post-election peril

ISTANBUL: Turkey's economy is in a double bind: analysts see its current policies leading to imminent peril and the prescriptions incurring massive pain. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan campaigned round the clock to win the toughest election of his two decades in power in a historic runoff last weekend. He also poured billions of dollars into campaign pledges - and tens of billions more into keeping the lira from suffering politically sensitive falls before the vote. Analysts at Capital Economics think Turkey now faces its post-election "day of reckoning".

Turkey's once-vibrant economy - driven by relatively cheap labor and a well-oiled banking system - is confronting a self-inflicted problem few other countries have faced. Erdogan has waged a lifelong war on high interest rates that he occasionally attributes to his faith in Muslim rules against usury. He calls high rates "the mother and father of all evil" promoted by a foreign "interest lobby". Erdogan spent through a series of central bankers before finding one willing to follow through on his desire to slash rates at all costs in 2021. The results were dire.

### Freefall

The lira entered a freefall and the official annual inflation rate soon touched 85 percent. The unofficial one estimated by economists - and believed by most Turks - neared 200 percent. Analysts see the most recent period of chaos as the culmination of Erdogan's gradual departure from the prosperous policies of his first decade of rule. Foreign investors have largely abandoned Turkey because of its political instability and Erdogan's takeover of state institutions that were once run by impartial technocrats. "The balance sheet so far of Erdogan's two decades in power has been the progressive destabilization of the economy," Conotoxia investment firm market analyst Bartosz Sawicki said. "Foreign equity exposure to Turkish bonds is estimated to have declined by around 85 percent since 2013, during which time the lira has lost around 90 percent against the dollar."

Turkey's most immediate problem is that its central bank is running out of cash. It burned through nearly \$30 billion supporting the lira this year alone. The bank's net interna-



ISTANBUL: Women shop at a market in Istanbul. — AFP

tional reserves - a technical measure of how much it has to spend on emergencies - have dropped into negative territory for the first time since 2002. "The current setup is just not sustainable," London-based emerging markets economist Timothy Ash said.

### Export competitiveness

Analysts have two simple solutions: quickly hike interest rates and let the lira float freely again. Turkey's currency support measures have wiped out the benefits low interest rates gave its loan-dependent producers. The cars and jewelry Turkey exports in places such as the United States and Europe now simply cost too much. Analysts at Allianz said the lira has "appreciated by around 35 percent in real effective terms since the unorthodox monetary policy stance took full effect in December 2021". The lira was hovering near a record 20.3 to the dollar on Tuesday. Analysts at JP-Morgan think it could reach the 30 mark if the government stopped intervening.

This would further erode people's purchasing power and potentially require the government to find billions of dollars to spend on new social support measures. The vicious cycle could be broken by a sharp interest rate hike - something Erdogan has repeatedly ruled out during the campaign.

Atilla Yesilada, analyst at Turkish consultancy GlobalSource Partners, worries that the country may simply start printing money to pay for the huge hikes in benefits and wages Erdogan promised during the campaign.

### 'Soft capital controls'

Turkey must also find vast sums - estimated at roughly \$100 billion - to pay for the reconstruction of cities destroyed by a February earthquake that claimed more than 50,000 lives. "How any government would finance the reconstruction effort without printing money and leading to hyperinflation is a question that people prefer not to address at this point," Yesilada said. Analysts agree that Turkey would eventually have no choice but to raise rates.

Emre Peker, Europe director at the Eurasia Group political risk consultancy, said Turkey would first try to contain demand for dollars through "soft capital controls on locals". But Erdogan could relent and raise rates once March 2024 municipal elections involving Turkey's biggest cities are out of the way. Allianz said they should go up from the current 8.5 percent to at least 20-25 percent - the current rate of bank deposits. But that would create still more problems. "Raising rates will reduce bank capital," Yesilada warned. "Banks will not be able to lend for a long time." — AFP

## Difficult times bring Russia, Cuba closer

HAVANA: For the first time since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia is taking an intense interest in Cuba as Moscow has become increasingly isolated over its invasion of Ukraine. Top Russian officials have flocked to the island nation this year, starting in March with Nikolai Patrushev, Moscow's secretary of the Security Council, alongside the executive director of state oil company Rosneft, Igor Sechin. A representative of Russian business owners, Boris Titov, also visited.

The most high-profile visit was from Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in April on a week-long trip to Latin American allies, including Venezuela and Nicaragua, which like Cuba and Russia are the subject of Western sanctions. "Russia needs trading partners and political allies, with Latin America offering the possibility of both," Mervyn Bain, from Aberdeen University in Scotland, told AFP.

Last week, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko drew up a road map to accelerate cooperation with Cuba, which is mired in its worst eco-

nom crisis in three decades, with chronic shortages of food, fuel and medicines. The two countries have signed around a dozen agreements to relaunch trade relations in construction, information technology, banking, sugar, transport and tourism. "But to what level" this cooperation can go "is unclear," said Bain, an expert in Russia's relationships with Latin America.

Chernyshenko's plan also referenced Cuba's need to change certain laws to loosen restrictions on private enterprise. Communist Cuba had already been forced to open up its centralized economy to small and medium-sized private businesses due to its increasing economic woes. Cuba has announced the reopening of direct flights between Moscow and the seaside resort of Varadero, and Russian tourists have been able to use the Russian Mir payment system in the country since March.

### 'Unconditional support'

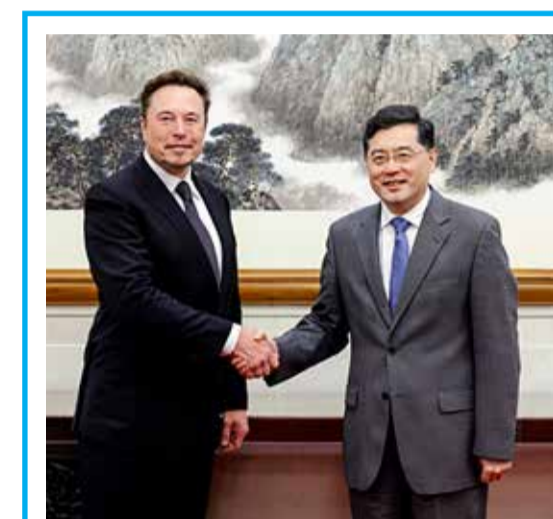
The Russian visits to the Caribbean island nation have come only months after Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel visited his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow. The two communist entities were close allies during the Cold War, but that cooperation was abruptly halted in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. Until then, 75 percent of Cuba's commer-

cial exchanges were with its communist ally.

Having almost ended completely, relations started picking up again from 2005, with the current levels of exchange the highest since then. According to Russian figures, commercial exchanges between the two countries reached \$450 million in 2022, with 90 percent of that in sales of oil and soybean oil to the island nation. The strengthening of ties is paying off for Russia in geopolitical ways. Havana had maintained a position of neutrality over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, abstaining from United Nations votes on the issue.

But this week, Diaz-Canel assured Chernyshenko of "Cuba's unconditional support" in its "clash with the West" and on Wednesday, Havana voted against a World Health Organization resolution condemning Russian attacks on Ukrainian health systems. The West has been taking note. The EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Thursday urged cash-strapped Cuba to "reinforce the economic ties with the European Union," which is its main trade partner. During a visit to meet private business leaders, Borrell reminded Cuba that it does twice as much business with the EU as it does with Russia and China combined.

Indeed, the aid that Russia can supply Cuba is limited and "nothing like" that which the Soviet Union furnished during the Cold War, according to Vladimir



BEIJING: Tesla CEO Elon Musk meets China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang on May 30, 2023. — AFP

## Elon Musk meets Chinese minister

BEIJING: Elon Musk met China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing on Tuesday, the ministry said, on the Tesla CEO's first trip to the country since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. China is the world's biggest electric vehicle market, and Tesla announced in April it would build a second massive factory in Shanghai. Qin told Musk that China was "committed to creating a better market-oriented, rule-of-law-based and internationalized business environment" for foreign enterprises, his ministry said on its website.

The statement also quoted Musk as saying: "Tesla opposes 'decoupling and breaking chains', and is willing to continue to expand its business in China". Musk's ties to China have raised eyebrows in Washington, with US President Joe Biden saying in November that the executive's links to foreign countries were "worthy" of scrutiny. Qin and Musk spoke about relations between China and the United States, with Qin saying the two countries should "apply the brakes in a timely manner to avoid dangerous driving", according to the readout.

The battery factory announced in April will be Tesla's second factory in Shanghai after Gigafactory, which broke ground in 2019. Tesla has hit its stride after years of losses, scoring an impressive string of earnings records as it has added factories and ramped up production. The company has also acted as a major catalyst for a revolution in transportation, with much of the automobile sector's innovation efforts moving away from the internal combustion engine towards EVs.

Even with that success, Musk has fallen short of some of his outsized goals. Tesla reported a drop in first-quarter earnings this year, with the company undertaking a series of price cuts amid competition from other automakers. Tesla's lowest-priced vehicle, the Model 3, begins at more than \$40,000 in the United States — too pricey for many consumers even though the vehicle had been pitched at the mass market.

Musk has also missed his own deadlines for a fully autonomous vehicle, with Tesla driver-assistance technology spurring US regulatory probes. And while Tesla remains the world's largest seller of EVs, the popularity of Chinese brands has soared in recent years. The largest of them, BYD, saw its profits jump fivefold in the first quarter thanks to global demand for its cars and buses. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Tuesday that the country welcomed visits by international executives to "to better understand China and promote mutually beneficial cooperation". — AFP



View of Russian Orthodox church in Havana, on May 23, 2023. Urged for new trading partners and political allies after its invasion in Ukraine, Russia has drawn ever closer to Cuba, a welcome step in an investment-hungry island in the midst of its worst economic crisis since the implosion of the Soviet bloc in 1991. — AFP

Rouivinski, an academic at the ICESI university in Cali, Colombia. "Putin's Russia is not the USSR ... nor is Putin interested in spending millions of dollars keeping Cuba within the Russian orbit, and Russia doesn't have the money to do so anyway," said Rouivinski, another expert on Russia's relations with Latin America. — AFP



# CAR OKs law to implement the use of digital currency

## 'Thousands' quit US over crypto negativity

**BANGUI:** The Central African Republic (CAR) has passed a law that allows foreign investment in cryptocurrencies, after last year adopting Bitcoin and its own digital currency, the Sango as legal tender. A bill was passed by acclamation, National Assembly president Simplice Mathieu Sarandji announced late Monday.

The law comes after the CAR - one of the poorest countries in the world - suddenly announced in April 2022 that it had adopted Bitcoin as legal currency. Three months later, the CAR unveiled plans to launch its own digital currency, the Sango. The announcements sparked bemusement among analysts, given the entrenched poverty and lack of infrastructure in a country where only one person in seven has access to mains electricity.

The new law for the "tokenization" of "natural and land resources" sets down the framework "for using the Bitcoin and Sango virtual currencies in the investment process," according to the text. This includes "foreign nationals wishing to invest in mining, agricultural and forestry assets," it said. Investors "have the right to transfer abroad all annual profits accruing to them after payment of taxes, duties and other obligations," it added. Opposition MPs accused the government of staging "the selloff of natural resources to the world's gangsters."

Landlocked and mineral-rich but dirt-poor, the CAR has experienced few periods of stability since gaining independence from France in 1960. President Faustin Archange Touadera is under scrutiny for bringing in Russian paramilitaries to help shore up his regime against armed rebel groups. Critics accuse him of paying for the help with gold and diamonds. The CAR is the first country in Africa to embrace Bitcoin as a national currency, and the second in the world after El Salvador.

brace Bitcoin as a national currency, and the second in the world after El Salvador.

### Crypto negativity

Meanwhile, thousands of cryptocurrency industry developers have left the United States because of its negative stance towards the sector, the head of one of the pioneer exchanges told an international forum Thursday. Despite a "wild year" of scandal and failure in 2022 when the FTX exchange and a number of crypto dealers collapsed, Peter Smith, chief executive of London-based Blockchain.com, told the Qatar Economic Forum that there is now "real growth" in the crypto community.

Smith, who said nearly a decade as head of Blockchain.com had left him with "no nerve endings", told how other countries were taking advantage of the void left by the US where some regulators were "openly negative about crypto". While some US legislators want to see rules for a cryptocurrency market, regulators there have taken a tough line because of fears of money laundering and scams such as the FTX collapse. Former FTX chief Sam Bankman-Fried is due to go on trial in New York in October.

"It has opened up opportunities for other countries," said Smith. "France, Portugal, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong, London increasingly and interestingly, have all been very excited to take up the slack that the US has created," he said. Other countries had been "very constructive" over regulation and attracted "a huge amount of talent". "Thousands of incredibly talented people have left the US to move to other jurisdictions in the past year," Smith told the forum.

Before last year's turmoil, Blockchain.com said it had



**BANGUI:** This general view shows the logo of the French company TotalEnergies at a gas station in Bangui. — AFP

more than 31 million verified clients. Smith said there has since been growth notably in Nigeria, Ghana, Colombia, Argentina and Ukraine. "We are investing in Singapore, we are investing heavily in Europe, because they are the two most certain environments that we have," Smith said. "That is coming at the expense of investing in America. The vast majority of our resources and capex investments are outside the US."

Regulators worldwide have expressed concern

about the lack of control of digital currencies but there has been a trend in various countries toward regulating the market. Singapore has proposed new regulations and the 27-nation European Union last month approved the first comprehensive rules covering crypto assets such as bitcoin and ethereum and tokens whose value is secured with blockchain technology. EU ministers last week agreed measures to crack down on tax fraud using cryptocurrencies. — AFP

## Gulf Bank provides instant sign language interpreting services

**KUWAIT:** As part of its efforts to consolidate the principles of sustainability in the society and following the requirements of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank announced its cooperation with SignCom, to provide instant translation services using sign language, for people with special needs, which provides Video Relay Services (VRS) as a mean of communication for deaf people, which is now accessible across six branches.



**Basel Al Assad**

The bank provides an iPad inside each of the branches, that is designated for people with special needs, through which direct communication takes place via video calls with the call center. Hence, the customer is received by a sign language interpreter, who then translates the customer's needs to an employee in the branch, and vice versa.

Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking, Basel Al Assad, commented on this new service, stating: "We are keen to provide additional, and distinguished, services in our branches to support our customers' experience, especially for those with special needs - ensuring that all their transactions are completed swiftly and with ease at all times."

Al Assad pointed that Gulf Bank provides services to customers with special needs at six different branches distributed across Kuwait, specifically in the areas of: Bayan, Daiya, Adan, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Al-Ayoun and Hadiya. This comes as part of Gulf Bank's commitment to promote financial literacy in society, and its continuous support towards the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign.

He stated that through its cooperation with SignCom, Gulf Bank seeks to provide more convenient alternatives for people with special needs - whether through direct communication with the branch employees or through the instant sign language interpretation services - indicating that the new service aims to reduce the waiting period for customers visiting the branches, especially in the event of an increase in the number of visitors.

Al Assad noted that the bank organizes sign language training courses annually for branch employees - to ensure that there is a sufficient number of sign language interpreters available in each branch - who are able to meet the customers' requirements and provide them with a distinguished banking experience.

He further mentioned that the branches that provide services for people with special needs, are also easily accessible for people who use wheelchairs, due to their wide designs, that do not impede the movement of the wheelchairs. Additionally, the ATMs are easy to use, as they are placed at appropriate heights, and are equipped with keyboards consisting of Braille key top labels for the blind. The ATMs also include headphones for voice guidance, with auditory instructions on how to conduct each transaction with convenience.

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.

## Night-time shopping booms as Zimbabwe inflation soars

**HARARE:** After the sun sets in Harare, the streets of Zimbabwe's capital suddenly burst to life. Carts, cars and trucks turned into makeshift, unauthorized, shops sell anything from potatoes to babies' nappies on the pavements of the city centre. Shopping is best done at night in times of hyperinflation and economic hardship.

Cash-crunched Zimbabweans are increasingly turning to informal vendors for their groceries shopping as, with little or no overheads, street hawkers can afford to undercut big supermarkets. "Everything is always cheaper outside," Blessing Steven, 23, a taxi driver, says, buying a bottle of juice for \$0.50 at a roadside stall rather than in a supermarket where it costs \$1. "I save money."

The juice vendor, Shingirirai Goriondo, 23, claims that he gets more customers than the retail outlet he operates in front of. "All beverages I sell here are being charged double there," he said, pointing to a branch of supermarket chain Foodworld. Inflation has shot through the roof in recent weeks as Zimbabwe prepares for presidential and parliamentary elections expected in August. Officially standing at more than 280 percent in April, analysts estimate the inflation rate is in fact somewhere over 700 percent.

### No light, no police

Economists blame the crisis on a steep depreciation of the local currency on the black market - where most trading takes place. Only last month, the Zimbabwean dollar was trading at around 1,000 against its more coveted US counterpart. Today, one greenback costs between 3,800 and 4,000 Zimbabwean dollars on the street - although the official rate is 1,888. The situation has created price madness in supermarkets. AFP reporters have in recent days observed staff changing price tags on goods every morning to try to keep pace with the exchange rate. This has brought back memories of 2008, when hyperinflation was so out of control that restaurant-goers



**HARARE:** A family picks groceries off the shelf at a supermarket in Harare. — AFP

would see the price of their dinner change before they could finish eating it.

Back then, the central bank even issued a 100-trillion-dollar note - now a collectors' item. The government was eventually forced to ditch the local currency and adopt the US dollar as legal tender. The Zimbabwean dollar was revived in 2019, but it seems to be suffering from much the same ailments as its previous incarnation. Most Zimbabweans prefer to do business, get paid and hold their savings in US dollars.

Many who earn a salary in local money, rush to currency exchange shops on pay day. "It is now expensive to purchase groceries from the supermarket with our own currency," said Tarisai Bera, 36, buying a range of toiletries from a hawker. Kerbside shops take only greenbacks and prices there "rarely change", said Bera. Street trade gets busier after dark because there is less police to go around. Most hawkers are not allowed to operate. "If we come earlier... we might end up having our goods confiscated and fined," said Julius Munyanyi, 46, a vendor.

### Election largesse

The government has resorted to various ex-

pedients to stabilize the economy, including issuing gold coins and launching a gold-backed digital currency - but so far to no avail. The central bank's main interest rate is currently at 140 percent. Ex-finance minister, Tendai Biti, now an opposition politician, has blamed his former office's current holder, Mthuli Ncube for much of the chaos.

"Treasury, the natural gate keeper has become the gate crusher," Biti tweeted last week. President Emmerson Mnangagwa has instead pointed the finger at US dollar-loving businesses. "Zimbabwe dollar-earning workers are now being forced to buy basics priced exclusively in foreign currency," Mnangagwa wrote in a weekly newspaper column earlier this month.

Others, like economist Prosper Chitambara, believe Mnangagwa's pre-election largesse might have something to do with the crisis. Public workers received a 100 percent pay rise in March. Whatever the reason, business is thriving for street traders like Munyanyi. "Customers find it viable to buy from us. We literally don't have competition," he said. Buying from a supermarket is "throwing away your money," quipped Mike Mashuro, 51, after purchasing a bottle of cooking oil from Munyanyi's stall. — AFP

## Institute of Banking Studies honors 17 NBK employees

**KUWAIT:** The Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) honored 17 employees from National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) who participated in a number of training programs provided by the KIBS for the banking sector employees, as part of the Professional Certification Programs for year 2021-2022. These programs are accredited by The London Institute of Banking and Finance, which is one of the leading international institutions in professional banking and finance studies.

NBK employees received various professional certificates including: Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Bank Branch Operations Manager (CBBOM) and Certified Business Relationship Manager (CBRM). NBK adopts a strategy that promotes employees' continuous development and improvement of their skills and expertise. To this end, the bank links promotions and financial incentives to academic certificates and training courses obtained by employees, to



ensure continuous development for them.

The bank also regards professional certification as paramount in employee's career, and always motivates them to pursue continuous development of their capabilities and skills. In addition to being globally accepted tools for continuous learning and training, these certificates help boost the professional competence of banking sector employees to keep pace with global changes in this regard.

The Programs aim to improve their efficiency and enhance their capabilities to ensure that they are up to

date with the latest advancements made in the global banking industry and qualify them to become active contributors to the economic development in Kuwait. KIBS' initiatives aligns with NBK's strategy of investing in its human capital, as seen in its consistent endeavors to support, empower, train national talent and provide them with promising employment opportunities. This reflects NBK's role as one of the top private sector employers of Kuwaitis, and keenness to offer training programs designed according to advanced scientific methodologies, to help improve employees' performance.



Lifestyle



A man aiming before throwing a dart during a dart competition in Port Moresby.



People competing during a dart competition in Port Moresby.



This picture shows a competitor throwing a dart during a dart competition in Port Moresby. — AFP photos

## Darts craze hits the bullseye in Papua New Guinea

At a smoky sports club in Papua New Guinea's rough-and-tumble capital, security guards check for weapons as players with smiles stained betel-nut red throw darts at the wall. Around 150 Port Moresby locals have flocked to the Sports Inn to play or watch a game with origins in Middle Ages England that, half a millennium later, is setting a poor Pacific island nation alight. Dreadlocked slinger Baxter Torie of the Telpepe Snipers pumps his fist as his teammate hits the 103 points needed to beat their nearest league rivals.

with boards hung up in pubs or next to bus stations and market stalls. In shanty towns, locals regularly throw darts to win bottles of Coca-Cola. But things are serious now, said Torie. Officials want the game to become an organized sport as it is in Europe, where darts moved from smoke-filled pubs to razzle-dazzle arena spectacles and made the world's top players household names.

Darts in Papua New Guinea does not enjoy that support just yet, but its popularity soared after it was the first

according to NCD darts president Dr Kapua Kapua.

### Changing mindsets

Fees for the season cost locals around 80 kina (\$23), which gets them league entry, hopes of a trophy and a potential cash prize of 3,000 kina, a sizeable reward in a country where many live on a few dollars a day. Kapua, a former rugby player, says other funding has been hard to come by but hopes the game will one day become professional. "Sponsors still see darts as a social pastime and not a sport," he said. "But we are changing that mindset slowly."

Kapua and Torie say late players now forfeit games, digital scoring will soon replace chalkboards and there is live-streaming for darts fans around the country. To underscore how serious they are about developing the game, a judicial committee oversees punishments for acts of violence in a game often linked to a culture of heavy drinking.

"We want to stamp out troublemakers. It does reflect on the association, how the general public looks at us," Kapua said. Torie has also set up a games committee that includes five young volunteers — three students and two unemployed players. They collectively earn five kina from every match in return for setting up boards and mats, a lifeline in a country where 40 percent of the country lives below the poverty line. "Everybody agreed to assist the boys. I'm very proud," said



A woman picking up her darts as she competes in a dart competition in Port Moresby.

Torie.

### 'Nothing is impossible'

One of them, unemployed 25-year-old Ezra Rava, says playing darts has turned his life around. "It has helped me a lot in my behavior. We used to drink a lot and cause trouble. Just out on the street, fighting," he said. "Playing darts helped us to focus on something." Now he practices five hours a day in his front yard, dreaming of reaching events held by the Professional Darts Corporation,

the premier global darts organization. In a country with a poor reputation for gender equality, this darts league is also an arena where women can thrive.

Many teams in the league are filled with women playing side-by-side with male counterparts, and some are captains. "Everybody gets the same, there is no differentiation" in prize money, Kapua said. At the national level, Papua New Guinea was recently forced to miss out on the South Pacific championships due to a lack of funding.

The country's darts federation said it plans to rejoin the global darts body this year, allowing players to compete abroad. Torie hopes the upward trajectory of the game means Papua New Guinea's top players can one day hope to emulate their heroes across the world. "If you want to be like these guys, we have to change our attitude, change the way we play, change the way we think," he said. "And nothing is impossible." — AFP



A man aiming before throwing a dart during a dart competition in Port Moresby.



A woman aiming before throwing a dart during a dart competition in Port Moresby.

Games are taking place at this and 10 other boards, with uniformed players huddling, shouting pre-throw slogans and yelling "checkout!" when they win. "There's a lot of interest. Everyone's concentrating on playing rather than socializing, we're happy about that," said 43-year-old Torie, who runs the games committee for the capital's biggest darts association. Darts is played across Papua New Guinea,

sport allowed back during the Covid-19 pandemic. That was because players could follow protocols such as social distancing, given that in the Pacific island country darts is not primarily considered an indoor sport. The National Capital District (NCD) Darts Association had just a dozen teams last year, but it has 40 on the books this year and had to turn away more. Some rural associations now boast 100 squads,



A man aiming before throwing a dart during a dart competition in Port Moresby.



People competing during a dart competition in Port Moresby.



Kapua Kapua, President of National District Darts Association, posing as people take part in a dart competition in Port Moresby.



People competing during a dart competition in Port Moresby.

## Is Mediterranean diet right for you?

Delicious food that stood the test of time and helps keep you healthy for years to come. That's at the heart of the traditional Mediterranean diet. There's no single Mediterranean diet plan, but in general, you'd be eating lots of fruits and vegetables, beans and nuts, healthy grains, fish, olive oil, small amounts of meat and dairy. This lifestyle also encourages daily exercise, sharing meals with others, and enjoying it all.

### What you can eat and what you can't

You'll eat mostly plant-based foods, including fruits and vegetables, potatoes, whole-grain bread, beans, nuts, and seeds. You can have yogurt, cheese, poultry, and eggs in small portions. You should eat fish and seafood at least twice a week. "Good" fats get a stamp of approval: Think olives, extra-virgin olive oil, nuts, sunflower seeds, and avocados instead of butter or margarine. You'll use olive oil a lot while cooking. Reach for herbs and spices to add fla-

vor. Dessert is usually fruit. Sweets and red meats are OK occasionally.

### Level of effort: Low to medium

It's a tasty diet and good for you, though you may have a learning curve at first.

**Limitations:** Few. The Mediterranean diet allows plenty of variety and experimentation.



**Cooking and shopping:** Simplify by planning your meals in advance; keeping pantry staples like olive oil, canned tomatoes, whole grains, pasta, and tuna on hand; and shopping for fresh produce and seafood a few times a week. You can easily grill or broil many Mediterranean diet foods.

**Snacks can be quick and easy, too:** Grab a clementine or a handful of nuts, or dip whole wheat pita chips into hummus.

**Packaged foods or meals:** None. The diet emphasizes fresh foods.

**Exercise:** Being active every day is part of the lifestyle.

**Does it allow for dietary restrictions or preferences?**

**Vegetarians and vegans:** Sticking with fruits, veggies, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds is a snap for vegetarians. If you're vegan, you'd need to skip the dairy products.

**Low-sodium diet:** You'll rely on herbs and spices for flavor instead of salt, which helps if you're looking for a low-sodium diet.

**Low-fat diet:** The Mediterranean diet doesn't qualify as a low-fat diet. But it is low in saturated fat and is well within the American Heart Association's guidelines.

**Gluten-free:** If you're avoiding gluten, you can choose grains without gluten.

**What else you should know**  
If you're looking for a long-term lifestyle change, this can be a fun and realistic way to do it. You can be creative, approach your food in a new way, and enjoy the foods you like in moderation.

**Costs:** None beyond your shopping.

**Support:** There are many books and online articles about the Mediterranean diet, but no official groups. What Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD, Says:

### Does It Work?

There's no question about it. Years of research have shown that the Med-

iterranean Diet is one of the healthiest around.

For weight loss, stick with it more than 6 months (preferably forever), get regular exercise, and watch your portions.

### Is it good for certain conditions?

This diet scores big for heart health and longevity. Studies suggest it may make you less likely to get heart disease, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, help you manage diabetes, and help you avoid certain cancers and chronic diseases.

### The final word

Research continues to show the Mediterranean Diet, based on healthy foods and physical activity, is the best prescription for a long, healthy life. It is an excellent, enjoyable diet plan that is easy to follow, and flexible.

Even if you don't follow the diet faithfully, simply eating more of the foods on the plan, dining more leisurely, and being more active are superb health goals.

— webmd.com



Lifestyle



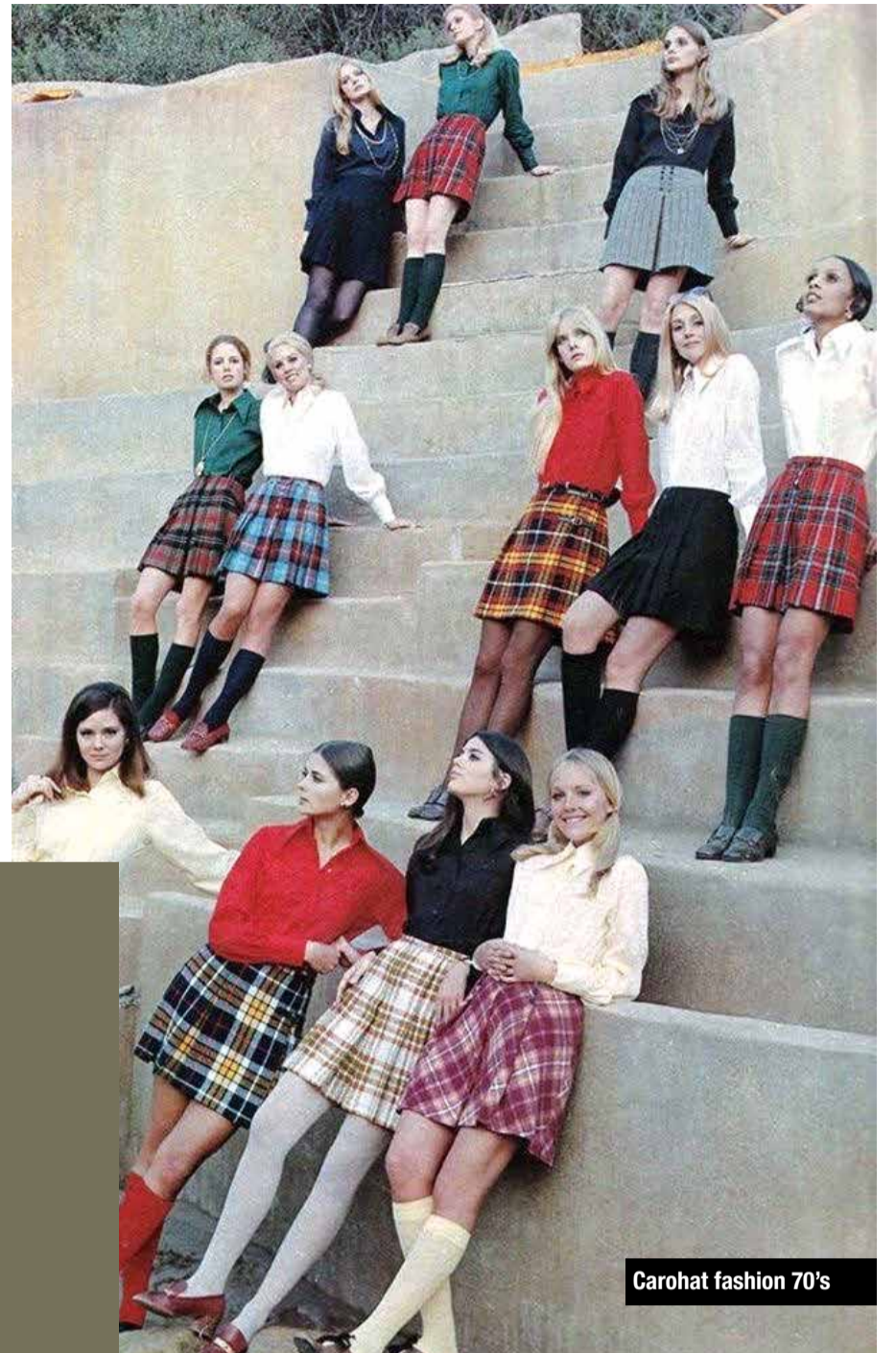
Arabesque



Arabesque 20's



Carohat 30's



Carohat fashion 70's

# Fashion designers inspired by fashion their parents used to wear



Huda Hussein Carohat

By Seham Ahmed

Through the years, everything has been repeating itself — events, stories, movies and even fashion trends. When you watch a movie filmed in the '30s, you can notice some clothes that seem familiar with 2010s, or when you look at a magazine from the late '80s, all you can see is how bright and crazy the colors are, rocking just like today's fashion. The '60s and its astonishing accessories and colors are close enough to the early 2000s.

These observations are not just predictions or coincidences; it is a fashion plan and people working in this field know a lot about it, as there is a fashionable theory that trends keep repeating every 20 years, 50 years and 100 years. There are different reasons behind this phenomenon. One of them is that designers usually get inspired by their parents' or idols' style, returning faded trends to life.



Denim Everywhere



The Exchange 80's

### Denim, denim everywhere

In the Kuwaiti television show "Jadah 7", a young girl called Ghasag has some arguments with her mother Nouriyah for wearing jeans the whole time. One of the scenes shows her going to a birthday party wearing jeans under her dress, as it was fashionable at that time and most Hollywood celebrities wore it that way. Another scene shows Nouriyah claiming her daughter's name must be written in the Guinness Book of World Records for the number of jeans she owns.



Clueless Carohat

Denim in the beginning of the 2000s was a huge trend. Nowadays, the fad of wearing denim jackets, shirts, dresses, bags and pants is coming back.

### Arabesque

Another trend which was popular in the early '20s, bright wide low-waist belts, came back during the '40s, '60s, '80s and early 2000s. Women wore dresses and with arabesque decorations and shimmery fabrics, with a low-waist fabric that looked like a belt and was mostly shiny and glittery.

This arabesque shimmery style was quite a trend during the early 2000s, and can be seen in the Kuwaiti TV show "Adeel Al Rouh", where actresses wore glimmery and shiny styles full of accessorized fabrics. This trend was also seen in most local and international TV shows and movies at that time.

### Colorful bold rocking '80s

The recent Kuwaiti TV show "The Exchange" was set in the late '80s in Kuwait. It starred two main female characters — Farida, played by Rawan Al-Mahdi, and Mounira, played by Mona Hussein — who were the first women to join the Kuwaiti stock exchange. Farida was a traditional, old-fashioned girl who did not keep up with the times, as most of her style went back to the '70s, unlike Mounira, who adopted the new courageous trends, colors and hairstyle of that time.



Pearls with black

### White pearl accessories

Audrey Hepburn's style in "Breakfast at Tiffany's", filmed at the end of the '50s, Turkish actress Turkan Soray in the movie "Arim, Balim, Petegim" in the '70s, Chanel and other fashion houses in the '50s, '70s and '90s inspired a huge number of fashion shows with the famous black dress and white pearl accessories — necklaces, bracelets and earrings. The trend that began in the '30s faded and came back many times. In 2013, Amal Al-Awadhi in "Ghosn Maksoor" wore this style in one of the scenes.

### Carohat

The "carohat" plaid or checks trend was hugely popular in the '90s. Jennifer Aniston in "Friends", Alicia Silverstone in "Clueless" and Liv Tyler in "Empire Records" were fashion icons. Carohat

began in the '30s as a classic look, always linked with suits, maxi dresses and skirts. It showed up again in the '50s, adding more colors and shapes. In the '70s, the look was casual, mostly as miniskirts, and with the '90s, it looked more iconic, worn in winter with sweaters as a cozy comfy style or with casual wide jeans.

A different shape of plaids took off in the 2010s, when it returned, with rock and pop styles mixed with leather jackets, boots and skinny jeans. The classic look was still trendy, as Huda Hussein wore a carohat suit in her show "Al-Mohtala" in 2016.



Turkan Soray

## Russian 'spy' whale surfaces in Sweden



This file handout photo released by Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries (Sea Surveillance Service) shows a white whale wearing a harness, which was discovered by fishermen off the coast of northern Norway. - AFP

A harness-wearing Beluga whale that turned up in Norway in 2019, sparking speculation it was a spy trained by the Russian navy, has appeared off Sweden's coast, an organization following him said Monday. First discovered in Norway's far northern region of Finnmark, the whale spent more than three years slowly moving down the top half of the Norwegian coastline, before suddenly speeding up in recent months to cover the second half and on to Sweden. On Sunday, he was observed in Hunnebostrand, off Sweden's southwestern coast.

"We don't know why he has sped up so fast right now," especially since he is moving "very quickly away from his natural environment", Sebastian Strand, a marine biologist with the OneWhale organization, told AFP. "It could be hormones driving him to find a mate. Or it could be loneliness as Belugas are a very social species - it could

be that he's searching for other Beluga whales." Believed to be 13-14 years old, Strand said the whale is "at an age where his hormones are very high".

The closest population of Belugas is however located in the Svalbard archipelago, in Norway's far north. The whale is not believed to have seen a single Beluga since arriving in Norway in April 2019. Norwegians nicknamed it "Hvaldimir" - a pun on the word "whale" in Norwegian, hval, and a nod to its alleged association to Russia. When he first appeared in Norway's Arctic, marine biologists from the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries removed an attached man-made harness. The harness had a mount suited for an action camera and the words "Equipment St. Petersburg" printed on the plastic clasps.

Directorate officials said Hvaldimir may have escaped an enclosure, and may have been trained by the Russian

navy as it appeared to be accustomed to humans. Moscow never issued any official reaction to Norwegian speculation he could be a "Russian spy". The Barents Sea is a strategic geopolitical area where Western and Russian submarine movements are monitored.

It is also the gateway to the Northern Route that shortens maritime journeys between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Strand said the whale's health "seemed to be very good" in recent years, foraging wild fish under Norway's salmon farms. But his organization was concerned about Hvaldimir's ability to find food in Sweden, and already observed some weight loss. Beluga whales, which can reach a size of six meters (20 feet) and live to between 40 and 60 years of age, generally inhabit the icy waters around Greenland, northern Norway and Russia. — AFP





The market is one of the oldest buildings in the Turkish capital.

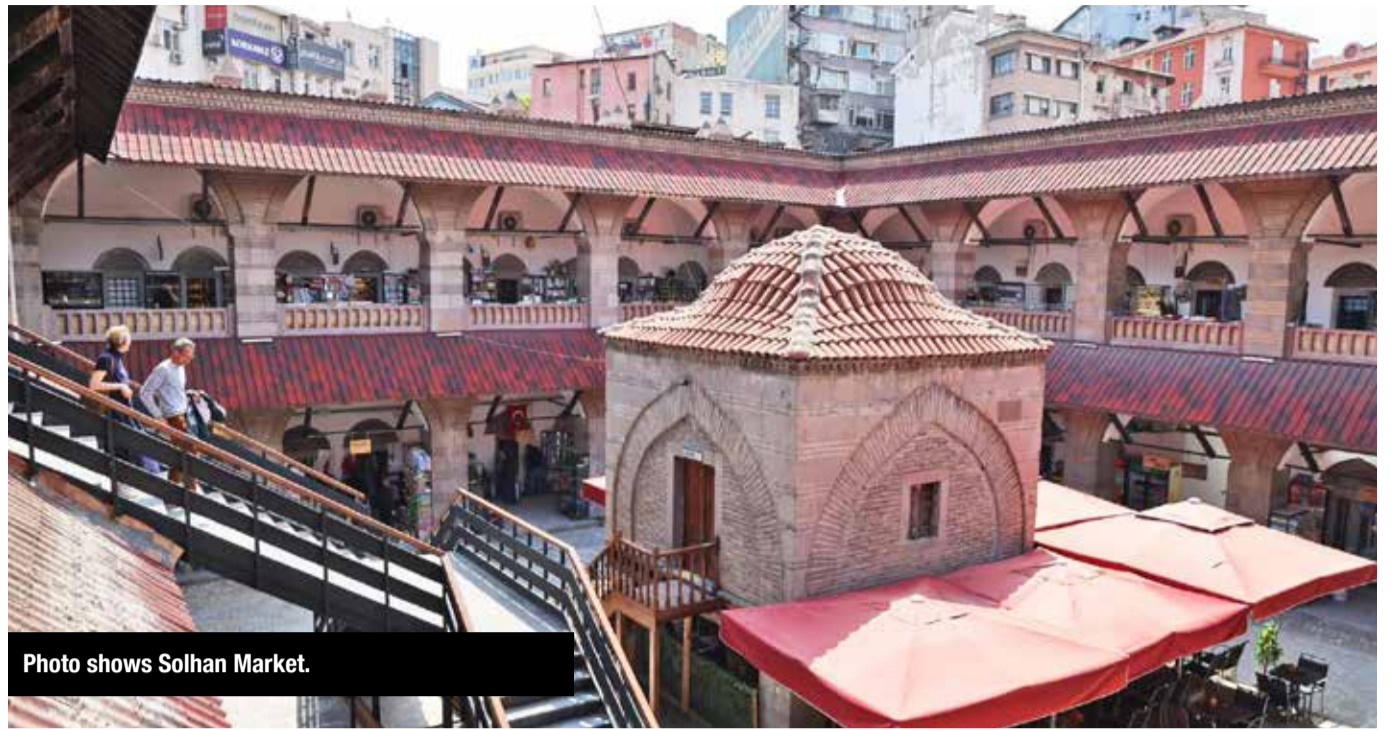


Photo shows Solhan Market.

## Solhan Market in Ankara Historic site turning into popular marketplace



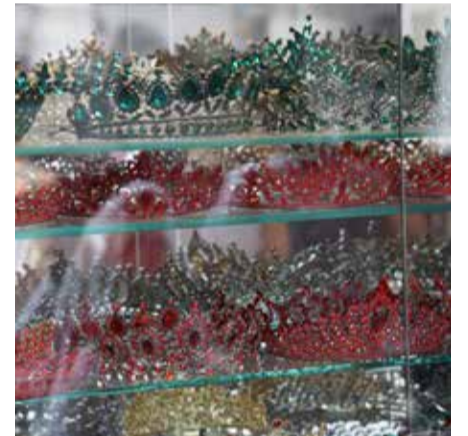
The market draws many tourists and indigenous people.

Being one of the oldest markets in the Turkish capital, Ankara, Solhan Market is an archaeological building that was built more than 500 years back. Located in the touristic Ulus region, the two-storey building has turned out to be a popular market that draws many tourists and indige-

nous people thanks to its low prices of vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, garments and whatnots. Solhan Market is home to a mosque, fountain, landmarks, hotels and restaurants and stores devoted to the sale of roses, handicrafts and antiques. — KUNA



Photo shows merchandise for sale.



Entrance of Solhan Market.



Photo shows vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, garments and whatnots in the market.

The United Nations' weather agency announced Tuesday it was making the cryosphere a new top priority, saying the melting of sea ice, glaciers and permafrost posed a global threat. Member states at the UN's World Meteorological Organization are concerned about the impacts of melting ice on sea levels, natural disasters, ecosystems and economies.

"The cryosphere issue is a hot topic not just for the Arctic and Antarctic, but it is a global issue," said WMO chief Petteri Taalas. WMO countries meeting in Geneva called for increased funding for more coordinated observations and predictions, and better data exchange, research and services.

Nations far from the polar regions, such as in the Caribbean and Africa, voiced concerns that changes in the cryosphere would affect the whole planet. "What happens in polar regions and high mountain regions doesn't stay in those regions," WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told reporters.

"More than a billion people rely on water from snow and glaciers melt which is carried by the major rivers of the world. When those glaciers retreat... you need to think what's going to happen to the water security of those people." Besides implementing the 2015 Paris climate accords and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the WMO said better monitoring was needed to track the scale and speed of change. "You cannot manage what you're not measuring," said Nullis. "And we really need to think hard about water resource management."

### Permafrost 'sleeping giant'

The melting of glaciers and the Greenland and Antarctica ice sheets account for about 50 percent of sea level rise, which is accelerating. This will have growing impacts on small



## World's melting ice a hot topic for UN

island developing states and densely-populated coastal areas, says the WMO. The Greenland Ice Sheet ended with a negative total mass balance for the 26th year in a row.

Sea ice in Antarctica dropped to 1.92 million square kilometers in February - the lowest level on record and almost one million square kilometers below the 1991-2020 mean. Meanwhile, the Arctic permafrost is considered a "sleeping giant" of greenhouse

gases, said Nullis, as it stores twice as much carbon as is in the atmosphere today. The world's top meteorologists are meeting in Geneva for the WMO's congress, the quadrennial meeting of member states that sets the UN agency's direction and priorities for the next four years.

The congress approved a new Global Greenhouse Gas Watch monitoring initiative to fill critical information gaps and provide an integrated framework

for space- and surface-based observations. "Greenhouse gas concentrations are at record levels - in fact higher than at any time over the last 800,000 years," said Taalas. Member states are also discussing plans to make sure that every country is covered by advance early warning systems for meteorological disasters within five years. — AFP

## Austrian actor Peter Simonischek dies aged 76

Austrian actor Peter Simonischek, who played a whimsical patriarch in the prize-winning film "Toni Erdmann", died overnight in Vienna aged 76, a spokeswoman for the Austrian Federal Theatres said Tuesday. Born in Graz on 6 August 1946, Simonischek received great acclaim in the German-speaking world for his performances, including numerous appearances at the famous Salzburg Festival. In 2016, Simonischek made his international breakthrough in film in the comedy "Toni Erdmann", which won the International Federation of Film Critics award at Cannes.

The bittersweet father-daughter tale features Sandra Hueller and Simonischek, who created an indelible portrait of a sad clown. Britain's The Daily Telegraph newspaper gave the "exquisite" movie five out of five stars. "Not only does German humor exist, it might just save your life", it said. — AFP



Austrian actor Peter Simonischek



## Sports

# Heat rout Celtics, book NBA Finals showdown

## Miami Heat seek fourth NBA title

**BOSTON:** Jimmy Butler played a starring role as the Miami Heat advanced to the NBA Finals by routing Boston 103-84 on Monday, denying the Celtics a historic comeback after trailing the playoff series 3-0. Butler had 28 points, seven rebounds and six assists while Caleb Martin added 26 points and 10 rebounds to spark Miami, which will visit Denver on Thursday to begin the best-of-seven championship final.

Miami recovered from a gut-punch of a game-six defeat, where they fell on a last-second tip-in, to win the Eastern Conference final 4-3, silencing a loud Boston crowd. Taking full advantage of an injury to Boston star Jayson Tatum in the opening seconds and a cold-shooting Celtics start, the Heat avoided becoming the first team in 151 attempts to lose a playoff series after leading 3-0.

"We stayed together as a group," Butler said. "We talked about going to get a tough one on the road and we did just that. But we're not satisfied. We're happy. We're ecstatic. But we've got one more to get." Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said he never doubted his resilient squad could win game seven. "Sometimes you have to suffer for the things you really want," he said. "This group has shown fortitude when there are inevitable let-downs and failures, but had that perseverance to pick yourself up, that collective spirit to keep on forging ahead."

The Heat, seeking a fourth NBA title and first since 2013, last reached the NBA Finals in 2020, losing to the Los Angeles Lakers. The Nuggets, into the NBA Finals for the first time, swept the Lakers in the Western Conference final. It was a determined effort by a Miami squad that lost to Boston in seven games in last year's East finals. Miami also lacked any momentum after squandering their 3-0 edge

to set up a winner-takes-all road game.

"When the ship gets rocky, just stay together and keep believing in one another," said Miami's Bam Adebayo, who had 12 points and 10 rebounds. Spoelstra said last year's loss had weighed on the team. "They made us get better. We thought about it all season long," he said. Butler said his teammates enabled him to sink key shots and shut down Boston comeback bids. "They give me so much confidence to hoop at a high level," he said. "They're the reason we're here. I know how good a team we are and we made it happen."

### 'A shell of myself'

Tatum, who finished with 14 points on 5-of-13 shooting, turned his left ankle landing awkwardly after a baseline jumper in the opening seconds. He grimaced often and took only one shot in the first 17 minutes. "It swelled up," Tatum said. "I was like a shell of myself. It was tough to move. It was frustrating especially that it should happen on the first play." Miami stretched the lead as high as 17 points in the second quarter but Boston pulled within 59-51 early in the third.

Caleb Martin sank a baseline jumper to put Miami ahead 76-66 entering the fourth. Martin sank a three-pointer to ignite a 7-0 Miami run to open the fourth quarter for an 83-66 edge. "Not shooting the ball well had an effect on us," Tatum said. "And it kind of snowballed." The Celtics went nearly four minutes without scoring and never again threatened, finishing a woeful 9-of-42 from three-point range.

"They gave it everything they had," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "That's the most important thing to take from this. We failed, but it's not because the guys didn't have a sense of togetherness and character."



**BOSTON:** Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball during the second quarter against the Miami Heat in game seven of the Eastern Conference Finals on May 29, 2023. — AFP

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 19 points but had a career-high eight turnovers while Derrick White added 18 points. "We failed. I failed," Brown said. "We let the whole city down." An 18-6 Heat run to close the first quarter gave Miami a 22-15 lead with

the Celtics matching their season low for first-quarter points. Boston went 0-for-10 from three-point range in the first quarter, missing the first 12 from beyond the arc overall, and made only 6-of-23 from the floor in the opening period. — AFP

## Knights blank Stars to advance to NHL Final

**HOUSTON:** The Vegas Golden Knights advanced to the Stanley Cup Final for the second time in their six-season history on Monday by routing host Dallas 6-0 in the NHL playoffs. Swedish center William Karlsson scored twice for Vegas, which also reached the NHL final in 2018, losing to Washington in the Knights' debut campaign. The Golden Knights captured the best-of-seven Western Conference final 4-2 over Dallas and will host the Florida Panthers in game one of the championship series on Saturday.

"We had a good start," Karlsson said after Vegas shrugged off back-to-back losses to Dallas. "We kept it light. We know when to buckle down and play hockey. It has been a great journey so far. We still have four more wins to get but it has been a great journey so far." The Panthers, who swept Carolina in the Eastern Conference final, made their only prior NHL Final in 1996, when they were swept by Colorado.

Florida will have had nine days off before starting the Stanley Cup Final. The Stars had dropped the first three games of the conference final before rallying and hoped for a home triumph to pull the series level, but the Knights took command quickly. Vegas left wing William Carrier took advantage of a Stars turnover in their own zone and flicked a backhand shot past sprawled Dallas goaltender Jake Oettinger for the game's first goal only 3:41 into the contest.

Karlsson gave the Golden Knights a 2-0 edge with a power-play goal 10:25 into the first period, taking a rebound off Nicolas Roy's shot and firing it into the net. Keegan Kolesar boosted the Vegas advantage to 3-0 with six minutes remaining in the opening period off assists from Carrier and Roy. Jonathan Marchessault scored for the Golden Knights 10:25 into the second period for a 4-0 Vegas lead and Karlsson netted his second goal 2:06 into the third period to dim any hopes of a Dallas fightback. Michael Amadio gave Vegas a final goal with 7:35 remaining in the third period. — AFP



**DALLAS:** Jonathan Marchessault #81 of the Vegas Golden Knights celebrates during the second period against the Dallas Stars in Game Six of the Western Conference Final on May 29, 2023. — AFP

## Kosovo, COVID, kicked out of Australia: Novak Djokovic controversies

**PARIS:** Hailed as one of the greatest tennis players of all time, Novak Djokovic is at the centre of fresh controversy after writing "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence" on a camera at the French Open after his first round match in response to clashes flaring up in northern Kosovo fuelled by ethnic tensions. "Kosovo is our cradle, our stronghold, centre of the most important things for our country," he told reporters in Paris. The 22-time major winner is no stranger to causing a stir on and off

the court. AFP Sport looks at some of the incidents that have dogged the career of the former world number one:

The famously unvaccinated Djokovic arrived in Melbourne to play the 2022 Australian Open claiming he had a valid medical exemption from the vaccine. However, after a protracted legal fight, his visa was cancelled on "health and good order grounds" before he was deported. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic accused the Australian government of conducting a "witch hunt" against Djokovic. As Djokovic left the country, he said: "I respect the court's ruling and I'll cooperate with the relevant authorities in relation to my departure from the country. I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me and I

hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love." He returned to Melbourne in January this year where he swept to a 10th Australian Open title. His refusal to be vaccinated also led to him being banned from the 2022 US Open.

### US Open default

Djokovic saw his 2020 US Open title hopes dashed when he was sensationally disqualified from his last-16 match against Pablo Carreno Busta after accidentally hitting a female line judge in the throat with a ball. The Serb had lashed out in frustration after dropping serve in a match played on an empty Arthur Ashe Court where fans were banned due to the pandemic. "This whole situation has left me really sad

and empty," Djokovic said in a statement. "I checked on the linesperson and the tournament told me that thank God she is feeling OK. I'm extremely sorry to have caused her such stress. So unintended. So wrong."

### COVID-19 tour

In the midst of the pandemic in 2020, and with professional tennis shut down, Djokovic organized the Adria Tour, a series of exhibition events in the Balkans. However, the tournament was abandoned in Zadar in Croatia after Bulgarian player Grigor Dimitrov tested positive for coronavirus. Djokovic and his wife Jelena, as well as fellow players Viktor Troicki and Borna Coric, also went on to reveal positive tests. "I know there has been some criticism, especial-

ly from the West," Djokovic said. "Why do we have spectators there? Why is there no social distancing? Why is this kind of event taking place while there is a serious pandemic in the West?" said Djokovic. "It is not easy to explain to people that the situation in the United States or Great Britain is completely different from that in Serbia or the surrounding countries."

Djokovic has long faced accusations that he exaggerates injuries in matches. At the 2008 US Open, he took two medical timeouts in a gruelling five-set win over Tommy Robredo. Quarter-final opponent Andy Roddick then mockingly listed Djokovic's injuries to include "two hurt ankles, bird flu and SARS!" Djokovic defeated the American and hit back in his post-match, on-court interview. — AFP



## Kuwait Karting Club organizes championship

**KUWAIT:** The second Open Karting Championship was organized by Kuwait Karting Club at Al-Kout Arena. There were strong competitions during the final rounds. Faisal Al-Shuwaie won the men's title, followed by Abdelmajid Shaaban and Hazzaa Al-Aiban. The women's title went to Eman Shams Al-Deen, followed by Misk Al-Saleh and Asmaa Jayyash. Club Board Member Yousuf Al-Kandary and PR director Hanadi Al-Shaar awarded the winners. The chairman of the Board of the Karting Club Dr Hamid Busheri lauded the high technical level of competitors.

## Tomoooh Club players prepare for tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The Tomoooh Sports Club for the Mentally Disabled delegation left for Tunis to have a one-week training camp prior to the international Czech tournament for the disabled that will be held June 8th-10th. The delegation includes the Secretary General of Tomoooh Club Qaseema Al-Mousawi, an official Habbab Al-Hami, a coach Kefaya Abdelmalek, a supervisor and the players: Haneen Al-Misbah, Abdallah Salmeen, Hassan Sameer, and Fahad Al-Saleeli.

Sadeeqa Al-Ansari said the Czech International tournament is one of the approved events by the International Paralympics Committee and will see 150 players from around the world competing. She said Kuwait's participation is to give the players an opportunity to compete with international players and get qualifying numbers for international events.



"Our players succeeded in making outstanding achievements in their first Paralympics event at the Oman international games two months ago when Haneen Al-Misbah won a gold medal; Abdallah Sal-

meen won gold and silver medals, and Hassan Sameer won a bronze," she added. Al-Ansari expressed confidence in Tomoooh players to give great efforts and continue their Paralympic achievements.



Sports

# Chelsea and Pochettino ink 2-year contract deal

## Jurasek appointed as new chief executive; Glick departs

LONDON: Chelsea hired Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager on Monday as the Argentine accepted the daunting task of reviving the troubled Premier League club. Pochettino agreed a two-year contract with an option for an additional year and will return to the Premier League four years after being sacked by Chelsea's London rivals Tottenham. The 51-year-old had been out of work since being dismissed by Paris Saint-Germain in July 2022. "Mauricio is a world-class coach with an outstanding track record. We are all looking forward to having him on board," Chelsea co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said in a statement.

Pochettino, who will begin his new role on July 1, replaces Frank Lampard after the former England midfielder returned to Chelsea as caretaker boss until the end of the season. Lampard was Chelsea's third manager of a dismal campaign that featured Boehly sacking Thomas Tuchel in September and then axing his successor Graham Potter in April after less than seven months in charge. Pochettino emerged as the favorite after Chelsea held talks with the former Spain manager Luis Enrique and Julian Nagelsmann, who was sacked by Bayern Munich in March.

Pochettino verbally agreed to take charge at Chelsea in April, but the appointment was put on hold until the end of the season. With the Blues wrapping up their lacklustre Premier League campaign with a draw against Newcastle on Sunday, Pochettino flew into England to officially seal the deal. Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley, Chelsea's co-sporting directors, said: "Mauricio's experience, standards of excellence, leadership qualities and character will serve Chelsea Football Club well as we move forward."

"He is a winning coach, who has worked at the high-

est levels, in multiple leagues and languages. His ethos, tactical approach and commitment to development all made him the exceptional candidate." Pochettino will arrive at Stamford Bridge to find a club in crisis after ending the season 12th in the Premier League - their first bottom half finish since 1996. They also lost to Manchester City in the FA Cup and League Cup and made a limp Champions League quarter-final exit against Real Madrid.

### Standards slipping

Believed to be keen to sign a new goalkeeper, central midfielder and striker, Pochettino has a big job on his hands. Just two years after Tuchel led the Blues to Champions League glory, Chelsea face a rare season without European football. Boehly reportedly told his players their season had been "embarrassing" after a home defeat against Brighton that featured fans shouting abuse at the American. Boehly has come under fire after overseeing a haphazard £550 million (\$679 million) spending spree on new signings.

That record outlay failed to fix Chelsea's numerous issues and left them with such a bloated squad that there weren't even enough places in the changing rooms for every player to have their own seat.

Pochettino will have to fix the fractured morale among a squad packed with frustrated stars keen to leave after failing to secure regular game-time. Lampard admitted after his final game on Sunday that standards in Chelsea's squad had slipped dramatically at a club who last won the Premier League in 2017.

Chelsea fans quickly grew tired of Potter and it will be intriguing to see if Pochettino's history with Tottenham proves a source of angst among the Blues faithful.

At least Pochettino knows what it takes to succeed in the Premier League after leading Tottenham to four top four finishes during his five-year reign in north London. The demanding Argentine, who first managed in the Premier League with Southampton from 2013 to 2014, also took Tottenham to their maiden Champions League final appearance in 2019.

They were beaten by Liverpool in the final but although Pochettino was unable to end Tottenham's long trophy drought, it was still a surprise when he was sacked just months after that memorable Champions League run. He was hired by PSG in January 2021, failing to win the Ligue 1 title in his first season, while leading the club to victory in the Coupe de France. While PSG were crowned French champions in Pochettino's second season, their disappointing Champions League last 16 exit played a major role in his dismissal and replacement by Christophe Galtier last July.

### New chief executive

In another development, Chelsea announced Tuesday the appointment of Chris Jurasek as their new chief executive, with president of business Tom Glick about to leave the club after less than a year. After a lowly 12th-place Premier League finish in Clearlake Capital's first season as owners, Chelsea appointed Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager on Monday, with the London side seeking a return to the English and European triumphs they enjoyed during Roman Abramovich's reign at Stamford Bridge. Jurasek, an executive at American co-owner Todd Boehly's Clearlake group, will oversee all business areas at Chelsea and report to the board alongside co-sporting directors Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley.



Mauricio Pochettino

"I'm delighted to be joining Chelsea, a club which is loved and followed all over the world," Jurasek said in a statement. "I'm enormously proud to be leading it into the next chapter in its rich history. "We have huge opportunities to grow on and off the pitch and to engage our exceptional fans both in London and wherever they are supporting us from." Behdad Eghbali and Jose E Feliciano, co-controlling owners, said: "Chris' skill and expertise will help us to drive the club forward in all areas, particularly in supporting our long-term plans for Chelsea. Former Manchester City executive Glick will be leaving, having only been appointed last July. Earlier this month, the Guardian reported Chelsea had hired a law firm to assess whether Glick acted appropriately when he told a female agent her complaints to him about the behavior of a club executive did not interest him and were not relevant to his job. — AFP

## Luton celebrate EPL promotion

LUTON: Luton celebrated their lucrative promotion to the Premier League with a parade in front of thousands of jubilant fans on Monday. Rob Edwards' side beat Coventry 6-5 on penalties following a 1-1 draw in Saturday's Championship play-off final at Wembley. The Hatters have defied the odds to reach the top-flight just nine years after they were playing in the non-league National Conference. Luton will welcome Premier League champions Manchester City and the rest of the top-flight elite to their modest 10,356-capacity Kenilworth Road home next season. Playing in the Premier League will be worth an estimated £170 (\$210 million) in increased revenue.

It is an incredible achievement for an unfashionable club that last played in the top-flight in 1992 and almost went bankrupt during their plunge down the leagues. Luton's success has won the admiration of the football world, with thousands of supporters clad in the club's orange colors lining the parade route to serenade their heroes. "It means everything," Edwards said before launching into a rendition of Bon Jovi's 'Always' and holding aloft the play-off trophy on the Luton Town Hall balcony.

"It's for you, the Luton Town people, for the town, these players who deserve it, for the backroom staff who work so hard, the board. We've got to enjoy this moment." Luton enjoyed a golden era in the top tier in the 1980s, winning the club's only major trophy in the 1988 League Cup final against Arsenal. They suffered a steady decline after that before gradually working their way back up to the Championship.

## Spalletti confirms Napoli exit after making history

MILAN: Luciano Spalletti has confirmed that he will leave Napoli at the end of the Serie A season after winning their first league title since the days of Diego Maradona. Speaking at an event at the Italian national team's Coverciano training centre, Spalletti said that he would take time away from football and would not be immediately moving to coach another team. "I need to take some time to rest because I'm pretty tired," Spalletti said. "I don't know if you can call it a year's sabbatical but I won't be working. I won't be coaching Napoli or any other team."



LUTON: Luton Town's Welsh manager Rob Edwards (left) and Luton's mayor Mohammad Yaqub Hanif lift the Championship playoff trophy as Luton Town football club players and staff hold an event in St George's Square after a parade through the streets of Luton. — AFP

Edwards inspired this season's promotion charge following his appointment in November in the aftermath of his sacking by Luton's local rivals Watford.

Luton fans are determined to make the most of their club's return to the big time, with some waiting nearly four hours to see players and staff make their way on to a stage in the town's St George's Square. Highlights of the season and the play-off final were

The 64-year-old guided Napoli to their third Scudetto — their first since 1990 — with five matches to play after a magical campaign in which his team played some of the most thrilling football in Europe. Napoli's title triumph was the crowning glory of Spalletti's long and eventful coaching career which had brought plenty of plaudits but few trophies.

### 'Free man'

It was his first Italian league crown and first trophy of any sort in Italy since the Italian Cup won at Roma in 2008. He did win league titles in Russia with Zenit Saint Petersburg in 2010 and 2012. Spalletti will bow out as Napoli coach on Sunday evening when the newly-crowned champions host relegated Sampdoria at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona. Italian media report that former Barcelona and Spain coach Luis Enrique is the favorite to replace Spalletti next season.

shown on a big screen before two open top buses arrived following a short ride from Kenilworth Road. "The impact of being in the Premier League will be massive for this town," Hatters chief executive Gary Sweet said. "This could be a life-changing opportunity for us, but from a character point of view, don't change. "Let's still be us, still grounded. Let's keep humble." — AFP

Spalletti's departure had been expected as both he and Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis hinted recently that a hugely successful two-year spell in southern Italy was coming to an end. On Sunday De Laurentiis told Italian state broadcaster RAI that Spalletti had asked to go on sabbatical despite having a year left on his contract. "He's a free man, he's given us something and I thank him, it's right that he does what he wants," he said on current affairs programme Che Tempo Che Fa.

Napoli exercised an option to extend Spalletti's contract until the end of next season, but the manner in which it was done — via email and without discussion between the two parties — reportedly irked the coach. Spalletti will effectively be on gardening leave for next season and will return to his vineyard in Tuscany, as he did during the two-year period before he took charge at Napoli when he was still under contract with Inter Milan after being replaced by Antonio Conte. — AFP

## Van der Sar to quit as Ajax chief after 'tough period'

THE HAGUE: Former Netherlands goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar announced Tuesday he was quitting as Ajax chief executive, after "an incredibly tough period" of more than a decade at the helm of the Amsterdam powerhouse. Van der Sar's resignation comes on the back of the worst season in 14 years for the top Dutch club which finished third in the Eredivisie after a 3-1 drubbing by FC Twente on Sunday. "After almost 11 years on the board, I am done," Van der Sar, 52, said in a statement. "We have experienced wonderful things together, but it has also been an incredibly tough period," the former Manchester United keeper said, who retired from professional football in 2011.

Ajax have failed to qualify for the Champions League after finishing third in the Eredivisie behind Feyenoord and PSV Eindhoven. Media reports including the NOS public broadcaster and daily tabloid De Telegraaf said supporters held Van der Sar responsible for the club's drop in success, following the departure of sporting director Marc Overmars and trainer Erik ten Hag.

Former Dutch international Overmars quit after admitting sending inappropriate messages to female staff at Ajax, while the successful Ten Hag left for Manchester United in April last year. Van der Sar said he needed to "take some distance, to get some rest, and to do other things." Ajax supervisory board chairman Pier Eringa said the club "wanted Edwin to stay, but he had made his decision. We have to respect that." Van der Sar's contract ran until June 30, 2025. "The last season does not reflect the entire period that he has been in charge of Ajax," Eringa stressed.

Regarded as one of the world's all-time best goalkeepers, Van der Sar played for Ajax from 1990-1999, winning the Champions League in 1995. He went on to lift the European Cup again in 2008 with Manchester United after spells at Juventus and Fulham. Van der Sar returned to Ajax in 2012 as director of marketing before being promoted four years later to CEO. He is also the second-highest capped Netherlands player of all-time with 130 international appearances. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

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

Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

#### Clinics

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

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

### Change of Name

I, **Fakhruddin** holder of Indian Passport No. V1972831 having permanent address V/P Najampura Sagwara Dist. Dungarpur (RAJ) 314025 residing in Kuwait present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name Fakhruddin and surname Bhaishab (#3547) 31/05/2023

I, **MANSUR**, holder of Indian Passport No. T4007957, do hereby change my name to MANSUR (as given name) LOKHANDWALA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name MANSUR LOKHANDWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#3545) 29/05/2023

I, **AWA SINGH**, holder of Indian Passport No. U0747355 Indian permanent address Vill. Taluwal, PO Naushera, Tehsil Mukerian, Distt. Hoshiarpur-144211, Indian residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name AVAV and surname SINGH. (#3546) 29/05/2023

I, **KHOZEMA**, holder of Indian Passport No. Z5708356, do hereby change my name to KHOZEMA (as given name) MUKADAM (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name KHOZEMA MUKADAM and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#3545) 29/05/2023

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## Chennai secure fifth IPL crown

Super Kings overwhelm Titans; Dhoni eyes return next year



AHMEDABAD: Chennai Super Kings' players celebrate their win at the end of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 final cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Chennai Super Kings on May 30, 2023. — AFP

**AHMEDABAD:** Indian cricket superstar MS Dhoni said he will look to return for the next IPL season after he led Chennai Super Kings to a record-equalling fifth title over Gujarat Titans in what many believed to be his last match. Ravindra Jadeja hit a six and four off the final two balls as Chennai chased down their revised target of 171 in 15 overs with five wickets to spare in a rain-hit final which went past 1.30 am local time Tuesday on a reserve day in Ahmedabad following a washout on Sunday.

New Zealand's Devon Conway led the chase with his 25-ball 47 before cameos from Ajinkya Rahane (27) and Shivam Dube, who hit an unbeaten 32, set the stage for Jadeja's heroics. Needing 13 off the final over, Mohit Sharma bowled four good balls before Jadeja hit the winning runs to trigger wild celebrations at the world's biggest cricket stadium.

"This is the best time to announce my retirement. But the amount of love I have received all over. The easy thing would be to walk away from here, but the harder thing would be working hard for nine months and try to play another IPL," said the 41-year-old Dhoni. "It would be a gift from me, won't be easy on the body. You do get emotional, the first game at CSK everyone was chanting my name. My eyes were full of water, I needed to take some time off in the dugout."

Chennai won the title for the fifth time to go level with Mumbai Indians. Dhoni kept attracting huge crowds across venues this season and over 80,000 fans cheered the veteran, who had recently said he would take a call on his future later this year, in the final. Playing his 250th IPL match, Dhoni got out for a first-ball duck as he went back to a stunned silence,

but he had the last laugh in his 10th appearance in the final as Chennai captain.

Ambati Rayudu also hit a key 19 off eight balls in his last match after he announced his retirement ahead of the final. Rain forced players off the ground when Chennai were four without loss after three balls of their innings. The downpour lasted for about 15 minutes but covers came off from one of the pitches which got damp and the groundstaff worked for over two hours to get the field ready for play. Sai Sudharsan smashed 96 off 47 balls to guide Gujarat, a team which won the crown in their debut season last year in the T20 competition and topped the table in this edition, to 214-4. "I think we tick a lot of boxes as a team," said captain Hardik Pandya.

"We play with a lot of heart, really proud of the way we kept fighting. We have a motto - we win together,

we lose together." In-form Gujarat opener Shubman Gill hit a 20-ball 39 and was named most valuable player, earning the orange cap as the leading batsman with 890 runs. Gujarat pace spearhead Mohammed Shami got the purple cap as the leading bowler for his 28 wickets with teammates Sharma and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan one behind on 27 each.

Gill, fresh from his third century this season, was dropped on three when Deepak Chahar spilled an easy catch off fast bowler Tushar Deshpande. The opener smashed Deshpande for three straight boundaries in the next over and kept up the attack with regular hits to the fence before Dhoni's lightning quick glove work sent back the batsman, stumped off Jadeja. Fellow opener Wriddhiman Saha made 54 and put on 64 runs with Sudharsan, who took charge after his partner's departure. — AFP

### No tickets please: Superhero Dhoni

**AHMEDABAD:** MS Dhoni, who led Chennai Super Kings to a record-equalling fifth IPL title on Monday, could have spent his life inspecting tickets on Indian Railways if he had listened to his father. Instead he followed his dream and became one of his cricket-crazy country's most beloved players, second only in adulation to the "little master" Sachin Tendulkar. In a career spanning two decades, he was India's most successful skipper and even after retiring from international cricket in 2020 has had a glorious Indian summer still playing the IPL.

His journey, which was made into a Bollywood biopic, began in a cramped one-bedroom government flat in the eastern city of Ranchi provided by his pump operator father's employer. As a boy Dhoni was passionate about sport and honed his skills playing tennis-ball cricket and borrowing bats and other kit from friends. On his father's insistence, he took a job at Indian Railways but the hectic routine of juggling between collecting tickets and playing cricket finally saw him break free.

In 2004, he made his India debut and in 2007, took over from Rahul Dravid as India's one-day captain, the same year winning the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa. In 2008, he became Test captain and won two home series against Australia, and in 2011 famously sealed winning the 50-over World Cup in India with a sumptuous six. Along the way - with constant hairstyle changes, from shaggy to spiky to shaved - numerous endorsements saw Dhoni become one of world sport's best-paid athletes, earning an estimated \$31 million in 2015.

#### 'No CSK without Dhoni'

But he stunned the cricket world by quitting the five-day format in 2014 after finishing with 27 wins from 60 Tests as skipper. He stepped down from the limited-overs captaincy in 2017 on the pretext of preparing Virat Kohli as leader, but continued to play a big part in the team's decision-making process. His last appearance for India was in their semi-final loss to New Zealand in the 2019 ODI World Cup.

He then briefly served with an army reserve unit,



AHMEDABAD: Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (right) and Gujarat Titans counterpart Hardik Pandya laugh at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP

where he is an honorary lieutenant colonel, before announcing his international retirement. But he didn't quit the IPL, using his unrivalled tactical nous and experience to guide the franchise, which he has captained since the league began in 2008, to 10 finals and now five victories. "There is no CSK without Dhoni and there is no Dhoni without CSK," N Srinivasan, the industrialist who owns the franchise, famously said after the previous triumph in 2021.

#### 'Captain cool'

Hard-hitting and always unruffled, Dhoni has many nicknames including "Captain Cool" and "Thala", which means "leader" in Tamil, the language of Chennai. Fans at the IPL go wild when he strides out to bat and cheer every shot - and not just those of Chennai but of all the other franchises. The excitement has been heightened this year because of the expectation that - at 41, with a dodgy knee and no longer the force he was with the bat - this season might be Dhoni's last. But he has kept fans guessing, saying last week that he would take until the auctions for the 2024 IPL in December to make his final decision. "I will always be there for CSK whether in playing form or sitting somewhere," he said. "I don't really know. But frankly, it takes a heavy toll." — AFP

### Swiatek eyes history; Djokovic defiant in Kosovo row

**PARIS:** Iga Swiatek begins her bid to become the first woman in 16 years to successfully defend the French Open title on Tuesday as Novak Djokovic remained defiant after controversially weighing in on the Kosovo crisis. World number one Swiatek, a two-time champion in Paris, faces Moldovan-born Cristina Bucsa of Spain as she looks to emulate Justine Henin, the last back-to-back women's winner at Roland Garros in 2007. The 21-year-old Pole arrives in Paris shrugging off a thigh injury suffered in Rome.

"Luckily nothing serious happened. I'll be good for my first round. That's the most important thing for me," she said. Also getting underway is world number two Daniil Medvedev who was buoyed by clinching his first ever clay court title at the prestigious Italian Open last week. It was also his fifth trophy of 2023. The Russian has endured a bitter-sweet relationship with the French Open, losing in the first round in his first four visits. He ended that streak with a run to the quarter-finals in 2021.

The eccentric Medvedev faces former US Open junior champion Thiago Seyboth Wild, a Brazilian ranked 172 and who had to play the qualifiers. Meanwhile, Djokovic insisted he does not fear being punished for his potentially explosive "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia" message he scribbled on a courtside TV camera on Monday amid fresh violence in Kosovo.

The Belgrade-born superstar, chasing a record 23rd Grand Slam title in Paris, wrote the message in Serbian after his opening round victory over Aleksandar Kovacevic on the showpiece Philippe Chatrier Court. "Kosovo is our cradle, our stronghold, centre of the most important things for our country," 36-year-old Djokovic told Serb media. His comments came after NATO-led peacekeepers dispersed Serb protesters who clashed with police in northern Kosovo to demand the removal of recently elected Albanian mayors. Around 30 soldiers were injured during the clashes, along with over 50 demonstrators.



Poland's Iga Swiatek

#### 'I have no remorse'

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. However, Serbs in Kosovo remain largely loyal to Belgrade, especially in the north, where they make up a majority and reject every move by Pristina to consolidate its control over the region. "As a public figure but also a son of a man who was born in Kosovo I feel additional responsibility to express my support to our people and Serbia as a whole," said Djokovic. "I hear that there were many complaints on social media and from international journalists, saying someone would punish me but I have no remorse and would do it again as my stance is clear."

"But I am against war, violence and conflict of any kind and I have always publicly shown that." Djokovic was hailed in his native Serbia. "A man of his word and integrity. He proved to be one many times over, and repeated it in Paris by doing something that raced the hearts of all Serbs," commented the Alo tabloid newspaper. On the court at Roland Garros early Tuesday, 16-year-old qualifier Mirra Andreeva marked her Grand Slam debut with a 56-minute 6-2, 6-1 victory over Alison Riske-Amritraj of the United States.

Andreeva, the youngest player in the tournament, has reached 143 in the world from 312 in April and hit the headlines at the Madrid Open earlier this month where she reached the last 16. Later, fourth seed Casper Ruud, the runner-up to Rafael Nadal last year, faces Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer while sixth-ranked Holger Rune, a quarter-finalist on his debut in 2022, tackles Christopher Eubanks of the United States. Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, the fourth seed, faces Czech teenager Brenda Fruhvirtova with 2022 runner-up Coco Gauff taking on Rebecca Masarova of Spain. — AFP