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210 Palestinians massacred

Zionist forces attack Kuwait Specialty Hospital in Rafah



GAZA: (Left) A boy and man in critical condition following Zionist bombardment, lie on the floor of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, on June 8, 2024. (Right) Palestinians evacuate with their belongings following an operation by Zionist Special Forces in the Nuseirat camp, in the central Gaza Strip on June 8, 2024. — AFP photos

Apollo 8 astronaut dies in plane crash



WASHINGTON: William Anders, the former US astronaut who took the historic "Earthrise" photo from space over 55 years ago, died in a plane crash on Friday at the age of 90, his family said. Anders had been piloting a small plane which crashed off the coast of Washington state on Friday morning, his son told US media. Anders was alone in the plane. His body was later recovered by a dive team. The Seattle Times reported, quoting a Coast Guard spokesperson. A member of the Apollo 8 mission in December 1968, Anders became one of the first humans to orbit the Moon, along with fellow Americans Frank Borman and James Lovell. The crew circled the Moon 10 times without landing, before successfully returning to Earth on December 27, 1968. On one of the lunar orbits, Anders captured a photo of the bright blue Earth against the vast darkness of space, with the Moon's cratered surface in the foreground. "We'd been going backwards and upside down, didn't really see the Earth or the Sun, and when we rolled around and came around and saw the first Earthrise," he said in a 1997 NASA oral history interview. "That certainly was, by far, the most impressive thing. To see this very delicate, colorful orb which to me looked

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GAZA: Hamas' government media office said at least 210 people were killed Saturday in Zionist attacks on a central Gaza refugee camp from which four hostages were rescued. "The number of victims from the Zionist occupation's massacre in the Nuseirat camp has risen to 210 martyrs and more than 400 wounded," the press office said in a statement.

The Zionist entity said its forces rescued four hostages alive on Saturday from a Gaza refugee camp. The military said the four were in "good medical condition". They had been kidnapped during the Nova music festival during the October 7 attack. Noa Argamani, 26, Almog Meir Jan, 22, Andrey Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 41, had been rescued from two separate buildings "in the heart of Nuseirat" camp in a "complex daytime operation", the military said. They were among 251 captives seized by the mili-

tants in their October attack. There are now 116 hostages remaining in Gaza, including 41 the army says are dead. Footage posted on social media showed Argamani emotionally reuniting with her father after her rescue, as well as beachgoers erupting into cheers in Tel Aviv when a lifeguard announced the four had been freed. Campaign group the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which has pressed the government to reach a deal that would free the captives, hailed the rescue as a "miraculous triumph".

The Hamas media office said "the number of victims from the occupation's massacre in the Nuseirat camp has risen to 210 martyrs and more than 400 wounded". The Islamist group earlier accused Zionist forces of engaging in "brutal and savage aggression on Nuseirat camp". Zionist police said an officer was mortally wounded during the rescue operation.

It was carried out despite growing international pressure on Zionist entity after a deadly strike on a UN-run school in Nuseirat where displaced Gazans were sheltering. "The message this morning to Hamas is clear: we are determined to bring back home all the hostages," military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said. Hamas' Qatar-based leader Ismail Haniyeh vowed to keep fighting. "Our people will not surrender, and the resistance will continue to defend our rights in the face of this criminal enemy," Haniyeh said in a statement.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced regular street protests demanding a deal to bring the captives home. Pressure increased after troops retrieved the bodies of seven hostages from the Gaza Strip last month.

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S&P confirms Kuwait's sovereign rating at A+

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said on Friday that the international rating agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) confirmed the sovereign rating of Kuwait at A+, with a stable future outlook due to a huge stock of government financial assets estimated at about 418 percent of the gross domestic product in 2024. In a statement, the Central Bank noted that the Standard & Poor's report indicated that Kuwait's structural and financial reforms are still lagging behind its peers, and its economy is considered among

the most dependent on the oil sector among GCC countries, which exposes its economy to fluctuations in the oil market.

The statement added that Standard & Poor's expected that the real gross domestic product would grow by 2.4 percent on average during the years 2025-2027, compared to a contraction of 2.3 percent in 2024, assuming a slight easing in the restrictions of the OPEC+ agreement on oil production. CBK also pointed out that the rating agency is also expected to accelerate the implementation of large government investment projects and focus on partnerships between the public and private sectors and high-impact projects led by the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

Regarding the rating prospects, the statement noted that the stable future outlook reflects the agency's

assumption that the large financial and external balances in Kuwait will continue to be strong during the forecast period, supported by a huge stock of government financial assets estimated at about 418 percent of the gross domestic product in 2024, which is among the largest sovereign funds of countries.

CBK noted that the agency expected these assets to reach 447 percent of the gross domestic product during the years 2024-2027, pointing out that these huge government assets are expected to mitigate the economic risks associated with the heavy dependence on the oil sector and potential fluctuations in oil prices. It stated that the agency listed the most important factors that could lead to a downgrade of the country's sovereign credit rating in the

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UN hails Kuwait's humanitarian efforts

WASHINGTON: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres hailed Kuwait's role in supporting humanitarian work around the world. Guterres made the remarks during the annual charity dinner, hosted by Goodwill Ambassador of UNHCR and the Kuwait-America Foundation Sheikhha Rima Al-Sabah. Guterres expressed deep gratitude to Kuwait and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for their continuous support for UNHCR.

He also thanked Sheikhha Rima for her achievements and efforts in providing international financial aid to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other countries during her 20-year term as a goodwill ambassador. The UN top official also applauded the role of the

World Central Kitchen (WCK) charity in providing food for those affected by war and conflict in Ukraine, Gaza Strip, and other places around the world.

UNCHR chief Filippo Grandi said that donors' financial aid improves the lives of millions who fled their homes and countries due to wars and conflicts. The refugee crisis is growing and has become a "global catastrophe," with no less than 114 million refugees around the world, mainly women and children, said Grandi. Meanwhile, former Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah said humanitarian work is among Kuwait's top priorities, adding that Kuwait has become one of the top UNHCR supporters in the past decade.

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WASHINGTON: Former Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, his wife Goodwill Ambassador of UNHCR Sheikhha Rima Al-Sabah and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres take a group photo. — KUNA



Kuwait demands Zionist entity joins international nuclear treaty

Zionist entity preventing IAEA from creating nuclear-weapon-free zone in Middle East: Official

VIENNA: Kuwait is calling on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to take the necessary steps to urge the Zionist entity to immediately join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and subject all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the IAEA. Third Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Delegation to the United Nations in Vienna Dr Sara Al-Ajmi made the demand in a speech she gave during the discussions regarding the Zionist entity's nuclear capabilities. Dr Al-Ajmi urged the IAEA to keep the Zionist occupation's nuclear capabilities under discussion in policy-making meetings, which would ensure the agency's ability to effectively and competently fulfill its role in verifying and applying its safeguards system.

Through the safeguards, the IAEA verifies that a state's declaration of nuclear material is correct and complete. The verification activities also give the IAEA the authority to independently verify that all nuclear material in the territory or jurisdictional control of a state is not diverted for nuclear weapons and that nuclear facilities are not misused. The IAEA, which is entrusted as the nuclear inspectorate under the global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other treaties against the spread of nuclear weapons, safeguards nuclear material and activities under agreements with more than 140 States.

Dr Al-Ajmi added that despite the commitment of all Middle Eastern countries to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the implementation of the comprehensive safeguards agreement, the Zionist occupation has persistently refused to subject all its nuclear facilities to the system of the IAEA.

She also pointed out that the Zionist entity continues to reject any initiatives or serious steps in this



VIENNA: Third Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Delegation to the United Nations in Vienna Dr Sara Al-Ajmi (right) speaks during the meeting. — KUNA

regard, preventing the agency from applying the system in the Middle East and creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

Kuwait's delegation also addressed the situation in Gaza, stating that while the Board of Governors is holding its meetings this week, Palestine was witnessing a dangerous escalation and developments in events. Dr Al-Ajmi mentioned in her speech that nearly eight months have passed since the Zionist occupation forces launched brutal attacks on Palestine, disregarding international laws, covenants, and resolutions, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of unarmed civilians, most of whom are women and children.

In her speech, she confirmed Kuwait's principled



DEIR AL-BALAH: Palestinians watch smoke billowing following a Zionist airstrike in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on June 6, 2024. — AFP

and firm stance in condemning the unfortunate massacres committed by the Zionist occupation forces against Palestinian camps. Kuwait once again called on the international community to exert strong pressure to stop this blatant aggression, which violates all international laws and norms, to protect Palestin-

ians, thus, serious efforts must be made to hold the perpetrators of these heinous crimes accountable. Dr Al-Ajmi emphasized that the deliberate targeting of refugee tents and the killing of innocents was clear evidence that the Zionist occupation hardly understands the language of peace. — Agencies

Minister urges better planning for youth activities

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, directed officials at the General Authority for Youth to intensify their efforts in planning for youth activities to empower young people and help them build skills in various fields. In a press statement Thursday, after holding several meetings with the authority's leaders, Minister Al-Huwailah stressed the importance of choosing the best activities and projects to prepare young people to become future leaders and change-makers. "Times are changing very quickly, which requires us to keep pace by organizing events that suit this rapid change, especially in the technical, technological, leadership and entrepreneurship aspects," she said.

Huwailah praised the authority's efforts in organizing several activities over recent weeks. She highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships with state agencies, civil society institutions and the private sector to grow Kuwaiti youth capacities across many fields. Huwailah singled out the Kuwait Technical Park for Entrepreneurship project, which is in partnership with Boeing Airlines an example to be followed in this regard. — KUNA

Official: Kuwait backs Arab action towards industrial integration

RABAT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Mohammad Al-Adwani affirmed on Friday that the State of Kuwait is keen to support joint Arab initiatives, especially in the field of industrial development, which leads to achieving industrial integration among Arab countries.

Adwani made the remarks during the launch of the Arab Strategy for Standardization and Quality for the period 2024-2028 during the General Assembly of the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization, which kicked off Thursday in Rabat, with the participation of a number of industry ministers and representatives of Arab countries.

"Our keenness stems from the depth of our belief in joint Arab action," he said. He added that the adoption of the Arab strategy for standardization and quality for the next four years comes to strengthen and develop Arab standard specifications and establish an infrastructure for standardization and quality in the Arab region. The strategy will eventually lead

to the consecration of Arab economic integration and raising the quality of Arab products in line with regional standards.

Adwani pointed to the role Kuwait plays in the work of the Arab Organization for Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining, which is concerned with industrial development, standardization and mining, and to which the State of Kuwait contributes abundantly. Representing the State of Kuwait, Adwani participated in various sessions hosted by the organization as part of the general assembly.

The officials also discussed means to develop the region's mining sector, which aimed at "increasing investment and ensuring the sustainable development" of the sector. Director-General of the Organization Adel Al-Saqer said in an earlier statement.

Saqer had also stressed that the organization is committed to focusing on the adoption of modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, to enhance innovation and sustainable industrial development.

The meeting highlighted several topics, including reviewing the outcome of the partnership between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization and the prospects for their future partnership, in addition to a presentation by the World Society for Food



RABAT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Mohammad Al-Adwani is seen at the meeting. — KUNA

Legislation Science on the Arab Codex Initiative, the Industrial Integration Strategy and a review of its general framework.

During the meeting, a number of memorandums of understanding were also signed, most notably the memorandum of understanding between the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, based in Doha, Qatar, and the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization to exchange experiences and knowledge in the field of preparing industrial strategies. — Agencies

Thailand showcases medical tourism excellence in Kuwait

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Thailand welcomed 79,255 Kuwaiti tourists in 2023, up from 44,334 tourists in 2022, Thai officials said at an event held Thursday.

The event, "Thailand Medical, Healthcare and Wellness Networking 2024", was held by the Thai Embassy in Kuwait on the sidelines of the 13th Kuwait Medica Conference and Exhibition on June 6-7, 2024.

Ambassador of Thailand to Kuwait Ekapol Poolpipat, in his opening remarks, reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to being a world-class destination for medical and wellness tourism. He highlighted the country's state-of-the-art hospitals and wellness centers, renowned Thai hospitality, highly experienced medical professionals, cutting-edge technology, affordable costs, shorter waiting times, accessible facilities, and beautiful tourist attractions.

The event served as a platform for representatives from five Thai hospitals - Bangkok Hospital, Bangkok Hospital Phuket, BPK9 International Hospital, Sukhumvit Hospital, and Piyavate Hospital - to showcase their expertise and excellence in medical, health, and wellness services.

Sutipa Thirapatsakul, Deputy Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's Dubai Office, said the Thai government's policies and promotional measures support medical and wellness tourism in Thailand.

Last year, Thailand welcomed 20 million tourists. Currently, 62 Thai clinics and hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI), a global healthcare accreditation organization. The Royal Thai Government is committed to promoting medical tourism as a "New Engine of Growth," positioning Thailand as an International Medical Hub.



Ekapol Poolpipat



Ambassador Ekapol Poolpipat is seen with officials and hospital representatives at the event.



Representatives from a Thai hospital are seen at their booth at the "Thailand Medical, Healthcare and Wellness Networking 2024" event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

New association for women's health

KUWAIT: At Kuwait Medica exhibition, Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Mona Youssef Abdullah, a consultant in internal medicine and oncology specializing in breast cancer, who is also a member of a new association, the Kuwaiti Association for Women's Health. The non-for-profit organization is particularly concerned with women's health issues such as cancers, diabetes in pregnant women, psychological conditions affecting pregnant women, and domestic violence against women.

"We fulfill our role by providing specialists to speak on these issues and act as a bridge to institutions and initiatives that focus on these matters. Our participation in this Kuwait Medica exhibition is our first achievement, which we are proud of, as this exhibition includes both local and international institutions and hospitals that showcase their services," she said.



Dr Mona Youssef Abdullah

Local

Kuwait-S Korea trade hits \$12bn

Economic relations on path to recovery after COVID-19 pandemic: S Korean ambassador

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: South Korea's Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha revealed that the volume of bilateral trade between South Korea and Kuwait reached \$12 billion last year. Although the trade was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now on a path to recovery. The ambassador expressed optimism about the future of economic relations between the two countries, highlighting ongoing efforts to restore and enhance trade activities. On the sidelines of his farewell ceremony attended by media, officials, and fellow ambassadors, the ambassador expressed his gratitude for the support and cooperation he received during his time in Kuwait, emphasizing the importance of the diplomatic bond between South Korea and Kuwait and reflected on the shared achievements and prospects of this enduring partnership.

The Korean ambassador is to leave at the end of June, revealing that the new ambassador to Kuwait will arrive a week after. "I'm impressed by Kuwaitis who are very open-minded, kind, and I can see the rare humanity deep in everyone's heart, and that is why Kuwait is highly considered as the humanitarian country for its contributions. Kuwait has great potential, even though I will leave but I will always support Kuwait," he said.

Long history

During his tenure, the ambassador achieved significant milestones in strengthening the political ties between South Korea and Kuwait. Through continuous dialogues and diplomatic efforts, the

ambassador fostered a deeper understanding and cooperation between South Korea and Kuwait, reinforcing their mutual commitment to a prosperous bilateral relationship. "Economically, South Korean companies have a long history of co-operation in Kuwait, and they consider the country as their second home, and they are very proud of contributing to the development of Kuwait. As for people-to-people exchange, I established a Korean language center in Kuwait, which continued to offer cultural events even during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives have brought the people of both countries closer together, where Kuwaitis understand Korean culture more now."

Nuwair, Kuwaiti dialect

The Korean ambassador indicated that Kuwait is a great country. He will recommend it to his friends back home, admiring the summer and winter seasons in Kuwait especially the season of the yellow flowers of Nuwair that will be seen widespread across the country, saying that they symbolize the hope of Kuwait, and the optimism Kuwaitis have for the future. The ambassador also revealed that



KUWAIT: Officials, ambassadors and media people attend the ambassador's farewell ceremony.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

he was learning the Kuwaiti dialect, emphasizing the importance of the diwaniya as a source of power for the community. He noted that the diwaniya

serves as a vital space for exchanging cultures and learning, reflecting the strong social and cultural bonds within Kuwaiti society.

All set to host Kuwait pilgrims: Awqaf official

JEDDAH: Head of the Kuwaiti hajj mission and Undersecretary of the Kuwait Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Bader Al-Mutairi confirmed on Saturday that all preparations have been undertaken to serve the pilgrims of the State of Kuwait.

This came in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of Dr Al-Mutairi's visit to the headquarters of the Kuwaiti hajj mission in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, in the presence of the Deputy Head of the Mission, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf for Media and External Relations Muhammad Al-Mutairi and the heads of the teams and committees participating in the mission.

He said that the efforts exerted by the members of the mission are clear evidence of their dedication to accomplishing the tasks entrusted to them accurately and perfectly. He hoped "for the mission to proceed according to plan and that it will be a great success."

He hailed the Kuwaiti mission's track record for success and stressed that sparing no effort in serving pilgrims is a great honor. He pointed to the continuous communication with the Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi, to follow up the work of the mission and facilitate all procedures and steps necessary for the pilgrims of the State of Kuwait to perform their hajj easily and safely.

He expressed his sincere thanks, praise and gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime



Dr Bader Al-Mutairi



Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for their constant support. He also expressed his thanks to the Saudi government, which works to serve the pilgrims and provide them with great facilities starting from their arrival in the Kingdom until the end of the hajj season.

Earlier in Kuwait, the Ministry of Health declared that the whole team of medical services for the Kuwaiti hajj expedition had arrived in holy Makkah. Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, the health ministry official spokesman said in a statement to KUNA that all of the expedition's medical equipment had been set up. The ministry clinics are set to open on Sunday with start of the Kuwaiti pilgrims' arrival, he said, affirming that the ministry will secure all medical needs for the devotees namely the elderly and those suffering from chronic diseases. The ministry had declared that 41 health prevention centers had been set up to immunize the pilgrims.

Saudi finalizes preparations

Meanwhile, Saudi transport and logistical services have finalized preparations for the up-

coming pilgrimage for serving the pilgrims, Minister of Transport and Logistical Services Saleh Al-Jasser said. The minister was speaking at a news conference after he examined the various sectors related to the hajj season. He added that the concerned authorities had already secured the land, air, maritime and railway routes for the waves of incoming devotees, affirming that all necessary facilities have been made available for pilgrims' easy movement from arrival in the holy land until departure.

Up to six airports have been prepared to receive the coming pilgrims who will be aided and served by 26,000 cadres and 7,700 flights have been scheduled to bring in the pilgrims. The pilgrims can use 35 trains through the Al-Haramain high-speed railway that will transport more than 1.6 million pilgrims, minister Al-Jasser said, in addition to 27,000 buses that will transport the devotees from one ritual place to another. He has also indicated that new technologies are being employed for serving the pilgrims: namely road cooling systems and drones. — KUNA

Thousands of expats benefit from residency law amnesty: Official

KUWAIT: Thousands of expatriates have benefited from the interior ministry's amnesty campaign for residence law violators, an official said in an interview with local Arabic media.

The campaign, which is designed to address residency violations in the country, has been ongoing for nearly three months now and is set to end on June 17. During the past two months, residency affairs department offices located across Kuwait's six governorates, in addition to two centers designated for the campaign in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Riggaa, received about 1,000 violators on average daily who were looking to adjust their legal status, the official said.

Expats taking advantage of the grace period can either leave Kuwait without facing penalties or adjust their legal status by fulfilling the necessary legal requirements. Those who choose to adjust their status will still have to pay the fine. Residency fines are KD 2 per day with a maximum of KD 600, the interior ministry said in a statement.

"This is a golden opportunity that won't come again," said Brigadier General Mzeed Al-Mutairi. He added that the ministry has a plan in place to crackdown on violators who don't adjust their status by deadline. Currently, there are no plans to extend the grace period, said Mutairi.

Illegal residents who cannot pay the fine can leave the country from any exit point without paying any fines. However, they are allowed to return to the country after undergoing new procedures, the ministry said.

Following the end of the grace period, the Ministry warned that strict legal action will be taken against those who remain in violation, including deportation and potential re-entry bans. Mutairi said the person in violation might be banned from entering other GCC countries, as well, according to the security agreements in place between Kuwait and its Gulf neighbors.

Leaving the country

When an illegal resident wishing to leave the country turns up at the department, officials take their fingerprints and pertinent data. They then book them a ticket to leave the country immediately. Expats who don't have a valid passport have been able to obtain travel documents from their embassies to facilitate their departure, said Mutairi.

Embassies have also issued documents to some expats who have come with dependents, with ages ranging from one to 20 years old, who don't have official identification papers and have not been registered with Kuwaiti authorities.

While fines associated with violating residency laws have been waived for those leaving the country, they must still pay any outstanding bills or loans.

Violators who are facing administrative obstacles or are embroiled in court cases are required to apply to the residency affairs department, which will assess their cases and see if they fulfill conditions to be granted residency in accordance with the law, the ministry had said in an earlier statement. Tens of thousands of expats are believed to be living illegally in Kuwait, but the ministry has not announced their numbers. The last time Kuwait issued an amnesty for illegal expats was in early 2021. — Agencies

'Stop and savor': Millennials reflect on life as adults

By Aaron Philip

If Anitta Sara, a millennial expat, could bring back one thing from the olden times, it would be the custom of sending letters through post. "Now that everything is within the palm of your hand, everything is required urgently, it would be nice to stop and savor the art of writing and running the extra mile to send it personally."

Millennials have seen it all - the days when kids played outdoors with friends or family as they spent the weekend with their cousins when schools are closed. They have also grown up as the world's technological revolution unfolded. So, they have modified traditional paradigms with their own blend of technology, skill, social consciousness, and various perspectives. "We certainly have seen the world shift from the old routine to a new dynamic era, we have seen technology swoosh by," said Sara.

Although millennials, who were born from 1981 to 1996, are hailed as the generation of invention and change, they still miss how things were when they were young. "We miss the old times and would love to go back to those times, but we must move with the pace of the world. We certainly miss the child-

hood that was spent more outdoors, away from the screens," said Shanley Joshua, another millennial.

An easier life

Millennials feel that face-to-face communication is lacking in today's environment and that it plays a vital role in strengthening relationships and links with fellow beings. As one of the last generations to have spent time with, heard stories from, and learnt from their grandparents, millennials are the ones passing on traditions, culture, and values to the younger generations. However, Sara says the younger generation don't value culture and customs, merely using traditions as material for trendy viral videos or posts on social media.

Stanley James, an Indian expat, says the younger generation lives a convenient life compared to times before. "Communication has gotten simpler, transportation is easy, studying has gotten easier, doing homework has gotten easier. One can buy food, sell their things even do their work on their phone without moving," he said.

On the other hand, Joshua says millennials have it tough. "It's not as though, we live our life happily, most millennials face issues in getting into jobs of their liking. Most of them are in transition of a son or a daughter to a



husband/wife or a father/mother. We have their own share of struggles, taking care of our family, being independent, managing the day-to-day family expenses," added Stanley.

Different values

The new generation might prefer living independently from their extended family, but Janet a Filipino expat, says deep down, humans know they need their loved ones. "Let's face the truth, even though we all pretend to live our lives independently, we all need each other and are dependent on each other," she said.

When asked what she thinks of the newer generation, Mariam an Egyptian

expat, answered: "The newer generations have two sides. One side wants to do everything to enhance and value human connection, where they are willing to go miles to make that happen, they are ready to slog and burn the midnight oil to make a difference.

"But there is the other side of them that are influenced by people blindly. They have the sudden urge to adapt to a new lifestyle and abandon their own. The need to be identified and acknowledged is on the rise. The need for validation is on the rise. At the end of the day, all a human being needs is food, shelter, family and love. I am worried that Gen-Z is missing out too much on the simplicity of what life can be."

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Municipality open for complaints



Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality will open its doors to the public to hear their complaints, a municipality circular says. The recent administrative circular issued by Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous obliges all officials in the municipality, including heads of departments, to allocate Sunday of each week to receive Kuwaitis to listen to their suggestions and demands. The initiative aims at addressing people's concerns first hand and eliminating any issues they are facing.

The move is in line with similar initiatives announced by other ministries in recent days. Both the social affairs and high education ministers have started meeting citizens in their office to listen to their complaints. The open-door policy has been a focus of the new Kuwaiti Cabinet, which was named in mid-May.

The new government came shortly after HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dissolved parliament indefinitely. The Amir had also suspended some articles of the constitution, including those stating that a new parliament must be elected within two months of a dissolution and that laws must be approved by the parliament and the Amir. The powers of the National Assembly would be assumed by HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal and the country's Cabinet, state TV reported at the time.

The articles would be suspended for a period not exceeding four years, during which all aspects of the democratic process would be studied.

Citizens who would like to book an appointment to meet with Kuwait Municipality officials can do so through the "Sahel" app. The circular said complaints and suggestions heard at the meetings will be summarized in reports to be regularly shared with the municipality's director general. — Agencies

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Skyscrapers stand tall behind men seen fishing on the shore of the Arabian Gulf on a hot afternoon. - Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti only doctor in Middle East to teach at global event

Dr Al-Kandari conducts 2 endoscopy operations at conference livestreamed on social media



Dr Asmaa Al-Kandari is seen during her participation. - KUNA photos



PARIS: Dr Asmaa Al-Kandari, consultant of internal medicine and gastroenterology at the Kuwait Ministry of Health, has taken part in the Endoscopy on Air online marathon, which connects world-class physicians and is a unique educational opportunity for those who want to learn and improve their endoscopy techniques and elevate their skills.

In remarks to KUNA on Friday, Dr Al-Kandari affirmed that her participation in the convention was an opportunity to get acquainted with new information in the realm and interact with peers, noting that she was the sole representative at the event from the Middle East.

This international scientific event is valuable with respect to research and clinical treatment, she said, affirming the need for such interaction to update medical protocols. The Kuwaiti doctor conducted two endoscopy operations, publicized via the social media. The conference has drawn 25,000 partici-

pants and specialists, some partaking virtually. Participants could observe some of the most proficient and experienced physicians from around the globe and examine how state-of-the-art technologies are utilized to diagnose and treat a wide range of medical conditions and discover the latest advancements in endoscopic procedures.

Last year, Dr Al-Kandari was honored by Health Minister Ahmad Al-Awadhi. In a statement to KUNA, the minister said she was one of the top international and local experts in diagnosing and treating gastrointestinal tumors through endoscopy. She also utilizes AI in her procedures. The doctor was head of a training program at the Jahra Hospital done in collaboration with several international organizations. The program helped equip 100 specialists from Kuwait and other parts of the world, including Turkey, the UK, Europe and North America, with the skills they need to use endoscopy for tumor diagnosis. — KUNA

KRCS distributes more aid to families in south Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) started Friday its second phase of distributing relief aid to southern Lebanese people affected by Zionist attacks since October 2023.

In a statement to KUNA, relief coordinator for the Lebanese Red Cross Yousef Boutros said that the KRCS is continuing its relief aid distribution to the Lebanese in cities and villages in the south whose security had been threatened by Zionist attacks. In coordination with KRCS, the Lebanese Red Cross' aid includes food and cleaning supplies for over 6,000 Lebanese families, added Boutros.

Member of Qana town municipality in Tyre Hassan Ftouni extended his gratitude to the leadership and people of Kuwait for their unending support and assistance for Lebanon and its people. Ftouni underscored the KRCS' efforts in southern Lebanon, empowering people through their current security and economic difficulties. The KRCS' relief and contributions extend to its "loaf project," aiding and supplying food to thousands of Syrian and Lebanese families and refugees over the years. With Eid Al-Adha around the corner, the KRCS will distribute food to Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.



BEIRUT: Personnel from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the Lebanese Red Cross prepare to distribute aid boxes. — KUNA

The Zionist military and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement have been exchanging near-daily fire since Hamas' attack on the Zionist entity and the ensuing Zionist war on Gaza.

Lebanon has accused the Zionist entity of using controversial white phosphorus rounds, in attacks authorities say have harmed civilians and the environment. The cross-border hostilities have killed more than 450 people in Lebanon according to an AFP tally, most of them fighters but also including 88 civilians. Tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes in south Lebanon. The entity says 14 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed on its side of the border. — Agencies



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Rahul Gandhi
nominated as leader of
India's opposition

Tensions flare on Poland-Belarus border as more migrants arrive

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PARIS: Protestors hold Palestinian flags as they stand on the "Triomphe de la République" statue during a demonstration to support Palestinians and to demand for a ceasefire at Place de la Nation in Paris on June 8, 2024. — AFP

Muslim-majority allies urge world to pile pressure on Zionist entity

Blinken to visit Mideast next week to push ceasefire plan

ISTANBUL: An alliance of mostly Muslim-majority countries including Turkey, Egypt and Iran on Saturday demanded full Palestinian membership of the United Nations and greater international pressure on Zionist entity amid the Gaza war.

The D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, which also includes Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Pakistan, called for an immediate ceasefire in the devastated Palestinian territory, where Zionist entity has been battling Hamas militants for more than eight months. Foreign ministers from the group meeting in Istanbul called on the United States to lift its veto on full Palestinian UN membership and on all countries to "exert diplomatic, political, economic and legal pressure" on Zionist entity.

They also urged states to ensure Zionist entity complies with the International Court of Justice's decisions, withdraws from the southern Rafah governorate and guarantees the safe entry of humanitarian

aid to Gaza. Denouncing an "ongoing genocide and grave violations of international law", the group called on states to contribute to and join legal proceedings against Zionist entity at international courts.

The eight countries also demanded an end to arms and ammunition deliveries to Zionist entity and that all measures be taken to protect Palestinian civilians, rejecting any attempted forced displacement.

They advocated a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital and a guarantee mechanism to protect a future settlement.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit the Middle East next week to push a plan for an Zionist entity-Hamas ceasefire that aims to end the war, the State Department announced Friday. Blinken, who will be paying his eighth visit to the region since the Oct 7 attack, will visit Zionist entity and key US Arab partners Egypt, Jordan and

Qatar from Monday through Wednesday, the State Department said. The United States has been pushing for Hamas to accept a plan laid out a week ago by President Joe Biden that would halt fighting for at least six weeks and free captives held in Gaza.

Blinken "will emphasize the importance of Hamas accepting the proposal on the table, which is nearly identical to one Hamas endorsed last month," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement. The top US diplomat "will discuss how the ceasefire proposal would benefit both Zionist entity and Palestinians. He will underscore that it would alleviate suffering in Gaza, enable a massive surge in humanitarian assistance and allow Palestinians to return to their neighborhoods," he said.

Miller said the plan would also "unlock the possibility of achieving calm along Zionist entity's northern border" as tensions rise between Zionist entity and Lebanese militants Hezbollah.

Hamas has not yet formally replied to the offer but has been critical, saying it was not a detailed, written proposal. Qatar and Egypt have been the main interlocutors, with the Qataris submitting the plan to Hamas. In Jordan, Blinken will take part in a UN-backed conference on the humanitarian response in Gaza.

Biden on May 31 unveiled a plan that he hopes will bring an end to the war, which has taken a heavy toll on civilians and increasingly angered his electoral base five months ahead of elections. Under the plan, Zionist entity would withdraw from Gaza population centers and Hamas would free hostages for an initial six weeks, with the ceasefire extended as negotiators seek a permanent end to hostilities.

Biden billed the plan as a Zionist entity offer, although it has drawn criticism from some right-wing Zionist entity politicians critical to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government. — AFP

Macron: France, US intensify efforts to prevent ME explosion

PARIS: France and the United States will work harder to prevent a broader escalation in the Middle East with a key priority to calm the situation between Zionist entity and Hezbollah, President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday. We are redoubling efforts together to avoid a regional explosion, particularly in Lebanon," Macron said in a joint statement with Joe Biden during the US President's state visit to France. Macron added that the sides were working on "advancing parameters" to reduce tensions and end an institutional vacuum in Lebanon. France and the United States have in recent months worked to try to defuse tensions with Paris submitting written proposals to both sides aimed at stopping worsening exchanges between Zionist entity and Hezbollah on the border. The United States has also worked on the issue, but diplomats have said there have been problems in coordinating efforts.

Macron said the two countries had developed "a close coordination" in the discussions "with Zionist entity on one side and with Lebanon and all the parties involved on the other side". Biden made no mention of Lebanon in the short statement and also did not mention Iran, which Macron said was adopting a strategy of escalation in the region, citing Tehran's attack on Zionist entity and the development of its nuclear program. "Our two countries are determined to exert the necessary pressures to stop this trend," Macron said.

Biden pledged Washington's support for Kyiv in its battle against the Russian invasion, warning that Vladimir Putin would "not stop" at Ukraine. "Putin is not going to stop at Ukraine," Biden said alongside French President Emmanuel Macron after talks in Paris.

"All of Europe will be threatened, we are not going to let that happen," Biden told journalists during his state visit to France. "The United States is standing strong with Ukraine. We will not, I say it again, walk away," he added. Macron told Biden in front of reporters: "I thank you, Mr President, for being the president of the world's number one power but doing it with the loyalty of a partner who likes and respects the Europeans."



French President Emmanuel Macron gestures next to US President Joe Biden at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France June 8, 2024. — Reuters

Both Biden and Macron on Friday met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Paris, pledging support for the Ukrainian cause. The US president, 81, has been in France since Wednesday and took part in this week's commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings that changed the course of World War II. On Friday, Biden warned of the need to preserve American democracy and drew parallels between World War II and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Biden is set to face his Republican rival and predecessor Donald Trump later this year in presidential elections that commentators predict will subject US democracy to a severe test. Trump has also signaled his lack of interest in international organizations including NATO. "We have shown the world again the power of allies and what we can achieve when we stand together," said Biden. Earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Joe Biden at Paris' Arc de Triomphe at the start of the US leader's state visit to France on Saturday as the two nations seek to tighten ties. Biden has been in France since Wednesday and took part in this week's commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings that changed the course of World War II. During a welcome ceremony in Paris, Macron and Biden laid a wreath and rekindled the flame on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The two leaders were also due to walk down the Champs-Élysées, accompanied by the Republican Guard. — Agencies

Assault on Danish PM not 'politically motivated': Govt

COPENHAGEN: Danish authorities said Saturday that an attack on Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, which left her "shaken" and with a whiplash injury, was likely not "politically motivated". A 39-year-old Polish man, who was apprehended after hitting the prime minister on Friday evening, was remanded in custody until June 20 after appearing before a Copenhagen court, prosecutor Taruh Sekeroglu told reporters. "It is not our guiding... hypothesis that there is a political motive here. But that is something that the police of course will investigate," Sekeroglu said.

Sekeroglu said the man was suspected of violence against a public servant and deemed a flight risk. Frederiksen's office told AFP she had been taken to a hospital for a check-up after the attack in a Copenhagen square. The assault caused a "minor whiplash injury", it said, adding that the prime minister was "otherwise safe but shaken by the incident" and her Saturday schedule had been cancelled.

During the hearing on Saturday, the prosecution presented a statement from a doctor describing the defendant as mentally unbalanced and under the influence, Danish media reported. Broadcaster DR also reported that police had described the man, who denied being guilty of a crime, as "probably both under the influence of substances and drunk" when arrested. The broadcaster also reported that while in court the prosecutor asked if the man could remember what he was doing between 5:30 pm (1530 GMT) and 5:45 pm the day before. "To be completely honest, then no, not much," the man replied, according to DR.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday became the latest European leader to denounce the attack as "unacceptable", in a statement on X. "I strongly condemn this act and wish Mette Frederiksen a speedy recovery," Macron added. Two witnesses, Marie Adrian and Anna Ravn, told newspaper BT they had seen Frederiksen arrive at the square while they were sitting at a nearby fountain, just before 6:00 pm on Friday. "A man came by in the opposite direction



SAINT-LAURENT-SUR-MER, France: Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and her husband Bo Tengberg arrive at the International commemorative ceremony at Omaha Beach in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, in northwestern France, on June 6, 2024. — AFP

and gave her a hard shove on the shoulder, causing her to fall to the side," the two women told the newspaper. They added that while it was a "strong push", Frederiksen did not hit the ground. They described the man as tall and slim and said he had tried to hurry away but had not gone far before being grabbed and pushed to the ground by men in suits.

The attack was widely condemned by leading European politicians, including EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, who said it was a "despicable act which goes against everything we believe and fight for in Europe". In 2019, Frederiksen became Denmark's youngest prime minister and kept the post after emerging victorious in the 2022 general election.

The incident follows a spate of attacks on politicians from across the political spectrum at work or on the campaign trail in Germany ahead of this week's EU elections - with Danes headed to the polls for their vote on Sunday. On May 15, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico was shot four times at close range as he greeted supporters after a government meeting in the central town of Handlova. Fico, who survived the assassination attempt, underwent two lengthy hospital surgeries. — AFP

International

Tensions flare on Poland-Belarus border as more migrants arrive

Polish soldier dies after being stabbed by migrants on border

BIALOWIEZA, Poland: Surrounded by lush forests, a dozen people huddled near a razor-tipped fence along the Belarus border, waiting for a chance to scale it or push aside its slats to head west into Poland. On the other side, armed Polish border guards and soldiers walked and drove back and forth, keeping a close eye on group, who were mostly young men from the Middle East, some of them marked with cuts from the sharp wire.

Tensions over migration are high across Europe as far-right parties calling for tougher controls face off against centrist movements in European Parliament elections, which are taking place in Poland on Sunday. Here, that standoff has an extra geo-political edge.

A Polish soldier died on Thursday after he was stabbed on the border with Belarus by migrants trying to cross into the European Union, the army said, while Warsaw said it would demand Belarus hand over the person responsible for his death. The border has been a flashpoint since migrants started flocking there in 2021, after Belarus, a close Russian ally, opened travel agencies in the Middle East offering a new unofficial route into Europe - a move the European Union said was designed to create a crisis. A soldier of the 1st Armored Brigade, referred to only by his first name Mateusz, had been stabbed by migrants trying to cross a fence on the border in late May. The army said he died on Thursday. "Despite the help provided in the area of the criminal attack on the border with Belarus and the efforts of doctors, his life could not be saved," it said in a statement.

In recent weeks there has been an increase in the number of migrants trying to cross illegally and border guards have reported a number of violent incidents.

"We demand that (Belarusian) authorities estab-

lish the identity of this murderer and hand him over to Polish authorities," Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said. A protest note would be handed to the Belarussian charge d'affaires later on Thursday, he said. Poland has recently announced plans to beef up the border and reintroduce a 200-metre buffer zone.

Poland and the European Union have accused Belarus and Russia of trying to spread chaos since 2021 by pushing migrants over the frontier in what Warsaw calls a "hybrid war". Minsk and Moscow have dismissed the accusations.

The numbers of people arriving have been rising recently, according to Polish government figures. And this week, what Poland sees as a war had a casualty when a soldier patrolling the border died after succumbing to his wounds from a confrontation with migrants on May 28. In response, the centrist, pro-EU government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has announced plans to re-introduce a no-go zone along the frontier.

"This border is not safe, unfortunately. The purpose of this zone is to ensure that no one is exposed to the type of attack that Polish soldiers are exposed to," deputy defense minister Pawe Zalewski told Reuters.

Back at the fence on Monday, the group kept waiting. Ahmed Lebek, 24, from Aleppo, Syria, said he had been there for more than a month. His brother had given up and gone back to Belarus, though he had had no news from him since. "I come from the war to find a good life. But I found it very hard to cross this border," said Ahmed, 35, an English teacher from Syria. He had tried four times to climb the fence. Under current arrangements, migrants can apply for asylum in EU-member Poland once they are on the Polish soil.

One of them who made it through the fence a day



A group of migrants, mainly from Yemen, receive help from humanitarian organization activists in the forest near Grudki, Poland. — Reuters

later was Noaman Al-Hemiyari, a 24-year-old graphic designer from Yemen. In the forest on the Polish side of the border, he told Reuters he and others has built a ladder from wood, fabric scraps and plastic bags, and scaled the barrier when darkness fell.

He had originally applied for a Polish student visa from Yemen, which was rejected, before trav-

elling to Moscow, then Belarus and later the border area where he had spent 22 days. "We had been caught by the Belarussians. They hit us ... Then they said 'go,'" Noaman said, visibly relieved and with leaves still in his hair. "They (smugglers) said it's so easy ... They lied to us. If I had any idea it's like this, I wouldn't have come." — Reuters

Trump vows to reverse Biden border order

PHOENIX, US: Donald Trump said Thursday he would reverse US President Joe Biden's order clamping down on illegal border crossings, in his first campaign event since becoming a convicted felon. The expected Republican Party nominee also threatened to impose tariffs on countries that do not stem the flow of migrants into the United States, as he seeks to make electoral capital on an issue polls show resonates with voters.

Asked by an audience member at an event in the must-win state of Arizona what he would do to shut off the flow of people entering the US via the southern border - including migrants from China

and the Middle East - Trump said he would use economic measures.

"We have tremendous economic power... if China or some other country is behaving badly, we have things called tariffs that are so severe," he said. "We are going to be so tough and if a country is not going to behave, we're going to tariff the hell out of that country," he added, without giving details on what size or kind of tariffs he would impose.

Trump was in Phoenix for his first event since being convicted of 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up hush money paid to a porn star. A sympathetic audience in this southwestern border state were given the opportunity after a long speech to ask questions of the former president.

While there were some on the cost of living, most were variations on a theme of immigration, an issue polls show is uppermost in voters' minds ahead of the November 5 election.

Biden, seeking to neutralize an issue he is widely thought to be performing badly on, this week issued an executive order barring

migrants who enter the US illegally from claiming asylum when numbers surge past 2,500 in a day. The order also makes it easier to deport people back to Mexico.

The curbs will remain in place until numbers fall back down below 1,500 illegal crossings a day. Biden came under fire from all sides for the policy shift, which uses the same law that Trump once employed to ban migrants from Muslim countries when he was president. Republicans, meanwhile, lashed it as too little. Trump on Thursday said he would reverse the order if he won the election. "On Day One of my administration, I will be rescinding Crooked Joe's outrageous executive order," he told the cheering crowd, blasting it - without evidence - as "pro-invasion, pro-child trafficking... pro-drug dealers."

"And I will terminate every single open borders policy of the Biden administration." Biden won Arizona in 2020 by a wafer-thin 10,000 votes, and the state is expected to be crucial to both men's chances of winning another four years in the White House. — AFP



Former US President and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump participates in a town hall event at Dream City Church in Phoenix, Arizona, on June 6, 2024. — AFP

210 Palestinians massacred...

Continued from Page 1

On Saturday, Netanyahu said the security forces "have proven that the Zionist entity does not surrender to terrorism". He pledged to return the rest of the captives. His office also released a video of him speaking with Argamani on a mobile telephone. She said she was "very excited" to return home.

US President Joe Biden welcomed the rescue operation, saying: "We won't stop working until all the hostages are home and a ceasefire is reached. That's essential to happen." He was speaking in Paris alongside French President Emmanuel Macron, who also congratulated the families for the release of the hostages. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called the rescue "an important sign of hope". Near Nuseirat on Saturday, an AFP photographer saw scores of Palestinians fleeing the Bureij camp on foot, fearing further airstrikes.

The operation came days after the airstrike on the Nuseirat school run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, which a Gaza hospital said had killed 37 people. The military said it killed 17 "terrorists". UNRWA condemned Zionists for striking a facility it said had housing 6,000 displaced people. Zionists accuse Hamas and its allies of using civilian infrastructure, including UN-run facilities, as operational centers - charges the militants deny.

The war has brought widespread devastation to Gaza. Most of Gaza's 2.4 million inhabitants are displaced. In Gaza City, five people were killed overnight when a warplane bombed the Mhana family home, emergency services said. Yussef Al-Dalu said his neighbor's house had been reduced to rubble. "I know that only defenseless civilians live in this house. They are not part of any resistance (group)," he told AFP TV.

Zionist military offensive has killed at least 36,801 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. Seventy were killed in the past 24 hours, it said. Zionist entity faces growing diplomatic isolation, with international court

cases accusing it of war crimes and several European countries recognizing a Palestinian state. Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced Saturday his government would suspend coal exports to the Zionist entity "until the genocide stops".

Netanyahu also faces pressure from within his right-wing government. After the announcement of the hostage rescue, Zionist war cabinet minister Benny Gantz cancelled a news conference that was scheduled for Saturday, his office said. Gantz, a centrist former military chief, said last month he would resign if Netanyahu did not approve a post-war plan for Gaza by June 8. Latest efforts to mediate the first ceasefire in the conflict since a week-long pause in November appear to have stalled a week after Biden offered a new roadmap. World powers and Arab states have backed the proposal that Biden said includes an initial six-week pause and hostage-prisoner exchange as well as stepped-up delivery of aid into Gaza.

Hamas has yet to respond. The Zionist entity has expressed openness to discussions but remains committed to destroying the Islamist group. Major sticking points include Hamas insisting on a permanent truce and full withdrawal - demands Zionists rejected. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is set to visit the Zionist entity and key regional partners Egypt, Jordan and Qatar from Monday on his eighth Middle East trip since the war began.

Meanwhile, Zionist forces have attacked the Kuwait Specialty Hospital in the city of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, setting large parts of it on fire. In a press statement, Director of the Kuwaiti Hospital, Dr Suhaib Al-Hams, condemned occupiers systematic targeting of hospitals in the Gaza Strip and putting them out of service. He described the health situation in Rafah as extremely catastrophic after all Rafah hospitals were put out of service due to Zionist assaults.

He noted that dozens of dead bodies and injured people are scattered in the streets of the Rafah Governorate as the occupation forces prevent medical teams from reaching them. Al-Hams called on international health institutions to stand up to their responsibilities and urgently stop the shedding of Palestinian blood and the ongoing genocide in Gaza. — Agencies

dollars to support the organization this year.

Taking serious measures to address the refugees' crisis is a must, as the situation is deteriorating around the world, she noted. On his part, WCK president Andres condemned the Zionist occupation's prevention of humanitarian aid delivery in Gaza and the attacks on field workers. He said that no less than 200 humanitarian workers were killed by Zionist attacks during the war on Gaza.

Humanitarian workers support all war victims regardless of their religion or ethnicity, said Andres, adding that the WCK provides 250,000 meals daily in the Gaza Strip. Speaking to KUNA at the event, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah said Kuwait's public and private sectors share strong relations with the UNHCR as part of the country's humanitarian efforts. — KUNA

S&P confirms Kuwait's...

Continued from Page 1

event of a significant increase in public financial imbalances driven by a decline in oil prices or the absence of financial reforms.

The rating could also be downgraded if the government remains without comprehensive financing arrangements for the deficits in the general budget, the report noted. CBK also said that the agency stated that the country's credit rating could be improved if the government succeeds in implementing a comprehensive structural reform package, such as diversifying the economy away from the oil sector and increasing its production capacity, which leads to stronger prospects for growth.

Regarding the reasons for the classification, the agency noted that the Kuwaiti economy is still largely dependent on the oil sector, which represents approximately 90 percent of exports and government revenues and about 50 percent of the gross domestic product, as this sector contributed significantly to achieving surpluses.

The agency pointed out in its report that high government spending, including the very large wage and salary bill, ensures that large surpluses in the financial accounts will not be repeated, as Kuwait has suffered from a deficit throughout the past 10 years, with the exception of two fiscal years (2013-2014) and (2014-2015), expecting such deficits to continue for the fiscal years (2023/2024-2027/2028).

Apollo 8 astronaut dies in plane...

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like a Christmas tree ornament coming up over this very stark, ugly lunar landscape." The "Earthrise" photo is frequently listed in roundups of key historical images, and was included in Life Magazine's book "100 Photographs that Changed The World."

An original version of the photo sold at a Copenhagen auction in 2022 for 11,800 euros. "In 1968, during Apollo 8, Bill Anders offered to humanity among the deepest of gifts an astronaut can give," NASA chief Bill Nelson wrote on social media platform X. "He traveled to the threshold of the Moon and helped all of us see something else: ourselves. He embodied the lessons and the purpose of exploration. We will miss him," Nelson added.

"To discover Earth"

The San Juan County Sheriff's Office in Washington state said in a statement that local authorities received a report around noon on Friday that "an older model plane was flying from north to south then went into the water and sunk." The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board were investigating the crash.

Regarding financial reforms, the agency expected that authorities in Kuwait would move to impose new selective taxes on tobacco and sugary drinks and increase fees on a group of government services, noting that it is unlikely to impose a value-added tax (VAT) with the possibility of passing the public debt law in the fiscal year 2025/2026.

Other financial reforms aimed at reducing the wage bill remain important but are under discussion, and the government seeks to increase the employment of citizens in the private sector. As for developments in the general budget of the country, the agency estimated the budget deficit in the fiscal year 2023-2024 at about 4.7 percent of the GDP. It was also estimated that the deficit in the fiscal year (2024-2025) would shrink to 3.1 percent of the GDP.

Regarding monetary policy and exchange rate policy, Standard & Poor's expected that the Kuwaiti dinar's exchange rate would continue to be linked to an undervalued weighted basket of currencies. Consumer price inflation (CPI) remained around 3.6 percent in 2023, down from 4 percent in 2022, the agency said, projecting that the CPI will moderate throughout the forecast period, averaging 2.3 percent in 2024-2027. It is lower than in many developed and emerging markets, it is estimated.

It did not envisage significant contingent liabilities for the government from the banking sector in Kuwait, which has demonstrated strong resilience and financial soundness over the past few years. It forecasted subdued credit growth in 2024 and 2025, rising in 2026-2027. The agency expected that banks' high provision buffers would allow them to limit the increase in nonperforming loans (NPLs) ratios by writing off NPLs, which are already at a very low level and stood at 1.4 percent in December 2023. — KUNA

Born October 17, 1933, in Hong Kong, Anders graduated from the US Naval Academy and later earned a master's degree in nuclear engineering. After his time as an astronaut, Anders later held various technology-related government positions, notably becoming the first chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and later serving as the US ambassador to Norway. In the early 1990s, he headed up the US defense and aerospace company General Dynamics as CEO and chairman, before retiring.

In a 2015 interview with Forbes, Anders said his Earthrise image had captured so much attention because it showed the planet's beauty and fragility - and "helped kick start the environmental movement." But he was also surprised that the public seemed to have lost the memory of the space mission that produced the photo. "It's curious to me that the press and people on the ground have kind of forgotten our history-making voyage, and what's symbolic of the flight now is the 'Earthrise' picture," Anders said. "Here we came all the way to the moon to discover Earth."

Of the Apollo 8 members, only Lovell is still alive. Borman died in November 2023 at the age of 95. Lovell, 96, was also a member of the Apollo 13 mission that was meant to land on the Moon, but experienced a near-catastrophe that was later made into a Hollywood film. The last time humans set foot on the Moon was in 1972 during the Apollo 17 mission, but NASA has set its sights on sending new astronauts, including the first woman and person of color, in the coming years. — AFP

UN chief hails Kuwait's ...

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah presented WCK founder Jose Andres with an honorary award in appreciation of his humanitarian efforts, especially in Gaza, where the organization provides thousands of meals daily to Palestinians. He also conveyed his deepest condolences over the deaths of seven WCK employees in Zionist occupation air raids last April in Gaza. In the same context, Sheikhha Rima Al-Sabah said she will continuously support UNHCR's work around the world, noting that she had gathered over one million

International

Rahul Gandhi nominated as leader of India's opposition

Modi to be sworn in PM on Sunday

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival Rahul Gandhi was nominated on Saturday to lead India's opposition in parliament after an election result that rescued his party from the political wilderness.

Modi will be sworn into office for a third term this weekend following a poll that deprived his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of a majority, forcing it to rely on coalition allies to govern. Gandhi defied analysts' expectations and exit polls to help his Congress party nearly double its parliamentary numbers, its best result since Modi was swept to power a decade ago.

A meeting of the Congress leadership on Saturday voted unanimously to recommend Gandhi's election as India's official opposition leader, a post that had been left vacant since 2014. "All participants unanimously passed the resolution that Rahul Gandhi should take the position of leader of opposition in the parliament," Congress general secretary K C Venugopal told a news conference afterwards.

The nomination was being put before a meeting of lawmakers belonging to a Congress-led opposition alliance later on Saturday. Gandhi is the scion of the dynasty that dominated Indian politics for decades and is the son, grandson

and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

If elected, as expected, he will be recognized as India's official opposition leader when the new parliament sits, which local media reports suggest will happen as soon as early next week. Parliamentary regulations require the opposition leader to come from a party that commands at least 10 percent of the lawmakers in the 543-seat lower house.

The post has been vacant for 10 years because two dismal election results for Congress - once India's dominant party - left it short of that threshold.

Gandhi is one of several top opposition figures to face criminal proceedings in cases they claim are politically driven by Modi's government. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment last year in 2023 in a separate case in Gujarat but was not jailed after appealing with India's top court. The sentence did, however, force his brief disqualification from parliament until the Supreme Court suspended his conviction.

On Friday, he made another brief court appearance in the tech hub of Bengaluru, in a case brought by a BJP member for accusing the party of corruption in its administration of the southern state of Karnataka. US think-tank Freedom

House said this year that the BJP had "increasingly used government institutions to target political opponents".

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, an ally of Gandhi's, was jailed this year in connection with an ongoing graft investigation.

Tuesday's election results increased the party's parliamentary representation from 52 to 99 seats. A statement from the Congress executive said that "many challenges" remained in the party's road to reclaiming its credibility and returning to government in the future. "The people of India have spoken - the Congress has been given another chance," the statement said. "It is now up to us to build on it. We must and we will."

Modi and his Hindu-nationalist BJP ruled outright for the past decade but failed to repeat its previous two landslide wins this time, despite widespread expectations of another easy triumph. He was instead forced into quick-fire talks with the 15-member National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition, which guaranteed him the parliamentary numbers to govern.

There are no indications yet of what concessions Modi may have offered in return, though several larger coalition allies are reported to be seeking cabinet posts. The NDA has



Indian National Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi speaks during a press conference in Ghaziabad on April 17, 2024, ahead of the country's general elections. — AFP

293 members in the next parliament, 21 above a simple majority.

Modi and his new ministers will be sworn in by President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday evening. Leaders of India's neighbors including Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina began arriving in New Delhi on Saturday for the ceremony. Tesla founder Elon Musk was among the latest international figures

to congratulate Modi on his re-election, writing on his social media platform X that he was looking forward to his companies "doing exciting work in India".

"Appreciate your greetings," Modi wrote in his Saturday response. "Our demography, predictable politics and stable democratic polity will continue to provide the business environment for all our partners." — AFP

Python swallows woman whole in Indonesia

MAKASSAR, Indonesia: A woman has been found dead inside the belly of a snake after it swallowed her whole in central Indonesia, a local official said Saturday.

The husband of 45-year-old Farida and residents of Kalempang village in South Sulawesi province discovered her on Friday inside the reticulated python, which measured around five meters (16 feet).

The mother-of-four had gone missing Thursday night and failed to return home, forcing a search effort, village head Suardi Rosi told AFP. Her husband "found her belongings... which made him suspicious. The villagers then searched the area. They soon spotted a python with a large belly," said Suardi.

"They agreed to cut open the python's stomach. As soon as they did, Farida's head was immediately visible." Farida was found fully clothed inside the snake.

Such incidents are considered extremely rare but several people have died in Indonesia in recent years after being swallowed whole by py-



A screen shot of YouTube video shows villagers in Indonesia slicing open a python's carcass to reveal a woman's body.

thons. Last year, residents in Southeast Sulawesi's Tinangea district killed an eight-metre python, which was found strangling and eating one of the farmers in a village.

In 2018, a 54-year-old woman was found dead

inside a seven-meter python in Southeast Sulawesi's Muna town. And the year before, a farmer in West Sulawesi went missing before being found eaten alive by a four-meter python at a palm oil plantation. — AFP

Malaysia defends eviction of sea nomads over security

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian authorities defended their decision to evict hundreds of sea nomads from their homes off the coast of Sabah state this week, saying it was aimed at boosting security and combating cross-border crime. More than 500 people from the Bajau Laut, a mostly stateless sea-faring community who live on rickety houseboats or coastal huts built on stilts, saw their homes demolished or burned by enforcement officials this week, local activists have said.

The operation in Sabah's Semporna district was criticized by rights groups, which called on the government to halt the evictions and ensure the safety and protection of the Bajau Laut. Sabah's minister of tourism, culture and environment Christina Liew said authorities were empowered to act against illegal activities, such as fishing, building structures and farming without permission, in protected areas controlled by Sabah Parks, a state conservation agency.

"The sovereignty of the country's laws in this issue must be upheld," she said in a statement on Friday.

Liew said evacuation notices were sent to 273 unauthorized settlements last month, with 138 structures demolished between Tuesday and



Smoke rises as a house is demolished in Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Sabah, Malaysia, in this screen grab obtained from a social media video, released on June 4, 2024. — Reuters

Thursday in "hot spots" around the Tun Sakaran Marine Park, a tourism attraction known for its diving spots. Citing police sources, Liew alleged that some homeowners had burned their own houses to gain sympathy and go viral on social media.

The operation was carried out taking into account security factors, including cross-border crime, she said. Semporna lies on the north-eastern tip of Borneo, bordering the southern Philippines. The Bajau Laut have been recorded living in

the area for centuries, but many are born without nationality documents and are regarded by authorities as migrants.

Rights group Pusat Komang called on the state to provide alternative homes and address documentation issues to ensure the Bajau Laut received fair treatment and access to essential services. "Their forced removal raises serious questions about the equitable treatment of ethnic minorities in Malaysia," the group said. — Reuters

and covered the mine during the heavy rains.

Workers would usually use dynamite to break the rock apart, he said, but had ruled it out as they took the "utmost care not to endanger the lives of those trapped".

"It is a manual and tedious process that requires patience and care," he said. Minerals such as gold, tantalite and lithium are mined in the area. Shiroro is one of several districts in Niger State terrorized by bandits, who raid remote villages in northwest and central Nigeria to loot as well as kidnap residents for ransom. Six people were kidnapped in the area on Sunday and another 20 abducted nearby on Tuesday, according to SEMA.

Last year, the Niger State government banned mining activities in Shiroro and other districts due to insecurity and safety concerns. But artisanal miners have continued to operate, seeking to raise money for food and essentials after bandit raids displaced many from their homes and farms. — AFP

Desperation rises in search for trapped Nigerian miners

KANO, Nigeria: Desperation rose on Friday as Nigerian rescuers worked by hand to dig out around 20 trapped miners, with fears they may not survive after four days buried in a collapsed pit. At least one person was killed and six rescued with severe injuries after the mine collapsed on Monday following torrential rains, officials said earlier this week.

Ibrahim Audu Hussein, spokesman for the SEMA relief agency in central Niger State, told AFP on Friday that the rescue operation was proving "delicate and more difficult than expected".

News in Brief

Student killed in rare Panama university campus shooting

PANAMA CITY: A rare campus shooting in Panama left at least one person dead as two gunmen attacked a group of university students, apparently due to a gang dispute, police said Friday. Another person was wounded in the attack on the grounds of a University of Panama site in the southwestern city of Santiago de Veraguas, authorities said. The motive was thought to be a settling of scores between criminal groups, police deputy commissioner Hector Delgado said in a video posted on social media. — AFP

Rio police kill alleged crime boss in shoot-out

RIO DE JANEIRO: A suspected organized crime boss in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro was killed Friday in a shoot-out with police as they tried to arrest him, local authorities said. Rio's civil police said in a statement that Rui Paulo Goncalves Esteveao, also known as "Pipito," was the alleged head of an organized criminal group accused of extortion and sowing terror in the city. "When he was approached, he attacked the agents and a confrontation ensued. The criminal was hit and taken to a local hospital, but died of his wounds," police said. — AFP

Islamists kill 10 in attack on eastern Congo village

BENI, Democratic Republic of Congo: Suspected Islamist rebels killed at least 10 people in an overnight attack on a village in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a local official and a civil society leader said on Saturday. Armed men attacked the village of Masala in Beni territory, which lies in North Kivu province, overnight on Friday, military administrator Charles Euta Omeonga told Reuters by phone. Civil society leader Justin Kavalami said the attack was carried out by members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the same group that a local official accused of being behind another village assault that killed at least 16 people earlier this week. — Reuters

Vietnam arrests two Facebook users over freedom abuse

HANOI: Police in Vietnam have arrested two well-known Vietnamese Facebook users on charges of abusing democratic freedoms, the government said on Saturday, as a major leadership reshuffle in the Communist-ruled country is settling down. Ex-reporter Truong Huy San, 62, and lawyer Tran Dinh Tien, 65, were arrested on accusations of "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state", the government said in a statement. Despite sweeping economic reform and increasing openness to social change, Vietnam's ruling Communist Party retains tight media censorship and tolerates little criticism. The statement said San and Tien had posted articles on Facebook that infringe upon the interests of the state and lawful rights and interests of organizations and individuals, without elaborating. — Reuters

Top law firms in US opioid lawsuits to get hundreds of millions in fees

WASHINGTON: A court-appointed panel on Friday recommended how to divvy up a pool of \$2.13 billion in legal fees from nationwide drug industry settlements over the US opioid crisis, with top firms set to receive hundreds of millions of dollars. The panel gave national firm Motley Rice the largest share, with 18.6 percent of the funds, or \$396 million. Other firms with large shares include New York-based Simmons Hanly Conroy, with 11.4 percent, or \$244 million; California-based Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd, with 8.2 percent, or \$174 million; and California-based Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, with 5.65 percent, or \$120 million. — Reuters

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024

Unemployment rate 80% in Gaza: UN

Gaza Strip's private sector shed 85.8% of its production value worth \$810m

GENEVA: The war in Gaza has seen the unemployment rate in the besieged Palestinian territory surge to nearly 80 percent, the United Nations said Friday.

The UN's labor agency said the Zionist entity war on Gaza had "caused loss of jobs and livelihoods on a massive scale", while gross domestic product has also plunged. Since the war began in October last year, "the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has reached a staggering 79.1 percent", the International Labour Organization said, citing a new brief by the ILO and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. In the West Bank, unemployment has reached 32 percent, the ILO added.

The average unemployment rate across the West Bank and Gaza combined stood at 50.8 percent, it said. However, these figures "do not account for those who have left the labor force altogether as job prospects proved unattainable", it said. "The actual number of those who have lost their jobs is therefore even higher than what the unemployment figures suggest."

Zionist entity's military offensive has killed at least 36,731 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in Gaza. The ILO said real GDP had contracted by 83.5 percent in the Gaza Strip and by 22.7 percent in the West Bank over the past eight months. "Our new bulletin shows that the grim toll the war in the Gaza Strip has taken on human lives, and the desperate humanitarian situation it has caused, are accompanied by widespread devastation of economic activities and livelihoods,"

said Ruba Jaradat, the ILO regional director for Arab states. The ILO said that in the Gaza Strip almost all private sector establishments "have either completely ceased or significantly reduced production", with the sector shedding 85.8 percent of its production value - equivalent to \$810 million - during the first four months of the war. Gaza's economy now represents 4.1 percent of the total Palestinian economy, down from 16.7 percent before the war.

The unemployment update comes as the ILO holds its annual International Labour Conference in Geneva from June 3-14. "In the wake of the horrific Hamas-led atrocities against Zionist entity and the ensuing relentless war waged by Zionist entity, the labor market in Gaza has literally collapsed," ILO chief Gilbert F Houngbo said during the conference on Thursday. "Gaza is in ruins. Livelihoods are shattered and work is scarce. Labor rights have been decimated. This has been the hardest year for Palestinian workers since 1967. Never before has the situation been this bleak."

Houngbo called for a job-rich and rights-driven early recovery even while the humanitarian response to the war is still unfolding, saying job creation and decent work out to be at the heart of rebuilding infrastructure and services. "Of course, none of this will be possible without an end to the current war and the release of all hostages," the former Togolese prime minister added.

Founded in 1919, the ILO has 187 member states, which are, uniquely in the UN system, represented equally by governments, employers and workers. — AFP



DEIR EL-BALAH: A girl carries folded mattresses as she walks with other displaced people fleeing from the eastern parts of Deir El-Balah to the city centre in the central Gaza Strip on June 8, 2024. — AFP

Japan household spending sees first rise in 14 months

TOKYO: Japan's household spending rose in April for the first time in 14 months, official data showed Friday, as wages grow at the fastest pace in three decades.

The figure was up 0.5 percent on-year with more money spent on education, clothes and transport, including cars, according to the internal affairs ministry. Eyes are now on a decision next week by the Bank of Japan, which in March hiked interest rates for the first time since 2007 but indicated it would maintain its ultra-loose monetary policy.

Wage growth is a key part of the BoJ's strategy as it targets demand-driven inflation of two percent - as opposed to prices rising on the back of unstable, temporary factors such as the war in Ukraine.

Although "wage growth is not keeping up with price increases, it's expected that consumer spend-

ing will pick up as the employment and income environment improves", government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said Friday. Japan's largest business group Keidanren last month put the rate of wage increases among major companies at 5.58 percent - the first time it has topped five percent in 33 years.

While the United States and other major economies have battled sky-high inflation, price rises in Japan have been more moderate. In April, the pace of Japanese inflation slowed to 2.2 percent as gas bills fell. The BoJ's long-standing, ultra-loose monetary policies are designed to banish stagnation and deflation from the world's number-four economy.

But they have made the central bank an outlier among its global peers, which have aggressively increased borrowing costs to tackle sky-high inflation. Masamichi Adachi and Go Kurihara at UBS said last month that in Japan, the "prospect of consumption looks rather good" as "nominal wage growth is expected to accelerate". While they do not expect another rate hike at the bank's meeting next week, "we cannot rule out the possibility of the BoJ's policy change to tightening direction in (the) next couple of months". "Without any policy change, public criticism of the Bank could heighten," they added. — AFP

Norway fund to vote against Musk's \$56bn Tesla pay package

OSLO: Norway's \$1.7 trillion sovereign wealth fund said on Saturday it will vote against ratifying Tesla CEO Elon Musk's \$56 billion pay package, which is up for a shareholder vote next week, after a Delaware judge invalidated it earlier this year. The fund is Tesla's eighth-biggest shareholder, according to LSEG data. Musk's pay, the largest for a chief executive in corporate America, was approved in 2018, but voided by a judge earlier this year, who said the amount was unfair to shareholders, calling it an "unfathomable sum". The fund said it appreciated "the significant value generated under Mr. Musk's leadership since the grant date in 2018".

Still, "we remain concerned about the total size of the award, the structure given performance triggers, dilution, and lack of mitigation of key person risk," Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM), the operator of the fund said. In 2018, the fund had voted against the package. "We will continue to seek constructive dialogue with Tesla on this and other topics," NBIM added.

The fund, which holds a 0.98 percent stake worth \$7.7 billion according to fund data, has been critical of excessive CEO pay. Last year it voted against more than half of US CEO pay packages above \$20 million, warning they did not align with long-term value creation for shareholders.

The fund also said it would vote for a shareholder proposal calling on Tesla to adopt a freedom of association and collective bargaining policy, a win for labor unions seeking to assert their influence over the US carmaker. The vote comes as Tesla continues to face industrial action in Sweden, with its mechanics on strike since Oct 27, in one of the country's longest labor disputes. — AFP

China exports jump in May but imports slow

BEIJING: China's exports accelerated far more than expected in May but imports slowed, official figures showed Friday, in further evidence of an uneven recovery for the world's number two economy.

Overseas shipments surged 7.6 percent on-year in dollar terms, the General Administration of Customs said - much better than April's 1.5 percent and also beating the 5.7 percent forecast in a Bloomberg survey of analysts. Exports have historically served as an important economic engine in China, with overseas sales performance having a direct impact on employment for thousands of companies.

The latest figures represent a second consecutive month of growth, following a brief year-on-year decline of 7.5 percent in March. But various headwinds facing China's trade outlook remain, with combined exports and imports with the United States down 1.4 percent in May amid continuing geopolitical spats between the superpowers.

Trade between China and Russia grew 2.9 percent last month, though Chinese exports to its neighbor fell for the first time since 2020. Beijing and Moscow have strengthened economic and political ties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 - a decision that China has not condemned. China's total imports grew 1.8 percent on-year in May, the data showed, down from the 8.4 percent surge recorded in April. A highly anticipated economic recovery in China following the scrapping of tight pandemic restrictions in late 2022 has been less robust than expected. Beijing policymakers now face an uncertain economic situation, as a debt crisis in the real estate sector and high youth unemployment threaten to weigh down consumer confidence. The latest jump in exports brought China's trade surplus to \$82.6 billion, from \$72.4 billion in April. — AFP



In this file photo an employee rides a bicycle next to oil tanks at Saudi Aramco oil facility in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia October 12, 2019. — Reuters

New Saudi Aramco share offering to raise \$11.2 billion

RIYADH: Saudi oil giant Aramco on Friday said it would price its secondary offering at 27.25 Saudi riyals (\$7.27) per share, in the lower end of its range, allowing it to raise \$11.2 billion. The mostly state-owned jewel of the Saudi economy announced last week it would sell 1.545 billion shares, or approximately 0.64 percent of its issued shares, on the Saudi stock exchange.

The move follows an initial public offering in December 2019 that raised \$25.6 billion, the biggest flotation in history, and will offer a short-term boost to Saudi Arabia's finances as the Gulf kingdom builds large-scale projects including resorts and stadiums as part of ambitious economic reforms.

The share price announced on Friday, disclosed in a statement to the Saudi stock exchange, is at the low end of the range of 26.70 to 29 Saudi riyals (\$7 to \$7.70) announced last week.

It follows days of book-building for investors inside and outside the kingdom, allowing officials to gauge demand. About 10 percent of the shares were offered to retail investors from Monday. "The retail offering was fully subscribed and received a total of 1,331,915 subscribers," Friday's statement from Aramco said. — AFP



People walk out from a subway station in Tokyo's Ginza district on June 6, 2024. - AFP

COP29 climate hosts say they'll keep expanding fossil fuels

BONN: The incoming president of the COP29 UN climate summit in Azerbaijan told AFP on Friday that his country would keep increasing fossil fuel production "in parallel" with investments in cleaner alternatives. Mukhtar Babayev defended his country's hosting of the world's most important climate summit despite its surging natural gas exports, even as UN chief Antonio Guterres renewed calls this week for countries to "phase out" fossil fuels. In an exclusive interview in Bonn with AFP, the COP29 organizers said they would also call for a "COP truce" and ask nations to observe a conflict ceasefire during the marathon negotiations in Baku in November. It comes as diplomats are meeting in the German city this week and next to take stock of global climate action, including a pledge made at last year's COP in the United Arab Emirates to transition away from fossil fuels.

Environmental activists have expressed dismay that the climate talks are being held a second year running in a nation committed to developing even more of the fuels most responsible for causing global warming. Azerbaijan's president recently described his country's gas reserves as a "gift of the gods" and pledged to defend other fossil-fuel economies wanting to extract more oil and gas. Babayev, a former oil executive turned ecology minister, said Azerbaijan was a gas-exporting nation and they would keep ramping

up production to meet demand. This includes from the European Union, he said, which signed major gas contracts with the former Soviet nation after the outbreak of the Ukraine war caused an energy crisis. "We are planning in several years (to) increase the volumes of the natural gas but, at the same time, our renewable energy projects," Babayev told AFP.

"I think in parallel - natural gas production and renewables - possibly will move together at the same time," he added, saying his country was already investing in major clean energy projects. The UAE, which was accused of using its COP presidency to advance fossil fuel deals - allegations it denies - also defended scaling up oil and gas production capacity in response to demand. Babayev is hoping his COP presidency will lead to a new agreement on money from wealthy nations to help developing ones invest in clean energy and adapt to the impacts of global warming. This has been a sticking point of climate negotiations for decades, but negotiators hope to land a new fundraising target when world leaders and ministers meet in Baku. Developing countries want the goal to exceed a previous target of \$100 billion per year.



Mukhtar Babayev

It is estimated that emerging markets and developing countries, excluding China, will need more than \$2 trillion a year by 2030 to meet their climate and development needs. Developed nations historically responsible for climate change agree that more cash is needed, but want wealthy economies and major polluters like China to pay in as well. Raising this money is a "global effort", said COP29 lead negotiator Yalchin Rafiyev. "We cannot single out any party, any country".

"The current flow of finance is not sufficient. And regardless of who will be the contributors, the funding available for the developing countries should be increased," Rafiyev told AFP.

Behind closed doors at Bonn, the COP29 team has floated raising money from "innovative sources", including fossil fuel producers who may be asked to fund climate action in vulnerable nations. "It is a very preliminary idea, and we already had the chance to discuss it with different countries and international financial institutes, and UN institutions," Babayev said, without offering further details.

Rafiyev said the shape of a fund-raising instrument - a tax, levy or other mechanism - had not been decided but they did not want to "finger-point at any industry". "We are listening to everybody, and based on that, we will come up with a final product," he said. Some nations have proposed introducing levies on the fossil fuel industry and other heavily polluting sectors like aviation and shipping, while Brazil is building support for a global tax on billionaires. Azerbaijan had less than a year to prepare for the COP29 summit, being named in December at the last minute after Russia blocked other prospective hosts. It came just days after Azerbaijan and its arch-foe Armenia announced they would work toward a peace agreement, and in the midst of raging conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. — AFP

Capital Intelligence affirms Gulf Bank's Long-term Foreign Currency Rating at 'A+'

Bond rating affirmed at 'BBB+' • Both with a 'Stable' outlook

KUWAIT: Capital Intelligence Ratings ("CI Ratings") has affirmed the Long-term Foreign Currency and the Short-term Foreign Currency of Gulf Bank ratings at "A+" and "A1", respectively. At the same time, CI Ratings has also affirmed the Bank's Stand-alone Rating of "a-", with a "Stable" outlook.

On the other hand, CI Ratings has also affirmed the rating of Gulf Bank's KD 50 million Basel III-compliant Tier 2 Subordinated Bonds at "BBB+". The Outlook for the Bond is "Stable".

According to the recently published CI Ratings report, Gulf Bank's Stand Alone and Core Financial Strength are both supported by the Bank's well established business franchise, especially in retail banking, good and resilient loan asset quality metrics, solid and improved capital position and good liquidity met-



Dalal Al-Dousari

rics. The Core Financial Strength also reflects the Bank's size as the fifth largest bank in Kuwait in terms of total assets, with one of the largest distribution networks in the country and a sound market share of both loans and deposits, as mentioned by CI Rating announcement.

On Gulf Bank's asset quality, CI Ratings stated in their report: "We consider Gulf Bank to be a well-managed institution and conservative lender. Loan asset quality metrics have

remained good and resilient, underpinned by a fairly well diversified loan book by customer segment and economic sector."

Commenting on Capital Intelligence Ratings Bank and Bond credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations said: "We are very pleased to receive the affirmation of our Bank's Long-term Foreign Currency rating at "A+" and our KD 50 million Tier II Subordinated Bond rating at "BBB+" by Capital Intelligence Ratings. This is an international acknowledgement of Gulf Bank's positive market position and highly experienced management team that contributed to its well-established business franchise and sound market share, solid and improved capital position and good liquidity metrics."



Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally as it is rated 'A' by three major credit rating agencies. In addition to Capital Intelligence's recent affirmation of its Long-term Foreign Currency Rating at 'A+' with a stable outlook, Gulf Bank has a Long-term Issuer Default Rating of 'A' with a 'Stable' outlook by Fitch Ratings and a Long-term Deposits rating of 'A3' with a 'Positive' outlook by Moody's Investor Services.

ECB still has 'long way to go' to tame inflation: Lagarde

BERLIN: The European Central Bank (ECB) still has "a long way to go" to tame inflation, its president Christine Lagarde said Friday, a day after the body announced its first interest rate cut since 2019.

In an op-ed published Friday evening in several European newspapers, Lagarde said that inflation had "slowed significantly" and was expected to fall to the target level of two percent by next year. "But there is still a long way to go until inflation is squeezed out of the economy. It will not be an entirely smooth ride," she continued. "Interest rates will

therefore have to remain restrictive for as long as necessary to ensure price stability on a lasting basis. In other words, we still need to have our foot on the brake for a while, even if we are not pressing down as hard as before."

The ECB on Thursday lowered the eurozone's record high key deposit rate by a quarter of a point to 3.75 percent after having kept borrowing costs on hold since October. The cut is expected to provide a much-needed boost for the beleaguered eurozone economy. However, the bank reiterated that it would "keep policy rates sufficiently restrictive for as long as necessary" to hit its inflation target, adding the rate-setting governing council "is not pre-committing to a particular rate path".

"We have made major progress, but our fight against inflation is not over," Lagarde said in her op-ed. "As the guardian of the euro, we are committed to ensuring low and stable inflation for the benefit of all Europeans." — AFP

India central bank holds rates as inflation risks linger

MUMBAI: India's central bank kept interest rates unchanged for the eighth time in a row on Friday, as inflation risks continue to linger in the world's fifth-largest economy. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said its benchmark repo rate, the level at which it lends to commercial banks, would remain steady at 6.50 percent.

Two major central banks have started bringing down interest rates, including the European Central Bank which on Thursday cut rates for the first time since 2019.

Inflation in India has cooled from its 2022 peak of 7.8 percent but still remains above the RBI's four percent target. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said the bank "remains vigilant to any upside risks" of inflation, particularly from food prices.

The decision comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party failed to secure an outright majority in the national elections, forcing it to depend on coalition partners to govern.

Experts believe that may force Modi's next administration to resort to populist spending to shore up its support base and mollify allies, which could stoke inflation. India's economy grew at a robust



India's central bank kept interest rates unchanged for the eighth time in a row on Friday.

8.2 percent in the year to March, with a surging manufacturing sector helping beat government and analyst forecasts. Interest rates were hiked by 2.5 percentage points between May 2022 and February 2023, but have been unchanged since.

India's retail inflation came in at 4.83 percent in April, almost level from the previous month and led mainly by an increase in food prices. The country's "core" inflation, which excludes food and fuel costs, remained below 4 percent. The International Monetary Fund expects India's gross domestic product growth to taper slightly to 6.8 percent in 2024-25, which will still make it the fastest-growing among large economies, according to forecasts from April. — AFP



A sticker of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pasted on a scooter at a wholesale grain market in Mathura, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India, April 25, 2024. — Reuters

In Modi stronghold, voters chose jobs over new temple

AYODHYA, India: The opening of a grand Hindu temple just three months ahead of India's general election was supposed to be a crowning moment for populist prime minister Narendra Modi that would carry his party to a dominant victory with its Hindu-first agenda.

It didn't work out that way. Instead, Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost the seat in Ayodhya, where the temple is located. In the surrounding state of Uttar Pradesh, a traditional stronghold for the party and one that sends the most lawmakers to parliament, its tally of seats was nearly halved. Although the BJP and its allies can form a coalition government to keep Modi in power as prime minister for his third term, the margin of the victory was much smaller than pollsters had predicted and sent a shockwave through Indian politics.

The message from voters in Ayodhya and across swathes of Uttar Pradesh is that the BJP's pro-Hindu agenda was not enough. Other campaign tactics of record economic growth and free-food programs were overshadowed by unemployment, the cost of living and the widening gap between the urban and rural economies. "Everyone loves Lord Ram, but without work and income, what can one do?" said Nankan Yadav, a 55-year old Hindu farmer, one of 18 people interviewed in the town by Reuters. Yadav said he switched to the opposition Samajwadi Party after voting for the BJP in the last two elections. He said he was the sole earner in a family of five, with his three children either studying or jobless.

"Inflation and unemployment are the issues on which people have voted. We have voted to bring the focus back on unemployment," he said, as earth-movers dredged his front yard to widen a public road, a common feature across the city as it grows to accommodate more visitors. Twenty-four-year-old Mohammad Shahid, whose income driving an electric rickshaw supports his parents, wife and two young children, said he too voted for the Samajwadi Party because he was struggling with high electricity bills, monthly instalments for the loan on his vehicle and other costs.

"Rates for everything keep rising," he said. The ruling BJP lost a third of its rural parliamentary seats, with analysts saying this was down to discontent over a lack

of jobs and inflation in the countryside. Over the past half-century, the BJP has risen from the fringes of mainstream politics to become the country's most dominant party on the back of its ideology of muscular Hinduism, underlined by the campaign to build the Ram temple on the site of a 16th-century mosque. Its landslide victories since 2014 in a series of general and state elections, India's stellar economic growth and Modi's huge personal popularity may have led to over-confidence, analysts said.

"In a state like Uttar Pradesh, the temple is not the only deciding factor any more (unlike) development issues...and unemployment," said Surendra Kumar Dwivedi, a former head of the political science department at Lucknow University. Unemployment and inflation were the two biggest reasons nationally for people to go against Modi's alliance, according to a survey of 20,000 voters by the CSDS-Lokniti polling agency for the Hindu newspaper. Some 30 percent of the voters were worried about inflation, a jump from the 20 percent prior to the election, while unemployment was a factor for 27 percent. The unemployment rate in India rose to 8.1 percent in April from 7.4 percent in March, according to the private think-tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, compared with around 6 percent before the COVID-19 pandemic. Modi first came to power in 2014 on the promise of creating 20 million jobs a year, but has fallen far short of that.

While headline inflation hovering around 5 percent is relatively low, food inflation of above 8 percent since November 2023 has hit the poor hard. Prices of vegetables and cereals have risen by double digits for most of the last year. "You are not going to vote because you are swayed by the temple's inauguration," said Ghanishyam Tiwari, spokesperson for the Samajwadi Party that unseated the BJP as the dominant party in Uttar Pradesh. "You are going to vote because you are uncomfortable about your job situation, you are uncomfortable about the fact that there aren't basic amenities in your house, you are uncomfortable that the government is not doing enough."

"They spent crores (millions) of rupees for the temple's inauguration," said Awadhesh Prasad, the Samajwadi candidate who won the Faizabad parliamentary seat where Ayodhya is located. "There is so much poverty in our country and this kind of showing off is not for a democracy like ours." Long-time BJP voter Krishna Shankar Pandey, a 65-year old Hindu priest, said about the party that "whatever votes they got, they got in Ram's name". "Otherwise they would not have got any," he said, sitting on the street outside his home, shirt-less and clad in a white linen sarong. — Reuters

US manufacturers in halting recovery but diesel use tepid

LONDON: US manufacturers are gradually emerging from a prolonged but shallow slowdown over the last two years, but progress has been fitful, and their consumption of diesel remains tepid, which is weighing on oil prices. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index slipped to 48.7 (22nd percentile for all months since 1980) in May from 49.2 (26th percentile) in April and a recent high of 50.3 (34th percentile) in March. The March reading was the first time the index had climbed above the 50-point threshold, signalling expansion, since October 2022, but it has since slipped back into contraction territory for the last two months. The survey's production sub-index fell to 50.2 (21st percentile) in May from a recent high of 54.6 (45th percentile) in March, as activity rates faltered.

Indicating the expansion could remain desultory for a few more months, the new orders component slumped to 45.4 (9th percentile) in May from 51.4 (27th percentile) in March. Manufacturers reported weaker conditions than their counterparts in services, real estate, construction, mining and farming. The ISM non-manufacturing index actually rose to 53.8 (33rd percentile for all months since 1997) in May from 51.4 (14th percentile) in March.

Manufacturing provides fewer jobs and accounts for a smaller share of overall economic output but is much more energy-intensive. By contrast, services account for a far larger share of value-added, employ more people but use relatively less fuel and electricity. The manufacturing sector's sluggish performance has therefore dampened overall energy consumption - even as the faster growth in services has boosted the overall economy and employment. Expectations at the beginning of the year that an acceleration in manufacturing in the United States and the other major economies would lift diesel consumption and prices have not been realized.

More than three-quarters of all diesel and other distillate fuel oils are used in freight transport, manufacturing and construction, so distillate consumption is normally correlated closely with the manufacturing cycle. But consumption of distillates has been even more lackluster than the slow and halting recovery in manufacturing activity over the last six months. The volume of distillate fuel oil supplied to the domestic market, a proxy for consumption, was under 3.7 million barrels per day (b/d) in March 2024. Volumes supplied were the lowest for the time of year since 1998, according to estimates prepared by the US Energy Information Administration. Volumes were down by 10 percent compared with the same month last year and by the same percentage compared with the prior 10-year seasonal average. Supply can be volatile from one month to the next. March may have been an outlier. But distillate consumption has been lagging the upturn in manufacturing for several months.

Some petroleum-derived distillate fuel oils are being replaced by biodiesel and renewable fuel oils, especially in California. Even if biodiesel and renewable fuel oils are included, however, the volume of distillate supplied was down by 4-8 percent in March compared with last year and the 10-year average. — Reuters



Russia's Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina says the country must prioritize 'ensuring the openness of our economy'. — AFP

Russia central bank holds rates steady

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank held interest rates unchanged on Friday, despite inflation running well ahead of government plans and repeated warnings that a surge in military spending is overheating the economy. The bank kept its key rate at 16 percent, it said in a statement, but signaled it could hike borrowing costs in the future if the pace of price rises does not slow down. Inflation is currently running at 8.2 percent on an annual basis - more than double the central bank's four percent target. "Returning inflation to the target will require a significantly longer period of maintaining tight monetary conditions in the economy," it said.

It added that it "holds open the prospect of increasing the key rate" at a future meeting. Speaking earlier this week, Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina said she remained committed to bringing inflation down to four percent.

But the bank removed an inflation forecast for 2024 from its statement on Friday and said price rises would only hit that level next year. Russia's economy has grown strongly after recovering from the initial shock of sanctions and the immediate fallout of launching its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine in February 2022. Surging military spending has supported the economy, but triggered critical labor shortages in many sectors.

Hundreds of thousands of young men have been called up to fight, fled the country, or recruited by a booming arms industry. "Labor shortages come as the key constraint on the expansion of output of goods and services. Labor market tightness continues to grow," the central bank said Friday.

The head of Russia's largest lender warned Friday that despite high headline growth rates - 5.4 percent on an annualized basis in the first quarter - Russia's economic model was "fragile."

German Gref, the CEO of state-run Sberbank, said Russia's economic growth was based on rising government expenditures that have pushed wages higher and fuelled consumer spending.

"But this model is very fragile," he said Friday at the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF). "Goods are not becoming more plentiful and their prices are rising. As a result, labor productivity is not rising, but is actually falling. And that is the limit of today's growth model," state news agencies quoted him as saying. — AFP

stc the most valuable telecom brand in Mideast: Brand Finance Global 500

stc ranked among the top five strongest telecom brands in the world

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that stc group maintained its position as the most valuable telecom brand in the Middle East for the fourth consecutive year, confirming its leadership status amongst the top 5 strongest telecom brands in the world. According to the latest report from “Brand Finance Global 500”, the group emerged as the strongest brand.

Brand Finance conducts an annual ranking of the top 5,000 brands worldwide and publishes over 100 reports on brand valuations across sectors and countries. The 2024 Brand Finance Global 500 report includes the 500 strongest and most valuable brands globally.

The report highlighted stc Group's outstanding performance, which saw a notable 12 percent growth in brand value in 2023, reaching \$13.9 billion. The group

Brand Finance

stc is the most valuable telecom brand in the Middle East

stc

#5 strongest telecom brand globally

stc

placed 149th in the list of the top 500 most valuable brands worldwide, a 10-spot rise from 2023. stc Group is the first consumer brand from the Middle East to enter the top 150 global brands list.

In 2023, stc Kuwait demonstrated its unwavering commitment to digital transformation and

operational excellence, achieving several key milestones, mainly:

- stc Kuwait shares have been added in a number of the MSCI indexes
- stc Kuwait inclusion in a number of FTSE Global Equity Index
- stc Kuwait the first operator in Kuwait succeeded on the PoC of passive IOT RF ID on 900MHz band
- stc Kuwait is the first operator in Kuwait succeeded on the PoC of the commercial 5.5G Redcap device that works on 20MHz BW (in N78 band) and provided DL speed > 130Mbps.
- stc Kuwait launched “Your Smart Choice” campaign. The initiative enriches the lives of our customers with smart and easy solutions, including a wide range of advanced services such as top-

notch entertainment with Always On plans, the fastest network with FULL 5G, the best home Internet with baity fiber, extensive roaming with stc Roam, and complete protection with stc Protect.

- stc Kuwait successfully completed a pilot test for the new Mobile VPN technology, becoming the first telecom operator in Kuwait to achieve this remarkable feat.
- stc Kuwait completed its pilot test to launch a new technology called ‘5G New Calling’, becoming the first telecom operator in Kuwait and the whole region to achieve this remarkable milestone.
- stc Kuwait successfully completed the pilot testing of 5G Redcap (Reduced Capability) technology in combination with already proven MEC Mobile VPN service, stc became the first telecom opera-

tor in Middle East region to achieve this remarkable milestone.

- solutions by stc Kuwait launched My Business, our Digital Self-Care Portal for B2B customers. The redefined portal falls in line with solutions by stc's application of modern technologies to enable digital transformation and enrich the lifestyle of its customers.

- solutions by stc Kuwait unveiled Modar, a state-of-the-art Cloud Managed Network solution, specifically crafted for the business sector and developed in partnership with CloudCampus technology.

- solutions by stc Kuwait introduced Virtual Private Servers (VPS), a transformative solution tailored to meet the diverse needs of businesses ranging from SMEs to large enterprises and government organizations.

On the corporate social responsibility and sustainability fronts, stc Kuwait was highly active throughout the year under the various launched programs. In 2023, stc Kuwait continued to implement initiatives in key areas such as education, environmental sustainability, sports, health, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the Company enhanced its existing campaigns, which included “weyak” – that aims at supporting young entrepreneurs and startups, and the educational ‘upgrade’ initiative – that aims at empowering youth and supporting the education initiatives.

Due to these remarkable achievements, as well as other successful accomplishments witnessed throughout the year, stc Kuwait received numerous reputable awards. These recognitions were awarded to stc Kuwait on both regional and international platforms, recognizing the Company's excellence across all fronts.

Mexico investors worry lopsided vote could threaten law



Claudia Sheinbaum, presidential candidate of the ruling MORENA party, addresses her supporters after winning the election, in Mexico City, Mexico June 3, 2024. — Reuters

NEW YORK/MEXICO CITY: The Mexican governing party's unexpectedly lopsided victory this week has investors concerned that it may use its mandate to sweep aside some of the checks on presidential power which have long been a source of comfort to the business community.

The possibility that current president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador could push through some of those changes during his final month in office in September has some investors especially on edge. That period will overlap with a new legislature in which his MORENA ruling party is likely to be enjoying a super-majority that would give it the power to rewrite the country's constitution. Some analysts hold out hope that Lopez Obrador's anointed successor, President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, who will be sworn in on Oct. 1, may take a more gradualist approach, but even that is not a given. She has mostly professed her loyalty to her charismatic mentor's policies. Lopez Obrador proposed a bevy of constitutional changes in February that would drastically remake Mexico's judiciary, eliminate or neuter some key regulatory agencies and introduce some expensive new social benefits, including an expanded state pension plan.

Although none of the measures are welcome by investors, what makes some observers particularly nervous are the proposed changes to Mexico's court system - which would include the popular election of Supreme Court judges - plus the evisceration of key oversight bodies. “What an investor wants least, and even less an investor who is going to install a factory worth billions in Mexico, is for the rules of the game to suddenly change,” said Esteban Polidura, Julius Baer's director of investment strategy for the Americas.

“That's why they place a big importance on the continued existence of a State of Law, that the existing rules are respected and that the independence of institutions which are there to make decisions not linked to a particular government are respected.”

Mexico's peso weakened further on Friday as Lopez Obrador reiterated the call for his controversial judicial overhaul. The peso was on track to fall more than 7 percent this week versus the dollar, its largest weekly decline since the start of the covid pandemic lockdowns in March 2020.

Lopez Obrador proposes to cut the number of Supreme Court judges to nine from 11 and all judges would need to be reconfirmed in an extraordinary election next year. The plan has been criticized as a hit on an independent court system, which has served as a check over some of Lopez Obrador's most extreme policies. “One of the great checks that the government has had has been the independent institutions and in particular the judiciary,” Ramse Gutierrez, co-director of investments at Franklin Templeton in Mexico City, said.

Sheinbaum told local media on Thursday night that any reform has to be properly evaluated and explained to the Mexican people. If the fate of checks and balances looms as the key issue for many investors, others are also anxious about plans to boost retirement and other social benefits at a time of already heightened concerns about election-year spending by the once frugally minded Lopez Obrador. — Reuters

Burgan Bank offers cardholders up to 1,000,000 reward points

KUWAIT: In preparation for summer, Burgan Bank announced that between June 1 and August 31, all customers using Burgan credit and prepaid cards for everyday purchases in Kuwait and around the world are eligible to enter a monthly draw, for the chance to win up to 1,000,000 reward points. Three winners will be announced at the end of each month at the Burgan Bank HQ, with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in attendance. This comes as part of the Bank's dedicated loyalty and rewards program, which reflects Burgan's commitment to adding value to its customers at every turn of their banking journey.

“Summer is easily the most exciting time of the year,” Nasser Al-Qaisi, General Manager – Retail Banking at Burgan Bank, said. “Families spend the most time together, traveling across the world and creating lasting memories. As a Bank that is ‘Driven by You’, we decided to top up the summer fun by turning every Burgan credit or prepaid card purchase into a ticket for its cardholder to win up to 1,000,000 redeemable reward points. Every month, for three months, three lucky winners will be able to exchange their prize points or Avios for a wide range of premium products and services that are available on Burgan Rewards, guaranteeing an unforgettable experience.”

US job gains surge past expectations, wage growth quickens

WASHINGTON: The US economy created far more jobs than expected in May and annual wage growth reaccelerated, underscoring the resilience of the labor market and reducing the likelihood the Federal Reserve will be able to start rate cuts in September. The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday also showed the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.0 percent from 3.9 percent in April, a symbolic threshold below which the jobless rate had previously held for 27 straight months.

The unexpectedly strong report made plain that while the labor market has softened around the edges in recent months, its still-solid performance is set to underpin economic growth and keep the Fed on the sidelines and taking its time in deciding when to begin lowering borrowing costs. The hotter-than-expected wage gains also raised the prospect that elevated inflation may prove stickier than hoped although the impact from the rise in the unemployment rate could temper that.

Financial markets slashed the odds of a September rate cut, reducing the probability to about 53 percent from about 70 percent before the report, based on rate futures contracts, and now see roughly an even

US raises truck and SUV fuel economy rules

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden's administration Friday finalized tighter vehicle fuel economy rules through 2031 that are significantly less stringent than first proposed, a win for the Detroit Three automakers who lobbied heavily for revised rules. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it would hike Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) requirements to about 50.4 miles per gallon by 2031 from 39.1 mpg currently. The new requirement is barely above the 49 mpg it previously required for 2026. Last year, NHTSA projected its toughest proposal would hike requirements to 58 mpg by 2032.



Nasser Al-Qaisi

To qualify for the monthly draw, cardholders must spend a minimum of KD 100 within a given month. Upon meeting this requirement, every KD 1 spent domestically or abroad using Burgan's credit or prepaid cards will translate to one draw entry, increasing the cardholder's chances of winning with higher spending. The third-place winner of every month will receive 250,000 reward points or Avios, while the second-place winner will receive 500,000 reward points or Avios, and the first-place winner will receive an outstanding 1,000,000 reward points or Avios.

Understanding that cardholders have varied preferences, Burgan Bank will be offering winners redeemable points and Avios based on their card type. CashBack and Visa Signature cards qualify

chance of two rate cuts by the end of 2024, versus about a 68 percent chance seen before the report. “So much for slowing. The headline payrolls number is eye popping.... The Fed will take this to mean that they can still focus squarely on inflation without worrying much about growth,” said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

The yield on the 2-year Treasury note, which is sensitive to Fed policy expectations, shot up by the most in two months. Yields across other maturities rose sharply as well. The report put stocks on the defensive after a rally led by the AI sector that had carried major indexes to record highs this week. The dollar strengthened broadly.

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 272,000 jobs last month, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Revisions showed 15,000 fewer jobs created in March and April combined than previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls advancing by 185,000. Estimates ranged from 120,000 to 258,000. May's employment gains were higher than the 232,000 monthly average for the past year.

Hiring was widespread across the economy, with a measure of its diversity at its highest level since January last year. The healthcare sector added 68,000 jobs, spread across ambulatory healthcare services, hospitals, nursing and residential care facilities. It continued to lead employment gains as companies seek to boost staffing levels after losing workers during the pandemic. Government payrolls increased by 43,000 positions. Employment in the leisure and hospitality sector rose by 42,000 jobs, with slightly more than half that total coming from employment in food services and drinking plac-

The agency said the proposed new rules will ultimately slash compliance penalties from what they would have been under the original proposal. It explained the change by noting automakers said “they cannot stop manufacturing large, fuel-inefficient light trucks while also transitioning to manufacturing electric vehicles.”

Environmental groups criticized the new rules as not strict enough, while automakers hailed the decision after calling the initial proposal unfeasible and warning it would result in dramatically higher vehicle prices. Biden is running for reelection in November and working to build support among autoworkers and their unions, which had warned against the earlier vehicle proposals. Republican candidate Donald Trump has blasted the administration's backing of EVs and stricter vehicle rules.

In July 2023, NHTSA had proposed boosting CAFE requirements by 2 percent per year for passenger cars and 4 percent per year for light trucks from 2027 through 2032. The final rule has no increase for light trucks for 2027 and 2028 and will only require 2



their holders for CashBack points, whereas Qatar Airways cards qualify their holders for Avios points. Meanwhile, winners using MasterCard World Elite, MasterCard Titanium, or Visa Platinum receive reward points.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's loyalty program, “Burgan Rewards”, runs all year long with multiple campaigns and opportunities to turn everyday purchases into valuable gifts. Stemming from the belief that customers are a primary pillar of its success, Burgan Bank continues finding innovative ways to express its appreciation for its loyal customers, offering them more value than meets the eye with every transaction.



A pedestrian passes a “Help Wanted” sign in the door of a hardware store in Cambridge, Massachusetts. — Reuters

es. Professional and business services hired 32,000 more workers, driven by management, scientific and technical consulting services and architectural and engineering-related services. Social assistance and retail hiring also trended up last month. There were small job losses at department stores and home furnishings retailers.

The US central bank is expected to leave its benchmark overnight interest rate unchanged at its meeting next week in the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range, where it has been since last July. Average hourly earnings rose 0.4 percent after having slowed to a 0.2 percent rate in April. Wages increased 4.1 percent in the 12 months through May following an upwardly revised 4.0 percent annual rise the prior month. — Reuters

percent increases from 2029 through 2031.

Last year, NHTSA said its proposal to hike fuel economy standards through 2032 would cost the industry \$14 billion in projected fines over a five-year-period. This includes \$10.5 billion for the Detroit Three; \$6.5 billion for General Motors; \$3 billion for Chrysler parent Stellantis and \$1 billion for Ford Motor.

Under the final rule, the auto industry is collectively expected to face a total of \$1.83 billion in fines from 2027 through 2031 - and it could be as little as nothing - based on various models, NHTSA said.

NHTSA said GM could face \$906 million in penalties through 2031, while Stellantis faces \$368 million and Ford nothing. Automakers, who buy credits or pay fines if they cannot meet CAFE requirements, separately face \$1.5 billion in expected fines for the 2024-2026 model years. In June 2023, Reuters first reported Stellantis and GM paid a total of \$363 million in CAFE fines for failing to meet US fuel economy requirements for prior model years. — Reuters

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024



This picture taken in Hong Kong shows a member (centre) of the Darkness Fighters, a dragon boat team of visually impaired rowers, being helped into a dragon boat.



Photo shows Kitty Lau (second right), member of the Darkness Fighters, a dragon boat team of visually impaired rowers, during training.



Members and volunteers of the Darkness Fighters making their way to dragon boats before they start training.

Hong Kong's visually impaired dragon boat team builds community

Slicing their oars through the dark-green waters of a Hong Kong river, a dragon boat team of visually impaired rowers paddled in unison as their coach yelled out instructions.

The Darkness Fighters are Hong Kong's only team that pairs visually impaired people with sighted volunteers to compete in the annual Dragon Boat Festival, which will take place on Monday. Samrid Wongchan, a 62-year-old team member who is blind, said the team trains like many rowers on the Shing Mun river, which cuts through the city's New Territories.

"We have to be united and we have to be attentive," she told AFP. "Everyone's oar movements must be in sync." But while sighted rowers rely on both visual and sound cues while training, the Darkness Fighters' sense of hearing plays a larger role.

"We must listen carefully to the environment," Wongchan said.

Safety is also a key concern and small things that people with sight may take for granted, like getting in and out of boats that sit low in the water, must be handled with care.

The team was founded in 2018 and today has around 50 members - many of them retirees - with varying levels of eyesight and physical fitness.

Believed to originate in ancient China, dragon boat racing has grown into an international sport and remains popular in Hong Kong as a celebration of both tradition and athleticism.

It is known for being physically taxing, requiring precise coordination among the 20-plus paddlers per vessel, who follow the beat of a drum during a race. Coach Yung Chi-wah, a firefighter by trade, said he teaches oar movements to visually impaired people by holding their hand to show that the edge of their fist should graze the water as they paddle in a swift motion. "Every time after practice my voice is hoarse because I have to shout," Yung added, explaining that even small fluctuations in rowing speed would lead to chaos. While the team does occasionally take home prizes, Yung said winning isn't everything.

"We want to encourage blind people to come together, to have a group sport so that they are not hiding themselves away," he said.

'Challenge the impossible'

In Hong Kong, nearly 200,000 people have some form of visual impairment, with nearly three-quarters aged 65 or above, according to the latest available official data.

The Darkness Fighters were formed as a way to build a community and "challenge the impossible," said the team's founder Endy Chan, who drew on his own experience of losing his eyesight as a teen.

"(Sports) helps the visually impaired people regain their confidence and physical strength," said Chan.

He added that they might often feel like they are on the receiving end of others' help, but in a dragon boat, all team members are equal.

"They work together for one goal, which is to get



This picture shows dragon boats at the Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association where the Darkness Fighters train at the Sha Tin neighborhood. — AFP photos

to the finish line in the shortest time."

Kitty Lau told AFP she was devastated after she lost her eyesight two years ago, and realized many of her visually impaired friends tended to hide at home. But the 65-year-old now spends her Saturday morn-

ings at dragon boat practice with her husband at her side. "That cheers me up... It's about finding people to share what you like," Lau said.

For the Darkness Fighters, every small win counts. Wongchan recalled how her son was initially skep-

tical when she joined the sport.

"My son said, 'Mom have you gone mad?'" she said. "(Later) he quietly came to watch me practice and said afterwards, 'Your visually impaired friends are really impressive.'" — AFP



This picture shows Coach Yung Chi-wah of the Darkness Fighters speaking with a volunteer before training.



This picture shows members and volunteers of the Darkness Fighters arriving for training.



This picture shows Kitty Lau (third right), member of the Darkness Fighters, during training.

Millions of Chinese students start exams in biggest 'gaokao' ever

Mothers in crimson dresses and fathers clutching umbrellas huddled together in drizzly Beijing after sending their children into an exam hall on Friday, the first day of China's biggest "gaokao" tests that will shape the futures of millions of high school kids. The number of students taking this year's multi-subject gaokao series is set to be a record high, with the Ministry of Education saying that 13.42 million candidates have registered for the high-stakes tests.

"People say that this is the start of a life," 50-year-old mother Zhi Haihong told AFP. "So one cannot slack off." Zhi donned a traditional qipao dress to take her daughter to the examination site in central Beijing, hoping that its auspicious bright red color would bring good luck. China's gaokao drills high school students on subjects including Chinese, English, mathematics, science and humanities, the results of which are critical for gaining admission to university. High-level education has expanded rapidly in China in recent decades as an economic boom pushed up living standards - as well as parents' expectations for their children's careers.

The job market that fresh graduates enter is no longer as rosy as it once was

as the world's second-largest economy struggles to achieve a post-pandemic recovery, with high youth unemployment a significant concern.

"I think this is a necessary process of growing up," Zhi said when asked about the pressures young people face. "(The gaokao) is also a method for the country to select talented people," she said. "Only after undergoing pressure can one's mental tolerance increase. Then you will be able to withstand these pressures in the future when working in society. 'I think this is understandable.'"

Praise from space

A list of top-trending topics on social media site Weibo on Friday morning was studded with exam-related discussions,



A student hugs a teacher outside a school on the first day of the national college entrance examination, known as "Gaokao".



A mother holds flowers as students line up to enter a school on the first day of the national college entrance examination, known as "Gaokao", in Bozhou, in central China's Anhui province on June 7, 2024. — AFP photos



Students line up to pass a security check outside a school on the first day of the national college entrance examination, known as "Gaokao".

with many students sharing pictures of uniformed students exchanging high-fives and hugging their parents before entering testing centres.

Even the official Weibo account of China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe, which began carrying samples back to Earth from the far side of the Moon on Tuesday, of-

fered encouragement. "Every one of you that is striving hard is terrific," it said. Images from across the country taken Friday morning showed students and well-wishers preparing for the first session.

In the central city of Wuhan, crowds of parents stood behind a barrier as test takers clutched documents on their way into the examination centre. Education authorities are on high alert each year after elaborate cheating attempts were uncovered in previous years.

Areas around testing centres are often tightly controlled, with traffic diverted and honking prohibited to ensure a comfortable environment so that test takers can concentrate.

Sun Song, a 45-year-old father, stood under an umbrella in Beijing chatting with other parents after seeing his daughter off before her first exam.

"It will be enough if she can find a job she likes and get into a school she likes," Sun told AFP.

"As long as the kid is happy, it's enough."

28th time lucky?

After failing for the 27th time to get into his dream university through the gaokao last year, 57-year-old millionaire Liang Shi is giving it another go.

Liang worked his way up from a menial factory job to establish his own construction materials business but said he has yet to become "an intellectual" worthy of Sichuan University. The plight of the "gaokao holdout" has been closely watched by the media and online in recent years. However, Liang said it could be his last attempt if he doesn't make the grade this year.

In another closely watched case, 35-year-old Xu Mengnan is taking the gaokao again 16 years after he deliberately flunked the exams in protest against the education system. Xu has worked in factories in eastern China, married, had children and divorced since that act of defiance but decided to hit the books again in 2017 for another try. He passed in 2018 and graduated last year from an art college in eastern Anhui Province, but this year he wants to get into university to take his studies further. — AFP

Lifestyle



Photo shows the entrance to the Flying V.



Photograph shows ex-Megadeth guitarist Marty Friedman at the Flying V, the only heavy metal bar in Singapore. — AFP photos

Singapore's only heavy metal bar rocks 'something different'

Tucked away in the basement of an old mall lies gleaming Singapore's only heavy metal bar, where music fans brush shoulder-to-shoulder with international rockers who helped pioneer the genre. Few venues cater to the country's tiny but vibrant metal scene, while the government has focused on luring more mainstream headliners - most recently Taylor Swift.

Around the corner from the looming parliament and Supreme Court buildings, "The Flying V" is a metal music oasis in the otherwise manicured environment. Sitting at the bar on a Tuesday night, Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover enjoyed a dark Welsh drink ahead of his band's concert the next day.

"I've gone to a few places like it, and this is one of the best," said Glover, whose band is behind one of the most recognized bangers of all time, "Smoke on the Water". Two

days later, a meet-and-greet session was held for fans of legendary metal muso Marty Friedman, ex-shredder for bands Megadeth and Cacophony.

Metal music forges a close community, Friedman told AFP, while "fans of other genres have found good things about metal". "So, it's not just an underground community anymore," he said, after posing for photos and signing autographs. "But places like this are very cool because it's the hardcore real metal fans."

'Pizza, metal'

The bar's walls are plastered with fliers, posters and heavy promotion of Iron Maiden's "Trooper" drink.

Besides metalheads in black band T-shirts, the pub also attracts customers in their office attire as well as tourists. "What shocks me is you get all of these guys who kind of look like you, or

they look like me, or they look like regular office guys, especially like Japanese guys and German guys," said George Kirton, who co-founded the bar.

"They still have to wear their shirts and their suits for work. But deep down inside, they've still got that heavy metal streak from when they were teenagers," said the Briton.

Customers take turns to cue up their favorite tracks via the pub's communal iPad. Songs blare out, ranging from classic 1980s glam metal to thrash, grindcore or math metal.

"When we come here (to the pub), we don't feel like we're in Singapore. We feel like we're in Europe," said Singaporean barber Saifullah Sabri, 36.

A Dutch engineer told AFP the Flying V reminded him of metal bars in the Netherlands. "When you are in such a bar, you immediately feel at home," Daniel Hokke, 48, said.

The bar is situated in the historic

civic district where annual National Day parades are often held in front of the former City Hall building.

But in the 1990s, during the global punk revival, the area was also popular among local counterculture groups, including skinheads, punks and metalheads, and was home to a handful of shops selling music merchandise and skateboards.

Ross Knudson, who co-owns the Flying V with Kirton, also runs LAMC Productions, which brings in rock and metal acts to the city-state. Rock and metal are under-represented in Singapore and a place was needed for fans to hang out, Knudson told AFP. "Singapore has a very fancy kind of mentality," the American said. "We just wanted to do something that's different." — AFP



Pedestrians walk past a poster advertising the popular "Dragon Ball" manga franchise along a street in the Akihabara area of Tokyo. — AFP photos



This photo illustration shows books from the popular "Dragon Ball" manga series on a shelf in a store in downtown Tokyo.

Japan aims to quadruple overseas market for anime, games

Pop-culture powerhouse Japan wants to expand its overseas market for video games, manga and anime fourfold to \$130 billion in about a decade, the government has said. Japan, the birthplace of comic and cartoon epics such as "Dragon Ball" and game franchises from "Super Mario" to "Final Fantasy", sees the creative industries as a driver for growth on par with steel and semiconductors.

In its revised "Cool Japan" strategy released Tuesday, the government said it aims to boost exports of these cultural assets to 20 trillion yen (nearly \$130 billion) by 2033. In 2022, Japan's gaming, anime and manga sectors raked in 4.7 trillion yen (\$30 billion) from abroad -

close to microchips exports at 5.7 trillion yen, government data shows.

"In recent years, content like anime and manga has played an extremely important role in attracting bigger and bigger young audiences abroad, serving as their 'gateway' to Japan," the strategy document said.

A pandemic-fueled streaming boom helped boost the global profile of anime, including franchises like "Demon Slayer" which has had global box office hits. The burgeoning phenomenon of "Vtubers" - virtual animated YouTubers - playing video games is also helping to boost Japan's international soft power, the strategy said.

Combining these sectors' growth

with related industries including fashion, cosmetics and inbound tourism, Japan is targeting an economic benefit of 50 trillion yen by 2033.

The strategy also includes plans to stiffen a crackdown on piracy websites that illegally distribute anime and manga for free in languages including English and Vietnamese.

"Strengthening measures against piracy websites is essential to expanding the global market," it said, warning that some of their advertising revenue can go to criminal syndicates. "Swift inter-governmental action is needed" to tackle this piracy "crisis", it said. — AFP

'Like a gladiator'

Verona's Arena offered the ideal setting, Tezier told AFP: its atmosphere "is warm, conducive to opera. We experience truly magical moments.

"When you enter the arena, with this huge audience in front of you, you have a feeling of humility, you have the impression of being very small. "But at the same time you feel like a gladiator going into battle because there is an exceptional energy that emanates from this place."

The Arena in the northeastern Italian city was built in the first century AD to entertain Romans with gladiator fights, spectacular shows featuring wild beasts, and even naval battles. Friday's concert kicked off the 101st edition of the Verona Arena Opera Festival, which runs to September 7 and is expected to draw more than 500,000 music lovers.

The festival was created on August 10, 1913 by the Veronese tenor Giovanni Zenatello. He showed off the stone amphitheatre's remarkable acoustics when he performed Verdi's Aida there. Opera came into being around 1600 in Florence, with the founding of an academy promoting an innovative combination of sung text and music. The first great composer of opera is considered to be Italy's Claudio Monteverdi, who lived from 1567 to 1643. — AFP



Riccardo Muti directed 160 orchestra musicians, and more than 300 choristers from prestigious Italian institutes such as La Scala in Milan and La Fenice in Venice opened the event by interpreting pieces from the greatest Italian composers of the 19th century.

Of the works performed Friday evening, the famed ode to freedom "Va, pensiero", also known as "The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves", visibly moved the audience. Addressing the crowd at the end of his concert, Muti paid tribute to the members of the orchestra, saying they had "surpassed themselves", especially in light of their large number, which complicates coordination.

The second part of the evening was reserved for arias performed by internationally renowned soloists, including Australian soprano Jessica Pratt, whose masterful rendition of "Casta Diva", from Bellini's "Norma", made the amphitheatre vibrate.

Italian opera celebrated in Verona's 'magical' Arena

Verona's ancient Roman Arena hosted a star-studded classical concert Friday to celebrate the addition of Italian opera singing to UNESCO's list of intangible global heritage. Some of the world's finest singers performed arias, including German tenor Jonas Kaufmann, French baritone Ludovic Tezier, Italian soprano Eleonora Buratto, and her compatriots Luca Salsi and Francesco Meli.

The Russian diva Anna Netrebko had to cancel her performance at the last minute for health reasons. A total of 13,500 people attended the concert at the Arena, the largest open-air theatre in the world. Italian opera was added to the UN's heritage list in December. The citation acknowledged it as an art associated with specific facial expressions and body gestures involving a combination of music, drama, acting and staging.

"Italian opera is our common ancestor," Tezier told AFP before the concert. "Opera is an Italian invention which has spread all over the world." Conductor

Final spin: 'Wheel of Fortune' host signs off after 41 seasons

The longest-serving TV game show host in history signed off on Friday after presiding over US primetime hit "Wheel of Fortune" for 41 seasons. Pat Sajak has been a fixture in American homes since 1981, hosting more than 8,000 editions of a show that has become part of early evenings for millions of households.

"Well, the time has come to say goodbye," he told viewers in a clip from the pre-recorded final show. "It's been an incredible privilege to be invited into millions of homes night after night, year after year, decade after decade."



File photo shows Pat Sajak posing backstage at the 38th Annual Daytime Emmy Awards show in Las Vegas, Nevada, on June 19, 2011. — AFP

He described the half-hour show as "a safe place for family fun. No social issues, no politics, nothing embarrassing I hope - just a game." "Thank you for allowing me into your lives."

Sajak, 77, was renowned for his low-key, unflappable style, asking contestants to choose a consonant or buy a vowel in the word-guessing game.

With his suit and even tan, he chatted with guests and bantered with co-host Vanna White, who joined the show in 1982 just a year after Sajak.

In 2019, Guinness World Records awarded Sajak the title of the longest career as a game show host for the same show. "America Idol" host Ryan Seacrest will take over the role, joining the veteran White. — AFP

Chanel breaks with designer Virginie Viard

French fashion house Chanel announced the departure of its artistic director, Virginie Viard, on Thursday, despite hitting record sales under her leadership. Viard, 62, replaced legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld at the storied label following his death in 2019, having worked alongside him for 20 years.

"Chanel confirms the departure of Virginie Viard after a rich five-year collaboration as artistic director of fashion collections," the group said in a statement, adding that a successor would be announced in due course.

Chanel thanked Viard for her "remarkable contribution", and while critics felt she played it a little safe, sales soared under her leadership, hitting a record of nearly \$20 billion in 2023 - an increase of 14.6 percent on the previous year.

Her last womenswear collection in March was an homage to the French seaside town of Deauville where Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel opened her first boutique in 1912.

Viard herself kept a very low profile, dressing simply and giving very sober statements to the press - a world away from the flamboyant Lagerfeld and his often provocative pronouncements. — AFP



Jessica Gunning (left) and Richard Gadd attend the photocall for Netflix's "Baby Reindeer" at DGA Theater Complex on May 07, 2024 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

'Baby Reindeer' inspiration sues Netflix for \$170 million

British woman who claims she was the inspiration for the stalker in the smash Netflix hit "Baby Reindeer" sued the streamer Thursday, demanding \$170 million in damages.

Fiona Harvey has identified herself as the real-life "Martha," the delusional, violent and abusive woman at the center of Richard Gadd's global phenomenon, which claims in its opening episode to be "a true story."

"The above quote... is the biggest lie in television history," the lawsuit, filed in California, says. "It is a lie told by Netflix and the show's creator, Richard Gadd, out of greed and lust for fame; a lie designed to attract more viewers, get more attention, to make more money, and to viciously destroy the life of Plaintiff, Fiona Harvey."

In a statement to AFP, a Netflix spokesperson said: "We intend to defend this matter vigorously and to stand by Richard Gadd's right to tell his story." The seven-episode series premiered on Netflix in April and quickly became a huge hit.

The show, based on Gadd's one-man play, follows a fictionalized version of the author who meets a woman in the pub where he works. What unspools over the following episodes is a deeply disturbing years-long ordeal for Gadd in which Martha sends thousands of emails, texts and voice messages as she harasses him, his girlfriend and his family.

Martha, who the show claims to have been previously convicted for stalking a lawyer, is also shown to sexually assault Gadd. The British writer and performer has told journalists that he changed details about Martha in an effort to protect her identity, but armchair detectives quickly tracked her down and began contacting her on social media. — AFP



French fashion designer Virginie Viard acknowledges the audience after the Chanel Women's Fall-Winter 2022-2023 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris, on March 8, 2022. — AFP

Lifestyle



This aerial photograph shows a general view of the Sadpara Dam with scarce water near Skardu in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region.



This aerial photograph shows a general view of the Skardu city in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region.

PAKISTAN POWER CRISIS DEEPENED BY MOUNTAIN TOURISM

In the mountainous valleys of Pakistan, 18-hour daily power cuts have meant local teacher Aniqqa Bano uses her fridge as a cupboard for storing books and kitchen utensils.

Load shedding is typical across much of fuel-short Pakistan, but few areas consistently suffer the same prolonged outages as Skardu city.

A surge in mountain tourism, driven by climbers and Pakistanis looking to escape heatwaves, is rapidly depleting the limited energy supply at the gateway to ascend K2, the world's second-highest peak. While higher-end hotels can supplement their supply with solar panels or fuel generators, many locals cannot afford such luxuries.

"We have to reinvent everything that once used electricity," said Bano. "We no longer have an oven, we use a coal-heated iron for clothes," the 41-year-old teacher added. "When we come home tired from work, we cannot run a heater."

Tourism boom

Skardu is the largest city in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, where almost impossibly high peaks tower over the Old Silk Road, still visible from a highway transporting tourists between cherry orchards, glaciers and ice-blue lakes. Normally home to around 200,000 people, Skardu becomes heavily bloated in



This photograph shows Siddiqa, a tailor and handicraft maker weaving a cloth on handloom amid power outage at her workshop in Skardu.

summer when Pakistanis seek the relief of its cooler climate at 2,228 metres (7,310 feet) above sea level.

The region hosted 880,000 domestic visitors in 2023, up from 50,000 in 2014. As the country grapples with energy shortages - owing to dwindling forex reserves, mismanagement, rapid population growth and climate change - the tourism boom has proved too much for local power.

"Due to the increase in population and tourism activities, load shedding hours have increased," Muhammad Yunus, a senior engineer for the regional government's water and power department, told AFP. There are up to 22 hours of load shedding in winter and be-



This photograph shows carpenters sawing wood at a workshop amid power outage at Skardu. - AFP photos

tween 18 and 20 hours in summer - an increase of around 10 percent each year for the past six years, according to the department.

Siddiqa, a tailor and handicraft maker who goes by one name, has seen her earnings fall alongside the number of hours of electricity.

"When we started this business in 2014, there was no issue of power," she told AFP. "Now, I have replaced all the electric machines and brought hand sewing machines." "In the presence of light, we could prepare 10 to 12 suits every three days. Now, to prepare a single suit, it can take 10 to 15 days."

The tourism flow does not appear to be letting up any time soon. There

are up to 15 domestic flights a week to the region and, since March, international flights began landing from Dubai. In Skardu alone, the number of hotels has increased more than fourfold since 2014, according to the tourism department.

7,000 melting glaciers

Owing to its remoteness, Gilgit-Baltistan is not connected to the national grid, so it relies on its own power generation from dozens of hydro and thermal plants. But Pakistan's 7,000 glaciers - more than anywhere outside the poles - are rapidly melting.

This can temporarily increase the availability of water for energy production, but the glaciers' long-term ability to store and release water gradually decreases, affecting energy production.

"The availability of water for hydroelectric plants is becoming unpredictable," said Salaar Ali, head of the Department of Environmental Science, University of Baltistan. Damage to energy infrastructure is also a regular setback. Record heatwaves in 2022 caused dozens of glacial lakes to burst their banks, washing away more than 20 power plants, 50 bridges and countless homes. Inadequate planning and mismanagement of the power sector can also play a role, engineers have said.

The Satpara dam on the edge of



This photograph shows solar panels installed on the roof of a building in Skardu.

Skardu city, completed in 2008 for \$26 million of aid funding, was supposed to supply 40,000 homes with power.

But it generates just a fraction of its potential after plans to divert a river were halted, government engineers admit. "It has been full only once since its formation," said Yunus, the engineer in Skardu. Without a reliable energy supply, Wajahat Hussain, a 36-year-old carpenter, uses a fuel generator to keep his business in operation - puffing out emissions that contribute to global warming. "We run the generator to fulfil the demands," he told AFP. "There is no work without the generator." — AFP



Photo shows local jewellery made using dolphin teeth, renowned throughout the Solomon Islands, at a stall in the Central Market in Honiara.



Photo shows locals standing in front of a sign warning vendors against the live wildlife trade, including dolphins as a "no sell" species, at the Central Market in Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands. — AFP photos

Shadowy exotic pet trade thrives in Pacific island nation

The Pacific's Solomon Islands has become a key player in the global live animal trade, with foreign collectors sourcing exotic species including some subject to trade bans, an AFP investigation has found.

Conservationist testimony, official documents and UN data show native Solomon Islands lizards being shipped to the United States, wild birds plucked from verdant rainforests and sent to the Middle East, and dolphins destined for Chinese aquariums.

Some wild animals can be captured and sold legally, but the trade in vulnerable species is governed by strict rules or even bans. That has not stopped traders keen to cash in on the lucrative market for exotic pets.

They are targeting species that are already considered at risk, and are actively threatening the future of others, said Solomons ecologist Patrick Pikacha. "There's no studies. No monitoring. It's just every man for himself," Pikacha told AFP. Solomon Islands has stunning ecological diversity, and is teeming with vibrantly colored parrots, tree-dwelling lizards, swooping mega bats and more.

But it is the only Pacific island that participates in the legal wildlife trade, and its most unusual species are increasingly popular pets. One of the most coveted is the monkey-tailed skink, a striped native lizard that dangles from trees using a prehensile tail.

Designated near-threatened, trade in the reptile was suspended in 2001 un-

der an international conservation treaty overseen by the United Nations.

But UN export figures show a thriving market. More than 2,000 monkey-tailed skinks were sourced from Solomon Islands in the last eight years, according to the figures, including around 1,300 sent to the United States.

Online listings reviewed by AFP show a single juvenile specimen can sell for up to \$1,500.

'Insane' trade

Last October, UN officials urged Solomon Islands to "address compliance challenges" within its live wildlife trade, including the continued export of monkey-tailed skinks. "It has come to the attention of the secretariat that specimens... that are under trade suspension from Solomon Islands continue to appear... as being traded for commercial purposes," a UN letter read.

Solomon Islands' environment department did not respond to requests for comment. But it has previously called "sustainable trade in wildlife" an "important source of income" for the developing nation. In the capital Honiara, clouds of flies buzz around plastic bins of fish at the bustling seaside market.

A faded sign overhead warns against the live wildlife trade, singling out dolphins as a "no sell" species. Foreign dealers set their sights on Solomon Islands in the early 2000s, paying coastal communities to capture live dolphins for theme parks overseas.

Solomon Islands pledged to shut down the trade in 2011, after a dolphin flown to Mexico died, sparking international outcry. But exports appear to have quietly resumed after the furore died down. Trade records compiled by the UN show China alone imported 56 live bottlenose dolphins from Solomon Islands between 2016 and 2018 for zoos or "commercial" purposes.

Solomon Islands environmental campaigner Lawrence Makili said "foreigners" had exploited the "small, struggling" nation. And while no dolphins are known to have been exported since 2018, Makili fears the "insane" trade could resume.

"Only early this year I got some information that there was a group attempting to capture dolphins," he told AFP.

'Essentially lies'

There are also signs the Pacific nation is a transit point for threatened birds smuggled from elsewhere. The chattering lory parrot is found only in the jungles of Indonesia's Maluku Islands - about 3,400 kilometres (2,100 miles) from the main Honiara port.

Yet UN trade records show around 390 of the striking red-and-green birds arrived in Oman and Bangladesh via Solomon Islands between 2016 and 2020.

Pikacha said the birds, designated a vulnerable species, likely arrived on logging ships travelling through Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Ecologists suspect the Solomons wildlife trade is

intertwined with powerful logging interests, which own vast tracts of rainforest throughout the nation and wield immense political influence.

Many of the birds sold from Solomon Islands are supposedly bred in captivity, a designation that attracts less scrutiny than wild-caught animals.

But Solomon Islands has no aviaries big enough to breed birds on a commercial scale, conservationists said.

"There are absolutely zero captive-breeding facilities in Solomon Islands," said Pikacha. "And so what's placed on those trade records are essentially lies." Animal trafficking expert Chris Shepherd, who has researched Solomon Islands' bird trade, compared the process to "wildlife laundering".

"It's a big concern that these so-called breeding centres in Solomon Islands are still facilitating the laundering of species," he told AFP. Conservationists also warn that baseline data on species in the Solomon Islands is so thin it is hard to even be sure about the status of the country's wildlife.

"The whole region is a black hole when it comes to understanding what species are in trade - their volumes, destinations, the conservation impacts," said Shepherd. "It might seem like a small deal to lose a lizard or bird species here and there. But once you start damaging these populations, things are going to fall apart pretty quickly." — AFP

Spain's Disfrutar named world's top restaurant by 50 Best

Barcelona restaurant Disfrutar was named as the best in the world by the influential 50 Best list in a year dominated by Spanish and Latin American restaurants. Disfrutar (which means "Enjoy" in Spanish) opened in December 2014 next to the Ninot market in the heart of the Catalan city.

50 Best, run by British magazine Restaurant, describes it as having "far-reaching technique, original thinking and ground-breaking flavors". It is run by three chefs who trained at the renowned El Bulli in Roses, Spain, which has topped the 50 Best list five times, including the first-ever in 2002.

A Spanish eatery also took second place: Asador Etxebarri, in the Basque town of Atxondo. Third place went to Table de Bruno Verjus in Paris, among the most expensive in the French capital. They received their awards at a ceremony in Las Vegas. The 50 Best list was launched in 2002 and quickly established itself as an international alternative to France's renowned Michelin Guide. It has more than 1,000 voters across 27 regions around the world - a mix of chefs, food writers and "well-travelled gourmets".

Disfrutar and Table de Bruno Verjus both also have the highest three-star ranking from Michelin, while Asador Etxebarri has one. Spanish and Latino establishments dominated the top 10 this year, with Madrid restaurant Diverxo in fourth place, Lima's Maido in fifth, Mexico City's Quintonil in seventh, and the Don Julio steakhouse in Buenos Aires in 10th. — AFP



Sports

Afghanistan maul N Zealand

Afghans pull off upset win to grab top spot in Group C

GEORGETOWN: Rampant Afghanistan mauled a lethargic New Zealand by 84 runs to grab top spot in Group C at the T20 World Cup with an upset win at the Guyana National Stadium on Friday. Set a challenging 160 for victory, the Black Caps crashed to 75 all out off 15.2 overs to suffer their first defeat ever to Afghanistan in T20 International cricket. Opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz led the way for the Afghans with a top score of 80 off 56 balls (five fours, five sixes), posting 103 for the first wicket with Ibrahim Zadran (44) by the 15th over on the way to a final total of 159 for six after they were put in.

Left-arm seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi then followed his five-wicket opening match demolition of Uganda with the first three wickets of the New Zealand innings before coming back to claim a fourth to end the match and complete figures of four for 17. Captain and champion leg-spinner Rashid Khan shared the bowling honors with an identical haul of four for 17, including opposite number Kane Williamson with the first ball of his spell to effectively end the match as a contest.

"We've been waiting for this moment for about three years," said a delighted Gurbaz after receiving the "Man of the

Match" award. "We have the trust and belief that we can beat any team in this competition on this type or surface. At the start of the innings our target was around 130-140 and we played our part in getting there, but credit must go to the bowlers as well. To do this against a team like New Zealand...it's unbelievable".

New Zealand's capitulation and obvious rustiness leaves the 2021 beaten finalists with a tough challenge ahead, starting against hosts West Indies in at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad next Wednesday. "This just wasn't good enough in terms of starting a tournament. It's very frustrat-

ing," admitted Williamson, reflecting on a forgettable night for New Zealand cricket. "We have to move on quickly from this because the matches now come thick and fast for us. Yes, we have to learn from so much that went wrong without over-analyzing, but we have to turn it around as quickly as we can," he added.

Williamson's gloomy demeanor was obviously in stark contrast to his Afghanistan counterpart Rashid, who put the result in perspective. "It is one of the greatest performances for us in T20's against a big team like New Zealand," he said. "And it was great team effort, from the opening stand between

Gurbaz and Ibrahim to the bowlers to the effort in the field from everyone. It's a great feeling to be leading this side."

His own efforts with the ball were impressive but the captain preferred to focus on the impact of Farooqi, who has now taken nine wickets in his first two matches at this World Cup and had the perfect start against the Black Caps, bowling Finn Allen comprehensively with the first ball of the New Zealand innings. "He is a very skillful bowler, but there's still lots of areas to improve," Rashid cautioned. "Once he understands how skillful he really is he will be very dangerous in the future." — AFP

IndyCar racer takes leave amid online abuse row

WASHINGTON: Online abuse after two cars bumped on an IndyCar restart has led to Argentine racer Agustin Canapino taking a leave of absence after dismissing French rival Theo Pourchaire's death threat claims. Juncos Hollinger Racing (JHR) announced on Friday that American Nolan Siegel would replace Canapino for this weekend's race at Road America as the South American takes a leave of absence after becoming the target of online vitriol.

"Online abuse is unacceptable and we need to ensure that our drivers are prepared both mentally and physically when they get in the car," JHR co-owner Brad Hollinger said. "We're saddened by the events that led to this scenario." The situation unfolded after an incident in last Sunday's Detroit Grand Prix, in which Pourchaire was seventh despite a penalty for avoidable contact and Canapino was 18th. Pourchaire posted Monday on X, formerly Twitter, that he had received death threats and hateful posts over the incident.

"I'm sad I received so much hate and death threats in the last 24 hours for such a small incident in the Detroit GP," he posted. "I hope people can understand that we are all humans and we can make mistakes. But it's not normal to abuse people online. Please be kind to each other." That prompted Canapino to reply in a Tuesday statement, saying while he is against abuse, he felt accusing his fans of making death threats was improper. "We Argentines are passionate and euphoric but that doesn't mean we should be accused of something we are not. Therefore, I strongly reject being generalized and placed in a category we don't deserve," he said.

"I've not seen a single death threat directed at those who claim to have received them. It's outrageous to be accused of this so lightly and I won't allow it anymore. If anyone did this, they are not part of us." Canapino also took a jab at the Frenchman, saying: "I constantly receive abuse and hate and I have learned to live with it as many people do, choosing to ignore it. There's nothing sadder and more miserable than hiding behind social media to insult others." Those comments brought online abuse down on Canapino, leading to his stepping away from the ride.

"The growth of online abuse and harassment resulting from the events of this week have led to a very difficult experience for Agustin," JHR said in a team statement. "The safety of Agustin and the rest of the competitors has to be considered first and foremost. Abuse, hatred, and harassment in any form is a detriment to this sport, and we must prioritize the mental and physical wellbeing of both our drivers and our competition." Both Pourchaire and Siegel took part in a Friday practice at Road America. Canapino ranks 20th on the season points list while Pourchaire is 23rd. — AFP

Kuwait's Wheelchair basketball team shines

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Shafi Al-Hajiri said he is proud of the wheelchair basketball team that won the Eighth Generations of Tomorrow Championship of West Asia, which was held earlier in Jordan. Al-Hajiri said that winning the title in this tournament came after competing with seven teams from the West of Asia. This is a major achievement by Kuwait's disabled team, which won in all stages and was also able to win the title at the end.

Al-Hajiri dedicated the victory to the Amir HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Al-Hajiri congratulated the players and technical and administrative departments for this win and thanked the Public Authority for Sport for its continued support. The Kuwait Disabled Basketball team won the tournament after defeating the Iraqi team in the final match, 70-52.



Shafi Al-Hajiri

Canada stun Ireland for first T20 World Cup win

NEW YORK: Canada won their first-ever Twenty20 World Cup match with a stunning 12-run victory against Ireland in New York on Friday. Defending a target of just 138, the non-Test nation bowled and fielded expertly to hold Ireland to 125-7 from their full 20 overs. From 26-0, Ireland lost six wickets for 33 runs as they slumped to 59-6, with Andrew Balbirnie (17) and Lorcan Tucker (10) the only top-order batsmen to reach double figures.

George Dockrell (30 not out) and Mark Adair (34) revived Irish hopes during a partnership of 62 in seven overs. The seventh-wicket duo reduced the target to 17 off the last six balls. But Canada paceman Jeremy Gordon held his nerve superbly, conceding just three runs and dismissing Adair with the second ball of the 20th over off a skyed caught and bowled chance.

The 37-year-old Guyana-born Gordon finished with fine figures of 2-16 from his maximum four overs as Canada, the lowest-ranked team in the tournament, enjoyed their best day in international cricket since defeating Bangladesh at the 2003 50-over World Cup. Victory meant Canada bounced back from an opening defeat by fellow non-Test nation the United States, with the co-hosts then blowing Group A wide open thanks to a superb Super Over win against Pakistan in Dallas on Thursday. But Ireland's second successive loss at the tournament, following an eight-wicket defeat by India, left them facing an early exit.

Canada themselves slumped to 53-4 on Friday after losing the toss before a key stand of 75 in 10 overs between Barbados-born left-hander Nicholas Kirton (49) and Shreyas Movva (37) helped take them to a total of 137-7. Pitches at the specially built ground in Long Island have been criticized for their



EAST MEADOW: Canada's Nicholas Kirton plays a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 group A cricket match between Canada and Ireland at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York, on June 7, 2024. — AFP

uneven bounce but Friday's strip was notably more placid. The biggest issue for batsmen was a slow outfield that denied them full value for their shots – still a worry ahead of Sunday's showpiece match at the venue between arch-rivals India and Pakistan.

'Strength to strength'

Kirton, however, still hit 16 off one Craig Young over, a return helped by two straight sixes, before his 35-ball innings ended when he gloved Barry McCarthy to short fine leg. "It wasn't so bad, bar the middle of the wicket, a pretty good wicket to bat on to be honest," said Kirton, the player of the match. The 26-year-old added: "The part-

nership (with Movva) was very important, it got us over the line. "It's very good to get our first win in the World Cup, hopefully we can continue from strength to strength. Out next focus is Pakistan, have a rest day tomorrow (Saturday) and get back in the nets."

For an Ireland side more used to causing shocks at International Cricket Council (ICC) events than being on the receiving end, it was a bitter reversal of fortune. "We were off in all three facets (batting, bowling and fielding) today and that wasn't good enough," said Ireland captain Paul Stirling. "Hopefully we can show a better game when we go to Miami next week (to play the USA)." — AFP



Special Olympics Council elected

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The local council of Special Olympics has concluded the first round of election of the council leaders for the next four years. Yousof Khalil was appointed chairman (unopposed), while Sheikh Al-Hindi was elected First Deputy and Ali Al-Shaye (Second Deputy). The final session of the Council was attended by the national director of Kuwait Special Olympics, Rihab Bouresli; the deputy chairman of the board of Tomooh Club, Cherar Al-Rabah; club secretary Sadeega Al-Ansari; the deputy chairman of the family council, Dr Ali Dashti; and Tomooh Club executive director, Huda Al-Khalidi.

Prosecutors name 4th person in NBA betting probe

NEW YORK: US prosecutors identified a fourth person charged in a betting scheme involving an NBA player, saying the accused man had turned himself in. Federal prosecutors in New York announced charges on Thursday against four people involved in conspiring to rig basketball games, but made only three names public: Timothy McCormack, Mahmud Mollah and Long Phi Pham, also known as "Bruce."

The name of a fourth man, Ammar Awawdeh, was revealed on Friday, with a US Attorney's Office representative saying in a statement



Rihab Bouresli was satisfied with the positive results of the council's sessions and the workshops that were held for more than a month. Bouresli lauded the awareness level and interaction of players. She also appreciated the creative efforts that contributed to the success of the Council's activities

that he had surrendered. The charging document does not say which basketball player was involved in the scheme, but the NBA in April banned Toronto Raptors forward Jontay Porter for life after a bombshell probe found he bet on league matches.

US media has reported that Porter was the player who worked with the four men. AFP confirmed the information by cross-referencing court filings, game statistics and the NBA's internal investigation into two games on January 26 and March 20. According to the investigators, McCormack won \$44,000 thanks to his bets, while Mollah netted over \$1.2 million. The two are accused of getting Porter to leave two games for medical reasons after a few minutes of play so they could bet against him.

Alerted by online betting companies, the FBI began an investigation. McCormack and Mollah were charged on Thursday and released on bail, while Pham was arrested on Monday at New



York's JFK airport before he could board a one-way flight to Australia. The NBA accuses Porter, the younger brother of Denver Nuggets star Michael Porter Jr., of placing at least 13 bets on NBA games from January through March of this year while traveling with either the Raptors or their G League affiliate Raptors 905.

NBA players are forbidden from wagering on NBA games under league rules. Those found to have gambled on NBA games risk a fine, suspension or life ban from the sport. "There is nothing more important than protecting the integrity of NBA competition for our fans, our teams and everyone associated with our sport, which is why Jontay Porter's blatant violations of our gaming rules are being met with the most severe punishment," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in April announcing Porter's ban. A majority of US states have legalized sports betting since a Supreme Court decision in 2018. — AFP

Sports

Minnows Lesotho go top as South Africa hold Nigeria

Nigeria winless streak continues

JOHANNESBURG: Football lightweights Lesotho stole the World Cup qualifying show in Africa on Friday, topping the table in a group including powerhouses South Africa and Nigeria. Lesotho, ranked 149th in the world, upset Zimbabwe 2-0 in Soweto to lead Group C, and remained there after Nigeria and South Africa drew 1-1 in Uyo six hours later. In other groups, shock 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco defeated Zambia 2-1 in Agadir and African champions the Ivory Coast edged Gabon 1-0 in Korhogo.

The victories kept Morocco and the Ivory Coast top of their mini-leagues with 100 percent records after matchday three. Rethabile Rasethuntsa and Jane Thaba-Ntso scored in a 10-minute spell during the first half to give Lesotho their first group win after draws with Nigeria and Benin last November. After Themba Zwane struck the woodwork from a free-kick, he put South Africa ahead on 29 minutes in Nigeria with a superb solo goal.

Nigeria leveled in the first minute of the second half when Fisayo Dele-Bashiru held off Mthobhi Mvala and fired a low shot past goalkeeper Ronwen Williams. The match was a repeat of the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations semi-final in the Ivory Coast, which also ended 1-1 before Nigeria won on penalties. Lesotho have five points, Rwanda, Benin and South Africa four each, Nigeria three and Zimbabwe two. Hakim Ziyech and Eliesse Ben Seghir scored to

put Group E leaders Morocco in control before Edward Chilufya netted 10 minutes from time for second-placed Zambia.

Seko Fofana scored after 36 minutes as the Ivory Coast climbed to nine points, three more than Gabon. Kenya lie third with four after conceding a late goal to draw 1-1 with Burundi. The perfect record of the Comoros in Group I ended when they fell 2-1 to fellow Indian Ocean islanders Madagascar in the night-time cold of Johannesburg.

Raveloson stars for Madagascar

Success for Madagascar took them to the top of the table with six points, ahead of the Comoros and Ghana on goal difference. With Mali and the Central African Republic just two points behind, this could develop into one of the most closely contested mini-leagues. France-based Rayan Raveloson starred for Madagascar, scoring in the first minute and again midway through the second half before El Fardou Nabouhane reduced arrears in added time. After failing to score in matchdays one and two last November, Angola needed just two minutes to end the drought as Mabululu notched what proved the only goal of a match against Eswatini.

Winning 1-0 in Luanda lifted the home team to five points, two adrift of table-toppers Libya, who edged Mauritius 2-1 on Thursday. Cameroon and

Cape Verde are in the same section and victory for either side in Yaounde on Saturday will take them above Libya on goal difference. Wins for Uganda and Mozambique created congestion at the top of Group G with four countries having six points. Algeria, who have competed at the World Cup four times, occupy top spot on goal difference, followed by Guinea, Uganda and Mozambique.

Muhammad Shaban netted after 74 minutes as Uganda edged Botswana 1-0 in Kampala, which can host matches again after the national stadium was declared unfit for international football last year. Uganda will enjoy home advantage again in matchday four on Monday when Algeria, shock 2-1 losers to Guinea on Thursday, visit central Africa. Mozambique quickly built a two-goal advantage over minnows Somalia in Maputo thanks to goals from Alfons Amade and Stanley Ratifo. But the Somalis pulled one goal back midway through the second half when Ismail Maxamed netted to set up a tense finish.

Meanwhile, Nigeria coach Finidi George has expressed confidence his team will bounce back to top form in 2026 World Cup qualifying after they extended their winless streak to three matches. Nigeria are yet to win in the World Cup qualifiers after they could only force another 1-1 draw at home against South Africa on Friday in the southern Nigerian town of Uyo. They are now fifth out of six

teams in Group C, having accumulated just three points from as many matches.

Lesotho lead the section with five points, one point ahead of Rwanda and Benin, while South Africa sit fourth and Zimbabwe are bottom with two points. Finidi said even though his team dropped two vital points at home against main rivals South Africa, they are capable of getting their qualifying campaign back on course. "I am not shaken, I am relaxed, we know what is at stake, we know we have to qualify (for the World Cup), but that does not mean we have to run helter skelter because of the draw," the 53-year-old said. "We dropped points and that should not break us, a positive result will change the narrative. "It is not the best result we wanted, we have to get our heads up and work for the next game (Benin)."

Former Nigerian international winger Finidi was handed the reins on a permanent basis in April following Nigeria's defeat in the Africa Cup of Nations final and poor start to World Cup qualifying. Finidi spent 20 months as assistant to Jose Peseiro before the Portuguese coach departed after Nigeria lost the AFCON decider 2-1 to hosts Ivory Coast in February. The Super Eagles will take on Benin in Abidjan on Monday as they seek to kick their World Cup qualifying campaign into gear before it breaks until March 2025. — AFP

Hurricanes, Blues reach Super Rugby semi-finals as Rebels farewell

WELLINGTON: The Wellington Hurricanes and Auckland Blues booked home semi-finals with power-packed victories on Saturday while the Melbourne Rebels bade farewell to Super Rugby. The top-qualifying Hurricanes overcame a slow start to beat the Rebels 47-20 in their quarter-final in Wellington, with the debt-laden Australian team playing the last match in their 14th and final season. The Blues - who finished the regular season a solitary bonus point behind the Hurricanes - overpowered the Fijian Drua in the forwards to win 36-5 in Auckland.

Three teams have reached the semi-finals following the Waikato Chiefs' 43-21 defeat of the Queensland Reds on Friday. The Otago Highlanders would complete a New Zealand sweep of the final four if they upset the ACT Brumbies in Canberra later on Saturday. Some Rebels players and supporters were outwardly emotional after the full-time whistle. They won't return next year after Rugby Australia decided to shut down the club, which went into administration in January owing almost Aus\$23 million (US\$15 million). Captain Rob Leota was pleased his team were competitive in what was the Rebels first play-offs appearance in a full Super Rugby campaign. "It was our goal from the start of the year to be the greatest Rebels team ever," he said. "We had high hopes to go further but you can't give opportunities to a team like the Hurricanes. — AFP



WELLINGTON: Hurricanes Harry Godfrey is tackled by Rebels Rob Leota (center) during the quarter final Super Rugby Pacific match between the Wellington Hurricanes and Melbourne Rebels at Sky Stadium in Wellington on June 8 2024. — AFP



MONCHENGLADBACH: Germany's midfielder #19 Leroy Sane and Greece's defender #22 Dimitrios Giannoulis vie for the ball during the international friendly football match between Germany and Greece on June 7, 2024. — AFP

Gross rescues Germany with last-gasp winner

MONCHENGLADBACH: An 89th-minute winner from Pascal Gross snatched Euro 2024 hosts Germany a 2-1 win against Greece in a friendly in Moenchengladbach on Friday, one week out from the tournament's curtain-raiser. Brighton midfielder Gross blasted a rocket past German-born Greece goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos in the final minute to win the match for the home side, after Kai Havertz earlier cancelled out Georgios Masouras' opener.

Despite coach Julian Nagelsmann naming his strongest XI, Germany lacked fluidity against the 2004 Euros winners, who did not qualify for this summer's tournament, having lost a play-off qualifier to Georgia on penalties. Toni Kroos, who returned having won the Champions League with Real Madrid six days ago, said Germany was on track despite the result. "In football you can play bad halves - but it's important to see the full picture. "In the first half we did plenty of things poorly and gave the ball away. But we finished the match much better, we concentrated and controlled the ball.

"It's important to be calm and also to not make mistakes. We lost the ball and misplaced some passes, but did much better in the second-half." Nagelsmann

praise his side for "showing much more spice" in the second-half, saying "the win is important for the atmosphere before the tournament - you could recognize that in the stadium". Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer was at fault for Masouras' 33rd-minute opening strike, clumsily spilling the ball in front of goal having previously gone unpunished for a late error in Monday's scoreless draw with Ukraine.

The mistake calls into question Nagelsmann's pre-tournament promise that the 2014 World Cup winner would line up between the sticks, with Barcelona goalie Marc-Andre ter Stegen waiting in the wings. Real Madrid's Kroos and Antonio Ruediger returned for Germany, having missed Monday's match due to their Champions League celebrations. The duo's return allowed Nagelsmann to name his strongest team - and the side likely to take the pitch in next Friday's tournament opener against Scotland. The visitors started strongly, Christos Tzolis forcing a desperate double-save from Neuer just six minutes in, the 38-year-old keeper denying the Fortuna Duesseldorf striker with his foot and then his hand from close range.

Ranked 50th in the world, Greece continued to cut through a lacklustre German midfield and hit the lead after 33 minutes when Neuer spilled a Tzolis shot into the path of Masouras, who tapped home from a metre out. The goal silenced the home crowd, who had been in full voice and had unveiled a banner saying "we will become European champions" before the match. Havertz had the ball in the net just before half-time, but was narrowly offside before collecting Jamal Musiala's pass. — AFP

Nowicki sails into European hammer final; Sutej pulls up

ROME: Poland's Wojciech Nowicki made short work of qualifying for the men's hammer throw final at the European championships in Rome on Saturday, while Slovenian pole vaulter Tina Sutej suffered an injury scare just seven weeks out from the Paris Olympics. Nowicki sailed out to 79.00 meters, two metres further than the qualifying standard, but was the sole thrower in his group to go further than that 77m mark.

The 35-year-old Pole, the reigning Olympic champion and five-time world medalist, is bidding for a third successive Euro title after previous successes in Berlin in 2018 and Munich in 2022. "I am sure that even with my first attempt, it would be enough to qualify for the final. But I was not very satisfied with it so I decided to go into the second attempt and test the circle a bit more for the final," Nowicki said. "I do not think about the fact that I am defending champion. For me, this was just like a first training and tomorrow, it is just like a second training towards the peak of the season - the Olympic Games.

"I want to be in the best shape in Paris. I am still in training and my shape is developing but I am hoping for at least one really good throw here." Nowicki added: "I am 35 years old so I have to adapt my body a bit. My head still wants to do it but my body is getting older." Alongside Nowicki, all the other medalists from both 2018 and 2022 Euro championships also qualified for Sunday's final scheduled for 1911 GMT: Polish team-mate Pawel Fajdek, the five-time world champion and 2016 European title winner, Hungary's Bence Halasz and Norwegian Eivind Henriksen. — AFP



Slovenia's Tina Sutej competes in the women's pole vault final during the World Athletics Championships in this file photo. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

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Change of Name

I, SUBHASHINI JAGU, holder of Indian Passport No. N8634257, having permanent address Dno 7 340 Krishna Nagar Rly Koduru Kadapa Dist, 516101, Andhra Pradesh India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) SUBHASHINI and (surname) KOLAVALA. (09/06/2024)

I, RAJA GOPAL REDDY JAGU, holder of Indian Passport No. R2317277, having permanent address 7 340 Krishna Nagar Rly Koduru Kadapa Andhra Pradesh, 516101, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) MAHESWAR REDDY and (surname) KOLAVALA. (09/06/2024)

I, MAHALAKSHMI NIDIGINTI, holder of Indian Passport No. U0192368, having permanent address 00, Chitvel Main Road, Chitvel, Annamayya District, Andhra Pradesh - 516104, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) MEHREEN SHAIK and (surname) SHAIK. (#5619, 09/06/2024)

I, Hawa, holder of Indian Passport No. M7067479, having permanent address Maharashtra, India, PIN - 415605 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Hawabi Jibran and (surname) Parkar. (#5618, 07/06/2024)

I, Lakhbir Singh, S/o Naranjan Singh, holder of Indian Passport No. M5723236 issued at Kuwait, having permanent address R/o Vpo Samadh Bhi The Bagha Purna Moga, Punjab, India. India present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Lakhvir and (surname) Singh. (#5617, 07/06/2024)

I, ALAM ABDUL VALI ANSARI SHAH, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3200385, having permanent address Imilia, Belthra Road, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh - 221715, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) ALAM and (surname) SHAH. (#5615, 06/06/2024)

Swiatek extends Open reign

Poland's Swiatek wins third French Open title in row



PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates with the trophy after winning against Italy's Jasmine Paolini at the end of their women's singles final match on Court Philippe-Chatrier on day fourteen of the French Open tennis tournament on June 8, 2024. — AFP

PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek extended her French Open reign on Saturday as she thrashed Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 6-1 in the final to win her third successive Roland Garros title. World number one Swiatek dominated Italian 12th seed Paolini, a first-time Grand Slam finalist, needing just 68 minutes to capture a fourth crown in five years in Paris. Swiatek has now won all five Grand Slam finals she has contested. Her other victory came at the 2022 US Open.

She is the fourth woman in the Open era to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen four times - after Justine Henin, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf. "It's amazing to be here. I love this place. I wait every year to come back," said Swiatek, who clicked into gear after saving a match point against Naomi Osaka in the second round. "I was almost out of the

tournament," she said.

"I also needed to believe this one is going to be possible, it's been a really emotional tournament." Swiatek becomes only the third woman to win the tournament three years running. Henin, in 2005-07, was the last to do so. Monica Seles also achieved the feat as a teenager at the start of the 1990s. At 23, her four Roland Garros titles is the same number Rafael Nadal, the record 14-time champion, had at the same age.

For the 28-year-old Paolini it was a sorry conclusion, at least in singles, to an otherwise brilliant fortnight in the French capital. The world number 15 had won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January. While she fell short of emulating compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who

won the 2010 French Open, Paolini could yet finish on a winning note with her and doubles partner Sara Errani through to Sunday's final.

"I have to say congratulations to you, Iga," said Paolini. "I think to play you here is the toughest challenge in this sport." Paolini's transformation this season into a player capable of challenging for the biggest prizes stemmed in part from quashing the mindset she needed "a miracle" to beat the best in the sport. Yet the odds were heavily stacked against her going into the final, with Swiatek unbeaten at Roland Garros since a 2021 quarter-final loss to Maria Sakkari.

Swiatek takes charge

Riding a 20-match winning streak in Paris, and a winner of 18 straight match-

es this year after titles in Madrid and Rome, Swiatek quickly set about her business. She powered an ace to hold in the opening game and had Paolini backpedalling down break point, but the Italian ground out a gutsy hold and then broke Swiatek when the Pole flayed a forehand long. That triggered a searing riposte from Swiatek, who broke to love to get back on serve and then surged 4-2 in front after Paolini coughed up a costly double-fault.

Swiatek had her opponent constantly scurrying around the court and the errors began to stack up for Paolini, who conceded the first set with a weak groundstroke into the net. With Swiatek firmly in the ascendancy, Paolini looked lost for answers as the top seed oozed confidence and repeatedly took control of the rallies. Had it not been for

an astonishing recovery against Naomi Osaka in the second round when she saved a match point, Swiatek would have suffered her earliest Grand Slam exit at the French Open.

Instead that fright served to ignite her title aspirations, reigning Wimbledon and US Open champions - Marketa Vondrousova and Coco Gauff - powerless to stop the Swiatek offensive. Swiatek had difficulty putting away Karolina Muchova last year when heavily fancied, but there was no such trouble 12 months on as the Pole dismantled Paolini to underline her burgeoning status as the 'Queen of clay'. The three games won by Paolini was the fewest in the final here since Henin obliterated Ana Ivanovic 6-1, 6-2 in 2007, which also coincided with the Belgian's fourth Roland Garros title in five years. — AFP

Al-Faqaan qualifies for Paris Olympics



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Suad Al-Faqaan qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics in rowing, becoming the first Kuwaiti female athlete to participate in the summer Olympics in this sport, and the fifth to represent Kuwait in the upcoming Olympic games.

Irish quartet outstrips Bol

ROME: An inspired Irish quartet led by Rhasidat Adeleke outstripped Fenke Bol's favored Dutch team to snatch gold in a thrilling 4x400m mixed relay at the European championships on Friday. The Irish four, also featuring Christopher O'Donnell, Thomas Barr and Sharlene Mawdsley, clocked a championship record of 3min 09.92sec, just ahead of silver medal winners Italy, in a show of Olympic intent just 49 days out from the Paris Games. It was Ireland's first European gold medal in 26 years, since Sonia O'Sullivan's 5-10,000m

double in Budapest. "We surprised a lot of people here and we definitely surprised ourselves," said Irish third leg Barr. "But we also had a great confidence that if there is a right day, there is no reason why we could not come home with a medal."

After the World Relays in the Bahamas, Barr said, when Ireland took bronze behind the USA and Netherlands, "I was secretly confident that we could come home with the gold. "And that is exactly what we did, championship record, we all delivered our own individual performances, we all performed together really well as a team and trusted each other to do what we needed to do and we come home with that gold medal which we do not often do in Ireland." — AFP

Indonesia's first Olympic gymnast urges others to 'Dream higher'

JAKARTA: Indonesian gymnast Rifda Irfanaluthfi's palms are covered in chalk as she swings between two uneven bars during intensive training just weeks before she makes history at the Paris Olympics. The 24-year-old is the first Indonesian gymnast to qualify for the Olympics, let alone the first woman, and her mind is set on reaching Paris fully fit so she can etch her name into gymnastics legend at home.

"There is a feeling of excitement. I hope that by qualifying for the Olympics, the world will get to know Indonesia better," she told AFP after training in the capital Jakarta. "I am also feeling worried because of injuries, it made me have insomnia for the last five days." Her feat is even more impressive considering Indonesia does not yet have a national training centre for gymnastics and that conservative Indonesian society, including its top sports, remains dominated by men. The archipelago's enthusiasm is largely focused on football and badminton, the latter the only sport in which it has won Olympic gold.

So talent alone was not enough for Rifda to make it as a gymnast. A level of dedication to overcome a series of hurdles, including a lack of support, was also required. "I continue to practice, and I prove that with limited facilities I can be a successful athlete," she said. "People still underestimated us." Rifda's family had struggled to find a school that would recognize and support something unknown to them such as gymnastics. Her luck changed

when she was admitted to an athletes' school in Jakarta that took her one step closer to her Olympic dream.

'Dream higher'

Rifda started swimming as a child before trying her hand at diving, sport climbing, rhythmic gymnastics and artistic gymnastics. Her mother Yulies Andriana said Rifda attracted attention as a talented gymnast and won her first medal at a junior championship in Singapore as an 8-year-old. Rifda qualified for the July 26-August 11 Olympics at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Belgium last year, with an all-round performance on the vault, floor, uneven bars and balance beam. "Her desire to be a champion is amazing," her mum Yulies said.

Rifda hopes her Olympic exploits can inspire other young Indonesians to follow their dreams, competing against gymnastic juggernauts such as the United States and nations from the former Soviet Union. "Maybe athletes of my age who have never qualified for the Olympics will become passionate to dream higher," she said. The sport is set to grow in Indonesia after it was handed the hosting rights to the World Gymnastics Championships for the first time in 2025, although it still has a long way to go. "Gymnastics needs to be improved comprehensively," Indonesian National Olympic Committee Chief Raja Saptia Oktahari told AFP. But he said "the opportunity for women is pretty big" now as the sport



Indonesian gymnast Rifda Irfanaluthfi

gains more attention. Indonesia's Olympic medal tally is slight but has been influenced by women who came before Rifda.

Its first medal was a silver at Seoul 1988 by a team of female archers, and two of its eight badminton golds were won by a female shuttler at Barcelona 1992 and a women's doubles pair at Tokyo 2020. Indonesia's new gymnastics queen hopes to join that special list, but she still needs therapy for her injured knee. She wants to recover in time to perform well in Paris despite that setback, make the history books and then return home for a well-deserved sweet treat. "Ice cream, strawberry flavor," she said with a smile. — AFP