

**R**<sub>+</sub>  
RIDE SAFE

**BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW**

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

@ridesafe.app

**5** Sudan cemeteries swell with fresh graves amid hunger and disease



**8** Booking.com sounds alarm on AI-enabled travel scams



**11** Stray cats, theatre and achieving students in today's Weekender

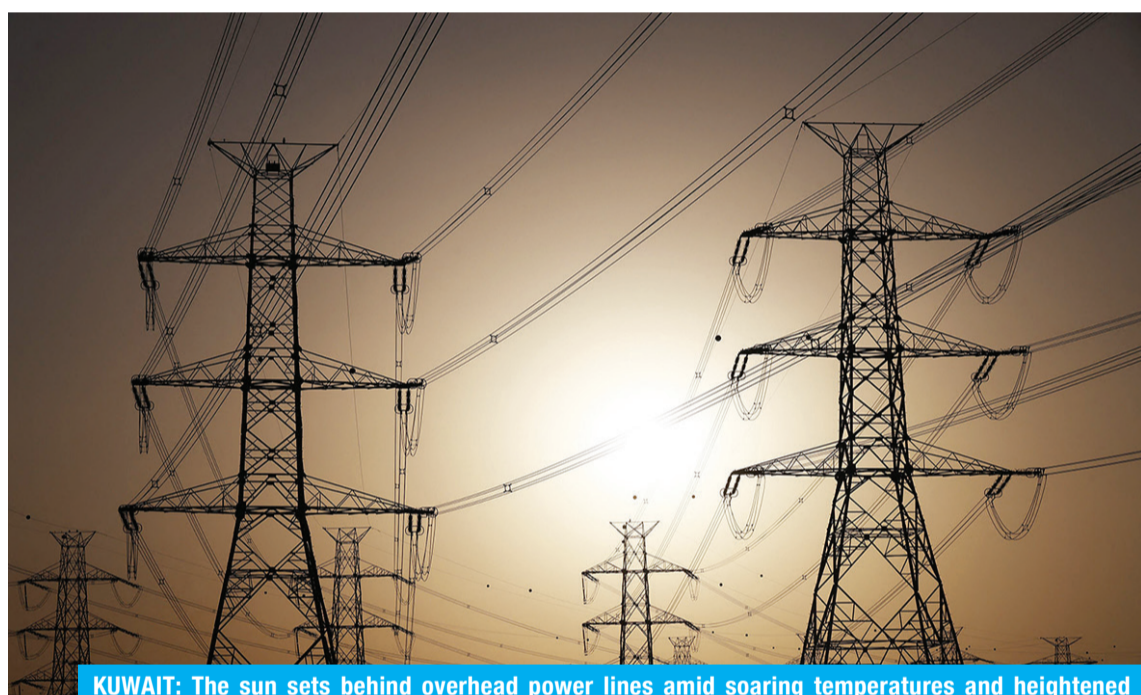


**16** From fighting boys to Olympic history for Saudi taekwondo



## Kuwait faces power crunch

Second day of cuts as demand spikes • Ministries move to save energy • Temperatures to rise



KUWAIT: The sun sets behind overhead power lines amid soaring temperatures and heightened energy demand. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of electricity and water and renewable energy resorted to programmed power cuts on Thursday for the second day running as government departments took a number of precautionary measures to save energy. The cuts on Thursday were limited to just five areas, mostly industrial, compared to over 40 residential areas on Wednesday, the ministry said on its X account. Earlier in the day, the ministry said that as many as 63 areas could be subjected to the cuts.

The ministry also announced Thursday that malfunctions at the main power transformer in Salwa caused power outages in parts of block 12 of the area, noting that technicians were working on fixing the problem as soon as possible. Kuwait Fire Force urged the public to avoid using elevators during the programmed power cuts. It urged people to use the emergency alarm button or call 112 for help if they get stuck in a lift during power cuts.

Temperatures continued to hover above 50 degrees Celsius and the meteorological department forecast extremely high temperatures over the coming several days, exceeding 50 degrees in most areas impacted by very hot air masses from the Indian monsoon.

The education ministry asked its primary teachers to go on summer holidays earlier, starting from Thursday, and asked its intermediate and secondary teachers to start the holidays from Monday to save as much electricity as possible as the schools will be closed. The ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs asked mosques to switch off air conditioners 10 minutes after each prayer, while the ministry of health ordered employees to switch off lights after office hours.

Power consumption on Thursday hit 16,241 MW, surpassing the 16,000 mark for the second day in a row. Reports say that if consumption crosses 16,100, it becomes dangerous and that cuts should be applied. A new study published on Thursday said that power shortages are expected to persist over the next four years unless the government takes quick measures to build new power plants.

The ministry of electricity and water had said on Wednesday the scheduled cuts would occur for up to two hours a day, in the first such step for the OPEC member state as temperatures rise. It blamed the cuts on "the inability of power plants to meet increased demand" during peak hours amid "a rise in temperatures compared to the same period in previous years".

Continued on Page 6

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**27 jailed for laundering KD 120m**

**KUWAIT:** The public prosecution on Thursday ordered the detention of 27 people, including six Kuwaitis, over money laundering charges and forming a gang for that purpose. The prosecution said in a statement that the men laundered more than KD 120 million during a short period of time and then illegally transferred the funds into the banking system, successfully hiding its source.

**Rutte seals NATO top job**

**BUCHAREST:** Outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Thursday clinched the race to become the next head of NATO at a pivotal time for the alliance, after sole challenger Romanian President Klaus Iohannis pulled out. The veteran politician, 57, is expected to be formally named by NATO's 32 nations in the coming days and should take over when current chief Jens Stoltenberg's term ends on Oct 1. Rutte will come in at a perilous moment for the Western allies as Russia's war in Ukraine drags on and Donald Trump battles to reclaim the presidency in the US come November. — AFP



Mark Rutte

**Toxic liquor kills 34 in India**

**MUMBAI:** A batch of toxic illegal alcohol in India has killed at least 34 people with more than 100 others rushed to hospital, Tamil Nadu state officials told reporters Thursday. The deadly mix of locally brewed arrack drink was laced with poisonous methanol, Chief Minister M K Stalin said. Stalin said arrests have been made over the deaths and warned such crimes "ruin society and will be suppressed with an iron fist". — AFP

### Zionist-Hezb tensions drive fears of war

**GAZA/BEIRUT:** Fears of a regional war rose Thursday after Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement said none of the Zionist entity would be spared in a full-blown conflict, and the Zionist entity said it had approved plans for a Lebanon offensive. In the latest border unrest, Hezbollah said it fired dozens of rockets into the Zionist entity in retaliation for a deadly air strike in south Lebanon that the Zionist entity said killed a Hezbollah operative.

Experts are divided on the prospect of wider war, almost nine months into the Zionist entity's vow to eradicate Hamas, the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. On Wednesday, the Zionist entity's top military spokesman said Hamas, as an ideology, cannot be eliminated. Others, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have also pointed to the difficulty of destroying the Islamist group.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah's group and Zionist forces have exchanged near-daily fire since Hamas' Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity, and the bellicose talk has lately escalated along with the strikes. In a televised address, Nasrallah said "no place" in the Zionist entity would "be spared our rockets" if war began.

Continued on Page 6

### Muslim migrants shelter in Tijuana on US doorstep

**TIJUANA, Mexico:** From Algeria, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, citizens of distant, Muslim countries wait for US asylum at a shelter in the Mexican border city of Tijuana — more used to seeing migrants from Latin America than the Middle East. At the Assabil Inn, Mexico's first shelter catering for US-bound Muslim migrants, the backstories of the guests are as varied as the assortment of languages they speak.

"Almost everybody follows the

same faith. So it feels like you're among your brothers and sisters," Maitham Alojaili, a 26-year-old who fled civil war-wrecked Sudan, told AFP before joining Friday prayers at the facility's mosque. "People get kidnapped. Anything could happen. Sometimes, when you leave home, there's a very high chance that you don't come back," Alojaili said of the circumstances that compelled him to leave everything behind in search of a better life far away.

Data released this week by Mexico's National Migration Institute said some 1.39 million people from 177 countries have traveled through the country so far this year, trying to reach the United States without entry papers.

Continued on Page 6

### Iraqis flock to river or ice rink to escape heat

**BAGHDAD:** In the sizzling Baghdad heat, Mussa Abdallah takes to the Tigris river during the day to cool off, while others opt for ice skating to escape the relentless temperatures. "At the end of the day, I'm sweaty and exhausted because of the sun," said Abdallah, a 21-year-old house painter in

the Iraqi capital. "At home, there's no electricity. If I want to wash, the water is scalding hot," he added, describing how water stored above ground virtually boils at this time of year.

Iraq is grappling with a blistering summer, with temperatures often exceeding 50 degrees Celsius, exacerbated by declining rainfall, rampant desertification and frequent dust storms. The United Nations ranks Iraq among the world's five most climate-vulnerable nations. Almost every day after work, Abdallah retreats to the Tigris to escape the sweltering heat.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A man with his children walks past destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis on June 20, 2024. — AFP



TIJUANA: President of Latina Muslim Foundation Sonia Garcia (right) and the shelter's administrator Angie Magana attend Friday prayers at Assabil Inn on May 17, 2024. — AFP



BAGHDAD: A boy jumps into the water of a canal of the Tigris river amid a searing heatwave on June 18, 2024. — AFP



## Local

In my view

## An open letter to the opponents of peace and Palestine



Nejouad Al-Yagout

local@kuwaittimes.com

One does not have to be Arab or Muslim to feel utter distress at the plight of Gazans and Palestinians (lest we forget that Palestine is home to Christians and Jews and other faiths as well). You refer to the conflict as a war on Gaza, but the paradox is that it is not confined to Gaza, and it is neither a conflict nor a war: it is a full-scale occupation. As you already know, the IDF (Zionist Defense Forces) has spread its tentacles to Rafah, and the fact that West Bank residents' homes are prey to bulldozers or settlers is further evidence that the conflict is not a conflict but an invasion, a manifestation of an expansionist scheme where lives or homes in the way are obstacles and bloodshed is considered noble.

What we are witnessing may seem like a scenario from the Dark Ages, but the fact that it is happening in the 21st century and on our screens to boot is horrifying and shocking, to say the least. It's almost as though you no longer make an attempt to hide atrocities since you are getting away with one atrocity after another. How many more images do you have to see of mothers and fathers holding the corpses of their babies for you to wake up and say: OK, Enough! How many more buildings are to be bombed? How many more hospitals?

You keep reverting to October 7th. Yes, of course, elderly women and babies and women and people uninvolved in the conflict are victims as well. You see, some people have hearts. And our hearts bleed for any member of the human race. We were dismayed by the attack on civilians, because some of us hold the view that human beings are human beings, wherever we hail from, whether a person in danger is considered a friend or an enemy, and whatever the circumstances that led to bloodshed are.

Unfortunately, there are not enough of us on the planet who feel this way; but, still, we exist. And we ask you to join us, since you are the ones in power, not us. You are the ones that can inspire people to let go of grievances and focus on uniting the world for once. Once and for all! This is not a pipe-dream. If you were able to galvanize people to hate, you can galvanize people to love. We are not here to discuss the reasons or pretexts for attacks nor to justify them. How many decades have been wasted through debates, pointing fingers, analyses and closed-door meetings, only to come up with futile proposals that "pave the way for peace?"

How much longer will we wait to let go of grievances and focus on what is happening now, at this moment in time? What we are living through is a horrendous retaliation, a retaliation that has shocked even your allies, a retaliation that has shocked even activists across the globe who rooted for peace, a retaliation that has shocked even supporters of the Abrahamic accords.

For the first time, countries around the world are standing up and recognizing the state of Palestine, but their stance is only met with your accusations of anti-semitism or support of terrorists. But how can rabbis be anti-semitic? How can Jews who are asking that the Zionist entity be held into account for its war crimes be anti-semitic?

How can former IDF soldiers who have changed their stance be considered anti-semitic? And why is it anti-semitism when Palestinians want a country, a home they can call home just like the rest of the world - a home their ancestors called home for eons? And speaking of terrorists: When did pregnant women and babies and children become known as terrorists? When did patients in hospitals become known as threats to the security of another nation? When are assaults on journalists acceptable? When is it ever justified to support the raid of a hospital, even when suspected hostage takers are inside?

The excessive violence of the IDF, the excruciating pain of watching settlers abuse residents, the viral videos where soldiers laugh with impunity as they take over homes, or the humiliation endured by Palestinians as they are forced to leave their homes, make even a peacemaker shudder. In what world is this considered okay for you? And if it is okay with you, then no wonder the world is in such danger! But then, of course, gaslighting occurs because nobody in a position of power wants to be accused of expansionist and vindictive agendas that are detrimental to humanity, even when their actions prove otherwise.

What is happening in Palestine, to both Palestinians and the inhabitants of Palestine, is heartbreaking, beyond unjust, and shocking. The lack of control we have as you seek to polarize us and even make money while doing so is nail-bitingly frustrating. No protests, no articles, no speeches, no resolutions, no peace proposals, no boycotts, no insistence on an immediate ceasefire, no one-state/two-state debates, no proof that the land was called this or that, have brought or will bring peace. These attempts have become farcical at best (including the writing of this open letter). Peace can never come through these routes.

What will bring peace is when you choose to rule from the heart rather than the ego, when you create laws that are free from prejudices and polarizing principles, when you realize that power trips are a manifestation of the evil that lurks within each of us, when you recognize that violence breeds violence, hatred breeds hatred, when you acknowledge that defending yourself by using extreme measures creates instability and further enmity, when you stop selling and buying arms and focus on building a planet that is beneficial to all of us, not just to you.

What we need now are less of you jet-setting to meetings in expensive designer suits to discuss peace and more of you willing to join hands rather than galvanize those who voted for you to kill and hate. Enough! Wake up! We are a part of this world too. And if money is your game, if you will lose billions when peace is made, then we, the people, will give you all the money in the world in exchange for peace, in exchange for one humanity, one world. When you experience the otherworldly vibrations of peace, you will give up warmongering and greed too. This is a promise. Try it. It won't hurt.

As for us, we want peace. We want peace now. Here's to peace in the world, even for those of us who are disillusioned and dismayed by the brutality we are forced to witness as you engage in war games at the expense of life, security, and peace of mind. Here's to true peace, a peace that can only be achieved when we transcend borders and nationality. That's what has gotten all of us into this worldly mess. Can't you see that? But that's a whole other article and a whole other era! Viva l'amore! (Long live love) With more frustration and pain that even the pen can fathom and on behalf of all the people in the world who choose peace.

## Protect your skin as heatwave rocks Kuwait: Medical expert

## Sun survival: Why sun protection matters more than ever

By Harichandana PD

KUWAIT: In recent times, Kuwait has been enduring scorching temperatures, thus recording one of the most intense heatwaves in its history. While the heat can be discomforting, it also poses significant risks to our skin health. Here is why sun protection is now more crucial than ever. Sun exposure, regardless of location, can wreak havoc on your skin. However, in Kuwait's blistering heat, the need for protection is heightened.

"In Kuwait, the temperature is extremely high, which makes it necessary to protect your skin so that you can avoid the chances of skin burns, skin cancer, pigmentation, and aging," explained Dr. Divya Rajaguru, a practicing dermatologist in Kuwait. "Sunblock should be used every four hours with a SPF of at least 50," advises Dr. Divya.

"Ultraviolet (UV) rays don't discriminate; they can harm any skin type." Selecting the appropriate sunscreen involves considering your skin type and the climate. For acne-prone skin, opt for non-comedogenic formulations (lotion or gel form) to prevent pore blockages. In Kuwait's low-humidity climate, oil-based sunscreens provide essential moisture for dry skin. For people who go to the workplace, they can use foundation like sunscreen, which has a pinkish/peach tint to it, which helps to avoid the white cast. There is also invisible sunscreen that blends with your skin to ensure it doesn't look odd," she suggested.

In addition to sunscreen, adopting other protective measures is crucial. Wear lightweight, breathable clothing that covers your skin adequately. Wide-brimmed hats and UV-blocking sunglasses shield vulnerable areas like the face and eyes. "Thin layers also work. Don't forget your sunglasses! It helps to protect your eyes from UV rays since sunlight is one of the causes of cataracts," Dr. Divya noted.

During severe heatwaves, it is essential to take additional precautions. Boost your body's resilience by consuming antioxidant-rich foods such as papaya and carrots. Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids, and prioritize protein-rich foods like fish to support skin repair and regeneration. "You can improve your nutritional value. Kids are recommended to take vitamin-rich foods like papaya and carrots and protein-rich foods like fish," she advised.



Dr Divya Rajaguru



Frequent sun exposure can also lead to various skin and other issues, including premature graying of the hair, the formation of rashes, and redness in the face (which are quite common among women in Kuwait). Preventative measures such as regular sunscreen application, protective clothing, and seeking shade can mitigate these risks. "Pityriasis alba, i.e., the forming of pale, white patches on the face, is quite common among children. Some young adults experience early wrinkles, usually occurring between 25 and 30 years of age, but here, people are experiencing them from the age of 18 due to the damage created by sunlight," Dr. Divya explained.

In extreme heat, individuals are susceptible to heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Symptoms include dehydration, dizziness, nausea, and confusion. If you are experiencing these signs, seek immediate medical attention and move to a cooler environment. There are several home remedies that can be practiced in case of a sudden burn or irritation. In the event of a sunburn, soothe the skin with cool compresses or ice packs. Avoid further irritation by using a gentle moisturizer. Over-the-counter pain relievers and topical treatments like calamine lotion can provide relief.

Common misconceptions about sun protection

abound, such as the belief that sunscreen is unnecessary on cloudy days. However, UV rays penetrate clouds, necessitating year-round protection. "Just because it's cloudy doesn't mean you don't have to apply sunscreen because UV rays are still present. When you apply sunscreen, you should apply a generous amount every day after every 4 hours, irrespective of whether it is morning or afternoon, sunny or rainy," she clarified.

Additionally, Dr. Divya added, "Take vitamin D tablets in case you suffer from vitamin D deficiency. People often perceive sunscreens as chemicals and use them only for short periods, which can actually lead to more damage. Skipping sunscreen can result in severe sunburns. While some sunscreens contain chemicals, they're generally safe for adults. For children, sunscreens with zinc oxide and titanium oxide are safer as they simply reflect sunlight."

As Kuwait battles with scorching temperatures, prioritizing sun protection is paramount. By embracing comprehensive measures, from sunscreen application to dietary adjustments, individuals can safeguard their skin health and mitigate the adverse effects of extreme heat. Remember, protecting your skin is not just a cosmetic concern - it's essential for your overall well-being.



KUWAIT: A young boy plays in a fountain to cool off during a heat wave, at the Mubarakiya Market in this file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Photo shows the Kuwait coastline along the Arabian Gulf. The director of the Meteorological Department, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said that the weather during the weekend will be very hot during the day and hot at night, with a relative increase in humidity in the coastal areas. — KUNA

## Heat, humidity, dust predicted

KUWAIT: The director of the Meteorological Department, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said that the weather during the weekend will be very hot during the day and hot at night, with a relative increase

in humidity in the coastal areas. Al-Qarawi told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is affected by the extension of the Indian monsoon, accompanied by a hot and sometimes relatively humid air mass. Al-Qarawi added that the weather will be very hot with the winds fluctuating from light-to-moderate speed, which is sometimes active from 8 to 42 kilometers per hour.

There will be a chance of dust in the western regions, and the expected maximum temperatures

will be between 47 and 50 degrees Celsius, while the sea will witness a light-to-moderate wave from 1 to 4 feet. It is expected that the weather tonight will be hot and relatively humid in the coastal areas. Saturday will also be relatively hot and humid, especially in coastal areas, with north-west winds turning south-east (between 10 and 35 kilometers per hour). The maximum temperature will be between 45 and 47. Saturday night will be moderately hot and humid, too. — KUNA

## Deputy PM stresses need for accurate ID and security info

KUWAIT: The First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, confirmed on Thursday that the Civil ID is the main source of security information needed by the security establishment, indicating that the government can approve any law that regulates work, removes obstacles, and serves the interests of the country.

This was stated in a press release issued by the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior after Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef chaired a meeting held at the headquarters of the General Authority for Civil Information in the presence of the former minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan and representatives of the Civil Information department, the General Authority for Manpower, Kuwait Municipality, Ku-

wait Fire Force, and the Ministry of Interior (represented by the public security, residency, and nationality affairs sectors).

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stressed the need to develop a comprehensive vision to achieve full connectivity between the concerned authorities to provide information from a single source and seek to update the data first-hand and tighten control over it in order to achieve the full effectiveness of correct and accurate information in achieving security and safety in lives and property. The meeting discussed the role of the Public Authority for Civil Information in providing correct and accurate information, the nature of its reflection on the general situation of the country, and documenting all the required data in order to control security and achieve social stability.

The officials stressed the need for clear and accurate data on the registered cards for each residential property or house, and for each voucher, the owner's information, the number registered in them, the obligation of the property owner to inform the concerned authorities in the event of his exit from the property and the entry of a new owner, and the need to fully link between Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Civil Information. — KUNA

## Nine stores closed for selling fake products

KUWAIT: The Consumer Protection Department of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry closed down nine commercial stores on site in one of the malls in Salmiya for selling counterfeit products that are subjected to legal audit. In a press statement on Thursday, the Ministry said that it seized about 6,000 pieces

of merchandise, noting that those in charge of these stores have been referred to the relevant authorities for prosecution.

Kuwait's name has been lifted from the list of countries that violate intellectual property due to the Commercial Protection Department's strictness in controlling those who trade in counterfeit goods, according to the statement. The Ministry reiterated its emphasis on continuing its monitoring tours of malls and shops to ensure that they adhere to the laws and regulations and to protect consumers from fraud, calling on consumers to report any complaint in this regard through the government application (Sahel). — KUNA

## Kuwait, Germany, India discuss trade

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf held talks on Thursday with the German and Indian ambassadors on the historic relations and trade enterprises between Kuwait and the two friendly nations. Dr Al-Mudhaf, also the Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, held the discussions separately with the German and Indian ambassadors, respectively Hans Christian and Dr Adarsh Swaika, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Finance.

It quoted Minister Al-Mudhaf as saying that his talks with the two envoys dealt with accrediting bills, paying for trade transactions in local currencies in India and Germany, and prospects of shifting to e-payments. The talks also covered the possible launch of Kuwaiti investments in the two friendly countries and establishing strategic investment relations in food security and renewable energy, the statement said, adding that hurdles facing Indian companies in the country were also broached with New Delhi's envoy. The statement also quoted Minister Al-Mudhaf as underscoring the significance of the water sewage project in Umm Al-Haiman, indicating that the state was seeking to execute it rapidly and affirming that the venture bonded the private and public sectors. — KUNA

## Local

# Cabinet commends Saudi for successful hajj season

## Ministers applaud Amir's humanitarian initiative

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Cabinet has commended Saudi Arabia's distinguished efforts and care for pilgrims, congratulating Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz on this year's successful hajj season. In a statement following its weekly meeting, the Cabinet also spoke highly of the proper organization, security measures, and medical services that enabled pilgrims to perform their rituals so smoothly and comfortably.

The great efforts of the Kuwaiti hajj mission, together with volunteers and medical staff, in providing all necessary services to Kuwaiti pilgrims were also appreciated. Locally, the ministers voiced thanks and appreciation for the response of the Ministry of Interior, General Fire Force, Ministry of Health, and Kuwait Municipality to the recent tragic fire that claimed the lives of scores of people.

Spearheaded by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, the ensuing inspection campaign targeting violating buildings and facilities nationwide was greatly commended during the meeting. In this context, the efforts of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan and officials of other ministries and state bodies involved were also extolled during the weekly Cabinet meeting, presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, the Cabinet applauded the humanitarian initiative of His High-



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over the weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday. — KUNA

ness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for handing out donations to the victims and airlifting their corpses to their homeland. In view of

the power cutoff, Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Mohammad Abdulaziz Bushehri kept

the Cabinet up to date on the causes of the power outage affecting some parts of the country earlier in the day, citing high power consumption at peak hours.

The minister reassured us that maintenance contracts and tenders for re-vamping the efficiency of power plants were approved on June 11. — KUNA

## Kuwait seeks new strategies, boosts local production

**KUWAIT:** In light of the political crises and climate changes the world is witnessing, Kuwait, like any other regional country, faces serious challenges in achieving food security, especially with the increase in demand, heavy dependence on imports, and scarcity of local food products, which makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in global prices. This shows the need for Kuwait to adopt new strategies to confront food security challenges by diversifying food sources, promoting sustainable agriculture, improving management of water resources, and encouraging awareness of healthy nutrition methods by enhancing investments in the infrastructure of agriculture, food industry, and livestock sectors.

The concept of food security includes economic, social, cultural, environmental, and political aspects, which calls for the need to move from the stage of adopting public policies to sustainable food systems aimed at ensuring the four elements of food security: availability, access, benefit, and stability. Meanwhile, the World Bank included, in a report published on January 29, 2024, on its official website, the food security issue among the eight critical challenges facing the world that must be addressed on a broad international scale.

### Food Security System

The Kuwaiti Cabinet had decided in August 2022 to establish the Supreme National Committee for Strengthening the Food and Water Security System, which includes competencies from inside and outside the country as advisors to prepare and address technicalities and recommendations regarding food and water security. In February 2023, the committee approved the broad outlines of the strategy for achieving food, water, and drug security in Kuwait, which included 21 basic pillars and 65 initiatives, with eight pillars and 28 security initiatives, in order to reach the strategic goal of strengthening the food security system.

In such international circumstances, there is an urgent need to adopt an integrated strategy for food security that includes dimensions such as strengthening the national food basket through expanding regional and international agricultural investments and owning agricultural lands, livestock, and fisheries in countries with fertile regions.

In that context, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development stated on its website that Kuwait fell 20 places back according to the food security index issued by the Economic Research Unit of the British Economist Group in 2022, where it was ranked 50th globally out of 113 countries, while it was ranked seventh in the Arab world and sixth in the GCC.

Kuwait was ranked 30th globally in 2021 and 33rd in 2020 on the Food Security Index, which measures the performance of 113 countries in providing the food needs of their population through four main factors: the ability to bear the costs and availability of food, the type and quality of food, natural resources,



**KUWAIT:** In this file photo, Kuwaitis pick strawberries at a farm in Al-Abdali, 130 kilometers north of Kuwait City. The farm in Abdali, encourages people to pick their own strawberries before buying them according to weight, in an attempt to encourage agricultural tourism. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

and resilience. In its evaluation, the Food Security Index relies on giving countries a score out of 100, as it is calculated from the average of the four main factors that make up the general index by collecting and weighing the results of the 68 individual indicators distributed among the factors and measuring the extent of each country's ability to provide the food needs of its population on a scale starting from zero to one hundred.

### Priorities and goals

In this vein, the Director General of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, after his meeting with the Director General of the Arab Center for Studies of Dry Zones and Dry Lands, Dr Nasraddin Al-Obaid, last January, said that the Authority is ready to implement all the development plans that it serves Kuwait in a way that meets its priorities and goals and achieves food security and sustainable development goals.

When talking about food security in Kuwait, there is a major role played by governmental companies concerned with food, such as Al-Mawashi Company, Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (KUCCS). According to a report published by KUNA on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of establishing the company, Al-Mawashi owns the largest shaded farm in Kuwait, covering about four million square meters and accommodating 200,000 heads of livestock.

It also has another shaded farm in the UAE, with an area of 285,000 square meters and accommodating 100,000 livestock. The company also has a farm in South Africa with a capacity of 70,000 livestock and another in Australia with a capacity of 100,000 sheep, while the Australian government seeks to stop the export of live sheep across the sea. According to the Australian Agriculture Minister's announcement regarding the decision to stop exports as of May 1, 2028, this necessitates searching for other sources for exporting live sheep.

Al-Mawashi relies on several goals, including providing the finest types of meat to local and regional markets in innovative ways and at reasonable prices through an integrated and

sustainable supply chain managed by the company. On the other hand, the CEO of Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, Mutlaq Al-Zayed, said in a previous statement to KUNA that it bears the task of achieving food security in Kuwait, expressing readiness to meet the needs of consumers, provide sufficient stocks of all products in cooperative societies and central markets, and keep up with any updates according to an established emergency plan.

### Continued availability

For his part, President of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Musab Al-Mulla, told KUNA that the union has a pivotal role in achieving food security in Kuwait by maintaining the strategic stock of foodstuffs to ensure their continued availability to the consumer. A study conducted by the Kuwait Society for Science, Technology, and Innovation and published on its website stated that challenges facing food security could be summarized into two main issues: the sustainability of agricultural production for future generations and maintaining the required quality of food while securing its availability in markets.

The study added that there is a shortage of natural resources, increased consumption of energy and water, and a spike in fertilizer and fodder imports, which requires management capable of exploiting energy without waste and the need to find renewable sources of energy in various types of farms. The study quoted a United Nations report on food waste saying, "An individual in Kuwait wastes 95 kilograms of food on average annually, while Kuwaiti families waste about 397 tons of food annually."

The study also recommended the availability of major food commodities of the appropriate quality from local production and the development of a plan to ensure their availability under scenarios and possibilities of supply chain interruptions. It stressed the need to improve the water management system to support the economy by expanding the use of treated wastewater in agriculture and focusing on manufacturing organic and chemical fertilizers in Kuwait, as it is necessary to achieve food security. — KUNA

## Kuwait Municipality issues 11 warnings for violations in Mutlaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality issued Thursday 11 warnings for violations in building regulations in the Jahra governorate as part of the campaign (A home without violations) launched at the start of this month. The campaign aims at investigating the extent of compliance with the requirements and specifications of private and model housing. Abdullah Al-Ajmi, head of the engineering violations follow-up department at the Jahra governorate municipality branch, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Thursday's inspection tour included accommodations in the Mutlaa residential area in addition to other areas within the governorate.

Ajmi added that this inspection tour is the fourth tour carried out by the supervisory team at the department. The inspection campaign is meant to deliver an awareness message to citizens applying to build homes so that the process goes without violations. He said that the supervisory team is keen to inspect the residential accommodations to ensure the proper and complete application of building regulations, in addition to monitoring encroachments on state property in the area of Al-Mutlaa. He stressed the need to comply with the regulations and laws of the municipality, pointing out that the control teams will intensify their inspection rounds to monitor violators and take all legal measures against them. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality officials issued 11 warnings for building violations in Jahra. — KUNA photos

In my view

World is waiting  
for 'the change'

Dr. Khalid A Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

There is a detachment from the human conscience and that of the political interest—a detachment where you can clearly see racism and oppression increasing among people. The world is watching the killing and devastation by the Zionist entity against the unarmed Gazans, and despite the arguments of the Zionist leaders and linking their barbarism to the attack on the Zionist entity on October 7th, 2023, the inhumane Zionists' reaction truly reflects the injustice the human conscience could not bear and ignore.

Destructive attacks with lethal weapons for months targeting civilians and children without discrimination are a scenario similar to what happened during the Second World War (WWII). The war was triggered by the Pearl Harbor attack. The Imperial Japanese Navy targeted the American Navy fleet in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the US declared war in retaliation. That war revealed American extremism in the use of power. The US military bombed a civil city, Hiroshima, with a nuclear bomb on August 6, 1945, and they were not satisfied with that as the Americans also bombed another city (Nagasaki) on August 9th, 1945.

The two bombings completely wiped out the entire cities (Hiroshima and Nagasaki). It was a tragedy that revealed the extent of human cruelty and injustice. At that time, human conscience could not bear that shock, forcing the then-leaders to make laws to ban the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The same tragedy is being repeated today, without nuclear weapons. In this case, a strong army, backed by a superpower, is killing unarmed civilians (in Gaza) who are trapped in a narrow area.

The world did not stop the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks then and is still not able to stop the attacks in Gaza now, and the reason is that the inhuman conscience of our political leaders is the one that controls the people's fate. The Gaza war has revealed the failures of democratic principles. The tragic war has shown that the world doesn't care about the minority. The claims of Western values, freedom, equality, justice, and the rest of the slogans are gone. The world is waiting for 'the change' as the politicians' conscience overrides the nations' conscience.

KUNA's hajj coverage highlights  
achievement of media initiative

The Hajj Media Forum



Military performance by hajj security forces. — KUNA photos



The Clock Towers in the lens of KUNA.

MAKKAH: Kuwait News Agency's (KUNA) unique and expansive coverage of the 2024 hajj season, in cooperation with Saudi Press Agency (SPA), highlighted the achievement of the media hub initiative. KUNA's participation in the Hajj Media Forum, organized by the Saudi Ministry of Information, underscored the importance of media in covering the annual fifth pillar of Islam. Furthermore, the hub was successful in its fruitful coverage and accessibility to religious, cultural, and educational sites within Makkah, with the help of the Saudi Ministry of Interior.

Moreover, international media personnel covered the Makkah Road Initiative, concerned with receiving and facilitating entry procedures for pilgrims into Saudi Arabia starting from their arrival at Jeddah's King Abdulaziz Airport. Meanwhile, KUNA's media team was given access to a myriad of locations to view and record the sites and scenes of the faithful pilgrims per-

forming religious rituals, as well as to interview numerous officials on the preparation and organization of the recent hajj season.

Kuwaiti hajj delegations were followed by KUNA throughout their stay, underscoring Kuwaiti campaigns, directives, and helpful information for the Kuwaiti pilgrims. In a statement to KUNA, Director of SPA Fahd Al-Aqran praised KUNA's cooperative efforts and expansive yet detailed coverage of the hajj, which reflected the agency's professionalism and due diligence in being one of the most important news agencies in the region. — KUNA



Fahd Al-Aqran



Kuwait News Agency at the Hajj Media Forum.

Kuwait's trade surplus  
with Japan rises 2.3%

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan widened 2.3 percent from a year earlier to JPY 82.7 billion (\$522 million) in May, up for the first time in three months, the latest government data showed. Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 16 years and four months, as exports outpaced its imports by a big margin, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan grew

3.9 percent year-on-year to JPY 102.8 billion (\$648 million) for the first expansion in three months. Imports from Japan also increased 11.5 percent to JPY 20.1 billion (\$126 million), up for the first time in six months. The Middle East's trade surplus with Japan widened 13.1 percent to JPY 831.6 billion (\$5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region rising 12 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas, and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, jumped 10.3 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan rose 8.5 percent on strong demand

for automobiles, machinery, and steel. The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade deficit of JPY 1.2 trillion (\$7.7 billion) in May for the second consecutive month of red ink as the weaker yen inflated import bills.

Exports surged 13.5 percent from the year before, lifted by automobiles, semiconductor-making equipment, and chips. Imports expanded 9.5 percent on energy prices, especially petroleum products and crude oil, amid the yen's depreciation against the dollar. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA

KRCS launches meat  
delivery campaign  
for refugees

AMMAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched a program in Jordan to deliver Eid Al-Adha sacrificial meat to Syrian refugees and the poor. According to the KRCS statement, the program would benefit around 6,000 individuals throughout Jordan. The KRCS had launched similar campaigns in Palestine and Lebanon.

## OIC in solidarity

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed the OIC's full support and solidarity with refugees on Thursday. During the celebration of World Refugee Day, he stressed the importance of prioritizing the humanitarian needs of this vulnerable group who have been forced to leave their homelands due to wars, conflicts, and natural disasters.

The Secretary-General expressed "his gratitude and admiration towards OIC Member States for their compassionate efforts in providing refuge to those displaced." He emphasized that helping and protecting refugees is both a humanitarian and Islamic obligation, as dictated by the teachings of Islam, the OIC Charter, and relevant national and international laws.

The Secretary-General urged the international community to support these member states and emphasized the importance of establishing an equitable partnership. He also acknowledged that OIC Member States currently bear the highest share of the global refugee burden, hosting over half of the world's refugees. Taha emphasized the importance of addressing the underlying causes of the refugee crisis in the Islamic world to assist this vulnerable group effectively.

He pointed out the consistent efforts of the General Secretariat, along with international partners and organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to find long-term solutions and facilitate the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees per established international agreements and protocols. The Secretary-General said that in the last quarter of this year, "the OIC will hold a donor conference to support refugees and displaced persons in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin, which will be graciously hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."



KRCS delivers food to refugees.— KUNA photos



The Secretary-General "highly valued the pivotal role played by the United Nations Relief Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees, especially in light of the recent developments in Palestine due to the brutal aggression against the defenseless Palestinian people and its destruction of UNRWA facilities and hundreds of tons of food and medicine in Gaza and the attacks on its headquarters in Jerusalem, calling on the international community to work hard to stop all legal and humanitarian violations and hold Zionist occupation accountable for its continuous crimes without adhering to the most basic international laws and norms."

He also called on the international community, the United Nations, and member states of the organization to continue providing support to the agency to enable it to continue its services to Palestinian refugees until the right of return is achieved in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. Meanwhile, World Refugee Day is celebrated on June 20 of each year and is devoted to reviewing the concerns, issues, and problems of refugees and people with no homes. — KUNA

Scan & Subscribe  
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



Jewish critics of Zionism have clashed with American Jewish leaders for decades

## Climate change made deadly heat 35x more likely in US, Mexico, Central America



El-FASHER: A handout photograph, shot in January 2024, shows a woman and baby at the Zamzam displacement camp, close to El-Fasher in North Darfur, Sudan. — Reuters

# Sudan's cemeteries swell with fresh graves as hunger and disease spread

**'We are trapped here and we will die of hunger'**

**KHARTOUM:** Community leaders are keeping handwritten lists of the names of the dead in the Kalma displaced persons camp in Sudan's Darfur region. The lists are growing longer, and not a day goes by when they don't include the name of a child, says one of the leaders. In a two-week period in May alone, 28 children appeared on the lists. The cause of death: malnutrition and disease, say the community leaders.

One of them was Moshatah, a seven-month-old girl. She suffered severe diarrhea and vomiting, which led to malnourishment. Her family lacked money to buy medication for her. And food ran short: They were surviving on one meal a day — a plate of Asaeda porridge.

Around midnight on May 14, Mariam Adam, Moshatah's mother, said she placed her hand on her daughter's heart but felt no pulse. Then she placed her hand above her mouth. Nothing. "She stopped breathing," said the 22-year-old Adam. "Her heart stopped."

It's not only children dying in Kalma. In April, Adam's aunt died of medical complications that required surgery. Moshatah and the aunt were buried in the same cemetery at the edge of the camp.

Like this burial ground, others around the Kalma camp have been growing rapidly in recent months. One cemetery on the southern edge of Kalma has expanded 2.5 times faster in the first half of 2024 than it did in the second half of 2023, a Reuters analysis of satellite images shows.

Graveyards are fast expanding elsewhere in the Darfur region, which has been ravaged by the war between the Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that has engulfed the country. In the teeming Zamzam displaced persons camp, now home to hundreds of thousands of people, a cemetery on that facility's southern edge expanded about three times faster in the first half of 2024 than in the second half of last year.

In all, Reuters identified 14 burial grounds in five communities across Darfur that have expanded rapidly in recent months. The area of new graves at these burial grounds has grown up to three times faster in the first half of 2024 than in the second half of last year. That increase, moreover, came on top of an already-high base: The region saw weeks of violence in the last six months of 2023 that resulted in many deaths.

These cemeteries are "the canaries in the coal mine," said Timmo Gaasbeek, the author of a recent report by the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think tank, that warns of high rates of hunger-related deaths in Sudan. "The longer the war continues, the bigger the problem will get."

The satellite images — combined with food insecurity data, photos and videos of emaciated children, and interviews with dozens of people from 20 communities across Darfur — reveal how hunger and disease are spreading rapidly in Sudan.

Like Mariam Adam, mothers in these communities described how their children died because they couldn't feed them, had no access to healthcare and had no money to buy medicine. More than 30 community leaders, medics and health officials spoke of an alarming spike in the number of peo-

ple dying from malnutrition and illness. The community leaders shared photos and videos showing dozens of fresh graves in the burial grounds that Reuters surveyed with satellite images.

An estimated three-quarters of a million people in Sudan could face catastrophic food shortages by September, according to a preliminary projection by the world's leading famine watchdog, Reuters reported this month. A total of nine million people — almost 20 percent of the population — are in an emergency food situation or worse, the projection says.

The new analysis was done by the Rome-based Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), an initiative of UN agencies, regional bodies and aid groups. The IPC's last projection was in December, and the agency hasn't yet published its latest preliminary projection. In March, the IPC said security threats, roadblocks and telecommunications outages in Sudan were hindering its ability to do assessments. The IPC had no comment for this report. Earlier, a spokeswoman said its Sudan analysis is "ongoing" and that it's not yet clear when it will be completed.

### 'Counting graves'

To obtain an up-to-date picture of Sudan's food emergency, Reuters employed techniques similar to ones used by health and hunger monitors in inaccessible conflict and disaster zones. In a 2021 manual, the IPC laid out steps that can be taken for establishing the level of mortality in areas with "limited or no humanitarian access." It included "interviews with key informants" and "counting graves."

The hunger crisis in Sudan is man-made. The fighting between the Sudanese military and RSF erupted in April last year, uprooting more than nine million people — almost a fifth of the population. War has prevented humanitarian aid from reaching large parts of Sudan. The RSF and its allied militias have looted aid warehouses and stolen harvested crops and agricultural equipment from farmers, Reuters reported in April, making them destitute and forcing them off their land.

Cereal production in Darfur and Kordofan, another region hit hard by the war, was estimated to be up to 80 percent below average in 2023, according to a March report by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. Unable to find food or afford it — prices have skyrocketed, making food prohibitively expensive even when available — people have resorted to skipping meals, eating tree leaves and even dirt, Reuters reported in April.

Tom Perriello, the US special envoy to Sudan, told Reuters this month that the RSF and military are both to blame for the food crisis. While the RSF had burned crops and looted warehouses, the Sudanese army is "right now playing games with border access, crossline access, and allowing their people to die," he said.

The UN-led government and the RSF didn't respond to questions for this report. The government has said it is committed to facilitating aid delivery and accuses the RSF of looting and blocking aid. The RSF has denied looting, saying any rogue actors in its ranks will be held responsible. It

has blamed the army for obstructing the delivery of aid.

The war has also devastated a healthcare system already under strain before the fighting began. About two-thirds of Sudanese don't have access to healthcare, and between 70 percent and 80 percent of the country's health facilities weren't functioning as of February, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Desperate to help their sick children, parents are resorting to traditional methods, according to medics and community leaders contacted by phone in Darfur. Some parents, they said, have used the stems of plants to tie their children's hands in the belief it will stop malnutrition. Others have boiled seeds and thrown them at their children's buttocks in the hope it will cure them of diarrhea.

In a crisis like Sudan's, where there is a breakdown of both the food and medical systems, malnutrition and disease go hand in hand, say food security experts and nutritionists. The threat is of a "deadly cocktail" of malnutrition, measles, malaria, cholera and other diseases, said Liesbeth Aelbrecht, a World Health Organization specialist on food insecurity and health for the Greater Horn of Africa.

"Malnutrition and disease reinforce each other, with sick children becoming more easily malnourished and malnourished children becoming sick more easily," UN organizations said in a statement in late May. "Sudan risks a lost generation."

The situation is about to get worse. Sudan has entered the lean season between harvests, which runs to September. It is a period when food is less available. The rainy season is also beginning, which will render impassable the dirt roads across Darfur that connect communities with urban centers. That will make it even harder to get aid to the people who need it most.

In charting the spike in mortality in the five Darfur communities, Reuters reviewed hundreds of satellite images of burial grounds over a period of several years. The recent expansion in the area of new graves may in part be due to higher mortality as a result of the influx of people into the camps who have fled violence.

Nevertheless, the Reuters calculation of how much the burial grounds have expanded is likely an underestimate: It doesn't account for new graves that have been dug in between existing ones in many places, for instance, or for the fact that there are small patches of graves not easily identifiable in satellite images.

Reuters only reviewed communities in which there hasn't been fighting in the past six months to rule out the possibility that this year's burial-ground expansion may be due to an increase in the number of people killed in conflict.

### 'We will die of hunger'

In the town of Nertiti in Central Darfur, no supplies are getting in and the RSF plundered the harvest, a local humanitarian worker told Reuters. Children are dying for lack of food, he said. People are eating the leaves off trees, he added, and digging up ant nests in search of bread-crumbs and other food stored in them.

"Famine is already here," he said.

The RSF and allied militias have been robbing merchants, making the roads unsafe, the humanitarian worker said, and there is no one to protect international aid agencies if they want to return. The town has doubled in size with the arrival of more than 33,000 people fleeing violence, according to data from the UN's International Organization for Migration.

Satellite images taken in March and June show rows of fresh graves on the southern edge of Nertiti. Between Nov. 21 last year and June 6, the area of new graves expanded 13 percent faster than in the preceding four months.

In Kalma, residents are too scared to leave the camp to look for work because there is no one to protect them from the RSF and its allied militias, said a community leader who spoke on condition of anonymity. The men fear being detained or killed, while the women fear being raped, he said.

The community leader shared pictures of a man who he said was shot dead by gunmen on May 29, when trying to leave the camp to seek work. He was killed on the main road connecting Kalma and Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, the community leader said. "We are trapped here and we will die of hunger," he said.

The same is happening in the town of Kas in South Darfur state. People in the Kas district, comprising the town and surrounding villages, are dying of disease and malnutrition, said Mohammed Ali Osman, a nutrition officer at the health ministry there. Only a fraction of the sick make it to hospital because the roads are unsafe and entire villages are isolated, he said. "We have no idea what is happening in these villages," he said.

In Kas, too, the cemeteries are swelling. One graveyard on the southeast edge of the town grew 49 percent faster between Jan. 4 and June 1 than it did in the second half of last year. There are indications now that cemeteries are expanding even faster.

Between March 28 and May 3, one large cemetery in the Zamzam camp in North Darfur grew 50 percent faster than in the preceding three-and-a-half months. A community leader in the camp said in April that many people were surviving on one meal a day. A mass screening conducted by Doctors Without Borders in March and April, including more than 46,000 children under five, found that nearly a third of the children were acutely malnourished.

At the Hamidiya camp in Central Darfur, the burial grounds are showing accelerated growth in recent months. Satellite images reveal dozens of new burial mounds appearing at one site between March 30 and June 4. The pace of expansion of the burial ground was 53 percent higher than in the previous three months, the images show.

Seif Eddinn Abdullah, a community leader in Hamidiya, shared video footage of cemeteries in the camp. In one segment, a group of people can be seen burying a 40-year-old man who Abdullah said suffered from diabetes. Abdullah said humanitarian aid isn't reaching the camp. The help is critical, he said, to "save the children who are dying every day." — Reuters



HANOI: Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Vietnam's President To Lam toast during a reception at the Hanoi Opera House in Hanoi on June 20, 2024. — AFP

## Russia and Vietnam vow to strengthen ties as Putin visits

**HANOI:** Russia and Vietnam pledged Thursday to deepen ties as President Vladimir Putin made a state visit aimed at bolstering his alliances to counter Moscow's growing isolation over the war in Ukraine.

Putin travelled to Vietnam, a close ally of Moscow since the days of the Cold War, from a summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un where he won a pledge of "full support" on Ukraine and signed a mutual defense pact. The Russian leader did not receive such a clear public declaration of support in Hanoi, but Vietnamese President To Lam indicated a desire to boost defense cooperation.

"The two sides want to push up cooperation in defense and security, how to deal with non-traditional security challenges on the basis of international law, for peace and security in the region and the world," Lam told reporters after talks with Putin.

Russia has been Vietnam's main arms supplier for decades, accounting for more than 80 percent of imports between 1995 and 2023, but orders have dropped off in recent years as international sanctions related to the Ukraine conflict have intensified.

The two sides said in a joint statement that their defense and security cooperation was "not directed against any third country" and contributed to "peace, stability and sustainable development" in the region. Lam and Putin signed around a dozen cooperation agreements ranging from education to justice and civil nuclear projects.

Putin told reporters the talks were constructive and that both sides had "identical or very close" positions on key international issues. He said they discussed creating "an adequate and reliable security architecture in Asia-Pacific based on the principles of not resorting to force, and of resolving differences peacefully". Putin later held talks with Nguyen Phu Trong, the powerful general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, and laid a wreath at the memorial to independence leader Ho Chi Minh.

Putin's Asia tour came as Western powers stepped up sanctions aimed at constraining Russia's war in Ukraine. The United States, Britain and the European Union all announced new sanctions over the past week, while the G7 agreed to use profits from frozen Russian assets to provide a new \$50-billion loan to Kyiv. — AFP

## International

# Jewish critics of Zionism have clashed with American Jewish leaders for decades

## 'Not in our name': American Jews decry Zionist entity's war in Gaza

WASHINGTON: Since October 2023, American Jews have been engaged in an intense, fractious debate over the Zionist entity's war in the Gaza Strip. Media reports say that American Jews are experiencing "the great rupture," widening "rifts," and stand at a "moral, political crossroads."

While most American Jews remain broadly supportive of the Zionist entity, others have protested vigorously against US support for the Zionist entity and are demanding a ceasefire in Gaza. They carry signs saying "not in our name."

Their slogan highlights the fact that American foreign aid to the Zionist entity has long relied on the support of American Jews. Unqualified US support for the Zionist entity was built, in part, on the promise that the Zionist entity kept American Jews — and all Jews — safe, especially after the Holocaust.

But American Jews have never been entirely unified in their support for the Zionist entity or in their visions of what role the Zionist entity and Palestine should play in American Jewish life. A new book, titled "The Threshold of Dissent: A History of American Jewish Critics of Zionism," analyzes a century of debates among American Jews over Zionism and the Zionist entity.

The book's account begins in 1885, when elite Reform Jews, with a goal of full integration in Jim Crow America, composed the Pittsburgh Platform, which rejected Jewish nationalism out of fear that it would make them targets of antisemitic accusations of dual loyalty.

Two years later, Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl founded the modern Zionist movement, relying on European powers for support for a modern Jewish state. The genocide of Europe's Jewish population in the Holocaust fundamentally altered American Jews' perspectives on Zionism.

Many believed that only a Jewish national homeland in Palestine could prevent another genocide. Others insisted that the lessons of the Holocaust meant that Jews must not contribute to making refugees of another group of people: the Palestinians who were then living on the land.

There were other issues that contributed to a new understanding of Zionism in the 1950s and 1960s within American Jewish communities. Among them: the Nakba, which was the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 founding of the Zionist entity; the Zionist entity's treatment of immigrant Jews from the Arab and Muslim world known as Mizrahi Jews; and the rise in the Zionist entity's militarism.

Across the 20th century, mainstream Jewish leaders manufactured an American Jewish so-called consensus on Zionism and the Zionist entity, in part by silencing American Jewish critics of Zionism.

### Human rights abuses

From the late 1940s through 1961, journalist William Zukerman edited The Jewish Newsletter, a publi-

cation that captured some of the voices of Jewish dissent from Zionism, including his own. He reported on the Zionist entity's human rights abuses against Palestinians and documented how American Jewish funds fueled the Zionist entity's military campaigns instead of supporting vibrant American Jewish communities.

Because Zukerman dared to publish this criticism, he faced campaigns of steep resistance, eventually losing funding and support from Jewish communal organizations. Anxious that Zukerman's dissent would cause "increasing trouble" for American support for the Zionist entity, diplomats in the Zionist entity wrote to American Jewish leaders, and together they convinced some Jewish journalists to exclude Zukerman's writings from their publications.

Into the 1960s, as mainstream Jewish leaders emphasized the urgency of Jewish unity on the Zionist entity and Zionism and showed growing intolerance for dissent, anti-colonialist activists gained momentum across the world. From 1948 through 1966, the Zionist entity held all Palestinians citizens under martial law, limiting their movement and access to opportunities and resources. Across the 1950s, the Zionist entity excluded Palestinian workers from the Histadrut, the state's largest labor union federation.

Activists allied with the cause of Palestinian rights noted the Zionist entity's alliance with colonial power France during the Algerian war of independence from 1954 to 1962 and criticized the Zionist entity as an occupier after the 1967 war. They spoke, too, of the Zionist entity's growing alliance with apartheid South Africa in the 1970s.

Black and Arab leaders in the US taught within, and learned from, these anti-colonial movements. Civil rights and anti-war activists offered new perspectives to debates over the Zionist entity and Zionism.

Raised in a liberal Zionist family, student Marty Blatt was learning to fight for justice. Blatt was born in 1951 in Brooklyn, New York. His grandfather had died in a Nazi prison camp. In 1970, he joined the anti-war movement at Tufts University in Massachusetts. "The Vietnam war was a horrible injustice," Blatt said. From the movement and from members of the left in the Zionist entity, he learned that "(Zionist)/Palestine was another great injustice."

With no access to the history of Palestinians in school, at home or at the synagogue, young American Jews like Blatt who joined the civil rights and anti-war movements learned these lessons for the first time. When they then criticized the Zionist entity and American Zionism, they, too, met with hostility from the mainstream Jewish world.

Blatt sought to teach his fellow students at Tufts with a course in 1973 titled Zionism Reconsidered. In it, he taught the history of Zionism, Palestinian resistance and the Zionist entity's Cold War alliance with

sister who live in the Gaza Strip. She said her mother tells her: "We are proud of you, we are proud to have someone outside of Gaza who is studying medicine."

Alghoul is one of 247 Palestinian students, 75 of them from Gaza, who have received a scholarship from the Cuban government, according to figures from Palestinian ambassador Akram Samhan.

### Watching with horror

Cuba has long handed out bursaries to foreign students. Some 1,500 Palestinians, many of them doctors, have studied for free on the island since 1974, said the ambassador. Whether studying, living abroad, or staying in refugee camps in the Middle East, millions of Palestinians in the diaspora are watching the destruction wrought back home with horror.

The Zionist entity's bombardment of Gaza has killed over 37,000 people in Gaza since October 7, mostly civilians, according to data released by Gaza's health ministry. Alghoul says her family, who lived in the north of the Gaza Strip, has had to move multiple times to flee bombing and is currently in central Gaza's Deir al-Balah.

the 50-degree Celsius mark in the coming days.

Last month, Kuwait signed short-term contracts to buy 500 megawatts of electricity, including 300 MW from Oman and 200 MW from Qatar, during the summer months. The contracts would last from June 1 to Aug 31.

Kamel Harami, a Kuwaiti energy expert, said that the state needed to revamp its energy infrastructure. "The available energy is not sufficient, and instead of relying on oil and gas, we must go towards nuclear, solar and wind energy," he said. "This is only the beginning of the crisis, and the programmed cuts of electricity will continue in the coming years if we do not accelerate the construction of power stations."

Umm Mohammed, a Kuwaiti woman in her sixties, said she was left without power for two hours on Wednesday. "We weren't severely affected," she said, noting that the house remained cool during the brief outage. "Some turn their homes into refrigerators, even when they are not inside, and this raises the load" on power plants, she said.

visa requirements. Instead, he flew visa-free to Ecuador before crossing seven other countries to Mexico where he awaits news on the US asylum process.

Migration is at the heart of the campaign for the US presidential election in November. Seeking re-election, incumbent Joe Biden signed a decree this month shutting down the border to asylum seekers after certain daily limits are reached. On Tuesday, in an attempt to balance the crackdown criticized by the left and human rights groups, he announced a new potential citizenship path for immigrants married to US nationals — which was in turn slammed by conservatives.

In Tijuana, 29-year-old Afghan journalist Fanah Ahmadi told AFP he traveled to Brazil on a humanitarian visa, then through "nine or ten other countries" to get to Mexico. "There are many difficulties on the way but I am still grateful that... today, I am here," said Ahmadi of the Assabil Inn, where migrants receive food and shelter, "and we are near the border as well." — AFP



WASHINGTON: Members of the anti-Zionist Jews group Neturei Karta join pro-Palestinians people blocking a street close to the US Capitol in Washington DC on February 1, 2024. — AFP

the United States. He taught students that anti-Zionism was not antisemitism.

On March 13, 1973, in the midst of the semester, members of the Jewish Defense League, a far-right, anti-Arab, Jewish nationalist group founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane, disrupted Blatt's class. They called it an "anti-Jewish outrage" and passed out a flyer that read, "Not since Germany in the days of Hitler has any university dared to offer a course presenting a one-sided view of any national movement."

Boston-area Jewish leaders urged community members to write to Tufts leadership to shut down Blatt's class. These letters used apocalyptic language to describe the damage wrought by his course, likening it to the destruction of the Jewish people. During this controversy, Blatt picked up the phone one day to hear someone who clearly knew his family history in the Holocaust tell him: "Your parents should not have been saved."

An article about Blatt and his course in Boston's Jewish Advocate was headlined "Tufts Anti-Zionist Course Seen as Abuse of Academic Freedom." Though Tufts stood behind Blatt's right to teach the class for another term, which it still touts on the university website, angry responses to the class appeared in community forums for years.

### Free speech

In the current moment, college campuses have

been riven with debates over the boundaries between student safety and free speech and whether criticism of the Zionist entity constitutes antisemitism. Young Jews dismayed by the unconditional Zionist agenda of Jewish campus organization Hillel and who founded Open Hillel in 2013 are now active in Gaza protests as "Judaism on Our Own Terms." They might be surprised to learn that in late 1972, even before his course began, Blatt and others founded the Tufts Hillel Non-Zionist Caucus. Hillel subsequently expelled them from the organization.

For over a century, some American Jews have modeled the idea that unqualified support for the Zionist entity and Zionism was "not in our name." They prioritized justice as a Jewish value and were motivated not by self-hatred or antisemitism but by abiding commitments to human rights and to Jewish safety and community.

Today's activists protesting over the devastation in Gaza are testing the threshold of dissent and the limits of free speech and academic freedom. They embrace what they view as more just visions of the Zionist entity and Palestine and more inclusive visions of an American Jewish community, one with space for dissent and earnest conversations about the Zionist entity and Zionism, and one in which Jews stand in solidarity with groups working for justice in Palestine, the Zionist entity and around the world. — Reuters

## Palestinian medical students in Cuba highlight pain of diaspora

HAVANA: Thousands of miles from Gaza, medical student Samar Alghoul is supposed to be living her dream in Cuba, where she and hundreds of other Palestinians have been given the opportunity to study for free. But, like the Palestinian diaspora all around the world, she is ridden with anxiety watching the decimation of her home from afar.

The 21-year-old lives in a dorm with six other students at the University of Havana, but often dreams of returning to her family's side, even if it means running towards war. "It would be easier for me to be with them than to have all these thoughts," of not knowing "what they drink, what they eat, where they sleep," Alghoul said of her mother, two brothers and

"They open WhatsApp, send me a message, 'We're fine,' and we don't know when we'll have more news," Alghoul said in Spanish. Like all foreign students, she took intensive language classes when she arrived in Cuba in 2022.

### 'Urgent need for doctors'

Motee Almashar, 24, from southern Rafah told AFP that he and his Palestinian friends are trying to get back to normal life "to relieve some stress." But it's not easy. "As soon as you pick up your phone, you see the news," he said.

Almashar is also too far away to be of much comfort to his mother, devastated after bombing in Rafah last month led to the deaths of his cousins, three uncles, aunt and grandmother. The bombings have also impacted the students' ability to make ends meet in Cuba, as they are no longer able to receive money from relatives in Gaza. Ambassador Samhan said he has launched a drive for donations among Palestinian groups in the United States and elsewhere to help support the students.



HAVANA: Samar Alghoul, 21, walks during an interview with AFP in Havana on June 2, 2024. — AFP

Mohammed Refat Almashari, 26, who has lost an uncle and eight cousins in the bombings, is in his final year of studies and torn over what to do next. His father is an ambulance driver in the Gaza Strip and he knows there is "an urgent need for doctors," but cannot afford a flight back home. — AFP

## Kuwait faces power crunch...

Continued from Page 1

On Thursday, the ministry published a schedule of expected cuts across several parts of the country, after urging residents to ration consumption to ease the load on power plants. Kuwait, one of the largest crude producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), is considered one of the world's hottest desert countries.

In recent years, climate change has made summer peaks hotter and longer. The extreme heat raises reliance on energy-guzzling air conditioners which are ubiquitous in Kuwait during the summer months. "What we are experiencing today is the result of climate change," said Kuwaiti astronomer and scientist Adel Al-Saadoun, noting that temperatures are expected to climb above

## Muslim migrants shelter in Tijuana...

Continued from Page 1

The figure represents almost the whole world — the United Nations has 193 member states. The majority came from Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador and Haiti. Increasingly, migrants from the Middle East and North Africa also undertake the perilous route via South and Central America. For many, it includes a journey on foot through the dangerous Darien Gap, a dense jungle on the Colombia-Panama border replete with dangerous animals, criminals and human traffickers.

Yusseph Rahnali, a 31-year-old Algerian, told AFP he opted for the United States "because they accept everybody". Europe is not an option, he said, because of

## Zionist-Hezbollah tensions drive...

Continued from Page 1

The chief of the Iran-backed group also threatened the nearby island nation of Cyprus if it opened its airports or bases to the Zionist entity "to target Lebanon".

European Union member Cyprus is home to two British bases, including an airbase, but they are in sovereign British territory and not controlled by the Cypriot government. On Thursday the Cypriot government spokesman dismissed as "totally groundless" any suggestion of possible involvement in a conflict related to Lebanon.

"Cyprus is not involved, nor will it become involved, in any military conflicts," Konstantinos Letymbiotis told state radio. Warplanes from the British air-

## Iraqis flock to river or ice rink...

Continued from Page 1

"We're young and want to have a good time — where else can we go?" the decorator said on the banks of the river, traces of white paint still visible on his temples and long-sleeved T-shirt. While Abdallah puts his sandals back on, nearby others are taking the plunge and two bathers are washing their hair with soap.

As night brings little relief from the sweltering gusts, residents of Baghdad flock to the city's lone indoor ice rink to find respite. The rink is in one of the air-conditioned shopping malls that have sprung up in the capital in recent years, attracting up to 100 visitors on busy days, 25-year-old instructor Sajjad Mohamed said.

base in Cyprus have, along with US forces, carried out reprisal strikes against Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels who have for months been attacking shipping in adjacent waterways. On Wednesday the US military said its forces destroyed two Houthi sites in Yemen.

The Zionist offensive in Gaza has killed at least 37,431 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the territory. The latest toll on Thursday included at least 35 deaths over the previous day, the ministry said.

The Houthis and Hezbollah both say they are acting in response to the Zionist entity's actions in Gaza. On Tuesday, the Zionist entity's military announced that "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated". The same day, Hezbollah published a video showing drone footage purportedly taken by the movement over the Zionist entity, including parts of Haifa's city and port. US envoy Amos Hochstein has called for "urgent" de-escalation. — AFP

"Twenty-four hours a day, the electricity never goes out. There's a cooling system" for the ice, Mohamed said. Abbas, 26, discovered ice skating in Turkey. Now back in Iraq, he is pursuing it enthusiastically. "When we finish work in the afternoon, it's either go home, or go to shopping malls and other places where it's cold," he said.

The soaring seasonal temperatures have become a troubling fact of life for the overwhelming majority of Iraq's 43 million inhabitants. Although it is rich in oil, Iraq has seen its infrastructure suffer after decades of conflict and failed public policy that has resulted in long power cuts on the public grid with generators unable to handle the strain.

On the banks of the Tigris, Rashid Al-Rashed takes off his T-shirt to dive into the Tigris. "At home it's hot, I can't stay there for long. The public electricity is inadequate," the 17-year-old garbage collector said. To escape the heat, "I bathe every day, for 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour," he added. — AFP

## International

# Climate change made deadly heat 35x more likely in US, Mexico, Central America

## Millions to be exposed to dangerous heat levels, scientists warn

WASHINGTON: Deadly heat that blanketed the United States, Mexico and Central America recently was made 35 times more likely due to global warming, an international network of climate scientists said on Thursday.

The World Weather Attribution (WWA) group of scientists also said that extreme highs witnessed over that region in May and June were four times as likely to occur today as a quarter of a century ago.

The record-breaking heat killed at least 125 people in Mexico and caused thousands more to suffer heat strokes, a potentially fatal condition that occurs when the body's internal cooling mechanisms start to fail.

"We likely do not know the full picture of heat-related deaths, since they are usually only confirmed and reported months after the event, if at all," said WWA, which uses peer-reviewed methods to assess links between specific extreme events and global warming. They said that as the world continues to burn fossil fuels and emit climate-heating greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, millions more people are expected to be exposed to dangerous levels of heat in the future. This year has been the hottest on record and already large swathes of the world have endured blistering temperatures before the onset of the northern hemisphere summer. Greece has notched its earliest-ever heatwave, India has suffered a month-long stretch of searing highs, while the United States is dealing with wildfires and scorching conditions.

### 'Between life and death'

For its study, WWA analyzed the hottest five consecutive days and nights during a "heat dome" that lingered over the southwest United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras in late May and early June.

The scientists have pioneered ways to use climate models to understand how these types of extreme events have changed in a world that is 1.2 degrees Celsius warmer than in pre-industrial times.

They concluded "that human-induced warming from burning fossil fuels made the five-day maximum temperature event about 1.4 degrees hotter and about 35 times more likely". WWA warned that if humans continue burning fossil fuels in the near term, these extremes could become more frequent still.



WASHINGTON: People put their feet in the water to cool off at the US World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, on June 19, 2024. — AFP

"The additional 1.4C of heat caused by climate change would have been the difference between life and death for many people during May and June," said Karina Izquierdo, urban advisor for the Latin American and Caribbean region at Red Cross Climate Centre. "As well as reducing emissions, governments and cities need to take steps to become more resilient to heat," she said in a statement. Heat is the

deadliest of all extreme weather but often underestimated, experts say, with children, the elderly and outdoor workers particularly vulnerable.

In Mexico and Central America, the impacts of heat are intensified by poor housing conditions, limited access to cooling services, and for those living in informal settlements. Extreme heat also threatens the stability of electricity supply, which is critical to

the functioning of healthcare facilities.

Scientists said that extreme heat warming systems and action plans could help bolster Central America's preparedness for such events, with safety measures needed to protect outdoor workers. Green spaces and improved infrastructure in informal settlements would also help protect the most vulnerable people, WWA added. — AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Power outage in Ecuador

QUITO: Ecuador suffered a nationwide blackout for several hours Wednesday as the electrical grid failed, with metro services, road traffic and other critical services crippled. The blackout hit abruptly just after 3:00 pm local time, surprising subway riders in the capital Quito as trains came to a halt and hundreds of people were evacuated. Some were forced to walk long distances through dark metro tunnels until finding an exit. Three hours after the stoppage hit, Energy Minister Roberto Luque said on X that 95 percent of the service had been restored nationwide. — AFP

#### Ten Commandments in classrooms

HOUSTON: The governor of Louisiana signed a bill Wednesday requiring the Ten Commandments be displayed in every public school classroom in the conservative US state. The legislation, the first of its kind in the nation, mandates that the biblical text be on display starting in 2025 in all public school classrooms from kindergarten through state-funded universities. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) responded to the legislation by indicating it would take the case to court. "The law violates the separation of church and state and is blatantly unconstitutional," the organization said in a statement. — AFP

#### Retired soldiers sentenced for rape

LIMA: A Peruvian court sentenced 10 retired soldiers to up to 12 years in prison for having raped nine rural women and girls in the 1980s as the army fought Shining Path Maoist guerrillas. The sentencing ended five years of hearings in the first case in the South American country to address sexual crimes committed by soldiers. The case dates back to 1984 when the army set up a base near the Andean towns of Manta and Vilca in Huancavelica, one of Peru's poorest regions. Many of the victims were minors when they were raped, and five became pregnant as a result, their lawyers told the court. — AFP

#### Canada declares Iran's Guards terrorist group

OTTAWA: Ottawa on Wednesday listed Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist entity while calling on Canadians in the Islamic country to leave. "Our government has made the decision to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code," Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc told a news conference. Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, noting that Ottawa broke off diplomatic ties with Tehran in 2012, urged Canadians against travel to Iran. The terrorism listing bars members of the Guards from entering Canada and Canadians from having any dealings with individual members or the group. Any assets the Guards or its members hold in Canada may also be seized. — AFP

## Four in five people want more climate action: UN survey

NEW YORK: Four in every five people want their country to strengthen its commitments to addressing climate change, according to a global poll of 75,000 participants published on Thursday.

The survey by the UN Development Program, Oxford University and GeoPoll posed 15 questions by randomized telephone calls to people in 77 countries representing 87 percent of the world's population. The key finding was that 80 percent of respondents want their governments to increase efforts to fight against global warming.

Poorer countries beat this drum the loudest, with 89 percent in favor, though appetite is also high in the wealthy G20 nations (76 percent), according to the survey. China (73 percent) and the United States (66 percent) - the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters - also saw a majority of respondents in favor of climate action.

"As world leaders decide on the next round of pledges under the Paris Agreement by 2025, these results are undeniable evidence that people everywhere support bold climate action," said Cassie Flynn, UNDP global climate director.

A majority of respondents in 62 of the 77 countries surveyed said they supported a quick transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy. These included China (80 percent) and the United States (54



SYLHET: An aerial view shows flooded area in Compañiganj of Sylhet district on June 20, 2024. — AFP

percent), but in Russia just 16 percent of poll participants were in favor.

Worries about global warming have also increased, the survey found, with 56 percent saying they think about climate change at least once a week. Over half (53 percent) of those surveyed said they were more worried about climate change than last year, compared with 15

percent who said they were less worried.

Leading the rise in climate anxiety is Fiji, where 80 percent are more concerned compared to a year ago, followed by Afghanistan (78 percent) and Turkey (77 percent). Saudi Arabia saw the lowest increase in climate fears, with 25 percent more worried, followed by Russia (34 percent), Czech Republic (36 percent) and China (39 percent). — AFP

## German defense group gets record ammo order

FRANKFURT: German weapons manufacturer Rheinmetall said Thursday it received a record 8.5 billion euro (\$9.1 billion) order for artillery ammunition from the country's armed forces, with some destined for allies including Ukraine. The order from the military, which is in the midst of an overhaul triggered by Russia's war in

Ukraine, is for 155 mm rounds.

The commonly used rounds are crucial for Ukraine's outgunned forces, which have suffered battlefield setbacks against Moscow in recent times amid manpower and ammunition shortages. "The main purpose of the order is to replenish the stocks held by the Bundeswehr and its allies, as well as to provide support to Ukraine in its defense campaign," said Rheinmetall in a statement.

Rheinmetall chief executive Armin Papperger hailed "the largest order in our company's recent history". Deliveries will begin at the start of 2025. As well as Ukraine, the Netherlands, Estonia and Denmark are participating in the order, the company said.

The contract will ensure enough work for a new factory

that Rheinmetall is building in Lower Saxony state, north-western Germany, the Duesseldorf-based company said. Kyiv's European allies have struggled to produce enough ammunition to help Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

Rheinmetall has been racing to boost output, and by next year plans to produce up to 700,000 artillery shells a year - about 10 times more than it manufactured before the Ukraine war. The group has seen demand soar as countries rush to re-arm. As well as setting up a new host of factories, it said in March it was targeting a record 10 billion euros in sales this year. It is desperately seeking to hire workers, and recently signed up to a scheme to employ staff from ailing German auto supplier Continental, which is slashing thousands of jobs. — AFP

## India's Modi criticized for exam irregularities amid lack of jobs

PRAYAGRAJ: India's opposition parties and the country's students on Thursday hit out at the new government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for irregularities in recent government-run tests for college admissions and government teaching jobs.

Modi surprisingly lost a parliamentary majority in a general election that ended this month partly because of joblessness, especially among the youth, exacerbated by frequent leaks of test papers for government jobs that are coveted by many Indians for the security. Having to rely on fickle allies to run his third government, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party next faces local elections in the states of Haryana and Maharashtra where it did badly in the

national vote.

The government late on Wednesday canceled an examination done earlier this week for university and college teachers as well as doctorate courses, based on early inputs from a government cyber-crime analysis team that the "integrity of the aforesaid examination may have been compromised". It said in a statement the federal Central Bureau of Investigation would probe the matter. The Ministry of Education said it had also sought a report from police into "certain irregularities alleged" in running another test for admission in undergraduate medical programs in May.

The main opposition Congress party, on a high after its better-than-ex-



SRINAGAR: A security personnel stands guard before the arrival of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi outside Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar on June 20, 2024 on the eve of International Yoga Day. — AFP

pected election result, said the "Modi government has ruined the country's education and recruitment system".

"There is huge pressure on our students. There is large-scale unemployment in the country," Rahul

Gandhi, Congress' highest profile leader, told a news conference on Thursday. "The youngsters in India have no way through. The youth of India have nowhere to go. It's a profound national crisis!" — Reuters

FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 2024

# EU sanctions target Russian LNG for the first time

Package bans re-exports of Russian LNG via Europe, but experts say measures to have little effect

**BRUSSELS:** European Union countries agreed on a 14th package of sanctions against Russia over its war in Ukraine, diplomats said on Thursday, including their first restrictions on Russian gas. The package bans re-exports of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) in EU waters but stops short of banning imports as the bloc did in 2022 for Russian seaborne oil. Some EU countries still import pipeline gas from Russia via Ukraine.

However, gas market experts say the measure will have little impact as trans-shipments of gas via EU ports to Asia represent only around 10 percent of total Russian LNG exports.

The package also sanctions three Russian LNG projects and includes a clause designed to allow Sweden and Finland to cancel Russian LNG contracts, diplomats said. Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency until July 1, said on social media platform X that the package "maximizes the impact of existing sanctions by closing loopholes". "This hard-hitting package will further deny Russia access to key technologies. It will strip Russia of further energy revenues. And tackle (President Vladimir) Putin's shadow fleet and shadow banking network abroad," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X.

Countries debated the new measures for over a month and ultimately watered down one of the Commission's proposals, aimed at preventing even more circumvention, at Germany's prompting. The dropped measure would have forced subsidiaries of EU companies in third countries to contractually prohibit the re-exports of their goods to Russia. The EU is keen to stop the flow of dual-use technology such as washing machine chips that could be used by Russia for military purposes.

An EU diplomat said Germany had asked for an



**BOLSHOY KAMEN, Russia:** The Zvezda shipbuilding complex is pictured before the naming ceremony of the Arctic tanker-gas carrier "Alexey Kosygin" and the tanker-shuttle "Valentin Pikul". — AFP

impact assessment, and the measure could be included at a later date. The package also tightens measures against the shadow fleet moving Russian oil outside the price cap on Russian crude set by the Group of Seven (G7) nations. EU countries added tankers to the list of sanctioned entities as well as at least two Russian-owned ships moving military equipment from North Korea, diplomats said.

Moscow and Pyongyang have grown closer since

Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This week, the two countries agreed to provide immediate military assistance if either faces armed aggression in a pact reached after Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Pyongyang. Overall, 47 new entities and 69 individuals were added to the EU sanctions list, bringing the total to 2,200. The package is expected to be formally approved when EU foreign ministers meet on Monday, diplomats said. — Reuters

and vuvuzelas, singing the national anthem and chanting: "Ruto must go".

Margaret, a 23-year-old jobseeker, told AFP that she was "tired of being lied to" and being dismissed as a "keyboard warrior" by those in power. "Gen-Z — we are the voice of the people. And that's something they are not used to, so we are just being called keyboard warriors but I guess they are also terrified of this," she said.

## 'Do the right thing'

Another first-time protester, Fidelis Njoroge, said she went live on Instagram because she wanted to spread the word about the demonstrations. "The next time we come out, we will come out in bigger and bigger numbers," the university student told AFP. "We are here to do the right thing, we are not here to cause chaos, we are just here to be heard."

The presidency on Tuesday announced the removal of proposed levies on bread purchases, car ownership as well as financial and mobile services, prompting a warning from the treasury of a 200-billion-shilling shortfall as a result of the budget cuts. The government has now targeted an increase in fuel prices and export taxes to fill the void left by the changes, a move critics say will make life more expensive in a country already battling high inflation. "They are just trying to lie to us, the taxes that they have removed on bread they have added somewhere else," 22-year-old protester Bella said, describing it as a tactic to "blindfold" citizens.

## Vote due

A parliament source told AFP that a final vote on the proposals was expected on June 27, three days before the deadline for passing the bill. The taxes were projected to raise 346.7 billion shillings (\$2.7 billion), equivalent to 1.9 percent of GDP, and reduce the budget deficit from 5.7 percent to 3.3 percent of GDP. At least 335 people were arrested during Tuesday's protests in Nairobi, according to a consortium of lobby groups including the human rights commission, KNCHR, and Amnesty Kenya. Kenya is one of the most dynamic economies in East Africa but a third of its 51.5 million people live in poverty. — AFP

## Thousands of young Kenyans protest over tax hikes

**NAIROBI:** Armed with smartphones and whistles, thousands of young Kenyans took to the streets across the country on Thursday to protest tax hikes, livestreaming the demonstrations in a vivid show of anger by Gen-Z citizens against the government. Police in the capital Nairobi fired tear gas and water cannon against protesters near parliament, but apart from isolated scuffles earlier in the day and some groups setting fire to tires and road signs around dusk, the demonstrations remained mostly peaceful.

Led largely by young Kenyans, the demonstrations—dubbed "Occupy Parliament"—began in Nairobi on Tuesday before spreading nationwide on Thursday. They have galvanized widespread discontent over President William Ruto's economic policies in a country already grappling with a cost-of-living crisis, with protesters turning to TikTok, Instagram and X to plan and livestream the demonstrations.

Hours after Tuesday's action, which saw hundreds of youth face off against the police, the cash-strapped government agreed to roll back several of the tax hikes laid out in a new bill. But the government still intends to go ahead with some tax increases and has defended the proposed levies as necessary for filling its coffers and cutting reliance on external borrowing.

On Thursday, protests were held across Kenya, with thousands assembling across Nairobi, the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa, the Rift Valley city of Nakuru and the opposition bastion of Kisumu, according to AFP journalists and images broadcast on TV. Isolated clashes broke out in Nairobi between protesters and police, who used tear gas and water cannon against demonstrators gathering near the parliament, which began debating the bill on Wednesday.

Despite a heavy police presence and closures along several roads leading to parliament, thousands of protesters gathered in groups, blowing whistles



**NAIROBI:** Kenya police officers surround a protester during a demonstration against tax hikes in downtown Nairobi, on June 20, 2024. — AFP

## Biden to ban US sales of Kaspersky software: Source

**WASHINGTON:** The Biden administration on Thursday will announce plans to bar the sale of antivirus software made by Russia's Kaspersky Labs in the United States, a person familiar with the matter said, citing the firm's large US customers including critical infrastructure providers and state and local governments. The company's close ties to the Russian government were found to pose a critical risk, the person said, adding that the software's privileged access to a computer's systems could allow it to steal sensitive information from American computers, install malware or withhold critical updates. The sweeping new rule, using broad powers created by the Trump administration, will be coupled with another move to add the company to a trade restriction list, according to two other people familiar with the matter, dealing a blow to the firm's reputation that could hammer its overseas sales.

The plan to add the cybersecurity company to the entity list, which effectively bars a company's US suppliers from selling to it, and the timing and details of the software sales prohibition, have not been previously reported. A spokesperson for the Commerce Department declined to comment, while Kaspersky Lab and the Russian Embassy did not respond to requests for comment. Previously, Kaspersky has said that it is a privately managed company with no ties to the Russian government.



**BARCELONA:** Visitors sit at the stand of Russian antivirus software development company Kaspersky Lab in this file photo. — AFP

The moves show the administration is trying to stamp out any risks of Russian cyberattacks stemming from Kaspersky software and keep squeezing Moscow as its war effort in Ukraine has regained momentum and as the United States has run low on fresh sanctions it can impose on Russia. It also shows the Biden administration is harnessing a powerful new authority that allows it to ban or restrict transactions between US firms and internet, telecom and tech companies from "foreign adversary" nations like Russia and China. The tools are largely untested.

Former President Donald Trump used them to try to bar Americans from using Chinese social media platforms TikTok and WeChat, but federal courts halted the moves. The new restrictions on inbound sales of Kaspersky software, which will also bar downloads of software updates, resales and licensing of the product, kick in on Sept 29, 100 days after publication, to give businesses time to find alternatives. New US business for Kaspersky will be blocked 30 days after the restrictions are announced.

Sales of white-labeled products — that integrate Kaspersky into software sold under a different brand name — will also be barred, the source said, noting that the Commerce Department will notify the companies before taking enforcement action against them. It is less clear what impact the entity listing will have on Kaspersky, whose Russian business is already subject to sweeping US export restrictions over Ukraine which make it almost impossible for any US-made items other than food or medical equipment to reach Russia. If the Commerce Department adds foreign units of Kaspersky to the entity list that purchase significant inputs from the United States, the move could crimp its supply chain. If it only adds the Russian entity, the impact will be largely reputational.

Kaspersky has long been in regulators' crosshairs. In 2017, the Department of Homeland Security banned its flagship antivirus product from federal networks, alleging ties to Russian intelligence and noting Russian law lets intelligence agencies compel assistance from Kaspersky and intercept communications using Russian networks. Media reports at the time alleged Kaspersky Lab was involved in taking hacking tools from a National Security Agency employee that ended up in the hands of the Russian government. Kaspersky responded by saying it had stumbled upon the code but said no third parties saw it. — Reuters



**TORONTO:** Marnie Wilking, the chief information security officer of Booking.com, speaks during an interview at Collision 2024 on June 18, 2024. — AFP

## Booking.com sounds alarm on AI travel scams

**TORONTO:** As travelers rush to book their summer getaways, Booking.com's Internet safety boss says watch out for supercharged AI scams. Marnie Wilking, Chief Information Security Officer at the Netherlands-based travel giant, said generative AI had sparked an explosion in online phishing scams, and that the hospitality industry, long spared, had also become a target. "Over the course of the last year and a half, throughout all industries, there's been anywhere from a 500 to a 900 percent increase in attacks, in phishing in particular, across the globe," Wilking told AFP on the sidelines of the Collision technology conference in Toronto. Phishing scams are a type of cyber attack where criminals attempt to trick victims into revealing sensitive information such as login credentials or financial account details.

Travel websites can offer a rich bounty to phishing scammers since travelers are often asked to share credit card and family details or upload ID. "Of course, we've had phishing since the dawn of email. But the uptick started shortly after ChatGPT got launched. The attackers are definitely using AI to launch attacks that mimic emails far better than anything that they've done to date," she said. With generative AI tools, the scammers can now work in multiple languages and with good grammar, Wilking said. They are also "really taking advantage of the helpful nature of hospitality." To be helpful to a supposed guest, a hotel owner is "probably going to open up the attachment" that is actually malware, she said.

Wilking said that in order to stay safe travelers and hosts should sign up for two-factor authentication when surfing online. In addition to providing a username and password, two-factor authentication requires users to verify their identity through an added factor, such as a one-time code sent to their mobile device or generated by an authenticator app. "I know it can be a little bit painful just to set up and then you have to remember which phone it's on and everything," she said.

However, the extra step "is still hands down the best way to combat phishing and credential stealing," she said. And "don't click on anything that looks suspicious, even if you think it might be real. If there's even a little bit of doubt, call the property, hosts, and customer support," she said.

Wilking said Booking.com and other major companies are cooperating closely and increasingly relying on AI to help in the fight. AI, for example, is helping thwart the proliferation of fake properties on platforms that are actually a bid to scam the user. — AFP



Business

# Job creation is India's top economic challenge: Experts

## Lack of universally accepted unemployment rate hinders progress in creating jobs

**BENGALURU:** Tackling India's chronic joblessness will be the biggest challenge for the government over the next five years, even as the country remains the world's fastest-growing major economy, according to policy experts polled by Reuters. Asia's third-largest economy grew more than 8 percent last fiscal year, driven by government capital expenditure that so far has failed to spark sufficient business spending to create enough work, particularly for young people in a country of 1.4 billion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party lost the parliamentary majority it has held for the past decade in national elections that ended in early June over widening inequality, relentless inflation pressure - particularly on food - and a lack of well-paying jobs. An overwhelming 91 percent majority of development economists and policy experts, 49 of 54, said unemployment would be the biggest economic challenge for the government's term in a survey taken May 15-June 18.

"In India, we have a very peculiar problem - supposedly very high aggregate growth rates and no increase in employment. Modi came to power offering aspirational youth jobs and a better life, but it's gotten significantly worse since then," said Jayati Ghosh, professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "You have to have a job-specific strategy ... You have to dramatically increase public employment in basic social services, health, edu-

cation, nutrition, sanitation." The BJP has acknowledged employment was a factor in the election and said "whatever best can be done is being done". However, most economists questioned the government's ability to provide jobs or accurately measure its success or failure. Others underscored the role business needs to play in bringing about material change in employment.

"Government alone cannot possibly create the jobs required to absorb the millions entering into the workforce every year. That requires the private sector to step up with high, sustained investment," said Rajeswari Sengupta, associate professor of economics from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research in Mumbai.

### Informal sector

Over the past decade, the BJP government has significantly ramped up spending on the country's infrastructure, but so far business spending has not followed through in anywhere near the same volume and intensity. Gross fixed capital formation, often used as a measure for private investment, has risen at a compound annual rate of about 8 percent since 2014, lower than the 14 percent during the previous decade. "The government needs to identify impediments to private investment, remove policy hurdles and obstacles holding back a revival ... and let the private sector do its job with minimum government



**NEW DELHI:** A shopkeeper wears a scarf on a hot summer day in New Delhi on June 18, 2024. — AFP

hindrance," Sengupta added.

Asked what the government should do to help create jobs, many survey respondents said spurring this follow-through from private investment was key. Other recommendations included raising education standards, reforming tax structures and increasing cooperation between central and state governments.

One of the biggest challenges to progress in creating jobs is there is no universally accepted unemployment rate in India, partly because it is very hard to measure in a country which has close to 1 billion people eligible to work. Without a commonly agreed starting point, it is difficult to measure success.

A recent Reserve Bank of India bulletin estimated about 80 percent of India's workforce is part of the unregulated economy. "Official figures of unemployment don't capture the absence of jobs in the informal sector, and since most of India's workforce is in the informal sector, especially rural, you're not going to be recording them as unemployed," said Bina Agarwal, professor of development economics and environment at the University of Manchester.

The latest government data puts the jobless rate at just 3.2 percent for the 2022/23 fiscal year, well below an already historically low unemployment rate in the United States. But the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy, a private think-tank, reported 7.0 percent unemployment in May, up from around 6 percent before the pandemic. — Reuters

## China's key plenum aims to fix tax revenue imbalance

**BEIJING:** Long-touted changes to China's tax system will focus on allowing local governments to retain more fiscal revenues, say policy advisers, widely seen by markets as an important step towards removing an immediate threat to financial stability. Measures that redistribute income from central authorities to municipalities, curbing an addiction to land sales laid bare by China's property crisis, will top the agenda of a leadership gathering in July, known as the third plenum, they said. "Pressure is high to push reforms to bolster local government revenue after the end of the land finance phase," said one of four policy advisers who spoke to Reuters. Three of them requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The plenum is set to discuss the biggest changes to China's fiscal system in three decades, with policymakers hoping to ease concerns over a \$13 trillion-and-growing local government debt pile that poses risks to financial institutions and economic growth. Details of the plans have been reported by Chinese media.

In 2023, local governments' own fiscal revenues accounted for 54 percent of the nation's total, but their expenditures accounted for 86 percent, data from the finance ministry showed. This imbalance stems from the fiscal reforms of 1994, when China aimed to limit localities' capacity to independently raise money, following a surge in local spending and inflation in the late 1980s.

But local governments got around those limitations by creating off-budget financing vehicles - which Beijing is cracking down on - and by auctioning land for residential development, fueling a giant housing bubble. Land sales' contribution to local budgets rose from a fifth to almost a third in the decade leading up to 2021, when China entered a severe property market downturn. It is no longer a reliable cash cow: such incomes shrank to 5.8 trillion yuan (\$780 billion) in 2023 from a 2021 peak of 8.7 trillion.

### 'Mature society'

Chinese leaders flagged plans for fiscal reforms at an annual meeting in December, without offering details. Policy advisers said the main changes are likely to revolve around how much revenue local governments retain, rather than adding or hiking taxes.

Municipalities currently get half of value-added tax revenue and 40 percent of personal income tax, while the central government gets most corporate income tax and all of what China calls a consumption tax, currently levied on producers and importers.

The advisers did not give figures on the future division of tax income between central and local governments. But they said local governments may be allowed to keep most of the consumption tax - which accounts for almost a tenth of China's total tax revenues - and more of the value-added tax - which accounts for more than a third.

Proposals also include Beijing taking over growing commitments on pensions and healthcare as the population ages. The aim is to stop municipal debt accumulation by balancing revenues with expenditure, the advisers said. "Local governments' spending should be based on their fiscal capacity," said a second adviser. "A mature society no longer needs to find special ways to build more infrastructure."

### Still imbalanced

The fiscal overhaul will likely stop short of addressing other structural imbalances, such as an over-reliance on investment and exports and weak household consumption, analysts say. China taxes capital gains at 20 percent. While subject to many exemptions, it is also lower than the 30 percent in India and 37 percent in the United States.

But investment yields dwindling returns, as evidenced by debt significantly outgrowing China's gross domestic product (GDP) for the past 15 years. Therefore, tax revenue is also low. The International Monetary Fund calculates China's tax-to-GDP ratio at 14 percent, versus a 23 percent average for the Group of Seven developed economies.

This makes social spending difficult to fund without raising taxes on capital or businesses. Taxing households more is a difficult proposition as China's upper personal income tax band is among the world's steepest, at 45 percent.

The difference between how capital and labor are taxed encourages low wages and high investment. But reversing that runs counter to Beijing's strategic goals of global industrial and technological leadership, which channel resources to factories and science laboratories, rather than consumers. "Tax reforms should support industrial development," said policy adviser Jia Kang, founding president of the China Academy of New Supply-Side Economics. China still needed to "grow the pie," he added.

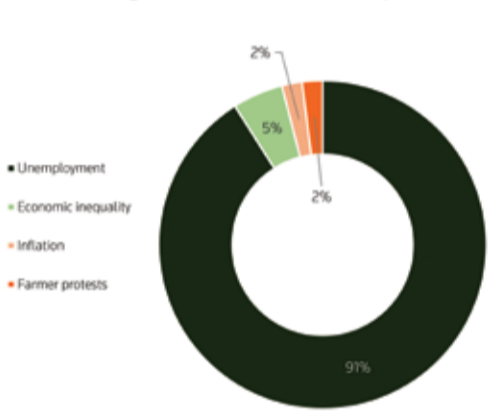
Still, one seed for a longer-term tilt towards consumption may yet be planted at the plenum. Chinese media said policymakers may shift the point of charging the consumption tax to wholesalers and retailers. This tax currently only applies to 15 types of goods, from alcohol and tobacco to luxury cars, jewelry and yachts. Domestic demand for these items has limited impact on China's productivity.

Goldman Sachs analysts say charging consumers shifts incentives for local officials from growing their manufacturing base to growing their consumer base. But that would require a broader application of the tax at a time when consumption remains weak and the economy is fragile. — Reuters

### Reuters poll: Unemployment in India

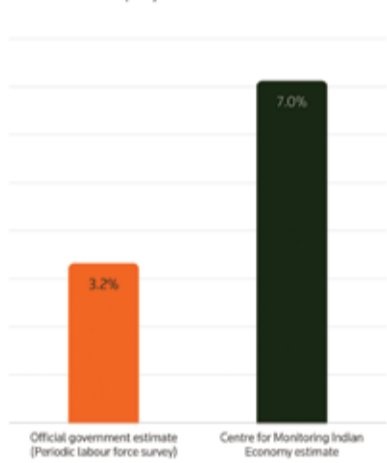
A 91% majority of development economists and policy experts polled by Reuters said unemployment will be the biggest economic challenge for the Bharatiya Janata Party government's third term.

What will be the biggest economic challenge for the government over the next five years?



Based on responses from 54 policy experts polled by Reuters, May 15 - June 18, 2024. Unemployment rates are the latest released figures (Oct. 2023 for the PLFS and June 2024 for CME). Saranya Ganguly | REUTERS GRAPHICS

Unemployment rate in India



## French camps draw election battle lines on economy

**PARIS:** France's far-right National Rally (RN) hit back on Thursday at charges from opponents that its spending plans would crash the economy, while President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance said it was the only bulwark against financial mismanagement.

The nationalist, anti-immigrant RN is leading in the polls ahead of a snap parliamentary election on June 30 and July 7, with a newly formed alliance of left-wing and environmentalist parties in second place and Macron's camp trailing behind. Macron's shock decision to call the election after his party was trounced by the RN in European elections threw French politics into turmoil and caused the euro and French stocks to tumble and France's borrowing costs to rise.

RN leader Jordan Bardella, who could be prime minister if the party wins an absolute majority, sought to assuage fears about its high-spending plans during an appearance before the Medef, France's leading employers' group. "I've understood that I need to reassure people," he said, pledging that if in government he would launch an audit of public finances to gauge his margin for maneuver before deciding on how far and how fast to go with reforms.

The latest opinion poll, conducted by IFOP over June 18-20, found support for the RN at 34 percent, with the left-wing Popular Front on 29 percent and Macron's Together alliance on 22 percent, on turnout of 64 percent. It was commissioned by Le Figaro, Sud Radio and LCI.

Bardella said a pledge to lower the retirement age from 64 to 60, after Macron faced down months of street protests to raise it to that age, would apply to people who began work aged under 20.

His government would introduce a revised 2024 budget over the summer, he said, and measures would include cutting production taxes on companies. Bardella said the European Union should reduce its spending and France should cut its contribution to the bloc. He also talked about addressing fiscal loopholes that allowed highly profitable companies to avoid tax.

### 'Not reassured'

Macron's camp portrays both the RN and the Popular Front as profligate, with unfunded spending promises threatening to increase the national debt to unsustainable levels. France has been reprimanded by the EU for its debt being too high. "The budgetary margin for manoeuvre is zero," said Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire at the Medef event after Bardella spoke, describing the policy propos-



**PARIS:** French far-right RN party President Jordan Bardella (right) and leader of the LR right-wing opposition party Eric Ciotti (left) attend a meeting with a French employers' association on June 20, 2024. — AFP

als from the RN and the Popular Front as "crazy". He said investors cared most about stability, and only the ruling Together alliance could provide that, reiterating a pledge to return the budget deficit to below 3 percent of GDP.

The left-wing bloc was also setting out its economic stall at the Medef, with Eric Coquerel of the hard-left France Unbowed party saying extra spending would be funded by economic growth and higher tax revenues from the wealthy. "I think that overall our budget deficit won't be worse than what the current government foresees," he said. The Popular Front also wants to lower the retirement age. "None of them have reassured me," said Sophie de Menton, head of a smaller employers' group, Mouvement Elhic.

Earlier, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said if the Macron alliance remained in power after July 7 it would lower power bills, soften inheritance tax and link pensions to inflation to ease the strain on household finances. "There will be no tax hikes, no matter what," he said.

Attal unveiled a campaign clip that did not feature Macron, reflecting the president's unpopularity. Macron's term runs until 2027 and he cannot be forced out. France has had three periods of "cohabitation" - where the government is of a different political stripe from the president - in its post-war history.

Markets have been steadier this week after the gap between French and German borrowing costs reached 80 basis points last week, its widest in seven years. Investors are nervous, however, at the prospect of a high-spending RN-led government or of political gridlock should no party get an absolute majority and the balance of power make it hard for any legislation to pass.

French blue-chip stocks are up 1.8 percent this week after last week's 6.2 percent tumble and the difference between French and German 10-year borrowing costs is 72 basis points, slightly lower after Thursday's French government bond auction. — Reuters

## European stocks rise, AI propels US into record territory

**LONDON:** Enthusiasm over AI helped propel tech stocks higher and Wall Street to fresh records on Thursday while European stocks advanced as central banks made interest rate calls. A day after a public holiday, Wall Street's S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite pushed higher at the open Thursday from record closes on Tuesday, setting new all-time highs. "US markets reopened after a day's holiday and AI chip giant Nvidia continued its ascent," said Dan Coatsworth, investment analyst at AJ Bell. Market enthusiasm for artificial intelligence has driven a surge in tech stocks, in particular for Nvidia which produces high-end processors prized for AI applications. Nvidia's market capitalization edged past Microsoft on Tuesday to become the world's most valuable publicly traded company and its shares struck a fresh record on Thursday.

But the gains on the Nasdaq and S&P 500 faded as the morning wore on, with analysts not convinced the rally has legs to finish the day higher. "This morning's economic data was aligned with an economic slowing that could raise questions about the achievability of earnings growth expectations and the Fed's decision to keep its policy rate higher for longer," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

Initial jobless claims for last week came in slightly higher than expected while housing starts fell. Data showing slowing growth gives the Federal Reserve some freedom to ease monetary policy, but so far US central bank officials have indicated they wanted to see more evidence of inflation coming down before committing to an interest cut. Analysts say this means there will be two reductions at most, with many predicting just one this year - in line with the Fed's "dot plot" gauge released last week.

Interest rate calls by central banks in Europe animate trading across the Atlantic, helping stocks rise across the region. Switzerland's franc dipped against the dollar after the Swiss National Bank (SNB) announced its second straight interest-rate cut, having become in March the first Western central bank to slash borrowing costs that had been raised to battle inflation. The Bank of England (BoE) held rates steady as expected ahead of UK's July 4 general election, as did Norway's central bank. The BoE's decision to keep its key rate at a 16-year high came just a day after official data showed UK headline consumer inflation had finally come down to the bank's two percent target.

But the statement following the meeting opened the door to a rate cut in August, however, according to Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading firm XTB, pleasing the stock market but hitting the pound. "The market has taken today's news as a step in the direction of a rate cut at the next BoE meeting. The market is now pricing in a 60 percent chance of a rate cut in August, up from a 35 percent chance before the meeting," she said. — AFP

## Business

# Activists win landmark ruling over UK oil well plan

## Ruling expected to hit proposals for future fossil fuel projects • Protesters spray-paint jets

LONDON: Planning authorities should have considered the impact of climate-warming emissions in approving an oil well near Gatwick Airport, the UK's highest court said on Thursday, a ruling activists say could profoundly impact new fossil fuel projects in Britain.

Environmental campaigners had argued that planning permission to retain and expand the oil well site near London's Gatwick was flawed because it had not considered the impact of greenhouse gas emissions from the use of the oil.

The ruling comes on the same day another group of climate activists gained access to another airport, Stansted, and sprayed private jets with orange paint. Environmental group Just Stop Oil claimed US pop star Taylor Swift's private jet had landed at Stansted airport "mere hours earlier". Taylor Swift, whose aircraft was not at the airport, according to police, has attracted criticism over her use of private jets. In 2022, she headlined a list published by British sustainability marketing firm Yard of the "worst private jet CO2 emission offenders" among celebrities. Her jet flew 170 times in 2022, with total flight emissions for the year reaching 8,293.54 tons, or 1,184.8 times more than the average person, Yard said.

### 'Watershed moment'

Supreme Court judges agreed by a narrow three to two majority, and quashed the planning approval which they said was unlawful. While the court said councils could still approve schemes even if they were likely to cause significant harm to the environment, campaigners said the landmark judgment would make it much harder for new oil, gas and coal developments to get approval.

"This historic ruling is a watershed moment in the fight to stop further fossil fuel extraction projects in

the UK and make the emissions cuts needed to meet crucial climate targets," Friends of the Earth lawyer Katie de Kauwe said. "It is a huge boost to everyone involved in resisting fossil fuel projects."

The campaign groups said the ruling could hit proposals for other controversial schemes such as a new coal mine in Cumbria, northern England, as well as North Sea oil and gas projects. "Oil and gas companies will be working through the judgment to assess to what extent it affects future projects in the UK, and existing challenges before the courts, which had been stayed pending the Supreme Court's decision," Tom Cummins, partner at law firm Ashurst. The government said it would carefully consider the impact of the ruling and any relevance for other ongoing legal proceedings.

### New oil wells

The case concerned a decision in 2019 by Surrey County Council to allow Horse Hill Developments, part-owned by British energy company UK Oil & Gas Plc (UKOG), to retain two oil wells and drill four more over a 20-year period near the town of Horley, close to Gatwick.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project examined the effect of the construction, production and decommissioning of the site, but did not assess the impact from emissions that would result from the use of the refined oil. The Weald Action Group (WAG), an umbrella organization for local groups that campaign against the extraction of oil and gas in southeast England, estimated this would equate to more than 10 million tons of carbon emissions.

A campaigner acting for WAG launched a legal challenge against the planning approval on the basis the EIA was flawed, but this was rejected both



LONDON: A handout picture released by the Just Stop Oil climate campaign group shows an activist sitting in front of a plane after spraying orange paint on private jets at Stansted Airport on June 20, 2024. — AFP

by the High Court in London and then by the Court of Appeal. However, the Supreme Court overruled, saying it was inevitable there would be combustion emissions from the refined oil. "It is not disputed that these emissions, which can easily be quantified, will have a significant impact on climate," said George Leggatt, one of the three Supreme Court justices who agreed with the appeal.

"The only issue is whether the combustion

emissions are effects of the project at all. It seems to me plain that they are." UKOG's CEO Stephen Sanderson said the company's focus had shifted from oil and gas to underground hydrogen storage but added it would work closely with the local authority to account for "this retrospective change to EIA requirements". The council itself said planning permission for the oil well "remains to be determined in due course". — Agencies

## EV sales drop in EU as German demand slumps

BERLIN: Sales of new battery-electric cars in the European Union dropped 12 percent in May from a year earlier, led by a 30 percent plunge in Germany, data from Europe's auto industry body showed on Thursday. Germany, the bloc's largest electric vehicle (EV) market, in December brought an early end to subsidies for buying EVs as part of a last-minute 2024 budget deal. It has now seen a year-to-date 16 percent decline in EV sales, according to the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA).

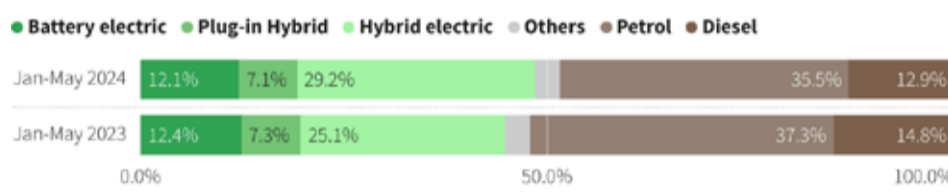
Overall new car sales in the bloc fell by 3 percent in May from the same month in 2023, the second drop this year, and were down 2.6 percent in a wider region covering the EU, Britain and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the ACEA said.

Demand for EVs in Europe has cooled in recent months, after rising strongly for

## EV adoption in the EU close to the halfway mark

Electric vehicles accounted for 48.3% of all new passenger car registrations in the European Union between January and May 2024. The share of BEVs was 12.1%.

### SHARE OF NEW PASSENGER CAR REGISTRATIONS



Note: Other vehicles include fuel cell electric vehicles, natural gas vehicles, LPG, E85/ethanol and other fuels.  
Source: ACEA | Reuters, June 20, 2024 | By Sumanta Sen

several years, while competition to produce more affordable models has grown. To shield domestic automakers from an influx of cheap EV imports, the European Commission said last week it would impose provisional duties of up to 38.1 percent on China-made EVs starting July.

US electric carmaker Tesla said last week it expected to increase the price of its China-made Model 3 when the EU measures come into effect. Elon Musk's

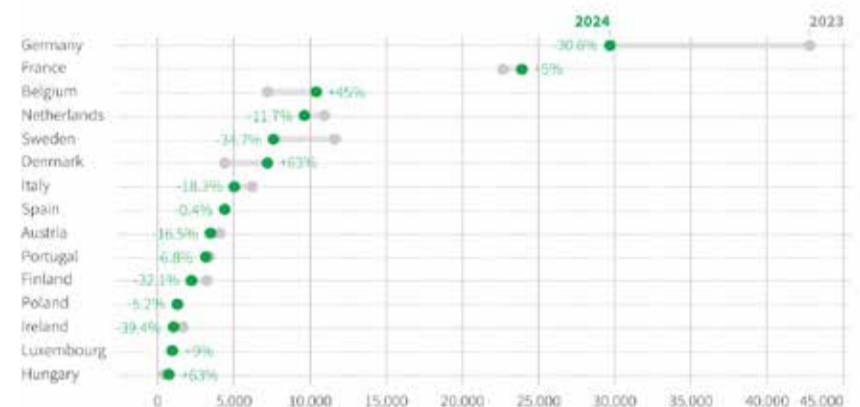
company recorded a 34.2 percent drop in May sales in the EU. The current stagnation of the EV market has been expected for years but sales should pick up from 2025 when the next EU car emission targets kick in, European campaign group Transport & Environment (T&E) said in a briefing on Thursday.

Electrified vehicles — fully electric models, plug-in hybrids and full hybrids — accounted for 48.9 percent of all new EU

## BEV registrations drop sharply in Germany

The number of battery-electric vehicle (BEV) registrations in several European countries including Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden fell in May 2024 compared to May 2023.

### BEV REGISTRATIONS IN MAY (The percentage change figures from May 2023 are highlighted)



Source: ACEA | Reuters, June 20, 2024 | By Sumanta Sen

passenger car registrations in May, up from 46.2 percent a year earlier. While the market share of fully electric cars fell to 12.5 percent from 13.8 percent in May 2023, the share of hybrids rose to 29.9 percent from 25 percent.

Total EU registrations for Volkswagen rose 1.6 percent in May, while Stellantis and Renault saw registrations fall 6.9 percent and 5.4 percent respectively. Toyota's sales were up 13 percent, the data showed. — Reuters

## New \$1.2bn plan to boost African vaccine production launched

PARIS: A new \$1.2 billion program to massively boost vaccine production in Africa was launched on Thursday, aiming to give the continent more sovereignty to fight numerous diseases including a cholera resurgence. The announcement made at a Paris summit aimed in part to begin to address the huge gap in access to vaccines between wealthy and poorer countries seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Gavi vaccine alliance, which facilitates the distribution of doses to poorer countries, also announced at the summit that it is seeking \$9 billion to fund its programs from 2026-2030. French President Emmanuel Macron told the summit that the new African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator (AVMA) "will be an essential step towards a genuine African vaccine market."

Three quarters of its funding will come from Europe, Macron told the summit, which was also attended by leaders from Botswana, Rwanda, Senegal, Ghana. Germany will contribute \$318 million to the scheme, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in a video message.

France put in \$100 million and the UK \$60 million, while other donors include the United States, Canada, Norway, Japan and the Gates Foundation. The new program "could become a catalyst for promoting the



PARIS: African and European leaders applaud as they pose for a group photo during the Global Forum for Vaccine Sovereignty and Innovation. — AFP

pharmaceutical industry in Africa and fostering collaboration between member states", African Union commission Moussa Faki Mahamat told the summit. Africa imports "99 percent of its vaccines at an exorbitant cost", he added. The African Union has set the goal of the continent producing 60 percent of its own vaccines by 2040.

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on global vaccine inequity, as wealthy countries home to big

big bets on selling products specifically geared toward millions of people taking the appetite-suppressing medications. The medications, from a class of drugs known as GLP-1 agonists, threaten to dent profits of snack-makers and fast food chains as people taking them cut way back on the amount of food they consume.

When its fajita melts and pizzas hit store freezers this autumn, Nestle will face a sea of competitors making specific claims about their products targeting people on the medications. The maker of Biocare, a drink that sells for \$4.50 per serving, touts on the packaging that it can "alleviate side effects" such as nausea, for people taking semaglutides, a reference to the active ingredient in Wegovy and Ozempic. The medications can cause gastrointestinal side effects, but doctors recommend people using them keep eating, especially protein-rich foods, to maintain energy and avoid losing muscle.

Herbalife pitches shakes sold in a bundle for \$185.10 that it claims can help people achieve their nutritional needs while on "the shot," as the injectable drugs are sometimes colloquially called. Retailers like supplement-seller GNC are also

looking to capitalize on the trend by introducing a section in stores dedicated to GLP-1 users, selling protein powder and fiber.

Referencing the weight-loss drugs on packaging for Vital Pursuit products could expose Nestle to regulatory scrutiny. "We're not a medication, we're a food product," Moe said. Referring to the medications could suggest that the food somehow treats or prevents disease, claims only products approved by the US Food and Drug Administration can make, said Lauren Handel, an attorney specializing in food. "It's a tricky area where you'd want to be careful about what you say," Handel said. "The safest course of action is not to mention any drugs."

The same rules apply to advertising, she said. Labeling items as "suitable for people on a diet" or as "companions" to the medications may comply with FDA regulations. "Some companies will take more risk," she said. Nestle declined to say whether it will refer to the drugs in advertisements.

### 'Absolute game changer'

Herbalife is taking a more direct approach, say-

ing on Facebook: "Using a GLP-1 weight-loss drug? Support your nutritional needs by using Herbalife's GLP-1 Companion Pack."

Herbalife Chief Commercial Officer Frank Lambert said the company chose GLP-1 instead of recognizable brand names like Ozempic to avoid alienating people taking rival drugs, such as Eli Lilly's Mounjaro and Zepbound, or who have quit taking the medications but still watch their weight.

Robard Corp, which makes Biocare, said it is marketing the drink through a "strong influencer community who are all taking GLP-1s." Biocare influencer Ashley Dunham of Jacksonville, Florida, said in a TikTok video the product has been an "absolute game changer" when it comes to maintaining her weight after losing 100 pounds (45.4 kilograms). Coca-Cola and yogurt-maker Danone say many of their products are perfect for people taking the medications because they are either low in sugar or high in protein. Coke's Fairlife shakes, with up to 42 grams of protein, are frequently touted on social media by people using the medications. — Reuters

## Nestle, Coke take cautious approach towards Ozempic users

NEW YORK: Nestle's NES.NS new food brand for people taking weight-loss drugs like Wegovy will note that the meals are high in protein, fiber and nutrients, but will not name the blockbuster medications, a company executive told Reuters. The world's largest food maker is keeping the names of the drugs off the packaging due to regulatory concerns, Tom Moe, Nestle USA's president of meals, said in a recent interview. Nestle will instead market its Vital Pursuit line of \$5-and-under frozen meals on social media, he said. "We won't directly make the connection (to the drugs) on the food package," Moe said.

Nestle's hesitancy to name drugs like Novo Nordisk's Wegovy and Ozempic on its packaging shows the uncertainty facing global food companies as they place

FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 2024

# Weekender

## PAWS FOR THOUGHT

### Animal activist launches campaign to combat cat abandonment



By Faten Omar



**A**nimal activist Fares Khaled has initiated an awareness campaign aimed at educating individuals who abandon their cats on the streets, with a particular focus on those near the Scientific Center. Khaled told Kuwait Times that the street is an unsafe place for domestic animals, as they are accustomed to a specific lifestyle that drastically changes when they are left to fend for themselves. "Abandoned cats always die, as this sudden shift often leads to dire consequences because the cats are unable to adapt to the harsh conditions of street life," he said.

Khaled's campaign highlights the importance of responsible pet ownership and the dangers of abandoning domestic animals. He launched the campaign after witnessing large numbers of cats being thrown onto the streets and dying within a few days due to their lack of skills to hunt for food, adapt to harsh weather, or avoid getting hit by cars.

"Especially at the Scientific Center, people think that it is the best place to abandon their cats because they see people feeding the cats there. The owners assume their cats will live in a good environment like they are used to at home, but that is a wrong assumption. Domestic cats never adapt and usually die from hunger," Khaled pointed out.

During his campaign, many people adopted cats, while others took several cats for treatment. "I will keep raising awareness, and I have a bigger plan to achieve my goal of preventing cat owners from abandoning their pets. I aim to advance a greater understanding of domestic animals' needs, encour-



Stray and abandoned cats are seen near the Scientific Center. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

aging humane treatment and responsible care," Khaled added. "Some companies provided food for the campaign, while people supported it with food, moral support and spreading the word. The challenge I faced was with the permits, where my goal was to vaccinate cats against rabies, but unfortunately, we did not get the needed permit," Khaled said regarding the campaign.

"We will continue our awareness campaigns because animals, much like us, are

living creatures that experience emotions and sensations. They deserve compassion and respect, and it is our responsibility to ensure their well-being," he added. He called on people to check with animal activists and social media accounts to adopt pets, as many are waiting for a home. "I hope people stop throwing their pets away; instead, they can put them up for adoption. You are harming a soul. Cut it short and find a new home for them," he concluded.



Animal activist Fares Khaled watches people feeding the cats.





# THE POWER OF THEATRE ON CAST AND AUDIENCE



Ghadeer Ghloum

“Theatre is a powerful tool for enlightenment and societal change,” said theatre instructor Hawra’a Ibrahim during an interview with Kuwait Times. She discussed the balance between the profound societal impact actors wield through their performances and the necessity of detachment from the

The journey of an actor extends beyond the confines of the stage, as Ibrahim elaborated: “An actor cannot be completely detached from the character they are performing. However, a good actor must be aware of the cause behind acting in a certain role and be able to overcome deep instances of acting within a short period post-play.”



## Hawra’a Ibrahim on navigating the emotional landscape of acting and delivering powerful social messages while staying detached

characters they portray onstage. Ibrahim echoed the sentiments of many in the performing arts. “When you take your time in performing the personality you’re acting, and you understand that these personalities you’re performing on stage are for the benefit of society, you realize that theatre is more than just entertainment. It’s a message. If I am performing a villain’s part, I am not becoming a villain, but I put in my mind that I am performing this character to deliver a message to the people, in order to raise awareness of such characters.”

Ibrahim highlighted the significance of psychological detachment as an essential skill for actors navigating the emotional terrain of their roles. “Actors should be careful with accepting certain character performances and be honest with themselves about their level of maturity and emotional capability of detaching later on,” she advised. Ibrahim also emphasized the importance of academic study in theater, particularly in understanding the psychological underpinnings of performance. “Studying theater academically is very important, especially for such



HAWRA’A IBRAHIM

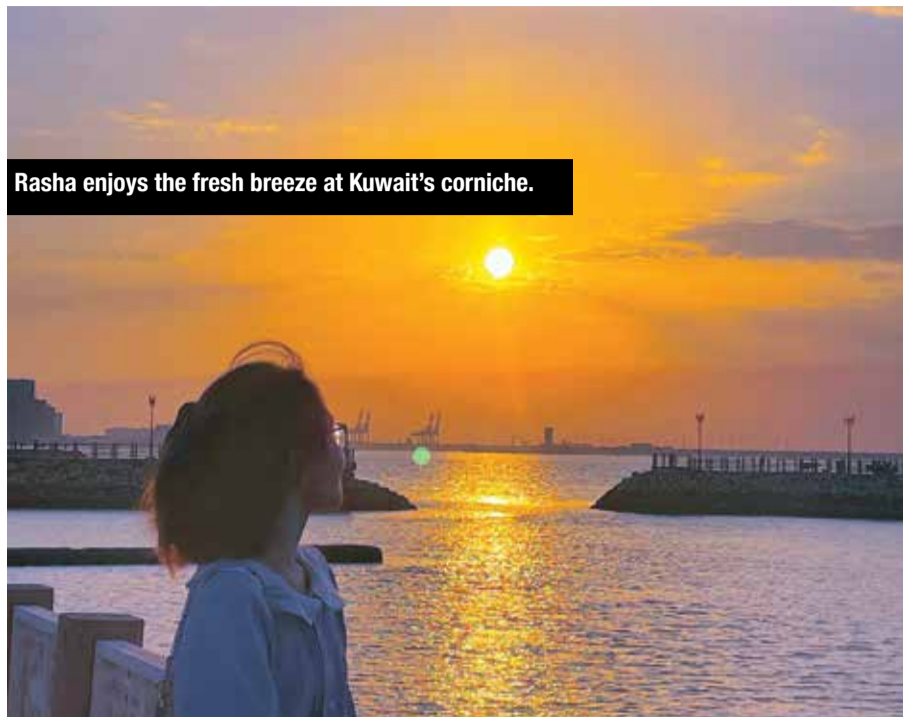
instances as it could get to one’s psyche.” Through academic exploration, actors gain invaluable insights into the stages that facilitate emotional stability post-performance, ensuring a harmonious balance between artistic immersion and personal detachment. “I once performed as a bad person on stage and received backlash from the public. This is where my emphasis on studying drama in a professional and academic way comes from. At the time, I was capable of detaching myself

from the character and was able to respond to the public’s questioning and criticism,” Ibrahim pointed out. As actors step into the spotlight, they carry with them not only the weight of their characters but also the profound responsibility of shaping hearts and minds, provoking thoughts and promoting critical thinking.



Hawra’a Ibrahim during her performance on stage.





Rasha enjoys the fresh breeze at Kuwait's corniche.



Dima looks at skyscrapers from Shaheed Park.



Rasha poses by the seaside in Kuwait.

# East meets Middle East



Dima poses for a picture next to the Kuwait Towers.

**T**raveling all the way from China, two Chinese girls in their early 20s, who chose "Dima" and "Rasha" as their Arabic names, lived in Kuwait for nearly a year to pursue their Arabic language studies at Kuwait University. Thousands of kilometers away from their homeland, this country helped them break the language barrier and brought them closer to a culture they previously knew very little about. "All I knew were stereotypes about Arabs, such as that they are just rich people," Dima said.

## Chinese students recall learning Arabic and enjoying machboos diyay in Kuwait

Although easily recognized as foreigners, the two girls never felt like strangers in Kuwait. "I felt embraced, and nobody ever gave me strange looks here," Dima shared. On weekends, they enjoyed exploring the streets of Kuwait as regular citizens, with their preferred spots being The Avenues mall and Souq Mubarakiya."



Passant Hisham

Dima especially loved ordering machboos diyay, her favorite dish.

Deeply immersed in Kuwaiti heritage, she shared her fascination with the bedouins and desert lifestyle in Kuwait. "What I loved most about Kuwait is how much pride its people hold in their ancient culture, such as preserving their tribal communities and their camels until this day."

Regarding her interest in the Arabic language, Dima added: "I loved how the same word in Arabic can hold many different meanings." Unlike the Chinese script, which uses characters to represent words, she liked that Arabic uses an alphabet to do so.

Beyond theoretical knowledge and books, they had the opportunity not just to practice the language properly in Kuwait, but also to exchange ideas about global topics and contrasting perspectives. Rasha noted that in China, almost everyone shares similar beliefs and ideologies, which sometimes limits their mindsets. "But here, the huge difference

between the two cultures has really broadened my horizons, as it taught me a lot more about Arab people's behaviors and attitudes," she said.

Their daily routine in Kuwait usually started with waking up at 6 am, riding the bus from their dorm in Kaifan to Kuwait University's branch in Shuwaikh or Shadadiya, and returning home in the afternoon to study. Dima enjoyed the festive ambiance of Kuwait during Ramadan and Eid, especially the decorations on the streets, which also introduced her to Islamic traditions such as praying and fasting. However, the roads were a new experience for her. "There are so many highways here," she said. "People drive very fast, which usually scared me when crossing the road."

Despite the roads, Dima holds deep affection for her time in Kuwait. "I would love to return to Kuwait for the lovely memories I had there. Everyone was so friendly to me. I got to know Arabs much deeper, and if I hadn't traveled to Kuwait, I wouldn't have learned so much about them. I wish more people from China could get this chance too," she said.

Similarly, Rasha feels grateful for this one-year stay, as it helped her master the Arabic language, which she now uses every day in her customer service job. Yet, she said: "One visit to Kuwait is enough for me because it was too hot there! There was a 15- or 20-degree temperature difference between China and Kuwait."

# Family joy: Graduates celebrate with proud moms



Joud Yasser Al-Zayyat is all smiles.



(From left) Mariam, Dana, Rahaf, Razan, Jana, Lulia, Joud, Toleen, Joud and Tala with their mothers.



Fajer Al-Sabah School students, (from left) Mariam, Rahaf, Dana, Joud, Razan, Joud, Lulia, Jana, Toleen and Tala, celebrate their graduation.



Mothers of the graduates don graduation gowns! — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## WHAT'S ON IN KUWAIT

**Event: Korean culture classes**  
Location: Language Center, Shadadiya  
Date: June 23 to July 25, 2024

**Event: BTS Day**  
Location: Madang  
Date: June 21, 2024

**Event: Kuwait's first piano competition**  
Location: AUK theater  
Date: June 21-22, 2024

**Event: Leathercraft workshop**  
Location: Burj Shaikha  
Date: June 22, 2024

**Event: Writing for Joy workshop**  
Location: Promenade Cultural Center  
Date: June 22, 2024

**Event: Blippi: The Wonderful World Tour**  
Location: Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre  
Date: June 21, 2024

**Event: Reading and painting**  
Location: Kuwait Scientific Center  
Date: June 22, 2024

**Event: Creative thinking workshop**  
Location: Interlace studio  
Date: June 22, 2024

**Event: Challenge Strength**  
Location: Kuwait International Fairgrounds  
Date: June 21-22, 2024

## Sports

# Player of the Match Salt blasts England to T20 World Cup win over West Indies

## Bairstow hit an unbeaten 48 as England finished on 181-2 off 17.3 overs

**GROS ISLET:** Phil Salt thrashed a brilliant 87 not out off just 47 balls as defending champions England romped to an eight-wicket victory over the West Indies in their T20 World Cup Super Eight clash on Wednesday.

Salt smashed seven fours and five sixes during a swashbuckling innings at the Daren Sammy National Stadium in St. Lucia while Jonny Bairstow hit an unbeaten 48 as England finished on 181-2 off 17.3 overs after earlier restricting the West Indies to 180-4.

Player of the Match Salt effectively sealed victory after cutting loose in the 16th over, hammering 30 runs off West Indies bowler Romario Shepherd with an exhibition of power-hitting that included three sixes and three fours.

The win marked an emphatic return to form for England, who labored through the first round group phase and flirted with elimination at one stage. "We're not looking too far ahead, just glad to contribute to the win," Salt said after his match-winning knock.

The England opener praised the contribution of Bairstow, who kept the runs flowing and took the pressure off Salt at the other end. "There are a lot of different factors that can affect an innings," Salt said. "There was a period where I did not face a lot of balls, but important to stick around and carry on."

"Jonny was fantastic, and took pressure off me by taking calculated risks. I couldn't be happier as a team-mate." England's other runs came

from 25 from skipper Jos Buttler while Moeen Ali added a brisk 13.

### Credit to Salt

West Indies skipper Rovman Powell lamented his team's bowling performance. "We needed a better display as a bowling group," he said. "We are generally good in the last five overs. The execution wasn't good. Credit to Salt, he always hurts us."

Earlier, a disciplined English bowling performance had held the West Indies to a relatively modest total of 180 in the Group 2 clash of two-time T20 champions. After England won the toss and opted to bowl, the West Indies made a smooth start with openers Charles and Brandon King in control.

Even after King retired hurt for 23 in the fifth over, the runs continued to flow, with Johnson Charles forming a handy partnership with Nicholas Pooran. The West Indies reached the halfway stage of the innings at 82-0 and looked poised to put up a commanding total.

But England spinner Moeen Ali finally made the breakthrough after Charles was caught in the deep by Harry Brook for 38 off 34 balls in the 12th over. West Indies captain Powell threatened to cut loose after blasting five sixes in a quickfire 36 off just 17 deliveries.

But after bludgeoning Liam Livingstone for three sixes in the 15th over, the English bowler got his revenge with the final delivery, tempting Powell into a top edge which was snagged by Mark Wood at short third man.

That left the score at 137-2, and Pooran fell soon afterwards, caught behind by skipper Jos Buttler off Jofra Archer to leave the Windies wob-



**GROS ISLET:** England's Jonathan Bairstow hits a four during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between England and the West Indies at Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. — AFP

bling on 141-3. Andre Russell fell for one off Adil Rashid to make it 143-4, before an unbeaten 28

from Sherfane Rutherford gave the West Indies a more competitive total. — AFP

## 'Emotional control' driving Tsunoda to blossom in F1

**BARCELONA:** Yuki Tsunoda used to be known for his four-letter outbursts on the team radio - this season it's for his controlled mastery of four wheels. Where the likeable Japanese star would once rant and rave at perceived injustices out on track, nowadays he is calmness personified. Almost.

This new self control is paying off handsomely with his points tally for 2024 already at 19, two more than the whole of 2023, with 15 races still to go. Chatting cheerily under a large umbrella at his RB team garage ahead of this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix Tsunoda's sunny outlook lit up the damp day.

"I'm happy with my progress. Sometimes I do have to think before pressing the radio button in the car, like when there's traffic. I have to force myself to calm down, but the emotional control is coming more naturally, or I'm just in silence," the 24-year-old commented.

"For sure I'm on the right path. But you can't just shut up all the time, you still need feedback!" He says his teammate Daniel Ricciardo has played a key role in his personal development which has been rewarded by his Red Bull employers handing him a contract extension with the team, formerly racing as AlphaTauri, until at least the end of 2025.

"Daniel is the more complete driver, with emotional control, he's very strong on that," said Tsunoda. "I started in a pretty bad position. I started to learn why he's doing much better than me, he's helped me become more consistent throughout the year. "With Daniel it's working really well, we have a relationship on and off track."

Tsunoda's boss, RB team principal Laurent Mekies, is excited about the giant strides the Italian-based Japanese driver has taken on his F1 journey. "What Yuki has done now in his fourth year - you expect these steps to come early in the career, but on his fourth year, to make such a huge leap is credit to him," Mekies told F1.com recently. — AFP

## Dressel eyes relay history but won't defend 100m title

**LOS ANGELES:** Caeleb Dressel won't defend his 100m freestyle title at next month's Paris Games, but after a third-placed finish in a storming final Wednesday at the US Olympic swimming trials he's ready to make relay history.

Dressel won five golds in Tokyo in 2021, including the 50m and 100m free, and the 100m butterfly. He took his career tally to seven Olympic golds, but stepped away from the sport abruptly in 2022 and is on the comeback trail after a nine-month break. In the cut-throat US trials, where only the top two finishers in each event can claim individual Olympic berths, Dressel was squeezed out as Chris Guiliano triumphed in the 100m free in 47.38 and Jack Alexy grabbed second in 47.47.

Dressel was third in 47.53, not quite fast enough to defend his crown in Paris but putting himself in the mix for the 4x100m free relay, where after a look at the scoreboard he said a world record was possible.

"I don't think we should shy away from it. I think the world-record is 47.3 average, so we've got a shot at that," he said, adding upon closer inspection of the times: "Oh my gosh, top six were under 48. That's pretty quick."

The 100m free was Dressel's first event of the trials in the mammoth Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. The 27-year-old still has the 50m free and 100m butterfly to come as he tries to return to the pinnacle of swimming after regaining his joy in the sport. — AFP

## De Kock leads SA to 18-run win over USA at T20 WCup

**ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA:** Quinton de Kock hit a blistering half-century as South Africa defeated a battling United States by 18 runs in their opening T20 World Cup second round clash on Wednesday.

The Proteas piled up 194-4 off their 20 overs after being put in to bat before restricting the USA to 176-6 as the Super Eights stage got underway at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. However, the USA, who stunned former champions Pakistan in the first round, were close to another upset when Andries Gous (80 not out) and Harmeet Singh (38) put on 91 for the sixth wicket.

Opening batsman De Kock, his country's leading run-maker in the format, reached his 15th T20 international fifty off 26 balls. He was eventually dismissed for 74 with seven fours and five sixes in a 40-ball innings which was comfortably his best performance of the tournament. In four previous visits to the crease at the World Cup, the 31-year-old had a best of just 20 against Sri Lanka.

"We've had some tricky wickets so it was nice to spend some time in the middle today. The USA put us under pressure towards the end. It was a great game," said De Kock after South Africa had struggled for runs on the slow wickets of the US in the first round. USA skipper Aaron Jones admitted it was a "tough result to take".

"We did lack discipline in the bowling at times. Once we play good cricket we can beat any team in the world. But we need to be a lot more disciplined," he said. Skipper Aiden Markram also hit his tournament best of 46 from 32 balls with four boundaries and a six. Markram and De Kock put on 110 for the second wicket and helped their team reach 101-1 off the first 10 overs.

Slow left-arm Harmeet brought the United States back into the match by removing De Kock and fellow dangerman David Miller (0) in the space of

## Is the founder of the modern Olympics being cancelled?

**PARIS:** France likes to honor its late pioneers and visionaries, but the aristocratic Frenchman who founded the modern Olympics is proving to be a troublesome figure for organizers of the Paris 2024 Games. Inspired by William Penny Brookes' Wenlock Olympian Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin almost single-handedly created the Olympics by reviving the ancient Greek tradition of Games at the end of the 19th century.

Lauded for his devotion to using sport to promote peace and international cooperation, he is now classed in the 21st century as a sexist, a class snob and a supporter of colonialism. "He created the movement, he had the idea, he laid the foundations," Daphne Bolz, a sports historian at the University of Rouen, told AFP on the sidelines of a recent seminar in Paris. "In this respect, he's never completely forgotten. But he was a man of his time, not in line with the contemporary values of France and those promoted by today's International Olympic Committee (IOC)," she added.

The question of how much prominence to give him as France hosts its first Olympics in 100 years next month - the last Paris Games in 1900 and 1924 were during de Coubertin's time - has posed a dilemma. "Paris is going to host its third Games and we know what we owe to the baron," chief organizer Tony Estanguet told reporters in March when asked about him. "If we are here today it's because of him." Yet de Coubertin is only very rarely name-checked by Paris organizers, nor does he feature prominently in any of the official narrative around



**NORTH SOUND, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA:** South Africa's Heinrich Klaassen successfully makes it to the crease before being run out by USA's Andries Gous during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between the United States and South Africa at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda. — AFP

two balls. Markram's innings was ended by impressive fast bowler Saurabh Netravalkar who finished with 2-21 from his four overs.

### Gous, Harmeet give hope

Heinrich Klaassen (36 not out) and Tristan Stubbs (20 not out) added an undefeated 53 for the fifth wicket. The United States enjoyed a bright start to their reply, reaching 50 in the first five overs before they struggled to contain the Proteas' pace-spin attack.

Kagiso Rabada removed Steven Taylor (24) and Nitish Kumar (eight) before American hopes suffered a major blow when Jones was out without scoring. Jones had smashed an undefeated 94 in the first round win over Canada but lasted just five balls Wednesday when he edged spinner Keshav Maharaj to De Kock.

the Games, which begin on July 26.

He has no major Paris stadium named after him, besides a municipal sports centre in the southwest of the capital that will be used as a training base. A homage for him on Sunday at the Sorbonne University in Paris - marking a speech he gave there in June 23, 1894, to create the International Olympic Committee - is being snubbed by Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera.

Although IOC head Thomas Bach is expected, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said Wednesday that she too had "another event" that made it impossible for her to attend. "Paris 2024 has not done much around Pierre de Coubertin, either to show appreciation or raise awareness," his great-great niece, Diane de Navacelle, speaking on behalf of the family, told AFP in an interview.

### 'Right place'?

The treatment of de Coubertin comes at a time of a broad ideological struggle about how to remember major historical figures in the modern era who are tainted by their beliefs or actions, particularly in relation to colonialism.

Across Western countries in recent years, left-wing student groups have torn down or defaced statues of individuals linked to slavery in a movement denounced as "cancel culture" by critics. In France, this has been symbolized by the struggle over a statue outside the national parliament of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, a 17th-century statesman who helped write legal guidance for slave owners in the French West Indies. De Coubertin held fairly typical views for a man of his class and era, namely a belief in the superiority of white men and Western civilization. The Games were conceived for wealthy, upper-class amateurs, while the prospect of women competing was "uninteresting" and "unaesthetic", he wrote.

He also heaped praise on the infamous Nazi-or-

Former New Zealand international Corey Anderson made a quick 12 before his stumps were scattered by Anrich Nortje one ball after cracking a six over midwicket. The USA limped to 73-4 off the first 10 overs before opener Gous and Harmeet suddenly reignited their team's hopes.

Gous smashed leg-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi for three sixes in the 18th over to leave his team needing 28 off 12 balls. Rabada, however, conceded just two runs off the 19th over while also dismissing Harmeet to finish with 3-18. Harmeet made his runs from 22 balls with two fours and three sixes. Gous' runs came off 47 balls and featured five fours and five sixes. Shamsi went for 50 runs off his four overs. West Indies and defending champions England are the other teams in Group 2 of the Super Eights. India, Australia, Afghanistan and Bangladesh comprise Group 1. — AFP



**PARIS:** Relatives pose alongside the wax figure of Pierre de Coubertin, co-founder of the International Olympic Committee during its unveiling ceremony at the Musee Grevin in Paris, ahead of the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics. — AFP

ganized games of 1936, which were instrumentalized by Adolf Hitler. "How do you expect me to repudiate these celebrations?" he wrote. But he did not attend in person and was no longer head of the IOC at the time, his family contends.

"What delighted him was to see a country make such an exceptional investment for the first time to host the Olympics," de Navacelle said. Paris Mayor Hidalgo said this week that she had no interest in "starting a fight to tear down the image of Pierre de Coubertin".

"We need to add to history, explain history, complete history, including the shadowy areas of some people," she urged on Wednesday. For Bolz, organizers have probably got the balance right. "He doesn't represent the things we want to promote nowadays, that's why he's a bit withdrawn," she said. "In the end, he's in the right place. He's present, but without being glorified." — AFP

Sports

# Mbappe injury leaves France to prepare Plan B at Euro 2024

Mbappe is his country's third-top scorer of all time with 47 goals from 80 caps

**PADERBORN:** France boast fearsome strength in depth but remain hugely reliant on Kylian Mbappe for inspiration and are now facing the prospect of being without their injured superstar for at least their next Euro 2024 game against the Netherlands on Friday.

Captain Mbappe is recovering from a broken nose suffered in Monday's 1-0 win over Austria in Duesseldorf in their opening match at the tournament. The new Real Madrid signing, who forced the own goal by Maximilian Woeber which decided the game, was badly hurt in a collision with Austrian defender Kevin Danso and had to be replaced by Olivier Giroud.

The French Football Federation later said Mbappe would not need an operation but did admit he would need to be fitted with a mask before he could return to action. In any case, the lack of time between matches means the clash with the Dutch in Leipzig is set to come too soon for the 25-year-old.

And France coach Didier Deschamps will hope his team can get a positive result which could seal their last-16 place, meaning Mbappe might also be able to sit out the last Group D game against Poland without it being a problem.

But can Les Bleus beat a strong Netherlands side without arguably the world's most lethal striker? "Of course he is an important player, the captain, a leader. So that will have an impact, but we have an exceptional squad," midfielder Adrien Rabiot said on Wednesday.

"I am not going to complain given the lads we have on the bench. We have more than enough options to replace Kylian. I have total confidence in the guys on the bench and the quality we have." Mbappe is his country's third-top scorer of all time with 47 goals from 80 caps, behind only Giroud and Thierry Henry.

He has only scored once in France's last six matches, and that was in a pre-tournament friendly against Luxembourg. However, he had an outside impact on their performances at the last World Cup, scoring eight goals - half the team's total - including an astonishing hat-trick in the final against Argentina.

France met the Netherlands twice in Euro 2024 qualifying, and Mbappe scored a brace on each occasion, in a 4-0 win in Paris and in a 2-1 victory in Amsterdam. Above all, it is worth considering how France have done in recent games without the player who has just ended a prolific seven-year spell at Paris Saint-Germain.

Deschamps' team lost 2-1 in a friendly in Germany last September when Mbappe was left on the bench. They also labored to a 0-0 draw against Canada in their final pre-tournament friendly when he only appeared as a late substitute.

**Giroud's chance?**

Their goal threat is obviously not the same without Mbappe, even if he has still never scored at the European Championship. At the last Euros three years ago, Mbappe failed to find the net and missed the crucial spot-kick in a last-16 loss on penalties to Switzerland.

Against Austria, he squandered one golden chance when clean through with just the goalkeeper to beat. The obvious option for Deschamps when it comes to replacing Mbappe would be to start Giroud, even if the big centre-forward is a very different player.

Giroud, who will move to MLS after the tournament, is 37 now and has also been nursing a minor groin injury. He ended up playing a key role in Qatar, and in similar circumstances - Karim Benzema would have been ahead of him only to pull out injured at the last minute.



**PADERBORN:** France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe, wearing a band-aid after breaking his nose during his country's opening win against Austria, kicks the ball during a training session within the UEFA Euro 2024 Football Championship, at the Home Deluxe Arena Stadium in Paderborn, western Germany. - AFP

"My mindset is always the same, to bring something to the team when the coach gives me the chance," Giroud said after the Austria game. "Everyone knows I think about the collective before I think about myself."

Another option for Deschamps is to move Marcus Thuram in from the left wing and to a central role. Thuram, though, has only scored twice for his country in

20 caps, and one of them came against Gibraltar. Then there is Randal Kolo Muani, but he appears low on confidence after a difficult season in Mbappe's shadow at PSG. One thing is for sure, France's performance against Austria - with the returning N'Golo Kante outstanding shielding an impressive defence - indicated they do at least look solid enough to shut most opponents out as they wait for Mbappe to return. - AFP

## Wary England set for Jones reunion in Japan Test

**TOKYO:** England come face to face with former boss Eddie Jones when they play his new-look Japan in a Test in sweltering Tokyo on Saturday.

Temperatures are set to reach 30 degrees Celsius (86F) in the Japanese capital for Jones's first game since returning to the Japan job for a second stint.

The feisty Australian, who took England to the 2019 World Cup final, has named an inexperienced line-up featuring four new caps, including a university player. A capacity crowd of about 65,000 is expected at the National Stadium.

England skipper Jamie George, who played under Jones, said they were used to him making "bold statements". "Eddie wouldn't have made that decision if he didn't have every confidence that he was able to go out there and play the sort of game that he wanted to play," George said Thursday.

"We probably had an idea of the line-up that he might pick, but it's not exactly what we thought.



**Eddie Jones**

"That's probably Eddie's way at times." England head coach Steve Borthwick sprang a surprise of his own by naming his team two days ahead of schedule on Tuesday. Notably, he picked Marcus Smith ahead of Fin Smith at fly-half. He also handed a first Test start to loose forward Chandler Cunningham-South in a starting XV that contained four changes from England's 33-31 loss to France in the Six Nations in March.

England will travel to New Zealand after the game for two Tests against the All Blacks on July 6 in Dunedin and July 13 in Auckland. Loose forward Sam Underhill said the tour was a chance to build on the work England have done under Borthwick, who took them to the World Cup semi-finals last year.

"We're still a relatively new group nearly two years into Steve's appointment," said Underhill. "It's a good challenge for us as a group and we're respecting it as such."

**Higher education**

George said there was "an element of the unknown" about Japan's team, with only three starting players retained from their previous game, against Argentina at the World Cup. Jones said he wants to "change Japanese rugby" and vowed that his team would "give it a red-hot go" against England.

He also said he was looking forward to locking horns with Borthwick, his former assistant with both Japan and England. "England's a high-pressure job, you get more scrutiny than probably any other job in the world," said Jones. "I think he's handled that pretty well."

Loose forward Michael Leitch, who played under Jones during the Australian's first stint as Japan head coach from 2012 to 2015, was named captain.

Japan's new faces include 20-year-old university full-back Yoshitaka Yazaki, who Jones said had "a fantastic future". "We brought him into camp and every time he's trained he's got better and better," said Jones. "Yes he's young, he lives with 150 other students in a dormitory. He's not a great student at the moment, but he's a great student of rugby." - AFP



**Steve Cooper**

## Steve Cooper named manager of Leicester City

**LONDON:** Leicester City have appointed former Nottingham Forest boss Steve Cooper as their new manager, the newly-promoted Premier League club said on Thursday. "Leicester City Football Club can today confirm the appointment of Steve Cooper as our new first-team manager ahead of the 2024/25 Premier League season. Steve, 44, has agreed a three-year contract," the club said in a statement.

Cooper fills the vacuum left by Enzo Maresca, who left for the vacant post at Chelsea earlier this month. Maresca, 44, had steered 2016 Premier League champions Leicester back to the top flight after just one season in the Championship. Former Brighton and Chelsea manager Graham Potter, as well as West Brom's Carlos Corberan, were also linked with the Leicester role but it was Cooper who got the job. "I am really excited and proud to be appointed Leicester City's first-team manager," said Cooper. "This is a fantastic club with a rich history and passionate supporters."

"I am excited to work with such a talented squad and I'm looking forward to the challenge of achieving our shared ambitions in the Premier League."

After congratulating Leicester on their promotion, the Welshman added: "Any person who loves football can only look with great respect upon how much this club has achieved in recent years."

"The Premier League title of 2016 and the FA Cup of 2021 have demonstrated what's possible for a united club. As the new manager, I don't take that legacy lightly." Leicester chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha welcomed Cooper's arrival by saying: "His vision for the team, including his ability to develop players and implement a dynamic style of play, is very much aligned with our aspirations for the club. "As a leader, he has the ability to build on the strong relationship that has been forged between our fans and our team, strengthening a bond that will be vital to us re-establishing the club in the Premier League." - AFP

## Defending champion Vingegaard to ride in Tour de France

**PARIS:** Double defending champion Jonas Vingegaard will ride in this year's Tour de France after recovering from the serious injuries he suffered in April, his team Visma-Lease a Bike announced on Thursday.

"The Danish two-time Tour winner has recovered enough from his crash in the Tour of the Basque Country to fight for a good result," read a team statement. Vingegaard, 27, was hospitalized after breaking ribs and a collarbone as well as damaging a lung in a mass crash on the Tour of the Basque Country on April 4.

He was back on a bike a month later and said he feels confident enough to be on the start line for the June 29 to July 21 race which begins in Florence, Italy. "I am excited to start the Tour. The last few months have not always been easy, but I thank my family and Team Visma-Lease a Bike for their unwavering support," he said in a team statement. "We have worked together to get to this moment, and of course, I am very excited to see where I stand. I feel good and very motivated." Sporting director Merijn Zeeman said thoughts of a third successive overall yellow jersey should be put on hold given the seriousness of the injuries Vingegaard suffered. "I am very proud of Jonas and the coaching



**Jonas Vingegaard**

team," he said. "He is coming back from a serious injury. "In the last few weeks, he has shown what a champion he is, both mentally and physically. Of course, we don't know how far he can go yet."

"We are being cautious because he has not been able to race, and his preparation has been less than ideal, to say the least. But he will be there, healthy and motivated." Vingegaard will be joined on the team by former Tour stage winner and three-time world cyclo-cross champion Wout van Aert, who is also coming back from injury after sustaining a broken collarbone, sternum and ribs as well as damaging a lung in the one-day Around Flanders race on March 27.

"Of course, this was not the plan initially, but after my development in the last weeks, I really wanted it, and the team agreed," Belgian Van Aert said. "Our main goal is, of course, to ride a top classification with Jonas. I want to contribute to that with an excellent team," the 29-year-old added. The Visma lineup will also include Spanish Vuelta champion Sepp Kuss, Paris-Nice winner Matteo Jorgenson and experienced riders Jan Tratnik and Wilco Kelderman. Vingegaard's main competitor for Tour victory will be Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, who won in 2020 and 2021. Between them the pair have taken the top two places in each of the last three years. - AFP

# Classifieds

**Clinics & Hospitals**

**Clinics**

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

Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

**Hospitals**

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010

**Change of Name**

**I, Ansar Basha Gudur**, holder of Passport No. M4451977 do hereby change my name to **ANSAR BASHA** (as given name) **SHAIK** (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **Ansar Basha Shaik** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

(#5624, 21/06/2024)

**I, Subhash**, holder of Indian Passport No. V7437174 having permanent address Krishna Gali No.1, Dhariwal, Gurudaspur, Punjab, India, PIN - 143519 residing in Kuwait at present,

hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **Subhash** and (surname) **Kumar**.

(#5623, 21/06/2024)

**I, BALU RAM**, holder of Indian Passport No. M9886812 having permanent address Vp Mahida Nayagaon Kherwara Udaipur Rajasthan India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: given name **Babu Lal** and surname **Patel**.

(12/06/2024)

## Hosts Germany through to last 16 of Euros, draws for Scotland and Croatia

Hungary's hopes of progressing now hang by a thread



COLOGNE: Switzerland's defence makes a save during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group A football match between Scotland and Switzerland at the Cologne Stadium in Cologne. — AFP

**STUTTGART:** Hosts Germany became the first team to qualify for the knock-out phase of Euro 2024 on Wednesday thanks to a 2-0 win over Hungary, while Scotland drew with Switzerland and Croatia's hopes of progressing were left hanging in the balance after they were held by Albania.

Germany followed up their 5-1 demolition of Scotland in the tournament's opening game by seeing off the Hungarians in Stuttgart, with Jamal Musiala and Ilkay Gundogan scoring either side of half-time.

Julian Nagelsmann's team have a maximum six points with one game still to come in Group A, and are certain to progress to the last 16 at least as runners-up in the section.

Hungary put up a fight but the hosts had too much quality in the final third, with Bayern Munich star Musiala firing in the opener midway through the first half after captain Gundogan refused to give up a lost cause in the box.

Germany then doubled their lead on 67 minutes as Gundogan, of Barcelona, swept home an assist by Maximilian Mittelstaedt. Their recent struggles appear to be a thing of the past, and Germany have now won their opening

two games at a World Cup or European Championship for the first time since Euro 2012.

"We were determined to win today and confirm our performance against Scotland," said goalkeeper Manuel Neuer. "We were dominant and deserved to win. You could see the euphoria in the stadium." Hungary's hopes of progressing now hang by a thread, while group rivals Switzerland and Scotland played out a 1-1 stalemate in Wednesday's late match in Cologne.

### 'Good reaction'

Scotland, backed by a large and noisy support, went ahead early on when Callum McGregor cut the ball back for Scott McTominay to score with a shot that went in via a big touch off Fabian Schär. However, Switzerland equalised when Xherdan Shaqiri pounced on a stray pass by Anthony Ralston to smash a superb first-time strike high into the net.

The Swiss saw Dan Ndoye miss a glorious second-half opportunity and Breel Embolo have a goal disallowed for offside, but Scotland deserved the draw which keeps their hopes alive. They might even have

won the game, with Grant Hanley hitting the post from a late header.

"The players knew what they needed to do. I thought it was a good team performance against a good opponent," said Scotland boss Steve Clarke. "It was a good reaction to a disappointing night and we are still alive in the tournament."

Switzerland, quarter-finalists at Euro 2020, may already have enough points to progress but a draw against Germany on Sunday will make sure of second place. Scotland, who have not won a match at a major tournament since beating the Swiss 1-0 at Euro 96, can still qualify with a win over Hungary in Stuttgart.

### Gjasula saves Albania

Elsewhere, Albania's Klaus Gjasula scored at both ends, including a dramatic injury-time equaliser as his side drew 2-2 with Croatia in Hamburg. After a disappointing 3-0 loss to Spain in their opening game in Group B, Croatia were behind again when Qazim Laci gave Albania an early lead.

But Croatia improved after the break and Andrej Kramaric levelled with 16 minutes remaining, before Gjasula put through his own net. The Albania mid-

fielder became the last-gasp saviour, though, slotting into the bottom corner in the fifth minute of injury time to snatch his team a point.

Croatia, World Cup semi-finalists in 2022, will now likely need to win their final Group B match against holders Italy on June 24 to reach the knockout phase for a fifth straight major tournament. "We will believe until the very end, to give our best as we did in this match," said forward Kramaric.

"Unfortunately we didn't win but we hope to be a bit luckier against Italy." Albania have won plenty of plaudits with their performances against both Italy, in a 2-1 defeat, and Croatia, but could not hold a lead in either game and will probably have to beat Spain to keep their last-16 hopes alive.

"We have to go forward but we have to fight for every single point," said Albania's Brazilian coach, Sylvinho. "It's important for our lives, the life of the country, the federation. I'm proud of the players so we have to enjoy the moment."

Group rivals Spain and Italy meet in Gelsenkirchen in the standout tie on Thursday, while England face Denmark and Slovenia take on Serbia in Group C. — AFP

## From fighting boys to Saudi Olympic history for taekwondo star

**ABHA, SAUDI ARABIA:** Saudi taekwondo standout Donya Abu Taleb had an unusual introduction to the sport: for years she trained at a boys' club because there were no girls to compete with. Now the 27-year-old has become the first Saudi woman to qualify for the Olympics and is dreaming of bringing home the Gulf kingdom's first gold medal when she competes in Paris.

Though her smiling face today appears on posters and billboards, underscoring Saudi officials' recent push to champion women's athletics, the Jeddah native had much humbler beginnings. "I started taekwondo when I was eight years old and there was no support like now," Abu Taleb, who also has a law degree, told AFP after a recent training session in the southern mountain city of Abha.

"I always played with the boys in the boys' centre, originally without girls. I used to wear a head-covering on my hair so as not to show that I was a girl." Facing off against boys, she added, "distinguished me and made me strong... I love the challenge".

### High hopes for Paris

For many decades, Saudi Arabia's restrictions on women's rights extended to their participation in sports, even as spectators. While privileged Saudi women could compete in tennis and even football in private compounds, there was limited official backing for women in other sports.

In 2012 in London, judo athlete Wojdan Shaherkani became the first Saudi woman to compete at the Olympics thanks to a special invitation from the International Olympic Committee. Her historic debut lasted just 82 seconds, as she was beaten in the first round. US-born Sarah Attar, another invitee, finished a distant last in her 800m heat on the track. Attar was one of four Saudi women to compete as wildcards at the 2016 Olympics, and they were followed by two more at Tokyo 2020. But Abu Taleb is the first to qualify by right.

Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi's de facto ruler who became heir to the throne in 2017, Riyadh has tried to revamp its forbidding image in part by expanding rights for women, allowing them to drive and encouraging them to work.

Authorities have also lifted a ban on women attending football stadiums and invested in developing a women's national football team. Abu Taleb has taken advantage of the newfound state backing, bagging gold at the 2020 Arab Taekwondo Championship and bronze medals at the Asian and world championships in 2022.

Earlier this year she upgraded to gold at the Asian Taekwondo Championships. She has high hopes for Paris, she told AFP at the Abha training centre, standing near a large banner bearing her picture. "From the beginning, I dreamed of being a world champion, participating in the Olympics, and winning gold," she said. To date, Saudi Arabia has won two bronze and two silver medals at the Olympics, all for men.

### 'Kill or be killed'

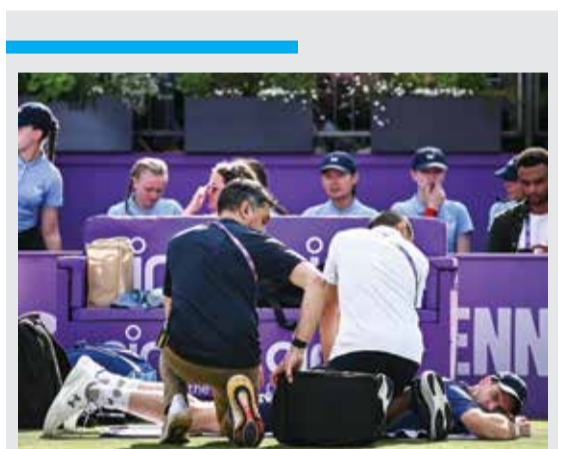
Abu Taleb's success at the Olympics would give added momentum to Saudi Arabia's campaign to rebrand itself as a sports hub. The kingdom will host the 2027 Asian Cup football tournament, the 2029 Asian Winter Games and the 2034 Asian Games, and regularly holds Formula One races and heavyweight boxing title fights.



ABHA, SAUDI ARABIA: Saudi taekwondo competitor Donya Abu Taleb attends a training camp in Abha on June 9, 2024. — AFP

Last year it also emerged as the sole bidder to host the 2034 football World Cup, and lavished more than a billion dollars on luring top footballers to the Saudi Pro League. Saudi Sports Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal told AFP in 2022 that hosting an Olympics was the government's "ultimate goal". Though she competes in a relatively low-profile event, Abu Taleb has gained officials' attention. Saudi Arabia hired Russian coach Kurban Bogdaev, who guided Tunisian Mohamed Jendoubi to silver at the Tokyo Olympics, to coach the Saudi taekwondo team.

"The first time I saw Donya, her level was low, but I saw her eager to grow and achieve," Bogdaev said, adding that he did not necessarily view her as an Olympic prospect at first. But she "trains hard, always believes in herself, and is confident in what she can do", he added. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Andy Murray receives medical treatment during his men's singles round of 16 match against Australia's Jordan Thompson at the Cinch ATP tennis Championships at Queen's Club in west London. — AFP

## Murray waits on scan after injury threatens farewell

**LONDON:** Andy Murray's hopes of bowing out from tennis at this year's Wimbledon were left in severe doubt after a back injury forced him to retire from a second-round match at Queen's on Wednesday. The British tennis great is now set to undergo a scan after lasting a mere five games against Australian Jordan Thompson.

Murray was in evident pain right from his first serve, when his right leg and hip seemed to buckle underneath him. The 37-year-old Scot had prolonged treatment after three games on his right hip—which he had replaced in 2019 -- his right knee and his lower back.

Murray briefly played on but eventually withdrew at 4-1 down, with the record five-time Queen's champion receiving sympathetic applause from spectators as he waved to a crowd that included his wife and mother.

Wimbledon is now less than a fortnight away but Murray, twice a champion on the grass of the All England Club, refused to rule out one last appearance. "During my pre-match warm-up I was pretty uncomfortable and then I walked up the stairs, just before going on the court, I didn't have the normal strength in my right leg," Murray told reporters.

The three-time Grand Slam winner added: "Then the first two balls I hit in the warm-up, my right leg, it was, like, so uncoordinated. I had no coordination. Then, yeah, my right leg just was not working properly. "In hindsight I wish I hadn't gone on there because it was pretty awkward for everyone. "There is nothing I could do, and then there is part of you that wants to go out there and see if it gets better, you know, and maybe feel better with a bit of treatment or something, but that wasn't the case." — AFP