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Kuwaitis urged to leave Lebanon

Kuwait Airways sends large planes to Beirut



EL KHIARA, Lebanon: Emergency and security service members and residents gather around the carcass of a car at the site of a Zionist airstrike in Al-Khiyara town in Lebanon's Western Bekaa area on June 22, 2024, which killed a member of the Jamaa Islamiya group. — AFP

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called on Kuwaiti citizens in Lebanon to leave as soon as possible, unless it's urgent to stay. In a statement, the Ministry called on those who are unable to leave Lebanon to contact Kuwait Embassy immediately via the embassy's emergency phone: 0096171171441. The Ministry also renewed its call to all citizens not to go to Lebanon, at the present time, in view of the security situation in the region. Kuwait Airways is operating large planes to Beirut to help Kuwaiti citizens returning home, the national carrier declared on Saturday. Coordination is proceeding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide all needed services for the Kuwaiti nationals desiring to return to Kuwait, it said.

'Another Gaza'

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Friday that fighting between Zionists and Hezbollah must not turn Lebanon into "another Gaza." Guterres cited increased "bellicose rhetoric" from both sides as they engage in nearly daily exchanges of fire across the Zionist-Lebanese border in parallel with the war in the Gaza Strip, and he said they risk triggering a catastrophe "beyond imagination." "Let's be clear: The people of the region and the people of the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza," Guterres told reporters.

As Zionist entity and Hezbollah trade cross-border fire, fears of a regional conflict are growing after the Zionist entity revealed it had approved plans for a Lebanon offensive and the Iran-backed militants vowed to blanket their foe in rockets. "The risk for the conflict in the Middle East to widen is real—and must be avoided," Guterres said. "One rash move—one miscalculation—could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border, and frankly, beyond imagination," he added. —Agencies

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ministry warns over false info

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information has urged the media and the press to abstain from publishing rumors and false information. The assistant under-secretary for the press, publishing, and printing at the Ministry, Lafi Al-Subaiee, called on all media outlets to adhere to professional norms and remain keen on credibility and national interests. Some visual, readable, and electronic outlets have recently broadcast false news about some measures taken by ministries and government departments, indicating that legal action could be taken against such offenses. The offenders will be submitted, without warning, to the information offenses committee to take legal action. — KUNA

Uganda, Sharjah ink deal

KAMPALA: Uganda has signed an agreement with Sharjah to build a second international airport near a national park in the northeast, the transport minister said. "An MoU was signed between the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and the government for the construction of Kidepo International airport in Karamoja region," Edward Katumba Wamala said. "The construction works are starting August," the minister said, without specifying the cost or the duration of the project. Uganda's presidency said in a statement Friday that the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry had also "agreed to... construct tourist hotels within Kidepo National Park to boost the tourism sector and the economy of Uganda." Tourism Minister Tom Butime told AFP that once completed, the airport would enable travellers to approach "the heart of our tourism hotspots", instead of landing at the country's only international airport at Entebbe and spending long hours on the road. — AFP

Death toll mounts as Gaza war rages

GAZA: Zionist military pounded Gaza on Saturday, a day after the International Committee of the Red Cross said 22 people were killed in shelling that damaged its office in the besieged Palestinian territory. Exchanges of fire across the Lebanese border between Zionist entity and the powerful Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah have also escalated, raising fears of an even wider war. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the cross-border hostilities must not turn Lebanon into "another Gaza", warning of the risk of a catastrophe "beyond imagination".

His warning came as Zionists stepped up strikes in the Gaza Strip. The fighting continued on Saturday, with witnesses reporting gun battles between militants and Zionist forces in Gaza City. Witnesses also reported helicopters firing at militants in the city's Zeitun neighborhood. The military said Saturday its "fighter jets struck two Hamas military infrastructure sites in the area of Gaza City". Witnesses said the strikes hit the Al-Shati camp and Draj Tufah neighborhood. They said at least four residential buildings and nearby houses were destroyed. Earlier, the military said troops had continued to carry out operations in central Gaza and that its jets had struck targets across the Palestinian territory.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Relatives mourn over the bodies of loved ones killed during Zionist bombardment in Al-Tuffah neighborhood in Gaza City on June 22, 2024. — AFP

Egypt's firms under fire over fraudulent hajj trips

CAIRO: Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly on Saturday ordered 16 tourism companies stripped off their licenses and referred their managers to the public prosecutor's office for illegally facilitating pilgrims' travel to Makkah, the Cabinet said. The order came after various countries reported more than 1,100 deaths, many attributed to high heat, during this year's hajj. Arab diplomats told

AFP earlier this week that Egyptians accounted for 658 deaths, 630 of them are unregistered pilgrims. "The prime minister has ordered the licenses of these companies to be revoked, their managers to be referred to the public prosecutor and the imposition of a fine to benefit the families of the pilgrims who died because of them," the Egyptian Cabinet said in a statement. It said the rise in the deaths of unregistered Egyptian pilgrims stemmed from some companies which "organized the hajj programs using a personal visit visa, which prevents its holders from entering Makkah" via official channels. On Friday a senior Saudi official defended the Gulf kingdom's management of the pilgrimage.

Hajj permits are allocated to countries on a quota system and distributed to individuals via a lottery. Even for those who can obtain them, the steep costs spur many pil-

grims to attempt the hajj without a permit, though they risk arrest and deportation if caught by Saudi security forces. The irregular route, which can save pilgrims thousands of dollars, has become increasingly popular since 2019 when Saudi Arabia introduced a general tourism visa which has made it easier to enter the Gulf kingdom. The senior official said the Saudi government had confirmed 577 deaths for the two busiest days of hajj.

Saturday, when pilgrims gathered for hours of prayers in the blazing sun on Mount Arafat, and Sunday, when they participated in the "stoning of the devil" ritual in Mina. "This happened amid difficult weather conditions and a very harsh temperature," the official said, while acknowledging that the 577 figure was partial and did not cover all of hajj, which formally ended on Wednesday. — AFP

Qatar tries to 'bridge gap between Hamas and Zionists'

MADRID: Qatar said it was pursuing efforts to "bridge the gap" between Zionists and Palestinian militant group Hamas to reach a ceasefire in Gaza and release hostages. The Gulf emirate, the United States and Egypt, have been engaged in months of negotiations for a ceasefire in the Zionist-Hamas war that erupted on October 7. There

has been one seven-day pause in November which led to the release of more than 100 hostages. Efforts since have been deadlocked. "We have continued our efforts without interruption over the last few days," Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told a news conference in Madrid with Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares. "There have been several meetings with the Hamas leadership to try to bridge the gap between the two parties and reach an agreement that will lead to a ceasefire and the release of hostages," he added.

The talks are based on a plan US President Joe Biden laid out on May 31 calling for Zionist withdrawal from "major population centers" in Gaza and a six week ceasefire, which could be extended if negotiators need

more time to seek a permanent deal. "Efforts are continuing, but so far we have not reached a formula that we feel is the most appropriate and closest to what has been presented," the Qatari prime minister said. "As soon as this is done, we will communicate with the (Zionist) side to try to bridge the gap and reach an agreement as quickly as possible," he added.

Qatar-based Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement that the Palestinian Islamist movement was open to "any document or initiative that ensures the foundations of the resistance's position in ceasefire negotiations". Hamas has insisted on the complete withdrawal of Zionist forces from Gaza and a permanent ceasefire before the release of all hostages. — AFP



Local

Kuwait, Arab League, OIC, MWL hail Armenia's recognition of Palestine

'Thank you Armenia! A victory for justice, legitimacy'

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared on Friday that Kuwait acclaims Armenia's official recognition of Palestine. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that it considers the recognition as a positive step that would contribute to achieving what has been stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab peace initiative as to empowering the Palestinian people to determine their destiny and establish an independent state with the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC and MWL renewed calls on the remaining states to take similar decisions and to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian cause.

Arab League

Also, the Arab League on Saturday hailed Armenia's official recognition of Palestine, describing the decision as a brave step. Secretary-General Ahmad Abulghheit said in a statement that the increasing number of states recognizing the State of Palestine reflects a conviction on the part of the international community that the occupation cannot continue. It is a significant step toward establishing the State of Palestine with the June 4, 1967, borders, he added, appealing to other nations to follow suit. Spain, Ireland, Norway, and Slovenia had already taken such a step.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Muslim World League (MWL) welcomed the Armenian government's decision. In separate statements, both organizations considered the recognition as a positive step that would contribute to achieving what has been stipulated in the

relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab peace initiative as to empowering the Palestinian people to determine their destiny and establish an independent state with the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC and MWL renewed calls on the remaining states to take similar decisions and to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian cause.

Armenia announced Friday it was recognizing the State of Palestine, the latest country to do so during the war in Gaza, saying it was against "violence towards civilian populations." A series of nations have recognized Palestine amid the war, drawing strong rebukes from Zionist officials. Shortly after the former Soviet republic announced the recognition, Zionist foreign ministry said it summoned Yerevan's ambassador for a "severe reprimand".

Yerevan noted it is "genuinely interested in establishing long-term peace and stability in the Middle East." "Confirming its commitment to international law, equality of nations, sovereignty and peaceful coexistence, the Republic of Armenia recognizes the State of Palestine," Armenia added. Yerevan, which has itself been ridden by conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan for decades, slammed Zionist military conduct in Gaza. "Armenia deplors using civilian infrastructure as shields during armed conflicts and violence towards civilian populations," Yerevan said. It also criticized Hamas for "the captivity of civilian persons" and said Armenia "joins the demands of international community on freeing them."

'Thank you Armenia'

A senior official from the Palestinian Authority, Hussein Al-Sheikh, welcomed the move. "This is a



KHAN YOUNIS: A Palestinian child walks with a stuffed bear recovered from the rubble of a destroyed building following Zionist bombardment in Khan Younis on June 21, 2024. — AFP

victory for right, justice, legitimacy and the struggle of our Palestinian people for liberation and independence," he said on social media. "Thank you our friend Armenia," added Al-Sheikh, who is also secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee. The Islamist Palestinian

movement Hamas also welcomed Yerevan's decision. "We consider this an additional and important step towards solidifying international recognition of our people's rights and their aspirations to end the occupation of their land", the movement said in a statement. — Agencies

News in Brief

MoE gets back more than KD 2m via biometric system

KUWAIT: The biometric system for staff attendance helped the Ministry of Education retrieve KD 2,086,426 that were paid illegally in the past few years, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani announced on Saturday. "Protecting public funds is on top of our priority list," he said in a statement. Dr Al-Adwani also said in a statement that these sums had been reclaimed in the last quarter of the fiscal year 2023-2024, adhering to circulars by the Ministry of Finance and the Civil Service Commission to tighten auditing on state funds. He affirmed the ministry's adherence to the financial overseeing on all transactions, and commitment to apply the bylaws equally to all personnel for sake of protecting the homeland resources. He lauded the personnel in the financial sector for their efforts that helped in slashing expenditures and speeding up the tasks. — KUNA

Social media not the place to discuss corruption cases: Minister

KUWAIT: Social media is not the right place to discuss corruption cases and ways of resolving them, Minister of Social, Childhood and Family Affairs, State Minister for Youth Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah said Saturday. All kinds of debate, whether serious or not, happen on social media, thus making it difficult to achieve positive change, the minister said in a statement. "Instead, it results in damaging the country's reputation when baseless information are posted," she added, noting that people who spread false rumors can be subjected to legal accountability. The minister urged people who have information on suspected corruption cases to present their evidence to relevant authorities and abstain from posting them on social media. — KUNA

'Control room' set up to bring Kuwaitis home from Lebanon

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Kuwait's foreign ministry is following up on the return of its citizens who are currently in Lebanon after urging them to return home 'as soon as possible', the ministry said in a statement Saturday.

Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya said in a press statement that the ministry is coordinating with Kuwait Airways to bring back any citizens who wish to return to Kuwait. The country's national carrier said in a statement Saturday it was operating large planes and increasing capacity in anticipation of Kuwaiti citizens returning home. The Kuwait Embassy in Lebanon, he said, has made the necessary preparations to facilitate the process.

Friday's advisory is an escalation of another statement released last January, where the foreign ministry urged citizens in Lebanon to "exercise caution or leave willingly to evade any potential military escalation in the area due to the continuous (Zionist) aggression on Gaza." It came as Zionist media outlet Channel 12 reported that Canada is gearing up for evacuating about 45,000 Canadian citizens currently residing in Lebanon. Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly informed her Zionist counterpart, Yisrael Katz, that Canada has already deployed military forces to the region to facilitate the evacuation process if the Zionist war was to escalate in Lebanon. On June 17, Canada updated its Lebanon's travel advisory risk level to "avoid all travel."

Call with Blinken

Kuwait's recommendation to leave Lebanon came within an hour of a foreign ministry statement reporting a phone call between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Foreign Minister Al-Yahya. "The Secretary and the Foreign Minister agreed on the need to prevent further escalation and to expand bilateral cooperation in the interest of regional peace and stability," a US spokesperson said in a press release. The two also talked about continued measures to ensure more



KHIAM: Black smoke billows following a Zionist air strike that targeted a house in the southern Lebanese village of Kham near the Lebanese-Zionist border on June 21, 2024. — AFP

humanitarian aid reaches those in need in Gaza. They also discussed plans for post-conflict governance, security, and reconstruction. The latest advisories were announced after reports by Zionist media outlets, including the news portal Walla, that Hezbollah may be planning a "pre-emptive surprise attack" against the Zionist entity. The heightened tensions follow the Zionist military's approval of operational plans earlier this week for a wide-scale attack on Lebanon.

'It's not that bad'

People on social media had mixed reactions to the advisory. Hussein Hakeem, who said he was in South Lebanon, said the situation was "not that bad". "Sure, you hear a couple of missile sounds here and there but nothing too serious," he wrote on Instagram.

Farah Al-Hashem, a Kuwaiti filmmaker living in Lebanon, downplayed the advisory, implying she and others will likely stay in Lebanon. "It's a precaution. They

do it every time there is a security threat. And every time, Kuwaitis go to Lebanon," she wrote.

Naif Al-Hajri, a Kuwaiti media personality, called on citizens in a video to stop "being stubborn" and avoid going to Lebanon. An Instagram user who goes by the handle @ratooujaa said south Lebanon was in crisis. "Maybe Beirut isn't (in crisis) but the south is and it can affect the whole country."

Lebanon has been a top destination for Kuwaitis since the 1920s, with many Kuwaitis purchasing real estate and spending summers in the small country overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Kuwait Times couldn't obtain an up-to-date official count of Kuwaitis in Lebanon, but their numbers are understood to have dwindled over the years as unstable economic and political conditions persisted in the country. Since late 2019, Lebanon has been grappling with a severe economic crisis, including a massive currency depreciation as well as fuel and medical shortages.



Al-Najat Charity Association distributes sacrificial meat to 15,000 Yemeni families as part of the campaign '10,000 sacrifices' launched in coordination with associations officially accredited by the ministries of foreign affairs.

Kuwaiti charities distribute meat to Sudanese, Yemenis

KHARTOUM: The Kuwaiti Patients Helping Fund Society, Sudan Branch, distributed meat to 60,000 people in Sudan this year, the philanthropic association announced. This year's sacrificial meat projects have been concluded after slaughtering 292 cows, 195 sheep, and 526 goats. The kilos of meat were distributed to more than 60,000 people in the states of Khartoum, Kassala, Al-Jazirah, and North

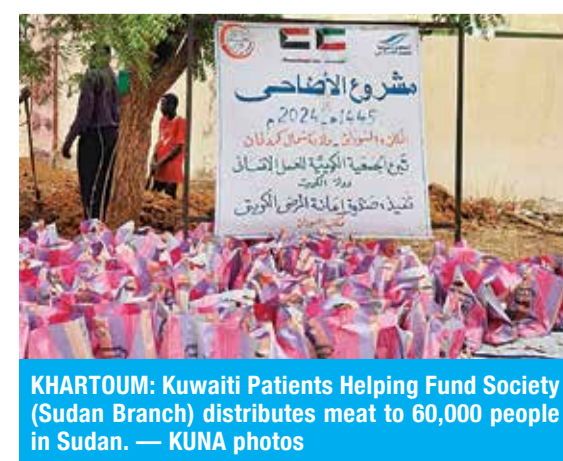
Kordofan, Dr Mohammad Ali Hajo, the director of the programs department at the association, said in a statement to KUNA.

The sacrificial meat was distributed to people dwelling at the displaced centers, the sick and injured undergoing treatment at hospitals, medical cadres, and others. Dr Abdulmajid Fadlallah, the executive manager, told KUNA that the project has been executed every year, thanking all donors in Kuwait.

In another development, the Al-Najat Charity Association announced on Saturday the distribution of sacrificial meat to 15,000 Yemeni families as part of the campaign '10,000 sacrifices' launched in coordination with associations officially accredited by the ministries of foreign affairs, namely the Yemeni charity and the Hands of Charity for Development.

Abdullah Al-Shihab, acting director general of the Al-Najat Charity Association, said that the campaign included the distribution of sacrificial meat in 10 Yemeni governorates, namely Lahj, Marib, Aden, Rima, Sanaa, Bayda, Hadhramaut, Taiz, Socotra, and Al-Mahra, explaining that about 15,000 families benefited from it.

The campaign aims to provide sacrificial meat to families. It is part of Kuwaiti humanitarian work and efforts to support poor communities and enhance the spirit of social solidarity. Through a statement issued by the association, the beneficiaries expressed their thanks and appreciation for this generous initiative. The beneficiaries thanked Kuwait, HH the Amir, the government, and the people of Kuwait for their continuous support of the Yemeni people. — KUNA



KHARTOUM: Kuwaiti Patients Helping Fund Society (Sudan Branch) distributes meat to 60,000 people in Sudan. — KUNA photos

Local

Power woes persist in Kuwait

Electrical load index peaks at 16,460 megawatts as cuts continue

KUWAIT: Malfunctions at the main power transformer in Khaldiya caused power cuts in parts of block 3 in the area Saturday, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said.

The ministry added that technicians were working on fixing the problem and restoring power as soon as possible. Several people have reported power cuts that were not announced by the ministry in different parts of the country, namely Hawally, over the weekend. Kuwait Times could not fully verify the reports.

Kuwait has been grappling with electricity shortages since Wednesday. The electricity ministry has resorted to programmed power cuts in precautionary attempts to protect the stability of the power grid. In a statement, the ministry blamed soaring temperatures, which skyrocketed to 52 degrees Celsius, for the power cuts, calling on the public to limit consumption between 11 am and 5 pm in order to ensure uninterrupted supply. Cuts last Thursday were limited to just five areas, mostly industrial, compared to over 40 residential areas on Wednesday, the ministry said on its X account. 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. As many as 63 areas could be subjected to the cuts, the ministry said.

Temperatures are expected to remain hot this week, with highs of 50 degrees Celsius, according to Kuwait's meteorological department. The electrical

load index has maintained high levels since the onset of the peak season at the start of June. On Saturday, the index peaked at 16,460 megawatts at 2 pm, according to the ministry's website.

Call to prayer unaffected

Amid concerns about power cuts, rumors circulated on social media Friday claiming that mosques would only broadcast the call to prayer for the noon and afternoon prayers due to energy conservation measures. In a statement Friday, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs quickly denied these rumors, calling them "false and unfounded". The ministry said mosques will remain open for all five prayers every day and that the call to prayer will be broadcast for all prayers as usual. The statement reiterated the ministry's commitment to both energy efficiency and upholding religious obligations, confirming that mosque doors will remain open to welcome worshippers throughout the day. The ministry urged the public to be wary of false information circulating online and to rely on official sources for news.

The Ministry of Information amplified the calls to take news from official sources Saturday. Assistant undersecretary Lafi Al-Subaiee called on all media to refrain from spreading rumors, warning that legal action could be taken against such offenses. The offenders will be submitted, without warning, to the information offenses committee to take legal action. —Agencies



KUWAIT: The moon rises behind overhead power lines as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity requested citizens to ration their electricity usage at peak times due to outages caused by the increased pressure on power stations amid soaring temperatures and heightened energy demand. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Money for marriage: Inside the world of online matchmakers

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Perhaps it's easy to assume that arranged marriage is an outdated tradition, almost forgotten in today's world where there's a lot of hype about romantic love stories and their "happily ever after" endings. However, in Kuwait, arranged marriages are not only surviving but evolving, especially with the rise of social media. The "matchmaker" or in Arabic, "Khataba" job title has found a new home on Instagram, where hundreds of matchmakers' business accounts have emerged. Once a couple going through the matchmaking process decides to get married, the online "Khataba" charges up to KD 500 from both partners. Prices vary among matchmakers and can be negotiated, some of them also request a non-refundable deposit at the beginning of the process, which can reach up to KD 20.

Om Hassan, a matchmaker in Kuwait who has matched over 1,000 couples in the past eight years, explained the nature of her job, which looked very similar to that of an HR employee searching for the best candidate for an open vacancy. She meets with the parents of single men and women, gathers all personal data about them, and receives their specific

requirements for desired partners. She then begins her search for the perfect match discreetly and confidentially, only revealing people's data with their permission. Om Hassan either reaches out to her network or posts an anonymous advertisement listing her clients' features and their requirements on her social media page.

Her role comes down to moderating the matching process, recommending suitable candidates, and introducing eligible bachelors to each other. She follows up with the couple until their families meet. If either party decides to step back for any reason, she is always ready to file a new request and connect with another individual.

Some might be lucky enough to find their perfect matches and schedule engagement dates within a week, a trend popular among the younger generation. However, older individuals, she noted, might wait up to two years to find a suitable spouse. According to her, one of the main reasons for delayed marriage among some women is their high standards, as they often seek men from well-known families, with high educational qualifications or reputable job positions. On the other hand, men's delays often stem from their search for conservative women who dress modestly.

Om Manea, another matchmaker with 16 years of experience, mentioned that most of her clients are between 20 and 40 years old, with few reaching 50 or 60. She stressed that she doesn't accept clients under 21 years old because she requires them to be mature and educated. While she prioritizes her Kuwaiti candidates, she also serves clients from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and



Algeria. Requirements vary widely, from specific physical characteristics like weight, skin tone, and height, to tribal affiliations and educational backgrounds. In many cases, she noted that appearance and reputation are essential factors that can either facilitate or hinder a potential marriage.

She believes that what gives this marriage approach edge is the ability for each person to find exactly the qualities they are seeking in a partner. Also, for those unable to find a suitable match within their families, they turn to this method to connect with someone outside their immediate circle.

However, what disappoints Om Hassan, and many other matchmakers, is when couples proceed with the matchmaking process but later report that it didn't work out, sometimes attempting to avoid paying fees as a result. To protect their rights, each matchmaker typically retains a lawyer to handle such legal matters.

Hajj mission successful due to collaborative effort: Official

JEDDAH: Cooperation between the hajj mission and Kuwaiti hajj campaigns to provide pilgrims with all their needs has contributed to the success of Kuwait's hajj plans this year, said Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and head of the Kuwaiti hajj mission Dr Bader Al-Mutairi.



Dr Bader Al-Mutairi

Mutairi pointed in a statement to the continuous and diligent follow-up of the Kuwaiti government on the mission's workers. He also praised the great efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in serving the pilgrims and its continuous development of the hajj system serve the pilgrims.

Mutairi expressed his thanks to all the employees of the Kuwaiti hajj mission for their dedication to serving the pilgrims of the State of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti hajj campaigns who devoted all their efforts to facilitate their affairs.

Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Jeddah and its permanent representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Mohammed Al-Mutairi commended the Kuwaiti pilgrims for abiding by the controls and instructions of the mission, in addition to their adherence to the plans for the movement of pilgrims between the holy sites and their performance of rituals.

Consul Al-Mutairi said he saw during his tours the Kuwaiti hajj campaigns' commitment to excellence in providing the best care for pilgrims. He expressed his sincere thanks, praise and gratitude to Kuwait's leadership in the country for their constant support and guidance to the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission in serving the pilgrims of the State of Kuwait. He also expressed his thanks to the Saudi leadership and the Saudi government for their great

The Kuwaiti Council of Ministers also praised during its weekly meeting the great efforts of the Kuwaiti hajj mission and those in charge of it, including officials, volunteers and medical cadres who exerted all efforts for Kuwaiti pilgrims to enable them to perform hajj with ease. — KUNA



MAKKAH: Pilgrims walk to Arafat in the early hours of the morning as they perform hajj in 2024. — KUNA

Unlicensed commercial activities still banned on waterfront: TEC

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Touristic Enterprises Company reiterated Saturday a ban on establishing commercial activities along the waterfront without a permit.

In a press statement, the government entity said any business, including food trucks or baqala trucks, retail shops and businesses offering bike rentals were "strictly forbidden" unless there was a valid contract with the company and the appropriate licenses were obtained from the competent official authorities. The company's premises include the area spanning the Kuwait Towers until Al-Shaab.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many mobile businesses, mostly food trucks, have set up shop in parking lots overlooking the waterfront on the Arabian Gulf Street. Since the end of the pandemic, the company has been working to regulate the practice.

People on the company's Instagram account were mostly in favor of the move. "It's the best decision because the trucks take up three parking spots and make a lot of noise," one person said.

Another asked for a mechanism to help business owners continue making money while preserving the beauty of the waterfront, suggesting that the government establishes kiosks and allows business owners to run them.



Touristic Enterprises Company had signed a contract to develop the waterfront and Blajat Beach in 2023. The 9.7-kilometer-long waterfront project will offer essential amenities for visitors, over 60 commercial and investment opportunities for local companies, various sports activities, swimming areas, a bicycle path, a jogging path, and a recreational area for children.

The aim of the waterfront development, which spans from the Yacht Club to Diyafa Village near Kuwait Towers, is to showcase the cultural and heritage

aspects of Kuwait by providing year-round leisure activities and events. The vision is to reactivate the waterfront for the public with key zones that offer national events, green sustainability elements, cultural entertainment, and lifestyle retail activities, creating distinct active spaces.

The implementation of the waterfront development project is being carried out by SSH and Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading. Phase one of the project, which redeveloped the area from Green Island to the Kuwait Towers, was complete last March.

Interconnection project to boost energy supply

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) said that the Al-Wafra power plant project, which is planned to be completed by December, will contribute to raising the capacity of the electricity grid in Kuwait to about 2,500 megawatts.

The electricity interconnection project between the GCC countries and Kuwait is one of the most important infrastructure interconnection projects to reduce the required electrical reserve in member states and provide joint coverage in emergency situations. GCC nations will benefit from the surplus thereby reducing the cost of producing electric energy.

The Wafra Station project comes within the expansion projects of the Gulf Link, as it will connect the Kuwait network with the GCC electrical interconnection through four circuits with a voltage of 400 KV sustain electric energy security. The project consists of a double-circuit antenna line from Al-Fadhli station in Saudi Arabia to Kuwait with



KUWAIT: A worksite, part of the Gulf electrical interconnection expansion project, is seen in this photo.

a length of 300 km. In addition, it will convert the existing double-circuit line between the stations. KFAED announced last May that the Gulf electrical interconnection expansion project with Kuwait has reached 75 percent of completion, and is progressing according to schedule. — KUNA



The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. — KUNA photos

Committee to begin verifying state employees' credentials

KUWAIT: The Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Adel Al-Adwani, issued a decision assigning a committee headed by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education to examine post-secondary academic certificates of all degrees for national and expat employees at the ministry.



Dr Adel Al-Adwani

The decision applies to those who graduated from outside Kuwait in or after the year 2000.

Government agencies had submitted the credentials of their employees to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) following orders from former Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The decision to establish the committee stipulates checking the validity of scientific degrees and reviewing them in accordance with the standards approved by the higher education ministry. According to the decision, the committee may form subcommittees and seek the assistance of whom-ever it deems appropriate to perform its work.

The committee will submit a periodic report every month on its work to the minister, as well as a final report on its findings to be submitted at the end of the committee's six-month term.

The higher education ministry said in a statement that this decision comes in implementation of the directives of the Council of Ministers on the importance of combating fake certificates and ensuring the validity of the educational qualifications provided by state employees.

It also aims to confirm the employees have the qualifications necessary to perform their tasks efficiently. Establishing the committee will also ensure justice and equality between all employees and job applicants.

The step also comes within the framework of the minister's commitment to take effective and serious measures in applying the law and combating any manifestations of corruption. The committee will be headed by the undersecretary of higher education and will include representatives of the ministry, the Civil Service Bureau, the Public Authority for Manpower and the Fatwa and Legislation Department. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Sprinklers spray water on people on a hot day in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NATO commends Kuwait's partnership

Kuwait participates in NATO Defense College course on cybersecurity, AI



ROME: Officials pose for a photo at the special course for ambassadors and senior officers organized by the NATO Defense College. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Deputy Secretary-General of NATO Mircea Geoana praised the State of Kuwait's hosting of the NATO Regional Center and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative countries and the support they provide to the center. This came after the end of the special course for ambassadors and senior officers organized by the NATO Defense College (NDC) in the Italian capital, Rome, which included several ambassadors, including the Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium and the head of its missions to the EU and NATO, Nawaf Al-Enezi. In a statement to KUNA, Enezi said on the conclusion of the session that NATO greatly values the partnership with Kuwait, which has extended over 20 years since Kuwait joined the Istanbul Cooperation

Initiative as the first country.

He indicated that there is existing cooperation between Kuwait and NDC through joint teaching in the fields of military sciences, training and exchange of expertise. He added that the course organized by NDC, which discussed the risks and opportunities available in the fields of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and geopolitical challenges at a global level, comes within the framework of NATO countries preparations for the upcoming NATO summit in Washington, coinciding with the seventy-fifth anniversary of establishing NATO. The upcoming NATO summit in Washington will take a decision to appoint a new Secretary-General of NATO. — KUNA

With graduation season ongoing, people reflect on meaning of success

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: For some, success is about serving and uplifting oneself or community, while for others, it's about securing financial stability and thriving in career accomplishments. These diverse interpretations stem from individual beliefs, values, and interests. Kuwait Times interviewed individuals from various backgrounds to explore their unique philosophies on this multifaceted concept.

For Safa'a, a middle-aged Arabic headteacher at one of Kuwait's private schools, success is defined by harnessing her passion to achieve financial stability. Despite societal norms that equalize success with marriage and parenthood, Safa'a challenges this notion. "Although I am not married and I do not have kids, I still believe in family, and I take care of my father. However, I find fulfillment through succeeding in my career as an Arabic headteacher, which has been my passion since my days at college. Arabic literature and poetry are where I find my purpose" she said. Unlike those who strive for success through years of hard work, Safa'a has embraced her journey with enjoyment, excelling in her profession and earning both personal and financial rewards along the way. "I am a single woman, I do not have kids, but my students are my kids," she said.

Zainab Dashti said there is no certain thing that defines success. "However, there are characteristics of a successful personality such as being open mind-



ed, continuously learning, and actualizing yourself through recognizing your own talents and capabilities. These things are what make one a successful human being regardless of their career, status, wealth or any other possessions. Also, a person who contributes to society and makes a positive difference is a successful person, no matter what kind of contribution that was. It can be something like keeping the streets clean or something like volunteering to help others who need help."

According to Mohammad Hasan, a middle-aged father of three, success means keeping peace in your family or community, not just achieving things for yourself. "It's more important to spend time and effort on your kids than anything else, in other words, invest in your kid, and keep in touch with your relatives, friends and be good to people," he said. Hasan believes in accomplishing one's duties towards society, even if nowadays people often focus more on doing their own thing and reaching personal goals.



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China, France launch satellite to better understand the universe

Arab-American mayor warns Biden has not 'earned my vote'



GAZA CITY: Palestinians transport the bodies of loved ones killed during Zionist bombardment for burial in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood on June 22, 2024. -- AFP

Zionist women rush to buy guns

549 Palestinians have been killed by settlers since Gaza war

ARIEL: With many Zionists gripped by a sense of insecurity following the unprecedented October 7 attack, the number of women applying for gun permits has soared, while feminist groups have criticized the rush to arms. According to security ministry data, there have been 42,000 applications for women for gun permits since the attack, with 18,000 approved, more than tripling the number of pre-war licenses held by women.

The surge has been enabled by the loosening of gun laws under Zionist right-wing government and its far-right security minister Itamar Ben Gvir. More than 15,000 women civilians now own a firearm in Zionist entity and the occupied West Bank, with 10,000 enrolled in mandatory training, according to the ministry. "I would have never thought of buying a weapon or getting a permit, but since October 7, things changed a little bit," political science professor Limor Gonen told AFP during a weapons handling class at a shooting range in the West Bank settlement of Ariel.

The October 7 attack that triggered the war and Zionist retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,431 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry. "We were all targeted (on October 7) and I don't want to be taken by surprise, so I'm trying to defend myself," Gonen said after the class, an obligatory step for acquiring a permit.

100,000 armed civilians

While the immediate trigger for the surge in gun buying was the Hamas attack, Ben Gvir was already pledging to reform firearms legislation when he became security minister in late 2022. He promised to raise the number of civilians holding weapons and "increase self-defense capacity". Under Ben Gvir, the process for getting a gun license has been sped up, with media reporting that in the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack the authorities were often clearing hundreds of permits per day.

Eligibility criteria for gun ownership in Zionist entity now include being a citizen or permanent resident over the age of 18, having a basic command of Hebrew and medical clearance. The full list of requirements makes it nearly impossible for non-Jews to obtain a permit. In March, Ben Gvir, who is himself a settler in the West Bank, hailed civilian weapon ownership passing the 100,000 mark, while showing off his own gun at a rally. But his rush to put deadly arms into the hands of Zionists has drawn criticism too.

The Gun Free Kitchen Tables Coalition, an initiative founded by feminist activists, condemned the civilian arms race. It is "a strategy of far-right settlers to consider the arming of women to be a feminist act", a spokesperson for the group of 18 organizations told AFP. "The increase of weapons in the civilian space leads to an increase in violence and murder against women. It's time for the state to understand that individual safety is its responsibility."

Community manager Yabel Reznik, 24, said she now felt "a lot more safe" in Ariel, which sits three kilometers north of the Palestinian city of Salfit. "Thanks to my training I will be able to defend myself and protect others" from an attack, she told AFP. Violence in the West Bank, which was already rising before the war, has surged since October 7. At least 549 Palestinians have been killed by settlers and troops across the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war, according to the Palestinian Authority.

The surge in gun ownership is not limited to West Bank settlers. In the coastal city of Netanya, just north of Tel Aviv, Corine Nissim said she never leaves home without her gun. The 42-year-old English teacher walked her three children to the park with a 9mm Smith & Wesson sticking out the back of her trousers. "After October 7, I think like most people, I realized that the only person I can trust is myself," she told AFP, adding she bought a gun not to feel "helpless". — AFP

West provoked Ukraine war, says UK far-right leader

LONDON: Nigel Farage, leader of Britain's anti-immigration Reform UK party, faced strong criticism Saturday after saying that the West provoked Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In an interview with the BBC on Friday, Farage said "we've provoked this war", while adding that "of course" it was Russian president Vladimir Putin's "fault". Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters that Farage's claim was "completely wrong and only plays into Putin's hands", likening the comments to "appeasement". Labour leader Keir Starmer, who looks set to take Sunak's job after an election next month, said Farage's comments were "disgraceful". "Anyone who is standing for parliament ought to be really clear that Russia is the aggressor", he told reporters on the campaign trail.

Farage—a former European Union parliamentarian who has tried and failed to run for the UK parliament seven times—is seeking a seat from Clacton in east England in a general election next month.

His party is polling third behind the ruling Conservatives and opposition Labour parties, and is predicted to pick up a few seats. A surge of popularity for Reform UK since Farage took over as leader this month risks drawing away votes that the Conservatives sorely need to win a fifth term in power.

Farage's comments met with outrage across political parties on Saturday. Interior minister James Cleverly criticised Farage for "echoing Putin's vile justification for the brutal invasion of Ukraine."

Former Conservative defense minister Tobias Ellwood called the comments "shocking" in the Daily Telegraph newspaper, adding that British wartime leader Winston Churchill "will be turning in his grave". Labour's defense spokesman John Healey called the comments "disgraceful" and said his stance made him "unfit for any political office in our country".

The opposition Liberal Democrat party leader Ed Davey adding that he did not "share any values" with Farage. Probed on his views on Putin in the interview, Farage said that he "disliked him as a person" but "admired him as a political operator because he's managed to take control of running Russia".

Russian media, however, was more enthusiastic about Farage's interview. A newsreader on the Channel One Russian state media said on broadcast that



BLACKPOOL: Leader of Reform UK Nigel Farage delivers a speech at a hotel in Blackpool, northwestern England, on June 20, 2024, in the build-up to the UK general election on July 4. — AFP

Farage was "an experienced politician who follows the moods of the electorate". The channel added on Twitter that he was among the European politicians "showing enlightenment and sanity". Kremlin propagandist and show host Olga Skabeyeva wrote on Telegram: "we provoked the war in Ukraine" - the leader of the Reform UK is trying to win the votes of those English people who do not want to go to war with Ukraine".

UK party leaders have largely maintained a united stance on the Ukraine war, condemning Russia as the aggressor and backing NATO's response.

In his rebuke, Starmer added that "parliament has spoken with one voice on this since the beginning of the conflict." A former Brexit figurehead, Farage is close to former US president Donald Trump, who has said he gets along with Putin "great".

Farage also stood by claims that Sunak, the first UK prime minister of colour, does not "understand our culture", in response to Sunak leaving D-Day commemorations in France early. He clarified in the interview that he meant Sunak was "too upper class". Farage's comments on Sunak—first made in a political debate—had previously drawn criticism, with one Tory minister saying they made him "very uncomfortable". Farage has already spoken about his intention to run for prime minister in 2029 during the campaign. His Reform UK party briefly overtook the Tories in a YouGov poll last week before returning to third place, with both parties trailing Labour.—AFP

Italy shipwreck toll at 34 as more bodies found

ROME: Italy's coastguard said Friday it had found another 14 bodies after a migrant shipwreck off the southern coast earlier this week, taking the confirmed death toll to 34. More than 60 people had been reported missing after the sailing boat sank off the coast of Calabria overnight Sunday-Monday, with 11 people rescued. "Today 14 bodies were recovered.. a total of 34 bodies have been recovered," the coastguard said in a statement.

It said air and sea searches continued for the missing. The coastguard had on Thursday reported another 12 bodies had been found, including women and children. Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said earlier this week that survivors had reported 66 people missing, including at least 26 children. They had set off from Turkey and sank around 120 nautical miles off the coast of Calabria. Afghan families were among the missing, MSF said. Ten bodies were found in a separate shipwrecked migrant boat on Monday off the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to German aid group ResQship. Some 3,155 migrants died or disappeared in the Mediterranean last year, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration. More than 1,000 have died or are missing so far this year. The Central Mediterranean—the area between North Africa and Italy and Malta—is the deadliest known migration route in the world, accounting for 80 percent of the deaths and disappearances in the Mediterranean. —AFP



ISTANBUL: People hold placards bearing portraits of Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi, who is arrested in Iran. — AFP

Iran court overturns rapper Salehi's death sentence

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme court has overturned a death sentence against popular rapper Toomaj Salehi who was jailed for backing nationwide protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death, his lawyer said Saturday. "Salehi's death sentence was overturned," the rapper's lawyer Amir Raisian said in a post on X, adding that the Islamic republic's top court had ordered a retrial.

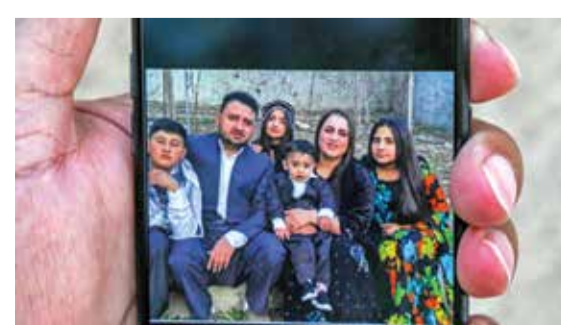
In April, an Iranian sentenced Salehi to death on the capital offence of "corruption on earth", Raisian said at the time. The rapper was also found guilty of "assistance in sedition, assembly and collusion, propaganda against the state and calling for riots", the lawyer said.

Salehi, 33, was arrested in October 2022 after publicly backing demonstrations which had erupted a month earlier, triggered by Amini's death in police custody.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, had been detained by the morality police in Tehran over an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress rules for women. "The Supreme Court prevented an irreparable judicial error," Raisian said. The months-long protests sparked by Amini's death saw hundreds of people killed, including dozens of security personnel.

Thousands were arrested as authorities moved to quell what they branded foreign-instigated "riots".

Nine men have been executed in protest-related cases involving killings and other violence against security forces. Covering the neck and head has been compulsory for women in Iran since 1983, following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Since the strict dress code but Iranian police have in recent months toughened controls on women who ignore the rules.—AFP



A person holds a phone showing a picture of members of an Iraqi Kurdish family who died at sea in a migrant boat off the southern coast of Italy, during a memorial service for them in Arbil. — AFP

International

Arab-American mayor warns Biden has not 'earned my vote'

Hammoud in spotlight for his criticism of Biden over support to Zionist entity

DEARBORN, US: Abdullah Hammoud's election as the first Muslim mayor of Dearborn was a watershed moment for this city, an automaking hub home to the highest concentration of Arab-Americans in the United States. But while his early focus was on upgrading sewer infrastructure and investing in parks, he has now been thrust into the national spotlight for his outspoken criticism of fellow Democrat Joe Biden, over the president's support for Zionist entity's military offensive in Gaza.

"I'll be the first to say that we don't want to see (Donald) Trump reelected to the White House," Hammoud told AFP in an interview. "But people want to be inspired to come out."

Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit famous as the birthplace of Henry Ford and home of the Ford Motor Company's headquarters, has a population of around 110,000 residents, of whom 55 percent claim Middle Eastern or North African heritage. In 2020, Dearborn voters overwhelmingly supported Biden and their ballots could tip the scales in Michigan—a crucial swing state that may ultimately decide the White House winner in November's election.

Hammoud's profile surged in January after he declined an invitation to meet with Biden campaign officials seeking to shore up the Muslim vote. Since then, he helped galvanize a movement that saw over 100,000 voters mark "uncommitted" in Michigan's Democratic primary in protest against Biden's policy on Zionist en-



DEARBORN: Dearborn Mayor Abdullah H Hammoud speaks during an interview in his office in Dearborn, Michigan. — AFP

ty, and was asked by Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein if he would be her running mate.

Hammoud, who won't meet the Constitutional requirement of being 35 until next March, was too young to accept the role, though he said the offer was "very humbling."

Besides, he remains unsure about how he'll cast his ballot. "I would say that no presidential candidate has earned my vote," said the father-of-two, urging both parties to pay attention to increasing public disapproval of Zionist entity's actions. "If you look at all the polling data that's emerging across the country, from

coast to coast, the issues that we have been advocating for, fighting for... are issues that have popular support." These demands include a permanent ceasefire as the pathway to provide safe harbor for all hostages and prisoners, unfettered access to humanitarian aid, and ending the supply of weapons to Zionist entity.

The son of Lebanese immigrants, Hammoud grew up in a "working poor" blue collar family. His father drove a truck while his mother's father worked on an auto factory assembly line.

He was drawn towards the Democratic Party for its support of the labor movement, and equally repelled by Republicans, whom he says have a history of "demonizing Arab Americans, Muslim Americans and other people of color." Hammoud's first dream was to become a physician, but he wasn't able to get the grades. He instead trained as an epidemiologist and began climbing the corporate ladder as a health-care executive.

But the sudden death of his beloved elder brother—Hammoud was the second of five children—made him re-evaluate his priorities, and in 2016 he won election to the state legislature.

Then in 2022, he became the second in a trio of new Muslim mayors in the southeast Michigan cities of Dearborn, Dearborn Heights and Hamtramck.

Hammoud immediately set to work righting historical wrongs. For decades, the city had been marred by a reputation for racism, exemplified by

the openly segregationist policies of former mayor Orville Hubbard. Hammoud appointed the city's first Arab-American police chief, which led to a drastic drop in tickets issued to Black drivers within a year, according to his spokesman.

Until the war in Gaza, triggered by Hamas's attacks and hostage taking on October 7, 2023, Hammoud considered Biden a "transformative" president, but now believes "the genocide outweighs the impact of that domestic policy." Hammoud sidesteps the question of whether he could ultimately endorse Biden under the right circumstances, emphasizing that whatever he might say, it's too late for some of his constituents who have lost dozens of relatives to Zionist entity bombs. He has no doubt that Trump, who imposed a Muslim travel ban during his tenure, would be an utter disaster—citing the Republican's arming of Saudi Arabia against Yemen, backing of Zionist entity settlements in the West Bank, and shifting the US embassy to Jerusalem. But Hammoud recoils at suggestions that members of his community would be to blame for potentially paving the way for Trump's return by withholding their support for Biden. Asked how he would respond to this criticism, Hammoud said: "The question should be asked of President Joe Biden—what will he do to prevent Trump being reelected come this November? What will he do to help prevent the unraveling of American democracy and the fabric of our society?" — AFP

Argentina's Milei makes new attack on Spanish PM

MADRID: Argentina's populist President Javier Milei on Friday renewed his attack on socialist Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez during a visit to Madrid to receive an award from a right-wing institute. Milei's last visit to Spain last month sparked a diplomatic row that saw Madrid withdraw its ambassador to Argentina after the president said Sanchez had "a corrupt wife".

Ahead of his latest visit, Spain earlier this week urged Milei "to show respect at all times for the institutions of this country and for the Spanish people".

The self-declared "anarcho-capitalist" Milei travelled to Madrid to receive an award from the neo-liberal Juan de Mariana Institute for his "exemplary defense of the ideas of freedom". He also met with Isabel Diaz Ayuso, a hard-right politician and regional president of Madrid who also presented Milei with an honorary medal.

Accepting the medal, Milei lashed out at socialism, which generates "poverty" and "is based on jealousy, on hatred, on resentment, on unequal treatment before the law". He also berated economist Sanchez who "evidently, despite having studied economics, either he didn't understand it or he loves the state". Milei warned Spaniards about the "risk you have before you".

"Don't let socialism ruin your lives," he added. Ayuso thanked Milei for his visit and praised inflation-ravaged Argentina for "coming back strongly" under his leadership and policies that "sound like fresh air in the whole American continent, but also in Europe". Milei's austerity measures since taking office in December have seen inflation slow but economic activity has plummeted while poverty and unemployment have risen.

The government slammed Ayuso, a vocal critic of Sanchez, for hosting Milei, who once again met neither the prime minister nor King Felipe VI on his visit. "You can very clearly see what is (Ayuso's) concept of institutional loyalty and patriotism," government spokeswoman Pilar Aegria told the Antena 3 television channel.

Milei is to travel this weekend to Germany to meet Chancellor Olaf Scholz, although he will not be afforded any special honours and no press conference will be held after the talks. — AFP

Russia launches new attack on Ukraine power network

KYIV: Ukraine on Saturday said Russia had launched a "massive" overnight attack on energy infrastructure in the west and south, adding that at least seven people died from Moscow strikes elsewhere. Russia launched 16 cruise missiles from land, sea and air as well as 13 attack drones, aiming at energy infrastructure in several regions, Ukraine's military said.

Air defenses downed all but four of them, it added. Russia's defense ministry said that its troops "carried out a group strike with long-range high-precision weaponry from air and sea and also drones on Ukrainian energy facilities that power arms production".

It said it also targeted warehouses containing munitions and "air-launched weapons provided to the Ukrainian military by western countries". "All the set targets were hit," the ministry said, calling its latest attacks retaliation for Ukrainian attacks on its own energy network.

The Ukrainian energy ministry said this was Russia's "eighth massive, combined attack on energy infrastructure facilities" in the past three months, targeting the southern Zaporizhzhia region and Lviv in the west. "Equipment at (operator) Ukrenergo facilities in the Zaporizhzhia and Lviv regions was damaged," the ministry said.

Ukrenergo said that two employees were wounded and hospitalized in Zaporizhzhia, where Europe's biggest nuclear plant is located. More than two years into the Russian invasion, targeted missile and drone attacks have crippled Ukraine's electricity generation capacity and forced Kyiv to impose blackouts and import supplies from the European Union.

Ukrenergo said outages across the country would start earlier than usual Saturday, running from 1100 GMT to 2100 GMT, due to damage from the attacks. In Zaporizhzhia, shelling over the last day also killed one civilian and destroyed residential buildings and infrastructure, according to the regional military administration. Russia controls a part of the region and the nuclear plant. The Russian-appointed administration said Ukrainian attacks had damaged a substation linked to the city's nuclear power plant but did not affect nuclear safety.

Maksym Kozlytskyi, the governor of the western



A Ukrainian serviceman hugs his partner, who visited him during a short break from his frontline duty, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, at the train station in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, June 21, 2024. — Reuters

Lviv region, said Russia "launched a missile attack on a critical energy infrastructure facility", sparking a fire that was later extinguished.

Ukrainian troops based in the west shot down seven out of 10 cruise missiles fired by Moscow, the Lviv regional governor said. Russian attacks have destroyed half of Ukraine's energy capacity, according to President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Zelensky said this week that all hospitals and schools in Ukraine must be equipped with solar panels "as soon as possible". "We are doing everything to ensure that Russian attempts to blackmail us on heat and electricity fail," he said Thursday.

DTEK, the largest private energy company in Ukraine, said Thursday that strikes caused "serious damage" at one of its plants. DTEK chief executive Maxim Timchenko warned that Ukraine "faces a serious crisis this winter" if the country's Western allies do not provide military aid to defend the energy network. Zelensky has repeatedly urged Ukraine's allies to send more air-defense systems to protect the country's vital infrastructure.

Front-line clashes were ongoing Saturday in the area near the town of Pokrovsk, northwest of the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk, where Moscow is trying to break through Ukraine's defenses, Kyiv's military said. Russia's defense ministry said troops had improved positions in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions and northeastern Kharkiv region.

Five civilians were killed by Russian shelling in frontline areas of the Donetsk region, the head of the region, Vadym Filashkin said. In the southern Kherson region, a policeman manning a checkpoint was killed by a drone, Ukraine's national police force said. Russia's defense ministry said it had hit 340 Ukrainian targets over the past day. The head of Russian authorities in the Donetsk region, Denis Pushilin, said the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk and the nearby town of Gorlivka had come under heavy attack from Ukraine. Three men working for a construction firm were killed by a rocket-releasing cluster munitions, he said. — AFP

Death toll mounts as Gaza war...

Continued from Page 1

The ICRC said late Friday 22 dead and 45 wounded people were taken to a Red Cross field hospital after shelling with "heavy caliber projectiles" near its office in southern Gaza. "Firing so dangerously close to humanitarian structures puts the lives of civilians and humanitarian workers at risk," the ICRC said on X. The Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory blamed the shelling on Zionists, saying 25 were killed and 50 wounded in the southern coastal Al-Mawasi area, where thousands of displaced have been sheltering in tents.

A military spokesman did not elaborate on the incident but said it was "under review". In the territory's north, Gaza City's Al-Ahli hospital director Dr Fadel Naeem was quoted by the health ministry as reporting 30 dead in strikes on "a difficult and brutal day" Friday. Lebanon-based Hamas ally Hezbollah meanwhile claimed a number of attacks on Zionist troops and positions near the border on Friday, including two using drones. Zionist entity said it had carried out multiple retaliatory strikes.

Jets on Friday hit a "Hezbollah military structure in the area of Khiam, a Hezbollah military post in the area of Mais Al-Jabal, and Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure in the areas of Taybeh and Tallouseh in southern Lebanon", an army statement said. Experts are divided on the prospect of a wider war, almost nine months into Zionist campaign to eradicate Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Amid the escalating exchanges with Hezbollah, military said Tuesday that plans for an offensive in

Lebanon had been "approved and validated". Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said "no place" in Zionist entity would "be spared our rockets" in a wider war, and also threatened nearby European Union member Cyprus. Citing "bellicose rhetoric" on both sides, Guterres warned Friday that the risk of all-out war was real. "One rash move - one miscalculation - could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border, and frankly, beyond imagination," he said.

'Nothing left'

The violence on the Lebanon border began after the October 7 attack. Zionist retaliatory offensive had killed at least 37,551 people, also mostly civilians, Gaza's health ministry said on Saturday, reporting at least 120 deaths over the past 48 hours. Months of negotiations towards a truce and a hostage release have failed to make headway, but mediator Qatar insisted Friday it was still working to "bridge the gap" between Zionists and Hamas. The war has destroyed much of Gaza's infrastructure and left residents short of food, fuel and other essentials. On June 16 the army said it would implement a daily "tactical pause of military activity" in a southern Gaza corridor to facilitate aid delivery.

But on Friday Richard Peepker of the World Health Organization said "we did not see an impact on the humanitarian supplies coming in". "We don't see any aid," said Umm Mohammad Zamlat, 66, from northern Gaza but now living in Khan Yunis in the south. "Even agencies specialized in aid deliveries are not able to provide anything to us," she added. Doctor Thanos Gargavanis, a WHO trauma surgeon and emergency officer, said Friday the UN in Gaza was trying to "operate in an unworkable environment". According to the WHO, 17 of the 36 hospitals in Gaza are operational, but only partially. — AFP

Turkey wildfire kills 12 and devastates flocks

CINAR, Turkey: A huge wildfire killed 12 people and injured more than 75 as it ripped through Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, the health minister said on Friday. Hundreds of animals have perished in the blaze that roared across the dry landscape. The fire has left huge areas of charred and blackened land between the cities of Diyarbakir and Mardin, near the border with Syria. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said 12 people had died and 78 people suffered injuries and smoke inhalation. Five people were being treated in intensive care, he said.

Turkey's pro-Kurdish DEM party, which won many municipalities in the southeast in local elections in March, criticized the government's intervention as "late and insufficient". As the fire spread during the night, the DEM had urged the government to send water bombers, saying fighting the blaze from the ground was "not enough". The fire started on Thursday and quickly threatened five villages. A new blaze broke out on Friday near the village of Ergani but was brought under control, an AFP correspondent witnessed.

An AFP reporter in Diyarbakir province saw around 100 animals lying dead on the ground in the village of Koksalan. Residents told AFP around half their flock of about 1,000 sheep and goats had perished.

A local vet, who did not want to give his name, confirmed the deaths and said many of those that survived were being treated for burns.

"We don't have very clear information on how many

animals have been affected," the vet told AFP TV.

"But at the moment, just under half of the survivors will have to be slaughtered because they can't be saved." Seracettin Bedirhanoglu, a member of the opposition CHP party and leader of the eastern Van province, described the images as "unbearable", urging vets to go to the area to help treat the wounded animals. "They are defenseless and helpless... In every big fire, they get hurt first. I ask my veterinarian brothers and sisters: please go to the fire zone because they need you," he wrote on X.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya blamed the fire on "stubble burning" which started late on Thursday and spread quickly in strong winds, affecting five villages. Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said on the X platform that the public prosecutor's office had opened a probe into the cause of the fire.

Turkey has suffered 74 wildfires so far this year, which have ravaged 12,910 hectares (31,900 acres) of land, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). In the summer of 2021, Turkey suffered major wildfires that claimed nine lives and destroyed huge swathes of forested land across its Mediterranean and Aegean coasts. The disaster prompted a political crisis after it emerged that Turkey had no functioning firefighting aeroplanes. It heaped pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was forced to accept international help.

It also prompted the government to push through Turkey's ratification of the Paris Climate Accord, becoming the last of the Group of 20 major economies to do so. Experts say human-driven climate change is causing more frequent and more intense wildfires and other natural disasters and have warned Turkey to take measures to tackle the problem. — AFP

International

China, France launch satellite to better understand the universe

SVOM satellite to seek out gamma-ray bursts

XICHANG, China: A French-Chinese satellite blasted off Saturday on a hunt for the mightiest explosions in the universe, in a notable example of co-operation between a Western power and the Asian giant. Developed by engineers from both countries, the Space Variable Objects Monitor (SVOM) will seek out gamma-ray bursts, the light from which has travelled billions of light years to reach Earth.

The 930-kilogram satellite carrying four instruments—two French, two Chinese—took off around 3:00 pm (0700 GMT) aboard a Chinese Long March 2-C rocket from a space base in Xichang, in the southwestern province of Sichuan. AFP journalists witnessed. Gamma-ray bursts generally occur after the explosion of huge stars—those more than 20 times as big as the sun—or the fusion of compact stars.

The extremely bright cosmic beams can give off a blast of energy equivalent to over a billion suns. Observing them is like “looking back in time, as the light from these objects takes a long time to reach us”, Ore Gottlieb, an astrophysicist at the Flatiron Institute’s Center for Astrophysics in New York, told AFP.

The rays carry traces of the gas clouds and galaxies they pass through on their journey through space—valuable data for better understanding the history and evolution of the universe. “SVOM has the potential to unravel several mysteries in the field of (gamma-ray bursts), including detecting the most distant GRBs in the universe, which correspond to the earliest GRBs,” Gottlieb said.

The most distant bursts identified to date were produced just 630 million years after the Big Bang—when the universe was in its infancy.

“We are... interested in gamma-ray bursts for their own sake, because they are very extreme cosmic explosions which allow us to better understand the death of certain stars,” said Frederic Daigne, an astrophysicist at the Institut d’Astrophysique de Paris. “All of this data makes it possible to test the laws of physics with phenomena that are impossible to reproduce in the laboratory on Earth.”

Once analyzed, the data could help to better understand the composition of space, the dynamics of gas clouds or other galaxies. The project stems from a partnership between the French and Chinese space agencies as well as other scientific and technical groups from both nations.

Space cooperation at this level between the West and China is fairly uncommon, especially since the United States banned all collaboration between NASA and Beijing in 2011.

“US concerns on technology transfer have inhibited US allies from collaborating with the Chinese very much, but it does happen occasionally,” said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in the United States. In 2018, China and France jointly launched CFOSAT, an oceanographic satellite mainly used in marine meteorology.

And several European countries have taken part in China’s lunar exploration program. So while SVOM is “by no means unique”, it remains “significant” in the context of space collaboration between China and the West, said McDowell. Once in orbit 625 kilometers (388 miles) above the Earth, the satellite will send its data back to observatories.



XICHANG: A Long March 2-C rocket carrying a satellite jointly developed by China and France dubbed the Space Variable Objects Monitor (SVOM), lifts off from a space base in Xichang, in China’s southwestern Sichuan province on June 22, 2024. — AFP

The main challenge is that gamma-ray bursts are extremely brief, leaving scientists in a race against time to gather information.

Once it detects a burst, SVOM will send an alert to a team on duty around the clock. Within five minutes, they will have to rev up a network of telescopes on the ground that will align precisely with the axis of the burst’s source to make more detailed observations. — AFP

NASA faces \$80,000 claim after debris hit family home

WASHINGTON: An American family is claiming more than \$80,000 from NASA after a small piece of debris fell from space and smashed through the roof of their Florida home, a law firm said Friday.

The problem of space trash has risen in tandem with increased spatial traffic, and NASA’s response could set a precedent for how future claims are handled, law firm Cranfill Sumner said in a statement.

On March 8, the object weighing just 700 grams hit Alejandro Otero’s home in Naples, Florida, making a hole in the roof. NASA later confirmed it was part of a cargo pallet of used batteries that was released from the International Space Station as waste in 2021.

Instead of fully disintegrating before falling to Earth, a section remained intact when it reentered the atmosphere, the US space agency said. Otero’s son was at the house at the moment of impact, according to the law firm, which said that NASA has six months to respond to its claim. “My clients are seeking adequate compensation to account for the stress and impact that this event had on their lives,” said lawyer Mica Nguyen Worthly. “They are grateful that no one sustained physical injuries from this incident, but a ‘near miss’ situation such as this could have been catastrophic. “There could have been serious injury or a fatality.” NASA did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for a comment. — AFP



The Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier is anchored in Busan, South Korea, June 22, 2024. — AFP

US aircraft carrier arrives in S Korea for military drills

SEOUL: A US aircraft carrier arrived in South Korea on Saturday for a joint military drills aimed to better counter North Korean threats, Seoul’s navy said.

The announcement came a day after South Korea summoned the Russian ambassador to Seoul to protest a defense deal signed by President Vladimir Putin and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang this week, which included a pledge to come to each other’s aid if attacked. “The US Navy’s aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt... arrived at the Busan Naval Base on the morning of June 22,” the South Korean Navy said in a statement.

Its arrival “demonstrates the strong combined defense posture of the South Korea-US alliance and their firm resolve to respond to the escalating threats from North Korea,” it added. The carrier’s visit comes around seven months after another US aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, came to the South in a show of strength against Pyongyang. The USS Theodore Roosevelt is expected to participate in joint exercises with South Korea and Japan this month. Pyongyang has always decried similar combined drills as rehearsals for an invasion.

The United States, South Korea and Japan have expanded their joint training exercises and heightened the visibility of strategic US military assets in the region to deter the North, which has declared itself an “irreversible” nuclear weapons power.



Robert Winnett

Washington Post, informed the newspaper’s editorial staff of Winnett’s decision “with regret,” according to the daily, which is owned by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

Lewis had tapped Winnett, a former colleague in Britain, to drastically remake the once-powerful Post, which is suffering heavy financial losses and bleeding readership. Winnett’s withdrawal followed a Washington Post article alleging that, while working for the Sunday Times, he had hired an actor to obtain confidential information.

The actor reportedly used false identities and de-

ceived potential sources to gather information. Winnett has not commented on the accusations. The actor, John Ford, also implicated Lewis among his contacts. The New York Times separately reported that in 2004, Lewis, then a business editor, had asked a Sunday Times journalist to write an article based on illegally obtained telephone recordings. According to the Times, Lewis also attempted to discourage several US-based journalists, including those at The Washington Post, from covering a UK legal case in which he was involved.

He is alleged to have helped to conceal evidence of fraudulent practices, including illegal phone tapping, within Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp group. Lewis, who assumed his position in January, reportedly pressured the Post’s previous editor-in-chief, Sally Buzbee, who unexpectedly stepped down this month, paving the way for Winnett’s appointment. — AFP

The carrier arrived a day after Seoul said it had fired warning shots when North Korean soldiers briefly crossed the heavily fortified border in the third such incursion this month. North Korean soldiers have recently been engaged in activities such as laying more landmines, reinforcing tactical roads and adding what seemed to be anti-tank barriers near the border, according to the South Korean military.

The two Koreas have also been locked in a tit-for-tat “balloon war”, with an activist in the South confirming Friday that he had floated more balloons carrying propaganda north. Pyongyang has already sent more than a thousand balloons carrying trash southward, and Kim’s powerful sister Kim Yo Jong warned on Friday the North is likely to retaliate.

The leaders of the three countries agreed at a summit last August to hold annual military training drills as they sought to project unity in the face of China’s growing power and nuclear threats from North Korea. This month’s drills, called “Freedom Edge”, will involve the three countries’ navies and include maritime, anti-submarine warfare exercises and air defense exercises, said US Rear Admiral Christopher Alexander, commander of the Carrier Strike Group Nine.

“The intent is to improve the interoperability between our navies and ensure that we are ready to respond to any crisis or contingency,” he told a press conference, saying the Theodore Roosevelt would serve as the command ship for the drills. Last year, the three countries also staged joint naval missile defense and anti-submarine exercises to improve responses to North Korean threats.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited North Korea this week for the first time in 24 years and signed a deal with leader Kim Jong Un that included a mutual defense pledge. — Agencies

News in brief

Three Ugandan legislators charged with graft offences

KAMPALA: Three Ugandan legislators have been charged with corruption-related offences, according to a charge sheet seen by Reuters on Saturday, as President Yoweri Museveni’s government widens its crackdown on rampant graft among lawmakers. MPs Michael Mawanda Maranga, Ignatius Wamakuyu Mudimi and Paul Akamba appeared in court late on Friday and were charged with “diversion of public resources,” the charge sheet said. They are all members of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. All three pleaded not guilty and were remanded to prison. Stealing and misuse of government funds is widespread in the east African country and critics have long accused Museveni of turning a blind eye to corruption by top officials, who are politically loyal to him and his ruling party. — Reuters

Six feared dead in landslides in China’s Fujian province

SHANGHAI: Six people have been found with no signs of life after going missing a week ago during landslides caused by heavy rainfall in China’s southeastern province of Fujian, state television CCTV reported on Saturday. Rescue workers found them after extensive searches since losing contact with the victims on Sunday, CCTV said. Unusually heavy rains have hit southern China after an early start to the annual flooding season. The death toll reached 38 on Friday in Meizhou city in China’s southern Guangdong province, where downpours led to flash floods and mudslides that destroyed thousands of low-rise houses and damaged roads and crops, CCTV said. — Reuters

Thai PM Srettha defends frequent overseas travel

BANGKOK: Thailand’s Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin defended his frequent globe-trotting during his first 10 months as leader of the Southeast Asian nation, in remarks aired in a television broadcast on Saturday. A real estate tycoon and political newcomer who became prime minister in August last year, Srettha made 15 overseas visits and pledged a two-month halt in March in response to public criticism. “Some of these visits are not avoidable,” he said, referring to those for official meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as to China and Japan, while a third was to Sri Lanka to sign a free trade pact. — Reuters

Merchant vessel reports explosion off Yemen’s Aden

ADEN: A merchant vessel reported an explosion in its vicinity 126 nautical miles east of Yemen’s port city of Aden, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said late on Friday. “The crew are reported safe and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call,” UKMTO said in an advisory note, without identifying the vessel. The Yemeni Houthi group has been launching drone and missile strikes in the key waterway since November in what it says is solidarity with Palestinian militants in Gaza. In over 70 attacks, the group has sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers. — Reuters

Watchman found dead in Paris hotel after robbery bid

PARIS: The body of a night watchman was found bound and battered in a Paris hotel after an attempt to steal a safe filled with cash, a police source said Saturday. Officers were called at around 11:30 pm (2130 GMT) on Friday to a street in the city’s 11th district, where the police source said a safe was found abandoned. Inside a nearby hotel, they found the body of the night watchman “lying on his bed, tied up and with multiple bruises,” the source added. A witness reported seeing four men wearing balaclavas trying to load the safe into a van at around 9:30 pm, before giving up and fleeing in the vehicle. The safe “contained the hotel’s whole month of revenue,” the police source said. — AFP

Death toll rises to 54 in India’s liquor tragedy

NEW DELHI: The death toll has climbed to 54 from consumption of tainted liquor in India’s southern state of Tamil Nadu, with more than 100 people still in hospital, a government official said on Saturday. Nearly 200 people have been treated since Wednesday for vomiting, stomach aches and diarrhoea, after drinking liquor spiked with methanol in the district of Kallakurichi, about 250 km (150 miles) from Chennai, the state capital. Law enforcement officials investigating the incident have arrested seven people, said MS Prasanth, a senior district official, adding that follow-up action was being taken against liquor sellers and brewers in the district.

Deaths from illegally produced alcohol, often called country liquor, are a regular occurrence in India, where few can afford branded spirits, despite public demands for a crackdown on the vendors. The state government said it was taking steps to identify those involved in production of methanol, a toxic chemical normally used for industrial purposes. — Reuters

British journalist not to take top job in Washington Post

WASHINGTON: British journalist Robert Winnett will not become editor-in-chief of The Washington Post, the daily said on Friday, a decision taken against a backdrop of disputes over editorial practice.

Winnett currently serves as deputy editor of the Telegraph Media Group, which oversees the London-based Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph. Will Lewis, the managing director and publisher of The

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2024

EU tariffs on China not a 'punishment': Germany

Beijing warns escalating frictions with EU over EVs could trigger trade war



Customers select tomatoes at a stall inside a morning market in Beijing, China. — Reuters photos

BEIJING: Proposed European Union tariffs on Chinese goods are not a "punishment", Germany's Economy Minister Robert Habeck told Chinese officials in Beijing on Saturday. Habeck's visit to China is the first by a senior European official since Brussels proposed hefty duties on imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) to combat what the EU considers excessive subsidies. China warned on Friday ahead of his arrival that escalating frictions with the EU over EVs could trigger a trade war. "It is important to understand that these are not punitive tariffs," Habeck said in the first plenary session of a climate and transformation dialogue.

Countries such as the US, Brazil and Turkey had used punitive tariffs, but not the EU, the economy minister said. "Europe does things differently," Habeck said that for nine months, the European Commission had examined in great detail whether Chinese companies had benefited unfairly from subsidies. Any countervailing duty measure that results from the EU review "is not a punishment", he said, adding that such measures were meant to compensate for the advantages granted to Chinese companies by Beijing.

"The European Union could trigger a 'trade war' if it continues to escalate tensions, China's commerce



SHANGHAI: Vice Chancellor and German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck speaks during a press conference in Shanghai, China, June 22, 2024.

ministry said on Friday, accusing the bloc of foul play during its eight-month anti-subsidy probe into Chinese electric vehicles. Last week, the European Commission proposed tariffs of up to 38.1 percent on electric vehicle imports from China despite Beijing's protest, plunging trade ties to a new low and risking punitive retaliatory action.

"The European side continues to escalate trade frictions and could trigger a 'trade war'," a statement attributed to the commerce ministry's spokesperson said. "The responsibility lies entirely with the European side." "Common, equal standards for market access should be achieved," Habeck said. Meeting Zheng Shanjie, chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission, Habeck said the proposed EU tariffs were intended to level the playing field with China.

Zheng responded: "We will do everything to protect Chinese companies." Proposed EU import duties on Chinese-made EVs would hurt both sides, Zheng added. He told Habeck he hoped Germany would demonstrate leadership within the EU and "do the correct thing". He also denied the accusations of unfair subsidies, saying the development of China's new energy industry was the result of comprehensive advantages in technology, market and industry chains, fostered in fierce competition.

"The industry growth "is the result of competition, rather than subsidies, let alone unfair competition," Zheng said during the meeting. The EU provisional duties are set to apply by July 4, with the investigation set to continue until Nov 2, when definitive

duties, typically for five years, could be imposed. Habeck told Chinese officials the conclusions of the EU report should be discussed.

"It's important now to take the opportunity that the report provides seriously and to talk or negotiate," Habeck said. After his meeting with Zheng, Habeck spoke with Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao, who said he would discuss the tariffs with EU Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis on Saturday evening via videoconference.

The statement was published about an hour before the arrival of German Economy Minister Robert Habeck in Beijing, where he is expected to explain the recent tariff announcement and try to allay the risk of retaliation from China that could harm German businesses.

EU trade policy is turning increasingly protective due to concerns China's production-focused, debt-driven development model could see it flooded with cheap goods as Chinese firms look to boost sales overseas due to weak demand at home.

But China decries accusations its firms benefit from unfair subsidies or that it has an overcapacity problem, and argues its rise in the global EV industry, as well as in solar panels and batteries, is driven by innovation and complete supply chains. — Reuters

Apple to delay rollout of AI features in Europe

WASHINGTON: Apple on Friday said it would delay the rollout of its recently announced AI features in Europe because of "regulatory uncertainties" linked to the EU's new landmark legislation to curb the power of big tech.

Citing the European Union's Digital Markets Act (DMA), a spokesperson for the iPhone-making juggernaut said "we do not believe that we will be able to roll out these features to our EU users this year." Apple earlier this month unveiled "Apple Intelligence," its suite of AI features for its coveted devices as it looks to reassure users that it is not falling behind on the AI frenzy. The announcement included a partnership with OpenAI that would make ChatGPT available to iPhone users on request.

Apple said the feature, as well as its iPhone Mirroring and SharePlay Screen Sharing enhancements, were put on hold over concern "that the interoperability requirements of the DMA could force us to compromise the integrity of our products in ways that risk user privacy and data security." Apple Intelligence, which runs only on the company's in-house technology, will enable users to create their own emojis based on a description in everyday language, or to generate brief summaries of emails in the mailbox.

"We are committed to collaborating with the European Commission in an attempt to find a solution that would enable us to deliver these features to our EU customers without compromising their safety," the company added. In an effort to instill fair competition in Europe, the DMA sets out a list of dos and don'ts for the specially designated internet gatekeepers that include Apple.

"The EU is an attractive market of 450 million potential users, and has always been open for business for any company that wants to provide services in the European internal market," an EU spokesperson said. "Gatekeepers



CUPERTINO, US: Apple CEO Tim Cook speaks at the start of the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) in Cupertino, California. — AFP

are welcome to offer their services in Europe, provided that they comply with our rules aimed at ensuring fair competition," the EU added.

The EU's competition supremo Margrethe Vestager on Tuesday warned that Apple was falling short in abiding by the DMA as the bloc carries out a probe over Apple's business practices. "We have a number of Apple issues; I find them very serious. I was very surprised that we would have such suspicions of Apple being non-compliant," Vestager told CNBC. Her comments came after the Financial Times reported that Apple was about to face charges in relation to the probe, citing people close to the probe. — AFP

US adds Japan to its currency monitoring list

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury said no major trading partner appeared to have manipulated its currency last year, but it added Japan to a foreign exchange "monitoring list," alongside China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany, which were on the previous list.

The Treasury's semi-annual currency report found that none of the countries examined met all three criteria triggering "enhanced analysis" of their foreign exchange practices during the four quarters through December 2023. Countries are automatically added to the list if they meet two of the three criteria: a trade surplus with the US of at least \$15 billion, a global account surplus above 3 percent of GDP and persistent one-way net foreign exchange purchases of at least 2 percent of GDP over 12 months.

China, Australia to issue 5-year visas to citizens for business

BEIJING: China and Australia will provide each other's citizens with multiple-entry visas of up to five years for tourism and business from Friday, the Chinese foreign ministry said, in another sign of improving ties between the two countries.

The visa arrangement followed a milestone trip by China's Premier Li Qiang to Australia earlier this week that marked a stabilization in bilateral relations

The Treasury said Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and Germany all met the criteria for trade surpluses and an outsized current account surplus. Singapore met the criteria for engaging in persistent foreign exchange intervention and a material current account surplus, and Malaysia only met the current account surplus criteria, but once on the list, it takes two currency report cycles to be dropped off.

China was kept on the monitoring list because of its large trade surplus with the US and because of a lack of transparency surrounding its foreign exchange policies. "China's failure to publish foreign exchange (FX) intervention and broader lack of transparency around key features of its exchange rate mechanism continues to make it an outlier among major economies and warrants Treasury's close monitoring," the Treasury said in the report.

The report also raises questions about China's reporting of data on its current account balance, which showed its surplus fell to 1.4 percent of GDP in 2023 from 2.5 percent in 2022. The Treasury said China's balance of payments data published by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on the country's trade surplus appear to be at odds with China's own customs data and that of other trading partners. A US Treasury official said the department was trying to understand such "anomalies." — Reuters

after a period of frosty ties. Previously, Chinese citizens could apply for visas of up to one year to visit Australia, or up to 10 years for frequent travelers. Within an hour following the announcement, searches for flight tickets, hotels and other items for Australia surged more than 200 percent on Chinese travel site Tongcheng Travel, state-backed media The Paper reported. Since last year, China has been easing entry requirements for visitors from some countries to facilitate travel for business and pleasure, following three years of harsh COVID-19 restrictions that had largely shut its international borders.

During Li's trip to Australia, he said China would also include Australia in its visa waiver scheme, allowing Australians to visit the country for up to 15 days without a visa. — Reuters

Business

Gulf Bank renews strategic partnership with LOYAC

Partnership to empower youth for a brighter future

KUWAIT: For the second consecutive year, Gulf Bank has renewed its strategic partnership with the non-profit organization LOYAC. This collaboration will support various activities throughout the year, including The Influencer program organized by LOYAC's Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), an affiliate of LOYAC. The program aims to provide exceptional training opportunities for youth aged 15 to 19, equipping them with comprehensive public communication skills, to prepare them to become effective future leaders.

On this occasion, Najla Al-Eisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, stated: "We are delighted to partner with LOYAC and support their ongoing efforts to empower youth and achieve comprehensive and integrated development, enabling them to become effective leaders in society. These objectives align with Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait's vision, where youth play a fundamental role."

She highlighted that Gulf Bank, as a leading financial institution in Kuwait, is committed to upholding social sustainability principles. This includes supporting and sponsoring numerous activities by proactive civil society organizations, especially LOYAC, given its notable social contributions. She added, "We believe that the private sector has an vital role in supporting the efforts of civil society organizations."

Najla Al-Eisa: We believe that the private sector has a vital role in supporting the efforts of civil society organizations.

Fareah Al-Saqqaf: We extend our appreciation to Gulf Bank for sponsoring the LOYAC's youth initiatives.

Al-Eisa highlighted Gulf Bank's commitment to promoting social sustainability, advocating for diversity and inclusion, and empowering various groups, including women, youth, and individuals with disabilities. She noted that these efforts have earned the bank significant recognition, both locally and internationally, as evidenced by the recent awards received from esteemed global publications like MEED and Euromoney.

Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairperson and Managing Director of LOYAC, conveyed her appreciation to Gulf Bank for sponsoring LOYAC's youth initiatives, notably The Influencer program. She stressed that sustainable development is a shared responsibility that demands collaborative efforts from governmental, private, and civil sectors alike. Al-Saqqaf noted that civil society

organizations are pioneers in addressing human, environmental, and human development issues. Their dedication is rooted in their intimate understanding of the people's needs. She also affirmed that the success of LOYAC's programs is greatly owed to the support provided by its strategic partners, offering them genuine opportunities to facilitate developmental initiatives.

She further explained that The Influencer program is carefully designed to build young people's oratory skills, boost their self-confidence, and enhance their ability to communicate, engage in dialogue, and persuade effectively. The program includes specialized workshops and experienced trainers aimed at teaching young individuals how to create intelligent, impactful, and engaging content.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its



Najla Al-Eisa and Fareah Al-Saqqaf during the signing of the partnership agreement.

employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

US existing home sales decline as prices hit record



FALLS CHURCH, US: A "For Sale" sign is displayed near Falls Church, Virginia, on April 2, 2022. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Existing home sales in the United States edged lower in May as prices reached a record high on continued tight inventory, according to industry data published on Friday. Sales of previously owned homes fell by 0.7 percent from a month earlier to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.11 million, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) said in a statement. This was slightly above market expectations, according to Briefing.com.

Year-over-year sales were down 2.8 percent. "Existing home sales edged lower in May, reflecting the backup in mortgage rates a month or two earlier," Oxford Economics lead US economist Nancy Vanden Houten wrote in a note to clients, referring to the high cost of borrowing. US mortgage costs remain elevated as the Federal Reserve continues to keep interest rates high in its battle to bring inflation back down towards its long-term target of two percent.

The popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, which is indirectly affected by the Fed's decisions about its key short-term lending rate, sits at just under 6.9 percent, according to the government-sponsored firm Freddie Mac, which buys and guarantees existing mortgages. This is down slightly from earlier this year, when it jumped above seven percent following a spike in yields on the popular 10-year US Treasury, which is used by lenders to help price a range of different financial products.

"The more recent decline in mortgage rates, which we expect to gain steam as interest-rate cuts by the Federal Reserve get underway, will support a modest rebound in home sales later in the year," Vanden Houten said. The median sale price of an existing home rose 5.8 percent year-over-year to \$419,300, the highest price ever recorded. "Eventually, more inventory will help boost home sales and tame home price gains in the upcoming months," NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said in a statement.

"Increased housing supply spells good news for consumers who want to see more properties before making purchasing decisions," he added. Total housing inventory at the end of May was up 6.7 percent from a month earlier, and up 18.5 percent from a year ago.

"Home prices reaching new highs are creating a wider divide between those owning properties and those who wish to be first-time buyers," Yun said. "The mortgage payment for a typical home today is more than double that of homes purchased before 2020," he added. "Still, first-time buyers in the market understand the long-term benefits of owning." — AFP

Argentina has surplus harvest, but farmers want more from Milei

LOBOS, Argentina: In the pampas, Argentina's vast and fertile grasslands outside Buenos Aires, grain silos overflow with this year's harvest—but nobody is selling just yet. Though the country's farmers largely gave their votes to President Javier Milei in the November election, they now want him to deliver on promises to slash taxes and ease exchange rate controls. Until then, their bumper harvest will sit.

"The silos are full. One sells just enough to cover expenses," Ricardo Semino, a farmer from Lobos, 110 kilometers (68 miles) southwest of Buenos Aires, told AFP as he finished harvesting his corn and wheat fields. "Those who can wait, do so." After the country's worst drought in a century saw agricultural exports plummet, leading to a shortfall of \$20 billion in revenue, the industry is expecting an excellent harvest in 2024.

The latest estimate from the Rosario Board of Trade indicates that the grain harvest could yield 131.1 million tons, a sharp rise from the 82.2 million tons gathered in the previous year.

But farmers say that low global prices and the delay in freeing up the exchange rate at which producers can sell their goods abroad have complicated the seemingly good news. Agriculture is a major part of Argentina's economy, accounting for 55 percent of the country's exports. It is among the world's largest food producers, ranking third in soybeans behind only Brazil and the United States.

Argentina usually sells about 70 percent of its agro-industrial production, while the rest goes into storage. Agricultural exports are estimated at \$29.3 billion this year, falling short of the average \$32 billion a year over the past five years.

The combination of increased production and unfavorable economic conditions has left Argentina's fields dotted with "silo bags"—basically,



A farmer harvests corn fields in Lobos, Buenos Aires province, Argentina on June 10, 2024. — AFP

tons of harvested soybeans and grains wrapped in plastic. Semino says sending grain to actual silos is a bit of a crapshoot.

"Usually you speculate when you send (the grain) to the silo plant," he explained.

"Nowadays the silo plants, which belong to big companies, give you the possibility to deliver the grain and you can sell it within five, six, seven months or a year." The Rosario Board of Trade estimates that there are some 35.6 million tons of unsold grains in the country, valued at almost \$10.6 billion.

Despite Milei's campaign promises, he raised taxes on exports of soybean meal and oil from 31 to 33 percent upon taking office. Taxes also increased on fuel. Reforms to exchange rate controls have not been forthcoming, and no timeline has been set. Inflation, though trending down, was still at 276.4 percent in May year-on-year. Argentina has half a dozen dollar exchange rates. Exporters get a preferential rate, but still far less than the value of the peso on the parallel

informal market (1,300 pesos to the dollar) -- which is the rate producers use to pay for farming supplies. Six months into Milei's tenure, all of that translates into uncertain costs for farmers.

In the past year, "the price of a tractor went from \$170,000 to \$250,000," Semino said. Nevertheless, support for Milei persists in the countryside, with Semino explaining that a devaluation of the peso in December did help farmers.

And despite all the uncertainty, the future still seems brighter. Cristian Russo, head of estimates at the Rosario Board of Trade, said strong rains had boosted projections for the wheat harvest, with a 40 percent higher yield expected next season. The agricultural sector does not stop production, no matter what happens in government, Semino explained.

"You get used to always moving forward," he said. "Nobody is going to leave a field fallow because they are waiting for another government. You have to plant it and get the most out of it." — AFP

US slaps sanctions on 12 top leaders of Kaspersky

WASHINGTON: The United States unveiled sanctions Friday against 12 top leaders of the Russia-based cybersecurity firm Kaspersky Lab, a day after banning the sale of its popular antivirus software on national security grounds.

The widespread sanctions target many of Kaspersky Lab's most senior leaders, including its chief operating officer, while sparing the chief executive and the company itself, the Treasury Department said in a statement announcing the designation.

"Today's action against the leadership of Kaspersky Lab underscores our commitment to ensure the integrity of our cyber domain and to protect our citizens against malicious cyber threats," said the US Treasury's under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, Brian Nelson.

"The United States will take action where necessary to hold accountable those who would seek to facilitate or otherwise enable these activities," he added. The Treasury sanctions come a day after the Commerce Department said it was banning the Moscow-headquartered cybersecurity firm from providing its popular antivirus products in the United States. That announcement came after a lengthy investigation which, the Commerce Department said, found that Kaspersky's "continued operations in the United States presented a national security risk due to the Russian government's offensive cyber capabilities and capacity to influence or direct Kaspersky's operations."

The move is the first such action taken since an executive order issued during Donald Trump's

presidency gave the Commerce Department the power to investigate whether certain companies pose a national security risk. Kaspersky, in a statement to AFP, said the Treasury's sanctions were "unjustified and baseless," adding that they were based on geopolitical concerns rather than a "comprehensive evaluation" of the integrity of its products and operations.

"Neither Kaspersky nor its management team has any ties to any government," it continued, calling the Treasury's allegations "pure speculation, which lacks concrete evidence of a threat posed to US national security." Moscow hit out at the decision to ban the sale of Kaspersky's antivirus software.

"Kaspersky Lab is a company which is very, very competitive on the international level," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday. "This is a favorite method of unfair competition from the part of the United States. They resort to such tactics every time."

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Friday that the company was subject to the "jurisdiction, control, or direction of the Russian government, which could exploit the privileged access to obtain sensitive data." This poses "an unacceptable risk to US national security or the safety and security of US persons," he added in a statement.

While Kaspersky is headquartered in Moscow, it has offices in 31 countries around the world, serving more than 400 million users and 270,000 corporate clients in more than 200 countries, according to the Commerce Department. The latest sanctions target many senior leaders at Kaspersky, including long-serving chief operating officer Andrei Tikhonov and chief legal officer Igor Chekunov, the Treasury Department said. Other individuals sanctioned include the firm's deputy CEO Daniil Borshchev, chief business development officer and board member Andrei Efremov, and its head of corporate communications, Denis Zenkin. — AFP

Eurozone business activity growth slows in June

BRUSSELS: The growth of business activity in the eurozone slowed down in June after the manufacturing sector posted its biggest decline in six months, a key survey said Friday.

The HCOB Flash Eurozone purchasing managers' index (PMI) published by S&P Global recorded a figure of 50.8, down from 52.2 in May and its lowest level in three months. Any reading above 50 indicates growth, while a figure below 50 shows contraction. Manufacturing activity slid to 46 in June from 49.3 a month earlier.

The data however "suggested that GDP will continue to expand in the second quarter", S&P Global said. But the lower PMI in June showed growth "may be slower than initially expected", said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at ING Bank. Economists agreed it was unlikely that the European Central Bank would cut interest rates again in July, although there could be further cuts later in the year. "The HCOB PMI do not provide ammunition for another rate cut in July by the ECB," said Cyrus de la Rubia, chief economist at Hamburg Commercial Bank (HCOB).

The situation in France, the EU's second biggest economy, is however weighing on the single currency area's economic performance, according to the economist. "It is evident that France's poor economic performance has significantly contributed to the deteriorating economic conditions in the Eurozone," de la Rubia said.

The survey showed both services and manufacturing output falling. De la Rubia said it could be tied to the far right's drubbing of the party of President Emmanuel Macron in EU elections this month and his call for a snap vote on June 30. — AFP

Business

Cash is leaving China again, pressuring yuan

Domestic investors shelving expectations for any immediate recovery

SHANGHAI/SINGAPORE: A sliding yuan and extensive outflows of cash from the mainland into Hong Kong show China's domestic investors are shelving expectations for any immediate recovery in their home markets and fleeing to the closest better-yielding assets. The yuan has dropped to seven-month lows this week, alongside a reversal in equity investment flows into China.

Analysts said Hong Kong's stockpile of yuan deposits has also grown as mainland investors use their limited offshore investment channels to seek higher yields and companies prepare to pay annual dividends, adding to the pressure on the currency. "Sentiment on China soured over the past month as the market has rallied ahead of improvement in macro data which continues to disappoint," said Gary Tan, a Singapore-based portfolio manager at Allspring Global Investments.

Tan, whose funds are underweight on Chinese stocks, said sentiment had come a long way from a time when mainland markets were considered "un-investible", however, and he expected that would improve further.

But investor patience has worn thin after months of waiting for authorities to roll out more stimulus, mainly to support a sinking property sector. The Shanghai benchmark stock index .SSEC rose 20 percent between early February and mid-May but is down 6 percent since.

Foreigners who had returned to the market since February, after quitting in 2023, have turned sellers too this month, pulling out 33 billion yuan (\$4.54 billion) via the northbound leg of the Stock Connect Scheme. Domestic investors have used the south-

bound leg to pump 129 billion yuan into Hong Kong.

Analysts say investors have several reasons to pause and reflect, not just about how far the People's Bank of China will ease rates, but also on the approaching July plenum of China's Communist Party to shape economic and fiscal policy. Chi Lo, senior market strategist for Asia-Pacific at BNP Paribas Asset Management, said foreign funds, though now positioned neutral on Chinese stocks, are turning positive. "Beijing is likely to keep the easing measures more progressive than they were in the 18 months, in my view, and the plenum will likely reiterate that policy direction," Lo said.

The PBOC's daily guidance for the yuan CNY=CFXS, which it manages in a tight band, is stirring speculation that the authorities are allowing some depreciation to manage the pressure.

The yuan is down 2.2 percent against the dollar so far this year. As mainland cash floods into Hong Kong, yuan deposits in the financial hub are at record levels, with latest official data for April showing they stand at 1.09 trillion yuan (\$150 billion), close to peaks last seen in January 2022. Ju Wang, head of Greater China currency and rates strategy at BNP Paribas, said mainland investors were thronging Hong Kong for better returns on offshore yuan CNH=D3, given low yields at home and expectations for further easing.

Persistent southbound flows and the traditional June-July transfers by Chinese firms to finance their dividend payments in Hong Kong had also led to selling of the offshore yuan CNH= and demand for Hong Kong dollars, she said.

Since early May, the CNH has fallen 1.9 percent



Woman holds Chinese yuan banknotes in this illustration taken May 30, 2022. — Reuters

against the Hong Kong dollar HKDCNH=R.

Also drawing money into Hong Kong is the expectation of peaking US dollar rates as the Federal Reserve prepares to ease policy, which, by virtue of the Hong Kong dollar's peg, will affect its economy

too. "US rate cuts are very important for Hong Kong's liquidity because of the currency peg, so once the Fed starts cutting rates, I think we will be flush with liquidity here, which will push up asset prices," said BNP Asset Management's Lo. — Reuters

Consumer-focused lending could dent UK bank profits

LONDON: Once seen as hostile to banks, Britain's Labour has courted lenders in recent years as it attempts to gain power, yet some of the left-leaning party's policies are still expected to hit the sector's profits if it wins next month's election. Leader Keir Starmer has won plaudits among business-owners and financiers with promises of stability and a more balanced approach towards taxation of the financial and professional services sector, which contributed more than 110 billion pounds (\$139 billion), or 12.3 percent, of total UK tax receipts in 2023.

But the party is still expected to lean on the industry to improve the financial resilience of households and consumers, many of whom have suffered disproportionately from more than two years of mortgage market volatility and a cost of living crisis.

Many lenders in Britain, including HSBC HSBAL, Barclays BARCL, Lloyds Bank LLOYL and NatWest NWGL, have reported record profits in the past two years. These have been bolstered by robust lending margins, low volumes of loan defaults and modest rates paid to savers on their deposits. Among the policies it has showcased in the run-up to the election on July 4, the Labour Party has said it will review the benefits of longer-term fixed rate mortgages to shield homeowners from steep changes in interest rates and make home ownership more accessible.

That pledge is leading some analysts, lenders and brokers to suggest a Labour government could seek additional changes across mortgages and other financial products and services to tip the balance back in favor of consumers. "Traditional mortgage products place all the interest rate risk with borrowers," said Arjan Verbeek, the chief executive of challenger bank Perenna.

Compared to the United States, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, banks in Britain tend to offer a narrower range of long-term fixed rate mortgage products, which some lenders have attributed to low demand from borrowers wary of "missing out" on lower repayment costs when base rates fall.

Longer term mortgages on fixed rates would give first time buyers greater security, but would come at a cost to providers, said Daniel Austin, CEO and co-founder of ASK Partners, a specialist lender to the property sector. "A 10-year fixed rate (mortgage) is always a lot more expensive, so the idea will not work if the cost of a 25-year fixed rate becomes prohibitive," he said. Whereas in the US, banks can reduce their risks and costs by repackaging and selling longer-term mortgages, lenders in Britain offset such risks more often by taking out a form of protection known as interest rate swaps with a matching duration to the home loans, mortgage bankers said.

That carries additional costs and the prices of such swaps have spiraled in the last two years amid political turmoil and rising inflation. Just 3 percent of UK residential mortgage deals available as of June 19 had a fixed initial term of 10 years or more, Moneyfacts data showed. A Labour Party spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

While an incoming Labour government may lean on banks to widen their mortgage range, analysts and senior executives at big British banks agree it is now unlikely to pursue bank windfall taxes, a policy championed by the party's previous leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Nor is it expected to overhaul how the Bank of England pays interest to banks on their deposits, another policy mooted in recent months by politicians, the sources said. Data published by the British parliament's cross-party Treasury Committee in May showed NatWest, Barclays, Lloyds and Santander UK SAN.MC received more than 9 billion pounds in interest in 2023 — a 135 percent increase year-on-year. "After years of low rates and sub cost-of-equity returns, banks are currently making normalized, rather than supernormal, profits," RBC Capital Markets analyst Benjamin Toms said.

"Labour looks to be taking a pro-growth stance which will be helpful for UK banks." Other Labour Party policies are likely to dent bank earnings potential over time, bank analysts and industry sources said. The party said this week it would "bring face-to-face banking back to the high street" with the opening of up to 350 'banking hubs' over the next five years — an initiative in conflict with most lenders' cost-cutting plans. — Reuters

Argentines eat less beef as inflation bites

BUENOS AIRES: Argentines, famed for steakhouses, sprawling cattle ranches and asado barbecues, are consuming less beef than ever, forced to tighten their belts by triple-digit inflation and a recession. Beef consumption is down almost 16 percent this year so far in the South American nation where beef has always been an essential part of the social fabric, along with soccer and mate tea.

Many Argentine homes have in-built "parrilla" grills where families gather. Steakhouses dot street corners around Buenos Aires and people will huddle around make-shift barbecues for a taste of beef, even on construction sites or at protests. "Beef is an integral part of the Argentine diet, it is as if pasta were eliminated for Italians," retiree Claudia San Martin, 66, told Reuters while waiting in line at the butcher shop. She said she was willing to cut back on other purchases such as cleaning products, but beef was sacred.

"Argentines can eliminate anything, I believe, in difficult times like this. But we can't do without meat," she said. Still, the latest data show Argentines are this year eating beef at a rate of around 44 kilograms (97 lbs) per year, down sharply from more than 52 kg last year and as much as 100 kg a year in the 1950s. Part of the long-term decline is a longer-term shift toward other meats like pork and chicken, as well as cheaper staples such as pasta. But this year's plunge has been driven by nearly 300 percent inflation and

Japan inflation ticks up in May to 2.5%

TOKYO: The pace of Japanese inflation accelerated in May partly due to higher energy bills, government data showed Friday, as analysts speculate on the timing of the Bank of Japan's next rate hike. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) — which excludes volatile fresh food prices—rose 2.5 percent year-on-year, compared with the 2.2 percent logged in April by the internal affairs ministry.

The ministry said that "energy, including electricity and gas bills, contributed" to the acceleration, which was slightly lower than market expectations of 2.6 percent.

While the United States and other major economies have battled sky-high inflation in recent years, price rises in Japan have been less extreme. The Bank of Japan is targeting sustainable, demand-driven inflation of two percent. While the CPI has been above this target since April 2022, the central bank has warned it was due to unstable factors such as the war in Ukraine.

Recently, however, the BoJ has taken cautious steps away from its long-standing ultra-loose monetary policies. The BoJ said last week it would trim its vast hoard of government bonds, having raised interest rates for the first time since 2007 in March.

"With inflation remaining somewhat sticky... a further rate hike in July or September is likely",

BlackRock not to involve in Malaysia airports privatization

KUALA LUMPUR: Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) said its buyer BlackRock BLK.N will not be involved in privatizing Malaysia Airports after criticism in Muslim-majority Malaysia over the US firm's alleged ties to Zionist entity. GIP, Malaysian sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional and others are part of a consortium that has offered to take over Malaysia Airport (MAHB) MAHB.KL in a privatization deal that would value the airport operator at \$3.9 billion.

The plan has come under criticism and protests from

a stalling economy along with tough austerity measures by libertarian President Javier Milei.

Poverty is up, more people are homeless in major cities and lines have grown at soup kitchens. Many families have reduced consumption of staples like meat, milk and vegetables. They say they are yet to feel the benefit of slowing monthly inflation. "The situation right now is critical. Consumer are taking decisions thinking just about their wallets," said Miguel Schiariti, president of local meat chamber CIC-CRA, who expected meat consumption to remain depressed. "People's purchasing power is weakening month by month."

Out in the farmlands of Buenos Aires province, cattle ranchers are feeling the pinch. "The drop in consumption is worrying," said Luis Marchi, 48, an agricultural engineer and the third generation to run the family farming business producing grains and livestock. "Beef consumption has been dropping quite sharply recently," he added, blaming inflation and the economic slump. "Consumers try to replace beef with cheaper foods, other types of meat or pasta."

Another rancher, 53-year-old Guillermo Tramonini, said input costs had risen while drought last year hit many herds. "Beef is not that expensive, but people's purchasing power has been reduced terribly," he said, adding farmers were being careful with capital expenditure to avoid firing workers.

As local consumption has slid, exports have risen, but weaker global prices have dampened the boost for farmers. By far the top buyer of Argentine beef is China, though it imports cheaper cuts not used domestically. "The export sector is going through a very tough time even though it keeps exporting big volumes. Prices in the international market have fallen a lot," Schiariti said.



Butcher Gerardo Tomsin cuts meat in his shop, in Buenos Aires, Argentina June 10, 2024. — Reuters

In his butcher shop in Buenos Aires where he has worked for 40 years, Gerardo Tomsin, 61, said people were still coming to buy beef, but were always hunting for cheaper deals.

"People keep coming, the issue is that they consume less. There are people who turn to other products. It is a permanent search for prices," he said. Another butcher Dario Barrandeguy, 76, said people were buying the cheapest cuts of beef or other less expensive meats. "The consumption of chicken and pork has increased a lot recently," he said.

Milei, a free market economist who calls himself an anarcho-capitalist, ended the previous Peronist government's freeze on beef prices. "Things have become very expensive and when it's so costly we just don't buy," said Facundo Reinal, a 41-year-old teacher, adding it meant spending less time socializing around the grill "We're seeing overall people doing fewer barbecues, which is a key part of the culture here in Argentina." — Reuters



FILE PHOTO: A woman walks in front of a cheap izakaya (Japanese tavern) in Tokyo, Japan, March 24, 2023. — Reuters

although "the timetable for that may remain unclear". Katsutoshi Inadome, senior strategist at SuMi TRUST, said earlier this month. Excluding fresh food and energy, Japanese prices rose 2.1 percent in May, against market expectations of 2.2 percent and following a 2.4 percent rise in April, Friday's data showed.

Data released earlier this month showed that Japan's household spending rose in April for the first time in 14 months, with wage growth at the fastest pace in three decades.

Wage growth is a key factor for the BoJ's policy decisions, as it seeks a "virtuous cycle between wages and prices". — AFP

some ruling party and opposition lawmakers in Malaysia, a staunch supporter of the Palestinians, over GIP's ties to BlackRock's significant investments in Zionist entity, which is fighting a war against Hamas group in Gaza.

MAHB's planned privatization is the latest focus on protests in Malaysia, following boycott campaigns against such Western brands as McDonald's MCD.N and Starbucks SBUX.O over the war in Gaza. GIP said its existing leadership team will "retain full control and responsibility for the strategic direction and operation of GIP and the companies in which we have invested" after its acquisition by BlackRock, state news agency Bernama reported on Friday, citing a written reply from GIP head of transport Phil Iley.

A GIP spokesperson confirmed the Bernama report. Khazanah did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Iley said the firm would provide MAHB with as much operational support and assistance as needed

despite being a minority shareholder.

"If we are successful with our transformation, we would very much consider re-listing MAHB on the Malaysian stock exchange in the future," he wrote. Khazanah has said GIP would not hire staff to directly manage MAHB, while Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has described claims that 25 percent of MAHB would be owned by a pro-Zionist company as baseless, without naming the company, Bernama reported. Under the deal GIP and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority would own 30 percent of MAHB, while the majority stake would be held by Khazanah and the Employees Provident Fund, Malaysia's largest pension body. The fund did not respond to a request for comment on GIP's statement. BlackRock's \$12.5 billion acquisition of GIP is expected to be completed in the third quarter. MAHB manages 39 airports across Malaysia and an international airport in Turkey. — Reuters

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2024



Actor Donald Sutherland looks at the Donostia Award he received for his career, during the 67th San Sebastian Film Festival, in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian on September 26, 2019.



Actor Donald Sutherland holds his honorary Oscar at the 9th Annual Governors Awards gala hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences at the Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood, California on November 11, 2017.



Flowers are placed on the star of late Canadian actor Donald Sutherland on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, on June 20, 2024 in Hollywood.—AFP photos



Actor Donald Sutherland poses as he is honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California January 26, 2011.

Actor Donald Sutherland dies at age 88

Donald Sutherland, the enigmatic actor whose lengthy career encompassed films including "The Dirty Dozen" and "The Hunger Games," has died, his son said Thursday. He was 88. "With a heavy heart, I tell you that my father, Donald Sutherland, has passed away," actor Kiefer Sutherland wrote on X. The elder Sutherland had a distinctive look -- and piercing eyes -- that brought a depth and mystery to the huge range of roles he inhabited over more than half a century on the big screen. One of Canada's most famous sons, he played dashing leading men as well as antiheroes and villains, most recently making a name among a new generation of fans as the evil President Snow in "The Hunger Games" franchise.

"I personally think one of the most important actors in the history of film. Never daunted by a role, good, bad or ugly. He loved what he did and did what he loved, and one can never ask for more than that. A life well lived," wrote Kiefer Sutherland. Reaction to the Emmy- and Golden Globe-winner's death was swift, with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hailing his unique talents.

"I had the opportunity when I was much younger to meet Donald Sutherland, and even as a young man who hadn't had a full exposure to the depth of brilliance of Donald Sutherland, I was deeply, deeply star struck," he told a press conference.

"He was a man with a strong presence, a brilliance in his craft, and truly, truly, a great Canadian artist, and he will be deeply missed." US President Joe Biden paid tribute to a "one-of-a-kind



Canadian actor Kiefer Sutherland (left) hugs his father, actor Donald Sutherland, after being honored with the 2,377th Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Dec 9, 2008, in Hollywood, California.

actor who inspired and entertained the world for decades." Ron Howard, who directed Sutherland alongside Robert De Niro and Kurt Russell in action-thriller "Backdraft," called him "one of the most intelligent, interesting & engrossing film actors of all time."

"Incredible range, creative courage & dedication to serving the story & the audience with supreme excellence," he wrote on social media. British actor Helen Mirren, who starred with Sutherland in 2017's "The Leisure Seeker," said he was "one of the smartest actors I ever worked with," Variety reported.

"He had a wonderful enquiring brain, and a great knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. He combined this great intel-

ligence with a deep sensitivity, and with a seriousness about his profession as an actor. "This all made him into the legend of film that he became. He was my colleague and became my friend. I will miss his presence in this world."

Rob Lowe said Sutherland had been "one of our greatest actors." "If you want a master class in acting, watch him in 'Ordinary People,'" he wrote on social media, referring to Robert Redford's multi-Oscar-winning directorial debut in 1980 about the disintegration of a wealthy family.

"Barry" and "Happy Days" actor Henry Winkler called Sutherland "singular," an adjective also chosen by "The Batman" director Matt Reeves. "Such a

beautiful, soulful, and singular actor. His performances have meant so very much to me... and to the world. One of the all-time greats," he wrote on X.

1970s hits

After what he called a "meandering" start to his acting career, Sutherland came to prominence in Robert Aldrich's "The Dirty Dozen," where 12 convicts are tasked with carrying out what appears to be a suicide mission in occupied France.

Starring alongside luminaries such as Charles Bronson, Lee Marvin and Telly Savalas, Sutherland's impish charm caught the attention of producers of "M*A*S*H." Though set in the Korean War, the 1970 film was widely seen as a sophisticated satire on the Vietnam War.

His casting opposite Elliott Gould turned Sutherland into a household name in 1970s America, and opened the door to a durable career that would see him work with some of the biggest names in show business.

They included Jane Fonda, with whom he starred in 1971's "Klute," in which he played a detective who falls for the call girl he is supposed to be protecting. Fonda won an Oscar for her performance, which she credited to her intense feelings for Sutherland, with whom she was in a relationship at the time. Their off-screen chemistry brought Sutherland into her pacifist orbit, and he became active in anti-Vietnam War circles. The pair put together a traveling revue, which irked the US government and landed them both under FBI surveillance.—AFP

Donald Sutherland in five films

Here is a look at five key films in the career of Canadian actor Donald Sutherland, who has died at the age of 88:



Actor Donald Sutherland arrives at the premiere of Lionsgate's 'The Hunger Games' at Nokia Theatre L.A. Live on March 12, 2012, in Los Angeles, California.—AFP

'The Dirty Dozen' (1967)

In his first big screen role, Sutherland starred alongside Lee Marvin and Charles Bronson in Robert Aldrich's film set in World War II. He played an army sergeant whose 30-year prison term for murder will be suspended if he survives a mission to assassinate German officers in Nazi-occupied France.

'M*A*S*H' (1970)

Sutherland's star turn in the anti-war black comedy hit "M*A*S*H", directed by Robert Altman, as snarky, charming US Army surgeon Hawkeye Pierce brought him wider recognition. The role was taken over by Alan Alda for the subsequent television show about the zany field hospital in Korea.

'Klute' (1971)

Sutherland starred as enigmatic small-town private detective John Klute, who gets entangled with a New York call girl (Jane Fonda) as he hunts for a missing man in this suspense thriller directed by Alan J. Pakula. The film is the highlight of Sutherland's partnership, both private and professional, with Fonda, who won an Oscar for her work.

'JFK' (1991)

In Oliver Stone's biopic, Sutherland played the chilling role of X, a shadowy intelligence figure who gives crucial information to a district attorney (Kevin Costner) investigating the politics surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

'The Hunger Games' (2012)

Sutherland glowered as the tyrannical President Coriolanus Snow, ruling over a post-apocalyptic state, in this blockbuster film and its sequels, delivering what The Hollywood Reporter called a "sinister performance". The franchise is based on a series of best-selling young adult novels by Suzanne Collins.—AFP



US actor Donald Sutherland (right) and his wife Canadian actress Francine Racette attend the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 22, 1975.

Viggo Mortensen to get prize at Czech film festival

Actor Viggo Mortensen, perhaps best known for playing Aragorn in "The Lord of the Rings" films, will receive an award at the Czech film festival in Karlovy Vary, organisers said Wednesday. The 65-year-old US actor and director will be presented with the Festival President's Award at the June 28 opening ceremony, festival president Jiri Bartoska told reporters.

Mortensen "will present 'The Dead Don't Hurt' at the festival, a film which he directed and in which he played one of the main roles", added Bartoska, who is a popular Czech actor. Other guests at Karlovy Vary will include "Closer" and "Sin City" star Clive Owen, as well as "Erin Brockovich" and "Traffic" director Steven Soderbergh.

Soderbergh will present his films and "Kafka" (1991) and a re-edited version "Mr Kneff", set in the Czech capital and dedicated to the Prague-born writer Franz Kafka. Both Owen and Soderber-

gh will receive the Festival President's Award, as will German actor and director Daniel Bruehl, known for a role in "Rush".

Oscar-winning British actor Geoffrey Rush, known for "Shine", "The King's Speech" and "Pirates of the Caribbean", will be a member of the festival jury.

The 58th edition of the festival in the western Czech spa city of Karlovy Vary will run from June 28 to July 6. Last year, the festival registered more than 123,000 cinemagoers.—AFP



President of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival Jiri Bartoska poses for the media with the KVIFF President's Awards during the press conference prior to the 58th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (KVIFF) in Prague, Czech Republic on June 19, 2024.—AFP

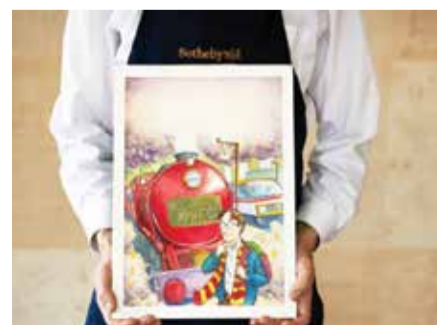
Original 'Harry Potter' cover art to go under hammer in NY

The original watercolor illustration for the first edition of "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" -- the book that introduced the world to the young bespectacled wizard -- will go up for auction in New York on Wednesday.

The work by Thomas Taylor, who was just 23 years old in 1997 when he painted the iconic image of the young boy with the lightning bolt scar and the round glasses, is expected to fetch from \$400,000 to \$600,000 at Sotheby's.

Taylor was working at a children's bookstore in Cambridge, England, when he was tapped by publisher Barry Cunningham at Bloomsbury to paint the image for J.K. Rowling's book, which was to be released in London on June 26, 1997.

He was one of the first people to read the book, getting an early copy of the manuscript to inform his artwork, according to Sotheby's books specialist Kalika Sands. "So he knew about the world before anybody else and it was really up to him to think of how he visualized Harry Potter,"



Thomas Taylor's original cover illustration for Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997) is expected to break auction records at Sotheby's on June 26.— Sotheby

Sands told AFP. Rowling and Taylor were unknown when the book was released, and few expected it would become a global phenomenon. Only 500 copies of the first edition were printed, and 300 of them were sent to libraries, according to Sotheby's. But the book soon became a runaway bestseller.—AFP

Lifestyle



Aerial view of a building that suffered a sinkhole in its structure due to rainwater accumulation.—AFP photos



View of a building that suffered a sinkhole in its structure due to rainwater accumulation.

SINKHOLES THREATEN LUXURY PROPERTY IN CHILE'S RESORT CITY

It was meant to be paradise on earth: a luxury apartment building standing just a few meters away from the beach with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean.

However, intense rains that have lashed Chile in recent days caused a giant sinkhole to open underneath this high-end property in the resort city of Vina del Mar, prompting the evacuation of hundreds of residents.

The 13-floor building with 200 apartments worth up to \$500,000 each is now sitting atop a hole that is 15 meters (50 feet) long and 30 meters deep,

the third such hole that opened here in less than a year.

Sergio Silva, 77, one of the few residents still left at Euromarina II, was trying to shove some of his belongings into a car to take them to a safer place because more rains are expected.

"We are taking important things, not everything," Silva told AFP.

Residents of the building that stands below Euromarina II, at sea level, have also had to abandon their homes for fear that it would collapse on them.

"Some people have left out of precaution. Those of us who remain are

prepared in case of emergency or if we have to evacuate," says Claudio Camus, 43, a resident of the Eurovista building that stands beneath Euromarina II.

'Impudent' sale

The high-end property is located on a 28-hectare dune field that until 1994 was part of a state-protected nature sanctuary. But a change in regulations allowed high-rise and high-density construction in the area, and there are currently 44 luxury buildings here.

Then, in August and September last

year, two landslides undermined the foundations of three other buildings: the Kandinsky, Miramar-Renaca and Santorini. Even the coastal road has been cut off due to the broken pavement. "The risks that were taken by building there are gigantic," Vina del Mar mayor Macarena Ripamonti told AFP, adding that the real estate was "sold in a very impudent manner."

The urban expansion on the dunes posed a clear risk -- and intense storms, the result of the El Nino weather phenomenon or the consequences of climate change, proved the critics

right. "It is a fragile sector that should have been preserved," says urban planner and mayoral candidate Ivan Poduje, calling it a "bad urban planning decision."

Experts say the sinkholes are caused by overflowing rainwater collectors. While engineers work to fix the water collection system, Ripamonti, the mayor, says she will leave nothing to chance: "I am not going to allow another building to be built there."—AFP

Genocide of Native Americans not over: Oscar nominee Gladstone

Oscar-nominated actress Lily Gladstone is pleased that Indigenous people are getting better representation on the silver screen, including in her new film "Fancy Dance," but warns there is an "ongoing genocide" of Native Americans that must be addressed.

Gladstone, 37, earned critical acclaim for her turn as an Osage woman locked in a duplicitous marriage to a murderous white husband in last year's true crime epic "Killers of the Flower Moon" from Martin Scorsese.

She is now starring in "Fancy Dance," about the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous people in America, most of them women. The film -- which premiered at the Sundance festival last year but is now hitting a limited number of theaters this month, and will stream on Apple TV+ from June 28 -- is a work of fiction but feels like a documentary.

told AFP at the film's premiere this week in New York.

'Emergency'

In "Fancy Dance," Gladstone plays Jax, a single and poor woman on the Seneca-Cayuga reservation in Oklahoma whose sister disappears, leaving her to care for her niece Roki.

Faced with the FBI's indifference and the lack of resources available to her brother, a cop on the reservation, Jax tries to find her sister herself and ultimately hits the road with Roki, who hopes to find her mother at a huge powwow ceremony.

Similar cases have made headlines in recent years. In the state of Oregon, the disappearances of Indigenous women were deemed an "emergency" in 2019 in official reports, but more than four years later, not much progress has been made, according to the independent outlet In-

vestigateWest.

Federal and local authorities have become increasingly aware of the disproportionate number of Indigenous women who have been killed or gone missing in recent years, according to InvestigateWest. On the small screen, a handful of television shows have addressed the issue, including "Alaska Daily," starring Hilary Swank, and the most recent season

of HBO's anthology series "True Detective" starring Jodie Foster and Kali Reis. "Fancy Dance" -- which was written, produced, directed, and largely acted by Indigenous women -- takes a stark look at how Indigenous women navigate a world and a justice system that often fails them.

Thousands of murders unsolved

Erica Tremblay, a documentary filmmaker who is making her fiction feature debut with "Fancy Dance," is a member of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation. She too worries about the epidemic of murders and disappearances. "As an Indigenous person, I can't go online without being, you know, without seeing a missing poster, without people, like, looking for someone who is missing," 44-year-old Tremblay told AFP at the premiere.

"And then you go outside of non-Native spaces and people have no idea that this is happening and going on," she said. InvestigateWest, citing official estimates, puts the number of unsolved cases of Indigenous people missing or murdered across the United States in the thousands.

And for Indigenous women under the age of 45, murder is one of the primary causes of death. "Genocide doesn't stop until it either accomplishes its goal or the bad actors stop it. And there's an ongoing genocide that's still happening in modern America that we aren't talking about," Tremblay said.

She noted that because of complicated judicial procedures on Native lands, Indigenous people cannot prosecute all crimes affecting them. Gladstone adds that the situation cannot improve "until those jurisdictional loopholes close, until sovereignty is restored, until native people are in positions to really protect ourselves."

Isabel Dero-Olson, who plays Roki, said she is happy that "Fancy Dance" is telling "such a real story." "It's a work of fiction, but it really is so true to our communities here in North America, you know, and that representation is so important," she said.—AFP



A handout pictured released by Pompidou Centre on Sept 4, 2019 shows an artwork depicting a masked rat by British street-artist Banksy on the back of a parking sign in Paris.—AFP

French court sentences man over Banksy stencil theft

Mejdi R, a 38-year-old musician, in court had admitted that he used an angle grinder in September 2019 to remove part of the parking sign on which the secretive British artist had depicted a masked rat holding a box cutter. But he claimed he was a friend of the artist, who had asked him to retrieve the artwork on the sign near the modern art Centre Pompidou museum in Paris.

He argued his "friend" wanted to prevent anybody else from making money off the street art of "no value", and to "denounce the hypocrisy of a capitalist system that says which art had value and which does not".

He said Banksy sent a "team" to help him steal it, that then slipped off back to England with the rat. The prosecutor said Banksy had denied this through a spokesperson. The court also sentenced Mejdi R to paying a 30,000-euro (\$32,000) fine. He was ordered to pay more than 6,500 euros in damages to the Centre Pompidou, which the court determined to be the stolen cultural asset's custodian. The defendant argued he had not stolen a "cultural asset" but taken part in "degrading a metal plate", referring to sign for the Pompidou's car park. Banksy blitzed the French capital with murals in 2018, and appeared to authenticate the rat with the box cutter on his Instagram page that year. The Pompidou theft came seven months after another Banksy work paying homage to the victims of the November 2015 attacks in Paris was stolen from outside the Bataclan, the concert venue where Islamic State group gunmen killed 90 people.

A French court in 2022 handed eight men punishments ranging from a six-month suspended sentence to two years behind bars for stealing that work and transporting it to Italy. Investigators found it hidden on a farm.—AFP



(From left) US actresses Isabel Dero-Olson, Lily Gladstone and US filmmaker Erica Tremblay attend the premiere of Apple Original Films' "Fancy Dance".

She says the film's strength is in showcasing "the needs that we have as Indigenous women, especially in the face of epidemics like missing murdered Indigenous people" and children being placed in foster care with non-Native families. "Both are tied to an ongoing genocide in different ways," Gladstone -- who is of Blackfeet and Nez Perce heritage and grew up on a reservation in Montana --

investigateWest. Federal and local authorities have become increasingly aware of the disproportionate number of Indigenous women who have been killed or gone missing in recent years, according to InvestigateWest. On the small screen, a handful of television shows have addressed the issue, including "Alaska Daily," starring Hilary Swank, and the most recent season



Cast and crew members attend the premiere of Apple Original Films' "Fancy Dance" at the Directors Guild of America in New York City.—AFP photos



US actor Ryan Begay



US film producer Bird Running Water attends the premiere of Apple Original Films' "Fancy Dance".



Canadian-US actress Crystle Lightning



US boxer and actress Kali Reis.



Heather Rae (left) and US actress Johnny Sequoyah.



DIOR OFFERS LAID-BACK STYLE ON A FELINE CAT-WALK

Dior offered a more light-hearted collection featuring giant cats at Paris Fashion Week, with designer Kim Jones telling AFP he wanted to counter the gloomy world atmosphere. The big cartoon cats that dotted the runway for the menswear collection were inspired by South African ceramicist Hylton Nel, a favourite of Jones, an avid art collector.

Nel's artwork popped up as prints on several outfits, which overall had a more laid-back vibe than recent Dior collections, with baggy trousers and shorts, and loose rounded silhouettes on the work coats and suits. Many

were topped with "cloche" -- or bell-style -- hats made by South African artisans, and scarf-like collars based on drawings made by Yves Saint-Laurent when he worked for Dior in 1960.

"There's an ease to this collection. The last two seasons have been quite structured, and every three seasons I like to flip things a bit," Jones told AFP.

"It's still the Dior DNA and still the idea of pulling things from the archive, but playing around with it a bit." The Kate Bush soundtrack and soft lighting emphasised the summery palette of pastel yellows, greens and blues.

"I think about the whole concept,

how it gets seen as a whole. I work backwards: music, set, clothes," said Jones. Dior made a splash with its much-imitated men's dance slippers last season. This season, Jones reworked that most traditional of working shoe -- the clog -- reimagined in beech wood and calf leather, and modified with rubber soles.

The collection had "a softness and a poetic feel," said Simon Longland, head of buying for London department store Harrods. "There was a sense of ease and grace to the collection," he added, highlighting "the soft boxy coats and beautiful fluid trousers".

Jones has a no-nonsense way of talking about his job that emphasises the fact he is flogging clothes -- surprisingly rare in the fashion world.

He told AFP he had to cancel the couture show for his other job as creative director of Fendi to focus on its 100th anniversary next year. "You have to make decisions: do customers get their dresses or do we do a show?" he said. "I thought better to make them their dresses and keep them buying." --AFP



Models present creations from the Dior Spring/Summer 2025 menswear ready to wear collection as part of Paris Fashion Week in Paris — AFP photos



Sports

England thrash Japan 52-17

Marcus Smith shines; Charlie Ewels red-carded

TOKYO: Marcus Smith gave an all-action first-half performance as England thrashed Japan 52-17 in Tokyo on Saturday ahead of two Tests against the All Blacks. Preferred at fly-half to Fin Smith, the Harlequins playmaker scored a try and set up Immanuel Feyi-Waboso and Henry Slade for two more before the break against an inexperienced Japan side coached by former England boss Eddie Jones.

Chandler Cunningham-South also scored on his first Test start, while Alex Mitchell, Ben Earl, Harry Randall and Sam Underhill crossed the line in the second half. Charlie Ewels was red-carded at the death for the visitors. "I'm really pleased with the result, I thought the application of the players was really excellent," said England head coach Steve Borthwick. "Clearly, late in the game our cohesion broke up a little against a very fast, skillful Japanese team who took their chances at the end of the game really well." England will face the All Blacks in Dunedin on July 6 and Auckland on July 13.

England's number 10 shirt is up for grabs on the tour, with Owen Farrell ineligible after deciding to continue his club career in France and George Ford injured. After England had started slowly, Smith staked his claim in impressive fashion, gliding through the Japan defense after a line-out midway through the first half for a stylish try. The 25-year-old then turned provider, picking out Feyi-Waboso for a try with a long pass before kicking into space to set up Slade after the half-time hooter. Smith was

quieter after the interval and blotted his copybook with a yellow card for a badly timed tackle.

It was a chastening start to Jones's second stint in charge of Japan, after handing starts to four debutants including university student Yoshitaka Yazaki at full-back. The hosts salvaged a measure of pride with late tries from winger Koga Nezuka and Takuya Yamasawa. "It was a pretty tough game for us today," said Jones, who took England to the 2019 World Cup final. "England are a strong, powerful team, but I was really pleased with our set-piece work, which kept us in the game for a long period of time. "We've been working on little things in our attack which created opportunities, but we weren't able to finish them," added the Australian.

England take control

Japan were forced into one late change before kick-off, with centre Samisoni Tui replacing Dylan Riley. Seungsin Lee's penalty gave them the lead with less than two minutes on the clock and the home side kept England back with their fast and aggressive attacking play early on. But the visitors woke up for Cunningham-South to power through a pile of bodies for the first try in the 14th minute. Smith added a second before finding Feyi-Waboso for another as England took control.

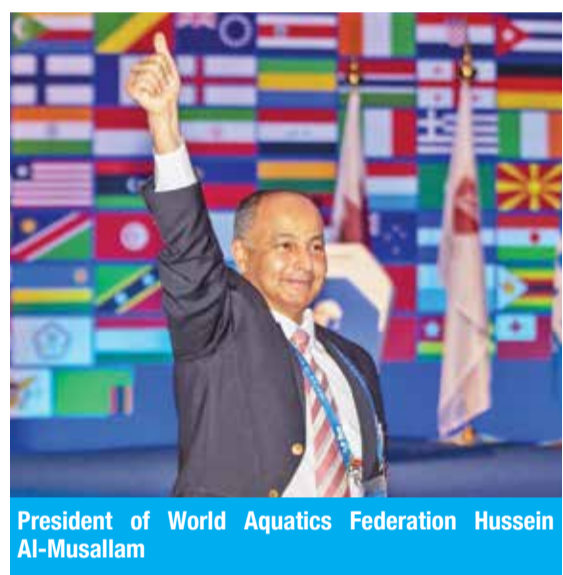
Japan were facing an uphill battle and their cause was not helped when Tiennan Costley had a try ruled out for a knock-on in the build-up. Slade finished the



TOKYO: Japan's Tiennan Costley (C) is tackled by England's Marcus Smith (L) and England's Chandler Cunningham-South during the international rugby union match between Japan and England at the National Stadium in Tokyo on June 22, 2024.—AFP

half by scoring England's fourth try and Mitchell bagged their fifth just minutes after the restart, dummying the Japan defense to dart home. Earl also took advantage of more gaps in the Japan back line to dash over in the

49th minute, before substitute Randall did the same 10 minutes later. Late scores for Nezuka and Yamasawa gave the scoreline a more respectable look for Japan, before Underhill grabbed another for England.—AFP



President of World Aquatics Federation Hussein Al-Musallam

World Aquatics Federation hails court victory

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) unanimously rejected an appeal by Leah Thomas against the policy and rules of the World Aquatics Federation headed by Kuwait's Hussein Al-Musallam. This has been seen as a victory for values and equal opportunity in the games. The appeal was to allow women to compete with men, and vice versa. This is a confirmation of world aquatics general policy and rules that were implemented and will remain in effect in all international aquatics championships.

can hold onto the Red Bulls, Ferraris and McLarens," he told Sky Sports. In third came the McLaren of Lando Norris, followed by the surprisingly quick Alpine of Pierre Gasly. Verstappen could only muster fifth ahead of Charles Leclerc in the other Ferrari, who earlier this week had acted as Olympic torch bearer on his very own streets of Monaco where he had claimed his maiden home Grand Prix last month.

After all the data-crunching from opening practice drivers emerged for the late afternoon session, with Verstappen straight away reporting his Red Bull's "weird understeer". George Russell, who ended up eighth overall, was quick out of the blocks, the Mercedes pole sitter from Montreal last time posting an early best lap of 1min 14.089sec. His friend Norris led the chasing pack one tenth of a second adrift ahead of Hamilton and Verstappen.

Hamilton in command

After a quiet F1, Leclerc was motoring, posting the third quickest time as Sainz, who has never made a podium on home tarmac, rose to the top - both Ferraris looking to bounce back from a double DNF in Montreal. Hamilton, a record-equaling six-time winner at the circuit, was also going encouragingly and took command at the midway stage in the latest positive sign of a return to form by Mercedes. Gasly, who earlier was wearing a French football shirt ahead of Friday evening's France clash with the Netherlands at Euro 2024, climbed to fourth.

Norris had laid down an encouraging marker when topping the times in opening practice. After a hard-to-read session as teams toyed with set ups and upgrades Norris had edged Verstappen in the three-time world champion's Red Bull by 0.024sec. Oliver Bearman, taking over Nico Hulkenberg's Haas for opening practice, had a steady time of it, assembling data and taking care of a car only lent to him as he takes another step towards a possible entry in F1 next season.

Verstappen approaches the 10th round of the 24-race world championship leading the drivers standings from Leclerc, with Norris hovering only eight points back in third. After missing out in Monaco to Leclerc and Miami to Norris Verstappen reasserted control with a stylish win in difficult circumstances in Canada. He will be eager to confirm that domination on Sunday in a race where he gained his maiden F1 win back in 2016. But much will depend on Saturday's qualifying, with 24 of 33 grands prix at the Barcelona-Catalunya Circuit won from pole position.—AFP

Hamilton tops Barcelona practice; Mercedes boss rails at 'sabotage' claim

BARCELONA: Lewis Hamilton topped practice for the Spanish Grand Prix on Friday after his Mercedes boss railed against "lunatic" claims the team were sabotaging the Ferrari-bound seven-time champion's car. Hamilton, who won his 103rd and last Grand Prix in December, 2021, led a finely-balanced second session with the reigning three-time champion Max Verstappen only fifth for Red Bull. Sunday's race is the first of a triple header as Formula One returns to Europe where Verstappen was generally expected to reassert his superiority after missing out on two of the past four races.

But on the evidence of Friday's opening two practice sessions Verstappen, who leads the 2024 championship by 56 points, has a real fight on his hands in a refreshing turn of events for impartial F1 fans. Hamilton's lap of 1min 13.264sec lifted him atop the timesheets on a sun-blessed day in Catalonia ahead of home hero Carlos Sainz, appearing at his last Spanish Grand Prix weekend as a Ferrari driver.

The British driver's performance came just hours after Mercedes boss Toto Wolff confirmed police were investigating an email from "a lunatic" claiming his team were sabotaging the car of Hamilton who will drive for Ferrari next season. A visibly angry Wolff spoke out in the strongest terms possible over the "upsetting" email which he denied had come from a member of Mercedes' 1500 workforce and which has been sent to Formula One's major players including the FIA.

"This was not from a member of the team, this email is upsetting, somebody talking about death," he said. "These lunatics, all those mad people out there - take a shrink." In hot sunshine, a welcome change after Thursday's scirocco rain and dust showers from the Sahara, Hamilton was making an early statement of intent at a track where Mercedes celebrated a double podium last year. "I think the car is definitely in a better place," Hamilton, putting aside all the off-track noise, reported.

Only seventh in the earlier opening session Hamilton added: "P2 felt quite a bit better. Made some good changes to the car and I felt great today." "I think we have some work to improve it overnight to see if we



MONTMELO: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton takes part in the first practice session at the Circuit de Catalunya on June 21, 2024 in Montmelo.—AFP

The Federation will continue to adopt an environment that strengthens justice and equal opportunity for athletes of both genders and safeguards women. "We must protect the rights of our athletes during championships. We must also maintain competitive fairness, especially protecting women in the World Aquatics Championships. Our policies and practices are always evaluated to represent fairness and the basic values of society, and we will continue in our commitment to work cooperatively with all those interested to support the principles of inclusivity in Aquatics games," President of World Aquatics Captain Hussein Al-Musallam said.

"We are confident that our policy represents a fair approach. Leah Thomas changed her gender from male to female during the secondary school stage, and the Aquatics Federation's policy was approved during the general assembly on July 20, 2022, following the formation of specialized medical, legal, and human rights committees," he added.

Dressel books 50m free Olympic title defense

LOS ANGELES: Caeleb Dressel shook off his doubts and booked a chance to defend his 50m freestyle Olympic title in Paris with a victory on Friday at the US Olympic swimming trials. Dressel, whose five gold medals at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 included the 50m and 100m free and 100m fly, booked his first individual swim in Paris after missing out with a third-place finish in the 100m free. The victory capped a long, often rocky road back to the top for the seven-time Olympic gold medalist, who stepped away from the sport abruptly in 2022.

Dressel looked in vintage form at Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts, exploding off the blocks to win the 50 free in 21.41sec. The time makes him the fourth-fastest in the world this year, a list led by Australian Cameron McEvoy. "I knew it was one of my toughest nights," said Dressel, who would return to top the times in the 100m butterfly semi-finals in 10.79sec. "(I was) not feeling great or anything special, so I just had to get it out tonight." With his wife, Meghan, celebrating in the stands with their four-month-old son, August, in her arms, Dressel checked the 50m free scoreboard and gave a mighty fist pump before acknowledging the crowd.

Chris Guiliano, winner of the 100m free and runner-up in the 200m free this week, was second in 21.69 - with Matt King shut out of the Olympic berths by an agonizing one-hundredth of a second as he finished third in 21.70. Dressel, 27, said his relaxed demeanor on deck in Indianapolis has belied some tense moments behind the scenes. "There's parts of this meet, I've had some very low lows," he said. "There's parts in my hotel room that aren't on camera, talking with my wife, talking with my therapist - it has not been smooth sailing this whole meet."

But, he added, he's trying to relish the good times after his extended break that refreshed his relationship to the sport. That includes the warmth he's felt from the crowd, which has topped 20,000 at the finals sessions. "It's just been fun," Dressel said. "I'm not going best times, I haven't done a single best time, but just when I'm walking out, not even performing, feeling the love from everyone, it's really special." After coming a long way in the past year in terms of performance, Dressel said, he's expecting more improvement in Paris in five weeks. "We're going to get faster, too," he said. "Looking forward to that."

Regan Smith capped a stellar week that started with a world record in the 100m backstroke final with a wire-to-wire win in the 200m back in 2min 05.16sec. Phoebe Bacon powered past reigning world champion Claire Curzan in the closing meters to take second in 2:06.27 and punch her ticket to Paris. Smith, who set 100m and 200m backstroke world records as a 17-year-old in 2019, has endured her share of ups and downs since then but she heads to Paris as a contender in both backstrokes and the 200m butterfly, which she won on Thursday. "I'm incredibly proud of this performance," Smith said. "I think it's a night and day difference versus 2021 to now."—AFP

Yang, Schmelzel share Women's PGA lead as Korda misses cut

LOS ANGELES: South Korea's Amy Yang and American Sarah Schmelzel, each seeking their first major title, shared the lead after Friday's second round of the Women's PGA Championship while top-ranked Nelly Korda made an epic collapse. World number 73 Schmelzel, who missed the cut in five of her past seven starts, fired the week's low round, a five-under 67, and Yang shot 68 to each finish on six-under 138 for 36 holes at Sahalee Country Club in Sammamish, Washington.

"It was a little softer this morning. Overall greens were perfect. I was just happy to take advantage of it," Schmelzel said. "Definitely firmed up out there so if you can hit it well off the tee, I think you can have some shorter irons and you can be a little more aggressive." Yang, who had the day's only bogey-free round, dropped her approach at the par-5 18th hole inches from the hole and tapped in to claim a share of the lead.

Korda, who has won six LPGA titles this season, was one stroke off the lead when the day began but fired a nine-over 81 - the highest score of her professional career - and finished on six-over 150 to miss the cut by a stroke. Reigning Olympic champion Korda had eight bogeys and a double bogey before making her lone birdie at 18, a tap-in after nearly holing out from a bunker for eagle.

Sharing third on 140, two strokes off the pace, were American Lexi Thompson, Japan's Hinako Shibuno and South Korean Ko Jin-young. Yang has 21 career top-10 major finishes without a victory, her closest calls being runner-up efforts at the 2012 and 2015 US Opens. The 34-year-old won her fifth and most recent LPGA title at last year's Tour Championship. Yang landed her approach at the par-5 sixth hole just outside eight feet then sank the birdie putt and after that made a 43-foot birdie putt at the par-4 seventh.

She pulled within one of the lead by making a birdie putt from just outside 13 feet at the 15th, setting up her closing birdie. Schmelzel made a 20-foot birdie putt at the par-5 second, made a birdie putt from just inside five feet at par-3 fifth, added another 20-foot birdie putt at seven, then made a four-foot birdie putt at 10 before her lone stumble, a three-putt bogey at the par-3 13th. The 30-year-old American sank a 10-foot birdie putt at the par-3 17th and dropped her approach inches from the hole for a tap-in birdie at the par-5 18th.

Schmelzel managed her best LPGA finish in March with a runner-up effort at the Blue Bay LPGA tournament but has struggled since. "Just staying patient, working on the same type of golf things," said Schmelzel of her perseverance. "It's a never-ending cycle and I was just reminding myself of that, that it's going to turn around again." Thompson, who announced last month that this would be her final season, fired a 72. Shibuno shot 70 and Ko fired a 68. Korda took her second major title at April's Chevron Championship, but she missed the cut at the US Women's Open and last week's LPGA Meijer Classic and has struggled to regain top form.—AFP



SAMMAMISH: Amy Yang of South Korea looks over a putt on the 12th hole during the second round of the KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Sahalee Country Club on June 21, 2024 in Sammamish, Washington.—AFP

Sports

Blues grab Super Rugby title

Clarke scores hat-trick as Blues crush Chiefs 41-10

AUCKLAND: Caleb Clarke scored a hat-trick as the Auckland Blues crushed the Waikato Chiefs 41-10 on Saturday to win their first full Super Rugby title since 2003. The ruthless home side had too much muscle in wet conditions at Eden Park, scoring five tries to triumph in the final in style. The Blues had won a Super Rugby Trans-Tasman crown in 2021 during a reduced competition because of the pandemic. Trailing 20-3 at halftime, the Chiefs were effectively shut out as the Blues nullified the influence of fly-half Damian McKenzie. The damp conditions suited the Blues pack, whose

effective style under new coach Vern Cotter has proved difficult to contain in winning 15 of 17 games this season.

Blues fly-half Harry Plummer landed all seven shots at goal in a 16-point haul as the Blues notched a 16th successive win at Eden Park. Plummer said the Blues had been overdue a title. "We've failed in the last couple of years at the last hurdles," Plummer said. "I'm just happy we did it for all the boys before us because I know they'll be watching and they deserve this success as well. "We played how we wanted to. We had a game plan and the boys fronted up

That's Blues rugby and that's rugby under Vern Cotter."

Home captain Patrick Tuipulotu was an inspiration at lock, playing just two weeks after suffering knee ligament damage in the quarter-finals. Tuipulotu and several of his team-mates put themselves firmly in contention for inclusion in the All Blacks squad named Monday for the two home Tests against England next month. Among them was Clarke, who crossed three times after flanker Akira Ioane had grabbed an early try to mark his final game for the Blues before taking up a Japanese club contract.

Clarke's first try came from a brilliant display of skill from the Ioane brothers, with Rieko and Akira both miraculously keeping the ball alive when they had appeared to be tackled into touch. The Chiefs' hopes sunk when prop George Dyer was shown a yellow card because of his team's persistent offending soon after the interval. Clarke bagged his third soon afterwards off a long pass from scrum-half Finlay Christie. Midfield back AJ Lam scored their final try, after replacement forward Simon Parker had bagged a consolation five-pointer for the Chiefs.

Chiefs captain Luke Jacobson con-

ceded his team were outplayed after losing a second successive final, having gone down to the Crusaders in Hamilton last year. "The Blues set it up right from the get-go tonight and made it very tough for us," Jacobson said. "We couldn't get the job done but we've got a really tight culture and we'll be back again." Their two only titles came back-to-back in 2012 and 2013 under Dave Rennie. The Blues' victory ends the reign of the Canterbury Crusaders, who had won the previous seven straight titles but failed to reach even the knock-out phase this year. — AFP

Oilers rout Panthers to force 1-game NHL Stanley Cup battle

MONTREAL: The Edmonton Oilers pushed their epic NHL Stanley Cup Final fightback to historic levels on Friday, defeating Florida 5-1 to force a winner-take-all seventh game. The host Oilers, who lost the first three games in the best-of-seven series, pulled level at 3-3 to force a game seven showdown on Monday at Florida. "Everyone in the locker room believes in us," Oilers left wing Zach Hyman said. "There's an unshakable belief in this bunch. "No matter how dire the circumstances are, we always believe we have a chance."

No Canadian-based NHL club has won the Stanley Cup since the 1993 Montreal Canadiens. The Oilers have not taken the trophy since 1990, the last of their epic run of five titles in seven seasons. But Edmonton could become only the second team in NHL history to rally to win the Stanley Cup Final after dropping the first three games. Only the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs have managed the feat, completing the historic fightback over Detroit. Not since 1945 has a team rallied from 0-3 down to force a game seven.

The Panthers, who lost to Vegas in last year's Stanley Cup Final, seek their first NHL crown in their third appearance in the championship series, having also been swept by Colorado in 1996. The Oilers, who won five NHL titles from 1984-1990, had not reached the Stanley Cup Final since 2006 until this year's run, which included a seventh-game ouster of Vancouver and a triumph over Dallas in the Western Conference final. This came after the adversity of losing nine of their first 12 games this season and the firing of coach Jay Woodcroft last November, setting up the Oilers revival under coach Kris Knoblauch.

Edmonton's Warren Foegele, standing just outside the left goalpost, scored his third goal of the playoffs off a pinpoint pass from Leon Draisaitl just 7:27 into



EDMONTON: Aleksander Barkov #16 of the Florida Panthers collides into Stuart Skinner #74 of the Edmonton Oilers during the second period of Game Six of the 2024 Stanley Cup Final at Rogers Place on June 21. — AFP

the contest to put the Oilers ahead. The Oilers out-shot Florida 11-2 in the first period, limiting the Panthers to their fewest shots on goal in any period all season. Edmonton made it 2-0 only 46 seconds into the second period on a wrist shot from Adam Henrique, who netted his fourth goal of the post-season.

Florida goal wiped out

Florida's Aleksander Barkov appeared to have answered for the Panthers just 10 seconds later but the Oilers challenged the goal saying the visitors were offside on the play. After a video review by league officials, the ruling was made that Florida was indeed offside on the play and the goal was disallowed, leaving Edmonton ahead 2-0. Hyman scored his second

goal of the final on a breakaway with 1:40 remaining in the second period to stretch Edmonton's lead to 3-0.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins blocked a shot for the Oilers and the rebound bounced out of the Florida attack zone and into perfect position for Hyman, who broke free up the center of the ice and flipped a backhand shot just under the right arm of Florida goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky. Barkov answered for the Panthers just 88 seconds into the third period, beating Edmonton goalie Stuart Skinner to pull Florida within 3-1. But the Panthers came no closer and after pulling Bobrovsky for an extra attacker, Edmonton's Ryan McLeod and Darnell Nurse scored into the empty net in the dying minutes to seal Florida's fate. — AFP

Copa America: Chile and Peru in stalemate

ARLINGTON: Two-time Copa America champions Chile opened their bid for a third title with a hard-fought 0-0 draw against Peru in Arlington on Friday. A scrappy encounter at the Texas home of the Dallas Cowboys NFL team saw neither side manage to get on top before a result that boosts Argentina's hopes of winning Group A. Chile were left ruing a golden missed chance from veteran Inter Milan forward Alexis Sanchez in the 16th minute.

Sanchez, one of the heroes of Chile's back-to-back Copa America victories in 2015 and 2016, was teed up in the six-yard box after a low pass from Victor Davila. But with plenty of time and space, the 35-year-old somehow scooped his shot over the bar as Peru were given a huge let-off. "I had one or two chances and this is the Copa America - when you have a chance you have to make it," Sanchez said afterwards. Despite his frustration in front of goal, Sanchez insisted Chile were satisfied with their display. "The feeling is good. I am happy with the performance. I am excited," said the former Barcelona and Arsenal forward.

Sanchez's botched effort ended up being the best chance of the night for Chile, who enjoyed 65% possession yet only managed one shot on target during the game. A disjointed encounter never really got going, with some 37 fouls breaking up play and contributing to a lacklustre spectacle. Peru's best chance came near the



ARLINGTON: Peru's forward #14 Gianluca Lapadula (C) fights for the ball with Chile's midfielder #07 Marcellino Nunez, Chile's defender #16 Igor Lichnovsky and Chile's defender #05 Paulo Diaz (L) during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament group A football match between Peru and Chile on June 21, 2024. — AFP

hour mark when Gianluca Lapadula volleyed over from close range. Peru's Uruguayan coach Jorge Fossati was encouraged by his team's performance. "In the first half Chile had more possession of the ball, although they could not do much damage to us," he said.

"I saw a Peru with a very good attitude, but anxious and with little confidence when it came to playing. But we improved substantially in the

second. "I didn't see anything in Peru that couldn't be corrected. I know we're not a machine, but we are taking steps in the right direction." The result leaves Argentina, 2-0 winners over Canada in the tournament's opening game on Thursday, two points clear at the top. Chile face Argentina in their second match on Tuesday in New Jersey in a replay of the 2016 Copa Centenario final at the same venue. — AFP

Florence, Fab Four: What to look for on the Tour de France

FLORENCE: As Tour de France embarks from Florence with the route, riders and finale shaping up to provide a spectacular edition as Jonas Vingegaard goes for a third successive title. AFP Sport looks at four things to watch on the 2024 race which culminates on the French Riviera rather than on the streets of Paris where the build-up to the Olympics will be taking place.

Fab Four

Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard of the Visma team is banking on his love of high mountains and heat but arrives in Florence still shaking off injury and staring down the barrel of a triple threat. Former two-time champion Tadej Pogacar is the form man having captured the Giro d'Italia and is backed by talented support in his UAE Emirates team. Veteran all-rounder Primož Roglic has won the Giro and the Vuelta and is targeting the Tour under Red Bull's colours who also boast powerful support. Roglic is however hampered by a reputation for self-destruction. Remco Evenepoel of Belgium claims he'll be satisfied with the best young rider jersey and a tilt at the podium. While Evenepoel is as talented as his three rivals, his Soudal Quick-Step team may struggle to provide him with support in the mountains. But his maverick *modus operandi* should see him steal at least some of the thunder.

Italian flavor

The Tour de France has never before started in Italy and the Grand Depart from Renaissance jewel Florence will provide a striking panorama. It also takes in a run along the Adriatic coast before heading back across Italy through Bologna. Italian riders will be desperate to take the yellow jersey before stage four when Vingegaard and the rest leave the industrial capital of Turin towards the Alps and back into France. The Tour de France is no stranger to starts in other European countries - Copenhagen was the early host in 2022 and Bilbao in 2023.

Peaks and plains

The seven mountain stages include four high-altitude finales, with the highest at a lung-busting 2,802m on stage 19 that will be to the liking of Vingegaard, who has twice vanquished Pogacar at altitude. The peaks may also suit 2019 Tour de France champion Egan Bernal who grew up at 2,700m in Colombia and is at ease in the rarefied atmosphere above the tree-line. Pogacar and Evenepoel are expected to be severely tested on this type of terrain. Conversely there are few flat sprint stages for British veteran Mark Cavendish to clinch what would be a record 35th stage win. He currently sits level with the 34 of Eddy Merckx.

Late twist in Nice

Instead of the traditional last-day procession along the Champs-Élysées in Paris, where there is almost no chance of an upset, fans can anticipate the potential for a decisive shake-up with an individual time trial along the Riviera coastline over the winding cuniche from Monaco. The race ends along the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. This final stage will evoke memories of the 1989 Tour, when American Greg LeMond started a final-day time trial 50 seconds behind French leader Laurent Fignon and ended up winning the race by eight seconds. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

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)

hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **Subhash** and (surname) **Kumar**. (#5623, 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,

I, **Ashraf Kamal**, holder of passport No. U0691584 do hereby change my name to **Ashraf Kamal** for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **Ashraf Kamal** and I also understand to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5625 23/06/2024)

Kante sparkles as France lose shine without Mbappe magic

Netherlands edge towards the last 16 of Euro 2024



LEIPZIG: Netherlands' forward #10 Memphis Depay (C) reacts next to France's midfielder #13 N'Golo Kante during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group D football match between the Netherlands and France at the Leipzig Stadium on June 21, 2024. — AFP

LEIPZIG: N'Golo Kante was the unlikely star of the show in the absence of a frustrated Kylian Mbappe as France and the Netherlands edged towards the last 16 of Euro 2024 after a 0-0 draw in Leipzig. Recalled from a two-year international exile, Kante has rolled back the years in Germany with back-to-back man-of-the-match awards to become the fulcrum of Didier Deschamps' midfield once more. A star of France's World Cup winning team in 2018, Kante's time with Les Bleus appeared spent after he departed Europe to join Saudi side Al-Ittihad 12 months ago.

Injuries had blighted the end of his spell at Chelsea and cost him a place at the World Cup two years ago. Deschamps' decision to bring back the 33-year-old has proven inspired despite some initial scepticism. "N'Golo is still out there running," Deschamps quipped in his post-match press conference on Friday. "But he doesn't only run. He also has a capacity to carry the ball up the field, which is important to complement our other players in midfield so we have variety and we are not always predictable."

Questions have been raised over how big European names lured by the riches of the Saudi Pro League would fare when thrust back into the intensity of an international tournament. But Kante has shown that a less demanding Saudi campaign could even be beneficial in comparison to those players worn out by gruelling seasons in Europe's top-five leagues. "It's important (to make a good impression), especially when you come back to the national team," said Kante.

Mbappe missed

As impressive as his ball-winning and boundless energy has been against Austria and the Netherlands,

the fact the diminutive midfielder has been France's star so far tells its own story. The 2022 World Cup finalists have managed just one goal in their opening two games and even that came via Austria defender Maximilian Wober. Mbappe's broken nose against Austria, which ruled him out on Friday, has not helped. But more is expected of a forward line that also boasts Antoine Griezmann, Olivier Giroud, Marcus Thuram, Ousmane Dembele and Kingsley Coman. Thankfully for France's hopes of becoming European champions for a third time, Mbappe looks set to be able to return with the aid of a mask. The Dutch stalemate continued a worrying trend for Deschamps without their star man.

Over the past two years, France have not won any of the seven games that Mbappe has not started. "Obviously the team is on a different plane when Kylian is in it," added Des-

champs. The France boss conceded his caution with the Real Madrid forward would have been different had it been a knockout game. The French have been here before under Deschamps and know underwhelming group games are easily forgotten - as long as they click in time for tougher tests in the knockout stages.

France have reached three finals in their last four major tournaments. The exception came at Euro 2020 when an out-of-sorts Mbappe failed to score and missed the crucial penalty in a shock last-16 exit to Switzerland. This time it is injury that threatens to ruin his Euros and France can ill-afford for their masked captain to be under par when he does return. Despite France having an abundance of talent, Mbappe remains the inspiration to complement Kante's perspiration that would make them the team to beat at Euro 2024. — AFP

Yaremchuk the hero as Ukraine beat Slovakia

DUSSELDORF: Roman Yaremchuk scored the winning goal as Ukraine beat Slovakia 2-1 at Euro 2024 on Friday, sparking tears from their players and earning the congratulations of President Volodymyr Zelensky for keeping alive their chances of reaching the knockout rounds. Ukraine trailed to an early Ivan Schranz goal in Duesseldorf and were in danger of suffering another defeat after losing 3-0 to Romania in their opening game at the tournament.

But Mykola Shaparenko equalised shortly after half-time and then set up substitute Yaremchuk to score the winner 10 minutes from time to get Ukraine's campaign in Group E up and running. "The players showed the spirit of Ukraine on the pitch and deserved the win," said coach Serhiy Rebrov, whose team are playing at a first major tournament since Russian forces invaded in 2022. "Today it was a very important win for Ukraine and for our country. I'm sure they were proud," Rebrov added. Zelensky greeted the win on X, formerly Twitter, by writing "Way to go guys!" He said it showed a country "that takes a punch and overcomes obstacles...This is exactly what Ukraine's National Football Team is doing today."

Slovakia knew victory would have taken them through to the knockout stage with a game to spare, but the result means they, Ukraine and Romania are all level on three points in a wide-open

Group E. Romania play Belgium, who are bottom without a point, on Saturday in Frankfurt before the final round of matches next Wednesday. "We had the chance to go through but we knew that we were playing a team that needed to win to get back into contention," said Francesco Calzona, the Slovakia coach. "We're the Cinderella of the group. Already playing here and trying to get out of the group is a great achievement."

Political backdrop

As they had before their first game against the Romanians, the Ukraine players emerged onto the sodden pitch in Duesseldorf with Ukrainian flags draped over their shoulders. With the war in their homeland still raging, it was impossible to avoid the political narrative to this match. Slovakia shares a border with Ukraine but the country's populist Prime Minister Robert Fico - who survived being shot in an assassination attempt last month - opposes giving military aid to the Ukrainians in its fight against the Russians.

Last weekend Peter Pellegrini was sworn in as Slovakia's new President after a campaign dominated by divisions over Ukraine. His predecessor, Zuzana Caputova, was a staunch Ukraine supporter, but Pellegrini is in favor of peace negotiations. There was more support in the stands for Ukraine than their opponents at the Merkur Spiel-Arena, as Rebrov made four changes following the heavy loss to Romania. Captain Taras Stepanenko and Girona winger Viktor Tsygankov were among the players to drop out, while Benfica's Anatoliy Trubin started in goal in place of Andriy Lunin, whose errors proved costly in the opening match. Slovakia, though, played with confidence after their fine



DUSSELDORF: Ukraine's forward #09 Roman Yaremchuk celebrates scoring his team's second goal during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group E football match between Slovakia and Ukraine at the Duesseldorf Arena. — AFP

result against Belgium, and Trubin made one stop from Lukas Haraslin before producing a fine reaction save to deny Schranz.

They were soon rewarded for their early pressure with the opening goal on 17 minutes. Trubin saved a David Hancko free-kick, then from the throw-in which followed Haraslin lobbed the ball from the byline to the back post for Schranz, of Slavia Prague, to head in. However, Ukraine improved and were almost level just after the half-hour mark when a low strike by Oleksandr Tymchyk was tipped onto the far post by the fingertips of Slovakia goalkeeper Martin Dubravka. — AFP



BERLIN: Poland's goalkeeper #01 Wojciech Szczesny dives to save a shot by Austria's forward #07 Marko Arnautovic during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group D football match between Poland and Austria on June 21, 2024. — AFP

Austria down Poland to close on last 16 at Euro 2024

BERLIN: Austria boosted their hopes of reaching the Euro 2024 knockout rounds on Friday as Marko Arnautovic scored in an impressive 3-1 win over Poland, for whom Robert Lewandowski only managed an ineffective substitute appearance. Ralf Rangnick's Austria will likely secure qualification for the last 16 if they can avoid defeat in their final Group D game against the Netherlands on Tuesday. Poland can no longer finish in the top two and need to defeat France to have any chance of progressing as one of the four best third-placed teams.

However, they will be out before that game if the Dutch fail to beat France later Friday. "Since I've been Austria coach that's the most important match we have had," said Austria coach Rangnick. "That's why we're so happy with the win... but also with the performance." Gernot Trauner headed Austria into a deserved early lead before Krzysztof Piatek, who had missed their opening loss to the Netherlands, equalized for Poland in the 30th minute. Lewandowski was introduced for his first appearance of the tournament with half an hour remaining, but was a peripheral figure as Poland slipped to the brink of elimination.

Christoph Baumgartner put Austria back in front after a fine team move and an end-to-end game was killed off by Arnautovic's 78th-minute penalty. "The whole nation deserves this," said Baumgartner, who celebrated his goal with Rangnick. "He (Rangnick) supported me every day, at half-time he told me that he needed me. So this is also a thank you to him." Austria, who reached the knockout phase at a major tournament for the first time since 1954 at Euro 2020, will be sure of going through if they defeat the Dutch. —AFP