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Mol gears up for end of amnesty

Plan to allow domestic workers to transfer to private sector



KUWAIT: (Left) Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah chairs a meeting of the Public Authority of Manpower on June 26, 2024. (Right) Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Mulla, Maj Gen Hamad Al-Munaifi and senior security officials from the interior ministry hold a meeting on June 26, 2024. — KUNA photos

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Top security officials from the interior ministry held a meeting on Wednesday to coordinate major security and search campaigns against residency violators who have failed to avail a three-month amnesty for illegals which comes to an end on June 30, the interior ministry said. The meeting was chaired by assistant undersecretary for special forces affairs and the head of field campaigns against violators Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Mulla and attended by senior officers.

Mulla conveyed to the meeting instructions by Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah to apply the law on all violators, the ministry said in a statement on X. The interior ministry had granted an amnesty from March 17 to June 17, which was later extended to June 30, to allow violators to either leave the country without any penalty and still have the right to return on a new visa, or to settle their violations by paying fines and legalizing their stay.

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Recruiters welcome Filipino workers, call for diversification



Mariam Macapudi



Khaled Al-Dakhnan

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Recruiters in Kuwait have welcomed the lifting of the ban on issuing visas to Filipinos and the resumption of recruiting domestic workers. Mariam Macapudi, President of the Filipino Association of Secretaries of Employment Agencies in Kuwait (Fil-Aseak) and Founder of Bayaning Filipino Migrant Workers in Kuwait, said the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) assured stronger protection and enhanced monitoring of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) deployed to Kuwait.

The deployment will resume following the issuance of policy guidelines, which include implementing a blacklist and whitelist system for recruitment agencies and employers, ensuring timely payment of wages through electronic payment and appointing welfare officers to monitor, report and assist OFWs throughout their stay.

Khaled Al-Dakhnan, Chairman of the Kuwait Union of Domestic Labor Offices (KUDLO), expressed hope that reopening visas for Filipino domestic workers could help overcome the financial losses domestic labor offices have faced due to the previous ban. "Around 85 percent of Kuwait's domestic labor offices were only hiring Filipino domestic helpers, whose work was almost halted for over a year and a half," he explained, noting that Filipino workers are the most in demand in Kuwait's domestic labor market.

"Kuwaitis are more familiar with dealing with them than any other nationality. They prefer them because of their high level of education and their ability to take excellent care of children, whether they are able-bodied or disabled," he said.

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Stark UN warning if Gaza war spreads; Erdogan slams West

GAZA: The outgoing United Nations humanitarian chief warned Wednesday that a spread of the Zionist-Hamas war to Lebanon would be "potentially apocalyptic", as fighting raged on in the southern Gaza Strip. Martin Griffiths described Lebanon as "the flashpoint beyond all flashpoints", especially its southern border with the Zionist entity which has seen daily cross-border violence.

"It's beyond planning. It's potentially apocalyptic," warned Griffiths whose term as UN humanitarian coordinator ends this week. A war involving Lebanon "will draw in Syria... it will draw in others", he told reporters in Geneva. "It's very alarming." Griffiths spoke as witnesses reported intense fighting between Zionist troops and Palestinian fighters in Gaza's southern city of Rafah, amid growing fears of a wider regional war.

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KHIAM, Lebanon: A Lebanese civil defence member inspects the site of a Zionist airstrike on this southern village near the border with the Zionist entity on June 26, 2024. — AFP

Assange returns home a free man

CANBERRA: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned home to Australia to start life as a free man Wednesday after admitting he revealed US defense secrets in a deal that unlocked the door to his London prison cell. Assange landed on a chilly Canberra evening in a private jet, the final act of an international drama that led him from a five-year stretch in the high-security Belmarsh prison in Britain to a courtroom in a US Pacific island territory and, finally, home.

His white hair swept back, the Australian raised a fist as he emerged from the plane door, striding across the

tarmac to give a hug to his wife Stella that lifted her off the ground and then to embrace his father. Dozens of television journalists, photographers and reporters peered through the airport fencing to see Assange, who wore a dark suit, white shirt and brown tie.

"He will be able to spend quality time with his wife Stella, and his two children, be able to walk up and down on the beach and feel the sand through his toes in winter — that lovely chill," Assange's father, John Shipton, said earlier in the day.

Prison time had taken a toll on Assange, who did not attend a WikiLeaks news conference to mark his return, his wife told reporters. "You have to understand, he needs time, he needs to recuperate, and this is a process," she said, apparently close to tears.

Continued on Page 6



CANBERRA: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gives a thumbs up after arriving at Canberra Airport on June 26, 2024, after he pleaded guilty at a US court in Saipan. — AFP

NATO names Dutch PM Rutte as next boss

BRUSSELS: NATO's 32 nations on Wednesday appointed outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as the alliance's next head, handing him the job at a crucial moment with Russia on the march in Ukraine and US elections looming. Rutte will take over from Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Oct 1 after major powers — spearheaded by the United States —

wrapped up his nomination ahead of a summit of NATO leaders in Washington next month.

"Mark is a true transatlanticist, a strong leader and a consensus-builder," Stoltenberg said on social media after NATO ambassadors approved the appointment. "I know I am leaving NATO in good hands," he added. Rutte said it was a "tremendous honor" to take over from Stoltenberg once his decade at the helm of NATO ends. "The alliance is and will remain the cornerstone of our collective security. Leading this organization is a responsibility I do not take lightly," he wrote online.

Continued on Page 6



THE HAGUE: Outgoing Netherland's Prime Minister Mark Rutte takes a selfie with a bystander as he leaves the Binnenhof on June 26, 2024. — AFP



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Sunlight or supplements? How to protect your bones

Vitamin D deficiency raising concerns

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: During the scorching summer season in Kuwait, people avoid getting exposed to the sun - a powerful natural source of vitamin D. As a result, research has found a high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency among the population, raising concerns about its negative impact on bone health. So, what do experts say about the solutions available to address this phenomenon?

Dr Ahmad Abdul Malak, a family medical consultant, stated, "standing in the sun for 10 to 15 minutes could help produce 10,000 to 25,000 IU of vitamin D, which can meet your needs for at least seven to ten days." He explained that the daily required vitamin D intake for an adult ranges from 400 to 600 units, though some international institutions suggest 800 units daily. "Exposing your hands and arms is enough, but that should be direct, not through a window or glass, and without

wearing sunscreen," he added.

The IOF (International Osteoporosis Foundation) suggested doing this activity outside peak sunlight hours, before 10 am and after 2 pm, daily, and advised being careful not to get skin burned. It noted that exposing the skin to sunlight is how we get 70-80 percent of the vitamin D our body needs. However, it stated that sunlight can be unreliable due to factors like season, geographic latitude, skin pigmentation, and age, which all affect vitamin D production. IOF added that natural food sources of vitamin D include oily fish (such as salmon, sardines and mackerel), eggs, mushrooms and liver.

Dr Ahmad Alhashemi, Internal medicine, endocrinology, diabetes doctor, and assistant professor at Kuwait University doesn't consider sun light's exposure as a viable solution in the extreme heat conditions in Kuwait. He said that the sun could cause serious health risks on our skin. "Vitamin D



Dr Ahmad Abdul Malak



Dr Ahmad Alhashemi



the efficacy of vitamin D supplements in reducing the risk of bone fractures as we age, which is a primary function of vitamin D. Alhashemi recommended taking one pill of vitamin D a day, which almost carries 1,000 units of vitamin D.

pill and syrup can do the same job as the sun," he explained, adding that they could even be more effective and safer in substituting the deficiency. He said that most strong research papers support

Q8's forum discusses energy consumption and climate change

PARIS: Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) organized a conference in Rome, dubbed "Smart city roadmap for the government", aiming to promote partnership between private public sectors and pave the way to cities of the future. Attending the conference alongside Italian Minister of Environment Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy, Nasser Al-Qahtani, stated that the conference handles topics of utmost importance.

He called it a valuable opportunity for public and private sectors to exchange perspectives, and discuss energy consumption in light of climate changes affecting the whole world. Al-Qahtani also said that it is a reflection of Kuwait's commitment to UN charter on climate change and decreasing carbon emissions. He commended Q8's efforts in organizing this conference as it became of social and economic weight in Italian market, making notable contributions. The conference, launched on Wednesday, was also attended by a number of high ranking officials from both Kuwaiti and Italian sides. — KUNA



Aliaa Shaikhan Al-Farsi

Workshop discusses effect of tire landfills on public health

KUWAIT: The Environmental Affairs Committee at Kuwait's Municipal Council held an environmental workshop chaired by Municipal Council Member Engineer Aliaa Shaikhan Al-Farsi, focusing on issues



regarding the tire landfills in Salmi, which Engineer Aliaa and other members of the Municipal Council visited last week. The workshop also discussed the effect of these landfills and tire disposals on the environment and public health. The workshop focused on deriving short and long term environmental solutions that would positively impact the community regarding environmental sustainability. Representatives from 13 different state departments attended the workshop, including the Environment Public Authority, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Interior, as well as the World Health Organization.

FM receives credentials of new Honduras envoy



KUWAIT: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Wednesday received the credentials of the new Ambassador of Honduras to Kuwait Francisco Jose Herrera Alvarado. During the meeting, the minister wished the new ambassador success and further prosperity for the two countries. — KUNA



KUNA Kids explore Kuwait Times warehouse with Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Bofain.



Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Bofain interacts with KUNA Kids.



KUNA Kids raising their hands to be on camera at Kuwait Times Studio.

KUNA Kids get a glimpse into world of journalism

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: KUNA Kids visited Kuwait Times and Kuwait News on a field trip, giving them a glimpse into the world of journalism before and during the digital era. The kids (with inquisitive minds) learned about journalism and the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. Despite growing up in a digital age, the children were fascinated by the printed paper copies of Kuwait Times, marveling at the distributed copies of the 63-year-old paper edition they were given by Kuwait Times team, exploring the texture, color, and the vintage TV featured Kuwait Times inaugural edition.

With eyes that have never seen the world without technology, KUNA Kids visited Kuwait Times Archives Room, which captivated their attention as they explored historical pages with genuine curiosity. This journey took them on a travel to the past, a time they have no memory of, making the experience even more pleasant and interesting. It was an opportunity for them to witness the world before digital technology and appreciate the evolution of media.

The kids were also thrilled by the excitement of being on camera, where they visited Kuwait Times Studio to experience the thrill of working behind the scenes in video reporting. Throughout the visit, the children were full of questions and eagerness to understand the type of personality a reporter needs and the detailed process of creating a printed newspaper. The Kuwait Times field trip was a memorable adventure for the KUNA Kids, sparking their curiosity and enthusiasm in the field of journalism. It was not just an educational experience but also a delightful journey.



KUNA Kids and Kuwait Times and Kuwait News staff take a group photo. - Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUNA Kids being introduced to the Editorial Department.



KUNA Kids check Kuwait Times newspaper layout.



KUNA Kids explore Kuwait Times Archives Room.



KUNA Kids at Kuwait Times warehouse.



KUNA Kids practice video reporting at Kuwait Times Studio.

Local

Kuwait Cabinet sounds alarm about rumor-mongering, disinformation

Social media users, news agencies urged to ensure credibility, national interest

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Cabinet on Tuesday cautioned against the perils of rumor-mongering and disinformation, urging social media and news services to ensure professionalism, credibility, and national interest. The Cabinet gave the warning during its weekly meeting held at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. It lashed out at some social media sites and news agencies for having recently published ungrounded reports on measures taken by ministries and governmental bodies.

Calling on everybody to shoulder responsibility for publishing or republishing fake news stories, the Cabinet warned that legal action would be taken against anyone involved in rumor-mongering and disinformation. During the meeting, First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah apprised the Cabinet of the outcomes of his meeting with Philippine Overseas Employment Administration chief Bernard Olalia, which ultimately found a breakthrough to lift the ban on domestic employment in the Philippines.

He added that both sides had also agreed to form a joint committee pertinent to domestic labor affairs, one that would convene in a routine manner

to address any sticking points that could potentially emerge. Afterwards, the Cabinet listened to an explanation from the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Dr Mahmoud Bushehri, about the country's power system.

In this context, the ministers voiced sincere thanks and appreciation to all citizens and residents, along with state bodies and private companies, for their swift response to calls for cutting power consumption. The Ministry of Information was then asked to interview ministers and senior state officials to highlight their services and accomplishments in a bid to bolster communication between officials and citizens.

Furthermore, the Cabinet tasked the Kuwait Municipality with completing its efforts, in collaboration with other state bodies, to put in place ministerial decrees pertinent to Sulaybiqhat Bay and Al-Jahra Corniche development projects. In this regard, the Cabinet asked the municipality to send it a periodical report on relevant developments and executive steps bearing on both developmental projects. Finally, the ministers approved the Kuwaiti nationality verification committee's recent decisions, including the withdrawal of some people's nationality as per Law 15/1959 as for Kuwaiti nationality. — KUNA



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

KNPC enhances digital transformation process

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has made strenuous efforts to enhance the digital transformation process in all its operations to protect assets, develop operational efficiency, and maintain its competitiveness in global markets. In a statement to KUNA, Manager of Information Technology Department at KNPC Eng Naji Al-Marri said that KNPC's journey in the field of digital transformation and the accumulated experience it has gained since its establishment in 1960 have brought it very close to declaring itself a "paperless company."

Al-Marri added that the company has achieved advanced levels of mechanization of its operations in its various facilities, including the main building, Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries, local marketing, and Sabhan and Ahmadi warehouses. He noted the efforts of successive generations of employees in the company that stand behind achieving this technical institutional excellence, pointing out that it has given them the opportunity to present their ideas and development projects in the technical field.

He explained that the company is currently moving towards building a modern digital infrastructure to accommodate artificial intelligence technologies and other technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. He stated that the digital transformation has led to improved performance of technical work in refineries and



Bassam Al-Shammari

Naji Al-Marri

administrative departments through the use of the latest modern technologies and working to simplify and unify operations and procedures in all fields of the company.

For his part, KNPC Chairman of the Digital Transformation and Innovation Committees, Eng Bassam Al-Shammari, said in a similar statement that various digital transformation initiatives have been adopted by the company. He added that among these initiatives are the integrated hydrocarbon supply chain, the digital twin, smart asset management, improving current systems, smart energy management, smart monitoring, a smart connected workforce, smart automation, and smart procurement.

He pointed out that the company developed an operational structure for the digital transformation strategy and formed committees to manage the plans, including the Supreme Steering Committee and the Digital Project Management Office. He explained that the tasks of the Su-



Kuwait National Petroleum Company

preme Steering Committee include monitoring the progress made on established and approved operational plans, reviewing performance, and achieving goals.

Al-Shammari added that the tasks of the Digital Project Management Office include providing reports of timeline, benefits, budget, achieved return, work requirements, and guidance on issues and challenges that arise during project implementation. KNPC conducted the largest search for local and global markets to find the best solutions, information, and partnerships with local and international companies with experience in managing and implementing digital transformation projects.

The company currently has a single digital community with a membership of 130 employees from various administrative and technical departments of the company and coordinates with the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) regarding the implementation of this strategy. — KUNA

In my view

Diplomatic Women's Day

Dr Nermin Y Al-Houti



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The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Embassy in Kuwait celebrated World Diplomatic Women's Day for the second year in a row. An invitation was sent to us to participate in this year's celebration on June 24, 2024. The celebration began with a speech by the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait, Prince Sultan Bin Saad Bin Khalil Al Saud, followed by a speech by the advisor at the Kuwait Foreign Ministry, Riham Al-Ghanim, and then a speech by Shurouq Al-Quwaie from Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry, who surprised the audience with her presence.

Al-Quwaie spoke about a diplomatic woman in Saudi Arabia and her role in the Foreign Ministry. What distinguished Al-Quwaie is her confidence while talking about the Saudi woman and her diplomatic role (being her) at the Foreign Ministry or in the diplomatic missions abroad. The World Diplomatic Women's Day celebration at the Saudi Embassy was distinguished by the presence of a large number of women diplomats from the Foreign Ministry and diplomatic missions in Kuwait, Arab countries, and foreign nations. We cannot ignore the men, as the celebration witnessed the presence of ambassadors from Arab and Western countries who celebrated with women that day. Finally, "we always pray to Allah Almighty to grant the country of the two Holy Mosques happiness and more blessings."



Ambassador Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah submits her credentials to Jamaica's Governor-General. — KUNA photos

Kuwait's ambassador submits credentials to Jamaica Gov-General

WASHINGTON: Kuwait Ambassador to the United States Sheikhha Al-Zain Sabah Al-Naser



Al-Sabah submitted her credentials as non-resident Ambassador to the Governor-General of Jamaica, Patrick Linton Allen, in a ceremony held at Allen's residence in Kingston.

According to a statement from the Kuwait Embassy in Washington, Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah conveyed on Tuesday greetings from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince,

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, to the Governor-General of Jamaica.

The ambassador expressed Kuwait's appreciation for Jamaica's supportive stance towards Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion and also praised the strong bilateral relations between the two countries over the past 50 years. He wished further prosperity in bilateral relations for serving joint interests. — KUNA

Seminar explores ways to advance Kuwait's sustainable agenda

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA), in cooperation with the European Union Delegation to Kuwait and the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project have organized a seminar titled "Kuwait's Sustainable Future: Collaborative Solutions for Green Transition, Renewables, and Energy Efficiency", which was held at the EPA premises on 26 June. The event brought together distinguished speakers from the European Union and Kuwait, as well as many participants including leading industry experts, policymakers, diplomats, researchers and business representatives, allowing for an insightful exchange on ways to advance Kuwait's sustainable agenda.

During the event, Eng Samira Mohamad Al-Kandari, Acting General Manager of the EPA, said: "Kuwait is seeking ways for mutual cooperation with the EU countries, striving diligently to support and develop its strategies in the field of renewable energy, and to enhance energy efficiency in the relevant institutions. This is done while taking into consideration the specific national circumstances of Kuwait, where natural resources and energy sources differ in structure and content from those in the European Union due to the geographic location and economic capabilities".

"Regarding renewable energy investments, Kuwait has its own record in this field through its investment funds,



Kuwait also seeks to gain expertise from the European Union in renewable energy by means of mutual cooperation in capacity building, technology transfer, improving energy efficiency, and using the best practices and available solutions," she added.

Anne Koistinen, EU Ambassador to Kuwait, during her opening remarks said "The EU as a global frontrunner on green transition is committed to supporting Kuwait in achieving its 2030 renewable energy targets. This fruitful collaboration goes in line with the EU's Strategy towards the Gulf, where strengthening EU-Kuwait cooperation on energy, green transition and climate change is a top priority. It also showcases EU's efforts to promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship globally".

The event allowed the European Union and Kuwait to exchange best practices and know-how on topics such as the path to green transition, the integration of renewable energy technologies, as well as better environmental regulation, and strategies for economic diversification



Anne Koistinen, EU Ambassador to Kuwait

through renewable energy and energy efficiency investments. This initiative supports Kuwait's vision towards achieving its 2030 renewable energy targets as well as Kuwait Vision 2035. The success of this event reinforces the strategic importance of Kuwait-EU relations and sets a positive trajectory for ongoing collaborative efforts aimed at fostering a sustainable future for Kuwait, the European Union and beyond.

Kuwait Investment Authority to open office in Saudi

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf said on Tuesday that the Kuwait Investment Authority's board decided to open a representative office in Saudi Arabia, within the framework of strengthening economic and investment ties between Kuwait and the Kingdom and the desire to bolster cooperation in such relations.

In a statement, Al-Mudhaf, who is also Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Investment Authority, said, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is witnessing great economic development and growth that has led to the creation of a rich investment environment that has attracted the attention of the entire world."

The Kingdom's economy is among the major economies in the world, and it is a permanent member of the Group of Twenty (G20), the minister said. The minister noted that the kingdom has "a prominent and influential role in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and is witnessing a remarkable increase in its economic and investment importance and its increasing role in international economic decision-making."

The minister added, "through the presence of a representative office of the General Investment Authority in the Kingdom, the Authority will be able to explore and seize investment opportunities, which will certainly increase the prospects for cooperation with Saudi Arabia and international companies in joint projects to enhance the economic development of both countries." Al-Mudhaf also noted that "opening the representative office will contribute to enhancing trade and investment exchange between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia." — KUNA

News in Brief

KFF promotes 564 officers

KUWAIT: The Acting Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Lieutenant General Khaled Fahad has decided to promote up to 564 non-commissioned officers of various ranks in appreciation of their devotion and sincere efforts in protecting souls and properties. The KFF said in a statement on Wednesday that Lieut. Gen Fahad has taken the decision upon instructions by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Kuwait deplors Dagestan attacks

KUWAIT: Kuwait has condemned a string of attacks targeting churches and synagogues in Russia's predominantly Muslim region of Dagestan, which left scores of people either dead or injured. Kuwait remains "firmly opposed" to any form of "violence and terrorism," said a foreign ministry statement, wishing a swift recovery for those wounded amid the rampage. The Kremlin dismissed fears Russia's historically restive North Caucasus region is facing a wave of violence after a series of coordinated weekend attacks on churches, synagogues and police killed at least 20 in the southern Dagestan region. The attacks came just three months after Islamic State (IS) group fighters killed more than 140 in a Moscow concert hall, the deadliest attack on Russia for almost 20 years, raising fresh questions about Russia's security apparatus. Moscow said it had concluded an "anti-terrorist operation" and killed five of the assailants behind the attacks in the regional capital Makhachkala and Derbent, a historic city on the coast of the Caspian Sea. — Agencies

GCC and Brazil enhance ties

RIYADH: During an official visit to Brazil, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jaseem Al-Budaiwi emphasized the importance of enhancing strategic relations and cooperation between GCC countries and Brazil, asserting the status of GCC countries with Brazil and the international community. This was mentioned in a statement by the GCC General Secretariat following a reception hosted by Kuwait's Ambassador to Brazil Talal Al-Mansour on Tuesday, attended by senior Brazilian officials, including the Minister of Agriculture, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary, and several members of the Brazilian Parliament, as well as numerous foreign diplomats. Al-Budaiwi stated that the large presence of a number of Brazilian official figures and the large number of ambassadors accredited in Brasilia reflect the status enjoyed by GCC countries in Brazil and the international community. The GCC made it clear on the efforts to enhance their relations with countries and international organizations, he added. — KUNA

KFAED underscores importance of OPEC's third development forum

VIENNA: Acting General Director of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), Waleed Al-Bahar, underscored the importance of OPEC's third development forum, affirming Kuwait's constant support for sustainable development efforts across the globe. Speaking to KUNA, Al-Bahar explained that the three-axis forum handles sustainable development goals and challenges they might face.

"This year's edition examines enhancing institutional abilities, improving the performance of corporations and individuals, and expediting smart, sustainable infrastructure, which underwent a concerning regression that reflected quite clearly on sustainable development," he added. On the Fund's contribution, Al-Bahar commented that they took part yesterday in a meeting for Arab funds, a meeting held annually to discuss important topics and coordinate positions.

He highlighted the Fund's projects, which have reached 105 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America since its inauguration in 1961. On the geopolitical and health challenges facing development, he stated that the coronavirus pandemic affected the progress of a number of projects as the health sector took priority.

Al-Bahar further added that they are now looking into environmental projects providing clean energy.

Meanwhile, Head of the OPEC Fund for International Development, Dr Abdulhamid Al-Khalifa, emphasized on Wednesday the significance of the outcomes of the Third Development Forum organized by the Fund for the third consecutive year. On the occasion of opening the new Fund building in Vienna, Dr Al-Khalifa said in a statement to KUNA that the topics discussed at the forum focused on the significance of sustainable development.

He explained that the Development Forum addressed three main topics: enhancing infrastructure development and maximizing its benefits through technology and artificial intelligence (AI). It also discussed the necessity of enhancing focus on human resources, and the last topic was the importance of collaboration between donors and beneficiaries to achieve developmental goals.

Dr. Al-Khalifa highlighted Kuwait's role within the Fund, affirming that in this regard it's the second largest contributor after Saudi Arabia in the Fund's budget, as Kuwait's sup-

port for development is known worldwide, not only through OPEC but through other development funds. He pointed out the cooperation between the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the OPEC Fund on several projects in developing countries.

He clarified that financial pledges by donors often take the form of commitments, but what matters most is altering these commitments into tangible actions on the ground. This implies knowledge-sharing activities in developing countries to assist them in developing long-term and sustainable plans. Dr Al-Khalifa provided a brief history of the OPEC Fund, established in 1976 with Kuwait as one of the founding countries. Since then, the Fund has engaged in developmental activities in nearly 125 countries worldwide. — KUNA



Waleed Al-Bahar



Farewell event for Lesotho envoy's wife

KUWAIT: The Friends Club member Kristana Khuraibet held a farewell lunch for Mabolina, wife of the Ambassador of Lesotho, as their mission in Kuwait comes to an end. The event was attended by the Club members including the wives of ambassadors and other diplomats in Kuwait. The event gave the Club members a chance to catch up before the summer break. During the event, Mabolina spoke fondly of her time in Kuwait, her impressions about the country and the friends she has made here. She wished Kuwait and the Club members all the best. At the end of the event, she was presented with a commemorative gift on behalf of all of the Friends Club members by the club's advisor Narjes Alshatti.



Kuwait Airways, Thai Airways deal to boost tourism

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways announced on Tuesday the signing of a codeshare agreement with Thai Airways, which will allow the code to be used for flights between Kuwait and Bangkok and from Kuwait to many destinations across Europe, starting on Wednesday. The company said in a press release that the common code will provide access to European cities such as Rome, Milan, and Athens and will also allow Kuwaitis to use the common code between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

The statement quoted Kuwait Airways CEO Ahmad M. Alkreebani as saying that this agreement will strengthen trade and tourism relations between Kuwait and Thailand, "and we will work together to provide the best distinguished services to passengers and improve the experience of clients." Alkreebani added that the codeshare agreement will enable passengers to book flights through various booking channels, such as the website or through travel and tourism agents and offices of both companies, stressing that it will contribute "significantly to the consolidation of relations and joint cooperation between Kuwait and the friendly Kingdom of Thailand."

For his part, Thai Airways CEO Chai Eamsiri said that the signing of this important codeshare partnership with Kuwait Airways will provide passengers with greater options in traveling between Bangkok and Kuwait with access to other parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and European countries. Eamsiri expressed his aspiration to develop



business relations and to provide more value-added services in the future "to enhance smooth cooperation and provide more distinctive options and experiences for passengers."

He pointed out that, based on the approval of the concerned authorities, Thailand, in cooperation with Kuwait, will provide various options for flights from Kuwait to destinations in the Middle East such as Amman, Dubai, Jeddah, Riyadh, Casablanca, and Cairo, in addition to flights from Kuwait to Korea and the Far East as well as Thailand. Travelers from Kuwait and those wishing to travel to Asian cities can go through the Kuwaiti website, which will link bookings directly with Thailand, to view a wide choice of new destinations in Asia. Passengers from Thailand can also reach European cities by following the same procedure onboard Kuwait Airways. — KUNA

Ministries of Public Works, Electricity hail exchange of expertise

KUWAIT: The Ministries of Public Works and Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy hailed cooperation and exchange of expertise as a cornerstone to the accomplishment of vital projects contributing to the state's infrastructure and strategic goals. This was communicat-

ed during the visit of the Minister of Electricity and the State Minister for Housing Affairs, Dr Mahmoud Bushehri, to Public Works Minister Dr Noura Al-Mashaan.

In a statement, the Ministry of Public Works explained that the visit included a discussion of plans and projects concerning infrastructure. In order to promote progress and development, the two discussed removing obstacles and accelerating the pace of work relating to residential care projects, as well as addressing issues in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, South Saad Al-Abdallah and Al-Mutlaa as promptly as possible. — KUNA



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Kenya president withdraws tax hikes

Indian opposition chief vows lawmakers will not be silenced

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Palestinians struggle amid heat wave

Displaced Gaza families face rising temperatures without air conditioning, showers, health care

KHAN YUNIS: Sweltering summer weather is worsening conditions in Gaza where nearly all the 2.3 million inhabitants have been driven from their homes by the Zionist military campaign and where there is almost no electricity and little clean water. Families living in tents, in crowded shelters in UN schools or crammed into private homes, face the rising summer temperatures without air conditioning, showers or a functioning health system amid rising rates of malnutrition and disease.

In a school classroom shared as a shelter among different families in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza Strip, Amal Nsair, 38, is worried that the rising heat and humidity and the increase in mosquitoes and other insects will harm their health. Her son cannot sleep and she has nothing to cool him except a fan made from cardboard. The family's home was in Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza Strip, which they fled earlier in the conflict. "My son's body is full of heat. In the past I would wash him but I need water. I'm very worried about my husband's health too. He has lost half his weight from carrying water," she said.

Temperatures in Gaza this week are forecast above 30 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) and recent years have brought a series of lethal heat-waves across the Mediterranean as the summer advances. Gaza's electricity was largely provided from the Zionist entity, but this was cut off as soon as the war began along with fuel for the territory's only power station. Diesel to supply private generators was largely exhausted soon afterwards.

The Zionist military campaign has levelled swathes of the enclave, destroying most infrastructure, and killing more than 37,600 Palestinians according to health authorities in Gaza. The nine-month assault began after Hamas sent fighters across the border from Gaza, killing more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seizing 253 hostages according to Zionist tallies.

"Insects and mosquitoes are biting us all night long. I don't sleep so that I can apply cream on my child, any kind of ointment or cream so he does not get bitten by the mosquitoes. They are scratching all night," said Nsair. — Reuters



KHAN YUNIS: A displaced Palestinian woman, Amal Nsair, fans her children as they sleep in a school where they shelter, during hot weather and power cuts on June 25, 2024. — Reuters

Trump, Biden gird for historic US presidential debate

ATLANTA: Joe Biden and Donald Trump prepared Wednesday for the biggest moment so far in the US election - the first of two high-stakes debates that could upend the race. Thursday's showdown will raise the campaigning to boiling point, with both camps recently escalating their increasingly personal attacks. "I think I have been preparing for it for my whole life... We'll do very well," Trump told right-wing network Newsmax in an interview on his debate preparation.

The 2024 election looks close, with Trump enjoying a slight polling advantage in the all-important swing states in an election likely to be decided by a few hundred thousand votes across a handful of battlegrounds. The rivals step onstage for the 90-minute clash, hosted by CNN in the southern city of Atlanta, seeking to allay

fears about serious political liabilities. Biden, 81, faces the most concern about his mental sharpness, with voters much more likely to bring up his age than Trump's, despite the Republican being just three years younger.

'Out for himself'

Both have faltered and appeared muddled during public events, although Trump in particular has raised eyebrows over his rambling and occasionally bizarre campaign speeches. Trump is also engulfed in controversy over his inflammatory rhetoric and a glut of criminal cases he faces, as well as fears that he would weaponize the presidency to settle personal scores.

Biden spent the week off the radar at the mountain-side retreat of Camp David near Washington, preparing with mock debates. Trump's preparation has been more relaxed, eschewing dress rehearsals in favor of informal policy roundtables and workshoping debate strategy with rally crowds.

Aides have encouraged him to focus on his perceived strength on the economy and crime, while Biden will seek to paint Trump as unhinged and unfit for office. The Biden campaign released an ad saying Trump is preoccupied with "revenge" rather than helping

voters, and the Democratic National Committee put up billboards in Atlanta reminding voters that the Republican is a convicted felon. "Come November, Georgians will head to the polls remembering that President Biden looks out for them, while white-collar crook Donald Trump will only look out for himself," said DNC spokesperson Jackie Bush.

'Ready for this'

The Trump campaign has repeatedly characterized Biden as feeble and incompetent, but changed track in recent days following warnings that setting low expectations for the Democratic president would only help him. "We know that Joe Biden, that after taking an entire week off, will be ready for this," senior Trump campaign advisor Jason Miller told reporters.

Backed by right-wing media figures, Trump and his team has been pushing the baseless theory that Biden will be hyped up on performance-enhancing drugs. The ex-president and his people have also been accused of "working the ref" and laying the groundwork for a poor Trump performance by repeatedly making insinuations of bias on the part of CNN.

Miller said Trump would emerge as the clear choice if



NASHVILLE: This combination of pictures shows former US President Donald Trump (left) and President Joe Biden during a presidential debate in 2020. — AFP

"allowed" to set out his vision for America "without the blatant interference of CNN or the two moderators" of the debate - the first ever between two candidates who have already served in the Oval Office. — AFP



Jamaal Bowman



George Latimer

Pro-Zionist candidate ousts pro-Palestinian incumbent in primary

NEW YORK: A pro-Zionist candidate beat a pro-Palestinian rival in New York on Tuesday in the most expensive House primary ever, a vote which exposed the Democratic Party's internal divisions over the war in Gaza.

George Latimer, backed by former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, ousted incumbent Jamaal Bowman, who has accused the Zionist entity of genocide in Gaza and advocated for a ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

More than \$23 million was spent on the election as of last week, according to AidImpact, a political advertising tracking group cited by local media. Of that, \$16 million was poured into campaigns against Bowman, mostly funded by affiliates of the AIPAC Jewish lobby group. Latimer, 70, is a supporter of the entity and has

called for the return of hostages captured by Hamas before any eventual ceasefire.

The Gaza war dominated the candidates' debate, which became a tug-of-war between the progressive, pro-Palestinian faction of the Democratic Party and the centrist, pro-Zionist front.

Senator Bernie Sanders told a rally in support of Bowman that "never before in history (has) powerful special interest spent so much money trying to defeat a candidate". "This election is not about Jamal versus Mr Latimer. This election is about whether or not the billionaire class and the oligarchy will control the United States government," Sanders said at a rally in the Bronx on Saturday.

The 16th congressional district in upstate New York encompasses both affluent suburbs of large Jewish communities, as well as poorer neighborhoods including the Bronx, home to Black and Hispanic communities.

Bowman, 48, was the district's first Black congressman and is the first member of the Democratic left-wing "Squad" group to lose an election since it formed in 2018. Fellow member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, meanwhile, won her district's primary for a fourth term in Congress. — AFP

French court confirms arrest warrant against Syria's Assad

PARIS: Paris judges on Wednesday confirmed a French arrest warrant for Syrian leader Bashar Al-Assad over alleged complicity in crimes against humanity for 2013 chemical attacks, the plaintiffs' lawyers said. The Paris appeals court found Assad could be sought over deadly August 2013 attacks on Syrian soil with chemical weapons.

"This is a historic decision. It's the first time a national court has recognized that a sitting head of state does not have total personal immunity" for their actions, said plaintiffs' lawyers Clemence Beccarte, Jeanne Sulzer and Clemence Witt. Prosecutors from a unit specialized in investigating terrorist attacks had sought to annul the warrant, arguing that immunity for foreign heads of state should only be lifted for international prosecutions, such as before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

They did not aim to "question the existence of evidence demonstrating Bashar Al-Assad's complicity in the chemical attacks," they said. France is believed to be the first country to have issued an arrest warrant for a sitting foreign head of state. The decision was "great news"

and "a new victory for the victims," International Human Rights League (FIDH) lawyer Mazen Darwish posted on X. "There is no immunity in this type of crime," he added.

The anti-terrorist prosecutors could yet appeal the judgement to France's highest court, the Court of Cassation. The arrest warrant, initially issued in mid-November on the request of investigative magistrates specialized in so-called crimes against humanity, calls for Assad to be detained over his role in the chain of command for attacks on Adra and Douma on August 4-5, 2013, and East Ghouta on August 21.

Around 450 people were hurt in the first attack, while American intelligence says over 1,000 were killed with sarin nerve gas in East Ghouta, a suburb of Syrian capital Damascus. Alongside Assad, the warrants target his brother Maher - then head of the Syrian army's fourth division - and two generals, Ghassan Abbas and Bassam Al-Hassan.

The anti-terror prosecutors contested only the warrant for Bashar Al-Assad's arrest. The investigation by France's OCLCH crimes against humanity unit is based on photos, videos and maps, many supplied by plaintiffs, as well as testimony from survivors and former military personnel.

Soon after the attacks, Syria agreed to join the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and has denied subsequent allegations it continued to use the arms. It had its OPCW voting rights suspended in 2021 following poison gas attacks on civilians in 2017. — AFP

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International

Indian opposition chief vows lawmakers will not be silenced

Election has shown Indians 'expect the opposition to defend the constitution': Gandhi

NEW DELHI: India's new leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday that his lawmakers would not be silenced, in his first speech since formally taking up a post vacant for a decade. Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival, was appointed by fellow opposition lawmakers to the post in a signal of a reinvigorated challenge to the government.

"The government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Gandhi said in a speech in the lower house of parliament, accompanied by supportive thumps by his party's lawmakers on their desks. "This time, the opposition represents significantly more voice of the Indian people."

In the past two parliaments, Gandhi's once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post. Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

However, the BJP won only 240 seats in this year's poll, its worst showing in a decade, and 32 seats below a majority. That forced it to rely on coalition allies to build a 293-seat majority in the 543-seat lower house. Modi, 73, on Monday appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" following his election setback.

'Defend the constitution'

Gandhi, 54, defied analysts' expectations and exit polls to help his Congress party nearly double its parliamentary numbers. It was its best result since Modi swept to power in 2014, and rescued it from the political wilderness. "We would like the house to function often and well," Gandhi told veteran BJP lawmaker Om Birla, the speaker in the previous parliament, who was reelected on Wednesday to the post. "It is very important that cooperation happens on the basis of trust," he added. "It is very important that the voice of the opposition is allowed to be represented in this house."

Modi's BJP remains in control of all key cabinet posts, but analysts say he will be forced to seek consensus within his coalition to push more contentious legislation through parliament. Gandhi told Birla that the speaker's role was not only to facilitate the passing of laws, but also to ensure democratic debate flourished.

"The question is not: How efficiently the house is run? The question is: How much of India's voice is being allowed to be heard in this house?" Gandhi said. "The idea that you can run the house efficiently by silencing the voice of the opposition is a non-democratic idea," he added. "This election has shown that the people of India expect the opposition to defend the constitution of this country." — AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian National Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi (center) arrives at the Parliament in New Delhi on June 26, 2024. — AFP

Envoy: Indian interference claims by Canada politically motivated

OTTAWA: India has said a report by Canadian legislators alleging interference by New Delhi is politically motivated and influenced by Sikh separatist campaigners.

Already chilly bilateral ties cooled further last month when a group of parliamentarians, citing intelligence reports, alleged some elected Canadian officials had been "witting or semi-witting" participants in foreign interference operations.

India and China were the main foreign threats to Canada's democratic institutions, it said. Sanjay Kumar Verma, India's envoy to Canada, said the report was biased, did not give a fair hearing to India and did not give an opportunity to cross-examine witnesses.

"It has been influenced by anti-India elements ... you need to come out with infallible evidence. I don't see any hint of that," he told Reuters. "This is all politically motivated ... if Canadian institutions are bent upon harming bilateral relations with India, that will happen." His remarks were the first formal response by India to the report, which triggered demands by opposition legislators for the government to name those under suspicion.

New Delhi accuses Canada of harboring Sikh separatists who seek to create a homeland in India known as Khalistan. Last year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cited credible allegations of Indian government involvement in the murder of a Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down in the Canadian province of British

Columbia in June 2023. "There is a lot of political space given to Khalistani terrorists in Canada and therefore I would expect them to have influenced the entire process through their representatives," Verma said.

The special committee of legislators, asked about Verma's criticism, said the "committee speaks to and through its reports" and noted it had spoken to the country's two intelligence agencies, the police service, the public safety ministry and studied 4,000 documents. The offices of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly referred queries to the public safety ministry, which said it would allow the committee to speak to the report.

The World Sikh Organization of Canada, an Ottawa-based Sikh advocacy group, called Verma's remarks "baseless and unprofessional" and said the committee had operated with complete independence. Canada is pressing India to cooperate with the investigation into the murder of Nijjar. Verma said Canada had yet not shared any evidence with India, following media reports that Canadian intelligence agency officials visited India twice this year.

Last month, the Canadian police arrested and charged four Indian men on suspicion of Nijjar's murder. The killing prompted Canada to pause talks on a proposed trade treaty. The two nations had been talking off and on since 2010 about a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. If Canada decides to (ask) us to resume talks ... we will take a call," Verma said. — Reuters

Rahul Gandhi faces new test in revived fortunes

NEW DELHI: Once dismissed as an "empty suit", perennial Indian premier-in-waiting Rahul Gandhi emerged from his third consecutive election defeat with his reputation enhanced and his party back from the political wilderness.

But analysts are divided on whether the 54-year-old -- a scion of a dynasty that has already given India three prime ministers -- is ready for the next battle he faces.

Already the leader of the opposition to Hindu-nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all but name, Gandhi now takes on the formal position in India's parliament.

Congress party general secretary KC Venugopal said Gandhi would be "a bold voice for the common people" and ensure the government "is held firmly accountable at all times", he told reporters in a statement late Tuesday.

Gandhi's ascension is significant because, for the previous decade, his once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post.

"It's a huge thing what he has achieved in this election -- he's been able to get the masses to take him seriously," Sugata Srinivasaraju, an author of a book on Gandhi, told AFP. "But is that sufficient to be a good leader of the opposition inside the parliament? That is a big question."

Modi's first two terms in office saw landslide wins for his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP),

allowing his government to steamroll laws through parliament with only cursory debate. Dozens of bills were pushed through the legislature hours after they were introduced, including a contentious and far-reaching overhaul of India's criminal justice code last year.

Unable to stymie the government's legislative program, Gandhi and Congress were reduced to staging regular symbolic walkouts of the chamber and demonstrations outside parliament. With the BJP now reliant on coalition allies to govern, and Congress nearly doubling its seats in parliament, the dynamics of Gandhi's role will necessarily change.

His new post entitles him to take a role in the composition of parliamentary committees and sit on selection panels for appointing some of India's most powerful civil servants. But Srinivasaraju said it remained to be seen if Gandhi could evolve from Modi's chief gadfly outside parliament to an effective opponent within its walls. "He has not been a great speaker inside parliament. He has not been able to sway the crowds," he said. "From that perspective, we don't know if Rahul is really ready."

'Missed several opportunities'

Gandhi is the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with Indian independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. For that reason, he was seen as India's leader-in-waiting when he first entered parliamentary politics in 2004, but he struggled for years to shed his image as an insubstantial and entitled princeling. Leaked US embassy cables disparagingly referred to him as an "empty suit", and Modi dismissed him as a dynast more interested in luxury and self-indulgence than fighting to helm the world's biggest democracy.

For much of the past decade, many voters agreed with that sentiment. His stewardship of Congress -- once India's dominant party with a proud role in ending British colonial rule -- looked hapless against Modi's seemingly unassailable rule. "Gandhi missed several opportunities to shape up as an effective parliamentarian and politician," political commentator Rasheed Kidwai told AFP.

'Judging him with interest'

The seeds of his turnaround were sown in 2022 when he embarked on a cross-country walking tour inspired by his unrelated namesake, independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, to hear the concerns of ordinary people.

His journey gave him a gravitas that had previously eluded him, and his colleagues credited it with helping reinvigorate the party, delivering an election result that defied exit poll forecasts of another landslide BJP win.

Gandhi also stayed unruffled through the several ongoing criminal cases arrayed against him, which he and supporters accuse the government of orchestrating to eliminate him as a rival to Modi.

Last year, he was briefly disqualified from parliament after a conviction for criminal libel in a case brought by a BJP member, and weeks before this year's election, Congress had its bank accounts frozen as part of a running income tax probe.

Having pierced Modi's aura of invulnerability and shrugged off adversity, Kidwai said Gandhi's new post would give him the opportunity to capitalize on his newfound public esteem and establish himself as an alternative prime minister. "Taking up this position is going to do a lot of good for him," he said. "People who didn't take him seriously will now start judging him with interest." — AFP

MoI gears up for end of amnesty...

Continued from Page 1

The ministry has not disclosed how many expatriates have benefited from the amnesty amid unofficial reports that over 100,000 illegal expats were living in the country. The meeting reviewed a mechanism on how to conduct security campaigns in the six governorates against violators who did not leave the country or legalize their stay during the amnesty period.

In another development, the Public Authority of Manpower was asked by its board on Wednesday to prepare a draft resolution allowing domestic

workers (article 20) to transfer to the private sector (article 18) for a period of about two months, the authority said in a statement. The call came during a board meeting chaired by Sheikh Fahad, who is also the chairman of the authority.

The authority said the initiative aims to meet the requirements of the private sector of workers from the domestic market. At present, domestic workers are barred from transferring their residency to the private sector. The authority added that the proposed decision aims at temporarily lifting the ban on the transfer for about two months, and there will be guidelines and preconditions for the move to regulate the process and govern a balance between demand and supply in the labor market. Over 700,000 expats work as domestic workers in Kuwait, including housemaids.

Lankan and Filipino workers. We call on the government to open visas for more countries," he said.

According to him, this diversification would also provide more options for Kuwaiti citizens when hiring domestic labor. He pointed out that several African countries send labor to Gulf nations, and Kuwait should consider creating agreements with them. Dakhnan particularly suggested bringing back Indonesian labor, which he believes has been highly demanded by Kuwaitis due to their qualifications being similar to those of Filipino workers.

use all his diplomatic skills to win over reluctant allies Turkey and Hungary. He finally clinched the race last week when his sole challenger, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, dropped out.

A staunch supporter of Ukraine, the straight-talking Dutchman has spearheaded a push to give Kyiv F-16 fighter jets to help beat back Russia's invasion. As NATO chief he will play a key role in marshalling weary allies to keep backing the war-torn country -- while treading a fine line over Kyiv's push to join. "Congratulations to Mark Rutte on being elected as the new Secretary General of NATO. Your leadership and dedication to democratic principles are crucial for our shared future," the Ukrainian presidency's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said on social media.

The Kremlin's 2022 assault on Ukraine has reinvigorated an alliance that often struggled for purpose after the end of the Cold War, and pushed European nations to increase their defence spending. Rutte will now have to ensure NATO is fighting fit to deal with the threat Moscow will pose for years to come, and also keep a keen eye on the growing might of China. — AFP

Stark UN warning if Gaza war spreads...

Continued from Page 1

With the conflict nearing its 10th month, the Zionist entity top ally, the United States, warned of the risk of a major conflict with Hezbollah following an escalation in threats after months of cross-border fire. "Another war between (the Zionist entity) and Hezbollah could easily become a regional war, with terrible consequences for the Middle East," US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told his visiting Zionist counterpart Yoav Gallant. "Diplomacy is by far the best way to prevent more escalation," Austin said.

The Zionist military said last week plans for an offensive in Lebanon were "approved and validated", prompting fresh threats from Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday accused Western powers of backing the Zionist entity as it sets "its sights on Lebanon", seeking "to spread the war to the region". "(The Zionist entity) is now setting its sights on Lebanon and we see that Western powers behind the scenes are patting (the Zionist entity) on the back and even supporting them," he told lawmakers from his ruling AKP party.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to spread the war to the region will lead to a great disaster," he said. "It is ... pathetic that states that talk about freedom, human rights and justice are captives

of a mentally-ill person like Netanyahu. Turkey stands with the brotherly people and state of Lebanon. I call on other countries in the region to stand in solidarity with Lebanon," he added.

In Rafah, on Gaza's border with Egypt, witnesses reported clashes during the night. Mohammad Al-Mughayyir, a civil defense official in Hamas-run Gaza, told AFP rescuers had recovered the bodies of "15 martyrs from various areas in Rafah city in the past few hours". The Zionist offensive has killed at least 37,718 people, mostly women and children, Gaza's health ministry said.

Residents said fighting intensified in the Tel Al-Sultan neighborhood in western Rafah, where tanks were also trying to force their way north amid heavy clashes. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters attacked Zionist forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs. Later on Wednesday, a Zionist strike killed three Palestinians and wounded others near the northern Jabalia camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, medics said. — Agencies

Residents and Hamas media said the casualties were among a group of people who gathered outside a store to get an Internet signal to communicate with relatives elsewhere in the enclave. In Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, tank shells struck an apartment, killing at least five people and wounding others, medics said. Medics said earlier that two Palestinians were killed in a Zionist missile strike in Rafah. In the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahya, a Zionist air strike destroyed a house, killing four Palestinians and wounding several others, medics said. — Agencies

the judge in Saipan told him. Assange had published hundreds of thousands of confidential US documents on the WikiLeaks whistleblowing website from 2010. He became a hero to free speech campaigners but a villain to those who thought he had endangered US security and intelligence sources.

"Working as a journalist, I encouraged my source to provide material that was said to be classified," Assange told the court. Assange's lawyer Jen Robinson told reporters it was a "historic day" that "brings to an end 14 years of legal battles". "It also brings to an end a case which has been recognized as the greatest threat to the First Amendment in the 21st century," she said.

After touching down in Canberra, Assange told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese by phone "that he had saved his life", the lawyer told reporters. Albanese said he was "very pleased" by the outcome. "Regardless of your views about his activities, and they will be varied, Mr Assange's case has dragged on for too long," he told parliament in Canberra. — AFP

Recruiters welcome Filipino workers...

Continued from Page 1

Even though the new measures sound promising for the union, Dakhnan stressed the need to diversify the nationalities of domestic labor to avoid future financial strains resulting from similar sudden bans. "Domestic labor in Kuwait is now limited to Sri

NATO names Dutch PM Rutte...

Continued from Page 1

The seasoned Dutch leader, whose 14-year tenure in charge of the Netherlands is set to end within weeks, is seen as a safe pair of hands capable of stewarding NATO through perilous times. His appointment was welcomed by leaders across the 75-year-old alliance, including British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who called it "a good choice for freedom and security". The White House said US President Joe Biden believed Rutte "will make an excellent secretary general".

While the 57-year-old faces the spectre of a possible return by former US president Donald Trump to the White House, Rutte will also have to grapple with the threat posed by Russian leader Vladimir Putin. After staking a claim for the NATO post following the collapse of his coalition last year, Rutte had to

Assange returns home a free...

Continued from Page 1

"I ask you please to give us space, to give us privacy, to find our place, to let our family be a family."

Assange's long battle with US prosecutors came to an unexpected end in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, where a judge accepted his guilty plea on a single count of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate national defense information. The remote courtroom was chosen because of the 52-year-old's unwillingness to go to the continental United States and because of its proximity to Australia.

As part of behind-the-scenes legal negotiations with the US Justice Department he was sentenced to the time he had already served in London -- five years and two months -- and given his liberty. "You will be able to walk out of this courtroom a free man,"

International

Kenya president withdraws tax hikes

Ruto to start dialogue with youth as some protesters demand his resignation

NAIROBI: Kenyan President William Ruto on Wednesday withdrew planned tax hikes, bowing to pressure from protesters who had stormed parliament, launched demonstrations across the country and threatened more action this week. The move will be seen as a major victory for a week-old, youth-led protest movement that grew from online condemnations of tax rises into mass rallies demanding a political overhaul, in the most serious crisis of Ruto's two-year-old presidency.

But some demonstrators said on social media that despite Ruto's climbdown they would go ahead with a rally planned for Thursday, with many reiterating demands that he resign.

Ruto announced he would not sign a finance bill including the tax increases, a day after violent clashes between police and protesters at the assembly and nationwide left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded, according to medics.

"Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this finance bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 finance bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn," he said in a televised address with lawmakers, some clapping, seated behind him.

Vice President Rigathi Gachagua asked young people to call off the protests to avoid any further loss of life and destruction of property, and blamed the intelligence services for giving the government poor advice. "There would have been no mayhem, but they slept on the job," Gachagua said in a speech, calling on the head of the National Intelligence Service to resign.

Protesters were defiant, repeating calls for Ruto to step down and vowing further action in the streets. Boniface Mwangi, a prominent social justice activist involved in the protests, called for a "1-million-people march". "The arrogance is gone, but the lies are still there," he said on social media platform X. "Yesterday they unleashed goons and police to kill peaceful protesters. That will not stop us."

Other members of the protest movement continued to post on social media using the hashtag #tupatanethursday, or "see you on Thursday" in a mix of Swahili and English. Ruto said he would now start a dialogue with Kenyan youth, without going into details, and work on austerity measures - beginning with cuts to the budget of the presidency - to make up the difference in the country's finances. He said the loss of life on Tuesday was "very unfortunate". Kenyan police have not responded to requests for comment about the violence.

Competing demands

Even if Ruto's concession manages to see off the immediate threat of more unrest, it still leaves him caught between the competing demands of his hard-pressed citizens and of lenders such as the IMF - which is urging the government to cut deficits to obtain more financing.

Kenya's sovereign dollar bonds were trading largely flat despite Ruto's rejection of the finance bill. Its bonds were trading between 74.6 and 95 cents on the dollar, Tradeweb data showed, with the longer-dated 2034 maturity at the lowest price. On Tuesday, police opened fire on crowds who massed around parliament and later broke into the senate chamber and national assembly, minutes after lawmakers had voted through the tax measures and sent them on to the president.

The Nation newspaper documented protests in at least 35 of Kenya's 47 counties, from big cities to rural areas - even in Ruto's hometown of Eldoret in his ethnic Kalenjin heartland.

At least 23 people were killed across the East African country and another 30 were being treated for bullet wounds, the Kenya Medical Association said on Wednesday. Medical officials in Nairobi said scores had been injured.

Posts on social media had urged people to occupy State House, the president's office and residence, on Thursday, and the local offices of the World Bank



NAIROBI: A man walks past the wreckage of a car burned down by protesters following a deadly nationwide strike to protest against tax hikes and the Finance Bill 2024 in downtown Nairobi, on June 26, 2024. — AFP

and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Friday, though it was not immediately clear if the calls came from individuals or a broader movement. Heavily armed police patrolled the streets of the capital Nairobi, which were quieter than usual on Wednesday. The protests began as an online outpouring of anger by young, tech-savvy Kenyans at proposed taxes on bread and diapers and evolved into a nationwide movement calling for the scrapping of the entire finance bill including the taxes. Thousands took to the streets of Nairobi and several other cities during two days of protests last week as an online

movement gathered momentum.

While the young Kenyans in the current demonstrations have no official leader and have loudly urged the political opposition figures that have typically organized protests to stay away, some of Ruto's main rivals could not hide their delight with the president's climbdown. "Self-preservation has kicked in," opposition senator Edwin Sifuna posted on X.

Lawmakers had already removed some tax hikes from the final version of the finance bill on Tuesday, including ones on bread and cooking oil, but inserted others in an effort to avoid a budget gap. — Reuters

North Korea marks war anniversary with missile, trash balloons

SEOUL: North Korea test-fired what appeared to be a hypersonic missile off its east coast on Wednesday, but it exploded in midair, South Korea's military said. The missile was launched from near the capital, Pyongyang, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Japan's Defense Ministry said the missile flew to an altitude of about 100 km (62 miles) and range of more than 200 km.

Senior officials of South Korea, the United States and Japan held a phone call and condemned the launch as a violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and a serious threat to the peace and stability of the region and beyond. South Korean and US air forces said they conducted joint exercises involving F-22 and F-35 stealth fighter as part of their annual Buddy Squadron training. South Korea's marine corps staged separate firing drills near the maritime border with the North for the first time since Seoul scrapped an inter-Korean military pact early this month. The drills were announced earlier in June.

US Indo-Pacific Command also issued a condemnation and called on Pyongyang to refrain from further unlawful and destabilizing acts. "While we have assessed that this event does not pose an immediate threat to US personnel, or territory, or to our allies, we continue to monitor the situation," it said in a statement. North Korea's last missile launch was on May 30.

North Korea this week criticized the deployment of a US aircraft carrier to joint drills with South Korea and Japan, and warned of an "overwhelming, new demonstration of deterrence". The missile launch comes a day after the 74-year anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War. North Korean state media KCNA said on Wednesday a mass rally in Pyongyang was held to commemorate the war anniversary, calling it a day of "struggle against U.S. imperialism" and calling the United States the archenemy.

Flight disruption

North Korea has flown hundreds of balloons carrying trash toward the South, including on Wednesday. Balloons filled with refuse and launched Wednesday have caused disruptions in takeoffs and landings at South Korea's Incheon international airport for about three hours before dawn, an airport spokesperson said. Among the items carried by the North Korean balloons were articles printed with Hello Kitty characters, badly worn clothing, and soil containing traces of human feces and parasites, South Korea has said.

South Korea's military on Wednesday said about 100 balloons had fallen to the ground between Tuesday and Wednesday, mostly in the capital Seoul and the surrounding Gyeonggi province. Most of them just carried scraps of paper.

On Wednesday night, North Korea floated more trash balloons into the South, the South Korean military said, prompting Seoul and Gyeonggi province to send out alerts to citizens. — Reuters



YEONPYEONG-ISLAND, South Korea: A vapor trail believed to be created by a North Korean ballistic missile is seen from Yeonpyeong island near the 'northern limit line' sea boundary with North Korea on June 26, 2024. — AFP



GEDAREF: Patients receive treatment at the Gedaref Oncology Hospital in eastern Sudan on May 1, 2024. — AFP photos

Costly odyssey for cancer care in war-torn Sudan

GEDAREF: Doctors in eastern Sudan say Mohammed Al-Juneid's wife, displaced and diagnosed with cancer, needs treatment elsewhere in the war-torn country. But the road is long and dangerous, and the journey expensive. "Even if we make it to Meroe in the north, who knows how long we'll have to wait until it's her turn," the 65-year-old told AFP in Gedaref, where he and his wife have sought safety from the country's raging war.

Since April 2023, fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has shattered Sudan's already fragile healthcare system. Fewer than 30 percent of hospitals remain functional, "and even so at a minimal level", according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

For tens of thousands of patients with chronic illnesses, that has meant embarking on long, dangerous odysseys across front lines, often just to reach an overwhelmed and under-equipped healthcare facility. Many have flocked to Gedaref in the east, where more than half a million people fled to escape the fighting.

In its single oncology facility - one of the country's last - women draped in colorful traditional veils lie on beds, chemotherapy needles in their arms. Among them is Juneid's wife, who used to undergo radiation therapy at Wad Madani hospital in central Sudan before "it closed because of the war", her husband said.

"Now the doctors say she needs radiation again, which is only available at Meroe hospital" - a 900-kilometre (560-mile) drive that is actually far longer if you want to avoid the fighters on the way. The couple found a driver who agreed to take them on the bumpy, checkpoint-marked road. He would do it for \$4,000 - a small fortune that Juneid cannot afford.

40,000 lives at risk

Lying on a nearby bed, schoolteacher Fatheya Mohammed said her cancer had become more aggressive "since the war began". "They give me chemo injections here," she told AFP. But at bare minimum, she needs CT scans that are "only available in Kassala", 200 kilometers (125 miles) to the northeast. That might as well be half a world away. Over the past year, Mohammed has received only three months of her government salary, and can't afford to go anywhere.

Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries even before the war, already had an under-funded and overwhelmed healthcare system before the war dealt the final blow. Its two main oncology centers - in the capital Khartoum and just south in Wad Madani - have

closed. Smaller facilities, like the 27-bed East Oncology Hospital in Gedaref, have been overwhelmed by the influx. In 2023 "we took in around 900 new patients", the center's director Motassem Morsi told AFP - up from their annual patient load of "around 300 to 400". In the first three months of 2024 alone "we've taken in 366 patients", he said.

Of Sudan's 15 oncology centers, only the one in Meroe still offers radiation therapy, an October article published in the online medical journal eCancer-medicines confirmed. The costs associated with treatment, transportation and accommodation are out of reach for many, "forcing them to confront their impending death without proper care", wrote the authors, four doctors in Sudanese and Canadian hospitals. "The limited access to oncology services during the current war endangers the lives of more than 40,000 Sudanese cancer patients," they concluded.



Medical staff prepares medication at the hospital.

'Excruciating pain'

Even if terminal patients were to accept their fate - at the hands of both disease and the war's devastation - there is no respite from their daily physical agony. Dire shortages of medicines, including painkillers, mean patients must "endure excruciating pain without recourse", the authors wrote.

According to the WHO, "about 65 percent of the Sudanese population lack access to health care" entirely, in a country where upwards of 10 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Shattered hospitals and dire shortages place a "significant strain on and risks overwhelming the remaining facilities due to the influx of people seeking care", the WHO has warned.

In Meroe, the last hope for patients in need of radiation treatment, the nightmare has come true. "We have two radiation machines that work 24 hours a day," a doctor at the Eldaman Oncology Centre told AFP over the phone, requesting anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. "If one of them goes down, even just for maintenance, it causes an even bigger backlog of patients," he said, exhaustion clear in his voice. — AFP

Researchers fear new dangerous mpox strain could cross borders

PARIS: A new deadlier strain of mpox that transmits more easily between people is killing children and causing miscarriages in the Democratic Republic of Congo and may have already spread to neighboring countries, researchers have warned. All countries should be preparing for "this new strain before it spreads to other places, before it is too late," John Claude Udaemuka, a researcher at the University of Rwanda studying the outbreak, told AFP. A global outbreak of a new strain of mpox, previously known as monkeypox, in 2022 spread to more than 110 countries, mostly affecting gay and bisexual men. That was the clade II strain. But there have been regular outbreaks of the clade I strain - which is 10 times deadlier - in Africa since it was first detected in DR Congo in 1970. While the global outbreak was largely sexually transmitted, people in Africa normally caught clade I from infected animals, such as when eating bushmeat. But "it was obvious something was different" about an mpox outbreak detected among sex workers in the remote mining Congolese town of Kamituga in September last year, Udaemuka told an online press conference.

Unlike previous outbreaks in the central African country, the virus was being transmitted via sex between heterosexuals. Testing revealed it was a mutated variant of the original strain called clade Ib. It is "undoubtedly the most dangerous strain so far," Udaemuka said. More than 1,000 cases of clade Ib have been reported in South Kivu province since, said Leandre Murhula Masirika, who has led local research into the outbreak. There are more than 20 new cases every week in Kamituga alone - and the number is rising, he warned.

'Incredibly worrying'

Five percent of adults and 10 percent of children who get the strain die, researchers said. It gives sufferers "horrendous whole body rashes," unlike clade II, which caused lesions normally more limited to the genital area, said Trudie Lang, a global health researcher at Oxford University.

The clade Ib strain has also been spreading through non-sexual contact between people - including among families or children playing together at school - marking a major change from previous outbreaks, the researchers said. There has been a "high amount" of transmission between mothers and carers and children, Lang said. The strain has also caused numerous miscarriages, and researchers are studying its long-term effect on fertility. These significant differences from previous mpox strains are "incredibly worrying," Lang said. And the extreme cases turning up at hospital are likely "the tip of the iceberg," because many patients likely have less severe symptoms, she added.

There remain many "important unknowns" about the new strain, Lang cautioned, comparing this stage of investigation to the early days of COVID-19. Out of 384 people who died from all mpox strains in DR Congo this year, more than 60 percent were children, according to the World Health Organization.

So far, clade Ib has spread to the Congolese cities of Bukavu, Uvira and Kamanyola - and this week was declared in North Kivu province's capital, Goma, the researchers said. These cities are near DR Congo's borders with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

While the new strain has not been officially reported outside of DR Congo, it may have already spread to neighboring nations, Murhula Masirika said. Some infected sex workers came from these countries, he added. And Goma, notably, has an international airport. "There is definitely the opportunity for this to get on an airplane," Lang said, calling on the world to act quickly to contain the outbreak. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2024

AI takes centre stage as Mobile World Congress Shanghai kicks off

China's biggest firms showcase latest products and visions for an AI-driven future



SHANGHAI: Visitors interact with a robot and a chassis of a Nio car at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Shanghai on June 26, 2024. — AFP photos



Poland's huge air hub plan to go ahead: PM



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk holds a ballot paper at a polling station during the European Parliament elections in Warsaw. — Reuters

WARSAW: Poland will go ahead with plans conceived by the previous government to build a huge air hub in the centre of the country, but with amendments, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Wednesday. The Central Communication Port (CPK) airport project had posed a dilemma for Tusk's pro-European coalition government, which took office in December.

The nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) government proposed the construction of a regional transport hub serving around 40 million passengers a year, with high-speed rail connections, aiming to boost Poland's economy and international prestige. PiS also said it could be used for military purposes.

But the project was criticized for its cost and scale, and for its location far from any major city.

"The issue of the CPK was the subject of serious political confrontation," Tusk told a news conference. "The task of this team was to separate politics, propaganda, organized trolling ... It took some time." Tusk said the CPK airport would be built in Baranow in central Poland, but that regional airports and the Okecie (Chopin) and Modlin airports serving the capital Warsaw would also be modernized.

He also said the high-speed rail network forming part of the CPK project would connect major cities to each other, not just to the airport or the capital. The airport will open in 2032 and be designed to serve 34 million passengers a year, he said. Deputy Development Minister Maciej Lasek said the whole CPK project would cost 131 billion zlotys (\$32.5 billion) up to 2032. — Reuters

SHANGHAI: From phones that can detect deepfake scams to autonomous intelligent vehicles, the disruptive potential of artificial intelligence took centre stage as Mobile World Congress Shanghai kicked off Wednesday. The jam-packed connectivity industry conference saw some of China's biggest companies gather to showcase their latest products and visions for an AI-driven future. Smart device brand Honor on Wednesday unveiled technology it said could detect deepfake scam calls and warn the phone's owner in real-time.

Deepfake scam calls—where fraudsters manipulate images, sound or video of a real person as part of their con—have been flagged as a growing risk as generative AI use becomes more prevalent. In February, it was revealed that a Hong Kong finance worker had transferred \$26 million to fraudsters who presented themselves as his colleagues on a video call.

In an Honor demo video, a man used a convincing AI filter to alter his appearance to make a video call,

before a pop-up message on the victim's phone appeared warning it was likely a face swap.

The software, which the company says will be available on its devices this year, uses AI to analyze elements like eye contact or lighting frame by frame, "to identify flaws that are imperceptible to the human eyes" in around three seconds. Honor's CEO George Zhao told an audience that he believed on-device AI "has the potential to empower users" and address the concerns around authenticity that many have raised about AI. Whatever the inherent risks, high-profile speakers made clear they thought the AI revolution was unstoppable.

"AI needs to be omnipotent, it needs to be everywhere," said Huawei's Executive Director of the Board, David Wang. He pointed out that the continued success and expansion of AI depended on telecom networks—particularly 5G and its successors—keeping pace.

Ensuring that AI's associated infrastructure con-

tinued to develop too was a point made by other delegates. As well as networks, another issue, said one exhibitor, was processing power and heat.

"One of the challenges (AI has) is how do you get all that processing (energy) on devices when the consumer wants them smaller and smaller," said Sue Ryan, vice president of marketing at Frore Systems.

The company's solution is AirJet, a cooling device in the form of chips, the thinnest of which is 2.5mm. While AI has been used in the background of much of the connectivity sector for years, "it really feels like we've moved from the passenger seat to the driver seat", Lara Dewar from organizers GSMA told attendees. For some exhibitors that was quite literal, with multiple AI-using cars on display as the Internet of Things spreads further into the auto sector. "There is no doubt in my mind that AI... will reshape our lives and businesses as we know them," said Dewar. — AFP

Britain to face strained finances after election

LONDON: Britain will see little difference on public spending whichever of the country's main parties wins next month's general election, with state coffers strained largely by huge COVID expenditure.

The main opposition Labour party, widely predicted to defeat the ruling Conservatives in the national vote on July 4, has promised investment in key areas such as health and education but also stresses the need to balance the books. The Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, are promising tax cuts they claim will not trigger fresh chaos on markets.

"Both parties are offering very similar fiscal policies, there's a piece of paper between the two of them," Daniel Sopher, senior partner at tax specialists Sopher + Co, told AFP. "However, the way that they will manage the economy will be completely different, one focusing on tax cuts and the other focusing on investment and long-term strategic plans such as the zero-carbon strategy."

Keir Starmer's Labour and the Conservatives are seeking to avoid a repeat of October 2022, when the latter's unfunded tax cuts unveiled in a budget spooked markets and tanked the pound.

It also sank the chaotic premiership of Liz Truss, who lasted just 49 days before she was replaced by

Sunak. Britain's economy is currently on a more stable footing after exiting a mild recession and as inflation returns to normal.

The situation also appears calmer compared with neighboring France, whose upcoming snap election has triggered higher borrowing costs for the country's government. President Emmanuel Macron threw France into turmoil earlier this month by calling the vote after his centrist party was trounced by the far-right National Rally (RN) in European elections. The French vote is shaping up as a showdown between the RN and the leftist New Popular Front, which is dominated by the hard-left France Unbowed. Investors are concerned by the parties' high spending pledges.

In Britain, Labour promises a firm grip on spending should it win power. "I want investors to look at Britain and say it is a safe haven in a turbulent world, a place where I can invest with confidence in a world where perhaps other countries are tilting to more populist politics," Labour finance spokesperson Rachel Reeves told a recent gathering of business leaders.

She has also said that "change will be achieved only on the basis of iron discipline".

British public debt has flirted with a level totalling 100 percent of gross domestic product in recent months—a situation not seen since the 1960s. "The reason for Starmer's popularity... (is) because he offered a changeless change," said James Wood, senior teaching associate in political economy at the University of Cambridge. "He basically is a Conservative in a red tie." Wood said in reference to the color associated with the Labour party and Starmer's prudence around spending.



London: Britain's Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader, Rishi Sunak delivers a speech on June 24, 2024 in central London, as part of a Conservative campaign event in the build-up to the UK general election on July 4. — AFP

Should Labour win with a big majority, as some polls suggest, the party's leadership may feel pressure from its own members to relax budget rules, according to analysts.

"I don't think that anyone in the markets will be made nervous by yet another change of the fiscal rules," said Jonathan Portes, an economist at King's College London, noting that the Conservatives have altered them numerous times since winning power in 2010. "Obviously the fiscal rules are going to change, the question is how will they change and will they change in a way that is sensible."

According to Sopher, whichever party wins power, "tax is going to go up" to fund public services.

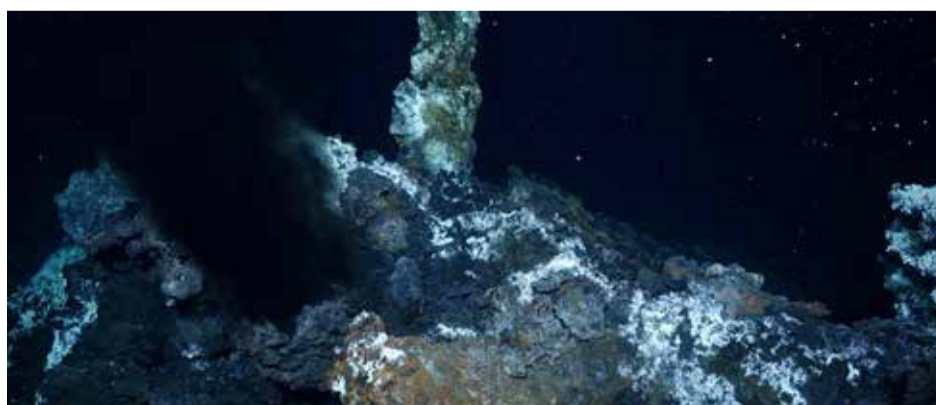
"There's only so much limit to what one can increase debt to," he added. — AFP

Norway to award Arctic blocks for seabed mining

OSLO: Norway offered on Wednesday large areas of the Arctic region for its inaugural seabed mineral licensing round and aims to award exploration permits during the first half of 2025, the country's energy ministry said. Norway may become the first country in the world to start commercial deep-sea mining, hoping to extract minerals needed for solar panels, wind turbines and electric car batteries needed to replace fossil fuel energy.

"The world needs minerals for the green transition, and the government wants to explore if it is possible to extract seabed minerals in a sustainable manner from the Norwegian continental shelf," energy minister Terje Aasland said in a statement. The government has previously said preliminary official resource estimates showed substantial accumulations of metals and minerals, ranging from copper to rare earth elements.

In January, the Norwegian parliament voted in favor of opening about 280,000 square kms (108,000 square miles) of ocean areas between Jan Mayen island and the Svalbard archipelago



A view shows active chimney venting at the Loki's Castle Vent Field on the Arctic Mid-Oceanic Ridge, and white microbial mats can be seen on the chimney at a depth of around 2,500m, in this undated handout picture by University of Bergen, Centre for Deep Sea Research. — Reuters

for seabed mineral exploration. The 386 blocks proposed on Wednesday cover about 38 percent of the total area opened by parliament, and the selection was based on industry input, the energy ministry said.

The Norwegian energy ministry published a map showing the proposed offshore blocks (in yellow):

Seabed mining remains controversial, however, and environmentalists are challenging the plans in court. Greenpeace said on Wednesday the proposed blocks constituted a "shockingly

large" area given previous warnings from scientists regarding the potential impact on fragile ecosystems. Seabed mineral exploration plans also face opposition from a number of countries, including France, as well as the European Parliament, that have called for a global moratorium to take more time to better understand the impact on deep-sea organisms. The Norwegian government has said the initial exploration stage will have a minimal impact on seabed organisms and that companies will need separate consents before any production can start. — Reuters

Yen touches 38-year low, stocks slide

LONDON: The yen, weakened by the Japanese government's easy monetary policy, hit a 38-year low against the dollar on Wednesday, sparking speculation about a new intervention by authorities. Stocks slid across the globe despite a tech rebound on Tuesday, as investors prepared for the release of crucial US inflation data. The yen slid as far as 160.61 to the greenback.

Despite sliding through the 160 level, there was no indication that authorities had intervened to support the yen, said market analyst David Morrison at Trade Nation.

"This being the case, it's possible that traders work to push the yen lower in a renewed attempt to test the resolve of the Japanese authorities," he said. The Asian country's top currency official has said authorities were ready to act 24 hours a day if the unit fell too far.

Billions were pumped in to support the yen when it hit a 34-year low of 160.17 in late April. Traders are also poring over any comments from the

Bank of Japan, which many say has been too cautious in moving away from its ultra-loose monetary policy. It is tipped to hike interest rates next month and begin winding down its bond purchases that help keep borrowing costs down.

The euro also remained under pressure before weekend elections in France that polls suggest will see big wins for the far-right and left-wing parties pushing President Emmanuel Macron's centrists into third. The Paris stock market was down 1.0 percent in afternoon deals. Eurozone peer Frankfurt was down 0.5 percent after a key survey showing German consumers are feeling more pessimistic heading into July, rattled by stubborn inflation and economic uncertainty.

The forward-looking survey published by pollsters GfK and the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM) dipped by 0.8 points to minus 21.8 points compared to a month earlier.

Wall Street opened lower, with shares in chipmaker Nvidia rising 0.4 percent. "What's the hangup? Hard to say exactly, but it is likely a little bit of valuation angst, the bump in the 10-yr note yield to 4.29 percent, and hesitation in front of Micron's earnings report after the close," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare. — AFP

Sri Lanka seals partial debt deal after financial crash

Agreement to help Colombo allocate funds to essential public services

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka said Wednesday it had clinched a restructuring deal with a majority of bilateral lenders covering up to \$5.8 billion in debt, a key step towards recovery after a 2022 financial crash. The agreement is hoped to allow Sri Lanka to allocate funds to essential public services and secure concessional financing for development, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said in a statement.

The country defaulted on its foreign debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange, and the unprecedented economic crisis forced then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down. "Sri Lanka reached a final restructuring agreement for \$5.8 billion of debt with its bilateral lenders' Official Creditor Committee (OCC) in Paris, France," the statement read, without giving further details.

The Paris-based OCC includes members France, India and Japan. China, the nation's largest single bilateral lender, is not a member. But Sri Lanka's junior finance minister Shehan Semsinghe, who is in France for the negotiations, said he hoped to secure a deal with them too. "We are also in the process of signing bilateral debt treatment agreements between Sri Lanka and Export-Import Bank of China," Semsinghe said on X, formerly Twitter.

The debt restructuring is a condition of a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Earlier this month, the IMF provided the latest tranche of \$336 million out of a \$2.9 billion rescue package, designed

to help repair Colombo's ruined finances over four years. Bilateral creditors account for 28.5 percent of Sri Lanka's outstanding foreign debt of \$37 billion, according to treasury data from the end of March. China accounts for \$4.66 billion of a total of \$10.58 billion borrowed from other countries.

Japan accounts for \$2.35 billion and India for \$1.36 billion. Semsinghe said the government was in talks with international bondholders, but there was no agreement. A previous round of talks ended in deadlock in April. Sri Lanka is unable to raise commercial loans until a deal with private creditors is struck.

However, the agreement with bilateral creditors allows the unfreezing of loans for ongoing infrastructure projects financed with funding from other countries. Wickremesinghe is due to address the nation later Wednesday, when he is expected to give details of the latest deal.

Meanwhile, thousands of teachers from government schools went on strike demanding higher pay in Colombo, with police using water cannon and tear gas to disperse the protest. Sri Lanka is due to hold a presidential election this year and opposition parties have vowed to renegotiate the terms of the IMF bailout. The IMF's Sri Lanka mission chief Peter Breuer said the fund was willing to listen to alternative proposals from rival political parties, but said it was necessary to stick with the benchmarks set in the bailout. Sri Lanka had made good progress, but the country was not out of the woods yet, he said. — AFP



COLOMBO: A fruit vendor waits for customers at a market in Colombo on June 26, 2024. — AFP

Gulf Bank: 13 tips for safe bank card usage on your travel

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank continues to support the "Diraya" awareness campaign, aiming to enhance financial literacy across various sectors of society. The bank achieves this goal by sharing informative and educational content through social media platforms, its website, and other media channels.

As summer approaches and the tourism season flourishes, Gulf Bank has provided a set of travel tips for those planning vacations abroad. The aim is to ensure that customers can use their banking cards securely and easily access the bank's various services. These tips include:

1. Ensure your card remains valid throughout your travels.
2. Keep your bank details updated, including your phone number and email address.
3. Confirm you have sufficient credit limits and check your account balance.



4. Avoid writing down your PIN or personal information. If your card is lost or stolen, contact the bank immediately to block it. You can also block it through the mobile app or online banking.
5. Use the mobile app to track card usage and expenses while traveling.
6. Ensure access to online banking services.
7. Book travel through reputable websites only.
8. Beware of suspicious offers to prevent fraud.
9. Keep antivirus software updated on devices used for bookings to protect card information.
10. Never share your PIN or OTP with anyone.
11. Read OTP messages carefully, verifying the store

On-demand transport app WIYAK launches WINCH

KUWAIT: WIYAK, the leading on-demand transportation application in Kuwait, is proud to announce the launch of WINCH, its newest on-demand service. This addition is another step forward in WIYAK's mission of building the future of transportation into one application.

WINCH is an on-demand towing service that provides users with a quick and efficient way to request towing services through their mobile devices. With just a few taps on the WIYAK app, users can either schedule or instantly book a tow truck, ensuring fast response times and reliable service around the clock. "At WIYAK, we're always looking for ways to push

the envelope and disrupt the transportation industry through innovative digital solutions combined with high quality service.

We are obsessively customer-centric which has enabled us to build a brand that our customers trust and rely on," said Khaled Al-Omar, Managing Director at WIYAK. The launch of WINCH not only provides our users with instant access to towing service but resolves key legacy issues that are associated with traditional towing including transparent upfront pricing, faster response times, and most importantly dependable service with professional drivers.

WINCH provides on-demand and scheduled booking options to both individuals and enterprises. Key features of the service include real-time tracking, various towing options including flatbed tow trucks and covered tow trucks, secure payments, and 24/7 availability. This service complements WIYAK's existing product suite including limousine service, car rental with chauffeur service by the hour, taxi service, and delivery service - pickup and drop and shop and drop.

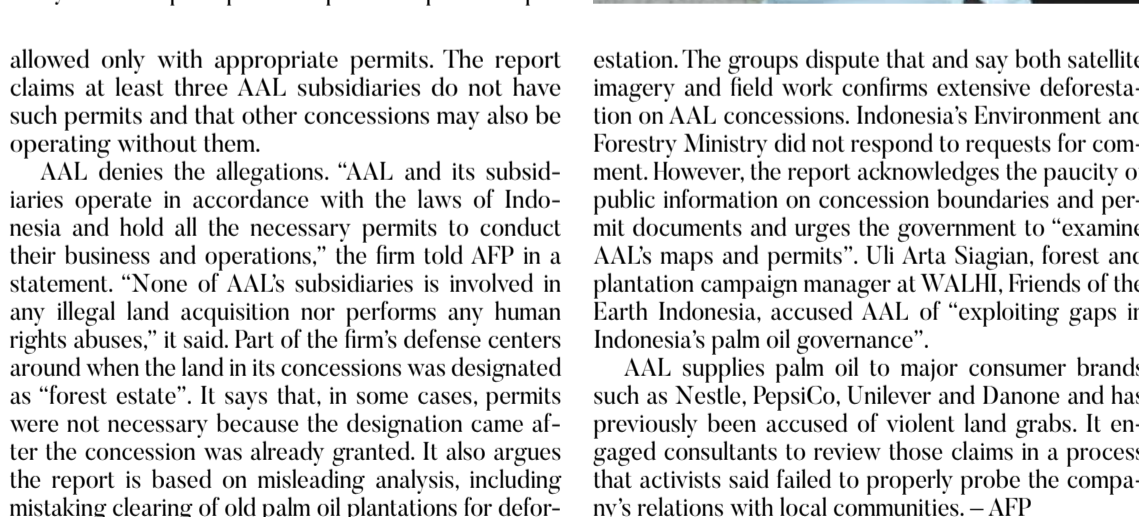
allowed only with appropriate permits. The report claims at least three AAL subsidiaries do not have such permits and that other concessions may also be operating without them.

AAL denies the allegations. "AAL and its subsidiaries operate in accordance with the laws of Indonesia and hold all the necessary permits to conduct their business and operations," the firm told AFP in a statement. "None of AAL's subsidiaries is involved in any illegal land acquisition nor performs any human rights abuses," it said. Part of the firm's defense centers around when the land in its concessions was designated as "forest estate". It says that, in some cases, permits were not necessary because the designation came after the concession was already granted. It also argues the report is based on misleading analysis, including mistaking clearing of old palm oil plantations for defor-

- name and payment amount before using the code.
12. Never disclose personal information via email, phone calls, or text messages, and avoid clicking on links from untrustworthy sources.
13. Check for travel privileges offered by your card on the bank's website and Visa/Mastercard's sites.



On another note, Gulf Bank highlighted that its branch at Kuwait International Airport in the Arrivals Hall operates around the clock, offering customers a wide range of banking services every day of the week. These services include account opening, loan applications, credit card requests, cash withdrawals and deposits, currency exchange, and instant issuance of ATM cards. Furthermore, the branch provides safety deposit box services, aiming to offer secure storage solutions for bank customers traveling abroad to safeguard their valuable possessions.



Indonesia is the world's largest palm oil producer, generating more than 60 percent of global supply, with the European Union among its main export markets. — AFP

Fitch downgrades Maldives, warns of default

MALE, Maldives: International credit rating agency Fitch downgraded the Maldives Wednesday and warned that South Asia's tourist paradise could be headed for a sovereign default on its foreign loans.

The downgrade came six weeks after the IMF warned the Maldives against a looming "debt distress," as the small but strategically placed luxury tourist destination looks set to borrow more from its main creditor China. Fitch bumped the archipelago one spot to 'CCC' on its ratings metrics, reflecting risks associated with dwindling foreign currency reserves that dropped to \$492 million in May, the agency said in a statement.

It said the government's debt servicing obligations amounting to \$409 million this year would add to severe stress. Since winning office last year, President Mohamed Muizzu has reoriented the atoll nation—known for its upmarket beach resorts and celebrity vacationers—away from traditional benefactor India and towards China.

In April, his party won parliamentary elections in a landslide after promising to build thousands of apartments, reclaim more land for urban development and upgrade airports, all with Chinese funding. Fitch said its baseline assumed the Maldives will continue to rely on bilateral and multilateral financing support.

US consumer confidence ticks lower in June

WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence edged slightly lower in June amid rising concern about current and future business conditions, according to survey data published Tuesday.

The Conference Board's consumer confidence index fell to 100.4, down from a revised figure of 101.3 last month. The June index was marginally higher than market expectations, according to Briefing.com, but the decline from May signals ongoing concerns about the health of the world's largest economy heading into the November election. The board's sub-index measuring current business and labor conditions nonetheless increased in June to 141.5, up from a revised figure of 140.8 in May.

"Consumers expressed mixed feelings this month," Conference Board chief economist Dana Peterson said in a statement. "Their view of the present situation improved slightly overall, driven by an uptick in sentiment about the current labor market, but their assessment of current business conditions cooled," she added. Most of the decline between May and June was seen among consumers aged between 35 and 54, while younger and older consumers actually saw confidence improve, she said.

"Consumer Confidence edged modestly lower in June, keeping the index within its narrow recent range," Wells Fargo economists Shannon Seery Grein and Jeremiah Kohl wrote in a note to clients.

"The details continue to demonstrate a hesitant, but not overly concerned, consumer," they added.

Consumer confidence in the United States has struggled to recover from a post-pandemic surge in inflation that prompted the Federal Reserve to hike interest rates to a 23-year high. Despite inflation falling sharply, it remains stuck above the Fed's long-term two percent target, and the Fed remains on hold on rates—pushing up the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses. Lackluster consumer confidence also remains a headache for President Joe Biden, who is talking up his economic record in office as he prepares to face off against Donald Trump in the November 5 election.—AFP

Business

Singapore port congestion shows ripple impact of Red Sea attacks

Manufacturers, industries battling surging rates, port backups and shortages of containers

SEOUL/SINGAPORE: Congestion at Singapore's container port is at its worst since the COVID-19 pandemic, a sign of how prolonged vessel re-routing to avoid Red Sea attacks has disrupted global ocean shipping - with bottlenecks also appearing in other Asian and European ports.

Retailers, manufacturers and other industries that rely on massive box ships are again battling surging rates, port backups and shortages of empty containers, even as many consumer-oriented firms look to build inventories heading into the peak year-end shopping season.

Global port congestion has reached an 18-month high, with 60 percent of ships waiting at anchor located in Asia, maritime data firm Linerlytica said this month. Ships with a total capacity of over 2.4 million twenty-foot equivalent container units (TEUs) were waiting at anchorages as of mid-June.

But, unlike during the pandemic, it is not a buying flurry by house-bound consumers that is swamping ports.

Rather, ship timetables are being disrupted with missed sailing schedules and fewer port calls, as vessels take longer routes around Africa to avoid the Red Sea, where Yemen's Houthi group has been attacking shipping since November.

Ships are therefore offloading larger amounts at once at big transshipment hubs like Singapore, where cargoes are unloaded and reloaded on different ships for the final leg of their journey, and forgoing subsequent voyages to catch up on schedules.

"(Shippers) are trying to manage the situation by dropping the boxes at transshipment hubs," said Jayendu Krishna, deputy head of Singapore-based consultancy Drewry Maritime Advisors. "Liners have been accumulating boxes in Singapore and other hubs."

Average Singapore cargo offload volume jumped 22 percent between January and May, significantly impacting port productivity, Drewry said.

Singapore, the world's sec-

ond-largest container port, has seen particularly severe congestion in recent weeks. The average wait time to berth a container ship was two to three days, Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) said in end-May, while container trackers Linerlytica and PortCast said delays could last up to a week. Typically, berthing should take less than a day.

Neighboring ports are also backing up as some ships skip Singapore. The strain has shifted to Malaysia's Port Klang and Tanjung Pelepas, said Linerlytica, while wait times have also climbed at Chinese ports, with Shanghai and Qingdao seeing the longest delays. Drewry expects congestion at major transshipment ports to remain high, but anticipates some easing as carriers add capacity and restore schedules. Singapore's MPA said that port operator PSA had re-opened older berths and yards at Keppel Terminal and would open more berths at Tuas Port to tackle extended waits.

Maersk MAERSKb.CO, the world's second-largest container carrier, said this month it would skip two westbound sailings from China and South Korea in early July due to severe congestion in Asian and Mediterranean ports.

The annual peak shipping season has also arrived earlier than expected, exacerbating port congestion, shippers and research firms said. This seems to be driven by restocking activities, particularly in the US, and by customers shipping goods early in anticipation of stronger demand, said Niki Frank, CEO of DHL Global Forwarding Asia Pacific. Container rates, meanwhile, have surged, raising the risk of another spate of price increases for buyers like the post-pandemic inflation spike which central banks are still trying to tame.

Rates had stabilized into April but in May "there was a significant increase in ocean freight exports of Chinese e-commerce, electric vehicles, and renewable energy-related goods," Asia-focused freight forwarder Di-



Container ships are berthed at PSA's Pasir Panjang Terminal in Singapore. — Reuters

merco said. "The peak season, which traditionally starts in June, was advanced by a full month, causing ocean freight rates to soar." Container import volume at the 10 largest US seaports in May rose 12 percent, fuelled by the second-highest monthly import volumes since January 2023, said data provider Descartes.

"(US) consumers are continuing to spend more than last year, and retailers are stocking up to meet demand," said Jonathan Gold, a National Retail Federation vice president. Ocean imports into Europe from Asia are also showing signs of a re-stocking season running into peak season - pushing rates to 2024 highs, Judah Levine of freight

platform Freightos said. Container freight prices from Asia to the US and Europe have tripled since early 2024.

Rates from Asia and Singapore to the US East Coast are at their highest since September 2022, while rates into the US West Coast are highest since August 2022, freight platform Xeneta said. Some industry players think part of the reason for the bottlenecks at China ports is fuelled by US importers rushing to buy Chinese goods such as steel and medical products that will be subject to steep tariff hikes from Aug 1.

But newly imposed US tariffs would affect only about 4 percent of Chinese imports to the US, said Jared Bernstein, chair

of the Council of Economic Advisers. Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, the largest US gateway for Chinese ocean imports, also expects a limited impact. "We may see some of this cargo come in, but it is not going to be a deluge," he said.

Concerns about possible strikes at US ports this year could also be pulling the peak season forward, while DHL said German port strikes were adding to the gridlock. All of those disruptions will likely mean higher prices for consumers, experts warn. "These are huge financial hits for shippers to absorb," said Peter Sand, chief analyst at Xeneta. — Reuters

FedEx climbs on cheery annual profit forecast

LONDON: FedEx shares jumped 13 percent pre-market on Wednesday after the delivery giant reassured investors with a largely upbeat annual profit forecast and said it would weigh options for its less-than-truckload business that one analyst valued at \$30 billion. On Tuesday, the company projected fiscal 2025 earnings of \$20 to \$22 per share - the midpoint of which was slightly above analysts' estimates - as cost cuts rolled out to tackle a slump in freight demand are set to yield \$2.2 billion in savings.

The company is also mulling whether to keep or sell its FedEx Freight trucking business that generated revenue of \$2.3 billion in the latest quarter. "It seems that the transformation at FedEx is building momentum and the strategic announcement with Freight should not be underestimated," JP Morgan analyst Brian Ossenbeck said, upgrading the stock to "overweight" from "neutral" and raising his price target to a Street high of \$359.

FedEx's shares were trading at \$290.2 and were set to add \$8.3 billion to the company's market value, if current gains hold. Shares of rival United Parcel Service were up 1.3 percent. Wall Street analysts were largely bullish on FedEx's plan for the freight unit. "We think (strategic review of Freight business) could unlock significant value for shareholders," Bernstein analyst David Vernon said. "The key here is not just getting a higher multiple - it's understanding that a stand-alone Freight business would be in a better position to close the margin gap to peers," Vernon added. Jefferies analyst Stephanie Moore pegged the value of the business at \$30 billion. FedEx is consolidating its separate delivery companies into a single entity to save costs and better compete with UPS and Amazon. As a result, the company's quarterly operating margin improved in the latest reported quarter to 8.5 percent from 8.1 percent a year earlier. FedEx executives have said slashing expenses and consolidating operations would bolster returns, even though demand remained weak for package deliveries due to sticky inflation and higher interest rates. — Reuters

NBK urges to use official websites, apps when making bill payments

KUWAIT: As part of its active efforts to enhance financial awareness and inclusion among all sectors of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to promote the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

NBK intensifies awareness by sharing educational content including video clips, messages and tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as reposting CBK's communications, aiming to raise awareness among the public and familiarize them with the various fraudulent schemes and protection methods. NBK stressed that customers should ensure using official websites and apps when making bill payments, advising them to use the 'Sahel' app to direct them to official websites and apps to avoid any scams.

With the increasing fraudulent techniques used by scammers to deceive victims, NBK always seeks to raise awareness among customers and familiarize them with

Russian ruble firms in low volume as taxes approach

MOSCOW: The Russian ruble strengthened on Wednesday, moving towards 87 against the dollar with favorable month-end tax payments approaching, but in low volume trade after US sanctions halted exchange trading in the dollar and euro earlier in June. Sanctions on Moscow Exchange MOEX.MM and its clearing agent, the National Clearing Centre (NCC), have led to varying prices and spreads as trading shifted to the over-the-counter (OTC) market on June 14, obscuring access to reliable pricing for the Russian currency. On the interbank market, where liquidity can be low as major Russian banks that have been sanctioned cannot participate, the

far-right government in Paris that could strain ties with other European capitals and test the very foundations of the euro project. Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) insists it would not blow up the French budget. But questions persist about how it would fund costly spending plans within the eurozone's newly minted budget rules and whether the European Central Bank could step in to help if financial markets turn on France. "If a country can just ignore the rules and be helped by the central bank, you'll get a lot of doubts about the future value of the euro and the future cohesion of the euro," said Holger Schmieding, an economist at Berenberg.

Such concerns are not on the official agenda of Thursday's EU summit. But with the RN leading polls in the two-round vote starting June 30, they are bound to occupy the minds of President Emmanuel Macron's fellow leaders. Senior German government sources said they were dismayed by Macron's surprise decision to call elections that could usher in an RN-led government. One compared it to former UK premier David Cameron's



these different schemes as well as provide them with the tips and precautions to steer clear of these threats. Fraud often occurs when users Google a service website to pay bills, as they get many clones that simulate official websites, which exposes users to fraud, scams and stealing of their bank accounts when they click the bill payment links. The bank stressed that precautions should be taken when making any service bill payments, by ensuring to use the entity's official website. The same should be followed also in case of online shopping by verifying that stores' websites are secure and legitimate before signing in, and also checking that these websites are protected and encrypted using https protocol.

Furthermore, the bank warned of using public Wi-Fi for online shopping, as these networks are unsecure

ruble was trading 1 percent higher at 87.40 at 0707 GMT against the dollar.

The average dollar-ruble mixed composite rate, calculated by LSEG and based on data from international brokers and counterparties, stood at 87.00. The central bank's official dollar-ruble rate was set at 87.28 for June 26, calculated on the basis of OTC trading. Against the yuan, the ruble firmed 0.2 percent to 11.88, according to an analysis of the OTC market.

The yuan had surpassed the dollar to become the most traded currency with the ruble in Moscow before last week's sanctions were imposed. It accounted for a 54 percent share of the FX market in May. Traders closing foreign currency positions and various technical difficulties concerning interbank limits when closing OTC market FX deals saw the ruble strengthen sharply to one-year highs in mid-June after the sanctions were imposed. It has eased from those highs since the government softened capital controls that have been supporting the ruble since October.

Month-end taxes, due on June 28, usually see

ill-fated gamble on an "in-out" Brexit referendum.

In Italy, with an even bigger debt pile than France, a tinge of Schadenfreude over France's misfortunes is offset by fears that a French crisis could extend across the Alps, said Francesco Galletti of Rome-based political risk consultant Policy Sonar. Otmar Issing, the ECB's first chief economist and one of the euro's architects, compared the debt of Italy and France to "a sword of Damocles hanging over the monetary union", bound to fall unless the problem is tackled.

"You can pull the hair by which it is attached but it cannot hold forever," he said in an interview.

Even Greece is not cutting France any slack, with central bank governor Yannis Stoumbaras stressing that all member states needed to respect EU rules.

Polling points to the RN emerging as the largest party, with or without a clear majority to pursue an awkward "cohabitation" with Macron until the 2027 presidential election. France's fiscal credibility is already at stake with the International Monetary Fund questioning how it will reduce

and unprotected, which makes them easily prone to hacking, and stealing customers' personal and banking information. It also urged customers to avoid saving any banking or personal information on the browser used to log in to the online shopping store.

NBK leverages its powerful customer communication capabilities and sector-leading social media platforms to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As the leading financial institution in Kuwait, the bank frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as many training courses for its employees to enhance their knowledge and expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime. The "Let's Be Aware" campaign is the largest across the GCC region focusing on raising banking and financial awareness among banks' customers. The campaign covers a variety of crucial topics including: anti-fraud tips, raising awareness on high-risk investments, maximizing benefit from banking services, promoting savings and investment culture, as well as other related topics.



A board showing currency exchange rates of the US dollar and euro against Russian ruble on display in a street in Moscow. — Reuters

exporters convert foreign currency revenues to pay local liabilities, additionally buttressing the ruble. Brent crude oil, a global benchmark for Russia's main export, was up 0.5 percent at \$85.43 a barrel. — Reuters

France may be next test of the euro's foundations

FRANKFURT/PARIS: "Because it's France" was how Jean-Claude Juncker, European Commission president at the time, explained Brussels' decision in 2016 to give leeway to the large, founder member of the European Union on the bloc's budget rules. That patience continued even as the EU endured a sovereign debt crisis that almost sunk the euro and forced smaller, more indebted nations such as Greece and Portugal to adopt swinging austerity measures.

But any indulgence for French exceptionalism may come to an end if France's snap election produces a eurosceptic,

a budget deficit running at around 5.1 percent this year and its credit rating downgraded by two agencies.

In truth, France's fiscal sins far pre-date Macron. It has run budget deficits greater than the EU-mandated 3 percent for most of the 25 years since those rules came into force. Brigitte Granville, economist at London's Queen Mary University and author of "What ails France?", said its rejection in the 1990s of German proposals for more complete political union reflected a desire to retain sovereignty over its finances. She expected the RN, which long ago dropped calls to leave a single currency broadly accepted by French voters, to moderate its plans just enough to please Brussels if it came to power. "They don't have a choice unless they want to leave the euro," Granville said in an interview. RN statements to that effect have reassured investors, who were demanding a premium of just 70 basis points to own 10-year French bonds rather than their safer German counterparts - a far cry from peaks of 190 points for France and nearly 560 points for Italy during the 2011 debt crisis. — Reuters

THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2024



This picture shows vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) performing on stage during a concert in Jakarta. — AFP photos



This picture shows drummer Euis Siti Aisah of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) speaking during an interview with AFP before their concert in Jakarta.



This picture shows members of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB); vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia (center), bassist Widi Rahmawati (right), and drummer Euis Siti Aisah (left), posing during an interview with AFP before their concert in Jakarta.

INDONESIA'S ALL-GIRL MUSLIM METAL BAND HEADS TO GLASTONBURY



This picture shows members of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB); vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia (right) and drummer Euis Siti Aisah (center), conducting a sound check before their concert in Jakarta.



This picture shows bassist Widi Rahmawati (right) and drummer Euis Siti Aisah conducting a sound check before their concert in Jakarta.

When three Indonesian teen girls formed a metal band 10 years ago to sing about gender equality and peace over bone-crunching guitars and drums, they could scarcely have dreamed of one day playing at Glastonbury. Yet, a decade later, Voice of Baceprot's three Muslim women will become the first band from Indonesia to perform at the world-famous festival in Britain this week, where the headliners include Coldplay and Dua Lipa.

Their set will mark the latest highlight in a wild career that has seen Firda Kurnia (guitar and vocals), Widi Rahmawati (bass) and Euis Siti Aisah (drums) amass a huge fanbase while challenging gender stereotypes in male-dominated Indonesian society. "Honestly, Glastonbury is not on our wishlist because we feel like it is too high a dream," Euis, 24, told AFP. "(I am) half in disbelief. That is why we keep checking whether it is the official Glastonbury or if someone pranked us." Voice of Baceprot rose from humble beginnings in a village near the West Javan city of Garut.

They won fans with their raucous Rage Against the Machine covers - the word "baceprot" means noisy in Sundanese, an Indonesian traditional language - and also won fans with their original material. Then came wider international attention, including plaudits from some superstars. Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea once tweeted that he was "so down with Voice of Baceprot". And while the



This picture shows vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) performing on stage during a concert in Jakarta.

group has previously played in the United States and Europe - including at the famous Wacken metal festival in Germany - there are nerves ahead of Glastonbury. "Hopefully my nervousness is a reminder for me to be more prepared," said Euis.

Indonesia tour dream

Muslim conservatives in Indonesia have criticized the band over the fact that they are women, and also claimed their clothes are inappropriate. But Voice of Baceprot have stuck to their beliefs and shot back through their music. Their biggest hit - "God, Allow Me (Please) to Play Music" - has racked up millions of plays on YouTube and Spotify, and takes aim

at the conservative detractors who say women should not play such music. The band has also written songs about climate change and women's rights. "We create songs based on what we see, hear, read, and experience ourselves," said Firda.

The group's rise has come with a hazard they had not anticipated: "obsessed" fans curious about every aspect of their lives. Some have even showed up at their homes to try and meet them. "We're like: 'OK, maybe this is one of the job's risks.' Our families sometimes get confused," said Firda, 24. After forming in 2014, Voice of Baceprot played at small festivals around West Java, one of Indonesia's most conservative provinces.



This picture shows bassist Widi Rahmawati of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) performing on stage during a concert in Jakarta.

They later moved to the capital Jakarta and also played online concerts during the Covid pandemic. They have since returned to their hometown, where they are building their own studio. Widi said the band has received "a lot" of offers to play abroad. But as they prepare to play the biggest show of their lives at the famous Worthy Farm in southwest England, Voice of Baceprot say one of their dreams is rooted at home. "We actually really want to tour Indonesia," said Widi. "But we haven't had the opportunity yet." — AFP



This picture shows vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia (left) of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) performing on stage during a concert in Jakarta.



This picture shows members of the Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB); vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia (left), bassist Widi Rahmawati (center), and drummer Euis Siti Aisah (right), chatting before their concert in Jakarta.

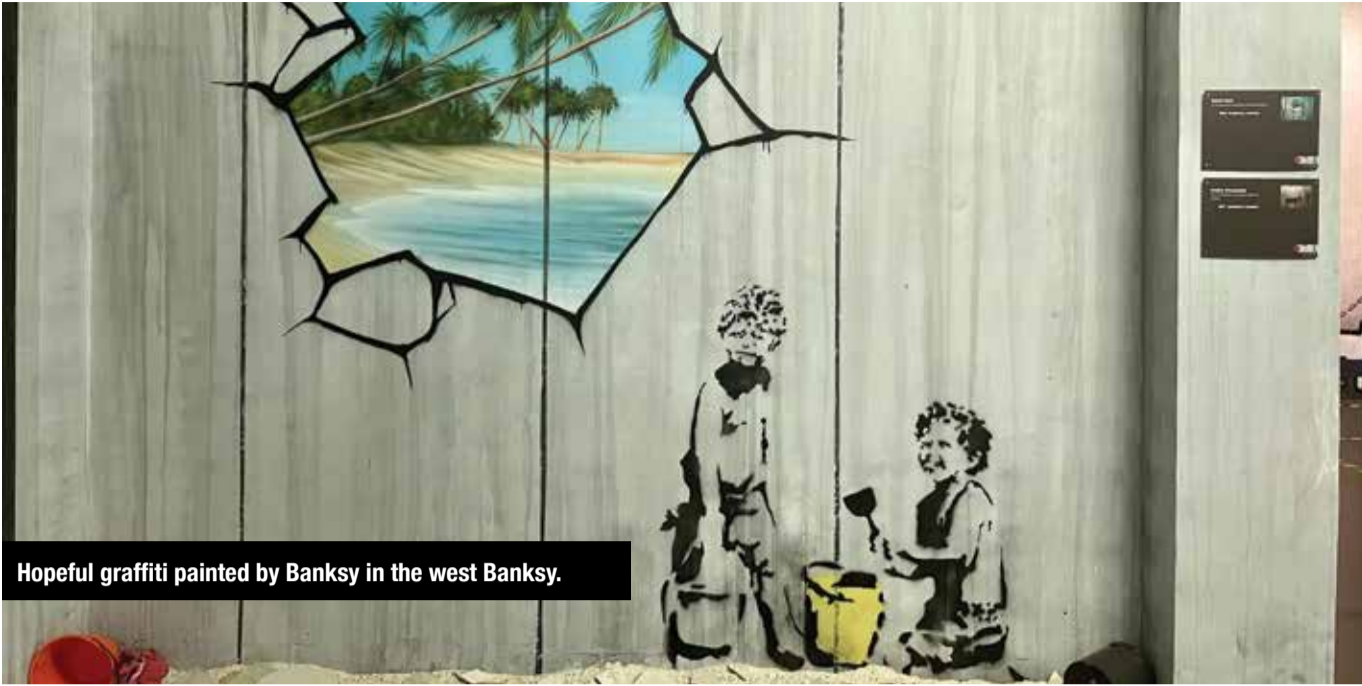


This picture shows vocalist and guitarist Firda Kurnia (left) and bassist Widi Rahmawati performing on stage during a concert in Jakarta.



This picture shows a crowd-surfing fan during a concert by Indonesian metal band Voice of Baceprot (VOB) in Jakarta.

Lifestyle



Hopeful graffiti painted by Banksy in the west Bank.



Rats are widely depicted in Banksy's drawings.



WALLS OF WHISPERED REVOLUTIONS: Exploring Banksy's legacy in New York



Banksy museum at lower East Side of Manhattan.

In Lower East Side of Manhattan, where the cracked walls were adorned with murals, the largest Banksy Museum in the world has been established. The museum included a large display of more than 160 works by the most mysterious and famous contemporary artist, documenting his journey to Palestine on the sep-

aration wall in the West Bank. Street art currently occupies a prominent place in the global cultural scene, with graffiti artists displaying their works in public spaces as a form of social interaction, and the name Banksy stands out in the forefront of this artistic field.

The museum presents the master of street art, whose identity remains unknown, in an immersive experience

for visitors by reviving his creations around the world. His art pieces covered themes that were considered controversial, such as advocating for the oppressed, the poor and migrants, political commentary, as well as people's struggle and hope. —KUNA



Dove of Peace painting in Palestinian Bethlehem.



Another painting by Banksy (Flower Thrower) which he painted in the West Bank in 2003. — KUNA photos

Almodovar's love affair with Madrid explored in new exhibition

Oscar-winning director Pedro Almodovar's decades-long love affair with Madrid is the focus of a new exhibition in the Spanish capital which has appeared in all of his feature films to varying degrees. "Madrid, Almodovar Girl", which runs until October 20 at the Conde Duque cultural center, features 200 photos from his 23 movies, as well as notebooks, movie props and the first camera Almodovar bought, a hand-held Super-8. This year marks the 50th anniversary since Almodovar began his film career in Madrid in 1974 with the release of his first short film.

"The story of Pedro Almodovar and Madrid is a story of requited love, Pedro Almodovar is Pedro Almodovar thanks to Madrid," Pedro Sanchez, the commissioner of the exhibition and author of a book on the director's links to the city, told AFP. "Almodovar has paid back to Madrid in spades what the city has given him by being his muse," he said, adding that many foreigners' first contact with Spanish culture and Madrid is through Almodovar's works.

A huge chart at the exhibition shows what percentage of the action in each of Almodovar's films takes place in Madrid. It ranges from just six percent in 2011 drama "The Skin I Live In", about an amoral plastic surgeon who seeks revenge on the young man who raped his daughter, to 100 percent in seven films. These include his international breakthrough, the 1988 romantic black comedy "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown".

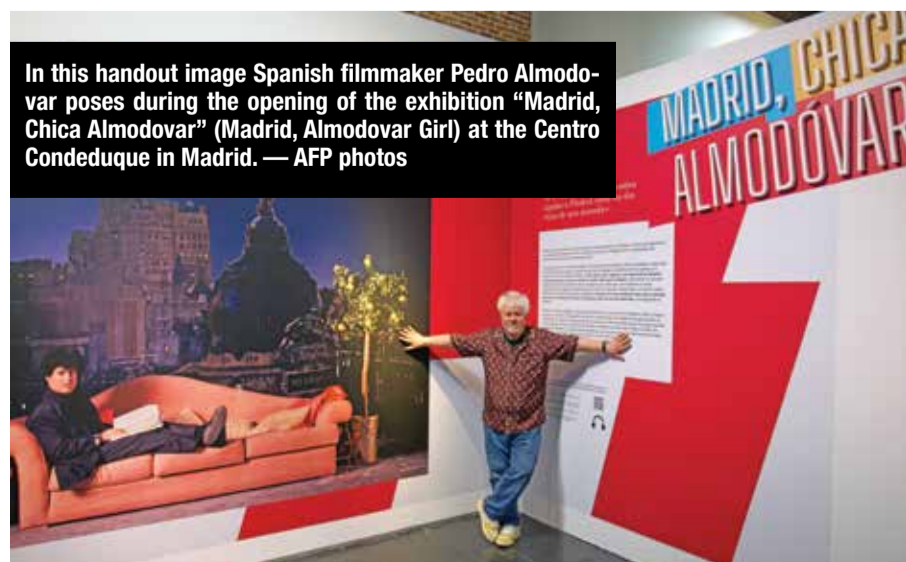
Cemeteries and bars

Almodovar moved to Madrid from a small village in Castilla-La Mancha, an arid and rural region in central Spain, in 1967 during the final years of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco when he was just 17. "I have never felt like a stranger here," he has said. After Franco's death in 1975, Almodovar became a key part of the cultural movement in Madrid dubbed "la movida" which saw artists break the Roman Catholic dictatorship's many taboos.

Sanchez said that like Madrid, Almodovar has a "transgressive, multifacet-

ed, critical, open, fun, cosmopolitan and friendly personality". The exhibition features a map of Madrid marked with the 272 locations that have appeared in his films. Spain's most famous director tends to avoid famous landmarks, preferring working-class areas like Vallecas and places such as hospitals, taxis, bars and cemeteries where people go about their daily lives. One of his most iconic scenes was shot outside the facade of the building housing the exhibition -- the moment in the 1987 film "Law of Desire" where a city street cleaner hoses down Carmen Maura's character on a hot Madrid summer night at her request.

Almodovar is known for using vivid colors, which he has said is "a way of taking revenge" on the grey years of the Franco dictatorship, Sanchez said. He reproduced his Madrid flat for the 2019 film "Pain and Glory" about an ageing film director, even using some of his armchairs.—AFP



In this handout image Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar poses during the opening of the exhibition "Madrid, Chica Almodovar" (Madrid, Almodovar Girl) at the Centro Condeduque in Madrid. — AFP photos



The first camera used by Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar is displayed as part of the exhibition "Madrid, Chica Almodovar" (Madrid, Almodovar Girl).

'Wake-up call': Third of adults not doing enough physical activity

Nearly a third of all adults are not doing enough physical activity, posing a growing threat to health across the world, a major study said on Wednesday. More than 31 percent of adults -- 1.8 billion people -- did not get the recommended amount of physical exercise in 2022, an increase of five percentage points from 2010, according to a study by the World Health Organization and other researchers. "Physical inactivity is a silent threat to global health, contributing significantly to the burden of chronic diseases," said Ruediger Krech, director of the WHO's health promotion department. "Unfortunately, the world is not going in the right direction," he told an on-line press conference. To be healthy, the WHO recommends all adults spend at least 150 minutes every week doing moderate-intensity physical activity -- which can include walking, cycling or even household chores -- or at least 75 minutes of more vigorous exercise, such as running or competing in sport. A combination of the two will also get people over the line. Not getting this level of exercise increases the risk of people developing heart disease, diabetes, some cancers as well as mental health problems, Krech said.

If current trends continue, adult inactivity levels are projected to rise to 35 percent by 2030, according to the study in The Lancet Global Health. This would fall far short of the WHO's goal of reducing physical inactivity by 15 percent by the end of the decade. Fiona Bull, head of the WHO's physical activity unit, said the research was "a wake-up call that we're not doing enough".

'Every step counts'

Inactivity rates varied widely between countries. For example, 66 percent of adults do not get enough physical activity in the United Arab Emirates, while the figure was under three percent in Malawi. There was also a gender gap. Nearly 34 percent of women worldwide do not reach the activity threshold, compared to 29 percent of men. There are "multiple causes" for activity rates declining overall, including that people are walking less, working at computers more and generally spending more leisure time looking at screens, Bull said.

During a busy few months of world sport which includes the Olympics and the European and Copa America football championships, Krech reminded people that "watching sports does not equal being physically active". "Don't just sit on (your) chairs, get up and be active -- every step counts," he said. The WHO emphasized that changing individual behavior is not enough, calling on countries to promote physical activity by boosting community sport as well as walking, cycling and public transport.

For the study, billed as the most comprehensive to look at the subject yet, an international team of researchers combined the findings from more than 500 studies involving 5.7 million people across 163 countries and territories. It was not all bad news. Almost half of the countries had made progress over the last decade, and 22 are on track to reach the 2030 target -- as long as they keep moving in the right direction.—AFP

Lifestyle



Princess Diana's 1986 midnight-blue Murray Arbeid dress, is on display at Julien's Auctions' press preview of "Princess Diana's Elegance & a Royal Collection", ahead of an exclusive private showing at the Peninsula Beverly Hills, Beverly Hills, California.--AFP photos



Princess Diana's shoes and purses are displayed during Julien's Auctions' press preview of "Princess Diana's Elegance & a Royal Collection".



Princess Diana's 1987 Victor Edelstein magenta silk and lace evening dress is displayed.

HANDBAGS AND BALL GOWNS: PRINCESS DIANA FINERY GOES UNDER THE HAMMER

The biggest auction of Diana memorabilia since the late British princess sold dozens of outfits months before her death gets underway in California this week, featuring a midnight blue tulle dress and a flamenco-style lace-up number. Nearly fifty pieces, including gowns, shoes, handbags and hats, will go under the hammer in Beverly Hills. "Princess Diana's Elegance & A Royal Collection," brings together some of the style maven's favorite designers, including Victor Edelstein, Murray Arbeid and Catherine Walker.

Highlights include Arbeid's blue dia-

mante ball gown, which the princess wore in 1986 to the London premiere of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera," and a magenta lace dress by Edelstein. Both pieces are expected to fetch up to \$400,000, according to Julien's Auctions, which is running the sale. "We are here celebrating Princess Diana's elegance," said Gabriela Schwartz, of the auction house. "We have some really standout pieces... that Diana wore with a lot of pride and (which are) really emblematic of her style."

Diana married Britain's now-King Charles in 1981 in an opulent ceremo-

ny watched by tens of millions around the globe. The fairy tale soured over the following years and their tempestuous relationship became fodder for newspapers and gossip magazines, feeding a growing celebrity culture that exploded in the 1990s. The couple had two children—Princes William and Harry—but divorced in 1996 in a tabloid frenzy and amid mutual infidelities. Diana died in a car crash in Paris the following year as she and her lover tried to outrun paparazzi.

More than a quarter of a century on, the woman dubbed "The People's Princess" remains unmatched as a celebri-

ty and style icon, whose allure continues to fascinate millions. A dress worn by the princess that was auctioned last year fetched a staggering \$1.14 million. The collection, which has toured the globe for months, is expected to generate huge interest by the time bidding closes on Thursday. As well as items of high couture, the sale will also include shoes by Salvatore Ferragamo, Kurt Geiger and Rayne, as well as letters in Diana's own handwriting, along with a number of other items connected to the British royal family.—AFP



Princess Diana's 1989 Hong Kong royal tour yellow and navy skirt suit by Catherine Walker is displayed.



Princess Diana's hats by Philip Somerville (from left to right) 1989 teal hat, 1987 yellow and black turban, and red and cream straw hat worn on tour in Australia are on display.



Gabriela Schwartz, head of fashion and talent relations at Julien's Auctions, poses for AFP during Julien's Auctions' press preview of "Princess Diana's Elegance & a Royal Collection".

Designer vestments and furniture for Paris' reborn Notre-Dame

Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris is getting a modern makeover for its reopening in December, with designer furniture and colorful priestly vestments created by a top fashion designer. The 860-year-old cathedral has been undergoing a rapid reconstruction since being ravaged by fire in 2019. It is on track to reopen on December 8, and with less than six months to go, fire-blackened rubble has given way to gleaming stone.

Archbishop of Paris Laurent Ulrich said he wanted to "welcome the whole world" as he revealed details of the new interior designs. Priests, archbishops, bishops and deacons will wear vestments created by aristocratic French designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac -- known to his celebrity pals as "JC/DC" -- the man who came up with Madonna's famous coat made of teddy bears. The 74-year-old was inspired by the



French fashion designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac speaks on Feb 19, 2019 in Milan during a press conference.

immense gold cross in the cathedral's choir, which was spared by the flames.

His priestly outfits feature geometric patterns with sharp lines and primary colors reminiscent of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. New massive bronze furniture -- highly stylized and bringing to mind something from "Game of Thrones" -- is being produced in southern France

and should be installed in November, including a new baptismal font, altar and tabernacle. Some 1,500 to 2,000 simple but comfortable chairs in light oak have been ordered for the faithful. The painted decorations of the chapels, seen in part by AFP, have regained their vibrant colors and should match seven new tapestries and six new stained-glass windows to be installed after the reopening. Contemporary artists including Daniel Buren, Herve Di Rosa and Chinese-born Yan Pei-Ming are among the 110 competing to create the windows.

'Spiritual experience'

Future visitors, which the diocese says will number 15 million a year -- up from 12 million before the fire -- will find the church a "strong cultural and spiritual experience", said rector Olivier Ribadeau Dumas. Most key parts of the rebuilding have been completed, including

the famous spire, all the wooden frames, the golden crosses and the cathedral's rooster weather-vane. State-of-the-art fire protection systems are due to be installed over the next few months, along with the eight restored bells for the north tower. The new great organ is also almost complete, the diocese said.

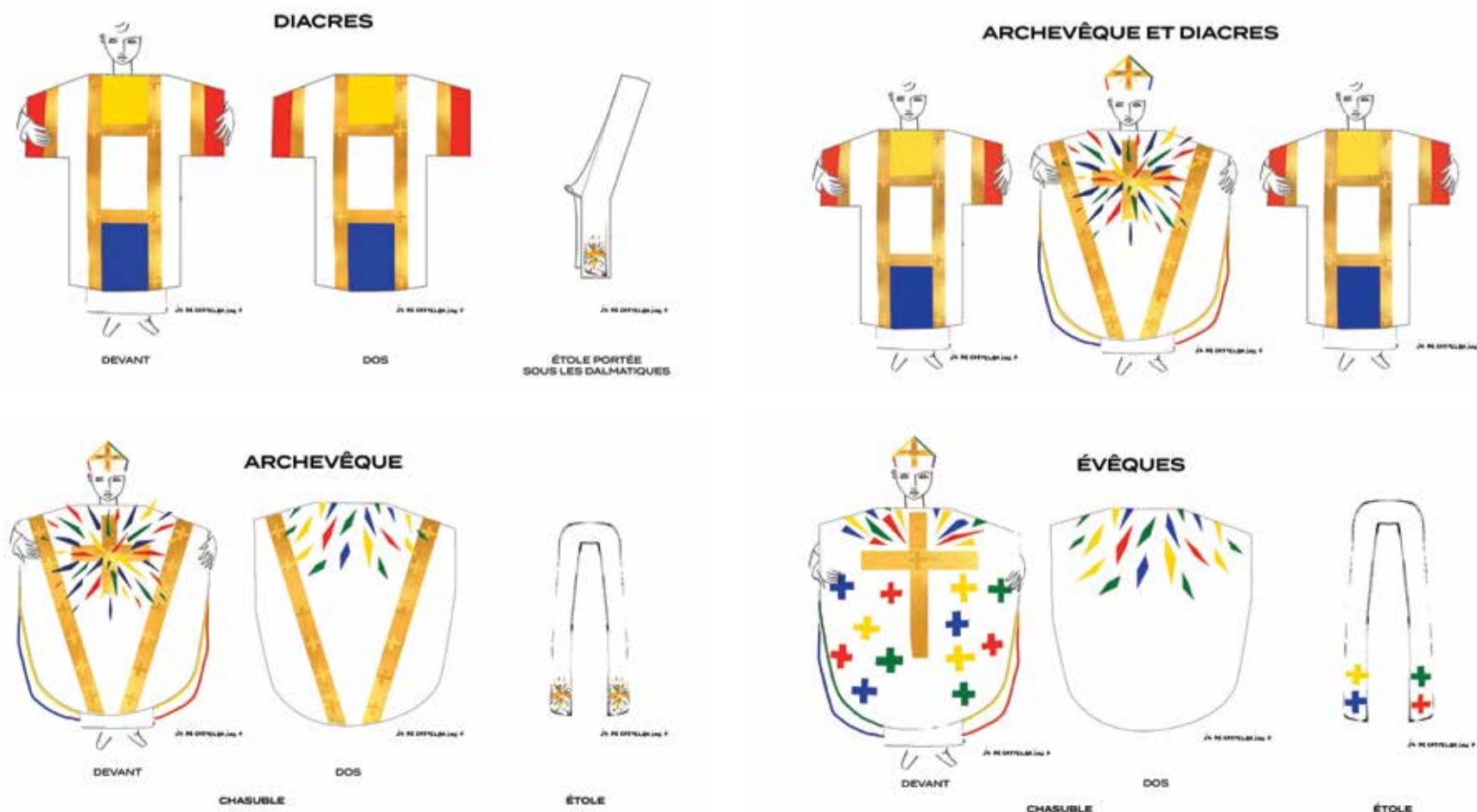
Reservations to visit the cathedral -- free of charge -- will open a week before the December 8 reopening, favoring individuals over groups for the first six months. The diocese said Notre-Dame will be able to accommodate 2,500 people at once and 40,000 per day. That is double the number at the Palace of Versailles, which is 10 times bigger, and 10,000 more per day than the vast Louvre Museum in Paris, the diocese said. —AFP

'Forgotten' women Impressionists rediscovered at Irish exhibition

Four women Impressionist painters largely overlooked by history are coming under a rare spotlight at an exhibition in Ireland marking the 150th anniversary of the artistic movement. Women Impressionists were often ignored by critics unable to see past their "feminine" subject matter or dismissed as "secondary" figures. The exhibition showcases the work of four of these 19th century artists -- Berthe Morisot, Eva Gonzales, Marie Bracquemond and Mary Cassatt. "It is one of the first exhibitions anywhere to focus on the four women who are key to the Impressionist movement," the director of Dublin's National Gallery of Ireland, Caroline Campbell, told AFP ahead of the show's opening on Thursday.

"We wanted to look at four great painters who got much less attention... because they were women," she said. The first Impressionist exhibition took place in Paris in 1874 after painters including Claude Monet, Edgar Degas and Paul Cezanne grew tired of being rejected by the conservative gatekeepers of the art establishment's official exhibition and decided to mount their own show. Although it took several more exhibitions for Impressionism with its trademark rapid, spontaneous brushstrokes, to take off, that first show is now considered the birth of the movement. Some 60 works by the four women artists are on display. "They take us into what Impressionism means. It's about light. It's about color, but it's also about family, and close relationships. And for these women, it's about sisterhood, as well," Campbell said.

Women artists did not have access to public spaces in the way that their male counterparts did, added exhibition curator Janet McLean. "They couldn't go to bars or cafes and paint people in those environments. So a lot of their work is painted in the intimacy of homes and gardens, using family members as models," she said. Highlights of the "Women Impressionists" exhibition include an 1884 portrayal of an intimate domestic scene: "The Artist's Daughter, Julie, with her Nanny" by Morisot. The painting, loaned by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, shows the girl watching her nanny sewing. Morisot positions the figures by a window to create Impressionist-style light and a glimpse of the outside. —AFP



These handout photographs show the drawing of the future liturgical vestments of the archbishop of Notre-Dame designed by 74-year-old French fashion designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, who was inspired by the huge golden cross of the Notre-Dame choir, which was spared from the flames. — AFP photos

Sports

India look to end clear knockout hurdle in England semi-final

Rohit's team head into the clash with a six-match unbeaten streak

GROS ISLET: India can take a huge step towards winning their first major title in over a decade and bury any doubts about their backbone in the knockout rounds when they face defending champions England in the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals on Thursday.

Despite being backed by the world's richest cricket board, success on the biggest stage has largely proved elusive for India and their 2013 Champions Trophy triumph is the most recent of their five global titles.

Rohit Sharma's team, however, head into the clash with England in Guyana on a six-match unbeaten streak in the tournament and determined to emulate the title success of the 2007 side in the inaugural edition.

Rohit, who along with fellow stalwart Virat Kohli could be playing at a last World Cup, returned to form with a 41-ball 92 in a thumping win over Australia in the Super Eight stage and said his side would continue being aggressive.

"We don't want to do anything different. We want to play the same way we've been playing, understand what individuals need to do at certain points in the game and play freely, not trying to think too much about what lies ahead," he added.

"It's important that we play our cricket well. So far we've been doing that consistently. Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we want to do and take the game on." Indian fans will still be anxious given their team's shaky displays in the latter stages of big tournaments.

A dominant Indian side topped the group stage

in the 2019 50-overs World Cup but crashed out in the semi-finals to New Zealand. They also fell at the same stage of the T20 World Cup in 2022, going out to England.

After more heartbreak in the 2023 World Test Championship, where they lost in the final to Australia, India's only defeat at last year's ODI World Cup on home soil was in the title decider against the same opponents.

But India look in fine fettle with both bat and ball this time around. Rohit has scored 191 runs in six matches, while pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah has 11 wickets and spinner Kuldeep Yadav, a late entry into the side, has claimed seven in three games.

England's campaign has stuttered with losses to Australia and South Africa in the group stages and they only made the Super Eights by virtue of having a better net run rate than Scotland. Now, however, they stand only two victories away from becoming the first team to retain the T20 World Cup trophy.

"In tournament cricket, sometimes it is better to sneak up and nick it at the end," said all-rounder Liam Livingstone. "Hopefully that's the way we will go. A lot of lads have been contributing in the last few games, which should stand us in good stead going forward."

"We've got hopefully two massive games." England's failure to defend the ODI World Cup last year heaped pressure on skipper Jos Buttler and coach Matthew Mott and they will hope West Indies-born pacers Jofra Archer and Chris Jordan can continue their good form in the knockout rounds.

Buttler is England's top scorer with 191 runs



GROS ISLET: India's Hardik Pandya (2nd R) celebrates with teammates after making a catch to dismiss Australia's Marcus Stoinis during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between Australia and India at Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. — AFP

while opener Phil Salt has 183 and the pair's form could prove crucial if they are to advance. Awaiting India or England in the title clash will be

winner of the first semi-final between South Africa and dark horses Afghanistan, who meet on Wednesday. — AFP

S Africa ignore near-misses with eye on WCup final

TAROUBA: South Africa coach Rob Walter believes his team will not be haunted by its embarrassing legacy of big-match stage fright when they take on Afghanistan for a place in the T20 World Cup final.

Despite the Proteas' deep resources of talent, the country has only won one international title - the Champions Trophy back in 1998.

In World Cup knockout games, they have won just one in 10 and have never made a final, be it in the 50-over or T20 format.

"The near misses in the past, they belong to the people who missed them," insisted Walter.

"This team is a different team. We own whatever is ours to own. And so, our nearest reflection point is this tournament where we've managed to get over the line. So that's what we think about."

South Africa have won all of their seven matches at this World Cup but have consistently struggled to get over the line.

In the first round, they defeated the Netherlands by four wickets only after being 12-4 at one stage and chasing just 104 to win.

A four-run win over Bangladesh followed before they avoided what would have been a seismic shock in a one-run victory over Nepal. In the Super Eights, they squeezed past defending champions England by just seven runs.

"It's always great to dream and I think everyone in South Africa dreams of the time when a trophy gets lifted," added Walter. "No doubt that will happen. Whether it's going to be this week, that remains to be seen. We're just going to try and play the best game of cricket that we can. And we still haven't played our best game yet."

South Africa have defeated Afghanistan in their only two other T20 meetings - by 59 runs at Barbados in the 2010 T20 World Cup and 37 runs in Mumbai six years later. However, Walter admits that the 2024 Afghanistan team - who stunned Australia on their way to a maiden semi-final spot - are a vastly better unit.

"We're seeing Afghanistan in a T20 semi-final. It's awesome for the game of cricket. I love the way they play the game and the way they support it," said Walter.

The coach also dismissed worries over opening batsman Reeza Hendricks who has a top score of 43 at this World Cup.

Hendricks has four scores in single figures including two first-ball ducks against Bangladesh and West Indies. "Reeza's form doesn't bother me at all. He's a quality cricketer," said the coach.

"It was just three and a half weeks ago that he scored a magnificent 80 against the West Indies (in a pre-World Cup game), a man-alone performance really."

"He's a wonderful cricketer and good batsmen are just one shot away from contributing to the team and that's all we are interested in is giving him the freedom to do that." — AFP

All Blacks must 'front up' in home England Tests

WELLINGTON: The All Blacks must "front up" to the firepower of England's forwards to avoid a repeat of their shock 2019 defeat. Ardie Savea warned Wednesday ahead of the two-Test home series. New Zealand will play their first game of the year when they host England on July 6 in Dunedin before the teams meet again the following Saturday at Auckland's Eden Park.

The All Blacks haven't beaten the touring visitors since 2018. England forced them into a 25-25 draw when the sides met in 2022 at Twickenham, three years after New Zealand were stunned 19-7 in the semi-finals of the 2019 Rugby World Cup, when Savea scored the All Blacks' only try against the English. "We understand what they bring and if we don't match up or front up, it's going to be a long day," the loose forward told reporters. "That's what happened in 2019. We got smacked on the nose and couldn't recover."

The All Blacks haven't played since losing the World Cup final 12-11 to South Africa in October, while England are fresh from thrashing Japan 52-17 in Tokyo last weekend. The New Zealand squad gathered near Wellington on Wednesday to begin preparations under new head coach Scott Robertson.

Savea, voted world player of 2023, has had one game for his Wellington club team since his playing sabbatical in Japan finished in May. He is relishing getting stuck into All Blacks training to prepare for England.

"The last time we played them we drew, so we have got a bit of history," he said. "They have just played Japan and are going really

South Korean men, women teams reign supreme

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: South Korea's men and women teams proved tough during Tuesday's competitions of the Asian Fencing Championships 2024 senior team men's Saber and senior team women's Epee.

Korea's Saber team of Bongil Gu, Hansol Ha, Sanguk Oh and Sangwon Park won the gold medal by defeating Iran's team of Farzad Arabzabarn Baher, Mohammad Fotouhi, Ali Pakdaman and Mohammad Rahbari, taking the silver medal. Hong Kong, China ended in third place with the team of Royce Hei Lok Chan, Aaron Long Sze Ho, Ching Tin Ching and Tin Ho Low.

Meanwhile, Korea's Epee women team of Injeong Choi, Young Mi Kang, Hyein Lee, and Sera Song won the gold medal by defeating China's Yiewen Sun, Junyao Tang, Nuo Xu and Sihan Yu, who took the silver medal, while the bronze went to the team of Hong Kong, China's Ying Sin Au, Ling Wai Ling, Sin Yan Kaylin

Duckworth-Lewis co-creator dies

LONDON: Frank Duckworth, one half of the team who pioneered the Duckworth-Lewis method for calculating target scores in limited-overs cricket hit by bad weather, has died at the age of 84. Along with his fellow statistician Tony Lewis, Duckworth



UPPER HUTT: New Zealand rugby head coach Scott Robertson speaks during the All Blacks Season Launch at NZCIS in Upper Hutt, near Wellington. — AFP

well. We need to focus on ourselves and making sure we nail it."

Savea is wary of England play-maker Marcus Smith, who ran in one of their eight tries with a slick move from a set-play in Tokyo. "They are physical, they are skillful and have Marcus Smith running their game," said Savea.

The All Blacks defence will need to pay England's fly-half special attention, Savea said. "His unpredictability is a threat, he's growing into himself in the way he is controlling the game." Like Savea, New Zealand's star back Beauden Barrett has spent the year so far playing club rugby in Japan. He is set to face England along-

side his two brothers.

Scott Barrett has been named All Blacks captain with centre Jordie Barrett as his vice-captain. The All Blacks have 10 days to prepare to face England and Beauden Barrett expects a simple game plan for Robertson's first game.

"The coaches have been really organized and their information presented has been layered," he said. "We wouldn't be taking in a game plan that is too extensive so we'll keep it simple, but whatever we do, we'll be super clear come Friday and Saturday next week. "We have obviously got a lot of work to do between now and then, but we're confident we will get to the right place." — AFP



KUWAIT: The winning teams pose at the championship.

Hsieh and Ooco Hei Yik Lin.

The tournament hosted by Kuwait, will conclude with Kuwait facing South Korea, in addition

to the women's foil competitions. It is worth mentioning that 350 fencers representing 36 countries participated in the championship.

devised the formula that was officially adopted by the International Cricket Council in 1999.

The London-based Royal Statistical Society said in a statement: "Frank will be remembered largely for his contributions to the Society as editor of RSS NEWS, and to cricket as the co-inventor of the Duckworth-Lewis method." Duckworth introduced a short paper, "A fair result in foul weather" at an RSS conference in 1992.

The paper was directly inspired by the farcical ending to the 1992 World Cup semi-final between England

and South Africa in Australia, when a short spell of rain played havoc with calculations and left South Africa targeting an impossible 22 runs off one ball.

Duckworth's lecture led to contact with Lewis, and the pair worked together on a formula that was first used in the second match of England's one-day series against Zimbabwe in 1999. The method was renamed the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method following the retirement of Duckworth and Lewis, after it was slightly modified by Australian statistician Steven Stern. — AFP

Sports

Dour England win Euro 2024 group, France face tough road to final

Netherlands will play the winners of either Groups C or E

COLOGNE: England ground out a 0-0 draw with Slovenia to claim top spot in Group C and avoid a last-16 meeting with hosts Germany, but France face a complicated path to the final after failing to beat Poland on Tuesday.

Gareth Southgate's side have struggled to find their best form in the tournament and delivered another unimpressive performance in Cologne, one that will do little to silence the mounting criticism back home. It was still enough to advance as group winners though after an equally turgid 0-0 draw between Denmark and Serbia in Munich, which saw the Danes finish second ahead of Slovenia despite an identical record.

"That was the aim before the start of the tournament, to come top of the group," England captain Harry Kane told ITV. "These games are really, really tough. We've been here before and stepped it up in the knockouts. Hopefully we can do it again but whoever we get in the next round will be tough."

England must wait to find out which of the four best third-placed teams they will meet in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday for a place in the quarter-finals. Denmark pipped Slovenia to the runners-up spot by virtue of a better disciplinary record after both nations finished with three draws, the same goal difference and number of goals scored.

Slovenia picked up one more yellow card than Denmark, who take on Germany in the last 16. "It's a great team but we're a great team as well and when we play the big nations, we always step up," said Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand.

Slovenia celebrated reaching the knockout phase of a major tournament for the first time, while Serbia were eliminated after coming last in the section. Croatia's exit was also confirmed.

France falter

France blew the chance to finish first in their group despite Kylian Mbappe scoring his maiden European

Championship goal from the spot in a 1-1 draw with Poland, as Austria won a thriller against the Netherlands to snatch top spot.

Didier Deschamps' France failed to top their group at a major tournament for the first time since Euro 2012 after being made to pay for a series of missed chances. "We've achieved our first objective," said Deschamps. "Even if we don't have the spot we were aiming for because we are second. A new competition is about to start."

Austria, who lost their opening game to France, grabbed a 3-2 victory over the Dutch to wrap up a last-16 berth and relegate their already-qualified opponents to third place in Group D. France dominated for long periods against Poland but have still only scored twice in Germany—an own goal by Austria's Maximilian Woeber and Mbappe's penalty.

Les Bleus will face the runners-up from Group E, in which Belgium, Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia all have three points, in the last 16.

As a result of coming second, France also now find themselves in the half of the draw with Germany, Spain and Portugal. Mbappe—playing in a mask after breaking his nose against Austria—finally broke his Euros duck in the 56th minute, as he slotted in a penalty after Ousmane Dembele was felled by Jakub Kiwior.

But Poland were awarded a spot-kick themselves with 13 minutes remaining for a foul on Karol Swiderski. Robert Lewandowski's weak initial effort was comfortably saved by Mike Maignan, but the France goalkeeper had strayed off his line and the Poland talisman dispatched his second attempt.

Austria power through

Dutch fans turned Berlin orange as they continued to light up the tournament, but it was the Austrians in full voice early on as their team were rewarded for an enterprising start when Donyell Malen inadvertently fired into his own net.



DORTMUND: France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe, wearing a protective mask, (L) fights for the ball with Poland's midfielder #03 Pawel Dawidowicz during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group D football match between France and Poland at the BVB Stadion in Dortmund. -- AFP

But the Netherlands drew level less than two minutes after the restart, as Austria midfielder Florian Grillitsch lost the ball in midfield before Cody Gakpo cut inside and finished off a rapid counter-attack. Just as the Oranje started to get on top, Austria reclaimed the lead as Romano Schmid's header found the net via a deflection off Stefan de Vrij on the line.

Memphis Depay struck with an excellent touch and volley to equalise again after a good header down by substitute Wout Weghorst. But one of the

games of the tournament was not yet done and Marcel Sabitzer hammered home in the 80th minute to put Austria in front for the third time.

Ralf Rangnick's men now have a match against either Turkey, the Czech Republic or Georgia to look forward to as they bid to reach the quarter-finals for the first time. The Netherlands will play the winners of either Groups C or E. "We didn't get around to playing football. In the second half, things got better but it wasn't enough," Gakpo told Dutch broadcaster NOS. -- AFP



LE PUY: (FILES) UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the best young rider's white jersey (L), Jumbo-Visma's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey (C) and Jumbo-Visma's US rider Sepp Kuss (R) cycle in the ascent of the Puy de Dome in the final kilometers of the 9th stage. -- AFP

Pogacar 'fairytale' inspiring new generation of riders

KOMENDA: At the Pogi Cup in international cycling star Tadej Pogacar's hometown in Slovenia, 14-year-old Urban Hvastija says he wants to become as good as his idol, "the best rider in the world". "He is a great role model for all of us young riders," Hvastija told AFP after finishing runner-up in the event organized every June in Komenda, just outside the capital Ljubljana, for riders aged eight to 19 years. With Pogacar eyeing a third Tour de France title to add to last month's first Giro d'Italia victory, his success—with that of his compatriots Primož Roglic and Matej Mohoric—has led to a cycling boom in the Alpine state of two million. "Years ago we had barely 50 kids in the juvenile team, now we have more than 200," Pogacar's father, Mirko, who helps organize the Pogi Cup, told AFP. He believes Slovenia establishing itself on the biking map is a "fairytale that I don't think we could see again in the next fifty years".

As Pogacar, the Tour de France winner in 2020 and 2021 and runner-up for the last two years, aims to become the first rider in 26 years to win the Tour and the Giro in the same season, Mirko Pogacar remembers his son as an "unstoppable and skillful" youngster. He recalls how Tadej and his older brother Tilen would use every occasion to practice in the saddle. Once they spotted a mound of soil in a neighbor's yard. --AFP

Argentina showed self-belief in late win over Chile

EAST RUTHERFORD: Substitute Lautaro Martinez grabbed an 88th-minute winner as Argentina finally overcame Chile 1-0 to book their place in the quarter-finals of the Copa America on Tuesday. Lionel Messi hit the post for Argentina in the first half but the World Cup winners had their goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to thank for keeping them on level terms before Lautaro's late strike settled a pulsating clash in front of 82,000 fans at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

There were enough openings for the 15-times Copa America champions to get the breakthrough much earlier but a combination of poor finishing and an inspired performance from Chile's 41-year-old goalkeeper Claudio Bravo left the score deadlocked.

The home of the NFL's New York Jets and New York Giants—and venue for the 2026 World Cup final—was transformed into a home venue for Argentina and the expectant crowd saw Messi and company dictate proceedings in the early stages. Messi's strike partner Julian Alvarez forced Bravo into a save in the 22nd minute with a first-time shot after Nicolas Gonzalez had pulled the ball back from the byline. Chile were doing a good job of neutralizing Messi, closing him down with three players on occasions.

But the eight-times Ballon d'Or winner was inches away from an opener in the 36th minute with a shot from 25 yards which clipped the outside of the post. Chile had twice left Argentina distraught with victories in the Copa America finals of 2015 and 2016, the latter at MetLife Stadium on a night when Messi reacted by briefly quitting the national side.

But while Chile proved stubborn, there is a real swagger about the world champions and a belief that they can always turn a game their way. As Argentina piled on the pressure, Bravo did well after the break to parry out a blast at the near post from Nahuel Molina and then showed great reactions to push a fierce Nicolas Gonzalez drive against the bar.

Chile threatened on the counter and twice Argentina goalkeeper Martinez had to be at his best to deny drives from Rodrigo Echeverria. The decisive moment came when Chile failed to clear an in-swinging corner from Messi and Lautaro Martinez pounced to grab the winner, confirmed after a lengthy VAR offside check.

Lautaro should have added a second after a break-away from Angel Di Maria but in the end the solitary goal was enough to make it two wins out of two for



EAST RUTHERFORD: Argentina's midfielder #16 Giovanni Lo Celso fights for the ball with Chile's midfielder #07 Marcelino Nunez during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament group A football match between Chile and Argentina at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. -- AFP

the World Cup winners and book their place in the next round with a game to spare. "I got in there and I was able to score. These games are always like that, we have to keep playing in the same way treating the games in this way, as they are all going to be complicated," Lautaro told TyC Sports.

Canada triumph

In other Copa America action, Jonathan David scored the only goal as Canada reignited their campaign with a 1-0 victory over 10-man Peru in sweltering Kansas City. Lille striker David—who is reportedly being targeted by Manchester United and Chelsea—once again demonstrated his eye for goal with a cool finish to secure all three points at Children's Mercy Park Stadium. A game played in scorching afternoon sunshine—with on-pitch temperatures nudging towards 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius)—saw one of the two referee's assistants collapse with apparent heat exhaustion just before half-time.

Canada, beaten 2-0 by Argentina in the opening game of the tournament, took the lead in the second half after Peru had been reduced to 10 men following the dismissal of Miguel Araujo for a wild foul on substitute Jacob Shaffelburg that sparked a melee amongst players from both teams.

Referee Mario Escobar initially only gave Araujo a yellow card for his ugly studs-up challenge but the punishment was upgraded after a VAR review. That dismissal tipped a close game in favour of Canada and the breakthrough finally came on 74 minutes with David's goal from a sweeping counter-attack. --AFP

Red Bull wary of Norris ahead of home Austrian race

VIENNA: Red Bull will be wary of McLaren's Lando Norris at a home Austrian Grand Prix that Max Verstappen has dominated in the past but this time looks a tight battle between the two. The 11th round of the Formula One season is a sprint weekend, for the third time this year, with a 100km race at Spielberg's Red Bull Ring on Saturday before the main event on Sunday.

Red Bull's triple world champion, cheered on by his orange army of travelling fans, will hope to stretch the 69-point lead he enjoys over closest challenger Norris in the papaya-liveried McLaren. Norris has a point to make after taking pole in Spain last Sunday and finishing second. He was also runner-up in Canada—both races the 24-year-old felt he should have won.

Spielberg is the shortest lap, in terms of time, on the calendar with Verstappen taking pole last year in just over 64 seconds. "On such a short lap it's going to be so tight," said Red Bull principal Christian Horner.

"We expect McLaren and Lando to be fast again. Ferrari, Mercedes, who knows? If you look at the gap to those guys after the (Spanish) race it was pretty similar to last year. The one who's stepped up is Lando."

"We're having to fight really hard for the wins at the moment and we're having to be on the top of our game as a team ... that's Formula One, that's as it should be." Winner in Miami in May, Norris was also runner-up in Imola and China while last year's Austrian race won by Verstappen, for the fourth time in six years, was where McLaren brought breakthrough upgrades.

The Briton has now finished second 10 times in 23 races. He was 2.2 seconds behind Verstappen in Barcelona and 3.8 adrift in Canada. The gap at Imola was 0.7 and he beat the Dutch driver by 7.6 in Miami.

Austria, and then Silverstone, are favourite circuits where he has gone well in the past. "We're on a good roll. We're doing well ... I need to just tidy up a few little bits and we'll be on top," he said in Spain.

"I'm confident. Every weekend we go into now, the car's performing extremely well. We're always there or thereabouts within a couple of tenths of pole." Verstappen and Norris's team mates, Sergio Perez and Oscar Piastri, will be hoping to get in on the act after disappointing results in Spain—the Mexican only eighth and Australian seventh. Mercedes and Ferrari should be in the mix, with seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton taking his first podium of the season with Mercedes in Spain and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz holding the race lap record at the Red Bull Ring, albeit from 2020. -- Reuters

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764

Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Radhe Krishna, holder of Indian Passport No. M3065406, having permanent address B-907, 1st Floor, Block - B, Gate No. 4, Green Field Colony, Sector-43, Faridabad, Haryana - 121010, India, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Radhe and surname Krishna. (#5627, 25/06/2024)

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Guardians top O's for 7th win

Jurickson Profar's grand slam carries Padres past Nationals



BALTIMORE: Cleveland Guardians catcher Bo Naylor (23) tags a sliding Baltimore Orioles catcher James McCann (27) out at the plate during the second inning at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. — AFP

BALTIMORE: Jose Ramirez smacked a three-run home run to fuel an early offensive outburst and the Cleveland Guardians held on to win their seventh game in a row, edging the host Baltimore Orioles 10-8 on Tuesday night.

Gunnar Henderson blasted his 25th homer of the season for the first of the Orioles' four long balls, but Baltimore's losing streak reached five games. Ramirez has 21 home runs this year and has gone deep in back-to-back games.

With their team trailing 8-4, Baltimore's James McCann and Colton Cowser smashed back-to-back home runs to lead off the bottom of the fourth. Jordan Westburg had four hits and Ryan Mountcastle had three for the Orioles, who also got a homer from Anthony Santander in the eighth.

Padres 9, Nationals 7

Jurickson Profar clouted a sixth-inning grand slam as San Diego beat the visiting Washington. Donovan Solano added two hits and two RBIS for the Padres. Adam Mazur (1-2) picked up his first major league win, allowing six hits and four runs over five innings. CJ Abrams had three hits and Jesse Winker homered for the Nationals, who have lost the first two games of the three-game series. MacKenzie Gore (6-7) surrendered five runs on five hits in five innings.

Giants 5, Cubs 1

Matt Chapman contributed a two-RBI single to a game-breaking, three-run eighth inning as San Francisco made it two wins in a row over visiting Chicago. Six San Francisco pitchers combined on a four-hitter. In a bullpen game with five starters on the injured list, the Giants got shutout relief from Sean Hjelle, Taylor Rogers, Ryan Walker, Tyler Rogers (1-2) and Camilo Doval after opener Randy Rodriguez allowed Chicago's only run in the third inning. Cubs starter Kyle Hendricks (1-5) went seven innings, allowing two runs and five hits. He walked one and struck out four.

Diamondbacks 5, Twins 4

Ketel Marte hit a two-run homer and later recorded a tiebreaking RBI single as Arizona beat Minnesota in Phoenix. Corbin Carroll had two singles while Eugenio Suarez and Tucker Barnhart had run-scoring hits for Arizona, which won for the ninth time in its past 14 games. Arizona starter Brandon Pfaadt allowed four runs and five hits over 6 1/3 innings. Ryan Jeffers hit a three-run homer and Byron Buxton had a solo blast for Minnesota, which lost for just the fifth

time in its past 15 contests. Buxton had three of the Twins' six hits. Kevin Ginkel (6-1) retired both batters he faced in the seventh, Ryan Thompson worked a perfect eighth and Paul Sewald pitched the ninth for his 10th save of the season. Minnesota starter Joe Ryan gave up four runs and six hits over six innings.

Dodgers 4, White Sox 3

Shohei Ohtani and Freddie Freeman homered and six pitchers combined for seven innings of scoreless relief to boost Los Angeles over host Chicago and to a seventh win in nine games. Ohtani went 2-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs, and he opened the game with a solo shot to right-center. Right fielder Tommy Pham nearly robbed the homer, but the ball glanced off his glove and landed in the bullpen. Ohtani became the first Dodgers player since 1955 to drive in a run in nine straight games. Gavin Sheets had two hits for Chicago, which stranded 10 runners on base and went 0-for-9 with men in scoring position. The White Sox have dropped six of their past seven.

Pirates 9, Reds 5

Bryan Reynolds continued his torrid offensive performance with a tape-measure, two-run homer as visiting Pittsburgh beat Cincinnati. Reynolds finished 2-for-5, extending the longest active hitting streak in the majors to 22 games. It's the longest streak for a Pirate since Jason Kendall had a 23-game streak in 2003. Nick Gonzales added three hits in support of Pittsburgh starter Mitch Keller (9-4), who was charged with four runs - three earned - on six hits in 5 2/3 innings. He walked three and struck out six as the Pirates ended a two-game skid. Jonathan India doubled twice, walked twice and scored three times for the Reds, who lost for the third time in four games. Pittsburgh handed Reds starter Hunter Greene his first loss since April 22. Greene (5-3) was tagged for six runs on seven hits in four innings. He fanned five and walked two.

Mets 9, Yankees 7

Mark Vientos hit two of the New York Mets' four homers as the hosts beat the New York Yankees in the opener of a two-game Subway Series. Harrison Bader and Brandon Nimmo also hit homers for the Mets, who lead the majors with a 14-6 record this month. Reliever Dedniel Nunez (1-0) earned his first major league win after allowing an unearned run over 2 2/3 innings. Aaron Judge hit an eighth-inning grand slam and finished with five RBIs for the Yankees, who

have lost eight of 11. Juan Soto also homered, while Gerrit Cole (0-1) served up four homers and yielded six runs in four innings.

Blue Jays 9, Red Sox 4

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had two doubles and four RBIs while George Springer homered to help visiting Toronto past Boston. The Blue Jays scored all nine runs over the third and fourth innings, highlighted by an initial seven-run scoring frame that erased an early 2-0 Red Sox lead. Kevin Kiermaier also posted a three-hit game, scoring two runs and driving in another for Toronto. The support was more than enough for starter Kevin Gausman (6-6), whose six innings of work included five strikeouts and helped Toronto snap a seven-game skid. Rafael Devers (2-for-4) and Tyler O'Neill each homered for the Red Sox, who were held to five hits while losing for just the second time in the past 10 games. Brayton Bello (7-5) was roughed up for seven runs on five hits and three walks in 2 1/3 innings. Josh Winckowski covered all but two outs the rest of the way, striking out a career-high eight over six innings of relief.

Rays 11, Mariners 3

Taylor Walls and Ben Rortvedt drove in two runs apiece in a breakout four-run sixth inning as Tampa Bay grounded Seattle in St. Petersburg, Fla. Walls, who went 3-for-4, tripled in two runs before scoring on a homer by Rortvedt (2-for-3, four RBIs, walk) to give the Rays a 6-2 lead. Yandy Diaz homered and stretched his on-base streak to 27 games, while Richie Palacios was 2-for-4 with a double, three runs, an RBI, a walk and a stolen base. Isaac Paredes hit a two-run homer, and Jose Siri had an RBI single, two runs and three walks. Rays starter Zack Littell yielded two runs on four hits, struck out six and issued a walk. Garrett Cleavinger (5-1) pitched a perfect sixth with two strikeouts. Seattle's Ty France went 2-for-3 with a homer and two RBIs, and Mitch Garver popped his 10th home run. Mariners starting pitcher Luis Castillo (6-9) fired 5 1/3 innings and allowed four runs on five hits.

Brewers 3, Rangers 1

Joey Ortiz homered and Bryse Wilson tossed six innings of scoreless relief to lift Milwaukee to a victory over visiting Texas. Ortiz led off the fifth with his seventh homer, putting the Brewers in front 2-1 with a 370-foot drive to left off starter Andrew Heaney. Wilson (5-3), originally slated to start, came on in the third for

opener Hoby Milner, making his first career start after 269 relief appearances. Wilson allowed three hits, striking out four and walking none. Elvis Peguero earned his second save. Andrew Heaney (2-9) allowed two runs on six hits in five innings, striking out four and walking two in a 90-pitch outing for the Rangers.

Tigers 4, Phillies 1

Tarik Skubal tossed seven shutout innings and host Detroit topped Philadelphia. Skubal (9-3), who had lost his previous two starts, allowed three hits and one walk while striking out seven. Andy Ibanez had two hits and drove in two runs for the Tigers, who bounced back from an 8-1 loss to Philadelphia on Monday. Riley Greene added an RBI triple. Bryce Harper extended his hitting streak to 10 games with a double and a solo homer. Phillies starter Ranger Suarez (10-2) gave up four runs and a season-high nine hits in six innings. He recorded four strikeouts without walking a batter.

Marlins 2, Royals 1

Nick Gordon scored the go-ahead run on an error in the seventh inning to fuel visiting Miami to a victory over Kansas City. Otto Lopez recorded his second straight two-hit performance and scored on Gordon's infield single for the Marlins, who have won five of their past seven games. Vinnie Pasquantino had an RBI single among the four hits for the Royals. Kansas City starter Seth Lugo was denied in his bid to become the sole major league leader in wins with 11 despite allowing just two hits over six scoreless innings. He was relieved by Carlos Hernandez (0-1), who took the loss.

Astros 5, Rockies 2

Hunter Brown posted his seventh consecutive quality start and Houston turned six first-inning singles into a victory over visiting Colorado in the opener of a two-game series. Brown (5-5) limited Colorado to two hits and three walks while striking out seven in six scoreless innings. The Astros made the most of their six singles in the first, plating five runs off Colorado starter Austin Gomber (1-5). Houston benefited from a stolen base from Jose Altuve and a wild pitch that allowed Yainer Diaz and Jake Meyers to each advance one base and set the table for Chas McCormick, whose two-run single capped the uprising. The Rockies fashioned a rally in the eighth against Astros reliever Seth Martinez, recording a pair of base hits. In the ninth, Michael Toglia socked his eighth home run of the season off Josh Hader, who limited the damage in that frame to that solo shot. — Reuters

HH the Amir int'l shooting contest kicks off in Italy

PARIS: Some 240 shooters from across the globe are vying for glory as His Highness the Amir's international shooting competition, in its 10th edition, kicked off in the central Italian region of Umbria on Tuesday.

Kuwait is being represented by a team of seven shooters who are contesting the skeet and

trap competitions, while Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani pointed out that the contest this year coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Rome.

He hailed the contest as a significant event given the international exposure it garners, saying the sport of shooting has risen to new highs in Kuwait thanks in part to recent positive results Kuwait shooters have achieved.

Echoing the Kuwaiti envoy's sentiments, International Shooting Sport Federation Chief Luciano Rossi acknowledged Kuwait's success in the sport, saying its support for the sport of shooting is appreciated by the global body. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwait shooters vying for glory. — KUNA