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Security boosted in all domains

MoD receives final 2 Caracal choppers • Internal security readiness reviewed



KUWAIT: (Left) Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah attends a ceremony to take delivery of two Caracal helicopters on June 26, 2024. (Right) Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah visits a command center on June 27, 2024. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed Wednesday the political leadership's will to develop the capabilities of Kuwait's armed forces across the board. Sheikh Fahad's statements were made during a ceremony to take the delivery of two Caracal helicopters at Kuwait International Airport.

The new helicopters are the last batch of 30 aircraft Kuwait had contracted with Airbus Helicopters in August 2016. Twenty-four of the new helicopters will be operated by the Kuwait Armed Forces and six by the Kuwait National Guard.

Also attending the ceremony were Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Air Marshal Bandar Al-Muzain, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Shamayel Al-Sabah, Commander of the Kuwait Air Force Air Vice-Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad and several other high-ranking defense ministry officials.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Zionists charge Al-Aqsa imam

JERUSALEM: The imam of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque on Thursday denounced a "fabricated" campaign against him after being charged with inciting terrorism for allegedly praising Palestinian gunmen who killed four Zionists. Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, 85, is the former mufti of Jerusalem and now head of the Supreme Islamic Council in Jerusalem. Sabri said he merely offered condolences to the families of the attackers after their deaths. — AFP

Smiling robot gets 'living' skin

TOKYO: Japanese scientists have used human cells to develop an equivalent to living skin that can be attached to robotic surfaces to flash a realistic — if creepy — smile. The University of Tokyo researchers published their findings this week along with a video of the gooey-looking pink material being stretched into an unsettling grin. They used a "skin-forming cell-laden gel" to create a "robot covered with living skin", their study in the journal Cell Reports Physical Science said. — AFP

Maldives 'black magic' minister held

MALE: Police in the Maldives have arrested a state environment minister, officers said Thursday, with media in the Indian Ocean nation reporting she was accused of performing "black magic" on President Mohamed Muizzu. State Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Energy Fathimath Shammaz Ali Saleem was arrested on Sunday along with two others in the capital Male, police said. — AFP

'Record' homelessness in London

LONDON: The number of people sleeping on the streets of London has hit a record high of nearly 12,000, latest figures showed Thursday, as the impact of the UK's cost-of-living crisis bites. Some 11,993 people were seen rough-sleeping in the capital in the year to March — up 58 percent in a decade and the highest number recorded in a single year. — AFP

Top court upholds jail for convicts in 1MDB scandal

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The court of cassation, the top court in Kuwait, on Thursday upheld a 10-year-jail term on a sheikh and his Kuwaiti partner for taking part in the country's largest ever money laundering case in the so-called Malaysian Fund.

Zionists pound Gaza, threaten Lebanon with 'Stone Age' jibe

GAZA: Palestinians fled eastern Gaza City on Thursday under heavy bombardment as the Zionist military issued an evacuation order for the area it had previously declared clear of Hamas militants. The flare-up in the northern Gaza Strip's Shujaiya district, which witnesses and medics said caused numerous casualties, comes as fears grow of a wider regional conflagration involving the Zionist entity and Lebanese Hezbollah, a Hamas ally.

Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, on a visit to Washington to discuss the Gaza war and ways to avoid broader conflict in the Middle East, warned Hezbollah that fighting on a massive scale would send Lebanon "back to the Stone Age". With cross-border tensions between the Zionist entity and Iran-backed Hezbollah rising, Gallant said, "We do not want war, but we are preparing for every scenario."

In Gaza, fighting has ground on despite comments Sunday by Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Continued on Page 6

ing case in the so-called Malaysian Fund.

The court, whose rulings are final, also confirmed a 10-year jail sentence against two foreign accomplices, a French businessman of Syrian descent and a Malaysian businessman and financier who is the main defendant in the scandal involving 1Malaysia Development BHD (1MDB), the Southeast Asian country's sovereign wealth fund. The two were sentenced in absentia.

The court also jailed a Kuwaiti lawyer for seven years in connection with the case. The court ordered the convicts to return \$1 billion and fined them KD 145 million. The men were first convicted by the criminal court and the ruling was upheld by the court of ap-

peals before taking the case to the court of cassation.

The men were convicted of laundering \$1 billion sent by the Malaysian convict, using a Kuwaiti bank account of the senior royal, and then transferring the money to Swiss bank accounts. Under the former prime minister of Malaysia Najib Razak, the country's sovereign fund was systematically embezzled for a total amount of \$4.5 billion, with the convicted Malaysian businessman Jho Low playing an instrumental role in the fraud.

The money was sent to several countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, China and others. The case attracted huge attention in Kuwait.



GAZA: A boy drives a donkey-drawn cart carrying two children, jerrycans, sacks of flour and other items while evacuating from the Tuffah neighbourhood in the east of Gaza City, heading towards areas in the west, on June 27, 2024 amid Zionist bombardment. — AFP

Murdered and forgotten: Iraqi 'honor' victims

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq: In a sunbaked cemetery in northern Iraq, silence lingers over a forsaken corner devoid of mourners, where women killed in gender-based violence rest in unmarked graves. Domestic violence and femicide have long plagued Iraq's conservative society, including through so-called "honor killings" — the murders of women deemed to have breached patriarchal social norms, often at the hands of close relatives.

In the unmarked section of the Siwan cemetery in Sulaimaniyah, the second city of the autonomous

Kurdistan region, many of the headstones are blank. Some are inscribed only with numbers that correspond to forensic records, and the signs have faded with time as wild scrub has covered the tombs. Lawyer and activist Rozkar Ibrahim, 33, pointed to three adjacent burial plots, the final resting places of a man, a woman and their child.

The couple fell in love and had the child without their families' approval, said Ibrahim, who regularly visits the cemetery to uncover victims' stories and honor their memory. The couple had attempted to flee Iraq for safety, but their relatives found and killed them along with the child, she said. "They are all buried here," said Ibrahim. "The gravedigger buries most of these women at night" to prevent relatives concerned about their family's reputation from defacing the graves, said the activist, who believes the demeaning anonymous burial "should not exist".

Continued on Page 6



SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq: Lawyer and activist Rozkar Ibrahim stands next to the headstone of Dekan Tarq Ali, the first female victim to have her name inscribed on her grave, in an area reserved for the victims of femicide and honour killings, at the Siwan cemetery on May 17, 2024. — AFP



Local

Kuwait PM: Four decades of giving

Sheikh Ahmad distinguished with profound scientific, professional and political experience

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is distinguished with deep scientific, professional and political experience that he has acquired from serving in multiple official posts for decades. His Highness the Prime Minister's march was capped with a resolution by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on April 15, 2024, appointing him as the head of the government.

He had been quite successful in his works in the sectors of banking and public administration, mirroring a unique mentality of deep know-how on setting the priorities to press ahead with the aspired development. His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, born in 1952, studied at Al-Sharqiah School in Kuwait, the American University in Beirut, and obtained a Bachelor's degree in bank funding and investments in 1976 from the University of Illinois, the US.

Forty years ago, he kicked off his career march working at the Kuwait Financial

Center until the 70s, and then he joined the Central Bank of Kuwait where he remained until 1987. Later, he occupied the post of the banking supervision administration before shifting to Burgan Bank where he was named the chairperson serving in the top post between 1987 and 1998.

Having acquired tremendous experience in the finance and business worlds, he began climbing the public echelon serving as a minister as of July 1999 in the departments of finance and transport.

Sheikh Ahmad had carried the portfolios of transport, planning, administrative development, oil and information. And on Sept 20, 2021, the Cabinet adopted a decree naming him the head of the Crown Prince Diwan with a Minister's degree. He had employed his potential in pushing ahead the country's development enterprises, improving the financial performance, overhauling the financial policies and boosting financial sustainability.

His Highness, on several occasions, affirmed necessity of transparency, com-

batting corruption and protecting public funds. He had translated words into action, referring several irregularity cases to the public prosecution. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah believes that Kuwait's real wealth is the youth and has affirmed the necessity of volunteering actions and boosting the role of technology in various sectors. His Highness the Prime Minister, when he was named as the Minister of Transport, Minister of Planning and Minister of State for Administrative Development on July 14, 2003, laid the cornerstone for the "government mall enterprise," sought to upgrade the administrative systems, accelerate the pace of development, enhancing skills of the national cadres and overseeing the development scheme. On June 15, 2005, he took the Health and Transport portfolios, set up partnerships with international medical institutions, devoted attention to medical research and accelerated the enacting of health legislations.

During this period, he adopted the ini-

tiative to establish a special fund for financial health ventures. On Feb 9, 2009, he was named Minister of Oil and in May of the same year, he was appointed as Minister of Oil and Information. During the service, he had taken decisive stands to solidify the national unity by activating the audio-visual law, the publishing law and blessed a package of amendments to the two laws. While in office at the Ministry of Oil, a new strategy was adopted to increase the crude output, luring and employing national cadres to run the oil operations in and outside Kuwait, in addition to reaching new markets. Moreover, during his service in the chain of offices, he exerted great efforts to cement the bonds and ties with great powers, friendly and brotherly nations, in addition to regional and international organizations. He also advocates strengthening the inter-GCC interaction in various fields, supporting the Palestinian cause, promoting the status of Kuwait and ridding decision making of personal interests. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the EPA Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan (center), after signing the MoU. — KUNA

EPA, IOSEA sign MoU to preserve sea turtles

KUWAIT: Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Environment Public Authority, Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan, announced the accession of Kuwait to the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (IOSEA) Convention for the Conservation of Marine Turtles and the signing of a memorandum of understanding that falls under the convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wildlife.

Al-Zaidan said that Kuwait, represented by the EPA, participated in the ninth meeting of the countries (MOS9), which was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and was held on June 24 and concluded on Thursday in the presence of specialists from around the world. He added that the meeting witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia to protect these unique creatures and their fragile ecosystems against ongoing human activities and global challenges.

"Kuwait's accession to that organization is a new environmental commitment added to its international obligations," he said adding that the memorandum of understanding aims to protect and preserve sea turtles, fill the shortage and restore their habitats based on the best scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, social, economic and cultural characteristics of the signatory countries. Six species of sea turtles globally — as sensitive, endangered or critically endangered — had been included in the IUCN Red List. He pointed out that during the meeting he reviewed Kuwait's efforts in cooperation with various local governmental and non-governmental agencies to preserve marine turtles, which have a special historical relationship since the Dilmunites civilization on Failaka Island. — KUNA

Kuwait to endure very hot weather over weekend

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Meteorological Department said on Thursday that the country's weather during the weekend will be very hot and humid during the day and hot at night. The director of the administration, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, told KUNA that the country is affected by the extension of the Indian monsoon's low pressure, accompanied by a hot and dry air mass and fast northwesterly winds that are active at times especially in the western regions.

He pointed out that the weather on Friday will be very hot, with light to moderate northwesterly winds, active in some areas, up to 40 kilometers per hour with a chance of dust in the western regions. The maximum temperatures expected between 47 and 49 degrees Celsius, and the sea will have light to moderate waves between 2 and 5 feet.

On Saturday, Al-Qarawi said that the weather will also be very hot, with light to moderate northwesterly winds and speed between 10 and 38 kilometers per hour. The expected maximum temperature is between 47 and 50 degrees Celsius. — KUNA

Foreign minister meets assistants

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Thursday in the presence of the Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with the minister's assistants in the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in the Diplomatic District.

The Minister directed the attendees to harness all capabilities to develop the level of work in the institution in line with the directives and visions of the political leadership and achieve the desired progress. During the meeting, the latest developments on the regional and international arenas and the developments taking place in the region were also discussed. — KUNA

Adwani inspects new schools in Al-Mutlaa city

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani Thursday made an inspection tour of the new schools in the residential city of Al-Mutlaa to determine their readiness to receive students, teachers and school administrations in the new academic year 2024/2025.

In a press statement following the tour, Al-Adwani stressed the importance of expanding the scope of the ministry's educational services by opening new schools in the city of Al-Mutlaa, ensuring their readiness in various regions and educational stages, and achieving an appropriate educational environment for students.

He explained that these visits come in the context of the ministry's plan to expand the scope of its educational services through the opening of new schools, noting that the opening of new schools contributes to the stability of the people of the new areas, ensuring their comfort, accommodating the increasing number of students there, and providing the necessary infrastructure to keep pace with the urban expansion that the country is witnessing.

The minister said that a number of new schools have been confirmed in the city of Al-Mutlaa, affiliated with the Jahra Educational Zone, and are scheduled to be officially opened and entered into service as part of 19 new schools in the next academic year 2024/2025.

He stated that the new schools are designed according to the latest systems and standards and feature specifications that achieve environmental

Ali Al-Sabah College a pioneering institution for military cadres

KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, said that the new Ali Al-Sabah Military College will be a distinguished educational edifice that contributes to preparing and qualifying officer cadets and military cadres at the highest levels.

This came in a press release issued by the Ministry of Defense after Lieutenant General Al-Muzain made an inspection field visit Thursday to the project to establish the new Ali Al-Sabah Military College. Al-Muzain stressed the importance of adhering to the highest quality standards in implementing the new college's facilities to ensure the provision of an integrated educational environment for students studying there in the future, praising the efforts made by all those working on the project.

At the beginning of his visit, Lieutenant General Al-Muzain listened to a briefing presented by the Project Services Supervisor in the Northern Region and the head of the Ali Al-Sabah Military College project team, Engineer Abdul Razzaq Al-Kandari, where all aspects related to the establishment of the new college, which has an area of 3.5 square kilometers and consists of 39 buildings with a capacity of 1,200 students, were reviewed.

He also reviewed the completion of the steps taken so far and the progress achieved in the various stages and in addition to the challenges that were overcome to ensure the progress of work according to the schedule. This visit comes within a series of inspection field visits carried out by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army to var-



Minister of Education Dr Adel Al-Adwani during his inspection tour of the new schools in the residential city of Al-Mutlaa on Thursday. — KUNA

sustainability by rationalizing energy consumption through the use of renewable solar panels that contribute to reducing dependence on traditional energy sources.

He stated that the new school buildings were provided with modern and developed systems, such as solar energy systems and the BMS system, which is a building management system using modern methods, elevators, designated places for people with disabilities, and security. Fire systems were also provided. He stressed the keenness to continue working with determination to achieve the ministry's strategic goals to ensure the provision of distinguished and sustainable education for all our children. Al-Adwani stated that these field visits also come within a program of inspection tours to a number of schools

in implementation of the directives of the esteemed Council of Ministers and in order to monitor the readiness of educational facilities to receive students, teachers and school administrations in the new academic year 2024/2025 and to closely monitor any observations and avoid them before the start of school in September.

He pointed out that all relevant sectors in the ministry have been directed to the necessity of working as one team to prepare for the beginning of the next academic year by working simultaneously between all sectors of the ministry to follow up on the rates of completion of operational plans and to integrate efforts among them which ensures the achievement of the desired goals according to the plans drawn up efficiently and effectively. — KUNA



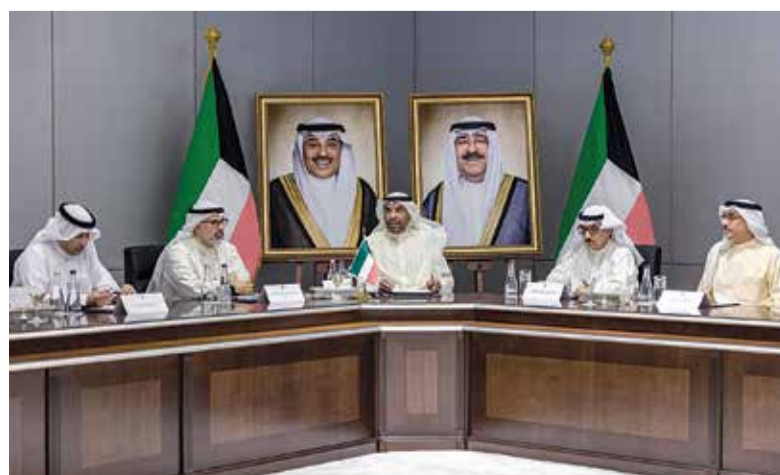
Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain makes an inspection field visit on Thursday to the project to establish the new Ali Al-Sabah Military College. — KUNA photos



ious units and various military projects to follow up on the progress of work in implementing the plans and ensure that they achieve the set goals with all efficiency and effectiveness.

He was accompanied during the visit by the Assistant Chief of the General Staff of the Logistics

and Supply Authority, Major General Engineer Salah Nasser, the Commander of Ali Al-Sabah Military College, Major General Khaled Faihan, and the Director of Project Management in Military Facilities Engineering, Engineer Hossam Al-Ateeqi. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya meets his assistants in the new ministry of Foreign Affairs building in the Diplomatic District. — KUNA photos



Local

GCC railway project to fuel economic boom for region

'One Gulf unites us': People in Kuwait excited about Gulf rail bonanzas

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The long-anticipated mega Gulf railway project, designed to connect all six GCC member countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates—is set for completion from Kuwait's side in December 2030, promising to bring an economic boom to the entire region.

According to local papers, the GCC Railway Authority has recently taken a critical step regarding this project. On June 7, it opened the bidding process for companies to develop a comprehensive project plan and examine the operational aspects of the railway, giving them until July 7 to submit their bids.

The Center for Government Communication announced via its social media platforms that the train will take only 150 minutes to travel from Kuwait to Riyadh, operating at a speed of 250 km per hour. They further disclosed that 23 institutions of ministries and government agencies are collaborating to overcome challenges hindering the project, which is expected to be completed in 30 months.

Following the latest project updates, most of the comments reflected people's excitement and optimism. Maryam Bu Safar expressed her enthusiasm, writing, "This is the best news I've heard all day; one Gulf unites us." Nura Al-Mutairi shared her hope, saying, "Two years ago, I wished for a railway connecting Gulf countries. Hopefully, I'll live to see my dream come true." Additionally, many others asked for extending the routes to other countries, with a number of special requests for a direct route to holy Makkah.

Economic expert Ali Al-Enzi told Kuwait Times



Ali Al-Enzi

that this project will significantly increase trade volume among GCC countries and play a major role in achieving economic integration within the region. It will support the growth and productivity rates of countries, helping them transport their products through a safe, fast, and modern transportation method at low costs. "It's only through the adoption of the latest technological means in communication and transportation that GCC countries will be able to reach the economic heights they aim to," Enzi said.

The project will not only facilitate the transportation of goods but also ease travel problems of people, contributing to a rise in Gulf tourism, said Enzi. He believes that, similar to Europe's railway system, this project will make travel costs lower and more affordable across all GCC countries. With consumers having more transportation al-



A train of the Gulf railway system will take only 150 minutes to travel from Kuwait to Riyadh, operating at a speed of 250 km per hour.

ternatives to choose from, competition with other modes will increase too, potentially driving down airfare prices, he said.

Enzi added that this new development in the Gulf will create more job opportunities to operate the train, thereby bringing down the unemployment rate

in the region. In addition to the economic benefits, as the railway will rely on diesel to generate electricity to work, Enzi mentioned that it will decrease reliance on other transportation methods that highly consume oil, thereby improving the quality of the environment by reducing carbon dioxide emissions.



Ambulances are preparing to transport the injured from the western areas of Khan Yunis. — KUNA photos



Patients' families line up in front of the hospital reception to treat their children.

Kuwaiti field hospital offers medical services in southern Gaza

GAZA: At a time when the health system in the Gaza Strip was deteriorating and collapsing due to the Zionist aggression on the Gaza Strip for the ninth month in a row, the management of the Kuwait Specialized Hospital was able to open a field hospital in the Al-Mawasi area, west of the city of Khan Yunis.

The Kuwaiti field hospital is considered one of the most important medical points visited by thousands of displaced Palestinians. It contains surgical departments, a natural birth booth, 13 specialized clinics, a dental center, and four emergency departments, in addition to 60 beds and support services such as laboratory, radiology and pharmacy.

The hospital's location among thousands of tents filled with displaced persons has increased its importance due to the spread of infectious diseases and the difficulty of transporting patients to other hospitals. Director of the Kuwaiti Hospital Dr Suhaib Al-Hams said in a press statement to KUNA



Patients arrive at the Kuwaiti field hospital.

that "the opening of the Kuwaiti field hospital came to fulfill the responsibility of serving the Palestinian people, who deserve to live in the midst of bombing and destruction.

Dr Al-Hams explained that when the Zionist enemy invaded the city of Rafah, the decision was taken to establish a field hospital, and part of the medical equipment in the Kuwaiti hospital



Patients receiving treatment at the field hospital.

was evacuated in stages for more than three consecutive weeks in light of the closure of the Rafah crossing, the only land crossing for the Palestinians. Aid has not entered for more than a month, and there is no medicine reaching the Gaza Strip, nor even the diesel needed to operate the generators, rendering the generators in the hospital inoperable. — KUNA

MoE honors 145 outstanding students

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education on Wednesday honored 145 outstanding students in the general secondary stage for the academic year 2023/2024. The ceremony was held under the patronage and with the presence of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr Adel Al-Adwani.

The Ministry's acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities, Maryam Al-Anazi, said in a press statement that the honoring ceremony is held annually by the Ministry of Education in honor and appreciation of the outstanding students who made a great effort to obtain these achievements.

Al-Anazi said ceremony covered top ten places in the scientific, literary, and religious education sections for the academic year 2023/2024, and top 50 Kuwaitis in the scientific and literary sections, in addition to the top five students in the scientific and literary sections of special education schools.

She pointed out that this stage is not the end of our students' educational journey, but rather the

beginning of their university educational journey, wishing them good luck and success in serving their homeland, Kuwait. She expressed her pride in all the top achievers who have reaped the fruits of a long journey of seeking knowledge, hard work, and insistence on excellence. They are the future leaders who possess the qualities of leadership, creativity, and determination to achieve success.

In turn, the high school seniors, according to the statement, expressed their overwhelming happiness in achieving academic excellence, stressing their determination to continue their excellence in the next university stage, and their deep gratitude to their families, teachers, and everyone who supported them during their academic journey. — KUNA



The Ministry of Education honors 145 outstanding students in the general secondary stage for the academic year 2023/2024.

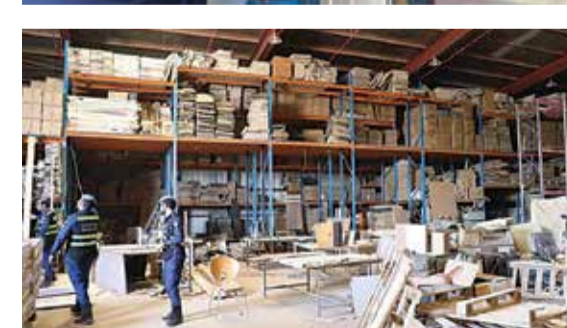
Sabah Al-Ahmad center launches youth tech program

KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced on Thursday the launch of the (Apprenticeship) program for the year 2024 under the slogan 'Develop Your Practical Skills' to prepare professional trainers from young Kuwaitis specialized in the fields of technology, integrated sciences and digital manufacturing.

Director General of the Center Nada Al-Dihani said in a press statement that the program, which begins on Jan 30 until July 30, aims to introduce trainees to the latest technologies and tools in the fields of technology, integrated sciences and technological competitions. Intensive workshops will be provided to trainees in order to enhance their practical skills and develop their educational abilities.

Al-Dihani explained that the center's work plan includes providing intensive and comprehensive apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs for trainees to enhance the technical knowledge and skills of trainers and enable them to provide high-quality training according to the latest training methods and techniques. He added that this year's program seeks to develop and prepare a generation of citizens to engage in the field of training by developing the efficiency of trainees, enhancing their skills and knowledge in the fields of technology, and improving their educational and training capabilities.

On the mechanism and conditions of selection and participation, he said that 15 participants will be selected from applicants in the following disciplines (engineering, computer science, software, web design, photography, videography and Graphic design). He stated that the criteria for applying for the trainee must be a Kuwaiti national and a university student (third or fourth year or recent graduate), in addition to passing personal interviews and having the required level in visual presentation skills and the use of the English language. — KUNA



An official stamps a closure notice on a property.

KFF shuts 76 commercial properties

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Force carried out on Thursday morning the administrative closure of 76 shops, garages, restaurants, basements, investment buildings, popular markets and industrial facilities in several governorates due to their failure to obtain fire permits and for not complying with the safety and fire prevention requirements. These properties continued to engage in illegal activities despite several warnings earlier.

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'Ladies Diwaniya', an inspiring platform for influential women

French Embassy holds the third edition of 'Ladies Diwaniya'



Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher poses for a group photo at the diwaniya.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The French Embassy held the third edition of Ladies Diwaniya at the French ambassador's residence. In her remarks, Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher said, "Ladies Diwaniya" gathers Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women from diverse fields such as business, politics, arts, culture, and fashion. She added, "This initiative aims to provide an inspiring and empowering platform for talented and influential women to connect, share their stories, and build robust networks of solidarity," noting that like other traditional diwanis, Ladies Diwaniya opens its doors every Wednesday, at the Résidence de France.

"We have tried to present it to women in a new

and modern way. This gathering is not just about networking; it's about creating a space where women can speak freely, share their challenges, and celebrate their successes. By coming together, the aim is to cultivate a culture of empowerment and resilience, to foster professional and personal growth, and to drive forward positive change in society," the French ambassador pointed out.

The ambassador indicated that new women are joining every week, expressing her joy to see new faces. She added, "I believe that by nurturing these connections and fostering a spirit of collaboration, we can amplify the impact of Kuwaiti women in all sectors, paving the way for future generations to follow in their footsteps."



The French ambassador discusses topics at "Ladies Diwaniya".



Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher

Blood Bank honors Life Savers Global



KUWAIT: The Central Blood Bank in Kuwait honors Life Savers Global.

KUWAIT: Life Savers Global has been honored by the Central Blood Bank in Kuwait for their exceptional humanitarian services. This recognition highlights the organization's dedication to organizing blood donations and medical camps, particularly benefiting the underprivileged in India.

The organization received an award by Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi. The Central Blood Bank in Kuwait commended Life Savers Global for its impactful initiatives and unwavering commitment to humanitarian causes by organizing blood camps on short notice during times of emergency. Its efforts not only support local communities in India but also foster a spirit of global solidarity and compassion.

Kuwait attends 15th meeting for SDGs in Cairo

CAIRO: At the headquarters of the League of Arab States, the work of the 15th meeting of the Arab Committee to follow up on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 2023 in the Arab region began with the participation of Kuwait.

The Director of the Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation at the Arab League, Nada Al-Agizi, said in her opening speech that "the agenda of the meeting includes discussing a number of important items such as the development of the work of the committee, which the technical secretariat of the committee, in cooperation with the Synergies Center for International and Strategic Studies, prepared a preliminary paper for the methodology of development to be followed in preparation for the preparation of a paper on the comprehensive development of the work of the committee."

'2024 Quiz on Korea' preliminary round held in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The preliminary round of the "2024 Quiz on Korea" was successfully held in Kuwait on June 26, drawing enthusiastic participation from Kuwaitis. The event aimed at promoting knowledge and understanding of Korean culture, history and current affairs. In

this Quiz event, the participants competed for a chance to advance to the final round in Seoul, while everyone who loves Korea had a great time. The atmosphere was charged with excitement as the participants eagerly showcased their knowledge on a wide range of topics, including Korean traditions, landmarks, language, and K-culture (K-Pop, K-Drama and K-Movie, etc.).

The "Quiz on Korea" is an annual event organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) to enhance cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Korea and other nations. This year's preliminary round in Kuwait was supported by the Korean Embassy, which praised the high level of participation and the participants' enthusiasm.

After several intense rounds of quizzing, the top four participants emerged victorious. Turki Al-Dhafeeri, an avid fan of Korea, secured the first place with an impressive score. He won a ticket to the final round. Ahmad Alrashdan, Nebras Al-Muhaini and Zainab Al-Adi followed closely behind, demonstrating exceptional knowledge and interest in Korea.

The participants expressed their excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to participate in such a prestigious event. Turki Al-Dhafeeri, the winner of 2024 Quiz on Korea, said "It was an amazing experience to compete and learn more about Korea" and "I am looking forward to the final round in Seoul and hope to make it."

The final round will be held in September, where winners from various countries will compete for the grand prize. The event promises to be a thrilling climax of cultural knowledge and international friendship.



Ambassador Chung Byung-Ha poses for a photo with winners and participants in the preliminary round of the "2024 Quiz on Korea".



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Bolivian army chiefs arrested after coup attempt

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GAZA: People inspect the damage next to a building destroyed during Zionist bombardment at Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. — AFP photos

US health workers sound alarm on Gaza medical crisis

'The level of civilian casualties that I experienced was beyond anything I'd seen before'

WASHINGTON: Patients in Gaza's few standing hospitals are dying in droves from infections resulting from a lack of protective gear and soap, even when they survive their horrific blast injuries. And health workers are facing agonizing decisions, like giving up on a seven-year-old boy with extensive burns because bandages are in short supply and he'd have probably died anyway. These are just some of the horrors witnessed by American doctors and nurses returning from the besieged Palestinian territory, who are now on a mission to spread the word about what they saw and apply pressure on the Zionist entity to allow in more life-saving supplies.

"Whether or not a ceasefire happens, we have to get humanitarian aid. And we have to get it in sufficient volumes to meet the demands," Adam Hamawy, a former US army combat surgeon, tells AFP in an interview after a medical mission to Gaza's European Hospital last month. "You could give all you want, you can donate," says the reconstructive plastic surgeon from New Jersey. "But if these borders don't open up to allow that aid to get in, then it's just useless."

Hamawy has volunteered in war-torn and natural disaster-hit countries for the past 30 years, from the siege of Sarajevo to the Haiti earthquake. "But the level of civilian casualties that I experienced was beyond anything I'd seen before," says the 54-year-old, who helped save the life of Senator Tammy Duckworth when she lost both of her legs to a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) attack on the helicopter she was flying in Iraq. "Most of our patients were children under the age of 14," he stressed. "This has nothing to do with your political views."

Rampant infections

Hamawy and other medics told AFP they are convinced that for now their energy is better spent lobbying the halls of power to stop the war and require the Zionist entity to comply with international law by letting in more aid. The Zionist entity denies

allegations of international law violations during its invasion on Gaza. On a hot June afternoon in the capital Washington, Monica Johnston, a 44-year-old ICU nurse from Portland, Oregon said she conveyed specific lists of what was needed in meetings she had held with White House officials and lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Unlike Hamawy, her journey to Gaza was her very first medical mission.

"I don't watch the news, I don't take part in anything political," she said. But last fall, she received an email from the American Burn Association with an urgent call for help. "Anytime I hear the word 'help,' my ears perk up, my heart starts pumping, and I feel I need to do that."

A 19-member team organized by the Palestinian American Medical Association set off with packed suitcases, bidding farewell to their families. On the ground, they faced daunting challenges: not enough health workers, as well as a severe scarcity of vital medicines and even basic hygiene supplies, which led to the rampant spread of infections. Johnston's voice cracks with emotion as she recalls the decision to stop treating a seven-year-old boy's extensive burns, prioritizing resources for patients with a better chance of survival. "Two days later, he started developing maggots in his wounds, and then the feeling of responsibility that I caused this," she says. He was buried in his bandages because his body was totally infested.

Families wiped out

Whole families often arrived together, explained Ammar Ghanem, a 54-year-old ICU doctor from Michigan. This stemmed from the common practice of extended relatives living in multi-storey buildings, making them more vulnerable to bombings. A case in point was a cheerful 12-year-old boy who used to volunteer at the hospital, a source of inspiration for the medics. But for several days, he stopped coming.

When he finally returned, Ghanem learned tragic news: thirty members of the boy's extend-

ed family had been killed in a single bombing, and he himself had to help pull their bodies from the rubble. Initially the team felt relatively safe, but that changed abruptly after the Rafah crossing was closed. This triggered deep anxiety in their Palestinian colleagues, who expressed a sense of déjà vu from Zionist's past incursion into northern Gaza and the multiple evacuations they'd been through.

Though they were penciled in for a two-week mission, they were left stranded for days until an intervention from the US embassy - a harrowing time for their partners and children back home. Now home, they grapple with survivor's guilt, thinking of patients and colleagues left back in Gaza. They also feel grateful for small things, from clean surgical gloves to filling meals. "What makes me feel better is feeling that I'm making a difference by relaying this message and telling people what I witnessed - I think that's as important as what we did over there," says Hamawy. — AFP

Dire water shortage

The Zionist entity also imposed a punishing siege, and water has become scarce due to damage to municipal water reservoirs and seawater desalination plants, and an intermittent supply of bottled water. Gazans struggled to access adequate safe water even before the war, and local underground water is often contaminated by salt-water intrusion, sewage and chemicals. Since the war on Gaza, more than two thirds of Gaza's sanitation and water facilities have been destroyed or damaged, according to data cited by UN agencies. This has fueled public health threats, includ-



WASHINGTON: (From left) Ammar Ghanem, Monica Johnston and Adam Hamawy walk through downtown Washington, DC on their way to a meeting at the White House on June 14, 2024, after returning from Gaza in May.

ing dehydration and food contamination, and the spread of diarrhea and other diseases, especially in crowded displacement camps.

Water tanks have become near impossible to purchase, and even jerrycans, buckets and other containers are scarce. Ramadan and Bashir repair those too when they crack. "The crisis has worsened now as summer has arrived," said Bashir. "People need water to drink and wash." — AFP



GAZA: A man repairs water tanks damaged during Zionist bombardment in Khan Younis on the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

Gaza workshop repairs water tanks hit by bullets, bombs

DEIR EL-BALAH: As the summer heat beats down on war-torn Gaza, Muhammad Bashir's skills are in high demand: he repairs rooftop water tanks that have been perforated by shrapnel and bullets. Some of the leaky tanks in his workshop look like sieves. "Before the war... we used to fix only one or two water tanks every month, but now we get dozens due to the Zionist occupation bombing of homes," he told AFP. Tawfiq Ramadan, another repairman, said "there are no tanks available on the market, new or used ones. Since no one can do without water, people are bringing us the tanks to repair them."

Gaza's rooftops have long been studded with large plastic tanks that supply homes below with gravity-fed water and provide a valuable buffer for times when the mains are down. Water trucks usually fill them up or residents pump up water from the

Gazans struggle to feed their children under Zionist campaign

KHAN YOUNIS: Famine approaches slowly for Gazans, who spend hours in queues for a few ladles of cooked food and the chance to fill plastic containers with drinkable water after nearly nine months of Zionist's military campaign in the enclave. Sometimes there is nothing to queue for in the shattered streets and crowded schools that have been turned into shelters for the vast majority of Palestinians displaced by bombardment.

"We found no water, food or drink as you can see. We walk long distances to search for water that is not even available," said Abdel Rahman Khadourah, looking for somewhere to get water in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. Despite concerted international efforts, the global hunger monitor said this week that Gaza remains at high risk of famine, with about a fifth of the territory's population still facing "catastrophic" food insecurity.

On Wednesday Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza said a child had died from malnutrition and dehydration. In a UN-run school in Khan Younis that has been turned into a shelter for displaced people, Umm Feisal Abu Nqera was sitting cross legged on the floor between mattresses, preparing a small meal for herself and her six children.

She cut tomatoes into a bowl, stirred a small pan of beans and crushed ingredients in a mortar and pestle. Her young daughters lay nearby, playing listlessly. Her husband fed a baby liquefied lentils from a bottle. "If the charity kitchen did not come here for one day, we would wonder about what we will eat that day," she said. The beans came from the kitchen. Food prices in Gaza are very high and her family has had no income since the war began. "We are living the worst days of our lives in terms of famine and deprivation," she said, comparing the family's existence before the conflict, when they were able to feed their children well and even give them pocket money. "Today your son looks at you and you bleed from within, because you cannot provide him with his most basic rights and the simplest needs for his life," she said.

Water shortage

Workers from the charity kitchen this week led their donkey cart through the rubble of a destroyed Khan Younis street crowded with people on their way to a UN school shelter. They used a paddle to stir two large vats of food before laddling out dollops of yellow lentils to a line of children queuing with pans to take to their families. Aid organizations have said the Zionist entity should do more to let in supplies. Standing near a water tanker on the street, Enayat Abu Hameed had filled three big plastic containers of water and loaded them onto a two-wheel cart. "We wait for four, five or six hours to find water and then we go home," she said before trying with a young son to haul away the cart, its wheels sticking in the sand as sweat ran down their faces. — Reuters

International

Bolivia army chiefs held after coup bid

'No one can take away the democracy we have won'

BOLIVIA: Two Bolivian army leaders have been arrested after soldiers and tanks took up position in front of government buildings on Wednesday in what President Luis Arce called an attempted coup. The troops and tanks entered Plaza Murillo, a historic square where the presidency and Congress are situated, in the afternoon, prompting global condemnation of an attack on democracy. One of the tanks tried to break down a metal door of the presidential palace.

Surrounded by soldiers and eight tanks, the now-dismissed army chief General Juan Jose Zuniga said the "armed forces intend to restructure democracy, to make it a true democracy and not one run by the same few people for 30, 40 years." AFP reporters saw soldiers and tanks pulling back from the square shortly after. The uprising lasted about five hours. Zuniga was captured and forced into a police car as he addressed reporters outside a military barracks later on Wednesday, footage on state television showed. "General, you are under arrest," Deputy Interior Minister Jhonny Aguilera told Zuniga.

A second senior officer Juan Arnez Salvador, who was head of the Bolivian navy, was also arrested Wednesday night. Salvador's arrest was announced by Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo, who said that Zuniga and the navy chief are "two military coup leaders who tried to destroy democracy and the institutionality of our country and failed". Speaking from a balcony of the government palace, 60-year-old Arce told hundreds of supporters that "No one can take away the democracy we have won". He had urged "the Bolivian people to organize and mobilize against the coup d'etat in favor of democracy," in an earlier televised message to the country alongside his ministers inside the presidential palace. He fired Zuniga and Salvador and swore in a new set of military leaders.

Before he was arrested, Zuniga told reporters that the president had told him to stage an uprising,

in order to trigger a crackdown that would make him look strong and boost his sagging approval rating. At a meeting Sunday, the general said, Zuniga asked Arce "so we bring out armored vehicles?" He said the president answered, "bring them out." Arce's instructions were to "stage something to raise his popularity," Zuniga said. Former president Evo Morales wrote on social media platform X that "a coup d'etat is brewing" and urged a "national mobilization to defend democracy."

Zuniga's anti-democratic remarks

Bolivia is deeply polarized after years of political instability and the ruling Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party is riven by internal conflict between supporters of Arce and his former mentor Morales. Morales, who was Bolivia's first Indigenous president, was extremely popular until he tried to bypass the constitution and seek a fourth term in office in 2019. The leftist and former coca union leader won that vote but was forced to resign amid deadly protests over alleged election fraud, and fled the country. He returned after Arce won the presidency in October 2020.

Since then a power struggle has grown between the two men, and Morales has increasingly criticized the government and accused it of corruption, tolerating drug trafficking, and sidelining him politically. Six months ago, the Constitutional Court disqualified Morales from the 2025 elections, however he is still seeking nomination as the MAS candidate. Arce has not said whether he will seek re-election. Zuniga appeared on television on Monday and said he would arrest Morales if he insisted on running for office again in 2025. "Legally he is disqualified, that man cannot be president of this country again," he said. Since that interview, rumors have swirled that Zuniga was on the verge of being dismissed.



BOLIVIA: Bolivian President Luis Arce (center) talks from the balcony of the Government Palace in La Paz on June 26, 2024. — AFP

The US administration of Joe Biden said it was keeping a close eye on events in Bolivia and "calls for calm," according to a spokesperson for the National Security Council. Russia "strongly" condemned the attempted military coup, its foreign ministry said Thursday, warning against "destructive foreign interference" in the South American country. "We express our full, unwavering support for the government of President Luis Arce," it said, adding that Moscow stood in "solidarity with... our reliable strategic partner". UN chief

Antonio Guterres was "deeply concerned" by events in Bolivia, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

Condemnations of the troop movements also poured in from across Latin America, with leaders of Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela calling for democracy to be respected. Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva wrote on X: "I am a lover of democracy and I want it to prevail throughout Latin America. We condemn any form of coup d'etat in Bolivia." — AFP

China expels former defense minister from Communist Party

BEIJING: Former Chinese defense minister Li Shangfu has been expelled from the ruling Communist Party for causing "great damage to (its) cause" through offences including suspected bribery, state media said on Thursday. Li was ousted last October after only seven months in the role following a lengthy absence from public view, one of the most prominent examples in a series of high-level disappearances from China's military establishment and political class. State broadcaster CCTV said in a separate report on Thursday that Li's predecessor, Wei Fenghe, had also been expelled from the party and passed on to prosecutors over alleged corruption.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has waged an unrelenting campaign against official graft since coming to power more than a decade ago. Proponents say the drive ensures clean governance, but critics argue it also serves as a means for Xi to purge political rivals. The Communist Party's powerful Politburo of senior leaders ruled on Thursday Li had "betrayed his original mission and lost his party spirit and principles", according to CCTV.

He "seriously polluted the political environment and industrial ethos in the field of military equipment, and caused great damage to the party's cause, national defense and the construction of the armed forces", it said.

Li is suspected of bribery, accused of abusing his position to take "huge sums of money" in return for favors and of bribing others. He also "illegally sought personnel benefits for himself and others", CCTV said, adding "the nature (of his offences) is extremely severe, their impact was particularly egregious, and the harm from them was particularly huge". Li's months-long disappearance from public view last year sparked rumors about his political future.

He had travelled to a security conference in Russia in August and days later held a meeting with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, according to handout photos. However, he then vanished for several months until his removal was confirmed in October. His sacking followed the dramatic ouster of foreign minister Qin Gang in June last year. Qin's whereabouts and condition remain unknown, and Beijing's foreign ministry again declined to answer a question about him this week. — AFP

Julian Assange 'rediscovering' life as free man

AUSTRALIA: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is "rediscovering" life as he tastes freedom in Australia after a five-year stretch in a London high-security prison, his wife said Thursday. The 52-year-old landed in Canberra the night before, hours after pleading guilty in a US Pacific Island court to a single count of revealing military secrets. Under a plea deal, he was sentenced to time already served and allowed to walk free, ending a 14-year legal struggle with the US Department of Justice. But the jail time has taken a toll.

Assange did not attend a news conference after he touched down, with his wife near tears as she pleaded for family privacy and time for him to recuperate. "He's just savoring freedom for the first time in 14 years. He needs time to rest and recover. And he is just rediscovering normal life. And he needs space to do that," Stella Assange told reporters Thursday. "Julian plans to swim in the ocean every day. He plans to sleep in a real bed. He plans to taste real food. And he plans to enjoy his freedom."

'Jumping on the sofa'

The WikiLeaks publisher had yet to see his two children, who were staying elsewhere and asleep when his plane landed, she said. Stella Assange said she sent her husband a video on the day of his US court hearing showing their children "jumping on the sofa" at the prospect of their father's return. Assange spent more than five years in London's Belmarsh prison fighting extradition to the United States on charges under the 1917 Espionage Act.

He had already lived for seven years in Ecuador's London embassy to escape extradition to Sweden over sexual assault charges, which were eventually dropped. The couple have not had time to discuss how their lives will play out since his release, said Stella, who met Assange while he was still in the Ecuadorian embassy and married him in the London prison. Assange's legal team argues that the US Justice Department's legal pursuit of their client will have a chilling effect on journalism.

They have called for US President Joe Biden to grant him a pardon following his plea deal in



AUSTRALIA: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (center) raises his fist after arriving at Canberra Airport in Canberra on June 26, 2024, after he pleaded guilty at a US court in Saipan to a single count of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate US national defense information. — AFP

Saipan, capital of the US territory of Northern Mariana Islands. "The president of the United States has absolute pardon power. President Biden or any subsequent president can, and in my mind should, issue a pardon to Julian Assange," said his US trial lawyer Barry Pollack.

People put in 'danger'

Stella Assange said her husband had pleaded "guilty to committing journalism - this case criminalizes journalism". 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. The Australian citizen was indicted by a US federal grand jury in 2019

on 18 counts stemming from WikiLeaks' publication of a trove of national security documents. The material he released through WikiLeaks included video showing civilians being killed by fire from a US helicopter gunship in Iraq in 2007. The victims included a photographer and a driver from Reuters.

On Wednesday, the US State Department renewed its allegation that he put people at risk. "The documents they published gave identifying information of individuals who were in contact with the State Department," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters in Washington. "That included opposition leaders, human rights activists around the world - whose positions were put in some danger." The US Justice Department has banned Assange from returning to the United States without permission. — AFP

Security boosted in all domains...

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Meanwhile, Interior Ministry Undersecretary and Commander of the Coordinating Command for Internal Security Protection Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah emphasized on Thursday the need to achieve interaction and integration in task execution and full readiness to protect internal security. This was stated in a press release following Sheikh Salem Nawaf's inspection tour at the Coordinating Command Center for Internal Security Protection, the General Department of Civil Defense and the Traffic Operations Center.

During the tour, Sheikh Salem conveyed the greetings of Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef to the center's affiliates, urging them to coordinate with various military sectors including the army, the National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force through regular meetings.

Sheikh Salem reviewed the readiness and necessary preparations to deal with emergencies at the Coordinating Command Center for Internal Security Protection and monitored the field coordination mechanism and linkage between military entities in performing joint tasks to achieve security and safety.

He also watched a visual presentation on risk management and listened to an explanation of potential annual scenarios that will be dealt with, in addition to inspecting the Operations Center at the General Department of Civil Defense where he reviewed the safety of the special equipment for performing civil defense tasks and rapid response to control accidents and natural disasters efficiently. — KUNA

Zionists pound Gaza, threaten...

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that the "intense phase" of the war — now nearing its 10th month — was winding down. The civil defense agency in the Hamas-run territory and medics said Zionist strikes overnight and early Thursday killed at least five people in Gaza City and another in Beit Lahia, also in the north. The Zionist military said it had "attacked terrorists who were in a school complex in Khan Yunis" in the south.

In Gaza City, a witness in Shujaiya who declined to be named told AFP the situation was "very difficult and frightening" as Zionist military vehicles approached the area amid air strikes and shelling. "Residents are running through the streets in terror... a number of wounded and martyrs lie in the streets." The military's Arabic-language spokesman, Avichay Adraec, told residents and displaced Gazans in the Shujaiya area to leave "for your safety", in a message posted on social media.

They were asked to head south, to a declared "humanitarian zone" about 25 km away. An AFP photographer saw many leaving on foot, carrying their belongings as they walked through rubble-strewn streets. Muhammad Ghurab, a doctor at Gaza City's Al-Ahli hospital, said the facility had so far received seven "martyrs

including four children" and more than 40 others who were wounded "as the (Zionist) forces advanced to the east of Shujaiya neighborhood".

Hamas' press office reported "a significant displacement of residents" around Shujaiya market. Shujaiya resident Omar Sukar said the violence began as Gazans were collecting drinking water, which has been in limited supply due to a Zionist siege. "People were filling water in the Shabura area in Shujaiya," he told AFP. "The water truck had just arrived when the shelling began."

Beyond the evacuation order announced by Adraec, the military declined to comment on the fighting.

The Zionist offensive has killed at least 37,765 people, mostly women and children, according to data from Gaza's health ministry. The Zionist entity in early January announced it had dismantled "Hamas' military framework" in Gaza's north, which saw the most intense fighting in the early stages of the war, but fighters have since regrouped.

The war and siege have triggered a dire humanitarian crisis, with Gaza hospitals struggling to function, and food, water and other essentials hard to come by as the vast majority of the territory's 2.4 million people have been displaced. Months of talks towards a truce and hostage release deal have so far failed as the Zionist entity has rejected Hamas demands for a permanent end to fighting and full troop withdrawal. — AFP

Murdered and forgotten: Iraqi...

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The Kurdistan regional government in 2020 ordered existing graves be marked with the word "life", and new ones to be engraved with names and birthdates. Though there are no comprehensive figures, Othman Saleh, a 55-year-old gravedigger at Siwan, said that in 15 years he had buried about 200 women and girls, some as young as 13, who were "killed, burned or smothered".

According to the United Nations, more than one million women and girls across Iraq are at risk of gender-based violence. The threat usually intensifies during crises, of which the conflict-ridden country of 43 million people has had many. The northern Kurdistan region, which is keen on presenting an image of relative stability and progress, passed a law in 2011 criminalizing domestic violence.

"Incredibly important strides have been taken in legislation" in the autonomous region, said Razaw Salihi, Iraq researcher at rights group Amnesty International. "Yet, the killing and maiming of women and girls — mostly at the hands of male relatives — is occurring at an alarming rate," added Salihi, who is working on a report on domestic violence focusing on

impunity for perpetrators and insufficient protection and support for victims. "Stories of the horrific ways women and girls are killed are much more prevalent than those of perpetrators being held accountable," said the researcher.

Earlier this month, a man poured fuel over his pregnant 17-year-old wife and set her ablaze, her grieving father, Jiza Jawhar, told AFP. "She lost her child" in the attack, he said, and a few days later succumbed to her injuries. The husband was later detained, though his family has maintained his innocence and claimed the teenager had committed suicide.

According to official figures obtained by AFP, 45 women were murdered in Iraq's Kurdistan in 2021, up from 25 the previous year. Serkut Omar, of the regional government's agency on gender-based violence, said cases of femicide have decreased in 2024, without providing figures. Activists say many cases of violence against women go unreported, with victims often wary of reaching out to the authorities or afraid to speak out.

At the cemetery in Sulaimaniyah, unmarked plots also serve as final resting places for unidentified women found dead in other parts of the Kurdistan region. Given that victims' personal details are missing from most graves, Ibrahim said one of the only ways to identify them is by matching the numbers on the headstones to records of the Sulaimaniyah forensic department. — AFP

International

Kenya police fire rubber bullets, tear gas at protesters after Ruto urges talks

'The youth will not rest. It's our future we are fighting for'

NAIROBI: Kenyan police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators in Nairobi on Thursday, as protesters returned to the streets despite President William Ruto scrapping contentious tax hikes after deadly clashes. The protests—led largely by young Kenyans—caught the authorities off-guard, as Ruto's government ricocheted between taking a tough line on the unrest and calling for dialogue. Dozens of protesters gathered in Nairobi's central business district, with soldiers deployed and police in anti-riot gear blocking access along roads leading to Ruto's office at State House and parliament, according to AFP journalists.

Officers fired rubber bullets and tear gas at small groups of protesters and arrested at least seven people, with scuffles erupting as some demonstrators threw stones at police, AFP journalists saw. "The youth will not rest," Lucky, a 27-year-old university graduate, told AFP. "It's our future we are fighting for," he said, adding that he did not trust Ruto, who had earlier likened the demonstrators to "criminals" before backing down. Many shops remained shuttered as traders worried about further unrest. Protesters also rallied in the port city of Mombasa and the opposition bastion of Kisumu, with some blocking roads and lighting fires in the lakeside city.

After the parliament complex was ransacked on Tuesday and police opened fire on protesters, Ruto made a surprise U-turn on the tax hikes that set off the demonstrations. He declined to sign the increases into law and withdrew the bill on Wednesday. "The people have spoken," he said, adding that he would seek "engagement with the young people of our nation".

But protesters maintained Thursday's rally in memory of those killed in the demonstrations, criticizing Ruto's dramatic reversal as a case of too lit-

tle, too late. Ivy, a 26-year-old job seeker, told AFP Wednesday that Ruto's about-turn was "a start to changing things." "He could have done this earlier without people having to die," she added, echoing the words of other protesters interviewed by AFP.

'Cannot take risk'

A state-backed rights group counted 22 dead nationwide — 19 in Nairobi alone—in the aftermath of Tuesday's protests and vowed an investigation. "This is the largest number of deaths (in) a single day protest," said Roseline Odede, chairwoman of the state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, adding that 300 people were injured across the country. Shops were largely closed in Nairobi's business district on Thursday. "We cannot take risk. We don't know what happens next," said Joe, an employee in a perfume store, as he prepared to head home. "Why did they have to kill these young people? This bill is not worth people dying," the 30-year-old said. "We are in uncharted waters."

The unrest has alarmed the international community, with Washington calling on Kenya to respect the right to peaceful protest and the UN urging "accountability" for the bloodshed. Rights watchdogs have accused the authorities of abducting protesters. The police have not responded to AFP requests for comment.

Debt fears

Ruto rolled back some of the tax measures last week, prompting the treasury to warn of a budget shortfall of 200 billion shillings (\$1.6 billion). Ruto said Wednesday that withdrawing the bill would mean a significant hole in funding for development programs to help farmers and teachers, among others. The cash-strapped government had said previ-



NAIROBI: A man reacts on the floor as Kenya Police officers arrest him while stopping people from gathering for a planned demonstration called after a nationwide deadly protest against a controversial now-withdrawn tax bill left over 20 dead in downtown Nairobi, on June 27, 2024. — AFP

ously that the increases were necessary to service Kenya's debt of some 10 trillion shillings (\$78 billion), equal to roughly 70 percent of GDP.

Analysts warned that Ruto's administration faced a tough choice in the weeks ahead. The government "will now have to find a way to pacify two opposing forces: a populace willing to

resort to violence to protect livelihoods, and a macroeconomic trajectory that, bar considerable multilateral support, is heading towards a cliff," Oxford Economics said in a note. Ruto's administration is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, which has called for fiscal reforms in order to access crucial funding. — AFP

Sudanese face 'acute food insecurity': UN-backed report

SUDAN: Some 25.6 million people, or more than half of Sudan's population, are facing high levels of "acute food insecurity", a report cited by the United Nations said Thursday. That figure includes 755,000 people who are facing famine, while 8.5 million face "emergency" conditions, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) said. Sudan has been gripped by war since April 2023, when fighting erupted between the regular military led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The war has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. "Fourteen months into the conflict, Sudan is facing the worst levels of acute food insecurity ever recorded by the IPC in the country," the report said. It pointed to "a stark and rapid deterioration of the food security situation" compared with the previous figures published in December, with a 45 percent increase in people facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

"The conflict has not only triggered mass displacement and disruption of supply routes... it has also severely limited access to essential humanitarian assistance, exacerbating an already dire situation," the IPC said. It further cited "highly dysfunctional health services, water contamination and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions".



SUDAN: Children sit together sharing a large bowl of food, as Sudanese families host internally displaced people coming from the central Sudanese state of Gezira to the eastern Sudanese city of Gedaref. — AFP

People trapped in conflict areas and those who fled the fighting, whether internally or abroad, are especially vulnerable to food insecurity, the report said. The IPC report comes a day after United Nations experts charged that both sides of the

conflict were using starvation as a weapon of war. Four independent UN rights experts on Wednesday said foreign governments providing military support to both the army and the RSF were "complicit" in war crimes. —AFP

Women 'changing the game' in Mongolia's patriarchal politics

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Women candidates are pushing for greater representation in Mongolia's male-dominated politics, raising their voices for change and inspiring girls to follow in their footsteps. Mongolians go to the polls in parliamentary elections on Friday, with the ruling Mongolian People's Party widely expected to retain a majority it has held for eight years. But for the first time in almost a decade, parties are required by law to ensure that 30 percent of their candidates are women, in a country where politics is overwhelmingly dominated by men. As a result, more women than ever before are running this year, in a new voting system that balances proportional lists with district candidates elected directly by the people. "The era we are living in demands the quota," Dorjzodov Enkhtuya, a 51-year-old former TV anchor running for the main opposition Democratic Party, told AFP in capital city Ulaanbaatar. "There are almost no women in decision-making positions," she said. "We are changing the game."

Strict patriarchal norms

In Mongolia, gender inequalities are especially acute in the vast countryside, where nomadic life is governed by strict patriarchal norms. But even in rural areas, attitudes are slowly shifting. In 2022, the government appointed Enkhbat Bolormaa as the country's first-ever woman governor in the western province of Khovd. The decision sparked national debate—provincial governors in Mongolia are typically required to participate in traditional ceremonies usually reserved for men. "There were public discussions about whether a woman can be a governor," Khurelbaatar Baasanjargal, a 42-year-old lawyer and ruling party candidate, told AFP. "But our first female governor has been doing everything that male governors can do," she said. "This was like a different world, especially for rural people."

'A dirty game'

As is the case everywhere, many of the problems that plague urban life disproportionately impact women. Women running for office have campaigned

on the platform that, ultimately, women's issues are Mongolia's issues. Children falling sick from air pollution mean that more often than not, working mothers must stay home to care for them. Dire city planning means there are fewer places for youngsters to play.

Stubbornly high inflation makes doing the weekly shop a lot harder—and it's a job women are usually left to handle. But in a quiet suburb of Ulaanbaatar, surrounded by dozens of purple and yellow balloons bearing her party's colors, 41-year-old candidate Baatarjav Munkhsoyol told AFP that women have to work extra hard to be heard in politics. "Elections are a game of money and an enormous expense—smear campaigns are common," said Munkhsoyol, a candidate for the minor center-right anti-corruption HUN party.

"It takes strong will and courage to run in an election if you are a woman," the former NGO worker added. Endemic corruption—a problem that analysts and Transparency International say has worsened since 2016 -- also puts women off, Munkhsoyol said. "The reason why men are more involved in politics is due to gender stereotypes and traditional mindsets," she said. "But these men are corrupt," she said. "Women see politics as a dirty game and prefer to stay away."

'Women protect women'

The country's institutions have seen some progress: the Mongolian government says that almost two thirds of civil servants are women. The 30 percent quota is, in itself, an improvement on the status quo ante, with a goal of raising it to 40 percent in the next vote. Mongolia has long had a quota for women in polls, and it has been revised several times. But beyond the realm of politics violence against women remains a major problem. The United Nations Development Program has said that two thirds of women in Mongolia have experienced some form of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse.

"Gender-based violence is one of the main barriers that today's women of all ages face," said Enkhtuya, who wants the quota for women candidates in polls to rise from 30 to 50 percent. "Women will do more to protect women," she said. "That's why it's time for change." Baasanjargal rose to prominence successfully campaigning for a ban on child horse racing.

She told AFP she had met an elderly woman in



This photo taken on June 24, 2024 shows Dorjzodov Enkhtuya of the main opposition Democratic Party posing during an interview with AFP at the Sukhbaatar Square next to the Mongolian Government Palace in Ulaanbaatar, ahead of the parliamentary elections on June 28. — AFP

far-eastern Dornod province who told her she had long suffered under an abusive husband. "She told me she was very happy that now we talk about the human rights of women," she said. "She said she might have suffered less if there had been a conversation about providing human rights for women." But, she said, her travels to the countryside had also seen her work to encourage two 10-year-old girls to dream big and pursue whatever careers they wanted. "I told them that women can do all jobs," she said. "They smiled and looked at each other. That's why I decided to stay in politics, to be an example for other women." —AFP

UK election campaign enters final straight

LONDON: Britain goes to the polls next week in a general election that looks set to end 14 years of Conservative rule marked by economic turbulence, Brexit, political scandal and upheaval. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's right-wing Tories are expected to be dumped out of power, with discontent appearing widespread about their record in government and the state of the country. Sunak has been unable to narrow a gaping 20-point polling deficit to Keir Starmer's centre-left Labour party, during a largely lacklustre election campaign.

Some predictions put the Conservatives on course for the worst results in their 200-year history and forecast a record majority for Labour, last in office under Gordon Brown in 2010. One survey even suggested that Sunak could become the first sitting UK prime minister to lose his own seat. Voting begins at 7:00 am (0600 GMT) next Thursday and runs until 10:00 pm, with official results trickling in late into the night and early morning.

Increasingly, the electorate is tipped to send a message to the Conservatives that their time is up, with some Tories already indicating that they can only mitigate the size of Labour's win. "The country is a mess," said Tom Lough, an 82-year-old Tory voter in Richmond, northern England, where Sunak is standing for re-election. "They're just not good enough," added another Conservative supporter, Bruce Walker, 67, accusing the party of abandoning its values of low taxation and strength on security and immigration.

'Broken Britain'

David Cameron brought the Conservatives to power in 2010, imposing tough austerity measures in the aftermath of the global financial crash, hitting the funding of public services—and people's pockets. Cameron then gambled on appeasing anti-European right-wingers in the party by calling a vote on European Union membership that backfired on him when the public narrowly voted to leave in 2016. Brexit and what form it should take claimed the premierships first of Cameron, who backed "remain", then his successor Theresa May, who failed to get her divorce deal sanctioned by parliament.

Boris Johnson, who took over, managed it with an 80-seat majority following a snap election in 2019, but he was brought down by his handling of the Covid crisis, and claims of corruption and cronyism. Liz Truss's brief tenure in September and October 2022 ended after her unfunded tax-cutting plans spooked the markets and crashed the pound. Sunak, the party's fifth leader and prime minister since 2010, has tried to revive its fortunes, vowing to bring down sky-high inflation and cut record levels of immigration.

But he has struggled to quell public anger at the higher cost of living, frustration with lengthy waits for health appointments, pared-back public services and crumbling infrastructure. "Nothing works in this country anymore and no one in government cares," Trades Union Congress leader Paul Nowak said last September. "The Conservatives have broken Britain." — AFP



RIPLEY: Britain's Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader, Rishi Sunak speaks during a Q&A event at Denby Pottery Factory, on Thursday in Ripley, north England, as part of a Conservative campaign event in the build-up to the UK general election on July 4. — AFP

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2024

Stress test: Olive oil producers adapting to climate change

Global production of olive oil fell to 2.57m tons in 2022-2023

MADRID: Olive oil producers are improving irrigation and seeking new varieties of olives to safeguard production as climate change upends harvests, causing prices of the staple of the Mediterranean diet to soar. "Climate change is already a reality and we need to adapt to it," according to the executive director of the International Olive Council (IOC) Jaime Lillo.



JAÉN, Spain: A farmer shows olives in drought-stricken Albánchez de Magina near Jaen.

He spoke at the opening of the three-day olive oil congress in Madrid which brings together 300 participants from around the globe. The gathering came as the world's top olive oil producers, including Spain, Italy and Greece, have recorded an unprecedented drop in production over the past two years due to extreme drought and repeated heatwaves.

Global production of olive oil fell from 3.42 million tons in the 2021-2022 season to 2.57 million tons in 2022-2023, IOC figures show. And according to data

supplied by the organization's 37 member states, it is set to fall again in 2023-2024 to 2.41 million tons. This has caused prices to soar by between 50 percent and 70 percent over the past year, depending on the variety concerned. Prices in Spain, which supplies around half of the world's olive oil, have tripled since 2021, to the dismay of consumers.

Olive oil has been an essential part of the Mediterranean diet for thousands of years. Spaniards for instance use it to cook and to season fish, salads, vegetables and other dishes. "The rise in prices has been a particularly demanding stress test for our sector. We have never experienced anything like this before," said Pedro Barato, the head of the Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional Organization.

"We have to prepare ourselves for increasingly complex scenarios that will allow us to face up to the climate crisis," he added, likening the "turbulence" faced by olive producers to that experienced by the banking sector during the 2008 financial crisis.

The outlook is not encouraging. Over 90 percent of the world's olive oil production comes from the Mediterranean basin. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has said this region is warming 20-percent faster than the global average. This situation could affect world production in the long term.

"We are facing a delicate situation" which implies "changing the way we treat trees and soil," said Georgios Koubouris, a researcher at the Greek Olive Institute. "The olive tree is one of the plants best adapted to a dry climate. But in an extreme drought, it activates mechanisms to protect itself and no longer produce anything. To grow olives, you need a minimum amount of water," said Lillo.

Among the possible solutions raised at the Madrid congress is genetic research. In recent years hundreds of varieties of olive trees have been tested to identify the species best adapted to higher temperatures. The goal is to find "varieties that need fewer hours of cold in winter and that are more resistant to



MADRID: A picture taken on June 27, 2024 shows olive oil bottles of various brands and prices displayed in a supermarket in Madrid. — AFP photos

stress caused by lack of water at certain key times" of the year, such as spring, said Juan Antonio Polo, head of technology at the IOC.

The sector is also looking to improve water use by storing rainwater, recycling wastewater and employing technology to use less water to irrigate trees. This means abandoning "surface irrigation" and instead using "drip systems" which bring water "directly to the roots of the trees" to avoid water loss, said Kostas

Chartzoulakis of the Greek Olive Institute. Farmers are abandoning production in certain areas that could become unsuitable for olive trees because they are too dry and moving it to other regions. There has been a rise in new olive tree plantations, although on a small scale, in regions previously not used to grow the crop, said Lillo, adding that he was "optimistic" about the future. "With international cooperation, we will gradually find solutions," he said. — AFP

Modi government asks Indian state to look into Foxconn hiring

BENGALURU: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on Wednesday said it has asked the Tamil Nadu state to submit a "detailed report" after a Reuters story revealed that Apple supplier Foxconn rejected married women from iPhone assembly jobs in the country.

In a statement calling for the probe, the federal government's Ministry of Labor and Employment cited the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, saying the law "clearly stipulates that no discrimination (is) to be made while recruiting men and women workers."

The ministry said it has requested a detailed report from the Labor Department of Tamil Nadu, site of a major iPhone factory where Reuters uncovered Foxconn's practice of shunning married women from jobs. The Labour Ministry said it also directed the office of the Regional Chief Labour Commissioner to provide a "factual report."

Apple AAPL.O and Foxconn 2317.TW did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the government statement. The Tamil Nadu state government did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment outside office hours. A Reuters investigation published on Tuesday found that Foxconn has systematically excluded married women from jobs at its main India iPhone plant near Chennai in Tamil Nadu state, on the grounds they have more family responsibilities than their unmarried counterparts.



Foxconn buses carry workers near the entrance to the Foxconn factory in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.—Reuters

ried counterparts.

Foxconn hiring agents and HR sources interviewed by Reuters cited family duties, pregnancy and higher absenteeism as reasons why Foxconn did not hire married women at the plant.

The Ministry of Labour "takes note of media reports on married women not being allowed to work at Foxconn India Apple iPhone plant," the statement said. Earlier, in response to questions from Reuters for its Tuesday report, Apple and Foxconn acknowledged lapses in hiring practices in 2022 and said they had worked to address the issues. All the discriminatory practices documented by Reuters at the Sriperumbudur plant, however, took place in 2023 and 2024.

The two companies didn't address the 2023 and 2024 incidents. Apple said that "when concerns about hiring practices were first raised in 2022 we immediately took action and worked with our supplier to conduct monthly audits to identify issues and ensure that our high standards are upheld," adding that all its suppliers, including Foxconn, hire married women.

Foxconn said it "vigorously refutes allegations of employment discrimination based on marital status, gender, religion or any other form." Lawyers told Reuters Indian law doesn't bar companies from discriminating in hiring based on marital status. Apple's and Foxconn's policies, however, prohibit such hiring practices in their supply chains. — Reuters

US Supreme Court strips SEC of key enforcement power

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court on Thursday said a tribunal system used by the Securities and Exchange Commission, Wall Street's government watchdog and rule enforcer, was unconstitutional in a major victory for pro-business conservatives. In a 6-3 vote, the justices upheld a decision by a deeply conservative federal appeals court that ruled in favor of plaintiff George Jarkesy, the founder of an investment fund who had been fined \$300,000 for securities fraud and ordered to repay \$685,000 in "illicit gains."

Curbing the enforcement powers of federal agencies, whose leadership is nominated by the White House, has long been a goal of conservatives seeking to pare back Washington's ability to more efficiently uphold regulations, especially those targeting big business. Chief Justice John Roberts said in the majority opinion that forcing defendants to go through the SEC's in-house tribunals rather than a federal court violated the constitutional right to a jury trial.

The decision could possibly ripple through the US government, as several other regulatory agencies use similar tribunals. "A defendant facing a fraud suit has the right to be tried by a jury of his peers before a neutral adjudicator," Roberts wrote. "Rather than recognize that right, the dissent would permit Congress



WASHINGTON: The headquarters of the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in Washington, DC. -- AFP

to concentrate the roles of prosecutor, judge, and jury in the hands of the Executive Branch. That is the very opposite of the separation of powers that the Constitution demands," the opinion concluded.

The decision was backed by the six conservative judges sitting on the country's highest court, with the three left-leaning justices dissenting. "Make no mistake: Today's decision is a power grab," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor in a sternly written dissenting opinion. "The constitutionality of hundreds of statutes may now be in peril, and dozens of agencies could be stripped of their power to enforce laws enacted by Congress," she wrote. — AFP

China's economy in focus ahead of key meeting

BEIJING: A key political meeting that is historically watched for signals on China's economic direction will be held in mid-July, state media said Thursday, as policymakers seek to shore up a stuttering recovery. A full rebound in the world's number two economy has yet to kick in a year-and-a-half after crippling COVID-19 restrictions ended, sending ripples of unease through leaders and citizens. The Third Plenum, originally expected in autumn, is highly anticipated in the hope it will resolve uncertainty and reveal details of Beijing's future strategy.

State news agency Xinhua said the meeting, to be held from July 15-18, would "primarily examine issues related to further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization". Authorities have been clear they want to re-orient the economy away from state-funded investment and instead base growth around high-tech innovation and domestic consumption. However, economic uncertainty is fuelling a vicious cycle that has kept consumption stubbornly low. President Xi Jinping's government has so far resisted any big stimulus and the head of China's central bank warned last week it was not on the cards. The economy still faced many challenges, the bank's chief said, but authorities would exercise moderation. — AFP

Amazon cloud giant AWS wants public sector to embrace AI

WASHINGTON: Amazon's AWS, the world's biggest cloud computing outfit, is making a major push to entice the public sector to join the artificial intelligence revolution, as the generative AI race with Microsoft and Google heats up. AWS and the other cloud giants say that the technology, made famous by ChatGPT, can have a huge impact on improving public services, including in health, security, charity and NGO work. But getting governments and nonprofits to sign on will be a bigger ask than persuading private companies—and AWS on Wednesday opened a \$50 million, two-year envelope for potential public customers to test out ideas.

The public sector market for cloud computing is already an important one. AWS serves 7,500 government agencies, 14,000 academic institutions and 85,000 nonprofits in 215 countries, according to company data. The initiative would give accepted AI projects access to cloud computing credits, training and technical expertise. "What I see happening is lots of ideas, lots of use cases, lots of proof of concepts, things that I think will really have an impact," Dave Levy, the AWS vice president in charge of the global public sector business, told AFP. "Getting that stuff into production is where public sector organizations really need that support and help," Levy said ahead of an AWS "summit" targeting the public sector in Washington.

The scramble for public sector adoption of generative AI comes as Microsoft's cloud business as well as Google Cloud are trying to bite into AWS' leadership of the market. Generative AI, which stormed the world with the release of ChatGPT, can generate human quality content by churning through piles of data, something that the public sector has on a massive scale. AWS' Bedrock platform provides generative AI to clients by allowing them to access a range of models, such as Anthropic's Claude model, that are used to power custom-made AI tools and applications. Levy insisted that the benefits of AI would far outpace the challenges, given how much could be done by the technology with the data available. In one example of generative AI cited by AWS, Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute built a new research solution using the Anthropic's Claude model to help doctors interpret lab results.

In Britain, the Swindon Borough Council meanwhile used AWS' cloud to build a generative AI tool to make complex leasing agreements more understandable. For now, generative AI, much like video streaming and much of life on the internet, requires cloud computing to function. The bet across the industry is that generative AI, while still in the early stages, could boost growth and accelerate a transition to the cloud once public agencies see AI can take on a bigger role in their mission. AWS' AI initiative is designed to give public actors an easy way to begin tooling around with generative AI and set aside skittishness associated with the technology. — AFP

Sri Lanka's creditors demand debt deal details, including with China

Deal key to restoring the country's debt sustainability: IMF

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's bilateral lenders who agreed to restructure close to \$6 billion in loans have demanded "comparability of treatment" with other creditors, including China. The Official Creditor Committee (OCC), led by Japan, France and India, have requested details of Colombo's other debt deals, a statement seen by AFP on Thursday read.

The grouping agreed in Paris on Wednesday to restructure \$5.8 billion in loans. But on the same day, Colombo struck another deal with the Exim Bank of China to cover \$4.2 billion.

The OCC, which also included the United States, Canada and several European nations, said it had asked Colombo to provide "all information necessary for the OCC to ensure comparability of treatment". It also expected Colombo to strike a deal with private creditors "on terms at least as favorable" as the OCC had offered.

Sri Lanka 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 had expected to rapidly conclude debt restructuring in line with a \$2.9 billion IMF bailout program, but delays in securing an agreement with China had held up the process.

Beijing is by far the largest single creditor of Sri Lanka, but Chinese funding is split into concessionary bilateral loans and private commercial credit. While \$4.2 billion of Chinese bilateral credit had been treated under debt restructuring on Wednesday, there was no word on a \$2.18 billion loan from the China Development Bank considered a private commercial loan. Sources involved with the process said the CDB loan was likely to be treated on par with the \$12.55 billion International Sovereign Bonds, on which negotiations continue.

Sri Lanka's total foreign debt was estimated at \$37 billion, according to treasury data from the end of March. China accounts for \$4.66 billion of a total of \$10.58 billion in bilateral debt, followed by Japan with \$2.35 billion, and India with \$1.36 billion.

Sri Lanka's agreements with China and other creditor nations to restructure about \$10 billion in bilateral debt brought it a step closer towards restoring debt sustainability, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday.

Sri Lankan officials in Paris inked the agreement with the Official Creditor Committee (OCC) co-chaired by Japan, India and France that have lent a



COLOMBO: Vendors arrange dried fish for sale at a market in Colombo on June 26, 2024. - AFP

combined \$5.8 billion. The committee is now awaiting details of a separate agreement that was signed with China EXIM Bank to rework \$4.2 billion to be shared with them to ensure comparability of treatment, OCC said in a statement. Sri Lanka, however, still needs to convince bondholders to restructure about \$12.5 billion in international bonds.

"We hope that there will be swift progress on reaching agreements with external private creditors in the near future," Peter Breuer, IMF's senior mission chief for Sri Lanka, said in a statement.

Bilateral lenders said they hoped an agreement with bondholders would be "on terms at least as favorable as the terms offered by the OCC." The restructuring of bilateral debt agreements was one of the key conditions set by the IMF under a \$2.9 billion bailout program that helped Sri Lanka tame

inflation, stabilize its currency, and improve government finances.

The central bank estimates the economy will expand 3 percent in 2024 after contracting 2.3 percent last year. Sri Lanka, whose total external debt is \$37 billion, also has to finalize arrangements with China Development Bank to restructure debt of \$2.2 billion, according to latest finance ministry data.

Under the restructuring plan, Sri Lanka can delay repaying bilateral creditors till 2028. During this period, the government and creditors can arrange new loans out to 2043. Once the restructuring is completed, Sri Lanka aims to reduce its debt by \$16.9 billion, the government said. It will seek approval from parliament on July 2 to proceed with the deals, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said during an address to the nation late on Wednesday. - Agencies

Norway designates zones for contested deep-sea mining

OSLO: Norway's government has taken another step toward its controversial plan to open its seabed to deep-sea mining, proposing areas suitable for exploration. Already Western Europe's largest oil and gas producer, Norway could become one of the first countries to authorize seabed mining, insisting on the importance of not relying on China or authoritarian countries for minerals essential for renewable technology. "The Ministry of Energy has presented a proposal for the announcement of the first licensing round for seabed minerals on the Norwegian continental shelf for public consultation," the government said in a statement issued Wednesday.

"The proposal sets out the areas where the companies will be able to apply for exploitation licenses, so that exploration and gathering knowledge ... can begin," it said. The World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Norwegian chapter said in late May it planned to take legal action against Oslo for failing to perform sufficient impact studies.

On April 12, the energy ministry announced it was opening up an area for exploration in the Norwegian Sea and Greenland Sea - of the size of the UK, according to WWF - with the aim of awarding the first licenses in the first half of 2025. The blocks proposed Wednesday cover around 38 percent of this area. Exploration of the zone will make it possible to know "whether there is a basis for sustainable mineral exploitation on the Norwegian shelf," the government said. If not, deep-sea mining will not be authorized. Earlier this year, the Norwegian parliament gave the green light to open up parts of Norway's seabed to exploration. NGOs and scientists have criticized the plan, warning of a lack of knowledge about the environmental impact. Several countries, including France and the UK, have called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining. Oslo maintains that by allowing the prospecting, it wants to fill in gaps in knowledge to determine whether undersea mining can take place without serious impact on the environment. - AFP

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Business

US new home sales slump as supply at more than 16-yr high

Median house price slips 0.9% to \$417,400 from year ago

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US single-family homes dropped to a six-month low in May as a jump in mortgage rates weighed on demand, offering more evidence that the housing market recovery was faltering. But the sting from the largest decline in sales in more than 1-1/2 years, reported by the Commerce Department on Wednesday, was softened by a sharp upward revision to data for April, which now shows sales rising instead of falling as previously estimated. Supply was the highest in more than 16 years.

The housing market has been the sector hardest hit by the Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes since March 2022. It had, however, pulled out of the slump starting in the third quarter of last year as an acute shortage of previously owned homes boosted demand for new construction. The resurgence in mortgage rates has also undercut sales of previously owned homes and homebuilding.

"As it stands, today's report will be further evidence to the Fed that monetary policy is restrictive and it will be time to start lowering rates in the coming months," said Richard de Chazal, macro analyst at William Blair. New home sales declined 11.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 619,000 units last month, the lowest level since November, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau said. The percentage-based drop was the biggest since September 2022.

The sales pace for April was revised up to 698,000 units, a nine-month high, from a previously reported 634,000 units. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast new home sales, which account for 13.1 percent of US home sales, would hit a rate of 640,000 units.

New home sales are counted at the signing of a contract, making them a leading indicator of the housing market. They, however, can be volatile on a month-to-month basis. Sales slumped 16.5 percent on a year-on-year basis in May. Residential investment notched double-digit growth in the first quar-

ter, contributing to the economy's 1.3 percent annualized growth pace. Economists at Goldman Sachs trimmed their gross domestic product estimate for the second quarter to a 1.8 percent pace on the data from a 1.9 percent rate.

The average rate on the popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage reached a six-month high of 7.22 percent in early May before retreating to 7.03 percent by the end of the month, data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac showed. Financial markets expect the Fed to start cutting rates in September, though policymakers recently adopted a more hawkish outlook. The US central bank has maintained its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range since July. It has raised its policy rate by 525 basis points since March 2022. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices fell.

New home sales are likely to remain weak, with a report from the Mortgage Bankers Association on Wednesday showing applications for loans to purchase a home rose 1 percent last week on a seasonally adjusted basis from a week earlier. "New home sales may continue to be subdued until we see a more substantial decline in mortgage rates," said Nancy Vanden Houten, lead US economist at Oxford Economics. "We do expect a modest rebound in sales later in the second half of this year, when we look for mortgage rates to decline more decisively below 7 percent once Fed rate cuts get underway." Sales plunged 43.8 percent in the Northeast and slipped 4.5 percent in the West last month. They plummeted 12.0 percent in the densely populated South and decreased 8.6 percent in the Midwest, which is viewed as a more affordable region.

The median new house price fell 0.9 percent to \$417,400 in May from a year ago. Nearly half of the new homes sold last month were priced under \$399,000. A survey from the National Association of



Real estate signs advertise new homes for sale in multiple new developments in York County, South Carolina, US. — Reuters

Homebuilders last week showed the share of builders cutting prices to bolster sales in June was the highest in five months. Builders are constructing smaller homes to try and fit home buyers' budgets.

National house prices are, however, steadily rising. The Federal Housing Finance Agency reported on Tuesday that single-family home prices increased 6.3 percent on a year-on-year basis in April.

There were 481,000 new homes on the market at the end of May, the highest level since January 2008 and up from 474,000 units in April, the Census re-

port showed. At May's sales pace it would take 9.3 months to clear the supply of houses on the market. That was the most months since November 2022 and up from 8.1 months in April. Rising supply could improve housing affordability.

"The overhang of new home listings will likely keep a lid on house price increases in the second half of 2024," said Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank. "That will make homebuying a little less unaffordable, and also contribute to cooler inflation in 2025." — Reuters

News in Brief

Stroll in new Aston Martin deal

SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD, Austria: Canada's Lance Stroll has signed a new deal with Aston Martin, the British team announced on Thursday. Stroll, 25, joined Racing Point in 2019 when they were bought by his father Lawrence, who two years later rebranded the team as Aston Martin. He will continue to race alongside 42-year-old Fernando Alonso after the two-time world champion extended his contract with Aston Martin to 2026. "I'm super happy to have committed to staying with the team for 2025 and beyond," Stroll said in a team statement. "It's amazing to see how far we've come in the last five years; we've grown so much as a team and there's still so much more to look forward to," he added. — AFP

Swedish CB holds rate steady

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's central bank kept interest rates unchanged on Thursday following its first cut in eight years but said it could reduce them again later this year if inflation continues to ease. Riksbank said it left its policy rate at 3.75 percent, arguing its monetary policy "should be adjusted gradually" after cutting it in May. The bank said "economic activity is weak" and inflation has continued to fall closer to its target of two percent. "If inflation prospects remain the same, the policy rate can be cut two or three times during the second half of the year," Riksbank said. — AFP

BTS agency staff charged

SEOUL: Three employees at affiliates of HYBE, the agency behind K-pop megastars BTS, have been charged without detention for alleged insider trading, prosecutors said Thursday. BTS members told fans on June 14, 2022, that they were taking a break from the supergroup to focus on their solo careers, citing exhaustion and the pressures of their stratospheric success. Many analysts said at the time the hiatus was strategic, with South Korea's mandatory 18-month military service looming for band members. The company's share price fell nearly 25 percent when the market opened the day after the announcement, wiping nearly 2 trillion won (\$1.4 billion) off its value. — AFP

In Aberdeen, climate and energy take center stage in poll

ABERDEEN: In Europe's oil and gas "capital", Aberdeen, voters are apprehensive about Labour's plans for combating climate change if the opposition party wins next month's UK general election as expected. Labour scaled back its green investment pledges under pressure from the ruling Conservatives about how it would fund them, but still promises to make Britain a "clean energy superpower".

The speed of the transition from fossil fuels to renewables is on the minds of many residents of Aberdeen on Scotland's northeast coast, where tens of thousands of people work in energy. "A carefully managed transition will ensure that workers can be deployed in lower carbon sectors as the race to net-zero gathers pace," Michael Love of OPITO, an Aberdeen-based non-profit body promoting skills for the energy industry, told AFP.

Labour plans to end new drilling licenses for oil and gas and raise the existing windfall tax on fossil fuel producers by three points to 78 percent.

It will also scrap a tax relief avenue for oil and gas producers. Industry groups and opposition parties have warned that the policies put up to 100,000 jobs at risk across the UK, a claim that Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar described as "scaremongering". "Expecting North Sea workers to vote for Labour at this time is like asking the forest to vote for the axe," said Viaro Energy chief executive Francesco Mazzagatti, recalling the words of a colleague recently.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's ruling Conservatives, who have watered down several climate goals and are tipped to suffer a heavy defeat to Labour on July 4, have committed to new exploration licenses.

Stephen Flynn, of the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP), told AFP that in the constituency of Aberdeen South, where he is seeking re-election, voters are "deeply concerned" about what a Labour government might mean for their livelihoods. Labour insists its so-called Green Prosperity Plan will create 650,000 jobs across Britain by 2030 and put the country on track to meet its target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Experts have warned of "worryingly slow" recent progress by the UK



Supply vessels used in the oil, gas and renewable energy industry are docked at the Aberdeen Harbour, in the North East of Scotland, on April 29, 2022. — AFP

on reducing greenhouse gases and suggested the country could miss its future targets.

At the heart of Labour's energy pitch is a publicly owned investment vehicle called Great British Energy, to be headquartered in Scotland and backed by £8.3 billion (\$10.5 billion) of government money. Labour says the body will invest in clean domestic power sources, securing energy supplies and lowering electricity and gas prices that rocketed after key producer Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

It will also invest in wind, solar and other projects, bidding to make Scotland a world leader in new technologies such as floating offshore wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage. "Clean power is the best opportunity we've had in a generation for the next generation of jobs," Labour leader Keir Starmer said in Scotland last month.

Starmer endured flak earlier this year for drastically slashing his party's flagship pledge to spend £28 billion a year on green infrastructure. Instead, it now plans to spend £23.7 billion over the entire five years of the next parliament, blaming fiscal constraints.

Labour also has the ambitious aim of decar-

bonizing the UK's electricity grid by 2030 and says it will reverse the Conservatives' move to push back a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035.

Many in Aberdeen recognize that North Sea oil is running out and agree that the future of the planet rests with renewable energy, with attempts under way to rebrand it Europe's "net zero capital". Unemployed 44-year-old Chris Murray, who intends to vote for the SNP, said a future Labour government should be planning to invest more in the energy transition.

"It used to be quite easy for someone to get an apprenticeship on a rig," he told AFP. "That's all coming to an end, so how about apprenticeships for wind turbines, wave energy?" In a statement following Labour's manifesto launch this month, Friends of the Earth called for Britain's main political parties "to stop treating climate and nature as a side issue."

"Economic prudence may be Labour's guiding principle, but there's nothing prudent about failing to invest in the measures that will safeguard our future," said Mike Childs of the environmental group. — AFP

Boeing aims to lift MAX quality control at Renton

RENTON, US: At its plane factory near Seattle, Boeing has increased employee training, appointed mentors for new recruits, brought back retirees as coaches and stepped up tracking of performance metrics.

It's all part of an effort to strengthen quality control on the 737 MAX, a bestselling airliner that has suffered some high-profile problems. Boeing this week led a tour for reporters at its manufacturing facility in Renton, Washington to see what the company is doing to rerebuild confidence and hear from employees on the front line. "I am extremely confident that every plane leaving this plant is safe," said Elizabeth Lund, a senior vice president for quality at Boeing. The manufacturer has been under a microscope by regulators at the Federal Aviation Administration following a near-disastrous Alaska Airlines flight in January when a 737 MAX had to make an emergency landing after a fuselage panel blew out mid-flight. An FAA audit following the incident pointed to compli-

ance problems in Boeing's processes control, parts handling and storage, one factor in the FAA order limiting MAX output.

The agency plans to closely monitor Boeing's implementation of a safety "roadmap" required by the FAA after the Alaska flight. Lund described four categories of actions Boeing is taking to address systemic issues: investing in workforce training; simplifying plans and processes; eliminating defects; and elevating safety and quality culture. "We are getting stronger," she said, adding that fully upgrading the operation will take a few years.

Boeing deployed Bill Riley, a 16-year quality inspector, to Spirit AeroSystems' factory in Kansas where fuselages are built for the 737. "I went to Spirit to teach them what I know here, and learn from them there," Riley said. "And you do see changes on the fuselages we receive here." Such "face-to-face" meetings lead to a more seamless operation, he said.

Since January, some 150 Boeing employees have been assigned to Spirit's Wichita operation, a major increase from before, said Katie Ringgold, vice president and general manager for the 737 program. The result has been a "significant reduction in the defects on fuselages in just three months," said Ringgold.

The shift has also improved efficiency, resulting in more than a 50 percent drop in late tasks. These improvements will help Boeing as the company imple-

ments improvements throughout its three assembly lines, which are split into 10 stations. In one change currently underway, workers must check at each station whether the operation has met key criteria before it can pass to the next station. At first glance, the Renton factory operation seems chaotic, with a succession of planes at various stages of assembly.

But staff scrutinize the details—reporting if a piece is wrongly detached, or defective in some way. Since the January incident, barcode tracking has been introduced in some cases, overseen by a steward. Around 300 to 500 people work on each assembly line against a steady industrial buzz. Nearby sits a training center where new recruits learn the ropes as mechanics and quality inspectors. The company has added more than 300 hours of supplementary training since the pandemic, which saw a turnover of tens of thousands of workers replaced by newcomers. New recruits need about four months before they can work on the assembly plant's shop floor. Boeing engineers also have undertaken training even if it isn't always required, said Mani Tiggs, vice president for manufacturing and safety at Boeing's commercial plane business.

In all, about 600 people frequent the training center each day. The idea behind the training is to simulate actual factory operations as closely as possible, said Tiggs, adding that the operation has about 160 workplace coaches who guide staff. A 737 MAX is



Elizabeth Lund, Senior Vice President, Quality at Boeing speaks to gathered media in front of a slide detailing the plug door blow-out that occurred on January 5, 2024, on Alaska Airlines flight 1282, at the Boeing 737 factory in Renton, Washington. — Reuters

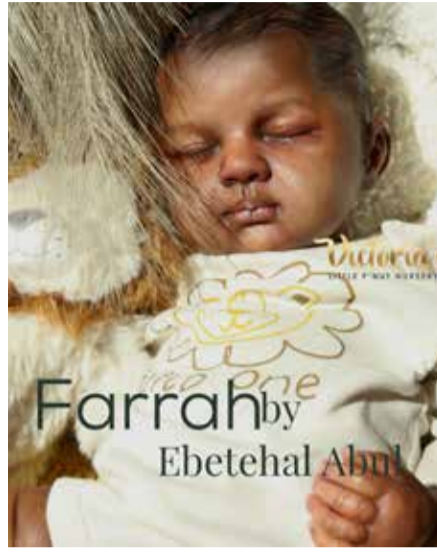
composed of more than two million components, including around 40,000 rivets that are installed one by one, a process that can sometimes involve more than one person. The MAX also includes some 36 miles (58 kilometers) of cable. And if one piece "falls on the floor, we don't use it anymore," said one instructor. "It goes in the FOD box," which stands for foreign object debris. — AFP

Weekender

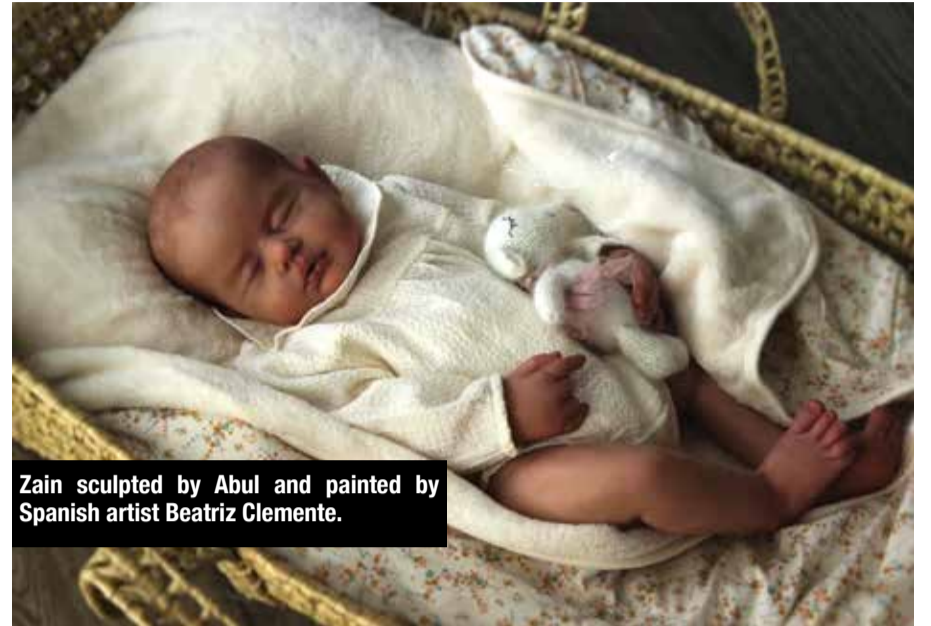
FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2024



Sara sculpted and painted by Ebtehal Abul (silicone version).



Farrah sculpted by Abul and painted by American artist Victoria Johnson (vinyl version).



Zain sculpted by Abul and painted by Spanish artist Beatriz Clemente.



Realism redefined

Sculptor Ebtehal Abul names reborn dolls after martyred Gazan children to raise awareness and preserve their memories



Sahar Moussa

Ebtehal Abul is a wife, mother and the first reborn (hyper-realistic) doll sculptor from Kuwait and the Middle East. She began as a collector in 2013 while working as a designer of newborn clothes, using reborn dolls as models. Her passion shifted from collecting to sculpting in 2017 when she discovered her talent after an experimental attempt. Since then, sculpting has become her new passion. In an interview with Kuwait Times, Abul shared insights about her unique art.

Kuwait Times: What sparked your interest in becoming a reborn artist?
Ebtehal Abul: Curiosity led me to discover a talent I didn't know I had. I always try, and if I fail, I learn. If I fail again, I admit I cannot do it. Initially, I sculpted out of curiosity and was surprised by the result. I realized I could sculpt with clay by hand, which was a gift from God.

the unavailability of raw materials in Kuwait, making it difficult to produce a single silicone doll.

KT: Tell us about the special doll you named after a martyred girl in Gaza.

Abul: My art is more popular in Western countries. However, as an Arab,

dolls after them to immortalize their names.

KT: What is your favorite work or doll and why?

Abul: Sara, inspired by a real child, my friend's daughter, is my favorite. It was the first doll I produced and distributed worldwide. It has become particularly popular in Latin America.

reborn doll? What are the processes?

Abul: Sculpting takes about a month. Making a silicone doll from the sculpture takes longer. It involves making a clay sculpture, creating a mold, pouring silicone, coloring and transplanting hair, taking about two months in total. Mass production in vinyl, a plastic derivative, takes about a month to a month and a half.

some fear that spirits will inhabit the dolls. I assure them that I have had dolls since 2013 and have never seen any move!



Ebtehal Abul holds Sila, named after a Palestinian martyr, in clay form.



KT: What was the most special moment you have experienced?

Abul: I receive letters from women worldwide saying my dolls resemble them when they were young. Watching videos of collectors on YouTube with my children and hearing people from different countries mention my name brings us great joy.

KT: Have you tried to create any other art not related to reborn dolls?

Abul: Yes, I made a sculpture of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It was the first sculpture I made of an adult, presenting a significant challenge. I was determined to complete it despite the difficulties. The sculpture achieved popular success at an exhibition I participated in, drawing audiences specifically to see it. Shortly afterward, I created a life-size sculpture of the artiste Abdulhussain Abdulredha at the request of his son, Dr Bashar. This project was also challenging but received a warm reception from the audience and, in particular, from Abdulhussain's family, especially his wife.



A sculpture of Kuwaiti artiste Abdulhussain Abdulredha

KT: What is the strangest request you have received?

Abul: An American woman contacted me about a doll that resembled her daughter, who had psychological disorders. She believed the doll might alleviate her daughter's suffering. I learned that reborn dolls are used to treat psychological trauma, with psychiatrists recommending them to patients.

KT: What is the biggest challenge you have encountered in creating reborn dolls?

Abul: I have two production lines. The first is the manual production of silicone dolls, which I make from scratch. The second involves sending clay sculptures to a factory for mass production. The most challenging part is producing the dolls manually due to

I care about Arab issues, especially the Palestinian cause. I named my dolls after the children of Gaza to raise awareness and preserve their names, expressing my solidarity with the Palestinian people. I share many videos in English on my Instagram to highlight the injustice faced by Palestinians. I cried for the children of Gaza and decided to name my

KT: How did the Kuwaiti community react to your work?

Abul: Reborn dolls are not popular in Kuwait, likely due to their high prices and the perception that dolls are for children. In reality, reborn dolls are intended for adults who appreciate art. Most of my followers are from Western countries.

KT: How long does it take to create a



Sara sculpted by Abul and painted by Belarusian artist Irina Kvetkovskaya (vinyl version).



Sara sculpted by Ebtehal Abul and painted by Russian artist Angela Plica (vinyl version).



Aziz sculpted and painted by Ebtehal



Nightly corniche escapades

People flock to Kuwait's revamped beaches late in the evenings to beat the heat



Chidi Emmanuel

As the summer heat intensifies, Kuwait's residents flock to the corniche late in the day to enjoy one of the country's greatest and most beautiful natural attractions. Whether it is swimming, fishing or enjoying a picnic, Kuwaitis and expatriates can't resist the charm and allure of Kuwait's thrilling beaches. "At night, especially during weekends, this is a wonderful place to be. It is a place where worries are left behind and memories are made. The coastline is a paradise that everyone should experience," said Samuel Andrea, a Cameroonian expat.



Whether for a leisurely day of relaxation or fun in the sun, Kuwait's beaches are a popular destination for locals and tourists alike. The transformed beaches and sea drive booming local coastal tourism. Meanwhile, the government is carrying out massive constructions along the coastline, offering various programs to promote healthy and clean beaches. Signs encouraging beachgoers to preserve the environment and keep it clean are visible throughout the area. "The coastline is neater, better, and more beautiful with improved amenities," Egyptian expat Ashraf Ahmed told the Kuwait Times.

Some beach resorts and clubs offer water sports and other activities like jet skiing, biking and boat riding for those seeking a more adventurous day or night at the beach. The revamped beaches in Kuwait are well-maintained and offer amenities such as showers, changing rooms and restrooms for visitors' convenience. There are cafes and restaurants too where beachgoers can grab a bite to eat or enjoy a refreshing drink while taking in the beautiful ocean views.

Amid the heat, residents often flock to the beaches to relax and enjoy the weather at night. Kuwaitis and



expats can be seen lounging on beach chairs, playing beach sports like volleyball and football and swimming in the calm waters. Families and friends often gather for picnics, making it a popular spot for socializing amid a sense of peace and tranquility.

"We like spending time at the beaches. Because of the heat, we normally

come at night. The new structures create a perfect setting for a relaxing night by the sea. The atmosphere is lively and vibrant, with families and friends gathering to enjoy the natural beauty," Noor Azmi, a Kuwaiti mother of three, told Kuwait Times.



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



What's cooking in our kitchens

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Starting your mornings with delicious and balanced food is the best way to stay productive and energized. While there's nothing wrong with falling back on toast and eggs or pancakes to kick off your day, we at Kuwait Times like to spice things up! This week, we've rounded up recipes from around the world to elevate your first meal of the day. Take a trip to India with buttery layered parathas, the Philippines with the aromatic sinangag and the Levant with the crunchy creamy fatteh. Now all you need is a cup of steaming coffee and you're ready to face the day!

SINANGAG



By Rachelle De Leon

Sinangag, or Filipino garlic fried rice, is a staple breakfast dish in the Philippines. This simple yet flavorful rice dish is made by stir-frying day-old rice with plenty of garlic until it's aromatic and slightly crispy. Often seasoned with just salt, Sinangag serves as a perfect base for various breakfast proteins like fried eggs, longganisa (Filipino sausage) or tapa (cured beef). It's a versatile and beloved dish that transforms leftover rice into a delicious, satisfying meal.

- Ingredients**
- 4 cups cooked rice (preferably day-old)
 - 6-8 cloves garlic, minced
 - 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 - Salt, to taste
 - Optional: chopped green onions for garnish

Instructions

- 1. Prepare the Rice**
 - Use day-old rice if possible, as it's less sticky and works better for fried rice. Break up any clumps to ensure the rice is loose and separated.
- 2. Cook the Garlic**
 - Heat the vegetable oil in a large pan or wok over medium heat.
 - Add the minced garlic and cook until golden brown and fragrant. Be careful not to burn the garlic as it can turn bitter.

- 3. Fry the Rice**
 - Add the cooked rice to the pan, breaking up any remaining clumps with a spatula or wooden spoon.
 - Stir-fry the rice with the garlic, ensuring the garlic is evenly distributed throughout the rice.
 - Season with salt to taste. Continue to stir-fry for about 5-7 minutes, or until the rice is heated through and slightly toasted.

- 4. Serve**
 - Transfer the garlic fried rice to a serving plate.
 - Garnish with chopped green onions if desired.
 - Serve hot, ideally with fried eggs, longganisa, tapa or other breakfast favorites.

- Tips**
- Day-old Rice: Using rice that's been refrigerated overnight gives the best texture for fried rice.
 - Adjust Seasoning: Feel free to add a bit of soy sauce or fish sauce if you want a different flavor profile, though traditional Sinangag is usu-



ally just seasoned with salt.

- Additional Ingredients: You can also add other ingredients like diced onions, bell peppers, or leftover meat/vegetables to make it more hearty.

Enjoy your delicious Filipino garlic fried rice for breakfast!

FATTET HUMMUS

By Nebal Snan



One of my favorite memories as a child was chatting with my family over a late breakfast meal on Friday afternoon. As the tradition is for many Palestinian families, the breakfast often involved hummus, fowl, falafel and fatteh — all delicious and nutritious legume-based dishes. Once a month, my father would pick up a variety, depending on our cravings that week, from one of many restaurants in Kuwait that specialize in making these dishes.

After moving to Canada in my 20s, the tradition was one of the things I missed the most. Soon, I sadly realized that there were no restaurants that had fatteh, my favorite of the bunch, on their menu in my part of the country. Fattet hummus, as we call it in Arabic, is a beloved Middle Eastern breakfast dish made of crispy pita chips and chickpeas drowned in a tangy, garlicky yogurt sauce. The name fatteh comes from the Arabic verb "fat", which means break into small pieces. The following recipe was my attempt to replicate the crunchy and creamy layers of this glorious dish when I was away from home. And it satisfied my cravings every time.

Ingredients

- Pita Chips**
- 3 loaves thin Lebanese bread, cut into squares.
 - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Chickpea Layer**
- one can of chickpeas
 - ¼ cup chickpea broth
 - 1 garlic clove, crushed
 - ½ teaspoon ground cumin
 - ½ teaspoon salt
- Yogurt Layer**
- 1 ½ cups plain yogurt
 - 2 tablespoons tahini
 - 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 - 2 garlic clove, crushed
 - 1 teaspoon salt
- Topping**
- 2 tablespoons butter
 - 3 tablespoons pine nuts, raw (can sub with slivered almonds)
- Garnish**
- Fresh chopped parsley
 - A dusting of paprika or Aleppo peppers
 - A dusting of cinnamon



- 3. Make the yogurt sauce**

In a medium bowl, whisk the yogurt on its own until it is smooth and free of lumps. Add the tahini, lemon juice, garlic, and salt, and whisk again until fully combined. You can add more salt or lemon juice to taste. Depending on the type of yogurt used, you might need to add some water if the consistency is not sauce-like.

- 4. Assemble the fatteh**

Place the cooked chickpeas in a bowl with the broth, garlic, cumin, and salt and mix until combined. Add the bread and mix again then pour the yogurt sauce on top.

- 5. Make the topping**

Place a fry pan over medium heat with the butter and pine nuts. Stir frequently and keep an eye on them. Once the pine nuts are a deep golden brown, immediately take the pan off the heat and pour the pine nuts with the hot melted butter all over the fatteh. It will sizzle, so be careful not to burn yourself.

Garnish with fresh parsley, paprika and cinnamon if desired and serve immediately while the pita chips are still a little crunchy and the fatteh is warm.

ALOO PARATHA

By Shakir Reshamwala



Aloo paratha is a popular South Asian flatbread stuffed with a spicy potato filling. Originating from the Punjab region, this delicious dish is made by rolling out dough, filling it with a seasoned mixture of mashed potatoes and then cooking it on a hot griddle with ghee or butter. Aloo paratha is typically enjoyed with yogurt, pickles or chutney and is a beloved breakfast staple. While potatoes are an all-time favorite, the parathas can also be stuffed with radish, cabbage, egg or minced meat.

Ingredients

- For the dough:
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - Water (as needed)
- For the filling:
- 3-4 medium-sized potatoes, boiled and mashed
 - 1 small onion, finely chopped
 - 2 green chilies, finely chopped
 - 1 teaspoon grated ginger
 - ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
 - ½ teaspoon garam masala
 - ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
 - 1 teaspoon coriander powder
 - ½ teaspoon red chili powder
 - 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves
 - Salt to taste
 - Ghee or oil (for cooking)

Instructions

- 1. Prepare the dough**

In a large bowl, combine the whole wheat flour and salt. Gradually add water and knead until you get a smooth, soft dough. Cover and set aside for 20-30 minutes.

- 2. Prepare the filling**

In a mixing bowl, combine the mashed potatoes, chopped onion, green chilies, grated ginger, cumin seeds, garam masala, turmeric powder, coriander powder, red chili powder, chopped co-

riander leaves and salt. Mix well to ensure all the spices are evenly distributed.

- 3. Assemble the parathas**
 - Divide the dough into equal-sized balls (about the size of a golf ball). Do the same with the potato filling.
 - Roll out a dough ball into a small circle (about 4 inches in diameter) using a rolling pin. Place a ball of the potato filling in the center of the circle.
 - Bring the edges of the dough together to enclose the filling completely. Pinch to seal and remove any excess dough.
 - Gently flatten the filled dough ball and roll it out into a larger circle (about 6-7 inches in diameter). Be careful not to let the filling spill out.
- 4. Cook the parathas**
 - Heat a tawa or griddle over medium heat. Place the rolled-out paratha on the hot griddle.
 - Cook for about 1-2 minutes until bubbles start to form on the surface. Flip the paratha and apply ghee or oil on the cooked side.
 - Flip again and apply ghee or oil on the other side. Cook until both sides are golden brown and the paratha is cooked through.

- 5. Serve**

Serve the hot aloo parathas with yogurt, pickles or chutney. Enjoy this delicious and comforting dish!



Event: Eco Talks
Location: Scientific Center
Date: June 29, 2024
Time: 10 am to 4 pm

Event: Kuwait Planetarium Shows
Location: Al-Qiblah Seaside

Date: from Monday to Thursday
Time: 10 am to 6:30 pm

Event: Bugsha Market
Location: Arraya Center
Date: June 28, 2024

Event: DIY Terrarium Workshop
Location: Scientific Center
Date: June 29, 2024

Event: Glass Painting Workshop
Location: State of Art Studio
Date: June 29, 2024

Event: Davinci Resolve Workshop
Location: AAB World Academy
Date: June 29, 2024

Event: Autumn Sonata
Location: CAP Theater
Date: June 29, 2024

Sports

South Africa thrash Afghanistan to reach T20 World Cup final

Team would look back on their campaign pride and belief for the future: Rashid

TAROUBA: South Africa demolished Afghanistan's T20 World Cup dream in ruthless fashion on Wednesday, thrashing the minnows by nine wickets with more than 11 overs to spare to reach the final of the cricket showpiece for the first time.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi (3 for 6) and gangling pacer Marco Jansen (3-16) spearheaded the rout of Afghanistan's brittle batting line-up for just 56 off 11.5 overs after they chose to bat. Fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje maintained the relentless pressure with two wickets apiece at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad.

On a surface which encouraged all bowlers but left Afghanistan with too little to defend, South Africa lost Quinton de Kock early in reply for Fazalhaq Farooqi's tournament-leading 17th wicket. But Reeza Hendricks (29 not out) and captain Aiden Markram (23 not out) saw them to victory at 60 for one off 8.5 overs to advance the Proteas to Saturday's final in Barbados where they will face the winners of Thursday's second semi-final between title-holders England and unbeaten India in Guyana.

"We assessed pretty early that the wicket was giving us something to work with so it was just about sticking to our plans, keeping it simple and getting the results," Man of the Match Jansen said of South Africa's bowling display, which effectively ended the match as a contest.

Only Azmatullah Omarzai (10) got into double-figures for the Afghans while their highest contribution to the paltry total was 13 extras in a thoroughly deflating effort following Monday's pulsating drama when they pipped Bangladesh in St. Vincent to reach the final four.

Throughout this dream run to their first semi-final

of a senior men's world tournament Afghanistan have been reliant on openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran to give them a solid platform and at the same time mask the frailties of the rest of the batting line-up.

'A tough night for us'

But when Jansen had Gurbaz taken at slip by Hendricks without scoring in the first over of the match, the worst fears of the Afghans and a growing mass of supporters in the Caribbean were realized as the Proteas mercilessly exploited their opponents' technical deficiencies.

"It was a tough night for us as a team, but that's how it goes in T20s," said Afghan captain Rashid Khan. "You need to be mentally ready for any kind of situation. They bowled exceptionally and we just couldn't bat well."

For Markram, who led South Africa to the Under-19 men's title in 2014 in Dubai, it was all about making the most of good luck. "I was fortunate to have lost the toss, I guess, because we also would have batted. But still the bowlers had to get it in the right areas and they did that," he explained.

"It's not really the captain who gets you to this stage of a competition. It's a massive squad effort involving those behind the scenes and off the field." This will be South Africa's first senior men's final since the inaugural Champions Trophy in Bangladesh in 1998 when the side led by Hansie Cronje defeated Brian Lara's West Indies team in the title match. Afghan skipper Rashid meanwhile said his team would look back on their campaign pride and belief for the future. "We came here before the tournament and if you told us we would be playing the semi-final



TAROUBA: South Africa's Tabraiz Shamsi (L) celebrates after the dismissal of Afghanistan's Karim Janat (out of frame) during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 semi-final cricket match between South Africa and Afghanistan at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, on June 26, 2024. -- AFP

against South Africa, we would accept that," Rashid said. "We are capable of beating any side. "Next time when we participate in a tournament like this, we will have the belief. It's about how you manage yourself in those pressure situations against tough teams.

"There is a lot of hard work to be done, especially in the middle order...We have achieved some good results but when we come back in the tournament, we need to do better, especially in the batting department." -- AFP



SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD: McLaren's British driver Lando Norris arrives on the Red Bull Ring race track in Spielberg, Austria, on June 27, 2024, ahead of the Formula One Austrian Grand Prix. -- AFP

Norris targets Verstappen at Austrian GP

SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD: Lando Norris seeks to be a party-wrecker this weekend when he takes on series leader and three-time Formula One world champion Max Verstappen at his Red Bull team's home Austrian Grand Prix.

After a series of impressive results including two consecutive second place finishes behind the Dutchman, the McLaren driver wants to trim his 69-point deficit in the title race. The 24-year-old Englishman believes he has the car and the confidence to put together a winning sequence himself. "We're on a roll and we're doing well," said Norris, adding he was frustrated by his own errors. "I need to tidy up a few little bits and pieces and we'll be on top. I am confident. "Every weekend we go into now, the car is performing extremely well and we're always there, or thereabouts, within a couple of tenths." He blamed himself for not winning from pole in last Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix after beating Verstappen in qualifying. Since winning the Miami Grand Prix in May, Norris has moved up a gear to become his friend's main rival for the title.

He has finished within four seconds or less of Verstappen at Imola, Montreal and Barcelona as he extended his run to 10 seconds in the last 23 races.

However, he and McLaren know Verstappen will be strong and motivated by massed ranks of his 'orange army' on a track where he dominated last year as he stamped his supremacy on the season.

'Big strides'

This year has been different, however, and a close scrap is in prospect in the 11th round of the championship where a third sprint race this year may also spring a surprise. Red Bull's team boss Christian Horner warned his team are no longer having it their own way and said he expects a difficult weekend.

"On such a short lap, it's going to be tight and we expect McLaren, and Lando, to be fast again along with Ferrari and Mercedes.

'Who knows?'

"The one who's really stepped up is Lando and we're having to fight really hard for wins at the moment and be on top of our game as a team. But, you know, that's F1 as it should be!"

After their recent resurgence, Mercedes will hope to stay in contention with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton buoyed by his first podium this year and team-mate George Russell feeling the Silver Arrows have rediscovered their form and mojo.

"We're all feeling excited for the remainder of the season," said Russell. "We've got more wind tunnel time than all of our rivals and we know what we need to do to make these big strides now. "We don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but I'm 100 per cent confident we'll win races this year now." Whatever the outcome this weekend, as he seeks a fifth win, Verstappen will extend his record for leading the championship to 50 races. It is a welcome certainty in the light of last year's chaos when the result was revised five hours after the event following a spate of penalties for drivers' exceeding track limits.—AFP

Thompson-Herah out of Olympics

KINGSTON: Jamaica's two-time Olympic women's 100m and 200m champion Elaine Thompson-Herah will not defend her titles at next month's Paris Games after failing to recover from an Achilles injury, the sprint star said on Wednesday.

Thompson-Herah, who completed the 100m-200m gold medal double at both the 2016 and pandemic-delayed 2020 Olympics, confirmed her decision after pulling out of this week's Jamaican trials. "I am hurt and devastated to be missing the Olympics this year but at the end of the day it's sports and my health comes first," Thompson-Herah, 31, wrote in a statement shared on social media.

Thompson-Herah had already abandoned her bid to defend her 200m crown in Paris after opting not to take part in the 200m at this week's Jamaica trials in Kingston. However, she had entered the 100m at



Elaine Thompson-Herah

the trials and retained hope of being able to compete in Paris over the shorter distance.

Thompson-Herah's fitness had been in doubt ever since she competed at a race in New York earlier this month, where she needed to be carried from the track after suffering a torn Achilles. In her statement on Wednesday, Thompson-Herah said she realized

the injury was serious immediately.

"I sat on the ground because I couldn't apply any pressure to the leg whatsoever as I was carried off the track," Thompson-Herah wrote. A medical examination later revealed a "small tear" of the Achilles tendon, she said.

"Funny enough I got back home with a strong mindset to keep pushing and prepare for my national trials another shot of my third Olympics but the leg wouldn't allow me to," she said. Thompson-Herah insisted, however, that she plans to continue her sprinting career despite her Olympic heartbreak.

"It's a long road but I am willing to start over and keep working and to make full recovery and resume my track career," she said. Although Thompson-Herah has never won an individual sprint gold at a world championships, she has dazzled in the Olympic arena.

Her 100m personal best of 10.54sec—set in Eugene, Oregon in August 2021 -- is the second fastest time in history, second only to Florence Griffith-Joyner's 1988 world record of 10.49sec. -- AFP



Andy Murray

Murray not giving up on farewell after surgery

LONDON: Andy Murray remains hopeful he will play at Wimbledon but admits it is unlikely to be in the singles competition after undergoing surgery on a spinal cyst. The 37-year-old, who confirmed he is planning for the Olympics in Paris to be the final event of his career, had the procedure on Saturday after experiencing weakness in his right leg while playing at Queen's last week.

He was forced to pull out of his second-round match against Jordan Thompson at the London tournament after just five games. Murray, who has won two of his three Grand Slams at Wimbledon, said he had been told to seek immediate treatment by multiple surgeons.

"The last week's been pretty tough," said the British former world number one. "There's obviously a lot going on with me planning on finishing at the Olympics." He added: "Although the surgery is not a major surgery, the problem was a serious problem because, if the cyst continues to grow—obviously at Queen's I basically lost the strength, coordination and everything in my right

leg on my way to the court—you're likely to have other complications as well."

The Scot, who is also a two-time Olympic champion, said the operation had gone "really, really well" and he was hitting balls again but added that it was "impossible to say" when he would be able to compete.

The draw for the singles takes place on Friday, with first-round matches starting on Monday, and Murray, who is also entered in the doubles with his brother Jamie, said he would wait until the last moment to make a decision. "It's complicated, and it's made more complicated because I want to play at Wimbledon one more time," he said.

"I would say it's probably more likely that I'm not able to play singles right now." I spoke to my brother a couple of days ago in terms of the doubles to see if he wants to find someone else to play with, and I was obviously absolutely fine with that. But he also wants the opportunity to try to play. We'll see how the next few days go."

Olympic entries will be confirmed next week, with Murray hoping to play singles and doubles with Dan Evans. Should Murray not make the Olympics, he revealed he could yet play another event, such as the US Open, in order to bow out on his own terms.

"Because of what I put into the sport over the last however many years, I would at least like to go out playing a proper match where I'm at least competitive," he said. -- AFP

Cheika named Leicester boss

LONDON: Michael Cheika, who guided Australia to the 2015 Rugby World Cup final and Argentina to the 2023 semi-finals, has been appointed coach of English Premiership side Leicester, the club announced Thursday.

The charismatic straight-talking 57-year-old Australian replaces compatriot Dan McKellar at the helm of the two-time European champions. McKellar left after just one season in charge. Leicester finished a lowly eighth in the Premiership and were knocked out of the Champions Cup by Leinster in the round of the Last 16.

Cheika enjoyed success with Irish province Leinster, who won the 2009 European Cup beating Leicester in the final. He backed that up by winning the 2014 Super Rugby crown with New South Wales Waratahs.

"Honestly, I wasn't looking at the Premiership and didn't have the desire to coach in it until Leicester Tigers came to me," Cheika told the club website. "But, the opportunity to coach at Tigers and lead this group of players turned my head. "I want this to be my best coaching yet. If I can bring my best level, other people will bring their best level and good things will start to happen around us." Cheika said he would need time to get to know the players and channel their strengths into moulding a successful team.

"Everybody can see that it is a top-quality roster the club has," he said. "I am not going to lie and say I know every single one of them down to their bones but that's what I will do over the next few months, to learn how to get the best out of them. "But, the roster is only paper. "It's now about how the team gels, how to put these really good players and characters together and get them playing in a way that they love it." Andrea Pinchen, Leicester CEO, said 2015 World Coach of the Year Cheika possessed the qualities to revive the club.

"He has, over more than two decades, achieved great success in winning trophies but also developing players, developing coaches and galvanising groups to be the best they can be," said Pinchen. "We want that, we need that and believe Michael is the right person to take this team, this club back to where we know we should be.

"After lengthy, detailed and very honest conversations with Michael in recent days, we are on the same page about what is now necessary to see this club back on top."

Cheika, whose colourful career has also seen him take charge of Lebanon at the Rugby League World Cup in 2022, will hold his first pre-season training session with the squad on July 1. -- AFP

Sports

Venezuela into Copa quarters after Mexico defeat, Jamaica out

Venezuela's win confirmed Jamaica's exit from the tournament

LOS ANGELES: Venezuela booked their place in the quarter-finals of the Copa America on Wednesday with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Mexico that ensured Jamaica's elimination from the tournament.

Mexico-based veteran striker Salomon Rondon stroked in the only goal from the penalty spot to seal all three points for Venezuela, who are top of Group B with six points from two games. Mexico, meanwhile, can still qualify for the knockout rounds with a victory over Ecuador in their final group game on Sunday. But the Mexicans will be left kicking themselves at their failure to take at least a point from Wednesday's clash with Venezuela at a packed SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles.

Mexico's Orbelin Pineda missed an 87th-minute spot kick that would have made it 1-1, his effort parried away by Venezuela goalkeeper Rafael Romo.

Earlier, Rondon had fired Venezuela into the lead in the 57th minute from the penalty spot after Mexico's Julian Quinones brought down Venezuela's Jon Aramburu with a clumsy challenge in the area.

Venezuela's win confirmed Jamaica's exit from the tournament following their 3-1 loss to Ecuador in Las Vegas earlier on Wednesday.

Ecuador, beaten by Venezuela in their opening match on Saturday, held off a spirited second-half rally by the Reggae Boyz to claim a vital three points at the Allegiant Stadium. The South Americans looked to be cruising to victory after taking a 2-0 lead following a Kasey Palmer own goal and a penalty from Chelsea-bound teenager Kendry Paez.

However, Jamaica pulled a goal back from veteran striker Michail Antonio early in the second half, and then had strong claims for a penalty rejected 15 minutes before full-time.

Ecuador, however, made the game safe in stoppage time with a breakaway goal from Alan Minda as Jamaica pressed forward for an equalizer.

Ecuador opened the scoring with a freakish own goal in the 13th minute, Pierre Hincapié's cross from the left taking a wicked deflection off Palmer and looping into the Jamaica net.

Ecuador doubled their lead from the penalty spot on the stroke of half-time. Defender Greg Leigh instinctively blocked a header with his upper arm and after a lengthy VAR review, Chilean referee Cristian Garay pointed to the spot.

The 17-year-old Paez - who will join Premier League giants Chelsea in July 2025 when he turns 18 - stepped up to calmly stroke the spot-kick into the bottom corner. A rejuvenated Jamaica pulled one back early in the second half with Antonio jabbing home a low shot on 54 minutes after Ecuador failed to clear a corner.

Jamaica thought they had been thrown a lifeline with 15 minutes to go after a VAR penalty check triggered when Ecuador's Alan Franco appeared to handle inside the area. But despite being called to the monitor to take a look at the incident, referee Garay decided there had been no handball and waved play on, before Minda's late goal sealed Ecuador's win. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Ecuador's defender #03 Piero Hincapié jumps as he celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament group B football match between Ecuador and Jamaica at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Spain the standouts as Euro 2024 heads into knockout stage

DUSSELDORF: Euro 2024 in Germany moves on to the knockout phase this weekend after a group stage which saw all of the continent's biggest names advance to the last 16 even if some of the favorites have failed to convince. France and England were widely tipped as the leading contenders before the tournament, but both stumbled unconvincingly through the first round, each scoring only two goals in three matches despite boasting some of the best forwards in the world.

The most impressive team has been Spain, probably followed by the hosts Germany, even if their group stage performance was not flawless in similar fashion to a strong Portugal team. Yet those three sides now all find themselves in the harder half of the draw alongside Belgium and France, after the stuttering 2022 World Cup runners-up proved incapable of winning their section. "We were in a very tough group. We beat Austria but they finished top," pointed out France coach Didier Deschamps, whose side were not helped by Kylian Mbappe breaking his nose and missing the goalless draw with the Netherlands. "We have achieved our first objective. A new competition starts now." A veteran of five previous major tournaments in 12 years as France boss, he also pointed out that the impressions left in the group stage "are not always the same later on". Had France finished first, they would have been on a collision course to play England in the semi-finals.

Lop-sided draw

Instead they meet Belgium in the last 16, with the winner of that possibly facing Portugal in the quarter-finals. Spain and Germany, meanwhile, are on course to meet in the last eight. "It doesn't cost anything to dream, but we need to keep our feet on the ground," was the reaction of Spain coach Luis de la Fuente despite his team winning all three group games without conceding a goal. That matched the performance of Italy at the last Euros, when they went on to win the trophy by beating England in the final. There is now the prospect of England and Italy clashing again here in the quarter-finals, should both win their last-16 ties.

England defeated Italy twice in qualifying but have disappointed at the tournament despite winning their group. Gareth Southgate's team were booed off after

Biles aims to lock up Paris berth at US Olympic trials

MINNEAPOLIS: Simone Biles looks all but unstoppable as she vies to punch her ticket to Paris at the US Olympic gymnastics trials this week, where competition to fill out the five-woman roster promises to be fierce.

Biles captured her ninth US all-around title earlier this month, winning on all four apparatus at the US championships in Fort Worth, Texas. Coach Cecile Landi said Biles' success in managing her mental health combined with sheer talent and a formidable work ethic mean the 27-year-old could be better than ever as a third trip to the Olympics beckons.

"I think we always knew she could be better," Landi said Wednesday as women began training at the Target Center in Minneapolis, where the trials start on Thursday with men's competition. "She's the most talented athlete I've ever worked with and so we just knew if she could get her mental game as well as her physical game, then she would be close to unstoppable."

Biles dazzled in winning four gold medals at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, but her expected star turn at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games was cut short when she withdrew with the "twisties" - a temporary mental block whereby gymnasts lose their sense of where they are in the air.

Since returning to competition in August she has gone from strength to strength, piling up more medals including all-around gold at the world championships last year. Landi said a better work-life balance had only

helped Biles in the gym. "All the work she's been doing outside the gym and just being 27, married, she has other stuff going on and I think it helps her keep a good balance," Landi said. "It's not only about gymnastics and I think that keeps her sane."

Nevertheless, the Olympic trials are a nerve-wracking affair: two days of competition each for women and men with the athletes emerging as the all-around winners securing their Olympic berths. A selection committee will then choose the remaining team members, taking into account performances at trials and other competitions including the national championships, as well as what combination of athletes might give the United States their best Olympic scoring chances. The 16 women in the field include Suni Lee, who won all-around gold and uneven bars bronze in Tokyo, who is in her best form since battling career-threatening kidney disease. — AFP



Slovakia's defender #14 Milan Skriniar (L) fights for the ball with Romania's forward #09 George Puscas (R) during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group E football match between Slovakia and Romania at the Frankfurt Arena in Frankfurt am Main on June 26, 2024. — AFP

their group "incredible", and they suddenly seem serious candidates to make the semi-finals.

Georgia defy odds

Georgia's story is remarkable, that of a small country in political turmoil appearing at their first major tournament and qualifying for the knockout stages by beating Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal. They now face Spain, who beat them 7-1 and 3-1 during qualifying.

Slovenia, a country of barely two million people, are also into the knockout phase for the first time at a major tournament, despite drawing all three group

games. Croatia and Ukraine, meanwhile, are the biggest names to go out, after almost two weeks of group-stage action which eliminated only eight teams from the awkward 24-nation format.

The group stage was less prolific than at the last Euros, with only 81 goals in the first round compared to 94 in 2021. Games became progressively more cagey after a lively start to the competition. Perhaps some misfiring stars will turn up when it really matters, starting with Mbappe. He got his first ever European

Championship goal via a penalty in France's 1-1 draw with Poland, but his Expected Goals (a commonly-used metric to measure attacking performance) is, at 2.12, the highest of any player in the competition. And he has only played two matches.

It is hard to pick a standout player from the group stage, but Toni Kroos and Jamal Musiala have excelled for Germany, and winger Nico Williams is just one player to star for Spain. Pepe has been outstanding at the age of 41 for Portugal, while Georgia could not have advanced without Georges Mikautadze, the tournament's top scorer on three goals. — AFP

Kapil Dev new India golf chief

NEW DELHI: India's World Cup-winning cricket captain Kapil Dev has been appointed president of the Professional Golf Tour of India. The switch in sports will enable Dev's "valuable experience as a professional sportsman" to drive "the further growth of Indian professional golf," said PGTI chief executive, Uttam Singh Mundy.

Dev, 65, was one of the world's greatest all-rounders who led India to their first World Cup triumph in 1983 and ended his glittering career in 1994 with 434 Test wickets and 5,248 runs. The World Cup final upset victory at Lord's against the West Indies triggered a cricket revolution in India.

He later focused on golf and welcomed the post as it would enable him to "spend more time with my golfing friends and play a little more". — AFP



Kapil Dev



ROME: (FILES) Team UAE's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader's pink jersey gestures a victory sign as he cycles during the 21st and last stage of the 107th Giro d'Italia cycling race. — AFP

Pogacar set for Tour de France duel with Jonas

PARIS: The Tour de France sets off from the Italian city of Florence on Saturday with Tadej Pogacar well prepped for a battle royale with defending champion Jonas Vingegaard on a route designed to take the world's greatest bike race down to the wire. Team UAE's rider Pogacar goes into the 21-day race in red-hot form after winning the Giro d'Italia in May. Visma's Vingegaard, the two-time defending champion from Denmark, hasn't raced since suffering multiple fractures in a fall in March.

Vingegaard's fall offers Slovenia's Pogacar a chance at revenge for the brutal manner in which the Dane crushed him on two Alpine stages late in the 2023 edition. "I've tested my legs a little and to be honest, I've never felt so good on a bike," said Pogacar, a back-to-back winner in 2020 and 2021. "Everyone thinks that I'm going to win the Tour every year, but I didn't win the last two times." While Pogacar dislikes heat and high altitude, Vingegaard is the man on the back foot this year due to the punctured lung and broken ribs he sustained in that March accident.

"Jonas was really badly injured, but I think he'll be okay. If he is feeling mentally strong and has made a good recovery he will be at his top level," Pogacar said. Behind these chalk-and-cheese rivals is a bevy of pretenders awaiting the slightest slip on a treacherous route in a year where bike accidents have hogged the headlines. Veteran Primoz Roglic has won the Vuelta a Espana and the Giro in his career and will be riding the Tour in the colors of new sponsor Red Bull, a new contract worth six million euros a year in his back pocket.

Also in the mix is the impossible-to-ignore talent of Belgian Remco Evenepoel (Quick Step), who will target the two time-trials and the gravel roads on what should be an enthralling Tour debut for the 24-year-old targeting the best young rider jersey.

"We saw that Remco and Primoz were in good shape in the Dauphine and I reckon they'll be at their best. But you never know. Last year I thought I was 100 percent," Pogacar said. The route crosses the Alps twice with seven mountain slogs, features a first-ever race on white gravel and ends with an eye-catching individual time trial from Monaco to Nice along the French Riviera. Broadcast live in more than 100 countries, the first four days are drenched with Italian colour, starting with the Renaissance beauty of Florence before the race crosses the Rubicon river, takes in the seaside sights at Rimini, passes along the Via Romagna road into Bologna and eventually moves out of Fiat capital Turin towards France for the remaining 17 stages.

Instead of the traditional parade round Paris on the final day for the 21st stage, a timetable clash with the 2024 Olympic Games in the French capital sent the organizers looking elsewhere. And what a solution they found. In place of the sprint up and down the Champs-Elysees, the stage is now an individual 34.5km time-trial along the coastline corniches between Monaco and Nice. The last stage could well provide a last twist in fate for the riders, evoking memories of the 1989 Tour, when American Greg LeMond started a rare final-day time trial 50 seconds behind French leader Laurent Fignon and ended up winning the race by eight seconds. — AFP

Japan, Australia to face off in tough World Cup qualifying group

South Korea drawn to face Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Palestine and Kuwait in Group B



Australia swim queen Campbell retires after missing out on Paris



BRISBANE: (FILES) Australia's Cate Campbell sheds a tear as she is embraced by her fellow competitor following the women's 50m freestyle final during the Australian Swimming Trials at Brisbane Aquatic Centre on June 15, 2024. — AFP

SYDNEY: Australian swimmer Cate Campbell has announced her retirement after failing to qualify for a fifth Olympics, ending a career in which she set seven world records and won a slew of medals. The 32-year-old, regarded as one of the best relay swimmers the sport has known, missed out on a Paris berth in the 50m and 100m freestyle at the Australian trials this month.

"I gave the pursuit of a fifth Olympics everything I had, and therefore, even in failure, there is a small, indelible kernel of pride," she said in a statement late Wednesday. "It's been a long and wild ride and I wouldn't change it for the world."

"I can't wait to cheer on the Australian Dolphins and the rest of the Australian Olympic Team in Paris." Campbell made her first Olympic team aged 15 in 2008, winning two bronze medals in Beijing. She went on to claim six more Olympic medals, four of them gold in relays. Campbell had a similarly impressive record at the world championships, winning 12 medals including four golds.

Her world records mostly came in the 4x100m freestyle relay, an event in which she won at the last three Olympics in London, Rio and Tokyo. She also held the 100m world record in 2016 after smashing the previous best set by Germany's Britta Steffen during the supersuit era.

"Her service and contribution to swimming is just incredible - not just for what she achieved in the pool but also outside of it," said Australian head coach Rohan Taylor. "She is a genuine leader, part of the Dolphins' leadership group, was always team first, and swam with heart." — AFP

KUALA LUMPUR: Japan, Australia and Saudi Arabia were all drawn together on Thursday in the third stage of Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup in a "group of death" that also includes China.

The 18 remaining Asian teams battling it out for eight direct qualification places were drawn into three groups of six at a ceremony in Kuala Lumpur.

Son Heung-min's South Korea were given a more straightforward-looking assignment when they were drawn to face Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Palestine and Kuwait in Group B. Iran and Asian Cup champions Qatar head Group A and will play Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates, Kyrgyzstan and North Korea.

Matches will be played on a home-and-away basis from this September to June 2025, with the top two in each group qualifying directly for the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Teams finishing third and fourth in their groups will advance to the fourth round of Asian qualifying.

China, Kazakhstan win gold at Asian Fencing tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Asian Fencing Championships being held in Kuwait came to conclusion on Thursday with the Chinese women's Saber team winning first place with fencers Xuwei Rao, Jiayi, Hengyu Yang and Xinyi, as Kazakhstan took second place through Karina Dospay, Anastassiya Gulik, Zhasmin Kapydzhy and Aigerim Sarybay. Third place went to Korea with fencers Sebin Choi, Hayoung Jeon, Eunhye Jeon and Jisu Yoon.

In the senior team men's foil China ended in first place as fencers Haiwei Chen, Ziwei Mo, Bin We and Jie Xu defeated Korea's Taegyul Ha, Cheolwoo Lm, Kwanghyun and Jeonghyun Yoon.

Japan took third place through Kazuki Limura, Kyo-suke Matsuyama, Yudai Nagono and Takahiro Shikine.

Meanwhile, in the men's Epee Kazakhstan proved dominant and won the gold medal by fencers Elmur Alimzhanov, Ruslan Kurbanov, Yerlik Sertay and Vadim Sharlaimov. Second place went to Japan through fencers Koki Kano, Akira Komata, Kazuyasu Miobe, Masaru Yamada. China ended in third place with fencers Minghao Lan, Yuhao Xiu, Zijie Wang and Fengming Yang.

In the team women's foil event, Japan came on top with Sera Azuma, Komaki Kikuchi, Karin Miyawaki and Yuka Ueno. China was second with Qingyuen Chen, Qianqian Huang, Enqi Jiao and Yuting Wang.

Third place went to Hong Kong, China with Daphne Sze Nok Chan, Valeri Wai Hiu Chengo, Ching Yu Kuan and Sophia Wu.

Hajime Moriyasu, whose Japan side beat Spain and Germany to reach the knockout rounds of the Qatar 2022 World Cup, called Group C "a tough group". Indonesia - in the third qualifying phase for the first time - and Bahrain are the other teams in that group.

"We had to do it the hard way in the qualifiers for the last World Cup and we're going to have to dig even deeper this time." Japan coach Moriyasu told reporters after the draw in the Malaysian capital.

"But I want us to be ready for it, be brave and go for it. I ask that the fans fight along with us."

Graham Arnold took Australia to the last 16 in Qatar, where they went out 2-1 to eventual champions Argentina. Like Japan, Australia had a 100 percent record in the second qualifying round for 2026 and did not concede a goal.

"We knew this round of qualifying would present challenges however the draw panned out," Arnold

said. "I feel it's important we embrace those challenges, with our mindset, belief and camaraderie integral to achieve our goal of qualification."

China have only reached the World Cup once, in 2002, and coach Branko Ivankovic knows his side are up against it in the same group.

"Ours is the hardest group in this round," he said. "But we want to be a serious opponent for any team. Of course we have three strong teams - Saudi, Japan and Australia - that participated in the last World Cup."

Third round AFC qualification draw for the 2026 FIFA World Cup:

Group A: Iran, Qatar, Uzbekistan, United Arab Emirates, Kyrgyzstan, North Korea

Group B: South Korea, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Kuwait

Group C: Japan, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, China, Indonesia. — AFP



Group picture of the winners.



Fencers in action during the championship.