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NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince to receive citizens

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan on Saturday conveyed to citizens greetings from HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The Amiri Diwan also announced that HH the Crown Prince would receive citizens on Monday from 7:30 pm until 9:30 pm at Al-Sabah Family Diwan in Bayan Palace. — KUNA

Limited fire at Zour Refinery

KUWAIT: A limited fire that broke out at noon on Saturday at a storage facility in Al-Zour Refinery has been doused. In a statement to KUNA, official spokesperson of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Ali Al-Ajmi, expressed gratitude to Kuwait Fire Force squads for their speedy and effective response in backing KIPIC personnel to rapidly contain the blaze. He confirmed that the fire caused no damage or injuries and did not affect production and export operations at the refinery. — KUNA

KFA denies making coaching offer

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association denied reports claiming it negotiated with Iraqi manager Adnan Hamad to become the next coach of Kuwait's national team. KFA has made no offer to the former Iraqi international, it said in a statement Saturday, urging the media to report news released only through official channels.

UAE shortens Friday sermons

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has shortened Friday sermons at mosques to protect worshippers from severe heat, amid rising summer temperatures linked to climate change. The General Authority of Islamic Affairs ordered preachers to limit Friday sermons to 10 minutes from June to October, when temperatures cool. The decision was aimed at ensuring "the safety of worshippers... especially during the summer months", a statement said. — AFP

US strikes Houthi weaponry

WASHINGTON: American forces destroyed seven drones and a control station vehicle in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over the past 24 hours, the US military said Friday, after Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for attacks on four vessels, including a "direct hit" on the Delonix tanker in the Red Sea after an operation involving a number of ballistic missiles. The Houthis also claimed attacks on the Waler oil tanker and Johannes Maersk container ship in the Mediterranean Sea and the Ioannis bulk carrier in the Red Sea. — AFP



GAZA: A Zionist tank takes position in the background as displaced Palestinians evacuate the Shakush area in the northwestern outskirts of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on June 28, 2024. — AFP

WASHINGTON/GAZA: The Biden administration has sent to the Zionist entity large numbers of munitions, including more than 10,000 highly destructive 2,000-pound bombs and thousands of Hellfire missiles, since the start of the war in Gaza, said two US officials briefed on an updated list of weapons shipments.

Between the war's start last October and recent days, the United States has transferred at least 14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs, and other munitions, according to the officials.

While the officials didn't give a timeline for the shipments, the totals suggest there has been no significant drop-off in US military support for its ally, despite international calls to limit weapons supplies and a recent administration decision to pause a shipment of powerful bombs. Experts said the contents of the shipments appear consistent with what the Zionist entity would need to replenish supplies used in this eight-month intense military campaign in Gaza.

The shipments are part of a bigger list of weapons sent to the Zionist entity since the Gaza conflict began, one of the US officials said. A senior Biden administration official on Wednesday told reporters

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Kuwait, Russia ink accords for legal cooperation

MOSCOW: Kuwait, represented by the Ministry of Justice, signed with Russia on Friday two agreements for judicial and legal cooperation. The accords were signed by the Kuwaiti Minister of Justice, Al-Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi and his Russian counterpart Konstantin Chuychenko during the 12th International Legal Forum, hosted by

the Russian city of Saint Petersburg.

The Kuwaiti ministry of justice said in a statement that signing the accords underlined the good relations tying the two friendly countries, indicating that they aim at establishing effective cooperation in combating crime.

One of the two accords includes procedural terms for criminals' extradition and prosecution regulations according to international norms. The ministry statement added that the other agreement stipulates that convicts are given the right to spend their time behind bars in their home country. Saint Petersburg Forum, founded in 2011, is one of the major platforms for global cultural, legal and political dialogue. — KUNA



MOSCOW: Kuwaiti Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi and his Russian counterpart Konstantin Chuychenko sign accords for legal cooperation. — KUNA

Reformist to face ultraconservative in Iran runoff vote

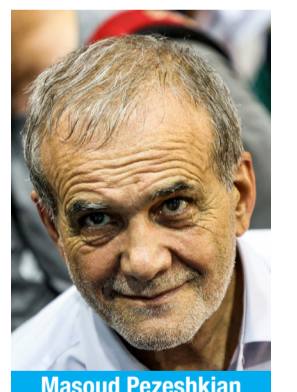
TEHRAN: The sole reformist in Iran's presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian, will face the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili in a runoff, authorities said on Saturday, following a vote marred by historically low turnout. Pezeshkian secured 42.4 percent of the vote, while Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator, came second

with 38.6 percent, according to figures from Iran's elections authority.

Conservative parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was next with 13.8 percent, while the only other candidate, conservative cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi, got less than one percent. "None of the candidates could garner the absolute majority of the votes," electoral authority spokesman Mohsen Eslami said.

In his first post-election remarks, Pezeshkian thanked his supporters and urged them to vote again next Friday "to save the country from poverty, lies, discrimination and injustice". "I hope your presence will be the basis of a new voice for change

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Defiant Biden seeks to repair debate damage

RALEIGH, North Carolina: A fired-up Joe Biden came out swinging Friday as he tried to make up for a disastrous debate performance against Donald Trump, insisting he was the right man to win November's US presidential election. Biden's appearance at a campaign rally in the battleground state of North Carolina came amid rumblings in his alarmed Democratic

Party about replacing the 81-year-old as their nominee — and shortly before the nation's most influential newspaper urged him to step aside.

"I don't walk as easily as I used to. I don't speak as smoothly as I used to. I don't debate as well as I used to," Biden admitted to supporters in unusually confessional remarks. "But I know how to tell the truth. I know how to do this job," he said to huge cheers, vowing "when you get knocked down, you get back up."

Biden's team was in damage-control mode after Thursday's debate when he often hesitated, tripped over words and lost his train of

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ATLANTA: US President Joe Biden and former US President Donald Trump participate in the first presidential debate of the 2024 elections at CNN's studios on June 27, 2024. — AFP



Local

PACI, Zain ink collaboration deal

To enable Geographic Information Systems portal and 'Kuwait Finder' services



Mansour Al Mithin and Nawaf Algharabally after signing the agreement.



Al Mithin and Algharabally with Zain and PACI officials.

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) and Mobile Telecommunications Company - Zain announced the signing of a collaboration agreement. This partnership will integrate PACI's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) portal and 'Kuwait Finder' services with Zain's systems, allowing the company to significantly improve its customer service efficiency across multiple levels.

The announcement was made at a signing ceremony held at PACI headquarters, attended by PACI Acting General Manager Mansour Al Mithin, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, Zain Kuwait Chief Government Affairs and

Business Development Officer Malek Jaber Al Sabah, along with other PACI officials and Zain executives. PACI Acting General Manager Mansour Al Mithin welcomed Zain to the list of organizations benefiting from PACI's GIS services, which are provided to over 300 government and private organizations in Kuwait. The GIS portal offers capabilities and data that can be integrated with each organization's systems, enhancing the services they provide to their customers and users.

Al Mithin explained that PACI makes processed data available through the GIS portal, which is compiled and up-

dated via various projects such as spatial photography/videography, drone scanning, and other initiatives aimed at creating an advanced, highly accurate foundational map to serve Kuwait's developmental projects and empower the nation's business sector. He emphasized the importance of these projects in supporting PACI's digital transformation efforts, particularly those related to logging building addresses. This has positively impacted the 'Kuwait Finder' app's data, strengthening the trust of its 2.5 million users and over 50 organizations that have integrated the app's interface into their own platforms.

Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally expressed his excitement about the collaboration with PACI, calling it a successful example of a strategic partnership between the public and private sectors. He noted that PACI's GIS data would significantly enhance Zain's Business Intelligence systems, improving service levels for Kuwait's largest customer base. Algharabally mentioned that this partnership would pave the way for further collaborations with PACI. Zain plans to use PACI's geographic data and detailed 3D models for network planning projects, which will improve customer experience and operational efficiency,

thanks to PACI's comprehensive scans of all areas in Kuwait.

He affirmed Zain's commitment to leveraging strategic partnerships with major public and private sector organizations to achieve full digital transformation and enhance the company's service offerings. The company strives to exceed customer expectations and deliver world-class services to the biggest family of subscribers in Kuwait. The signing ceremony also included discussions on future collaborations between Zain and PACI in a number of other related areas to deliver enhanced services to citizens and residents in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti organizations win Corporate Social Responsibility awards

MANAMA: Three Kuwaiti organizations have won the GCC Corporate Social Responsibility awards 2024 in recognition of their remarkable contributions to the development of their societies and the implementation of the national sustainable development goals. The Kuwaiti winners are EPSCO Global company, the Soroptimist Kuwait and the Gulf Bank. The awards were presented to the representatives of the winners by Bahraini Minister of Social Development Osama bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor in a ceremony held in Manama on the sidelines of the 2nd Gulf Cooperation Council International Corporate Social Responsibility Conference and Award 2024.

EPSCO Global for General Trading Company won the award for its game-changer project to recycle millions of unwanted used car tires, meanwhile the Soroptimist Kuwait and the Gulf Bank were honored for their role in empowering women. In statements to KUNA after receiving the award, CEO of the EPSCO Global Eng Alaa Hassan pointed out that her company won the award for its role in recycling used tires in order to solve the problem of tire accumulation on an area of approximately one million square metres.

In less than seven months the company has managed to transport 14 million tires to Al-Salmi recycling plant, she clarified. Hassan vowed that the company will transport the remaining 40 million tires to the plant to be recycled and utilized instead of occupying lands designated for establishing a residential area and to put an end to the repeated fires that erupt in the tires and emit smokes harmful to health and the environment.

She explained that this project contributed to the manufacture and transformation of solid waste into



Three Kuwaiti organizations win GCC 2024 social responsibility awards. — KUNA

profitable and valuable raw materials that are used in efficient production lines to produce rubber tiles, planting pots and car plastic parts. She added that the products of the recycling plant are exported to Gulf and Asian countries. She pointed out that it recycles from 1.5 million to three million tires annually.

For her part, the President of the Soroptimist Kuwait Dr Zainab Al-Musaileh expressed her pride in receiving two awards during the event. Al-Musaileh thanked the organizing and judging committees for appreciating the efforts of her organization in empowering Kuwaiti and Gulf women academically, health-wise, economically and environmentally by activating sustainability programs in addition to ending violence against women and girls.

Deputy head of the Human Resources Department at the Gulf Bank Nada Razzoqi expressed jubilation at the bank receiving the award of the best GCC organization in sustainable development in the workplace. She pointed out that the award is a new certificate of appreciation for the role of the bank in consolidating the principles of sustainability.

Razzoqi noted that the bank has succeeded over the past ten years in increasing females' share in leadership positions from 10 percent to 30 percent while raising their percentage in the Bank staff to 42 percent. She pointed out that Gulf Bank is committed to complete equality between employees of both sexes in terms of job benefits and signed the United Nations principles for empowering women.

GCC, Brazil bolster ties

RIYADH: GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi and Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira have affirmed their joint determination to bolster further the Gulf-Brazilian relations. The GCC General-Secretariat said in a statement that the common desire was expressed during a meeting that grouped the two sides in the Brazilian capital, Brasilia. It added that Al-Budaiwi handed over an official letter from Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani to the Brazilian minister, inviting him to the first Gulf-Brazilian Ministerial meeting, due in Doha in September.

The statement added that the invitation reflected the GCC states' desire to cement the strategic relationship with Brazil in many sectors. Moreover, the two sides affirmed during the meeting the two parties' resolve to promote further the distinguished relations, indicating that there are prospected mutual benefits in this respect. The GCC, founded in the early 80s to bolster cooperation among the Arabian Gulf countries, groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. — KUNA



GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi and Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira hold talks. — KUNA

Kuwait 'keen on modernizing its judicial system'

MOSCOW: Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi, has reiterated Kuwait's keenness to upgrade the judicial system to keep pace with global changes. He made this statement to KUNA after chairing the plenary session of the 12th edition of the St Petersburg International Legal Forum, hosted by Russia, during the period June 26-28.

Al-Wasmi stressed the importance of

Kuwait's participation in the three-day forum, which discusses a wide range of key topics related to the judicial system, new jurisprudence issues, and the latest legislative updates, as well as the use of technology to modernize the judicial system. He pointed out that the Kuwaiti delegation would highlight the government's use of electronic systems in the delivery of services in all sectors.

In this regard, the Ministry of Justice has introduced automated systems for its various departments and linked them to the government services application (Sahel) to save time and effort for litigants. "Considering the rapid developments in the world, Kuwait is aware of the importance of innovation and technology in the field of justice," he clarified. He pointed

out that the participants reviewed the experiences and practices of their countries and the use of modern digital means in the field of justice.

He referred to the "introduction of an electronic system for conducting remote trials." Moreover, Al-Wasmi pointed to the amendment of some articles of Law No 9 of 2020 so that litigants can be notified by email or any other "modern electronic" means of communication to shorten the duration of trials. On the sidelines of the forum, Minister Al-Wasmi attended a meeting of the ministers of justice of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states. During the meeting, the conferees mulled strengthening cooperation and unified stances regarding the main issues on the forum's agenda. — KUNA



MOSCOW: Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi (center).

KPI signs partnership deal with Fox Petrol

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) has announced completing the agreement to acquire a 50 percent stake in Italy's Eco Fox SRL, a company wholly owned by Fox Petrol, which specializes in the production of biofuels. In a statement to KUNA, KPI stated that this announcement follows the approval of the European Union's Directorate-General for Competition in accordance with the laws of the European Union and the Italian Republic.

This deal is considered the first biofuel play by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) in its international operations, making it a key component in KPC and its subsidiary strategy for Energy Transition 2050, the statement added. KPI's Chief Executive Officer, Shafi Al-Ajmi, expressed his pride in this accomplishment that enhances the provision of sustainable fuel to the company's customers across Europe, particularly in the Italian market.

He noted that it aligns with KPI's strategy to grow and enhance its market share in Europe while diversifying the company's products in line with European demand and the global trend towards sustainability. Al-Ajmi also highlighted the significant role played by national talent in capturing global investment opportunities and exploring every avenue to advance the company's operations in European markets, thanking them for their contribution to this achievement.

Executive Vice President for Marketing at KPI, Fadel Al-Faraj, stated that this acquisition is particularly significant as it represents a launching point for the 'QS' brand to become a leader in sustainable biofuel production in Europe. What adds to the importance of this achievement is its coincidence with the 40th anniversary of KPI's founding, Al-Faraj added. The company in Italy has transformed from a traditional fuel supplier to a sustainable fuel partner for our customers, adding that KPI will continue to meet customer demands and achieve KPC's goals for sustainable energy transformation.

It is worth noting that Fox Petrol has been operating in the biofuel market in Italy since the 1990s, producing a range of advanced biodiesel and by-products for industrial use. The company has a production plant with an annual capacity of 200,000 tons, a bonded warehouse with a storage capacity of 30,000 cubic meters, and logistical support capable of receiving and shipping products by sea and land.

Established in 1983, KPI is a global marketing company under KPC, managing over 4,700 retail fuel and transport service stations across Europe. KPI supplies aviation fuel to over 70 international airports, manufactures high-quality oils globally, and holds stakes in three refineries in Italy, Vietnam, and Oman through partnerships with international oil companies. — KUNA

Local

Minister visits juvenile complex, pledges to enhance social care

Center to provide vocational training, workshops

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah has affirmed that efforts to develop social care will proceed. Dr Al-Huwailah, in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during her inspection of the new juvenile care complex in Al-Sulaibiya district, said construction of this facility is a significant step forward for enhancing the quality of life for delinquent juveniles and re-merging them into the community in an effective and constructive fashion.

The Ministry is keen on providing all kinds of care and support for the hosted youth, said Dr Al-Huwailah (who is also the Minister of Family and Childhood Affairs and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs), indicating that such a well-equipped facility would provide this segment of society with comprehensive services. Such a developed center also provides a suitable environment to boost efforts to alter their behaviors and encourage them to acquire useful hobbies, explained the minister in her remarks to KUNA.

Her tour covered several sections, including the division of teaching and vocational training, including workshops for training in carpentry, blacksmithing, and tailoring, thus qualifying them to join the work market. The premises include sections for psychological and social support, entertainment sports, and facilities, in addition to the library. Minister Al-Huwailah was accompanied by the acting undersecretary, Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi, and the assistant undersecretary for social care, Dr Jassem Al-Kandari. — KUNA



Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah inspects the new juveniles care complex in Al-Sulaibiya. — KUNA photos



Minister calls for speedy completion of airport project

KUWAIT: The Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr Noura Al-Mashaan, stressed on Saturday the need to overcome all the obstacles facing the implementation of the new passenger terminal project (Terminal 2) and work to develop effective solutions to accelerate the pace of work. Minister Al-Mashaan added,

after meeting with the President of Civil Aviation, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Mubarak Hamoud Al-Sabah, that they discuss the progress of work on the project. She said that there are continuous efforts to develop the infrastructure of Kuwait International Airport and enhance its operational capabilities.

The meeting also discussed topics related to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Interior, the Kuwait Fire Force, and the follow-up on government performance. She stressed the keenness of all parties to accomplish topics related to their esteemed entities. The meeting comes within a series of periodic meetings held to ensure the delivery of the new passenger terminal project and address outstanding issues. She explained that the concerned authorities are working closely with the Civil

Aviation Authority to overcome any obstacles and support the continuous progress of this vital project, which is a key part of Kuwait's developmental plan aimed at boosting the economy.

"We intend to work collaboratively and intensively to ensure the completion of the new passenger terminal, which will significantly enhance productivity and expand our capabilities to accommodate the expected increase in air traffic. The project comes as an affirmation of our commitment to the development of the civil aviation sector and its vital role in supporting the country's economic growth," she explained. The minister stressed the importance of this project not only for the aviation sector but as part of a broader strategy to modernize the infrastructure. — KUNA

Minister, Assistant FM discuss human rights



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Amathal Al-Huwailah and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Duajj Al-Sabah discussed cooperation for boosting human rights. In a press statement, the Social Affairs Ministry said the meeting addressed a number of key issues related to women, the family, childhood, and people with disabilities. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan holds meeting with officials.



Kuwait secures top spot on IDI

KUWAIT: The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) announced on Friday that Kuwait has won the first place in the ICT Sector Development Index (IDI) for the year 2024, issued by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for the second time in a row. The Authority said

that the index is in continuous development, which gives the foreign investor confidence to invest in the country, create jobs and transfer experiences, noting the importance of this in diversifying the economy.

The IDI index explains the extent to which the Internet can be used in the country in a safe manner in terms of coverage and in terms of price. CITRA indicated that the rate of individual use of the Internet is 99.7 percent and the rate of household access to the Internet is 99.4 percent through subscriptions of Internet providers or telecommunications companies. — KUNA

KAPP lists companies for overhaul ground communication network

KUWAIT: Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) declared on Saturday a list of companies and consortiums qualified for partaking in the project of developing the land communication network. KAPP said in a statement, that the qualified parties are Bahrain Telecommunication, E and A Holding Limited, SBA Communication, and Brookfield

Corporation. The project is designed to overhaul the fixed telecommunication network and establish a partnership between the private and public sectors to cover designing, funding, operating, and maintaining it.

Based on the strategy of the government which is aimed at encouraging and enhancing the participation of the private sector in developing the infrastructure, Kuwait has developed a program for partnership between the public and private sectors. KAPP is the central coordinating body for the Public-Private Partnership Program, which is responsible for the financial and technical evaluation of partnership projects. Since its inception, in accordance with Law No (116) of 2014, it has participated in various projects. — Agencies

Iranians in Kuwait vote in presidential election



KUWAIT: Iranians vote in the presidential election at the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait City on June 28, 2024. The sole reformist in Iran's presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian, will face the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili in a runoff, authorities said on Saturday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

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40 tons of flour to be sent to Gaza Strip. — KUNA



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians load their belongings on a truck as they evacuate the Mawassi area on the outskirts of southwestern Khan Yunis on the southern Gaza Strip on June 28, 2024. - AFP

News in Brief

Live ammunition drill July 1-3

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Coast Guards and Army will carry out a drill with live ammunition in the Al-Sabbayiah and Boubyan areas from July 1-3, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement on Saturday. The exercise will be conducted from 5:30 am until 1:30 pm. The Ministry urged sea-goers to avoid approaching the specified locations during the set period and dates, warning that coast guard patrols will intervene and prohibit anyone from getting close to the shooting ranges. — KUNA

Two health centers closed

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi ordered closing a private dentistry center and banned the one-day cosmetic surgeries at a beauty parlor. Minister Al-Awadhi has referred the two centers to the department of medical responsibility after finding gross violations of standing medical regulations, according to a Ministry's statement. The decision indicated that the dentistry center had promoted services without obtaining the necessary permit. The Ministry affirmed that inspections of health institutions would continue to ensure adherence to the medical regulations and citizens' health and wellbeing. — KUNA

Jordan 'historic ties' hailed

AMMAN: Kuwait's ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Meri praised his country's "historic" relations with Jordan, saying ties have made continued progress over the years thanks to the efforts of the two countries' political leaderships. Conveying the greetings of Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti diplomat and Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah agreed amid talks on the need for even more headway in bilateral relations. The talks also covered current happenings around the region, in addition to matters of mutual concern, the envoy told KUNA, saying that more than 73 bilateral deals had come to fruition since diplomatic relations began in earnest back in 1961. — KUNA

Kuwait Red Crescent Society sends tons of flour to Gaza

GAZA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) is set to deliver 40 tons of flour in Gaza Strip, to help thousands of Palestinians. In a statement on Saturday, KRCS chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said the project is executed in cooperation with Jordan National Red Crescent Society, to ease the suffering of Palestinians, mainly children and the elderly who face death every day due to lack of food. He noted that the Society will continue aiding Palestinians in the face of the deteriorating conditions in Gaza. Kuwait had sent tons of humanitarian aid to Gaza, as well as dozens of ambulance vehicles, since the beginning of Zionist occupation attacks on October 7.

Gazans are forced to live in bombed-out buildings or camp next to giant piles of trash, a United Nations spokeswoman said Friday, denouncing the "unbearable" conditions in the besieged territory. Louise Wateridge from UNRWA, the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, described the "extremely dire" living conditions in the Gaza Strip. "It's really unbearable," she told reporters in Geneva, via video-link from central Gaza.

Wateridge, who returned Wednesday after four weeks outside the territory, said that even in that time the situation had "significantly deteriorated". "Today, it has to be the worst it's ever been. I don't doubt that

tomorrow again will be the worst it's ever been," she said. Nearly nine months into the war between Zionists and Hamas, Wateridge said the Gaza Strip had been "destroyed". She said she had been "shocked" on returning to Khan Yunis in central Gaza.

"The buildings are skeletons, if at all. Everything is rubble," she said. "And yet people are living there again. 'There's no water there, there's no sanitation, there's no food. And now, people are living back in these buildings that are empty shells,' with sheets covering the gaps left by blown-out walls. With no bathrooms, 'people are relieving themselves anywhere they can'." — Agencies

Alhedaa': Enduring bond between Arabs, camels

RIYADH: Camels have been a cornerstone of life in the Arabian Peninsula for millennia. They are not just beasts of burden but symbols of wealth, generosity, and travel. Over time, they became deeply woven into the region's heritage. This deep connection gave rise to a beautiful folk art called "Alhedaa'," passed down through generations across Arabian societies. It is an oral tradition whereby herders use a combination of sounds, gestures, and sometimes musical instruments to communicate with their camels. Inspired by poetry, these rhythmic expressions form a unique vocabulary that camels understand.

Herders use Alhedaa' to guide their herds through the desert, find pastures for grazing, and prepare them for watering, milking, and riding. It also serves as a critical warning system, allowing for swift assembly in the event of sandstorms. Historical accounts credit Mudar bin Nizar with having invented Alhedaa'. After a fall from his camel, he kept weeping: "Waidah! Waidah!" (Oh my hand!). The camels, captivated by his voice, started moving.

This sparked the tradition of using vocal cues to guide camels. Early Alhedaa' mimicked natural camel sounds, with herders urging their animals



KUWAIT: Camels are displayed for sale at a livestock market south of Kuwait City in this file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

with sounds like "heed heed," "heydoh," and "doh." These vocalizations, along with "Rajaz" (short, improvised poems), are still used today, though their use varies depending on the environment. Over time, Alhedaa' evolved into a more poetic form with distinct styles and vocabulary. It incorporated deeper meanings, sung verses, and balanced rhythms, reflecting the beauty of the Bedouin soundscape and culture.

According to Saudi folk heritage researcher Ibrahim Al-Khaldi, Alhedaa' was essential for nomadic caravans. It typically involved two people reciting simple rhyming verses in unison, a practice that helped encourage the camels while extracting water from wells. For larger water extraction tasks, where gathering distant camels was crucial, up to four people might recite Alhedaa'. Their voices, carried in the quiet of night or dawn, would travel a great distance. Alhedaa' does not adhere to a single melody; it varies based on the environment. The poignant words resonate with the camels, and the meanings are deeply tied to the herders' daily lives.

Chairman of the Saudi Society for Camel Studies, Dr. Mohammed Al-Otaibi, said Alhedaa' existed even in pre-Islamic times. It is sung during a camel's return to water, journey to pasture, or simply while traveling. These short, impactful chants help gather camels, guide their movement, and direct them back to their resting place. Inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022, Alhedaa' has various applications, with chants for departure, travel, watering, gathering, and even for camels drawing water from wells to encourage them.

Camels hold a unique place in Arab society, and even more so in Saudi society. Recognizing this rich cultural heritage, the Camel Club was established under the directives of the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Further solidifying this connection, the Ministry of Culture declared 2024 the "Year of the Camel," an animal seen as a cultural treasure, a pillar of national identity, and a valuable piece of Arab heritage. — KUNA

Kuwait's crude exports to Japan down 15.4%

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in May declined 15.4 percent from a year earlier to 5.44 million barrels (or 175,000 barrels per day), down for the eighth consecutive month, government data revealed. Kuwait was Japan's third oil provider last month, supplying 8.3 percent of the Asian nation's total crude imports, compared with 8.5 percent in the same month of 2023, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil slid 13.8 percent year-on-year to 2.11 million bpd in May,

down for the sixth month in a row. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 95.3 percent of the total, down 1.7 percentage points from the year before. The UAE remained in the top spot, but imports from the country fell 8.2 percent from a year earlier to 974,000 bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 758,000 bpd, down 19.8 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 88,000 bpd and the US fifth with 68,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's third biggest oil consumer after China and the US.

Kuwait oil price up

Meanwhile, the price of Kuwaiti oil went up 80 cents to \$87.94 pb on Friday, compared to \$87.14 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday. On a global scale, the price of the Brent crude futures' contracts went up two cents to \$86.41 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate crude went down 20 cents to \$81.54 pb. — KUNA

Graduation of 76 officers

KUWAIT: The acting chief of Kuwait Fire Force, Lieutenant General Khaled Fahad Al-Sabah oversaw the graduation of 76 non-commissioned officers and staff corporals. The KFF said in a press

release that Lt Gen Khaled Fahad conveyed to the graduates greetings from the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, urging them to honor their oath and serve faithfully. Lt Gen Khaled Fahad affirmed in his speech during the ceremony that the firefighters "sacrifice themselves for a humanitarian task that spares lives and properties." — KUNA



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Amputations soar but prostheses, painkillers lacking in Gaza

IS bombs found hidden in iconic Iraq mosque: UN agency

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SAN FRANCISCO: Patrons react during a watch party for the first presidential debate of the 2024 presidential elections between US President Joe Biden and former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at a pub in San Francisco, California, on June 27, 2024. — AFP

America's allies brace for Trump return

Biden's shaky performance leads to calls for new Democrat candidate

TOKYO/SEOUL: Joe Biden's shaky performance in the US presidential debate drew stunned global reactions on Friday, prompting public calls for him to step aside and likely leaving some of America's closest allies steeling for Donald Trump's return. Biden's supporters had hoped Thursday's debate would erase worries that he was too old to serve but footage of the president sounding hoarse and stumbling over his words boosted Trump, said politicians, analysts and investors. Global newspapers were also damning. France's *Le Monde* compared Biden to a shipwreck. Britain's left-leaning *Daily Mirror* called his performance a "gaffe-strewn nightmare". Germany's *Bild* newspaper ran with "Good night, Joe!" and the *Sydney Morning Herald* said "Trump monstered Biden. The Democrats can't win with Joe."

"Joe Biden can't do it," said Matteo Renzi, a centrist who was close to the Democrats while serving as Italy's prime minister. Renzi said on X that Biden had served the United States with honor, adding: "He doesn't deserve an inglorious ending, he doesn't deserve one. Changing horses is a duty for everyone."

For Japan and South Korea, among the closest US allies in Asia, relations with Trump's administration were at times strained by his demands for more pay-

ments towards military assistance and by trade tensions. Countries including Japan and Germany have started laying the groundwork for a possible Trump return as his campaign gathered steam.

"Mr Trump didn't win but Mr Biden might have imploded," said Kunihiko Miyake, a Japanese former diplomat and now research director at the Canon Institute for Global Studies, a think tank.

"Unlike eight years ago, we are much more prepared, as are other European and Asian allies. Still, Mr Trump is unpredictable." Peter Lee, research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, said he expected Trump to be "very tough" second time around in pressuring allies to increase defense spending. As president, Trump started a tariff war with China, and has floated tariffs of 60 percent or higher on all Chinese goods if he wins the Nov 5 election.

Overseas firms dependent on US markets, such as automakers, would be wary of the heightened possibility of Trump's return given the "myriad" of tariff-related policies he imposed during his previous term, said Lee Jae-il, analyst at Eugene Investment & Securities. Stephen Lee, chief economist at Meritz Securities in Seoul, said Trump "might not just target China but impose tariffs against other countries as

well under the concept of American exceptionalism."

War in Ukraine

In Europe, Trump's criticisms of NATO and demands that other members pay more dominated his previous administration. His skepticism towards NATO is causing further anxiety as Russia's war in Ukraine continues. "American democracy killed before our eyes by gerontocracy!" said Guy Verhofstadt, a member of the European parliament and a former prime minister of Belgium who posted pictures of Biden and Trump on X.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz previously cheered on Biden's prospects for re-election, but a senior defense figure in the ruling coalition lamented Biden's performance and urged Democrats to find another candidate. "The fact that a man like Trump could become president again because the Democrats are unable to put up a strong candidate against him would be a historic tragedy that the whole world would feel," Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, of the liberal FDP party, told the *Rheinische Post* paper. A spokesperson for Scholz did not comment on the specifics of the debate, but said the chancellor valued Biden highly and had never spoken to Trump

as their terms did not overlap. During the debate, Trump accused Biden of not standing up to China on trade. He also said China's Xi Jinping, North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Russia's Vladimir Putin "don't respect" Biden and that he was driving the country "into World War Three". Biden retorted by saying Trump's tariff proposals would result in higher costs for American consumers, and that he "cuddles up" to the likes of Kim and Putin. Putin has said it made little difference to Russia who was in the White House. On Friday, the Kremlin declined comment on what it said was an internal US matter.

Keir Starmer, leader of the British Labour party that leads polls before a July 4 election, said Britain's relationship with the US was strong and "above the individuals." In Sydney, several Australian officials and experts had attended a workshop titled "Trump 2.0" as the debate was aired. "The overwhelming feeling from today is that it was a disaster for Biden," said Peter Dean, a professor at the United States Studies Centre in Sydney who was at the workshop. "The mood has changed considerably after the debate and the general view is that if you weren't preparing for a 'Trump 2.0' then that is the smart play and the smart move now." — Reuters

How Democrats could replace Biden as candidate before vote

WASHINGTON: After President Joe Biden's shaky performance at the debate with former President Donald Trump on Thursday night, some Democrats openly questioned whether he should be replaced as their candidate for the 2024 election.

There is a process for doing so, but it would be messy. For answers on how that would work, Reuters spoke to Elaine Kamarck, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, a Democratic National Committee (DNC) member, and author of the book "Primary Politics" about the presidential nominating process. This explainer is based largely on interviews with her.

Plan B not ready

The Democratic Party has had no real Plan B for Biden as its presidential candidate. He ran virtually unopposed for the party's presidential nomination this year. He will not be nominated officially until later this summer, so there is still time to make a change and a handful of scenarios to enact one: Biden could decide himself to step aside before he is nominated; he could be challenged by others who try to win over the delegates he has accrued; or he could withdraw after the Democratic convention in Chicago in August, leaving the Democratic National Committee to elect someone to run against Trump in his place.

What happens next?

Right now, the process largely depends on Biden. He would have to agree to step down or face a challenger this late in the process who would try to force him to do so. So far Biden has shown no indications

of wanting to step aside and no opponents have challenged him directly. In fact some of his top potential replacements — Vice President Kamala Harris and California Governor Gavin Newsom — spoke passionately in his defense after the debate, serving in a surrogate role that showcased their support but also contrasted their smooth delivery with his faltering one on the Atlanta debate stage.

Delegates could throw vote

Biden has spent the last several months accruing nearly 4,000 Democratic delegates by winning primary elections in US states and territories. Those delegates would normally vote for him, but the rules do not bind or force them to do so; delegates can vote with their conscience, which means they could throw their vote to someone else. If Biden "releases" his delegates by stepping aside, there could be a competition among other Democratic candidates to become the nominee.

Other potential candidates

A: Several candidates could step into the fray, but there is no obvious number one. Vice President Harris would almost certainly be at the top of the list, but she has had her own problems after a rocky start in the job and poor polling numbers. The US Constitution dictates that the vice president becomes president if the president dies or becomes incapacitated, but it does not weigh in on an inter-party process for choosing a nominee. California Governor Gavin Newsom, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker have all been floated as possible replacements, but they are Biden supporters and campaign surrogates who are working to help get him elected now.

Choosing a nominee

There would likely be a free-for-all of sorts between the Democratic heavyweights vying for the job. Candidates would have to get signatures from

600 convention delegates to be nominated. There are expected to be some 4,672 delegates in 2024, including 3,933 pledged delegates and 739 automatic or superdelegates, according to Ballotpedia. If no one gets a majority of the delegates, then there would be a "brokered convention" in which the delegates act as free agents and negotiate with the party leadership to come up with a nominee.

Rules would be established and there would be roll call votes for the names placed into nomination. It could take several rounds of voting for someone to get a majority and become the nominee. The last brokered convention when Democrats failed to nominate a candidate on the first ballot was in 1952.

After the convention

If Biden steps down after the August convention, the 435 members of the Democratic National Committee would choose a new candidate. The members would meet in a special session to select a nominee. The members are divided equally between men and women as well as various constituency groups including labor leaders, LGBTQ representatives, and racial minorities. Of the total, 75 are appointed at-large by the chair, while the rest are elected in their respective states.

To nominate a candidate to replace Biden on the ballot, that person would have to have the support of a minimum number of DNC members — perhaps around 60, though the exact number would be determined by the DNC's rules committee, which would lay out the rules for the proceedings before they started. There would likely be nominating speeches and seconding speeches. Multiple candidates could be nominated before the list is whittled down. The DNC would likely hold its meeting in Washington and the votes would be counted there. Ballots would be coded, signed and collected by hand. If a vote were to happen very close to Election Day on Nov 5, when it was not possible to meet in person, then it would likely be virtual. — Reuters

US Supreme Court rules in favor of January 6 rioters

WASHINGTON: Prosecutors overstepped when charging January 6 rioters with obstruction for trying to prevent certification of the 2020 presidential election, the US Supreme Court said Friday, throwing hundreds of cases into doubt. The matter was brought to the court through an appeal by former police officer Joseph Fischer, a supporter of former president Donald Trump who entered the Capitol in Washington with hundreds of others on January 6, 2021.

Writing the opinion for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts said prosecutors' interpretation of the law would "criminalize a broad swath of prosaic conduct, exposing activists and lobbyist(s) to decades in prison." The government "must establish that the defendant impaired the availability or integrity for use in an official proceeding of records, documents, objects, or other things used in an official proceeding, or attempted to do so," he wrote.

The case was decided 6-3, with Ketanji Brown Jackson joining with the court's conservatives. Amy Coney Barrett, appointed by Trump, penned the dissent, which was joined by liberal judges Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. It now heads back to a lower court, which will decide whether Fischer's indictment can still stand considering the narrower interpretation of "obstruction." In all, 52 rioters have been convicted and sentenced only on obstruction charges, with 27 currently incarcerated, the Department of Justice said in a statement. Some 249 people were charged with obstruction in addition to another felony or misdemeanor. "The vast majority of the more than 1,400 defendants charged for their illegal actions on January 6 will not be affected by this decision," said Attorney General Merrick Garland.—AFP

International

Delhi airport roof collapses in record-breaking downpour

Collapse prompts complaints about the capital's creaking infrastructure

NEW DELHI: The roof of a terminal building at New Delhi's international airport partially collapsed in heavy rains early Friday, killing one person, rescuers said, months after a refurbishment project inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

About 148.5 millimetres (5.85 inches) of rain fell over three hours on the airport area in the early morning, more than the average for all of June, according to the national weather office. Delhi's main Safdarjung weather station recorded 228.1 mm (9 inches) of rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8:30 am (0300 GMT), its highest 24-hour rainfall in June in 88 years.

The city of 20 million people had faced searing heatwaves earlier this month. Experts blame climate change for the extreme heat followed by heavy rain.

A wall at a building site in southwest Delhi collapsed in the downpour, with three laborers feared trapped in 12 feet (3.7 meters) of deep water and mud, a fire service spokesperson said.

At the airport, images posted online showed vehicles crushed under giant steel girders at the departure forecourt of the airport's Terminal 1, one of several projects Modi celebrated in March ahead of the country's recent general election. "Due to heavy rain since early this morning, a portion of the canopy ... collapsed around 5 am," airport authorities said in a statement.

The terminal is used for domestic flights only. Departures from it were cancelled until early afternoon, with later flights diverted to other terminals, which were operating as normal. Infrastructure spending has been a priority under Modi, and the Delhi airport - named after assassinated former prime minister Indira Gandhi - is one of the country's flagship projects.

The opposition Congress party slammed Modi, saying in a statement: "Because of the elections, this half-finished terminal was inaugurated in a hurry. Today this accident happened." Congress defied expectations and exit polls to deprive Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of its overall parliamentary majority in elections earlier this month, forcing the BJP into a coalition with allies.

Delhi airport is run by a consortium led by Indian firm GMR, which describes itself as the world's second-largest private airport operator. It also has interests in energy and highways. Reports say it has given millions of dollars to an electoral trust that has donated tens of millions to Modi's ruling BJP - and has also funded Congress, albeit to a far lesser extent.

Senior Congress figure Priyanka Gandhi - sister of the opposition leader Rahul - posted on social media platform X: "Will the Chief Inauguration Minister take responsibility for this poor construction work and this corrupt model?" At the airport, civil aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu told reporters that the building inaugurated by Modi was not the one where the roof collapsed, which was opened in 2009. "Eight people have been injured, one person is dead. Rescue operations have been completed," Atul Garg, director of Delhi Fire Services told AFP.

Infrastructure worries

Earlier in the day, parts of Delhi were flooded, including a tunnel opposite the venue that was the site of last September's G20 summit. Some cars were trapped in thigh-deep water in chaotic scenes across the city. Metro services were affected, people had to navigate through waterlogged



NEW DELHI: A member of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) works at the site of collapsed terminal roof of New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport after heavy rains in New Delhi on June 28, 2024. — AFP

roads and traffic snarls were reported. Electricity supply was switched off in some waterlogged and low-lying areas as a precautionary measure, one of Delhi's power suppliers said.

The chaos prompted complaints on social media about the capital's creaking infrastructure. A federal government source said the home ministry would review Delhi's preparedness for the monsoon with

the local government, weather officials and other city authorities on Saturday.

A section of roof at Jabalpur airport in Madhya Pradesh - another of the projects inaugurated by Modi - also collapsed Friday, reports said, with no one injured. Safety and construction standards remain a concern in India, with accidents happening regularly. At least 20 workers were crushed to death when a crane collapsed above an

under-construction expressway outside the financial capital Mumbai earlier this month.

Last year, more than 40 workers were trapped for nearly two weeks before they were rescued after the road tunnel they were working on in Uttarakhand collapsed. In October 2022, more than 130 people were killed when a bridge in Gujarat collapsed soon after it was repaired. — Agencies

5 IS bombs found hidden in iconic Iraq mosque: UN agency

MOSUL: A United Nations agency said it has discovered five bombs in a wall of Mosul's iconic Al-Nuri mosque, planted years ago by Islamic State group jihadists, during restoration work in the northern Iraqi city. Five "large-scale explosive devices, designed to trigger a massive destruction of the site," were found in the southern wall of the prayer hall on Tuesday by the UNESCO team working at the site, a representative for the agency told AFP late Friday.

Mosul's Al-Nuri mosque and the adjacent leaning minaret nicknamed Al-Hadba or the "hunchback", which dates from the 12th century, were destroyed during the battle to retake the city from IS. Iraq's army accused IS, which occupied Mosul for three years, of planting explosives at the site and blowing it up.

UNESCO, the UN cultural agency, has been working to restore the mosque and other architectural heritage sites in the city, much of it reduced to rubble in the battle to retake it in 2017. "The Iraqi armed forces immediately secured the area and the situation is now fully under control," UNESCO added. One bomb was removed, but four other 1.5-kilogram (3.3-pound) devices "remain connected to each other" and are expected to be cleared in the coming days, it said.

'Complex manufacturing'

"These explosive devices were hidden inside a wall, which was specially rebuilt around them: it explains why they could not be discovered when the site was cleared by Iraqi forces in 2020, the agency said.

Iraqi General Tahseen al-Khafaji, spokesperson for the Joint Operations Command of various Iraqi forces, confirmed the discovery of "several explosive devices from ISIS jihadists in Al-Nuri mosque." He said provincial deminers requested help from the Defense Ministry in Baghdad to defuse the remaining munitions because of their "complex manufacturing". Construction work has been suspended at the site until the bombs are removed.

It was from Al-Nuri mosque that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the then-leader of IS, proclaimed the establishment of the group's "caliphate" in July 2014. The jihadists took over large swathes of territory in Iraq and neighboring Syria, which they ruled with brutality. Iraqi forces backed by a US-led coalition drove IS out of Mosul in 2017.

The Al-Nuri mosque derives its name from Nureddine Al-Zinki, the unifier of Syria who also reigned for a time over Mosul and ordered its construction in 1172. It was destroyed and rebuilt in 1942 in a renovation project, with only the ancient minaret remaining from the original structure. The current restoration of Al-Nuri, largely funded by the United Arab Emirates, is still expected to be completed in December 2024. This, said UNESCO, will finally erase "the stigma" of IS occupation.



MOSUL: This picture taken on January 18, 2022 shows renovations at the Al-Nuri mosque in the old town of Iraq's northern city Mosul. — AFP

The minaret - which will be reconstructed at a slant upon the request of locals - is being rebuilt with 45,000 of the original bricks saved from the rubble, only a third of the original structure. The bomb scare

was not the first surprise discovery at Al-Nuri. In January 2022, restoration teams unearthed an underground prayer room from the original 12th century building. — AFP

US has sent Zionist entity 14,000...

Continued from Page 1

that Washington has since Oct 7 sent \$6.5 billion worth of security assistance to the Zionist entity. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in recent weeks claimed that Washington was withholding weapons, a suggestion US officials have repeatedly denied even though they acknowledged some "bottlenecks".

The Biden administration has paused one shipment of the 2,000-pound bomb, citing concern over the impact it could have in densely populated areas in Gaza, but US officials insist that all other arms deliveries continue as normal. One 2,000-pound bomb can rip through thick concrete and metal, creating a wide blast radius.

While the US provides detailed descriptions and quantities of military aid sent to Ukraine as it fights a full-scale invasion of Russia, the administration has revealed few details about the full extent of US weapons and munitions sent to the Zionist entity. One of the US officials said the Pentagon has sufficient quantities of weapons in its own stocks and had been liaising with US industry partners who make the weapons, such as Boeing Co and General Dynamics, as the companies work to manufacture more.

Explosions, air strikes and gunfire rattled northern Gaza on Saturday, the third day of a Zionist military operation that has uprooted tens of thousands of Palestinians and compounded what the UN called "unbearable" living conditions in the territory. An AFP correspondent reported ongoing explosions from the Shujaiya area near Gaza City, with a resident saying bodies were visible on the streets.

A resurgence of fighting in the area comes months after the Zionist entity had declared the command structure of Hamas militants dismantled in northern

Gaza. The Gaza war has also led to soaring tensions on the Zionist entity's northern border with Lebanon, leading Iran on Saturday to warn of an "obliterating" war if the Zionist entity attacked Lebanon. The Zionist offensive has killed at least 37,834 people, mostly women and children, according to data from the health ministry in Gaza. It reported at least 69 deaths over the previous 48 hours.

Mohammed Harara, 30, said he and his family, young and old, felt as though they would become part of that toll. He said they fled from their home in Shujaiya with nothing, "due to the bombardment by (Zionist) planes, tanks and drones" that they barely survived. "We couldn't carry anything from the house. We left the food, flour, canned goods, mattresses, and blankets," Harara said.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "about 60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from the area this week. AFP TV images on Saturday showed men moving belongings on a donkey cart. Some people were pushed in wheelchairs. Children walked with backpacks past piles of dusty debris. "I saw a tank in front of the Shuhada mosque firing" at targets, said Abdelkareem Al-Mamluk. "There were martyrs in the street."

On Friday Hamas and the armed wing of the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad both said they were fighting in Shujaiya. Elsewhere in the coastal territory, the civil defense agency on Saturday said four bodies were pulled from an apartment after a Zionist strike in the central region. Further south, in the Rafah area, witnesses reported dead and wounded after a new incursion by Zionist troops.

Tarek Qandeel, director of the medical center in Al-Maghazi, central Gaza, said the facility was seriously damaged in the bombing of a neighboring house, making it the latest Gaza medical facility affected by the war. The United Nations, in a report on Friday that cited Gaza's health ministry, said "about 70 percent of health infrastructure has been destroyed". — Agencies

Reformist to face ultraconservative...

Continued from Page 1

in attitude, behavior, conversation and in the distribution and allocation of resources," he added in a video published on the website of the reformist newspaper Etemad.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called for a high turnout ahead of Friday's vote. Only slightly more than 40 percent of the 61 million electorate took part - a record low turnout for the Islamic republic - and more than one million ballots were spoiled. The poll had been scheduled to take place in 2025 but was brought forward by the death of ultraconservative president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash last month.

Defiant Biden seeks to repair...

Continued from Page 1

thought - exacerbating fears about his ability to serve another term. He had hoped to allay qualms about his advanced age, and to expose Trump as a habitual liar. But the president failed to counter his bombastic rival, who offered up a largely unchallenged reel of false or misleading statements about everything from the economy to immigration.

On Friday, Biden delivered the lines Democrats wished they had heard in the televised debate. "Did you see Trump last night? My guess is he set - and I mean this sincerely - a new record for the most lies told in a single debate," Biden said. "Donald Trump is a genuine threat to this nation. He's a threat to our freedom. He's a threat to our democracy. He's literally a threat for everything America stands for."

The Guardian Council, which vets candidates, had originally approved six contenders. But a day ahead of the election, two of them - the ultraconservative mayor of Tehran Alireza Zakeri and Raisi's vice president Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi - dropped out. After the final results were released, they both asked their supporters to vote for Jalili in the July 5 runoff. Ghalibaf followed suit, asking "all revolutionary forces and supporters" to get behind Jalili's bid for the presidency.

In the 2021 election that brought Raisi to power, the Guardian Council disqualified many reformists and moderates, prompting many voters to shun the election. The turnout then was just under 49 percent, which at the time was the lowest in any presidential election in Iran. Friday's vote took place amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war, a dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear program and domestic discontent over the state of Iran's sanctions-hit economy. — AFP

Trump also returned to the campaign trail Friday, speaking at a rally in Virginia and launching his familiar attacks on Biden in a rambling speech. "It's not his age, it's his competence," Trump said. "The question every voter should be asking themselves today is not whether Joe Biden can survive a 90-minute debate performance, but whether America can survive four more years of crooked Joe Biden."

Trump addressed the chances of Biden being replaced by another candidate, saying "I don't really believe that because he does better in polls than any of the (other) Democrats." So far, no senior Democratic figure has publicly called on Biden to withdraw, with most toeing a party line about sticking with the existing ticket.

"I will never turn my back on President Biden," California Governor Gavin Newsom, who has figured prominently on lists of possible replacement candidates, said immediately after the debate. Forcing a change in the ticket would be politically fraught, and Biden would have to decide himself to withdraw to make way for another nominee before the party convention next month. — Agencies

International

Man with crossbow attacks Zionist embassy in Belgrade

Attacker dies after shooting police officer in neck; several people arrested

BELGRADE: A Serbian police officer on Saturday killed a man who shot him in the neck with a crossbow in front of the Zionist embassy in Belgrade, in what the prime minister called a "terrorist act". Police identified the assailant as being a "convert" to Islam, who was born in 1999 in the town of Mladenovac, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Belgrade.

The attack happened around 11:00 am (0900 GMT) on Saturday morning in the Serbian capital, when the attacker shot the officer who was on duty outside the Zionist embassy. The policeman "used a weapon in self-defense and defeated the attacker, who died as a result of his injuries", said Interior Minister Ivica Dacic.

Authorities said some arrests had been made and several people known to the security services were suspected of being linked to the attack. Police also said they were carrying out searches in several locations. The officer, who underwent surgery in hospital, was in his guard booth when the attack happened.

According to authorities, the assailant had moved to live in Novi Pazar, which is a historical and political center of the Bosniak Muslim minority in Serbia, and a center of Islam in the country. Dacic told reporters that there were early indications connecting the

attack with people suspected of being linked to the Wahhabi movement - an ultra-conservative branch of Islam that dominates in Saudi Arabia.

He said several people had been arrested for "prevention reasons" and that overall security had been stepped up in Belgrade. Special prosecutors had taken over the case, added Dacic.

'Terrorist act'

Serbian Prime Minister Milos Vucevic strongly condemned what he labelled a "heinous terrorist act". "This was an act of insanity, which cannot be attributed to any religion and any nation. It is a crime of an individual," he said, according to quotes from the Beta news agency.

The prime minister said his country would firmly respond to the threat of terrorism and stressed Serbian citizens could "feel safe". The Zionist foreign ministry called it an "attempted terrorist attack in the vicinity" of the country's embassy in Serbia. "The embassy is closed, and no employee of the embassy was injured", it said in a statement, adding that the circumstances are still being investigated. The Balkan nation has continued arms sales to the Zionist entity after the war in Gaza. — AFP



BELGRADE: A forensic police officer inspects a body lying on the road next to the Zionist embassy in Belgrade, on June 29, 2024. — AFP

Palestinians 'hunted' over Gaza support: Arab Knesset member

JERUSALEM: In the office of one of the Zionist entity's most recognizable Arab politicians, framed pictures show him posing with famous figures like Bill Clinton, Yasser Arafat and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In front of Ahmad Tibi's desk is the Arabic slogan, "The more beautiful days are those we did not yet live," which the parliamentarian says is a poignant reminder for his people as they face increased scrutiny after Hamas' October 7 attack.

The attack resulted in the death of 1,195 people in the Zionist entity, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Zionist figures. The Zionist retaliatory military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 37,765 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the territory's health ministry.

This has put pressure on the entity's Arab minority, who make up about 20 percent of the population and say they face escalating hate crimes and unjust police action. "After October 7, hundreds of Arab citizens were hunted down, chased by the (Zionist) police for writing a post or a story empathizing with the children of Gaza or saying no to the war," Tibi, the 65-year-old leader of an Arab-majority party, told AFP. "It was, and still is, tough days for Palestinian citizens of (the Zionist entity)." Adalah, an organization advocating for Arab minority rights in the entity, said community members who expressed sympathy for Gazan civilians have been unfairly punished. Between October 7 and March 27, Zionist police arrested 401 people, the majority Arabs, for speech-related offences it says were tantamount to "incitement to terrorism", its figures showed.

In the same period, there was a total of 667 suspects for speech-related offences - with only 13 Jewish



JERUSALEM: Arab Knesset member Ahmad Tibi attends a parliamentary session in Jerusalem on June 25, 2024. — AFP

citizens compared with 590 Arabs. "The crackdown on freedom of speech has created a situation in which Palestinian citizens ... can neither protest nor freely voice their opinions," it said in a report after October 7.

Anti-Arab rhetoric

But Tibi says he and other Arab citizens of the entity were against the October 7 civilian deaths. "We said here and everywhere that we are against targeting civilians ... in the south of the Zionist entity - any child, any woman," he said. "Meanwhile, we are talking about more than 15,000 Palestinian children killed in Gaza."

Yet in some schools, Jewish students have called for the removal of Arab classmates who faced disciplinary procedures, even if some were acquitted. At one protest in a dormitory in the Zionist entity which happened following October 7, students shouted, "Death to Arabs!" and tried to break down doors. In November, right-wing Zionists protested against a Jerusalem shop employing Arabs.

But the lawmaker - who says he has lost 13 Gaza relatives to Zionist bombings - believes anti-Arab rhet-

are attacks that result in amputations of legs or arms for children, adults, and women."

In May, nonprofit Save The Children said that "thousands of child amputees and injured children are struggling to recover without adequate pain relief and devices like wheelchairs". Proper prostheses are in short supply in the Gaza Strip, which is subject to a tight blockade that does not automatically allow medical equipment and medicines to enter the territory.

"God willing, the crossings will open and Suhaib will receive treatment outside Gaza. Hospitals here have neither treatment nor medicines", Khuzaiq said. The situation at his hospital is particularly dire because northern Gaza is harder to access, making shortages there graver while most hospitals are "going out of service due to direct targeting by the (Zionist) army", he said.

Marwa Abu Zaida, 40, and her eight-year-old son Nasser Abu Drabi also hope to travel abroad to get access to treatment and prostheses. Her leg and his arm were amputated after they were injured when a Zionist strike hit their home in the northern Gaza



AL-BUREIJ: An amputee makes his way along a road, past buildings destroyed by Zionist bombardment, at Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on June 24, 2024. — AFP

oric is not getting the same reaction. "All those on the Jewish side who called to deport Arab citizens, to kill all Arabs, to destroy all of Gaza ... no one was arrested," Tibi said.

The Zionist government points to Arab roles in courts, hospitals and parliament as a sign of their acceptance in society. But in 2018 the entity angered Arabs by adopting a law defining the country as the "nation-state of the Jewish people", and Tibi only sees inequality getting worse. "After October 7, it was ethno-racism, only for Jews," he said.

'We will remain'

Tibi himself faced the ire of Jewish Zionists after October 7. "I received not tens, but hundreds of threats by ordinary Jewish citizens of the entity. When there is a war ... everyone is considered to be a legitimate target." Asked if he fears being attacked, he replied: "No, but I am cautious."

The one-time adviser to former Palestinian leader Arafat criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and far-right ally National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir for the worsening treatment of Arabs. "He's a terrorist, according to the (Zionist) law," he said of Ben Gvir, a settler convicted of incitement to racism and supporting a terrorist organization over his ties to a banned Jewish extremist group.

Ben Gvir has in turn called Tibi a terrorist and for his removal from parliament over his pro-Palestinian statements. "The general atmosphere in (the Zionist entity) ... it's almost fascist," said Tibi.

But, between dramatic hand gestures, Tibi says he still has hope Jews and Arabs can rebuild bridges. "I am realistic, but I am optimistic always, because I am on the right side of history," he said. If the Gaza war ends, he says "democracy is the only way" to solve the crisis, with a Palestinian state that offers full rights. "It is a natural right for Palestinians," he said.

Switching to Arabic, Tibi had a strong message for his people and their opponents. "We face attempts at intimidation. We have withstood in the past, and we will withstand this wave of fascism and racism," he said. "We were here, and we will remain here." — AFP

Trump criticized for 'Palestinian' insult in debate with Biden

WASHINGTON: Human rights advocates on Friday condemned former President Donald Trump's references to Palestinians, and immigrants allegedly taking Black American jobs, during Thursday's debate with President Joe Biden, calling the remarks racist or insulting. Biden and Trump had a brief exchange on the war in Gaza but did not have a substantive discussion on how to end the conflict which has killed 38,000 in the enclave, according to the Gaza health ministry, and caused a massive humanitarian crisis with widespread hunger. "The only one who wants the war to continue is Hamas," Biden said. Trump responded by saying Biden has "become like a Palestinian," which rights advocates said came across as a slur. "Actually, (the Zionist entity) is the one (that wants to keep going), and you should let them go and let them finish the job. He (Biden) doesn't want to do it. He's become like a Palestinian but they don't like him because he's a very bad Palestinian. He's a weak one," Trump said.



ATLANTA: Donald Trump gestures as he participates in the first presidential debate of the 2024 elections. — AFP

On Friday, Trump again used the term 'Palestinian' in a similar way, this time saying in a rally that Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who is Jewish, was Palestinian. "He's become a Palestinian because they have a couple more votes or something," he added. The Council on American Islamic Relations advocacy group said Biden was wrong to claim that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants the war to end, while adding it viewed Trump's Palestinian comment in the debate as a racist insult.

"Former President Trump's use of 'Palestinian' as an insult was racist. President Biden's touting of his military support for the (Zionist) government's genocide in Gaza was callous," Corey Saylor, research and advocacy director at CAIR, said in a statement. The Zionist entity denies allegations of genocide.

"To insinuate that being Palestinian is somehow a bad thing, as former President Trump did when he called President Biden Palestinian, reeks of racism and anti-Arab hatred," Paul O'Brien, executive director of Amnesty International USA, told Reuters. Human rights advocates have reported a rise in Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian bias and antisemitism in the US since the latest eruption of conflict in the Middle East. The war in Gaza and Washington's support for the Zionist entity has also led to months of protests across the United States calling for an end to the conflict.

Trump also faced criticism for using the term "Black jobs" and "Hispanic jobs" while claiming immigrants who were coming into the United States from its border with Mexico were taking away those employment opportunities. The Trump campaign did not have an immediate comment to the criticism. Immigration is a key election issue and Trump has claimed Biden has failed to secure the southern US border, ushering in scores of criminals. Studies show immigrants do not commit crimes at a higher rate than native-born Americans. "The fact is that his (Biden's) big kill on the Black people is the millions of people that he's allowed to come in through the border," Trump said during the debate. "They're taking Black jobs, and they're taking Hispanic jobs."

Civil rights organization NAACP wrote on X: "What exactly are Black and Hispanic Jobs?!". It added: "There is no such thing as a Black Job." Amnesty International's O'Brien told Reuters that Trump's comments on immigration were grounded in white supremacy.

"It is disheartening that false narratives grounded in white supremacy and racism about people seeking asylum at the border and immigrant communities in the United States continue to permeate our national discourse," he added. — Reuters

Amputations soar but prostheses, painkillers lacking in Gaza

GAZA: There is little Gaza's doctors can do to alleviate the pain that three-year-old Suhaib Khuzaiq still feels from a shrapnel injury that caused his leg to be amputated above the knee in December. "He is in pain and in need of painkillers and a prosthetic limb that is only available outside Gaza", his father Ali Khuzaiq, 31, told AFP from Gaza City's Al-Ahli hospital where Suhaib receives treatment.

On December 6, a Zionist air strike on their neighborhood of Tal Al-Hawa, southwest of Gaza City, injured Suhaib and destroyed their home, displacing the family who are now staying with relatives, Khuzaiq said. The war and the Zionist blockade have caused a shortage of medicines and destroyed much of Gaza's medical capacity. As a result, amputations have become a key way of handling injuries that in other circumstances might have been treated differently, causing their number to soar further.

Citing data from UNICEF, the chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said last week that in Gaza "every day 10 children ... are losing one leg or two legs on average," adding that it meant "around 2,000 children" had lost legs since the start of the war. UNICEF's spokesman Jonathan Crickx later told AFP that difficulties in gathering data in a war zone meant the figures were only "estimates" that would take time to verify, but that the agency "has met many children who have lost limbs". Mahmoud Basal, a spokesman for Gaza's Civil Defense agency, told AFP that the estimate seemed realistic, because "as the civil defense crews work in the field, with every strike they recover children, many of whom lose either legs or arms, sometimes requiring amputations reaching high points on the limb".

No prosthesis, no exit

Medical sources said that amputations are often the only available option, but they must be performed in inadequate conditions. "There are moments when anesthesia is not available, but in order to save the lives of citizens, we resort to amputation, and this causes severe pain for the wounded", Maher, a surgeon at Al-Ahli hospital, told AFP. "Every day, there

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2024

US inflation cools in May, boosting hopes of Fed cut

Consumer spending gains 0.2%; personal income up 0.5%

WASHINGTON: US monthly inflation was unchanged in May as a modest increase in the cost of services was offset by the largest drop in goods prices in six months, drawing the Federal Reserve closer to start cutting interest rates later this year. The report from the Commerce Department on Friday also showed consumer spending rose marginally last month. Underlying prices advanced at the slowest pace in six months, raising optimism that the US central bank could engineer a much-desired "soft landing" for the economy in which inflation cools without triggering a recession and a sharp rise in unemployment.

Traders raised their bets for a Fed rate cut in September. "This was a very Fed-friendly report that should keep the September rate cut in play, while at the same time increasing investor confidence that moderate economic growth can be maintained even as rates stay higher for longer," said Scott Anderson, chief U.S. economist at BMO Capital Markets. "The sharp slowdown in core inflation is just what the doctor needed to see to keep the economy on the soft-landing glide-path."

The flat reading in the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index last month followed an unrevised 0.3 percent gain in April, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis said. It was the first time in six months that PCE inflation was unchanged. Goods prices fell 0.4 percent, the biggest drop since November.

There were big declines in prices of recreational goods and vehicles as well as furnishings and durable household equipment. The price of gasoline and other energy goods dropped 3.4 percent, the biggest slide in six months. Clothing and footwear were also cheaper, while food prices rose marginally.

The cost of services increased 0.2 percent, lifted by higher prices for housing and utilities as well as healthcare. Financial services and insurance costs declined 0.3 percent after rising for five straight months. These costs, together with housing, have been among the major drivers of services inflation.

In the 12 months through May, the PCE price index increased 2.6 percent after advancing 2.7 percent in April. Last month's inflation readings were in line with economists' expectations.

Inflation is receding after spiking in the first quarter as 525 basis points worth of rate hikes from the Fed since 2022 cool domestic demand. Inflation, however, continues to run above the central bank's 2 percent target. Financial markets saw a roughly 68 percent chance that the Fed's policy easing would start in September compared to about 64 percent before the data, though policymakers recently adopted a more hawkish outlook. The US central bank has maintained its benchmark overnight interest rate in the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range since last July. Economists were divided on whether the Fed would still reduce borrowing costs twice this year amid solid wage growth. The release of the US employment report for June next Friday could shed more light on the monetary policy outlook.



NEW YORK: People shop in New York's Financial District in New York City. US monthly inflation was unchanged in May as a modest increase in the cost of services was offset by the largest drop in goods prices in six months. — AFP

Stocks on Wall Street were trading largely higher. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices were mixed.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the PCE price index edged up 0.1 percent last month, the smallest gain since November. That followed an upwardly revised 0.3 percent rise in April.

The so-called core PCE price index was previously reported to have climbed 0.2 percent in April. Core inflation increased 2.6 percent on a year-on-year basis in May, the smallest advance since March 2021, after rising 2.8 percent in April. It rose at a 2.7 percent annualized rate over the past three months, slowing from a 3.5 percent pace in April.

The Fed tracks the PCE price measures for its inflation target. Monthly inflation readings of 0.2 percent over time are necessary to bring inflation back to target. PCE services inflation excluding energy and housing also ticked up 0.1 percent last month after advancing 0.3 percent in April. This measure is

being watched by policymakers to measure progress in lowering price pressures.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased 0.2 percent last month after rising 0.1 percent in April, the report also showed. Spending was supported by a 0.3 percent gain in services, mostly outlays on hospital care, housing and utilities as well as air transportation. Services spending increased 0.4 percent in April. Goods spending rebounded 0.2 percent, lifted by outlays on prescription medication, recreational goods and vehicles, and clothing and footwear. Spending on goods fell 0.5 percent in April. Inflation fatigue, higher borrowing costs as well as the exhaustion of excess savings accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic are holding back spending. Nonetheless, consumer spending remains underpinned by a resilient labor market, which continues to generate strong wage gains. Personal income increased 0.5 percent after climbing 0.3 per-

cent in April. Wages shot up 0.7 percent, which some economists said could concern policymakers.

Income at the disposal of households after accounting for inflation and taxes rose a solid 0.5 percent. Consumers saved more, lifting the saving rate to 3.9 percent from 3.7 percent in April.

Spending adjusted for inflation rebounded 0.3 percent after slipping 0.1 percent in April. The rise in the so-called real consumer spending left growth in consumption this quarter on track to match the first quarter's 1.5 percent pace. The Atlanta Fed is currently estimating gross domestic product to rise at a 2.2 percent rate in the second quarter. The economy grew at a 1.4 percent pace in the first quarter.

"There was no inflation in May, but there was also no indication of the kind of soft demand - undermined by slower income growth - the Fed believes necessary to keep inflation on a low track," said Chris Low, chief economist at FHN Financial. — Reuters

Understanding excise tax: A balancing act

The economy of Kuwait, as is the case with the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies, is known for its hydrocarbon wealth. However, as Kuwait strives for diversification and fiscal sustainability, taxation has become an increasingly important tool. One key area is excise tax, a form of indirect tax levied on specific goods, i.e. excise goods.



By Hassan M Abdulrahim

What is excise tax and why is it used?

Excise tax is levied on specific goods, typically those considered harmful to health or the environment, such as tobacco products, sugary drinks, and energy drinks. The GCC countries - Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the (UAE), Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman - approved the Common GCC Excise Tax Agreement in 2016. Except Kuwait, all GCC countries adopted an excise tax system a few years ago.

Generally, there are two primary objectives behind excise tax implementation:

- Discouraging Consumption: By raising the price of these goods through taxation, the aim is to discourage people from consuming them, leading to potential health benefits for the population.
- Generating Revenue: Excise tax provides a new source of income for governments, which can be used for various purposes, such as funding public services and infrastructure development.

Excise tax rates

The GCC countries have adopted a harmonized approach to excise tax rates on specific categories:

- 100 percent: Tobacco products, electronic smoking devices, and energy drinks.
- 50 percent: Carbonated beverages and sweetened drinks.

It's important to note that these are the standard rates. Each GCC member state may have slight variations in implementation or additional excisable goods under their jurisdiction.

The impact of excise tax

The introduction of excise tax has had a noticeable impact in the GCC. Studies by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suggest a reduction in tobacco consumption by as much as 20 percent in some GCC countries following the implementation of excise tax with a target of 30 percent reduction in tobacco consumption by 2030. Similarly, a report by Euromonitor International indicated a decline in sugary drink sales by 12 percent in the region after the tax was introduced.

Excise tax has also generated significant revenue for governments. According to a report by the Gulf Cooperation Council Secretariat General, excise tax contributions to non-oil revenue in the GCC reached an estimated \$13 billion in 2022. This represents a significant increase from the pre-excise tax era and highlights the growing importance of this revenue stream. However, excise tax has also brought challenges. Some argue that it disproportionately affects low-income earners who may find it harder to absorb the price increase. Additionally, there are concerns about potential disruptions to supply chains and cross-border trade within the GCC.

The road ahead for excise tax

The future of excise tax in the GCC is likely to involve ongoing evaluation and potential adjustments. Here are some key aspects to consider:

- Effectiveness in Reducing Consumption: Governments will likely monitor the long-term impact of excise tax on consumption patterns. If the desired reduction in consumption of unhealthy goods isn't achieved, tax rates or the scope of excisable products might be revised.
- Balancing Revenue and Affordability: Striking a balance between generating revenue and ensur-

ing affordability for all citizens is crucial. The GCC countries may explore targeted social support measures to mitigate the impact on low-income earners.

• Combating Tax Evasion: Ensuring compliance with excise tax regulations is essential to maximize revenue collection. Governments may invest in robust tax administration systems and collaborate with regional partners to prevent cross-border tax evasion.

• Expansion of Excisable Goods: As public health priorities evolve, the GCC may consider expanding the list of excisable goods. For instance, sugary snacks or products with high saturated fat content could be potential candidates for future excise tax inclusion.

Excise tax is a relatively new tool in the GCC's fiscal toolbox. While it has demonstrably reduced consumption of unhealthy products and generated revenue streams, challenges remain in ensuring affordability and efficient implementation. As the GCC economies continue to diversify, excise tax is likely to play a significant role in achieving sustainable fiscal positions while promoting public health.

Economic insight: Tax incidence

It is important to distinguish between statutory incidence and economic incidence. The statutory incidence of a tax is who the law says pays the tax. The economic incidence of a tax is who really bears the tax. Taxes don't always land on the shoulders they're intended for. This concept, known as economic tax incidence, depends on how sensitive consumers are to price changes, i.e. elasticity of demand.

When demand is inelastic, meaning consumers buy a good regardless of price fluctuations (e.g. cigarettes), they end up absorbing most of the tax increase. The seller can raise the price to cover the tax because consumers have limited options. Conversely, with elastic demand (many substitutes exist, e.g. sweetened juice), the burden shifts to producers. Since buyers can easily switch to alternatives, sellers have to absorb most of the tax by lowering their profit margins to keep the price attractive.

This elasticity also impacts the government's tax haul. Inelastic goods generate more revenue because even with a price increase, consumers still buy them. On the other hand, elastic goods might see a

significant drop in consumption when taxed, leading to lower overall revenue. Excise taxes, often levied on "harmful goods" like cigarettes, carbonated drinks, and energy drinks, aim to achieve a dual purpose: Discourage consumption through higher prices and raise government's tax revenue.

The effectiveness of this strategy hinges on demand elasticity. With inelastic goods, the tax successfully discourages consumption while generating revenue. But for elastic goods, the tax might not significantly curb consumption and could even lead to lower revenue due to decreased demand.

Strategic insight: Businesses

From a different perspective, companies face some strategic issues when dealing with excise taxes, namely:

- Pricing strategies: Companies in inelastic markets (e.g. cigarettes) have more leeway to raise prices and pass on most of the tax to consumers. However, they might offer discounts or promotions to soften the blow and maintain market share. In elastic markets (e.g. sweetened juice), companies might absorb some of the tax to keep prices competitive. They might also reduce costs or introduce smaller, cheaper product options to entice price-sensitive consumers.

- Market Share: In both scenarios, companies will likely employ strategies to retain customers. This could involve increased marketing and advertising to emphasize brand loyalty or introducing new product features that differentiate them from competitors.
- Tax Shifting: Companies might explore legal avenues to minimize their tax burden. This could involve lobbying for exemptions or shifting production to countries with lower excise tax rates (if feasible).

- Product innovation: In some cases, companies might develop new product variations that fall under lower tax brackets or explore alternative ingredients to reduce the taxable component of their product. However, these are just some of the strategic considerations companies make when navigating excise taxes. The optimal approach depends on the specific market dynamics and the degree of demand elasticity for the product.

NOTE: Hassan M Abdulrahim is a Senior Instructor - Economics & Finance at Canadian College Kuwait and Deputy CEO of Visionary Consulting Co.

Gulf Bank wins Best Sustainable Workplace Development Award

Bank recognized at the Gulf International CSR conference in Bahrain



Najla Al-Eisa and Nada Razzouqi receive the award.



Najla Al-Eisa and Nada Razzouqi pose for a group photo with representatives of the Kuwaiti authorities participating in the conference.

- **Nada Razzouqi: A new recognition of Gulf Bank's role in embedding sustainability principles within the bank and beyond.**
- **This reinforces our commitment to uphold our pioneering role in promoting sustainability principles and creating a workplace environment known for its diversity and inclusivity.**
- **Gulf Bank is a leading employer in the Kuwaiti financial sector among citizens.**

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank participated in the Second Gulf International Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility 2024 in Bahrain, organized by the Bahrain CSR Society. The event, held under the theme "Strategic Practices for a Better Tomorrow" was held on June 26 and 27, 2024, and was attended by Minister of Social Development in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Osama bin Ahmed bin Khalaf Al-Asfoor.

At the conference, the Gulf International Corporate Social Responsibility Awards 2024 were announced. Gulf Bank was honored with the esteemed "Best in Sustainable Development in the Workplace" award in recognition of its exceptional initiatives. The conference focused on exploring the latest trends and innovative

approaches within CSR, with the aim of fostering positive changes in both society and the environment. Through workshops, participants gained valuable insights and tools aimed at improving CSR programs and promoting sustainability principles.

Nada Razzouqi, Deputy General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, expressed her happiness and appreciation for Gulf Bank's achievement in winning the "Best in Sustainable Development in the Workplace" award. She praised the Bahrain CSR Society for organizing such an impactful event.

Razzouqi highlighted Gulf Bank's commitment to sustainability, noting its success in increasing female leadership from 10 percent to 30 percent over the

last decade. She also emphasized Gulf Bank's pioneering role in eliminating gender discrimination in job benefits, and its early adoption of the UN Women's Empowerment Principles in Kuwait.

She underscored that empowering women, youth, and individuals with disabilities is a fundamental part of Gulf Bank's five-year strategy. She noted the ongoing efforts to further enhance these initiatives, which have contributed to Gulf Bank being recognized as a leading employer in the Kuwaiti financial sector among citizens.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and di-



Najla Al-Eisa and Nada Razzouqi

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

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

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka inflation climbs

COLOMBO: Crisis-hit Sri Lanka's annual inflation almost doubled to 1.7 percent in June, up from 0.9 percent the previous month, as food prices began rising again, official data showed Saturday. The Census and Statistics department data came days after Sri Lanka secured a deal with its bilateral creditors to restructure \$10 billion in debt, a key condition to maintain an IMF bailout program. Food inflation returned, with prices rising 1.04 percent in the year to June, having been flat a month earlier, the department said. At the height of Sri Lanka's economic crisis when it defaulted on its foreign debt in 2022, inflation had risen to nearly 70 percent. — AFP

Strike disrupts Portuguese trains

LISBON: A 24-hour rail strike over wages has forced the cancellation of more than 76 percent of Portugal's trains Friday so far, the national rail operator CP said. The operator said more than 600 of the 750 trains scheduled up till 16:00 local time (1500 GMT) had been cancelled, although a skeleton service had limited the strike's impact. Announcing the action, one of the 10 unions involved said they were demanding a wage rise to offset the effects of "soaring inflation" and better career prospects. Transport minister Miguel Pinto Luz planned to hold talks with the unions in the afternoon. — AFP

ANZ, Suncorp merger approved

SYDNEY: Australia's government on Friday cleared a US\$3.3 billion merger between the country's ANZ and Suncorp banks, describing the decision as a close call. Treasurer Jim Chalmers said he approved the merger after "much deliberation" following nearly two years of review by state and federal regulators. Chalmers said it was an "on-balance call" but he received clear advice that "it would not be in the national interest to prohibit this transaction". — AFP

WestJet mechanics go on strike

OTTAWA: Mechanics at Canada's second-largest airline WestJet went on a surprise strike late Friday, threatening to ground planes and disrupt travel at the start of a national holiday long weekend. The airline's president, Diederik Pen, said in a statement the walkout could cause "severe disruptions" for thousands of travelers. It comes one day after a ministerial order for binding arbitration to settle a contract dispute was believed to have averted labor unrest at the airline. — AFP

Union says Boeing penny-pinching has hurt supply chain

SEATTLE: Boeing's practice of aggressively pressuring suppliers on costs has damaged its own supply chain, contributing to the aviation giant's current woes, a top union negotiator told AFP this week. "Boeing has spent a long time, since 2012 trying to squeeze the supply chain by forcing them to cut their costs to Boeing, year over year," said Jon Holden, president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) for District 751.

"I'm fine with efficiency," Holden said. "What I'm not okay with is undermining the health of the manufacturing process." Holden's local chapter in Seattle represents 32,000 workers, with some 30,000 at Boeing. The union hopes for significant gains from the new contract after negotiations kicked off in March.

"Boeing went through an effort to sell off different factories, to reduce their net assets, and those factories are now part of the supply chain," Holden told AFP in an interview, adding such moves contributed to the storied manufacturer's current woes.

"The company looks at ways to make things more efficient, but they cut out important redundancies like quality assurance," he said. For months, Boeing has been dealing with production problems in three commercial jets - the 737 MAX, the 787 Dreamliner and the 777.

The company has been in crisis mode since a 737 MAX flown by Alaska Airlines was forced to make an emergency landing in January after a fuselage panel blew out. Boeing has undertaken training programs and other initiatives to boost quality control and reassure the Federal Aviation Administration. Many of these efforts center on the IAM-represented Boeing factory in Renton, Washington where the MAX is built. Along with another union at Boeing, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), the IAM has sought two seats on Boeing's board of directors, an effort Boeing opposes.

In light of Boeing's current travails, the union wants to be able to bargain on any changes to quality management that could affect the production system. "We



EVERETT, US: International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 751 District President Jon Holden (right) speaks while Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton listens during a labor rally on March 22, 2016 in Everett, Washington. — AFP

never proposed those things in the past but it's our reputation, it's our jobs, it's our livelihoods," Holden said.

Key demands include a "substantial" salary hike of at least 40 percent, as well as provisions for health care, retirement and job security. Holden said a hefty wage hike is imperative after workers only received nominal cost-of-living support over the last eight years in spite of "massive inflation" of recent years. The union is also seeking assurances from Boeing that it will build its next new aircraft - expected around 2035 - in the Seattle region.

"It's job security for the next 50 years," he said. At a congressional hearing earlier this month, Boeing Chief Executive Dave Calhoun said of workers, "they will definitely get a raise."

Holden said most of the major issues in the contract talks remain unresolved, meaning the two sides will be adding hours to upcoming negotiations. The IAM plans to take a vote July 17 authorizing a possible strike. To mark the event, it has rented T-Mobile

Park in Seattle, the stadium for the Seattle Mariners baseball team, which holds up to 48,000.

"When we all participate in this important event, the factory will be quiet," the union said on its website. The current contract, in place for 16 years, expires at midnight on September 12. The union last called a strike in 2008 that lasted 57 days.

During a media visit of the Renton plant organized by Boeing this week, an AFP reporter observed a boisterous union rally with representatives wearing IAM buttons and carrying signs as they marched through the plant in a show of solidarity. "We have a very strong leverage right now and we're going to use it," said Holden. Boeing is currently engaged in talks to buy back Spirit AeroSystems, a supplier of the fuselage for the 737 MAX. The company was once part of Boeing before being spun off in 2005.

Holden welcomes the shift, saying it was "foolish" for Boeing to separate from Spirit, adding, "it's important that they are healthy." — AFP

Vietnam economy expands 6.4% in first half of year

HANOI: Vietnam's economy grew by more than six percent in the first half of 2024, government figures showed Saturday, as analysts said more reforms are needed to further boost the economy. The global manufacturing hub saw an expansion of 6.4 percent in January-June, compared to 3.7 percent over the

same period of 2023, the General Statistics Office (GSO) said in a statement.

The upswing was the result of "several measures" taken to improve supply chains, the foreign exchange market and public investment, the GSO said. Industrial production was up 7.5 percent, while foreign investment increased by 8.2 percent compared to the same period last year, the new figures showed. To maintain and promote growth, the government needs to focus on the key sectors of manufacturing and processing, logistics and hospitality, VPBank Securities analyst Duong Thien Chi said.

Policymakers should also take into account "unmeasurable variables" such as the US Federal Re-

serve's moves on interest rate reduction. Duong told AFP. The United States was Vietnam's largest export market in the first six months of 2024. The Southeast Asian nation earned \$190 billion from exports over that period, up by 14.5 percent year on year.

Despite such improvement, an International Monetary Fund analyst said Vietnam "needs a new wave of reforms" following a visit to the country late June. "Increasing productivity, further investing in human and physical capital, and incentivizing private investment in renewable energy is key," said the IMF's Paulo Medas. Vietnam is targeting growth of between six and 6.5 percent this year, up on the 5.05 percent seen in 2023. — AFP

Business

NBK launches instant payment service 'WAMD' on its Mobile Banking App

The service allows sending and receiving money instantly and conveniently

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to enhance its digital services provided customers via the NBK Mobile Banking App. In this context, the bank announced introducing Instant Payment Service (WAMD) through the app starting from 30th of June 2024, for smooth and hassle-free money transfers. The service comes within K-Net's implementation of a new domestic account to account instant payments scheme in Kuwait under the authority and supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

The instant payments system (WAMD) provides added value and quality to the national payment infrastructure capabilities. It also serves as a safe and advanced payment option that caters to the needs of different customer segments, while advancing digital transformation in Kuwait by increasing the volume of electronic financial transactions. By introducing this service on its Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to gain a high level of performance for more customer satisfaction, as well as providing a reliable and secured service (users need a verification code during registration to the service).

The instant payment service to be provided on the NBK Mobile Banking App offers an easy way to transfer money as all customers need is a valid mobile number of the beneficiary to send the money. It also

provides straightforward transactions, as customers need to input the beneficiary's mobile number, transfer amount, purpose, as well as any other notes, and agree to the terms and conditions before executing the transaction. To avail the WAMD service via the NBK Mobile Banking App, customer needs to register to the service and link one bank account with it, to be able to send, receive and request money.

Commenting on service launch, Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Head of Funds Transfer & Wealth Management Operations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK is a trailblazer in adopting the most advanced services that bolster its leadership in providing the latest digital banking solutions in instant payments in Kuwait."

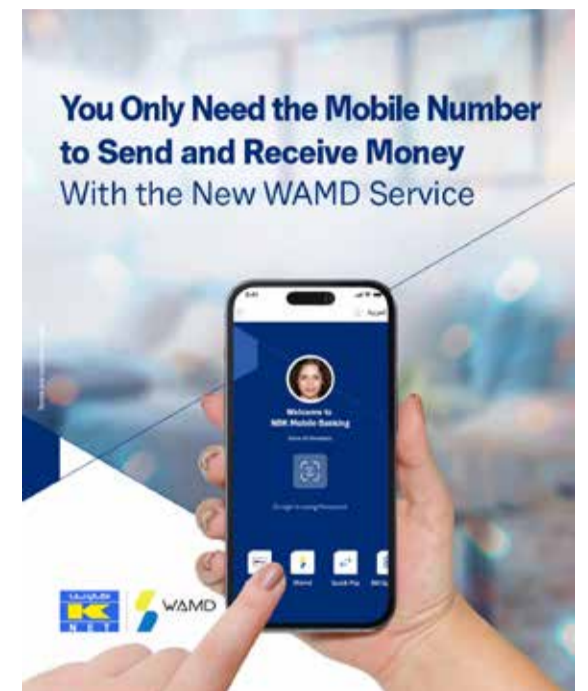
"We make unwavering efforts to keep pace with customers' ever-evolving needs and to live up to their growing expectations. We also strive to meet their preferences within our commitment to provide top-notch and highly advanced products and services," he added. Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to offer customers a secure platform to conveniently manage their finances at any given moment. This service facilitates a wide range of banking activities, including opening new accounts, monitoring transactions on accounts and credit cards, accessing accumulated NBK



Abdullah Al-Mutawa

NBK is a trailblazer in providing advanced solutions that bolster its leadership in the payment area

Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card dues, making payments for electronic bills, locating the nearest NBK Branches, ATMs, and CDMs across Kuwait, submitting requests for account statements, updating personal information, as well as toll-free numbers to call when they are abroad to reach the bank for any help/inquiry. Customers can easily download the NBK Mobile Banking App, which is currently available on various platforms including the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery.



Weyay Bank launches 'WAMD' by KNET for easier online transactions

KUWAIT: Weyay Bank announced its easiest and most convenient way to send and receive money "WAMD" through KNET under the authority and supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). This feature allows customers to seamlessly send and receive money using only the recipient's mobile number, without the need to provide any bank account details.

"We are always striving to enhance the banking experience for our customers. Being the first digital bank in Kuwait, we have been the pioneer to quickly adapt our mobile app to this instant payment feature," said Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank. "WAMD" is a game-changer, making money transfers more convenient, secure, and accessible than ever before. We are also fully aware of our customers' tendency to value convenience and security more than anything else when it comes to their financial online transactions. Considering the new feature "WAMD", it is a testament to our commitment to delivering innovative solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our customers."

The new feature leverages the latest advancements in financial technology to provide a seamless and user-friendly money transfer solution. Customers can now register with WAMD through the Weyay app in one step that requires a customer's review and confirmation of their contact details, i.e. name and mobile number, to be able to start sending, receiving, and refunding money simply by entering the recipient's mobile number, eliminating the need to remember or share sensitive bank account information.

What makes "WAMD" a more convenient way to receive money from others is that customers can request money through a single tap in the Weyay app instead of generating payment links.

Integrating "WAMD" into the Weyay app not only does streamline the money transfer process, but also enhances the overall security of financial transactions by eliminating the risk of unauthorized access or misuse. The new feature is now available for all Weyay app users, empowering them to make



Amal Al-Duwaisan



instant payments anytime, anywhere.

With its up-to-date features, user-friendly app interface, and commitment to digital banking excellence, Weyay Bank is poised to redefine the future of banking. Download the Weyay Bank app to experience the convenience of online transactions nowadays.

Get behind climate technology, Gates urges investors

LONDON: Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates urged investors to get behind cutting-edge climate technologies he says would drive a "green industrial revolution" and a next wave of global prosperity. Over three days in an upmarket London venue, Gates showcased more than 100 companies making ground on cutting planet-heating emissions from carbon-intensive sectors most responsible for climate change.

Gates is a firm believer in the power of innovation to drive breakthroughs in heavily polluting industries like manufacturing, energy and transport. He is the single largest investor in a fund he established in 2015 that has ploughed around \$2.2 billion into early-stage technologies like low-carbon cement, zero-emissions aviation and sustainable building materials.

But in the quest to deploy these technologies more quickly at scale, Gates is seeking to widen the investor base from venture capitalists to pension and sovereign wealth funds.

Many of the innovations he has bankrolled are still at the lab level and not making a dent on the heat-trapping gases that drive global warming, let alone a return on investment. Critics say climate technology is a costly distraction when deep reductions in emissions are needed today, as well as money to help the developing world cope with climate change. Gates acknowledged that innovation alone would not solve the problem, but said there were several reasons to be optimistic.

Some of these companies are already rolling out innovations, he said, while others are showing great progress in short time. "I think the clock is mov-

ing forward because of human ingenuity," he told reporters at the close of his Breakthrough Energy summit at a 19th-century dockyard in London.

"I do think we can provide all services that mankind wants with zero emissions without making the cost of those services higher... I don't think I am crazy to be optimistic." Less than a decade ago, Gates said, there was very little investor interest in climate technologies. He raised an initial \$1 billion with other ultra-wealthy investors including Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Alibaba's Jack Ma, and their first summit in 2022 attracted a few hundred attendees.

But investors beyond deep-pocketed philanthropists are starting to pay attention to climate startups long deemed too risky a bet, industry figures show. At the London event, Gates brought together around 1,500 executives from banks, state-backed investment funds and major businesses.

In one pavilion, potential investors inspected hydrogen-electric aircraft engines designed by ZeroAvia, hunks of low-carbon steel manufactured by Boston Metal, and an enormous magnet used by Commonwealth Fusion Systems to test fusion power. Source, a company that uses a "hydropanel" to harvest water from vapor in the atmosphere, quenched thirsts on a hot summer's night.

The fast rise in investor interest was obvious and understandable, said Tim Heidel, CEO at Veir, a company backed by Gates that is exploring high-temperature conduction to improve electricity transmission. "They have an opportunity to build some of the largest companies on the planet," Heidel told AFP at a reception night where attendees drank cocktails with names such as "electricity elixir" and listened to a string quartet.

Gates told investors that "if you're helping to solve climate, the chance of building very large, very profitable companies" would follow. "I think it's fair to say that what you're seeing... (with) those companies is the foundation for this green industrial revolution," he said in an opening pitch after walking on stage to the sound of "Revolution" by the Beatles.

The optimism stood in stark contrast to the diplomatic climate meetings hosted by the United Nations.



Microsoft founder Bill Gates (left) and Britain's Prince William attend the Breakthrough Energy Summit in London on June 27, 2024 bringing together leaders in technology, policy, science, academia, and business to collaborate on innovative climate solutions. — AFP

Crucial negotiations in June toward a new target on climate finance ended in bitter disagreement over how much rich countries should pay poorer ones for their emissions. Veteran US diplomat John Kerry said it would be the private sector - not governments - that would raise the trillions of dollars needed every year to confront the challenge, and new technology would drive that progress.

"It's not your average technology mission. This is life or death, literally," the former American climate envoy said Thursday. This year is shaping up as the hottest on record, with floods devastating swathes of the globe while many parts of Europe, Asia and Latin America are sweltering under record-breaking heatwaves. Without urgent emission cuts this decade, the world risks breaching 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming above industrial levels, the benchmark limit of the Paris climate accord.

Julia Reinaud, a senior director at Breakthrough Energy, said it was time to "double down" and get early-stage technologies from prototype to power grid. "We don't have the 30 years that it took to develop solar to where it is today," she said. — AFP

UK exits recession with stronger than expected growth

LONDON: Britain's economy emerged from a short-lived recession in the first quarter with stronger-than-anticipated growth, upwardly revised data showed Friday, lifting embattled Prime Minister Rishi Sunak before next week's general election. Gross domestic product grew 0.7 percent in the first three months of this year, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, upgrading the prior growth estimate of 0.6 percent. Market expectations had been for no change.

The surprise modest improvement was driven by the services sector, with slightly stronger activity in the professional services, transport and storage.

The upbeat news comes as Sunak's Conservatives are badly trailing the main opposition Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer, ahead of nationwide polls due next Thursday. "This is certainly good news for whoever will be the Prime Minister this time next week," noted Paul Dales, chief UK economist at research consultancy Capital Economics.

However, the ONS had revealed earlier this month that the UK economy had stagnated in April with zero growth, but the performance was hit by wet weather.

The economy contracted slightly for two quarters in a row in the second half of 2023, meeting the technical definition of a recession that was caused by elevated inflation that has prolonged a cost-of-living crisis. Britain votes on July 4 in an election widely expected to be won by Labour, a victory that would end 14 years of rule by Conservatives, who have been led by Sunak since 2022.

"This is certainly good news for whoever

will be the Prime Minister this time next week, although it could also contribute to the Bank of England cutting interest rates a bit slower than otherwise," noted Paul Dales, chief UK economist at research consultancy Capital Economics.

The ONS had already revealed earlier this month that the economy stagnated in April with zero growth, dented by wet weather which weighed on construction firms and retailers.

"More timely GDP data from April suggests that the UK economy may have slipped up again," warned XTB research director Kathleen Brooks.

Richard Flax, chief investment officer at European digital wealth manager Moneyfarm, meanwhile cautioned that Britain's economic recovery would be modest. "While the UK does not appear poised to re-enter recession, these figures hardly endorse Sunak's claim that the economy has turned a corner," said Flax. — AFP



DERBY, UK: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak walks beside a train being built during a visit to Alstom Transport in Derby, northern England, on June 27, 2024. — AFP

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2024

Self-taught Cuban glass blower turns recycled glass into art



Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano and two other people work on molten glass in his atelier in Havana, Cuba. — Reuters photos



Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano takes a glass out of a furnace.



Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano works in his atelier.



Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano works on molten glass.



Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano works on molten glass.

Cuban Eduardo Viciano taught himself to blow glass using the most basic of tools and raw materials, one of a handful of artisans to master the art on the Caribbean Island nation. Viciano, 54, toils daily at his trade, heating his glass in three handmade brick ovens, then blowing them into exquisite and colorful forms for use as lamps, ceiling lights, sculptures and containers. "There is no tradition of glass blowing in the country," Viciano said. "Everything we do here is done self-taught. We design our own equipment and the tools."

Glass blowing is an art form that involves inflating molten glass into a bubble with the aid of a blowpipe, a practice that dates back at least 2,000 years. To create an object, pieces of glass are placed inside a handmade brick oven to melt. The artist then uses a blowpipe and tongs give the piece its shape. In Cuba, even a corner hardware store is a rarity due to a grinding economic crisis that has led to widespread shortages. Viciano said he uses scraps of glass anywhere he can find them. His recycled glass, transformed into art, is exhibited in the Spanish

Embassy in Cuba, in the National Capitol building, in Havana's Grand Theater and in the stained-glass windows of local churches, Viciano said. — Reuters

Glassmaker Eduardo Viciano blows molten glass.

Lifestyle



Simon Cowell attends the "America's Got Talent" Season 19 Red Carpet at Pasadena Civic Auditorium on March 26, 2024 in Pasadena, California. - AFP

Simon Cowell looks for UK's next megastar boy band again

Fourteen years after launching One Direction on "The X Factor", music mogul and television personality Simon Cowell is looking for the UK's next big boy band, embarking on a new project differing from the talent shows he is known for. Cowell will hold auditions for 16-18 year-olds in Liverpool, Dublin and London over the summer in a bid to form megastars on levels not seen in Britain since the best-selling One Direction, who found fame on his televised singing competition "The X Factor" before parting ways several years later.

"Weirdly since One Direction, there hasn't been a successful UK band, which I don't understand why," Cowell told Reuters in an interview. "As an entry point into the music business, it's by far the best route. Diana Ross

became Diana Ross because she was in the Supremes. Beyonce became Beyonce 'cos she was in Destiny's Child." Unlike "The X Factor", there will be no weekly televised shows or vote but a potential documentary series. "As a viewer, I'd find it more interesting, particularly if I was a performer, I'd really want to see why people get chosen and what is the process you go through," Cowell said.

"In my opinion, that's never really been shown, certainly since I've been making these shows ... you see a side of it. I don't think you really see the interesting part ... the highs and lows." "The X Factor" last aired in Britain in 2018. Once hugely popular, it had seen ratings fall over the years. "More people than you think watch these shows

... Now, of course, in different ways as well - on YouTube, TikTok," Cowell said. "I think they're still very popular." He said talent shows had a purpose, helping new artists get noticed.

"Right now with the amount of songs that are being uploaded every day and the amount of artists that are breaking globally ... I think it's something like two UK artists in seven years have broken globally ... which is horrendous. "...A lot of these artists get their first break (on televised talent shows) ... even their first audition if it goes out and goes viral, that is a step on the ladder." Asked if he would do anything differently now compared to his work with One Direction, Cowell said he would not change much.

"I'm always very - 'do what you want ... have fun' ... I'm certainly not going

to tell you what to wear. I might advise you as to what I think is the best record to put out," he said. In the last few years, K-pop bands such as BTS have become hit phenomena building global fan bases. "K-pop filled a void," Cowell said. "So when I look at BTS filling out Wembley Stadium, you say, well, then of course there's still a market for bands, possibly bigger than ever." Cowell, who said his ideal boy band are "people who know who they are", started his search earlier this month. Asked what response he had received so far, he said: "You really don't know until you turn up on the day ... If not enough people turn up or that I just don't think they're right, then we're gonna have to keep going." — AFP

K-pop stars Seventeen become UNESCO ambassadors

K-pop megastars Seventeen said Wednesday they were honored to be named UNESCO goodwill ambassadors on Wednesday. "We are humbled and overwhelmed to stand before you for the first time as UNESCO's goodwill ambassadors for youth," said Seventeen member Joshua Hong at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. "It is a great honor to be representing today's young people which is a priority group for UNESCO," he said, adding that the boy band would donate

£1 million to a UNESCO youth grant scheme for creative projects.

UNESCO director-general Audrey Azoulay said the partnership with Seventeen "will add a tremendous momentum to our efforts". "They will be a fantastic bridge between us, UNESCO, our values, what we stand for, our aim for peace, and young people," she added. The 13-strong South Korean band founded in 2015, were second only to Taylor Swift for global revenue last year, according to the International Federation of the

Phonographic Industry (IFPI). They also topped the IFPI album charts in 2023 with "FML" and have racked up billions of streams online.

The group has already been working with the organization less formally and performed at the UNESCO Paris office in November. Other current ambassadors include Brazilian footballer Vinicius, actors Rossi de Palma and Forest Whitaker, and Italian-Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco. — AFP



UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and members of South Korean boy band SEVENTEEN pose during a photocall before their nomination ceremony as Goodwill Ambassador for Youth at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, June 26, 2024.--Reuters

SOME LIKE IT NOT: LA BARS DEMOLITION OF MARILYN MONROE HOME

The Los Angeles home where Marilyn Monroe died was declared a historic landmark on Wednesday, thwarting plans by its current owners to demolish the property. The house was home to the "Some Like It Hot" screen siren for the final six months of her life up to her death from a drug overdose in 1962.

More than half a century on, Monroe remains one of the most beloved figures in US pop culture, and fans as well as conservationists have closely followed a row over the future of the home. Property heiress Brinah Milstein and her reality TV producer husband Roy Bank bought the Spanish Colonial-style home in the

swanky Brentwood neighborhood last summer for \$8.35 million.

The couple owned the house next door and intended to combine the two properties. That construction would have involved razing the Monroe home.

But when a demolition permit was issued last September, a furor quickly followed, and local politicians moved quickly to designate the building protected status. Last month, the owners sued the city of Los Angeles for "illegal and unconstitutional conduct."

Their petition noted Monroe had "occasionally" lived in the home for "a mere six months", and the couple claim that more than a dozen previ-

ous owners since 1962 have already changed the building beyond recognition. Those objections were overruled Wednesday, as city councillors approved the designation of the house as a historic cultural monument.

Monroe bought the 3,000-square-foot single-storey hacienda in 1962 just after her divorce from playwright Arthur Miller. "There is no other person or place in the city of Los Angeles as iconic as Marilyn Monroe and her Brentwood home," said councillor Traci Park, whose district includes the house in question.

"Some of the most world-famous images ever taken of her were in that home, on those grounds and near her

pool. "There is likely no woman in history or culture who captures the imagination of the public the way Marilyn Monroe did. Even all these years later, her story still resonates and inspires many of us today."

Monroe's smouldering looks and breathy delivery made her one of the most bankable movie stars of her era.

The "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" star was linked during her lifetime with some of the most eligible men of her era, including president John F. Kennedy, famously singing "Happy Birthday, Mr President" at Madison Square Garden. — AFP



Film director Laurence Olivier directs US actress Marilyn Monroe on August 14, 1956 during the filming of "The Prince and the Showgirl" at Pinewood's studios near London.



An aerial view shows Marilyn Monroe's final home in the Brentwood neighborhood on September 14, 2023 in Brentwood, California.—AFP photos



(From left) US actress Dakota Johnson, US actor Sean Penn, and writer, director, and producer Christy Hall arrive for the premiere of "Daddio" during the Toronto International Film Festival at the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on September 10, 2023. - AFP

'Daddio' film eschews glitz for deep conversation between Sean Penn, Dakota Johnson

Dakota Johnson knew two-time Academy Winner Sean Penn was exactly who she wanted to star in the film "Daddio" as the male lead, but at first, she was not sure how to make it happen. "The first and only person that I was like, 'Oh he'd be really perfect', was Sean and we kind of thought he would never do it because it's such a small movie with a first-time filmmaker and newer producers," she said. However, living close to Penn and occasionally hanging out gave her the chance to ask him if he would read the script for "Daddio." "He did it quite quickly, and that was surprising, and then we went for a walk, and he loved it (the script)," Johnson added.

Johnson acquired the "Daddio" screenplay from writer and director Christy Hall. In the film, she plays a young woman who takes a cab driven by a man named Clark, played by Penn, who calls her "Girlie." The character's real name is never stated in the

film. "Girlie" takes the yellow cab back to her apartment in Manhattan after landing at John F. Kennedy Airport. She and Clark, the cab driver, have a shockingly earnest conversation about a range of topics, including relationships, loss and vulnerability.

"Daddio" arrives in theaters on Friday. The majority of the film involves Clark and "Girlie" talking about their lives and experiences while in the cab. Penn believes the film defies the "razzle dazzle" that people are often told they must look for in a film. For him, a glitzy film is not necessarily the key to crafting impressive cinema. Instead, what struck him about "Daddio" was the quality of the script and the rawness of Johnson's performance as "Girlie." "She has such a beautiful vulnerability ... that never gets in the way of strength," he said. "It's vulnerability in the most relevant ways," he added. — AFP



Sigourney Weaver attends Bridging the Distance: Celebrating Five Years of Abortion Access with The Bridig Alliance at The Times Center on May 01, 2024 in New York City.—AFP

Sigourney Weaver to get Venice Film Festival honour

Actor Sigourney Weaver, best known for her iconic role in Alien, will receive a lifetime achievement award at this year's Venice Film Festival, a statement from organizers said on Friday. "An actress of the calibre of Sigourney Weaver has few rivals," the festival's artistic director, Alberto Barbera said.

Weaver is being honored for building bridges "between the most sophisticated art-house cinema and movies that engage with the public in a frank and original way, all the while remaining true to herself", he said. Weaver, who will receive the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 81st festival on Venice's Lido, said she would "proudly accept this award in celebration of all who have helped bring these films to life".

The US actor, who has won two Golden Globe Awards and a Grammy Award, rose to fame as Ellen Ripley, the protagonist in Ridley Scott's 1979 science fiction film Alien. She returned in James Cameron's 1986 Aliens - receiving her first Academy Award nomination - and appeared in two more films in the franchise, as well as the blockbuster Avatar and Ghostbusters films. — AFP

6,101 pieces of history: Brazilian owns world's largest shirt collection



A view of the Brazil jersey worn by Neymar during the 2011 Copa America.

Brazilian Cassio Brandao walks through rooms filled with clothes racks that in April made him a Guinness World Records title holder as the owner of the world's largest collection of soccer shirts. From rare Pele jerseys to a 1998 World Cup shirt signed by Ronaldo, the 41-year-old Google employee has amassed a total 6,101 shirts since he started collecting them in 2000. "They are more than just 6,101 pieces of fabric; they are 6,101 stories that help us tell a bit of the history of soccer," Brandao told Reuters as, wearing white gloves, he took out some of his favorite items.

He keeps his shirts at the office of a collectors club he founded in Sao Paulo, "Alambrado Soccer & Culture," bringing together 60 people who trade stories and jerseys - some worth up to 40,000 reais (\$7,400). Brandao's collection includes the shirt worn by Pele when the Brazilian player nicknamed "The King" met Britain's Queen Elizabeth in 1968.

She was the guest of honor at a match at Rio de Janeiro's monumental Maracana stadium during an official visit to Brazil.

Pele is the star of the Alambrado office, which is decorated with signed shirts and framed pictures of the late soccer great, who died in December 2022. "Some shirts can go up to 40,000 reais, but a Pele shirt is priceless," Brandao said. He also displays a 1994 Brazil jacket worn by seven times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton at last year's Sao Paulo Grand Prix, when the British driver - an honorary Brazilian citizen - asked to borrow the outfit.

A large part of Brandao's collection is dedicated to his favorite club, local side Corinthians, including jerseys from Ronaldo's spell at the club and shirts worn by his favorite player Socrates. "Each shirt contains a story," Brandao said. "Stories of wins, losses, and overcoming. Stories that document a bit of the world's greatest sport." — Reuters



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds a Santos F.C. shirt worn by Pele in a room filled with clothes racks that in April 2024 made him become a Guinness World Records title holder as the owner of the world's largest collection of soccer shirts, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — Reuters photos



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds Brazil's tracksuit worn by Pele.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds a Brazil jersey of Ronaldo.



A view of the Brazilian Men's soccer team tracksuit from 1994 worn by F1 driver Lewis Hamilton among Cassio Brandao's collection.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds an Argentina jersey of Lionel Messi.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds the grass of the International Stadium Yokohama inside a glass box.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds shirts worn by Pele.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds a German shirt received by Pele during an exchange with player Beckenbauer at the end of a game.



Cassio Brandao, 41, holds a shirt worn by Pele during a match with the presence of Britain's Queen Elizabeth in 1968.

Hong Kong is the most expensive city for expats in 2024

Uprooting your life and moving to a completely different city for work isn't always an easy decision. There are many factors to consider, with cost undoubtedly high on the list. But which international city is the most expensive in the world for expats to move to? Hong Kong has once again taken the title of most costly city for overseas workers in the 2024 Mercer Cost of Living Survey. The Asian city, which also topped the annual list in 2022 and 2023, was closely followed by Singapore, in second place. Much of the rest of the top 10 was taken up by Swiss cities, with Zurich, Geneva, Ba-

sel and Bern coming in third, fourth, fifth and sixth place respectively.

1. Hong Kong
2. Singapore
3. Zurich, Switzerland
4. Geneva, Switzerland
5. Basel, Switzerland
6. Bern, Switzerland
7. New York
8. London, United Kingdom
9. Nassau, The Bahamas
10. Los Angeles



Photo shows ariel view of Kong Kong.

Vienna is the world's most livable city for the third straight year



Photo shows Vienna.

Vienna is still the world's most liveable city for a third year in a row according to a new survey published Thursday. In the Economist's annual ranking, the Austrian capital again came first, followed by the Danish capital Copenhagen and Zurich in Switzerland. Melbourne in Australia and Calgary in Canada completed the top five in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Global Liveability Index. "Western Europe remains the most liveable region, but has seen a decline in stability scores amid increasing instances of protests.... on a variety of issues," said a statement from the EIU. Vienna got full scores in terms of its stability, health care, education

and infrastructure.

2024's Global Liveability Index: The top 10

1. Vienna, Austria
2. Copenhagen, Denmark
3. Zurich, Switzerland
4. Melbourne, Australia
5. Calgary, Canada
6. Geneva, Switzerland
7. Sydney, Australia
8. Vancouver, Canada
9. Osaka, Japan
10. Auckland, New Zealand

Sports

Pakistan's first markswoman guns for historic medal at the Olympics

Talat will compete in the 10m air pistol and 25m pistol events

JHELUM: Slowing her breath and focusing on a bulls-eye in her pistol's sights, Kishmala Talat is aiming to become the first woman from Pakistan to win an Olympic medal. At the Paris Games starting on July 26, Talat will compete in the 10m air pistol and 25m pistol events, going for glory abroad and defying stereotypes back home. Pakistan's medal prospects are undercut by modesty codes which dissuade women from participating in sport.

The 21-year-old Talat, who comes from a military family, is the first Pakistani woman to qualify for Olympic shooting. "In Pakistan there's a prevalent taboo that dictates girls should stay at home, do girly things, and play with dolls, while boys are to play with guns," she said. "I see no one as competition. I compete with myself," she told AFP at a target range in the eastern city of Jhelum.

'Wanted to do more'

Talat has won dozens of medals at national level and four internationally, including Pakistan's first shooting medal ever, a bronze, at the Asian Games last year. Pakistan has only ever won 10 Olympic medals - all by men - and none since the 1992 Games.

Talat, who has just completed her university degree in communications, realistically faces an uphill task to get on the podium in Paris. She has a global ranking of 37th in the 10m event and is 41st in the 25m, according to the International Shooting Sport Federation. "I longed for recognition. I wanted to do more," she said.

"I wanted that whenever shooting is discussed, or 'Kishmala' is mentioned, it would be associated with someone who did something great for Pakistan." Hoping to defy the odds, she spends 10 hours a day training - one hour of physical exercise and then four hours each on the 10m and 25m ranges.

The last hour in the evening is spent meditating, concentrating on the flickering flame of a candle in an attempt to hone the zen needed to find her target. "I am dedicated to giving my best performance to let Pakistan's name shine," said Talat.

She takes her shots with her spare hand stuffed in her pocket and one eye covered by custom-fit glasses, her face frozen in expressionless concentration. The sport of target shooting is not a common pursuit in Pakistan.

Cricket is by far the most popular pastime, but all sports suffer from chronic underfunding. However, guns are omnipresent in Pakistan. Swiss weapons research group the Small Arms Survey estimated in 2017 that there were nearly 44 million legal or illicit guns held by civilians in Pakistan. The figure is the fourth highest globally and means there are 22 weapons per every hundred citizens in the nation of more than 240 million.

'City of Martyrs'

Talat's talent has been nurtured by Pakistan's military, the sixth-largest in the world with a vast budget allowing it to operate ski resorts, polo grounds and mountaineering academies. Talat is trained by officers and a foreign coach at a military facility in



JHELUM: Kishmala Talat, Pakistan's first female to qualify for Olympic shooting, aims an air pistol at a 10m target range during a practice session at the Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) in Jhelum. — AFP

Jhelum, known as "City of Martyrs" for its strong ties to the armed forces.

She hails from the garrison city of Rawalpindi, where the armed forces are headquartered. Her 53-year-old mother, Samina Yaqoob, serves as a major in the military's nursing service and proudly displays her daughter's many medals in the family

living room. Yaqoob once dreamed of competing herself. "I got married and got busy with that life, but it makes me happy when I see my daughter move forward with my dream," she said. "Girls should step forward, observe, work diligently and their parents should support them," the mother said. "She believes she can do anything. That's just who she is." — AFP

Pogacar favourite as Tour de France sets off from Florence

FLORENCE: The Tour de France set off from the Italian city of Florence in searing heat on Saturday with Tadej Pogacar gunning for a historic Giro-Tour double, while champion Jonas Vingegaard seeks a third straight title. The pair led the peloton past the Palazzo Vecchio, the Duomo and other key sites in the Renaissance city which was packed with holidaymakers and fans braving soaring temperatures. The hilly first of three stages in Italy could already create surprises with temperatures of 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) forecast in the shade.

Ahead is a gruelling 3,498 kilometre-route that crosses the Alps twice and ends exceptionally on the French Riviera rather than the Champs-Élysées on July 21 due to the upcoming Paris Olympics. The 2024 Tour is billed as a four-way struggle.

Behind Vingegaard and 2020-2021 champion Pogacar lurk former Vuelta and Giro champion Primož Roglic (Red Bull) and Tour newcomer Remco Evenepoel of Soudal Quick-Step. Evenepoel, who won both the Vuelta and the world championships in 2022, has described Pogacar as "untouchable if he stays safe and sound" even though the Slovenian revealed on arrival in Florence that he was recovering from a dose of Covid. The big four all predicted the first two days would feature a scrap for the yellow jersey between Visma's Wout Van Aert and his eter-

nal rival Mathieu Van der Poel. Both men suffered bad falls in the build up to the Tour. World champion Van Der Poel also shrugged off the expectation. "The first two days look too hard for me and (teammate) Jasper (Philipsen)," he said.

Italian job

Day one takes the riders over seven climbs as it crosses Italy to the Adriatic seaside resort of Rimini with its pretty beaches and lidos. Director Christian Prudhomme has promised a brawl from day one, and a Team UAE attack would seem as likely a scenario as any, given they did just that on last year's opening stage. Adam Yates is one of four UAE riders described by team leader Pogacar as "superstars", and he would seem equipped to take the yellow jersey again after beating his twin brother Simon to the line on day one last year.

Another Briton, Tom Pidcock, Roglic and even Pogacar himself are also worth keeping an eye on Saturday. Of the Italians gunning for the yellow in Italy, Alberto Bettiol of EF Education First is nailed on to make a bid as the American team have a history of gunning for a day one yellow jersey. The seven climbs are all short and average out at around 6.5 percent incline, making for some explosive racing.

Ageing British sprinter Mark Cavendish, 39, is back at the Tour de France as the subject of his own Netflix documentary on his personal quest for one last stage win before riding off into the sunset. The Manx Missile, who was given a knighthood this month by King Charles III, has 34 Tour de France stage wins over his career, the same as Eddy Merckx. "I have won 34 stages, along with the great Eddy Merckx, and that's the most," said Cavendish. — AFP



FLORENCE: EasyPost team riders cycle during a team training session, on the eve of the start of 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, outside Florence, in Italy. — AFP

Dupont guides Toulouse to incredible win

MARSEILLE: A superb Antoine Dupont said on Friday it was "incredible" for Toulouse to secure a domestic and Champions Cup double with victory in the French Top 14 final as he scored twice in a 59-3 rout of Bordeaux-Begles. Dupont, 27, made his contributions early in the second half as the holders claimed both trophies in one season for a third time with a record score.

Bordeaux-Begles had just one Maxime Lucu penalty on the scoreboard as they conceded nine tries in their first appearance in a final in either competition. "I'm very happy, it's incredible for the history of the club and these guys," Dupont told Canal+.

"I think I've achieved much more than I could have dreamt of as a child. I have to realize that but not too much as to keep dreaming," the 2021 World Rugby player of the year added. Humid and warm conditions in front of a sold-out 67,000-capacity Stade Velodrome welcomed both sides, with Par-

is' Stade de France out of use due to the upcoming Olympic Games. Bordeaux-Begles were handed a big boost as France fly-half Matthieu Jalibert and Tonga loose-head prop Ben Tameifuna were passed fit after they had missed last Saturday's semi-final win over Stade Français.

Toulouse started without first-choice loose-head Cyril Baille, who suffered a serious ankle injury in the last four victory over La Rochelle. Giant front-rower Tameifuna wore a Tongan flag as the French national anthem rang around the Velodrome with French president Emmanuel Macron absent. Toulouse were quick out of the blocks as Dupont crossed after just six minutes in his final game before France's Olympic sevens squad is named on July 8. In the build-up to the try, the video referee adjudged Bordeaux-Begles' No 8 Tevita Tatafu had made a high tackle and referee Ludovic Cayre showed the Japan back-rower a yellow card. By the time Tatafu had returned to the field Toulouse led 10-3 after 16 minutes as full-back Thomas Ramos added to his conversion of Dupont's first touchdown with a penalty in response to Maxime Lucu's three-pointer for Bordeaux-Begles.

Total control

By the 25-minute mark Toulouse and a majestic Dupont were in total control. Dupont set-up hook-

England's Rai and USA's Bhatia share PGA Detroit lead

WASHINGTON: England's Aaron Rai closed with back-to-back birdies to match American Akshay Bhatia for a share of the lead after Friday's second round of the US PGA Tour Rocket Mortgage Classic. Rai, a two-time winner on the DP World Tour chasing his first PGA title, fired a seven-under-par 65 to stand on 13-under 131 after 36 holes at Detroit Golf Club.

That left the 29-year-old from Wolverhampton level with Bhatia, who shot 67 to put him on 131 without a bogey this week. "Felt like I drove it pretty well," Rai said. "Hit a lot of good approach shots. Felt like I hit a lot of greens. I gave myself a lot of looks and nice to finish off that way on 17 and 18."

Rai, who had five-foot birdie putts at the third and par-3 11th holes, reeled off three birdies in a row to close the front nine. He drove the par-5 17th in two to set up a tap-in birdie and sank a birdie putt at 18 from just outside 20 feet to seize a share of the halfway lead.

"The game is in a good place," Rai said. "Striking it well tee to green. It's nice to see a few putts go in over the last couple of days. "It has definitely given me a little more confidence on the greens the last couple days which has made a difference."

Americans Troy Merritt, Cameron Young and Taylor Montgomery shared third on 131 with South African Erik van Rooyen. Bhatia won playoffs to capture both his PGA titles, at last July's Barracuda Championship and last April's Texas Open.

Back-nine starter Bhatia sank a three-footer to birdie the 10th hole then rolled in a birdie putt from just over 30 feet at the par-3 15th. He added back-to-back birdie putts on 18 from four feet and the first hole from three feet then tapped in for birdie at the par-5 seventh after reaching the green in two.

"It's nice to get a score like what I had today," Bhatia said. "It's a fun play." His craziest shot of the day was off the 17th tee when his ball rolled into a small drain hole. "That was wild. No, never seen it. Rules official has never seen it, so it was kind of one in a million chance that ball goes in that small hole in that drain, so it was pretty funny," Bhatia said. "That was hilarious."

American Joe Highsmith, who missed the cut in his past five PGA starts, aceed the par-3 fifth hole, his 14th hole of the round. He shot 64 to stand on 135. American Neal Shipley, low amateur at the Masters and US Open, stood on 135 in his professional debut. US 15-year-old amateur Miles Russell made his PGA Tour debut, going 74 and 70 to miss the cut. — AFP

er Peato Mauvaka with a flat pass before scoring a second with a delightful chip kick and Ramos' conversion made it 22-3.

Bordeaux-Begles in their maiden Top 14 final, coached by former Toulouse hooker Yannick Bru, were struggling with flankers Jack Willis and Francois Cros in superb form in defence for the champions. Ramos extended the lead to 25-3 four minutes after the interval with a second penalty as Toulouse played up to their pre-match favourites tag.

With 25 minutes to go a tired-looking pair of Jalibert and Tameifuna had been replaced with Toulouse's red and black clad fans sensing another Bouclier de Brennus title, first awarded in 1892. Victory was confirmed with a quarter of an hour left as Ramos dived over, his try coming from a Dupont break.

A cruising Toulouse added a fifth and sixth try as hooker Julien Marchand and winger Blair Kinghorn crossed with ease before the loudest cheer of the game came as Dupont was replaced with 10 minutes to play. Kinghorn's try took Toulouse to 40 points and the record score in a Top 14 final. Toulouse rubbed salt into Bordeaux-Begles wounds in the closing five minutes as Ramos added a second try, prop David Ainu'u and full-back Ange Capuozzo crashed over to cross the half century. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: US gymnast Simone Biles wave to the crowd as she's introduced during the Women's Day One of 2024 US Olympic Gymnastics Trials at the Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on June 28, 2024. — AFP

Biles, a step closer to Paris

MINNEAPOLIS: Simone Biles continued her march toward the Paris Olympics on Friday with a dynamic day one at the US gymnastics trials that featured brilliance and a little reminder that she's human, too.

The four-time Olympic gold medalist thrilled the Target Center crowd with her signature Yurchenko double pike vault, now also known as the Biles II.

She earned 15.975 points for the vault which no other woman has attempted in competition. Biles topped the all-around standings after the first night of competition on 58.900 points, with the all-around winner after day two on Sunday guaranteed a trip to Paris, where gymnastics competition begins in just under a month.

The other four spots on the team will be decided by a selection committee, based on results at trials and in prior events with an eye toward maximizing the squad's scoring potential in Paris. Jordan Chiles, part of the US silver medal-winning team in Tokyo, was second with 56.400 points. Tokyo all-around champion Suni Lee, eyeing a return trip to the Games after battling back from kidney disease, was in third on 56.025 points after a night when injuries to two Olympic contenders ratcheted up the stress for everyone.

Biles' coach, Laurent Landi, said the injuries to Shilese Jones and Kayla DiCello at the start of the night affected everyone, Biles included. "It's always hard to see one of your teammates really getting hurt," he said. "You need to be in your own bubble. We just told them to calm down and just to think about themselves, one event at a time, one skill at a time."

Biles' 37 world championship and Olympic medals make her the most decorated gymnast of all time. That haul includes a dazzling four gold from the 2016 Rio Olympics. But three years ago, her Tokyo Games campaign came to an abrupt halt as she pulled out of a string of events as she battled the temporary mental block gymnasts call "the twisties," which causes them to lose their sense of where they are in the air.

Once unsure if she would bid for a third Olympic team, Biles has only gained strength since her return to competition in August, capturing all-around gold at the World Championships last year and grabbing her ninth national all-around title earlier this month.

Biles enchanted the Target Center crowd with a floor routine that featured a breathtaking triple-twisting double somersault on her first tumbling pass.

She had launched her night with a rock-solid parallel bars performance that garnered 14.425 points. But Biles was clearly unhappy with a shaky balance beam routine. She had to fight to hang on as she mounted the beam and had another wobble on a spin. Her score of 13.650 was well below the 14.800 she put up twice at the US championships and, after a big step back on her dismount, Biles departed the podium looking furious.

"She was very, very pissed," Landi said. "But she calmed herself down, finished the routine, made it and then hit an almost perfect floor and an amazing vault," he said. Jones, a world championships bronze medalist last year, was hurt in a warm-up vault, limping off with the help of her coach with an apparent knee injury. She returned, however, and with her left leg taped from thigh to calf delivered the top parallel bars routine of the night, although she opted out of the remaining three apparatus. — AFP

Sports

England seek spark against Slovakia to take advantage of soft draw

We just need to perform and give people what they want to see: Southgate

GELSENKIRCHEN: England manager Gareth Southgate has pinpointed expectation for the festering unease among his side's travelling support but demand on the Three Lions to deliver at Euro 2024 has only risen after landing in the soft side of the draw.

Southgate's men begin what they hope will be a road to Berlin for the final on July 14 against Slovakia in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday. A rematch of the Euro 2020 final with Italy or Switzerland would then await in the quarters, while Austria, Turkey, the Netherlands or Romania are potential semi-final opponents.

There has been little in England's performances in Germany so far to justify their hype as pre-tournament favorites. But with Germany, France, Spain and Portugal all on the other side of the draw, the pressure has intensified on a richly-talented squad to finally start performing as a team. "If people are being negative, it's only because they expect a lot from you, which is a positive thing," said Newcastle winger Anthony Gordon, who could be one of the changes Southgate turns to. "If we want that to stop, we just need to perform and give people what they want to see."

Despite topping Group C, England have managed only two goals in their opening three games. The quartet of Phil Foden, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka and



COLOGNE: England's head coach Gareth Southgate and his assistant Steve Holland react after the UEFA Euro 2024 Group C football match between England and Slovenia at the Cologne Stadium in Cologne. - AFP

Harry Kane combined for 114 goals in club football in the 2023/24 campaign. But together they have been a disjointed attacking unit that Southgate is under huge pressure to shake up in Gelsenkirchen.

Foden has rejoined the squad after flying back home to attend the birth of his third child. However, his

lack of time on the training field this week may mean the Premier League's player of the year is the fall guy to try and balance the attack. England's lack of width on the left has been exposed by Southgate having no natural left-back available due to Luke Shaw's injury and Foden's tendency to drift inside.

Gordon backs himself to shine

Gordon looks set to be handed his chance despite having just a few minutes action in the tournament so far. "My main strength is that I'm very direct. I'm obviously quick, so I'm a nightmare for anyone I play against," Gordon told reporters on Friday to push his case for a first competitive England start.

"I'm not a very safe player, I'm always going for it, I'm always trying to put people on the back foot. I think with the players we've got, the likes of H (Kane), who likes to drop deep, I think I add a different element to the team." Kobbie Mainoo is expected to start in midfield after the 19-year-old made an impressive impact in his second half appearance against Slovenia. Southgate also faces a clamor to unleash Cole Palmer.

The Chelsea playmaker, who scored 26 goals at club level last season, caught the eye in his late cameo

against Slovenia and had England's only shot on target of the second half. So far Southgate has remained steadfast and stubborn in his team selection, making only one change to his starting line-up as Conor Gallagher replaced Trent Alexander-Arnold in midfield for the third match.

A similar approach at the weekend risks further antagonizing a fan base that threw beer cups at their coach after the Slovenia stalemate. Southgate can point to his experience at negotiating his nation through the highs and lows of major tournaments.

England also scored only two goals in the group stage of the last Euros before progressing to a first major tournament final in 55 years. However, it is the shades of Euro 2016 that will send shivers down the spines of England fans heading to Gelsenkirchen.

Eight years ago Roy Hodgson's side also stumbled their way through the group phase with five points only to be handed a seemingly kind draw against Iceland. What followed was arguably the most embarrassing night in English football history as the tiny island nation in their first every major tournament pulled off a shock 2-1 win. Matching that nadir is what England's current crop risk if they do not click through the gears come Sunday. - AFP

Earps leaves Man United

LONDON: Manchester United goalkeeper Mary Earps appeared to fire a parting shot at the direction of the club under minority owner Jim Ratcliffe on Saturday as she became the latest high-profile player to leave the Women's Super League side. The England international said she could not achieve her career ambitions at a club undergoing "transition". Since his takeover of football operations at Old Trafford, billionaire businessman Ratcliffe has made it clear that the focus has been on the men's team.

Earps is now out of contract and reportedly close to signing with Paris Saint-Germain after rejecting a new deal that would have kept her at United. "Dear the United family, after five years of service to your great club, I have decided that it's time for a new challenge," Earps wrote in an Instagram post.

"It's a decision I've gone backwards and forwards on for some time, and is not one I've made lightly," the 31-year-old added. "The club is about to undergo a period of transition, and unfortunately I don't feel it aligns with the timing of where I'm at in my career, therefore I think now is the right time to make a change and embark on a new challenge."

A club statement issued earlier Saturday said: "Everyone at Manchester United would like to thank Mary for her fine service and wish her the best of luck in the next stage of her career." Earps' exit comes just two days after that of United club captain Katie Zelem, with the Old Trafford hierarchy having previously announced the departure of striker Lucia Garcia.

Euro 2022 winner Earps joined United in 2019 and made 125 appearances for the club. During the 2022/23 WSL season, Earps kept 14 clean sheets to set a new league record, and a few months later finished fifth in the voting for the women's Ballon d'Or - the highest placing achieved by a goalkeeper.

Last season, Earps was between the posts as United beat Tottenham 4-0 at Wembley in the Women's FA Cup Final, to secure the club's first major trophy in the women's game. But after finishing fifth in the WSL last season, 20 points behind champions Chelsea, United accept they are not yet in a position to challenge for either the league title or the Champions League. The women's team, founded in 2018, moved into a new £10 million (\$13 million, 12 million euros) training facility in 2023. United, however, plan to overhaul their Carrington training base in a move which will see the women's team leave the site. - AFP



LONDON: (FILES) Manchester United's English goalkeeper #27 Mary Earps throws the ball during the English Women's FA Cup final football match between Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley Stadium. - AFP



HERZOGENAURACH: Germany's defender #06 Joshua Kimmich and teammates attend a MD-1 training session at the team's base camp in Herzogenaaurach, on June 28, 2024. - AFP

Sagnol revels in leading Georgia on Euro 2024 run

VELBERT: Willy Sagnol ranked just qualifying for Euro 2024 with Georgia as one of the finest achievements in his impressive football career, but the Frenchman topped that by leading the tournament's rank outsiders into the knockout stages where they face Spain on Sunday. The country of 3.7 million people in the Caucasus sits 74th in the FIFA rankings and had never been to a major tournament since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. "I thought we reached our maximum by qualifying in March," Sagnol admitted after Georgia beat Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal 2-0 on Wednesday to reach the last 16.

"To be here was already a big challenge. To qualify for the last 16 we maybe dreamt about without thinking it was doable." Georgia got to the Euros in a rather roundabout way, finishing fourth in their qualifying group behind Spain, Scotland and Norway.

However, their impressive performances in the Nations League gave them another crack at making it via the play-offs, in which they beat Luxembourg and then defeated Greece on penalties. "In emotional terms, qualifying for the Euros meant as much to me as winning the Champions League with Bayern Munich. I consider it to be a title. It is my first trophy as a coach," Sagnol told French newspaper L'Equipe. Georgia's success on the pitch, where they are led by Napoli's old-school winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, comes at a time of political turmoil in the country.

Political turmoil

There have been weeks of protests against a controversial "foreign influence" bill, which requires NGOs and media outlets receiving more than 20 percent of their funding from abroad to register as bodies "pursuing the interests of a foreign power".

Protesters are concerned the bill represents a shift

back toward Russia in the former Soviet republic which is a candidate for European Union membership.

This week Sagnol reacted angrily when it was put to him that striker Budu Zivzivadze was being left out of the team at the Euros due to his reported criticism of the law. Showing an excellent command of English, Sagnol called those making such suggestions "twats". "I can't accept that any longer," he snapped. "I'm a football coach, I'm nothing else." On Friday, there was a much more laid-back atmosphere as Sagnol gathered his players together in the sunshine on their training pitch in Velbert, where the stadium looks down over the Ruhr valley towards the city of Essen.

Sagnol, who along with his coaching staff talks to the players in English, is at home in Germany. He played for Bayern for almost a decade, winning the Champions League with them in 2001. Sagnol also played in the France side that lost the 2006 World Cup final on penalties to Italy in Berlin. The German-link is what led to him becoming Georgia's coach. Levan Kobiasvili, head of the Georgian Football Federation, knew him as an opponent when he too was playing in the Bundesliga, as did his vice-president Alexander Iashvili.

Sagnol, previously in charge of Bordeaux, became Georgia coach in early 2021. "There was an immediate sense of trust with them, and I accepted the job with immense joy and ambition," Sagnol told FIFA.com. He now has an apartment in Tbilisi where he lives for much of the year.

Just after taking charge, Sagnol's Georgia played Spain at home in a 2022 World Cup qualifier. They went ahead, but Spain came back to win 2-1 thanks to a stoppage-time goal. Spain beat them 4-0 at home in that campaign, and won both meetings in qualifying for this tournament, including a 7-1 victory in Tbilisi.

That shows the size of the task awaiting Georgia in Cologne, even if they have outstanding players beyond Kvaratskhelia in striker Georges Mikautadze - top scorer in the group stage with three goals - and Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili. "When you are the small team of the competition, you know you have nothing to lose," said Sagnol. "The only thing we said before the competition was that, whatever happens, we don't want to have any regrets. - AFP

Murray, Djokovic cleared for Wimbledon duty

LONDON: Former champions Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic shrugged off lingering injury concerns on Friday to take their places in the draw for Wimbledon. Murray, the 2013 and 2016 champion, had appeared certain to miss out on what will be his farewell appearance at the All England Club after undergoing a back operation last weekend.

Fellow former number one Djokovic, the seven-time champion, also needed surgery earlier this month after suffering a serious knee injury at the French Open. However, on Friday, the two 37-year-olds, career-long rivals, took their places in the draw for the third Grand Slam tournament of the year which starts on Monday.

Murray will face 38th-ranked Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic who has defeated the British star twice this year. Djokovic, seeded two, will take on 123rd-ranked Vit Kopriv, also of the Czech Republic, who will be making his Wimbledon debut.

Murray, now at 115 in the world, underwent an operation on a spinal cyst and said Thursday he was unlikely to be fit enough to play in the singles. The Scot, who plays with a metal hip, went under the knife after experiencing weakness and a loss of coordination in his right leg while playing at Queen's, forcing him to pull out of that tournament.

On Thursday Murray and brother Jamie were awarded the final wildcard for the Wimbledon men's doubles. Murray is planning for the Olympics in Paris next month to be the final event of his career. Machac defeated Murray in Marseille and Miami this year. The 23-year-old also stunned Djokovic in the semi-finals in Geneva on the eve of the French Open. Djokovic will play Wimbledon despite concerns over his fitness.

The Serbian star was forced to pull out ahead of his quarter-final at the French Open against Casper Ruud after tearing the medial meniscus in his right knee. He said earlier this week he would only play at Wimbledon if he was fit enough to "fight for the title".

"I didn't come here to play a few rounds," he told the BBC. "If I know I can play close to my maximum or at maximum, then I'll play. If not, then I'll give somebody else a chance to play. I really will only play if I know I am in a state which is good enough to go far in the tournament and fight for the title, so that's the condition. - AFP



Andy Murray

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Kaizen center	25716707	Qadsiya	22515088
Rawda	22517733	Dasmah	22532265
Adaliya	22517144	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Khalidiya	24848075	Shaab	22518752
Kaifan	24849807	Qibla	22459381
Shamiya	24848913	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Shuwaikh	24814507	Mirqab	22456536
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Sharq	22465401
Nuzha	22526804	Salmiya	25746401
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764		

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Syed Mukhtar Ahmed Quadra holder of Indian Passport No. T8211429 having permanent address No.30 15th cross Tajuddin street, Govindapura main road, Banalore, B.B.M.P North Karnataka, India - 560045, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Syed Mukhtar Ahmed (#5628, 30/06/2024)

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

India win T20 World Cup after thrilling battle with S Africa

Kohli retires from T20 internationals



BRIDGETOWN: Team India celebrates with the trophy after winning the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 final cricket match between India and South Africa at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on June 29, 2024. — AFP

BRIDGETOWN: India won the T20 World Cup title with a thrilling seven run victory over South Africa in a classic final at Kensington Oval on Saturday. Virat Kohli's 76 led India to a strong 176-7 but after Heinrich Klaasen blasted a superb 52 from 27 balls South Africa were closing in on victory only to be halted by some outstanding Indian bowling at the end.

Meanwhile, Virat Kohli quit T20 Internationals on Saturday shortly after helping his team beat South Africa in the World Cup final. "This was my last T20 game playing for India," player-of-the-match Kohli said following In-

dia's seven-run victory at Kensington Oval. "Time for the next generation to take the T20 game forward."

South Africa ended on 169-8 with Hardik Pandya taking 3-20 for India to the delight of the huge Indian following at the stadium. Kohli had struggled in the tournament but he delivered his best innings at the perfect moment with his balanced batting.

It was just what was needed for India who had slipped to 34 for three after their captain Rohit Sharma won the toss and opted to bat. In what has been a low scoring tournament, the total looked to be a daunting one for

South Africa but then Quinton de Kock (39) and Tristan Stubbs (31) set the Proteas on their way before Klaasen turned the game in their direction in the 15th over, smashing Axar Patel for 24 including two fours and two sixes.

When Klaasen was finally removed, caught behind off Hardik Pandya, the Proteas needed just 26 off the last 23 balls. Knowing they had to take the initiative, Rohit turned early for Jasprit Bumrah's final over and he answered the skipper's call perfectly, bowling Marco Jansen and conceding just two runs in the 18th over.

That meant South Africa needed 20

from the final two overs and Arshdeep Singh bowled a superb length to allow just four. With 16 to win off the last over, Pandya bowled a full-toss at Miller who smashed it high straight down the ground but Suryakumar Yadav produced a breath-taking catch on the boundary, throwing the ball back into play before he crossed the ropes and then returning to complete the catch. Kagiso Rabada came in and edged a four and Pandya showed some nerves with a wide but the seamer kept his cool to ensure silverware for India after they lost in last year's 50 Over World Cup on home soil.—Agencies

Switzerland stun holders Italy, reach Euro 2024 quarters

BERLIN: Switzerland dumped reigning champions Italy out of Euro 2024 with a stunning 2-0 victory on Saturday to reach the quarter-finals for the second time in their history. Murat Yakin's supremely well-drilled side outplayed the flat two-time winners in the last 16 clash in Berlin and will face England or Slovakia in the next round.

Ruben Vargas teed up Remo Freuler for Switzerland's 37th minute opener before curling home superbly himself right at the start of the second half to deservedly double their lead.

A new-look Italy, short on star power and without many of the key figures that led them to Euro 2020 glory, offered little in response to Switzerland's energetic display.

Former Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka, arriving at the Euros after a stunning season with German champions Bayer Leverkusen, pulled the strings as the Swiss rarely looked like letting the lead slip away.

Italy coach Luciano Spalletti dropped Jorginho after his worrying group stage performances, bringing in Nicolò Fagioli in defensive midfield among a hefty six changes which failed to bring the Azzurri to life.

The 23-year-old started a major tournament match for the first time, having missed most of the season with Juventus after a seven-month ban for gambling on football matches.

Italy scraped through the first phase thanks to



BERLIN: Switzerland's midfielder #10 Granit Xhaka controls the ball during the UEFA Euro 2024 round of 16 football match between Switzerland and Italy at the Olympiastadion Berlin in Berlin on June 29, 2024. — AFP

Mattia Zaccagni's last-gasp strike in the 1-1 draw with Croatia and Spalletti said his team had no alternative but to improve in the knock-out rounds.

However it was Switzerland who grew in confidence and pulled off their best display yet, making a bright start at the Olympiastadion in a sweltering Berlin, where a far more impressive Italy won the 2006 World Cup.

Former goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, now Italy's delegation head, has been regaling the squad with stories from that triumph but it did not inspire a convincing performance—apart from by his modern day counterpart, Gianluigi Donnarumma. The Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper, key in Italy's Euro 2020 conquest, made a fine save to thwart Breel Embolo midway through the first half as Switzerland created the first real chance by playing him through.

Freuler opener
Donnarumma could not stop Freuler from firing Switzerland ahead after 37 minutes when the midfielder controlled Vargas' low cross and drilled home at the near post.

Switzerland kept the ball for well over a minute in the build-up, stringing together 33 passes before Freuler, who plays for Serie A side Bologna, applied the finishing touch.

Donnarumma produced a fine save to tip Fabian Rieder's free-kick on to the post before the break as the Swiss sought to equal their best ever Euros performance by reaching the last eight. Hosts Germany needed a late leveller to avoid defeat against the Swiss in the group phase, while at the previous Euros they knocked out much fancied France in the last 16, so Italy cannot say they were not warned.

Spalletti hooked Stephan El Shaarawy at half-time for Zaccagni, but Italy gave the ball away from the kick-off and Switzerland doubled their lead just 27 seconds into the second period.

Augsburg midfielder Vargas, who started in place of the suspended Silvan Widmer but on the left of the attack, broke into the area and arced a superb curling shot over Donnarumma.

The closest Italy came to scoring in the first hour was when Swiss defender Fabian Schar misjudged a header and hit the frame of his own goal.

Substitute Mateo Retegui produced Italy's first shot on target as the clock ticked down and the near-invisible Gianluca Scamacca hit the post from close range, but appeared to be offside.

The sides drew twice in World Cup 2022 qualification with the Azzurri failing to make the tournament but went one better in Germany, securing their first win against Italy since 1993, after 11 without victory. — AFP



BANGKOK: Hamza Behbehani being declared the winner by the referee.

Hamza Behbehani advances in WBC rankings

BANGKOK: Kuwait's boxer Hamza Behbehani continued his winning ways towards international recognition as he beat Pakistan's Abi Jawzi Khan during the heavy weight match that was held in Bangkok, Thailand at the weekend. Behbehani who won by a technical knockout advanced by more than 200 places and received "half star" ratings by the WBC.

This international boxing tournament included 32 boxers from Kuwait, USA, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Britain, Australia, Iran and Vietnam.

Behbehani was in control from the start, then in the second round he was able to hit his opponent with heavy punches causing him to lose his balance and fall down and he could not continue prompting the referee to declare Behbehani the winner by a TKO.

Behbehani was very happy with his win and dedicated it to the political leadership and hoped to continue his winning ways and improve his ranking and start competing for world titles. Behbehani lauded the support of Vice President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Nawaf who is the main supporter of professional boxers.