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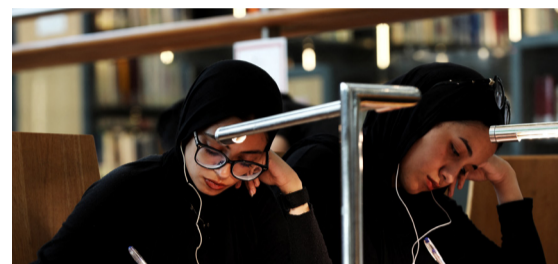
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Dems close ranks around Biden

US president hits fundraising trail in show of strength after debate debacle



HAGERSTOWN, Maryland: US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden step off Air Force One upon arrival at Hagerstown Regional Airport enroute to Camp David on June 29, 2024. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Democratic leaders rallied Sunday behind US President Joe Biden following his poor debate performance last week, as the White House denied a report he was meeting with family to assess his candidacy. After days of hand-wringing about Biden and the outcome of the Nov 5 election, Democrat leaders firmly rejected calls for their party to choose a younger presidential candidate.

No major party figures have broken ranks to call for Biden to step down, with prominent Democrats including past presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton voicing full-throated support amid a torrent of doubts from everyday Americans — and even a call from the New York Times editorial board to move aside.

The wave of party backing follows the 81-year-old's stumbling performance Thursday in the debate against Republican candidate Donald Trump, in which Biden

often hesitated, tripped over words and lost his train of thought, highlighting concerns about his age. "It's not about performance in terms of a debate, it's about performance in a presidency," Representative Nancy Pelosi, the former House speaker, told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday.

On "one side of the screen, you have integrity, the other side you have dishonesty," she said, echoing a number of party figures attempting to shift the focus from what they say was Biden's unfortunate performance to the barrage of lies that came from Donald Trump during the debate. According to a CBS News poll conducted in the two days following the debate, nearly three-quarters of registered voters now believe Biden should not be running for president, including 46 percent of Democrats.

Biden and his family traveled to the Camp David presidential retreat late Saturday, where NBC News reported he was ex-

pected to assess the future of his reelection campaign following his performance. White House senior deputy press secretary Andrew Bates, however, posted on X that the trip had been planned since before the debate, questioning the publication and claiming it had failed to ask for comment on the matter.

The Biden campaign has meanwhile reported that it has raised \$33 million since the debate, including \$26 million from grassroots donors. Biden should "absolutely not" drop out of the race, Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday. "It's our assignment to make sure that he gets over the finish line come November. Not for his sake but the country's sake."

"The unfortunate truth is that Biden should withdraw from the race, for the good of the nation he has served so admirably for half a century," the Atlanta Journal-Constitution said in an editorial on Sunday.

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Bader Al-Juwaihel

Artiste Bader Al-Juwaihel passes away

KUWAIT: Multitalented and renowned Kuwaiti historian Bader Al-Juwaihel passed away on Saturday. Juwaihel, a veteran heritage historian, artiste and media personality, joined the Labor Cultural Center in 1975, and earlier in 1963, joined the Artists Association and its musical band.



Tami Al-Rasheedi

Shooter Tami Al-Rasheedi passes away

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti shooter Tami Al-Turqi Al-Rasheedi passed away on Sunday after a long battle with illness. Rasheedi had represented Kuwait in various international tournaments since 1996.

Special IDs for revoked citizenships

KUWAIT: The Central Agency for Illegal Residents announced issuing special ID cards for people who had their citizenships withdrawn in Kuwait. The IDs are issued in accordance with Cabinet regulations to help regulate the affairs of those affected by citizenship withdrawal decisions, the agency said in a statement Sunday.

KFF: Fire alarm linkage saves lives, properties

KUWAIT: Acting Chief of Kuwait Fire Force Maj Gen Khaled Abdullah Fahad affirmed Sunday that a project linking fire alarm systems in buildings with KFF's central command has the potential to save lives, protect properties and achieve societal safety. In an interview with KUNA, he explained that a team has been tasked with looking into the linkage project. On inspection

campaigns and the direct handling of violations, he hailed the keenness and intent of First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.

Fahad said the venture is a major project linking more than 50,000 buildings to the central command and aims to expedite response to incidents and emergent cases. The project is in three parts, he explained, divided by types of buildings — new buildings, older buildings already equipped with fire detection systems and buildings with no fire alarm systems. Panels will be installed, where in case of an incident, would notify the central command and allow ac-

tion to be taken within 120 seconds.

The panel in the building will have to be installed by the landlord, Fahad added, indicating that at first it will be for bigger and more vital buildings, like hospitals. KFF statistics for the year 2023 indicate total of incidents dealt with reached 16,080, 4,394 of which were fires, 1,257 in residences. Farwaniya was cited as the governorate with the most fires, and the most common cause of fires in all governorates was electrical faults. The longest fire incident was between 10 to 19 minutes, while the number of firefighters injured reached 38, a 25 percent decrease since 2022. — KUNA



Maj Gen Khaled Fahad

Fighting rages in Gaza City's Shujaiya, Rafah

GAZA: Heavy battles and bombardment hit Gaza City's Shujaiya district for a fourth day on Sunday, months after the Zionist entity declared Hamas' command structure dismantled in the northern area. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have fled the devastated neighborhood, where the army said it has fought Palestinian militants both "above and below ground" in tunnels.

Months of on-and-off talks towards a Gaza truce and hostage release deal have meanwhile made little progress, with Hamas saying Saturday there was

"nothing new" in a revised plan presented by US mediators. The Zionist military reported clashes in central Gaza and the southern Rafah area, a week after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the "intense phase" of the war raging since Oct 7 was nearing an end.

Speaking at a weekly cabinet meeting on Sunday, Netanyahu repeated his stance that there is no substitute for victory in the war against Hamas. Hours after Netanyahu's comments, the armed wing of Hamas released a video showing weapons-making, in a show of defiance. The video showed fighters preparing anti-tank rocket warheads. In the background a large TV screen showed recent news events to indicate the video was recent. "Our preparation is continuing," said writing at the end of the short film.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A Palestinian boy hugs a woman as she speaks to a girl while sitting on the balcony of a home damaged in Zionist bombardment, as some residents return to the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on June 30, 2024. — AFP

Taleban govt reps meet UN officials, envoys in Doha

DOHA: Representatives of Afghanistan's Taleban government began meetings on Sunday with UN officials as they attended talks in Doha with special envoys to the Central Asian country for the first time, a UN spokesperson said. The two-day, UN-hosted meeting in Qatar is the third of its kind in the gas-rich emirate in just over a year but the first to include Taleban authorities who seized power in Afghanistan in 2021.

"Preparatory discussions have begun with the UN meeting separately with many of the special envoys in attendance and with the Taleban representatives," the UN spokesperson, who asked not to be named, told AFP. UN officials and over 20 envoys, including

the US special representative to Afghanistan, were expected to meet with the Taleban government's delegation led by spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

The talks in Doha were due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the country, including economic issues and counter-narcotics efforts. In the aftermath of the Taleban's return to power, the international community has grappled with its approach to Afghanistan's new rulers.

The Taleban government in Kabul has not been officially recognized by any other government since it took power and the administration has imposed a strict interpretation of Islam, with women subjected to laws characterized by the UN as "gender apartheid". The Taleban authorities had been excluded from the first round of UN talks in May 2023 and declined to attend the second round in February, demanding that their delegation be the only Afghan representatives.

Continued on Page 6



KABUL: Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid addresses a press conference on June 29, 2024. — AFP



Zain teams up with Spotify for new offer

The world's most popular audio streaming platform comes to MAX

KUWAIT: Zain is teaming up with Spotify, the world's most popular audio streaming subscription service, to bring customers a new way to enjoy Spotify Premium for free for a few months. With this announcement, Zain is bringing Spotify to its MAX Internet plans, featuring the biggest streaming platforms and entertainment content providers on Kuwait's biggest and fastest 5G network. Meshal Al Kandari, Zain Kuwait Chief Commercial Officer, said: "Welcoming Spotify to the MAX family brings even more world-class entertainment to the biggest customer base in Kuwait."

To celebrate this partnership, we're offering Wiyana postpaid subscribers three months of Spotify Premium for free, while eeZee prepaid subscribers will receive two months for free. "We are thrilled to announce our collaboration with Zain to offer their customers unparalleled access to the rich and diverse world of music through

Spotify Premium," said Akshat Arbola, Managing Director, Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and South Asia, Spotify. "This partnership underscores our commitment to delivering exceptional music experiences to users around the world."

The offer can be easily redeemed on the Zain app or the MyZain portal on kw.zain.com. After the free period ends, the subscription will be auto-renewed for KD 1.6 monthly. In addition, subscribers of select MAX plans can choose Spotify Premium as one of their included entertainment subscriptions. With Spotify Premium, users can enjoy amazing exclusive features like listening to millions of tracks, songs, podcasts, and more without ad breaks, downloading tracks to listen offline anytime and anywhere, full control over playing, repeating, and reordering tracks, high audio quality, listening together with friends in real-time, and organizing listening queues.

With this step, Zain becomes the first telecom op-

erator in Kuwait to partner with Spotify, the world's most popular audio streaming subscription service. Spotify features over 100 million tracks and 6 million podcast titles. Hundreds of millions of users enjoy Spotify in more than 180 markets. Spotify is now part of the MAX family, featuring some of the biggest regional and global content providers like Disney+, Shahid, TOD, OSN+, STARZPLAY+, viu, and more. With MAX, Zain brings thousands of hours of entertainment and sports content to the largest customer base in Kuwait.

MAX offers the best way for postpaid customers to enjoy three essential features all in one comprehensive plan: superfast 5G Internet, the latest Internet device of their choosing, and subscriptions in their favorite streaming platforms, starting at KD 12 monthly only. This announcement is the latest step in Zain's strategy to provide best-in-class digital services and content to its customers across Kuwait.



Bridging the official communication gap

In my view



Azzah Al-Ghamdi

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Today, the state is moving at an accelerated pace to develop its apparatus and institutions so that it can advance and improve its performance. However, this desired advancement will only be achieved by the efforts of the state's officials. There are other people who have great skills in various aspects. These set of people should be allowed to contribute to the development of the state.

To achieve this, every official must monitor his or her staff and aides. There are many people with different skills who are not part of the decision-making. These people don't have the opportunity to showcase their intellectual abilities. However, they often clash with the officials and their aides. We find out that sometimes these staff do not deliver the information they received by the officials. Due to jealousy or incompetency, they withhold some necessary information. This problem is not unique to a particular state. It is rather a global issue, but it is most widespread in the Arab world.

All government officials should monitor their staff so as to limit this growing phenomenon. The state will not be able to grow and prosper without the help of competent people with various qualifications and specializations. Also, government officials cannot perform well without a competent team. Appointments should not be based on family considerations and friendships.

Today, we are in dire need to achieve the Vision 2035 goals. We need to accelerate faster so as to compensate for the years the state was paralyzed as a result of political crises. However, if the situation continues like this, the state will not make reasonable progress. There are many complaints from higher degree holders that they are finding it so hard to reach the decision-makers so as to share their ideas and visions. There is always a communication barrier. Because of their executive positions, it is difficult to reach them, and going through their aides and staff is becoming more difficult. We hope that all leaders will monitor their aides and staff so that the state can benefit from people with great skills and ideas.

Kuwait condemns expansion of West Bank settlements

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of Zionist occupation's expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. In a press statement, the Ministry reiterated Kuwait's rejection of all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. It deplored the occupation's activities as a blatant violation of international conventions that deliberately undermines international efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

The Ministry urged the international community and the UN Security Council to press Zionist occupation to fully comply with the relevant UN resolutions. On Thursday, the Zionist Cabinet approved a plan presented by the far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to legalize five illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank and impose sanctions on the Palestinian Authority.

The plan also includes the issuance of tenders for thousands of new housing units in the illegal settlements in the West Bank. It also involves revoking permits and benefits for Palestinian officials, restricting their movement, and preventing senior officials from leaving the country, as well as removing executive powers from the Palestinian Authority in the southern West Bank, enforcing laws against unauthorized construction, and protecting heritage sites and environmental areas.

International action

Meanwhile, GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Sunday called on the international community and human rights organizations to shoulder their responsibilities and stand up against daily violations against Palestinians in Gaza. Al-Budaiwi made the remark to KUNA and Kuwait TV following the opening of the 23rd regular session of the Independent Permanent Commission for Human Rights of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held at the



KHAN YUNIS: A Palestinian woman bakes unleavened bread in a makeshift oven while sitting on the rubble of buildings destroyed by the Zionist bombardment on June 30, 2024. — AFP

organization's headquarters in Jeddah.

He emphasized the urgent need for the GCC and the OIC to "intensify their support for our brothers in Palestine." He noted that the meeting of the Permanent Commission for Human Rights comes at a sensitive and critical time, given the current situation in the region and the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where human rights violations persist. Al-Budaiwi added that the credibility of human rights standards has been severely undermined by the events in the Gaza Strip, rendering the issue of human rights a "dead end paper."

On the other hand, Al-Budaiwi mentioned that the meeting aims to discuss confronting artificial intelligence, which may be a double-edged sword, either serving humanity or violating human rights. This re-

quires considering the possibility of reaching legislation that preserves privacy and protects against the risks that artificial intelligence may pose. He pointed to the continued high coordination between the GCC and the OIC on all issues and in various international forums, highlighting memoranda of understanding and joint action plans that cover many topics.

He said that the GCC countries are active members of the OIC and that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosts the organization, stressing the important role it plays. The session, due to continue until July 4, discussed the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights. The session's agenda for the following days includes regular and closed discussion sessions on a number of different topics, with the final report of the session to be issued next Thursday. — KUNA

FM holds talks with EU, Qatar envoys



KUWAIT: (Left) Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Sunday met with the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen. During the meeting, the two officials discussed ways to enhance strategic cooperation and developing partnerships in various fields. (Right) Minister of Foreign Affairs also met with Qatar's Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Al-Mahmoud at his office in the Ministry headquarters. During the meeting, the two officials discussed ways to boost bilateral ties. — KUNA photos

College of Pharmacy receives approval for accreditation

KUWAIT: The College of Pharmacy at Kuwait University has received approval for the accreditation of the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program by the Canadian Academic Accreditation Institution for Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP). This distinguished academic achievement is an important step towards upgrading the classification of the College of Pharmacy at Kuwait University and reflects the quality of education provided at the college. It is worth mentioning that Accreditation Canada is considered one of the most distinguished international accreditation institutions and puts Kuwait on the global map in terms of the quality of education.

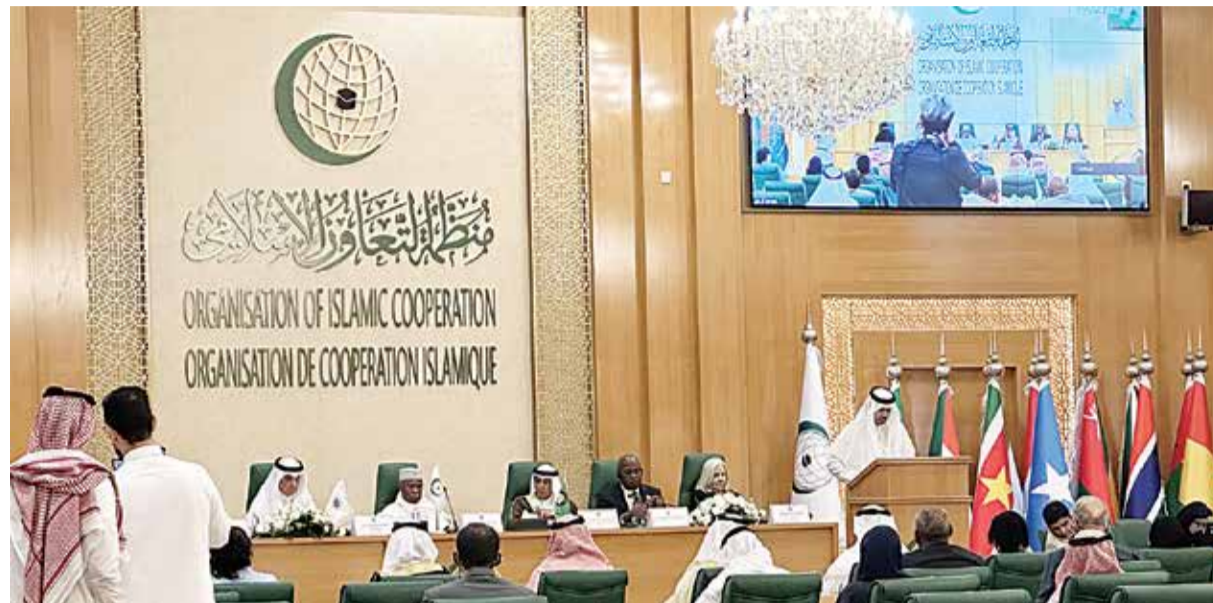
On this occasion, the Acting Dean of the College of Pharmacy, Prof. Maytham Khaja, congratulated the Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Acting Director of Kuwait University, the Vice Chancellor of the Medical Sciences Center, the members of the academic and administrative staff at the College of Pharmacy, and the students. The College of Pharmacy looks forward to more achievements in the future.



Local

Kuwait asserts commitment to human rights principles in AI

OIC session explores the impact of artificial intelligence



23rd OIC Human Rights Commission session begins. – KUNA photos



(Left to right) Jasem Al-Budaiwi, Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah and Talal Al-Mutairi take a group photo.

JEDDAH: Kuwait reiterated on Sunday its commitment to human rights principles in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) related to personal data, privacy, intellectual property, education, and work, emphasizing the importance of respecting human rights and preserving human dignity regardless of modern changes. This statement was made during Kuwait's speech at the 23rd regular session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The message was delivered by Diplomatic Attache Jana Al-Dhafiri.

Al-Dhafiri pointed out the importance of discussing recent developments in AI and technology, noting that the session's topics were significant and worthy of study, which indicated that the impact of AI now extends beyond individuals and has become an integral part of international relations. She underlined the importance of properly utilizing AI tools to benefit users in fields such as health, education, and the environment.

Al-Dhafiri echoed the call of IPHRC Chairman Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi for extraordinary measures to bridge digital gaps and foster innovation, including creating a comprehensive global regulatory framework and unifying efforts to advance a free, open, and secure digital future centered on human rights. Kuwait has kept pace with technological and digital advancements by establishing specialized bodies like the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), and the National Cyber Security Center (NCSC), she explained.

The first AI lab

Kuwait has made significant strides in AI, being a global leader in developing the communications

and information technology sector for two consecutive years, with Internet usage reaching 99.7 percent of the population, she said. In education, Kuwait University (KU) established its first AI lab in 2001, and in 2019, Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU) was founded with a focus on modern technology and AI, as Al-Dhafiri mentioned.

Kuwait hosted the 16th International Conference of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences last April under the sponsorship of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, focusing on AI's role in enhancing health and achieving Islamic Sharia objectives, she pointed out. Additionally, Kuwait held a Chief Information Officers (CIO) Summit earlier this year in collaboration with CAIT, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD), and NCSC, in partnership with several global tech companies, she said.

Kuwait has launched two national strategies for AI and digital transformation to align with its comprehensive e-government initiative, aiming to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and the country's development vision, New Kuwait 2035, focusing on building creative human capital and effective governance, she explained. Kuwait believes in the importance of a regulatory and ethical framework for AI to ensure optimal benefits and a human-centered approach, she stated.

The unanimous UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution last March on AI to protect personal data and human rights and manage risks serves as a strong foundation for collaboration with stakeholders, including governments and private companies, to preserve human dignity, she mentioned. Despite AI's benefits and opportunities, Al-Dhafiri noted the emerging challenges and risks, such as the potential for inequality and social and economic justice disruption, necessitating a balanced

approach to sustainable development.

She called for constructive international cooperation based on human rights and dignity to tackle these challenges. Kuwait encourages all countries to adopt frameworks for AI regulation, support projects, and empower entrepreneurs to develop AI in ways that serve humanity, creating new developmental opportunities for sustainable progress.

Al-Dhafiri acclaimed the OIC, its General Secretariat, and the IPHRC for their commendable efforts in promoting and protecting human rights, congratulating Al-Mutairi on his leadership and expressing gratitude for the organization and preparation of the conference, hoping that its goals and outcomes would be realized through cooperative efforts among OIC member states. Kuwait's delegation to the session was led by Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, accompanied by Kuwait's Consul General in Jeddah and Permanent Representative to the OIC Mohammad Al-Mutairi and other officials.

AI's impact on human rights

The 23rd regular session began with Kuwait participating, along with the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jasem Al-Budaiwi. In his opening speech, IPHRC Chairman Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi noted the establishment of IPHRC as a significant milestone in OIC's five-decade history. He underscored the need to study the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on fundamental human rights and called for a regulatory framework based on human rights principles to govern AI. Echoing this, OIC Secretary General Hissein Taha stated the organization's continued support for IPHRC and its members in their human rights work.

He stressed the importance of understand-

ing AI's impact on human rights to ensure technological progress aligns with core rights and values, mentioning the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) leading the creation of the Islamic World Charter for AI. Despite acknowledging AI's significance, the organization emphasizes alignment with Islamic principles and ethical considerations for responsible use.

Meanwhile, Al-Budaiwi pointed out the GCC and OIC's roles in confronting challenges, mainly the Palestinian issue and ongoing escalations in the Gaza Strip, condemning Zionist occupation forces' human rights violations and international law breaches against Palestinians, especially in Gaza. These violations expose the international community's weakness in protecting those in dire need, he explained, urging global officials to convey the reality of the situation in Palestine, hold perpetrators accountable, and impose appropriate penalties.

He underlined the need for concerted efforts to tackle future threats like technological advancements and AI's impact on privacy and digital rights, urging swift legislation to balance rights protection with technological progress. The session will continue until July 4, discussing "The Impact of AI on Human Rights" on Monday and "The International Court of Justice's Ruling on Gaza" on Tuesday. The agenda includes various regular and closed discussion sessions, with the final report to be issued next Thursday. — KUNA



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah



Graduates and attendees are pictured during the graduation ceremony.



Minister of Health Ahmad Al-Awadhi honors one of the graduates.

MoH welcomes 96 new doctors

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Health Ahmad Al-Awadhi, stressed on the pivotal role that graduates from the Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University play in supporting the country's healthcare system, describing them as "the main pillars of the health system." His remarks came during the faculty's graduation ceremony, where 96 new doctors were wel-

comed into the profession. He described this day as a turning point in their lives, marking their transition from academic life to professional life, where they officially "become doctors who carry a great responsibility in serving the community and taking care of the health of its members."

Al-Awadhi expressed his belief in the added value that these graduates will bring to the medical sector, adding "We appreciate your enthusiasm and ambition to achieve outstanding success, just like your predecessors who have excelled in various medical fields." He also noted that such achievements would not have been possible without the guidance and support of the graduates' parents, whom he praised for their effective role in guiding and supporting

their children throughout their journey.

In his final words to the fresh graduates, he advised them to adhere to the humanitarian principles of their job and ensure the performance of their duties with honesty and sincerity, paying attention to patients and providing the best healthcare possible. "The doctor's profession is not just a job; it is a noble calling," he said. "Congratulations, and I wish you continued success as ambassadors of your profession, your university, and your nation." He further encouraged them to continuously seek learning and stay informed about the latest developments in medical technology to keep pace with the tremendous advancements and progress seen worldwide, especially in the medical field.

'Extreme temperature has dangerous effects'

KUWAIT: The head of Urology Department at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital, Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim, said the extreme summer temperatures affect the various body systems in a negative and dangerous manner. In a press statement, he added that the temperatures we experience these days call for caution as they cause body dehydration, which may lead to health problems.

Among the problems the body may face are dehydration and kidney stones. "When the body loses much water, it might affect the urine concentration, which may cause the formation of kidney stones. Also, it may cause infections in the urinary tract, and that is due to the reduction in the production of urine when a person is dehydrated," he explained.

Al-Ghanim advised people to avoid dehydration at extreme temperatures by drinking large quantities of liquids and water. "Eat water-rich fruits and vegetables; avoid sports activities under high temperatures; and avoid direct sun at noon," he advised, urging the elderly, children, and those who have serious conditions to avoid diuretics like drinks with caffeine.



Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim

Book Review: 'An Unlasting Home' by Mai Al-Nakib

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Mai Al-Nakib's novel, *An Unlasting Home*, narrates the saga of multiple women characters across generations. Through flashbacks and memories, the novel shifts between the 20th and 21st centuries in Kuwait, where most of the plot is set. It explores the consequences - enriching for some, devastating for others - of Kuwait's post-oil transformation.

Through a complex web of familial and societal ties, the novel brings together characters from diverse backgrounds and countries - Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and India - across various circumstances, ultimately meeting in Kuwait. At the heart of this tapestry is Sara, a professor of philosophy at Kuwait University, whose journey serves as the linchpin connecting the disparate threads of the narrative.

Themes of belonging, identity, democracy, freedom, authoritarianism, censorship, and societal expectations unfold through Sara, whose life is under threat after she is accused of blasphemy for her lectures



Mai Al-Nakib

at Kuwait University. 'An Unlasting Home' is recommended for people who are interested in historical and literary fiction and the fundamental need for belonging. The book resonates with readers long after they finish.

Who is Mai Al-Nakib?

Mai Al-Nakib is a Kuwaiti author and, for twenty years, was an associate professor of English and comparative literature at Kuwait University. In addition to her novel, 'An Unlasting Home', published by Mariner Books in 2022, Al-Nakib's short story collection, *The Hidden Light of Objects*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2014. It won the Edinburgh International Book Festival's First Book Award. Al-Nakib's occasional essays have appeared in numerous international publications, including: World Literature Today; New Lines Magazine; BLARB; Blog of the LA Review of Books; The Markaz Review; and the BBC World Service; among others.



Health, finance ministries eye Arab strategy

CAIRO: The Arab League announced the meeting of the ministries of health and finance on Monday at its headquarters in Cairo to follow up on the implementation of the Arab strategy for a health-friendly budget and review its objectives.

Assistant Secretary-General and Head of Social Affairs at the Arab League, Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, said on Sunday that the meeting is scheduled to follow up on the implementation of the decision issued by the 59th regular session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health in May 2023 in Geneva regarding the launch of the Arab strategy for a health-friendly budget.

Abu Ghazaleh explained that the meeting aims to develop an executive plan for the strategy through discussions with the concerned authorities from the ministries and to enhance ways to move forward in achieving the desired goals in coordination with the United Nations Population Program for the Arab States and the WHO Regional Office.

She noted that this strategy is a reference for Arab countries to develop more responsive and flexible health budgets to meet the needs of their populations and strengthen their public financial management systems to advance towards universal health coverage.

The strategy prioritizes the role of ministries of health in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of public funds by boosting spending policies to make room for new health expenditures within the current total budget, especially within the framework of the limited capacity to increase public revenues.

She explained that the budget is important for health as there is a growing consensus among policymakers globally that public funding is essential to making progress towards universal health coverage.—KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A man buys fish from a seller at a fish market in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's show 'Part of the Text is Missing' wins best Arab TV award



The winning show 'Part of the Text is Missing' honored.



Kuwait's Ministry of Information pavilion.



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Kuwait's Ministry of Information delegation.

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti TV show 'Part of the Text is Missing', on Saturday won the best Arab TV program award at the 24th Arab Radio and Television Festival, which concluded in Tunisia. The show is produced by and screened on Channel 1 of the official Kuwait TV. Speaking to KUNA via phone, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation to the festival, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for Media Services and New Media Saad Al-Azmi, expressed pride in the award. He described the achievement as a new accolade for the Kuwaiti media.

Al-Azmi added that this achievement coincides with the Arab countries choosing Kuwait to be the Capital of Arab Culture and the Capital of Arab Media in 2025. This reflects the great status of the Kuwaiti media at the Arab and international levels, he said. He pointed out that the Kuwait Ministry of Information participated in a technology exhibition that was held on the sidelines of the festival and comprised 98 pavilions. The Kuwait pavilion has witnessed a large turnout from Arab officials and the Tunisian public, Al-Azmi said. — KUNA

Education Ministry honors outstanding students

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Social and Psychological Service, honored the outstanding scholarship students for the academic year 2023-2024 in cooperation with the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charitable Society and the Kuwaiti National Commission for Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO).

Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities Sector at the Ministry, Maryam Al-Enezi, stressed the keenness of the Ministry of Education to honor these outstanding students annually. She thanked

the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Society for its support. Al-Enezi indicated that the UNESCO Kuwait Committee is keen to provide scholarships to students in cooperation with charities and other associations, wishing students more progress and prosperity.

The Director of the Social and Psychological Service Department at the Ministry of Education, Bader Al-Enezi, said in a similar speech that honoring the students is a continuation of Kuwait's efforts in providing aid, grants, and assistance to students of friendly countries. Al-Enezi stressed the keenness of Kuwait to raise the cultural and educational level of these students so as to enable them to continue their education. The scholarship program has been worked on for more than 70 years. The Department of Social and Psychological Service provides all types of care, including containment and parental care, for all male and female students of all nationalities. — KUNA



Canada's Indigenous women suffer from years of injustice

At least 18 die in string of Nigeria attacks

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NOUMEA, France: People queue outside a polling station before they cast their votes during the first round of France's crunch legislative elections in Noumea in New Caledonia, on June 30, 2024. — AFP

France votes as far right eyes power

'We are going to win an absolute majority,' says far-right leader Le Pen

PARIS: French voters flocked to the polls on Sunday in the first round of a snap parliamentary election that could usher in the country's first far-right government since World War Two, a potential sea change at the heart of the European Union.

President Emmanuel Macron stunned the country when he called the vote after his centrist alliance was crushed in European elections this month by Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN). Her eurosceptic, anti-immigrant party was a longtime pariah but is now closer to power than it has ever been.

Polls opened at 6:00 am GMT and closed at 4:00 pm GMT in small towns and cities, with a 9:00 pm GMT finish in the bigger cities, when the first exit polls for the night and seat projections for the decisive second round a week later were expected. Participation was high, underlining how France's rumbling political crisis has energized the electorate. By 3:00pm GMT, turnout was nearly 60 percent, compared with 39.42 percent two years ago — the highest comparable turnout figures since the 1986 legislative vote, Ipsos France's research director Mathieu Gallard said.

France's electoral system can make it hard to estimate the precise distribution of seats in the 577-seat National Assembly, and the final outcome will not be

known until the end of the second round of voting on July 7. "We are going to win an absolute majority," Le Pen said in a newspaper interview on Wednesday, predicting that her protégé, 28-year-old Jordan Bardella, would be prime minister.

She has sought to detoxify a party known for racism and antisemitism, a tactic that has worked amid voter anger at Macron, the high cost of living and growing concerns over immigration. In Hénin-Beaumont, a town in Le Pen's constituency in northern France where she may be re-elected in the first round, 67-year-old Denis Ledieu said people were suffering due to the long-term deindustrialization of the region. "So if the (RN) promises them things, then why not? They want to try it out, I think," he said. In Garches, a small town near Paris, a woman screamed "It's shameful, it's shameful" as Bardella arrived to cast his vote.

On the other side of Paris, in the town of Meaux, 51-year-old Mylène Diop said she had voted for the New Popular Front, a hastily assembled left-wing coalition polling in second. She said it was "the most important election" of her life. "The RN is at the gates of power and you see the aggressiveness of people and the racist speech that has been unleashed," she said.

If the RN does win an absolute majority, French

diplomacy could be headed for an unprecedented period of turbulence: with Macron — who has said he will continue his presidency until the end of his term in 2027 — and Bardella jostling for the right to speak for France.

France has had three periods of "cohabitation" — when the president and government are from opposite political camps — in its post-war history, but none with such radically divergent world views competing at the top of the state. Bardella says he would challenge Macron on global issues. France could lurch from a pillar of the EU to a thorn in its side, demanding a rebate of its contribution to the EU budget, clashing with Brussels over European Commission jobs and reversing Macron's calls for greater EU unity on defence.

A clear RN victory would also bring uncertainty as to where France stands on the Russia-Ukraine war. Le Pen has a history of pro-Russian sentiment and while the party now says it would help Ukraine defend itself against Russian invaders, it has also set out red lines, such as refusing to provide long-range missiles.

'Split vote favors RN'

Opinion polls have suggested the RN has a comfortable lead of 33 percent -36 percent of the popular vote,

with the New Popular Front in second place on 28 percent -31 percent and Macron's centrist alliance in third on 20 percent -23 percent. The New Popular Front includes a wide range of parties, from the moderate center-left to the hard-left, eurosceptic, anti-NATO party France Unbowed, led by one of Macron's most vitriolic opponents, Jean-Luc Melenchon.

How the poll numbers will translate into seats in the National Assembly is hard to predict because of how the election works, said Vincent Martigny, professor of political science at the University of Nice and the Ecole Polytechnique. Candidates can be elected in the first round if they win an absolute majority of votes in their constituency, but that is rare. Most constituencies will need a second round involving all candidates who received votes from at least 12.5 percent of registered voters in the first round. The top scorer wins.

"If you have a very high level of participation you might have a third or fourth party that is getting into the struggle. So then of course there's a risk of split voting and we know that the split vote favors the National Rally," Martigny said. For decades, as the RN steadily gained popularity, voters and parties joined forces to block it from winning power, but that may not hold true this time. — Reuters



NUR SHAMS: Mourners carry the body of Saeed Izzat Jaber, 24-year-old member of the Palestinian armed group Islamic Jihad, who was killed due to a Zionist strike on the Nur Shams camp for Palestinian refugees. — AFP

Zionist drone strike kills Islamic Jihad commander

NUR SHAMS, Palestine: The Palestinian health ministry said a Zionist strike on Sunday in the occupied West Bank killed a man identified by the Islamic Jihad militant group as one of its commanders. Contacted by AFP, the Zionist military did not immediately comment on the attack, which official Palestinian news agency Wafa said was carried out with a drone.

The Ramallah-based health ministry said a Palestinian man was killed and five other people were wounded "following a strike by the occupation" in the northern West Bank's Nur Shams refugee camp. Wafa identified the slain man as Saeed Izzat Jaber, 24.

Palestinian armed group Islamic Jihad later said "the martyred leader" was one of its commanders, adding that he had previously "survived several assassination attempts". Jaber's killing "will strengthen

our resistance" against the Zionist entity, the group said. According to Wafa, the Zionist military had fired three projectiles from a drone at a house in the camp near the town of Tulkarm. The Palestinian Red Crescent said its crews were treating two people wounded from "shrapnel following a strike on a house in the Nur Shams camp". The organization added that rescuers were initially unable to enter the targeted building "due to fire".

An AFP correspondent later saw Nur Shams residents searching through the rubble, while blocks of concrete slabs lay scattered as a portion of the house was ripped off by the strike.

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since 1967. Attacks by Zionist settlers and forces on Palestinians in the territory have recently escalated to levels unseen in about two decades.

At least 554 Palestinians have been killed in the territory by Zionist forces or settlers since the Gaza war began, according to Palestinian officials. Attacks by Palestinians in the West Bank over the same period have killed at least 15 Zionists including soldiers, according to an AFP tally of Zionist official figures. — AFP

US court's slow pace makes Trump trial before election unlikely

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's bid for criminal immunity from prosecution for trying to overturn his 2020 election loss is set to be decided on Monday by the US Supreme Court. But however it rules, the court already has helped the former president in his effort to avoid trial before the Nov 5 election.

The ruling from the court, whose 6-3 conservative majority includes three justices appointed by Trump, will be released 20 weeks after he sought relief from the justices. The timeline of the ruling likely does not leave enough time for Special Counsel Jack Smith to try Trump on the federal four-count indictment obtained last August and for a jury to reach a verdict before voters head to the polls. "The amount of delay that has resulted has made it almost impossible to get the case to trial before the election," said George Washington University law professor Randall Eliason, a former federal prosecutor. "The court should have treated it with much more urgency than it did."

Trump is the Republican candidate challenging Democratic President Joe Biden in a 2020 election rematch. He is the first former US president to be criminally prosecuted, and already has been convicted in a case in New York state court involving hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 election. If he regains the presidency, Trump could try to force an end to the special counsel's case or potentially pardon himself for any federal crimes. The Supreme Court already has handed Trump important victories.

On Friday, it raised the legal bar for prosecutors pursuing obstruction charges in the federal election subversion case against Trump and defendants involved in the Jan 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. In March, the court threw out a judicial decision that had disqualified Trump from the presidential primary ballot in Colorado.

The speed with which the court dispatched the Colorado case — quickly agreeing to decide it and ruling in Trump's favor within a month of hearing arguments — contrasted with a sluggish pace in resolving Trump's immunity bid that has been to his benefit. Trump's trial had been scheduled to start on March 4 before the delays over the immunity issue. Now no trial date is currently set. Trump has pleaded not guilty and called the case politically motivated.

"I don't think that there is any way the case goes to trial before the election," said Georgetown University



CHESAPEAKE: Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Historic Greenbrier Farms in Chesapeake, Virginia, on July 28, 2024. — AFP

law professor Erica Hashimoto. "Even if the Supreme Court were to affirm the lower courts and say that Trump does not have immunity, the trial court still has to decide a bunch of other legal issues."

A slipping timeline

Smith, seeking to avoid trial delays, had asked the justices in December to perform a fast-track review after Trump's immunity claim was rejected by US District Judge Tanya Chutkan. Trump opposed the bid. Rather than resolve the matter promptly, the justices denied Smith's request and let the case proceed in a lower court, which upheld Chutkan's ruling against Trump on Feb 6. After Trump sought Supreme Court relief on Feb 12, more than 10 weeks elapsed before the justices would hear the case on April 25, their final day of arguments. And now the ruling will be issued on the final day of the term, nearly nine months after Trump first made a motion to dismiss the charges based on his claim of immunity.

If the Supreme Court rules that former presidents have some degree of criminal immunity — an approach some of the justices appeared to favor during arguments — it could delay the case further. Under one such scenario, the justices could order Chutkan to preside over a potentially time-consuming legal battle about whether certain allegations against Trump must be stricken before the case could advance to trial.

The trial judge also likely will have to decide what, if any, impact the Supreme Court's decision to heighten the legal standard for prosecutors pursuing obstruction charges against a Jan 6 defendant will have on Trump, who faces two charges under the same obstruction law. Chutkan has previously indicated she would give Trump at least three months to prepare for a trial once the case returns to her courtroom. — Reuters

International

At least 18 die in string of Nigeria attacks

Women suicide bombers target hospital, wedding in Nigeria's northeast



MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: An injured man grimaces in pain as he arrives for treatment after a wave of suicide attacks in the North East of Nigeria, in Maiduguri on June 29, 2024. (Right) People console each other as relatives arrive for treatment after the attacks. — AFP photos



M23 continues to gain ground in east DR Congo

KANYABAYONGA, DR Congo: The M23 militia group continued to gain ground in the war-torn east of DR Congo, with more towns falling into the hands of the rebels, sources told AFP Sunday. Kinshasa accuses Rwanda of backing the Tutsi-led M23 rebel group which has seized swathes of eastern DR Congo in an ongoing offensive launched in 2021 — something Kigali denies.

On Sunday the M23 (March 23 Movement) moved into the town of Kirumba, in North Kivu province, which has been rocked by violence since 2021 when the group resumed its armed campaign in the region. Kirumba is the biggest town in the south of the Lubero territory, where the group has been advancing, and a big commercial center with more than 120,000 residents.

"We regret that the large entity (the town) has since yesterday evening been in the hands of the M23," a local official, who did not wish to be named, told AFP on Sunday. He said the group is now heading north from the town.

'They are numerous'

"They are numerous, some arrived on foot and others in vehicles," a civil society leader who asked to remain unnamed told AFP. Another local official, who also said the rebels had arrived in the town, said they are "waiting for the government's reaction".

President Felix Tshisekedi held a meeting of DR Congo's defense council on Saturday. During a speech to mark the country's independence day, Tshisekedi said "clear and firm instructions have been given for the safeguarding of the territorial integrity of our country", without giving more details.

On Saturday M23 seized the strategic town of Kanyabayonga, as other surrounding areas also fell into the hands of the rebels. Kanyabayonga is home to more than 60,000 people and tens of thousands of people have fled there in recent months, driven from their homes by the advance of the rebels. — AFP

KANO, Nigeria: At least 18 people were killed and 19 seriously wounded in suicide attacks targeting a wedding, a hospital and a funeral in northeastern Nigeria on Saturday, authorities said. No one has immediately claimed responsibility for the string of attacks.

In one of three blasts on Saturday in the town of Gwoza, a woman with a baby strapped to her back detonated explosives in the middle of a wedding ceremony, according to a state police spokesman. "At about 1545 (1445 GMT) a woman carrying a baby on her back detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) she had on her at a crowded motor park," Borno State police spokesman Nahum Kenneth Daso said.

Women suicide bombers also targeted a hospital in the same town, which lies across the border from Cameroon. Another attack was later carried out at

the funeral for victims of the wedding blast, authorities said. At least 18 people were killed and 42 others injured in the spate of attacks, according to the Borno State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).

"So far, 18 deaths comprising children, men, females and pregnant women" have been reported, agency head Barkindo Saidu said in a report seen by AFP. Nineteen "seriously injured" people were taken to the regional capital Maiduguri, while 23 others were awaiting evacuation, Saidu said in the report.

A member of a militia assisting the military in Gwoza said two colleagues and a soldier were also killed in a separate attack on a security post, though authorities did not immediately confirm this toll.

Although Boko Haram has lost ground in recent years, jihadists continue to attack rural communities

in Nigeria on a regular basis. Over the course of the insurgency, Boko Haram has repeatedly deployed young women and girls to carry out suicide attacks.

The group seized Gwoza in 2014 when its militants took over swathes of territory in northern Borno. The town was taken back by the Nigerian military with help from Chadian forces in 2015 but the group has continued to launch attacks from mountains near the town.

Boko Haram has carried out raids, killing men and kidnapping women who venture outside the town in search of firewood and acacia fruits. The violence has killed more than 40,000 people and displaced around two million in Nigeria's northeast. The conflict has spread to neighboring Niger, Cameroon and Chad, prompting the formation of a regional military coalition to fight the militants. — AFP

Woman firefighter on Brazil frontline after flames took her baby

CORUMBA, Brazil: Debora dos Santos Avila used to resent firefighters for the death of her five-month-old baby in 2020, when she says he succumbed to smoke inhalation from worst-ever flames in Brazil's Pantanal. But this year, as the world's largest tropical wetlands sees new record infernos, the bereaved mother is on the frontline fighting back the flames in an area stricken by drought. "At first I didn't like firefighters. I resented them for what happened to my son. I needed to blame someone," she said. "But then, I went to see them to understand how they work, and now it has been two years since I became a volunteer firefighter."

Dos Santos Avila said her baby died from smoke inhalation, without giving further details, during a record-breaking year for fires which saw 30 percent of Brazil's Pantanal affected. "Many children suffer from the smoke. And I want to do all I can to alleviate this problem," said the woman, who works as a cook for an NGO when she is not called up to fight fires.

This year, the fires have spread out of control even before the peak of the dry season. "At this time last year, we were doing prevention in schools, we were not yet mobilized for direct combat" against the flames, said Dos Santos Avila.

In the first half of this year, satellites recorded more than 3,400 fires in the region, 33 percent more than in 2020. Experts say that the blazes result from harsh drought linked to climate change and deliberate fires — set to expand agricultural land — burning out of control.



CORUMBA: Firefighter Debora dos Santos Avila combats a fire outbreak in a rural area of Corumba, Mato Grosso do Sul state, Brazil, on June 26, 2024. — AFP

Dos Santos Avila is the only woman among 45 volunteer firefighters in Corumba, a city considered the gateway to the Pantanal. She underwent six months of training for the role. "My colleagues make no distinction. In the face of flames, we are all equal," she said.

The Pantanal, which extends into Bolivia and Paraguay, is home to millions of caimans, parrots, giant otters and the world's highest density of jaguars. Seasonal flooding across plains, marshes, savannahs and forest areas during the rainy season is crucial to the biodiverse ecosystem.

Covered in protective gear, Dos Santos Avila uses a machete to slash through the bush toward the merciless heat of a raging inferno that stretches over seven kilometers (four miles). When she nears the flames, she uses a leaf blower to disperse the decomposing organic matter that serves as kindling to the spreading fire.

Danger is ever-present. The wind could change the direction of the fire at any moment. With the help of water bomber planes, the team brings the blaze under control. Then it is time to turn over the earth to ensure no embers remain, a long and grueling job. — AFP

Dems close ranks around Biden...

Continued from Page 1

"The shade of retirement is now necessary for President Biden." The Washington Post's editorial board meanwhile urged him to do some soul-searching over the weekend after his "calamitous" debate performance raised "legitimate questions about whether he's up for another four years in the world's toughest job."

House of Representatives Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who could become speaker next year if his party can take control of the House in November, acknowledged that Biden suffered a setback in his debate with Trump. "I believe a setback is nothing more than a setup for a comeback," he told MSNBC. "So the moment that we're in right now is a comeback moment, and it's going to require all of us to lean in, articulate a forward-looking message as to why the Democratic platform is best equipped to deal with the challenges facing the American people."

Another top House Democrat, Representative James Clyburn, agreed. "He should stay in this race. He should demonstrate it going forward his capacity to lead the country," he told CNN. Republicans blasted Democratic claims that Biden's poor debate performance was a one-off. "This idea that Biden had a bad night, that's not the story. He's had a bad presidency, had a disastrous debate," Senator Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, told CNN.

But in his own debate performance, Trump unleashed a barrage of criticisms, many of which were well-worn falsehoods he has long repeated, including claims that migrants have carried out a crime wave, that Democrats support infanticide and that he actually won the 2020 election.

On Friday, Biden attempted to tamp down the naysaying with a fiery campaign speech in North Carolina in which he pledged to keep fighting. He appeared alongside his wife, First Lady Jill Biden, who has fiercely defended her husband amid calls for him to step aside. "On that campaign stage in North Carolina, I saw a forceful, engaged and capable Joe Biden," Democratic Senator Chris Coons, from Biden's home state of Delaware, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"I think it was a weak debate performance by President Biden," Coons said, adding that nonetheless "side by side, Donald Trump had a horrifying debate performance where, yes, he spoke plainly, but what he said was lie after lie after lie." Biden, he added, is "the only Democrat who can beat Donald Trump."

Biden attended a triple-header of campaign fundraisers Saturday, seeking to reassure high-dollar donors he can still win reelection in November despite a debate performance that sparked panic among many Democrats. Jill Biden accompanied him at the fundraisers in New York and New Jersey. "Joe isn't just the right person for the job — he's the only person for the job," she told one gathering, which featured a-list actors Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick among the co-hosts. — Agencies

Fighting rages in Gaza City's...

Continued from Page 1

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from Shujaia since new fighting broke out there on Thursday and the army issued evacuation orders. For those who remain, "our lives have become hell", said 50-year-old Shujaia resident Siham Al-Shawa. She told AFP people were trapped as strikes could happen "anywhere" and "it is difficult to get out of the neighborhood under fire". "We do not know where to go to protect ourselves."

The Zionist offensive has killed at least 37,877

Taleban govt reps meet UN officials...

Continued from Page 1

In a push to include Taleban government representatives, that condition has been met with the exclusion of civil society groups which will meet with representatives on Tuesday instead. Ahead of the UN event, Taleban foreign ministry official Zakir Jalaly on Sunday maintained that any meetings taking place after Monday were "unrelated" to the official agenda.

The sidelining of civil society organizations has provoked outcry among the groups, including women's rights activists. "Caving into the Taleban's conditions to secure their participation in the talks would risk legit-

imizing their gender-based institutionalized system of oppression," head of Amnesty International Agnes Callamard said in a statement ahead of the talks.

Yesterday, Mujahid told a Kabul news conference that Taleban authorities "acknowledge the issues about women", but asserted they were "Afghanistan's issues" to solve. Hameed Hakimi, an Afghanistan expert, told AFP the international community was "genuinely" concerned over women's rights and the role of civil society in the country. But he explained that international policy makers, "while accepting the Taleban are not perfect players in the game, also recognize that there is this gap that has not been filled by the Afghans themselves". In recent years, many governments, international organizations and aid agencies cut off or severely scaled back their funding to Afghanistan in response to the Taleban authorities' return to power — dealing a serious blow to the already struggling economy. — AFP

International

Canada's Indigenous women suffer from years of injustice

Indigenous women overrepresented among victims of femicide; Police investigations into murders 'snail-paced'



WINNIPEG: Red dresses on crosses are displayed at the entrance of a makeshift camp near the Prairie Green landfill in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, on April 27, 2024. — AFP photos



TERRACE: Gladys Radek, advocate for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada, shows pictures of murdered and missing people taped to her car, in Terrace, British Columbia, Canada, on April 30, 2024.

PRINCE RUPERT, Canada: A mountain of windswept garbage. Beneath it, bodies. For years, the remains discarded by a serial killer have languished in a landfill - the latest chapter in a long history of violence against Canada's Indigenous women. Morgan Harris and Mercedes Myran were raped, killed, dismembered and thrown out with the trash in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Police believe their remains are buried deep inside the Prairie Green landfill.

The partial remains of another victim, Rebecca Contois, were found in two places - a garbage bin in the city and in a separate landfill. The body of a fourth, unidentified woman in her 20s - dubbed Buffalo Woman - is still missing. Their murderer, Jeremy Skibicki, now 37 and linked to white supremacists, confessed in 2022 and has been tried. A verdict is expected in July.

But their relatives have been unable to lay them to rest, as the excavations to find their remains have not yet begun. Indigenous women are disproportionately targeted by violence in Canada, and often poorly protected by authorities accused of paying little attention to their plight. Instead, they are thrown "into the trash," says Elle Harris, the 19-year-old daughter of Morgan Harris. Harris and her family are keeping vigil near the Prairie Green landfill, where they have set up teepees, a sacred fire, red dresses and a banner demanding empathy: "What if it was your daughter?" For months - through the wind-blasted Winnipeg winter - they have taken turns staying in the makeshift camp, seeking, says Elle, "to prove that we are something, we are not trash, we can't just be thrown into the garbage."

It has also formed part of their campaign to pressure authorities to excavate the site, which has remained in use since Skibicki's confession, with new truckloads of debris regularly arriving to be piled on top of what is already there. The go-ahead for the digging was finally given at the end of 2023, shortly after Winnipeg elected Canada's first Indigenous provincial leader, Wab Kinew.

But the searchers must sift through tons of garbage and construction rubble, and



Elle Harris, member of the Long Plains First Nation and daughter of slain Morgan Harris, poses for a photo.

such an operation involves considerable risks due to the presence of toxic materials such as asbestos, according to independent experts. Ultimately, it could take years and cost tens of millions of dollars. Morgan Harris' family has vowed to maintain their vigil until her remains are recovered.

'Devastating history'

Skibicki targeted Indigenous women he met in homeless shelters, prosecutors told his trial, which began in late April. At the time of his arrest, the then-minister of crown-Indigenous relations Marc Miller said the case was part of "a legacy of a devastating history" of Canada's treatment of Indigenous women "that has reverberations today." "No one can stand in front of you with confidence to say that this won't happen again and I think that's kind of shameful," he said.

Indigenous women are wildly overrepresented among the victims of femicide in Canada. They represent about one-fifth of all the women killed in gender-related homicides in the country - even though they are just five percent of the female population, according to

official figures documenting an 11-year period up to 2021.

In that year in particular, the rate of gender-related homicide of Indigenous victims was more than triple that of such killings of girls and women overall, the report said. "Canada is looked at as a country that upholds rights," said Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, an activist who has championed Indigenous women for years. But when "we're being disposed of like garbage in landfills, that clearly says something is very wrong in this country."

'Highway of Tears'

Further west, in British Columbia, is a stretch of road hundreds of miles long known as the "Highway of Tears" - a stark monument, activists say, to the many ways Canada has failed Indigenous women. On the side of the highway is an incongruous sight: red dresses nailed to posts symbolizing vanished women, faded photos of young girls with dazzling smiles, messages promising rewards for any clues to where they have gone. Since the 1960s, as many as 50 women - and a few men - have vanished along this 450-mile (725-kilometer)



STONY MOUNTAIN: Aerial view of the Prairie Green landfill, where bodies of murdered women are reportedly buried, in Stony Mountain, Manitoba, Canada.

highway linking Prince Rupert, on the Pacific Coast near Alaska, to Prince George. All are believed to have been young and Indigenous. Many vanished while hitchhiking or walking home along Highway 16.

When Lana Derrick went missing in the area 25 years ago, "we had some challenges in the beginning getting support from the RCMP to take the case seriously," says her cousin Wanda Good, referring to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is an observation made by many of the families - that efforts to find women stigmatized as drug addicts, prostitutes or alcoholics can be middling at best.

Neglected

In several cases the families say they have organized the first searches themselves - both for their missing loved ones, and for any witnesses. The head of the RCMP admitted to the national commission in 2018 that, for too many Indigenous families, "the RCMP was not the police service that it needed to be during this terrible time of your life."

In recent years, there has been progress, notes Good: the police listen more

to families, and new relay antennas have been installed for mobile communications on the road. We are moving forward, but at a very, very slow, snail's pace," she says. But it is a collective tragedy which the country refuses to confront, believes Gladys Radek, 69.

Speaking slowly and gravely, her voice at times rising in anger, she describes how she began traveling the country "to tell the stories of all these women with broken destinies, to be the voice of these families, because they were silenced," including her niece, Tamara Chipman, who has been missing since 2005. The murders continue till this day: Chelsey Quaw, a 29-year-old Indigenous woman reported missing last November after leaving home from Saik'uz First Nation.

Her dilapidated van is covered with photos of the missing. When she passes through local villages along the Highway of Tears, residents often stop her to talk. Her fight now takes her outside of Canada to conferences and demonstrations seeking to raise awareness of the women's plight. "I'll never stop looking," she says. — AFP

Canada faces scourge of rising car thefts

MONTREAL: Montreal-area resident Zachary Siciliani discovered recently that his car had simply disappeared - likely in one of a rash of vehicle thefts in Canada. The crime trend, which the Insurance Bureau of Canada has dubbed a "national crisis," has seen stolen vehicles shipped through the busy Port of Montreal to overseas car lots for sale.

Siciliani told AFP there was no trace of a break-in at the scene, so he thinks thieves probably used a device that intercepts and copies the frequency of electronic key fobs used to open a car's doors and start the engine, and just drove away with it. "The advent of technology to start cars (has) provided a level of comfort for users and drivers of vehicles, but it also provided an avenue for organized crime groups to steal vehicles," Ontario Provincial Police detective Scott Wade told AFP.

Thousands of vehicles have been stolen in major cities in Quebec and Ontario - the nation's two most populous provinces - over the past several months. Most of them end up in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. A few have been found by police or intrepid owners using tracking sensors embedded in their cars or trucks.

According to the latest police figures, Montreal and Toronto are the most targeted. In Toronto, thefts of cars and light trucks between 2021 and 2023 increased by 150 percent over the prior six years. In that same time span, thefts rose by 58 percent in Quebec and 48 percent in Ontario. The cars were mostly stolen from driveways at night while their owners slept, but some were taken at gunpoint. In one case, a tow truck operator in Ottawa was arrested for attempting to steal a vehicle parked on a downtown street in broad daylight.

Big insurance payouts

The crime wave has its roots in the 2020 coronavi-



MONTREAL: Shipping containers at the Port of Montreal, in Montreal, Quebec on June 10, 2024. — AFP

rus pandemic, when public health restrictions effectively limited the number of vehicles manufactured, experts say. The disruption of global supply chains that followed created "very high demand, while supply was at its lowest," Montreal police spokesman Yannick Desmarais told AFP. Wade said organized crime networks are now behind most of the thefts in order "to supply foreign markets."

In 2023, the number of car thefts perpetrated by organized crime groups increased by 62 percent over the previous year, according to federal police data. Insurers that year collectively paid out \$1.1 billion in claims for stolen vehicles in Canada, an increase of 254 percent from 2018. Most of the stolen vehicles are shipped through the Port of Montreal, according to Desmarais. "Montreal is like a sieve," said Georges Iny, director of The Automobile Protection Association, a consumer advocacy group.

Located on the shores of the Saint Lawrence River, Canada's second-largest city is also one of the nation's major Atlantic ports, "connecting eastern Canada and North America's industrial heartland to more than 140 countries," Iny said. "The challenge is intercepting the small percentage of these illicit goods without harming our economy by slowing down trade," according to Annie Beausejour, the Canada Border Services Agency regional director for Quebec, noting that more than one million containers pass through the Port of Montreal each year. — AFP

In London, squatters take housing crisis into their own hands

LONDON: In the shopping streets and housing estates of the South London town of Croydon, some once-derelict buildings are slowly coming back to life. At a former school, peeling walls are getting a new coat of paint, and laundry hangs on a line to dry. Over at a disused youth center, there is laughter in the gymnasium-turned-dormitory, and a vase of purple flowers decorates a scrubbed kitchen counter.

The Reclaim Croydon collective, a squatters group, has taken over disused commercial premises to provide beds for the homeless, saying it is providing a community-based solution to a broken housing market. "The government is failing homeless people," one of the youth center's new occupants, who goes by the name Leaf, told Reuters.

Britain has long lacked enough housing, but a 22 percent jump in private rents in England over the last five years has left growing numbers of people struggling to find anywhere to live. Housing routinely appears in the top five issues that pollsters report as the most important for voters ahead of Thursday's general election.

The high rents and unaffordable house prices have meant people in their 20s or 30s are still living at home with parents or in house shares. At the most acute end, growing numbers are sleeping on the streets and in empty buildings, official figures show. Studies have found that ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected, with a 2022 report published by the Centre for Homelessness Impact charity showing that black people were more than three times as likely to become homeless as white people in England.

Both Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives and the main opposition Labour Party have pledged to tackle the housing crisis by building more homes. Housing campaigners have long argued that local councils should also utilize some of the roughly 700,000 vacant homes in England as a cheaper and

faster solution. "We're seeing more and more councils saying that temporary accommodation budgets for people that they theoretically have a legal duty to house are literally bankrupting them," Chris Bailey, campaign manager for the Action on Empty Homes charity, told Reuters.

Croydon - a large, built-up town with high-rise apartment and office blocks - had nearly 4,000 disused properties in October 2023, according to government data. In the main shopping streets, shuttered businesses and posters advertising closing down sales are tucked among discount stores and a bustling market.

Alex, 28, a Reclaim Croydon organizer, said the group has refurbished about 30 buildings since it was formed last year, providing homes for more than 100 people. The group first ensures the buildings are vacant and have basic necessities like running water and electricity, he said. It then carries out repairs to make them habitable, which can include installing showers and kitchens, fixing leaks and removing mold.

The people who live in the buildings come from diverse backgrounds. Some are trying to escape the streets, others the upheaval of living in different temporary accommodation. "A lot of people in Britain just get stuck in homelessness limbo, and they prefer to stay with us," Alex said.

A squatting culture has existed in Britain for hundreds of years. After World War II, many soldiers and their families moved into empty military bases. In the 1970s, the movement took on a political edge as anarchists took over buildings in acts of protest. Since 2012, it has been illegal to squat in residential buildings. But commercial squatting is not a criminal offence, provided no damage is done, and the squatters leave when ordered by a court.

The British Landlords Association estimates squatting in commercial buildings is up by almost 300 percent since December 2021, which its head, Sajjad Ahmad, attributes to government policies rather than squatters. In 2017, the government said 300,000 new homes were needed a year in England by the mid-2020s to fix the affordability squeeze. Since then, fewer than 250,000 have been built on average each year. Some owners have also been happy to leave properties empty, benefiting from rising valuations. — Reuters

MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024

Short fuses in Egypt as blackouts stretch into sweltering summer

Egyptians face worst economic crisis as inflation skyrockets, currency sinks

CAIRO: At least once a day, the hum of every fan, air conditioner and fridge across Egypt goes quiet. The lights go out and an expletive is muttered or hurled into the quickly-heating air. Lifts stop, errands are cancelled and meetings delayed for as long as the power stays out—hopefully an hour or two, but recently even longer.

It is now a year since energy and foreign currency crises led Egypt's government to institute planned blackouts known as "load shedding". But the measures have not been felt equally across the country.

In the southern city of Aswan, where temperatures neared 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) in the shade earlier this month, "the lights are out for up to four hours a day, and with them the water", Tarek, a resident of western Aswan, told AFP.

"Especially in the villages, there's no schedule of any kind. Food is spoiling in the fridge, people are getting heatstroke, and no one seems to care," he said, requesting a pseudonym for fear of reprisal. In June, the Aswan parliamentarian Riham Abdelnaby said dozens had died of heat-related illness. She called for the southern governorate to be exempted from the blackouts, which she said "threaten citizens' lives".

Amid three heatwaves in June, the blackouts grew longer and more frequent—and with them nationwide frustration, including from talk show hosts who have been fervent supporters of the government. "Electricity is not a luxury, this is the most basic right," prominent journalist Lamis Al-Hadidy wrote on Monday on social media site X. "The power going out takes out the water and telephones and the internet, and destroys electrical appliances, who is going to compensate the people for all of this?" A decade ago, Egypt faced similar power cuts, which helped fuel popular discontent and protests against the short-lived presidency of the late leader Mohamed Morsi. The present-day blackouts come as Egyptians face the worst economic crisis of their lives, with inflation and currency devaluations shredding savings and leaving families struggling to make ends meet.

Since 2022, the Egyptian pound has lost two-thirds of its value, and last year inflation reached a record 40 percent. Amr Adib, host of the popular Al-Hekaya talk show, addressed officials directly on Sunday, saying they had "failed to set a proper schedule and failed to stick to the hours you promised. And all this, while we know electricity price hikes are coming".

Electricity prices last rose in January, and the government has signaled it is looking to raise them again this year. This week, as temperatures in Cairo hovered around 40C, swathes of the capital have experienced additional midnight blackouts for up to



EL SHOROUK, Egypt: The sun sets behind high voltage transmission towers (electricity pylons) along a highway in El-Shorouk, a satellite city about 47 kilometers outside the city-center of Cairo, on July 24, 2023. — AFP

two hours—in addition to the existing midday outages.

On Tuesday, as public ire peaked, Egypt's prime minister Mostafa Madbouly held a press conference in which he "expressed the government's apologies to citizens" and said Egyptians should expect three-hour outages to continue this week.

The increased blackouts, he said, were due to a "gas field in a neighboring country" which supplies natural gas to Egypt going "out of service for over 12 hours". He did not name the country. The premier also said Egypt would spend \$1.2 billion in July, 2.6 percent of the crisis-hit coun-

try's precious foreign currency reserves, to shore up its fuel supply. "We will be able to end power outages entirely for the summer by the third week of July," Madbouly said, signaling that the outages would resume in the fall. The government is still committed to its plan to end load shedding entirely by the end of the year, he said.

In his apology, Madbouly said his government was "fully aware" of "how difficult the outages are on citizens", including "the elderly, those with health issues, or other humanitarian concerns." But the measures have already claimed lives across the country. Though there has been no official death toll

from heat-related illness in Aswan, parliamentarian Abdelnaby told local media there were "around 40 heat-related deaths" within four days in June. On the other side of the country, in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, a musician named Mohammed Ali Nasr died earlier in June after falling down the shaft of a lift he was trapped in during an outage, his brother told local channel Al-Nahar.

Across Egypt, people have taken to planning their lives around the official schedules to avoid getting stuck in lifts. But similar deaths have claimed at least four lives since last year, according to a tally of local media reports. — AFP

US needs to tackle debt despite robust growth, says IMF

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund called on the US to raise taxes to curb rising debt levels while applauding "robust, dynamic" growth in the world's largest economy and progress toward bringing inflation under control. The IMF said in a closing statement for its "Article IV" review of US economic policies that high deficits and debt "create a growing risk to the US and global economy, potentially feeding into higher fiscal financing costs and a growing risk to the smooth rollover of maturing obligations."

The IMF's statement slightly revised down its 2024 US GDP growth forecast to 2.6 percent from the 2.7 percent forecast in the global lender's World Economic Outlook in April.

The IMF forecasts US growth in 2025 to dip to 1.9 percent -- unchanged from the April outlook—and remaining above 2 percent through the end of the decade. "The US economy has proven itself to be robust, dynamic and adaptable to changing global conditions," the IMF said. "Activity and employment continue to expectations... and the disinflation process has been considerably less costly than many had feared." The IMF said it expects US inflation as measured by the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index to return to the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target by mid-2025, considerably sooner than the Fed's own forecast of returning to target in 2026.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters that the IMF's forecast is more optimistic because of the current trajectory of inflation indicates a quicker return to target, partly because strong US consumer spending driven by wealth built up during the COVID-19 pandemic is subsiding and the labor market is cooling.

But the IMF chided Washington for rising deficits that if continued would bring the US debt-to-GDP ratio to a concerning level of 140 percent by the end of the decade. The IMF measure includes Social Security pension and Medicare healthcare obligations. "Such high deficits and debt create a growing risk to the US and global economy, potentially feeding into higher fiscal financing costs and a growing risk to the smooth rollover of maturing obligations," the Fund said. — Reuters

Saudi Aramco signs second phase of its Jafurah gas field

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia's state oil company Aramco has signed contracts for the second phase of the expansion of its Jafurah gas field and the third phase of expanding its main gas network, state-run Al-Ekhabriya TV reported on Sunday.

Meanwhile, European firms have signed deals potentially worth over 40 billion euros (\$42.85 billion) with Egyptian partners, the EU Commission chief told an investment conference in Cairo on Saturday, part of a drive to bolster Egypt's fragile economy.

The announcement by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen of more than 20 new deals or MOUs follows a 7.4 billion euro EU funding package and an upgraded relationship unveiled in March, as Egypt tried to contain spillover from conflicts in Gaza and Sudan, and European states pushed to prevent migrant flows across the Mediterranean.

European officials say they want to help Egypt become more resilient by boosting investment and the private sector, after repeated shocks including fallout from the war in Ukraine and COVID-19 exposed underlying

Washington Post in turmoil with pressure for profit

NEW YORK: The prestigious Washington Post is in crisis, with pressure on from owner Jeff Bezos to change its money-losing ways. The Post's managing editor abruptly resigned; a chosen successor withdrew under fire, and a boss has been targeted in the newspaper's columns. At the heart of the storm is the "WaPo"'s new CEO, Briton William Lewis, who was given a mission by Amazon founder Bezos when he appointed him last autumn.

Lewis was asked to turn around a newspaper that continues to pile up Pulitzer Prizes half a century after the Watergate scandal it instigated, but which has lost \$77 million in 2023 despite job cuts and the disappearance of its Sunday supplement. However, the former journalist, who made history in the late 2000s with a scoop on the expenses of British MPs when he was editor of the Daily Telegraph, is finding his position increasingly vulnerable.

For weeks now, revelations have multiplied about his role, when he was working for the Murdoch fam-

economic weaknesses. "Your stability and your prosperity are essential for an entire region," von der Leyen said in a speech at the start of the two-day Egypt-EU investment conference. Sisi said the conference came at "critical time" in light of successive international and regional crises that he said required coordination between Europe and Egypt. Speakers at the event focused on Egypt's strategic location between Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and its potential for exporting clean energy and providing inexpensive skilled labor for European companies looking to "nearshore", or basing operations close to home markets.

About half of the deals being signed were in the energy sector, said Ditte Juul Joergensen, director general of the European Commission's energy department. European companies looking to invest were also in sectors including water management, construction, chemicals, shipping and aviation, von der Leyen said.

Egypt has received a windfall of foreign financing and pledges this year from the United Arab Emirates, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as the EU. That eased a long-running foreign currency crisis and prompted commitments to reforms including a more flexible exchange rate, controls on off-budget spending and the scaling back of the powerful role of the state and the military in the economy. Such pledges have done little to invigorate the private sector in the past. In a sign of continuing challenges, Egypt is experiencing routine power cuts, and fertilizer

ily's conservative media group about 12 years ago, in a scandal of illegal phone tapping by the tabloid The News of the World. On Friday, Lewis was at the center of an investigation by his own journalists. According to the Washington Post, he gave the go-ahead in 2011 for the destruction of thousands of emails, fueling suspicions that he was destroying evidence, which he denies.

As the US presidential election approaches, the affair is poisoning the atmosphere at a long-vaunted newspaper that is "not doing well economically," Northeastern University journalism professor Dan Kennedy tells AFP. The Post was among trusted news outlets that benefited from the upheaval that marked Trump's four years in the White House that ended with his loss to President Joe Biden.

The Post "was seen as a place that offered really tough, truth-telling coverage" of Trump, according to the professor. Trump's departure from the White House meant fewer attention-grabbing stories to keep readers engaged.

"When Donald Trump left the White House, the Trump bump that helped a lot of newspapers disappeared," Kennedy said.

"And the Post was hit especially hard." By the end of 2022, the Post would have 2.5 million subscribers compared with 3 million subscribers when Biden took office in early 2021, according to the Wall Street Journal. Meanwhile, rival New York Times has grown to more



EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi in this file photo.

and chemical plants have been halting production because of gas shortages.

Businesspeople and diplomats say there is little transparency about how economic strategy is determined. A new government is yet to be appointed nearly four weeks after the resignation of the current cabinet was announced. Egyptian officials say they are doing their best to manage external pressures and provide for a growing population of 106 million.

Von der Leyen travelled to Cairo as she seeks approval from the European Parliament for a second five-year term as Commission president. European Union leaders agreed to nominate the German on Thursday but the secret ballot vote at the parliament is widely seen as a trickier proposition. — Reuters



The headquarters for The Washington Post newspaper in Washington, DC in this file photo. — AFP

than 10 million subscribers, the fruit of a strategy to diversify into fun topics such as games, food, and lifestyle while still serving up hard news.

US media quoted Lewis as telling editorial staff in early June that he "can't sugarcoat it anymore"—the paper has lost a lot of money and people's interest in its articles.

The day before that editorial meeting, Post journalists learned of the resignation of editor-in-chief Sally Buzbee. Buzbee is said to have disagreed with Lewis's strategy to split the editorial department into three divisions: news, opinion, and a new third unit devoted to social media and service journalism. — AFP

NBK signs strategic MoU with Kuwait Clearing Company

For developing electronic services and exchanging technical expertise

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) signed a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) to develop the banking services provided by the bank in cooperation with the company. The MoU was signed by Mohammed Al-Kharafi, COO – Head of Group Operations and Information Technology at National Bank of Kuwait, and Duajj Al-Saleh, CEO of Kuwait Clearing Company, at NBK Headquarters in the presence of executives from both parties. It aims to further enhance mutual cooperation in developing electronic services, in a way that helps speed up operations and minimize associated risks, in addition to automating the services provided each party to the other.

This strategic cooperation between NBK and KCC would pave the way for future projects that help facilitate joint work and improve the services provided to the public. According to the MoU, NBK and KCC will hold periodic meetings to discuss business development opportunities through the exchange of technical expertise regarding the services provided between the two parties, and joint work to develop systems and prepare for related periodic tests, in a way that complies with regulatory requirements.

It is worth mentioning that NBK has successfully passed all the previous tests and is prepared for the upcoming ones related to Central Counterparty Project (CCP), which is considered one of key upcoming strategic projects that will make a qualitative shift in Bursa Kuwait by developing its performance, as well as upgrading clearing and settlement operations to meet international standards, which will reflect positively on the Kuwaiti economy in general.

Under the MoU, NBK and KCC will discuss automating daily reports to minimize manual entry risks and save time and effort, in addition to mutual coordination in training and familiarizing employees with the latest practical and technical developments, thus ensuring having highly up-to-date information.

On this occasion, Mohammed Al-Kharafi, COO – Head of Group Operations and Information Technology at National Bank of Kuwait, stated: "Through this MoU, we seek to foster fruitful cooperation with KCC, with a focus on training, automation of daily operations, and working together to develop the related daily routine steps, in a way that streamlines operations and speeds up execution."

"At NBK, we are proud of our relationship with KCC, and the signing of this MoU aims to enhance banking services provided in cooperation with the company," added Al-Kharafi. "One of the key ser-



KUWAIT: A group photo of Mohammed Al-Kharafi, Duajj Al-Saleh, and Ahmed Boursesli, General Manager of the Local Corporate Banking Group at NBK, with the NBK and Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) officials during the ceremony.

vices provided by the bank in this regard is e-Dividends allowing NBK shareholders to receive the dividend payments electronically, without the hassle to visit KCC Headquarters to receive checks, thus saving their time and effort," he added. Al-Kharafi stressed NBK's dedication to providing the best digital banking solutions, while always striving to

develop these solutions to keep pace with the rapid technological advancements in the banking sector, in order to deliver an integrated banking experience and exceptional services in cooperation with various public and private institutions.

On his part, Duajj Al-Saleh, CEO of Kuwait Clearing Company, said: "We are happy to sign this MoU

with NBK, which is a key step in fostering mutual cooperation." Al-Saleh extended thanks to NBK for close cooperation and continued support in exchanging experience and knowledge with KCC, adding that "this memorandum reflects our joint dedication to upgrading financial services, which serves the interests of all parties."

Canada's WestJet cancels 235 flights over flash strike

MONTREAL, Canada: Canada's WestJet Airlines said it was forced to cancel 235 flights on Saturday after a surprise strike by its mechanics, despite government intervention seeking to prevent holiday weekend travel disruptions.

The cancellations by the country's second-largest carrier are in addition to the 150 flights scrapped on Friday and 25 others Thursday. More than 55,000 passengers nationwide and internationally have been impacted by the various cancellations ahead of Monday's Canada Day holiday, WestJet estimated in a statement.

"This situation is devastating," WestJet's president Diederik Pen said in a statement, placing the blame squarely on Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, which called the work stoppage.

The airline said it would be forced to cancel additional flights in order to maintain stability across its remaining operations "until the union's irrational

strike action is rescinded, or immediate intervention is received." The threat of a walk-off appeared to have been averted Thursday when the Canadian government ordered binding arbitration to settle a contractual dispute over wages and working conditions.

But arguing the decision did not prohibit a strike, the mechanics' union decided to go ahead on Friday evening, insisting "the airline's unwillingness to negotiate with the union made the strike inevitable."

Labor Minister Seamus O'Regan was due to meet with the parties Saturday afternoon in an effort put them on a path to resolving the dispute. WestJet flies 198 commercial aircraft to more than 100 destinations in nearly 30 countries. — AFP

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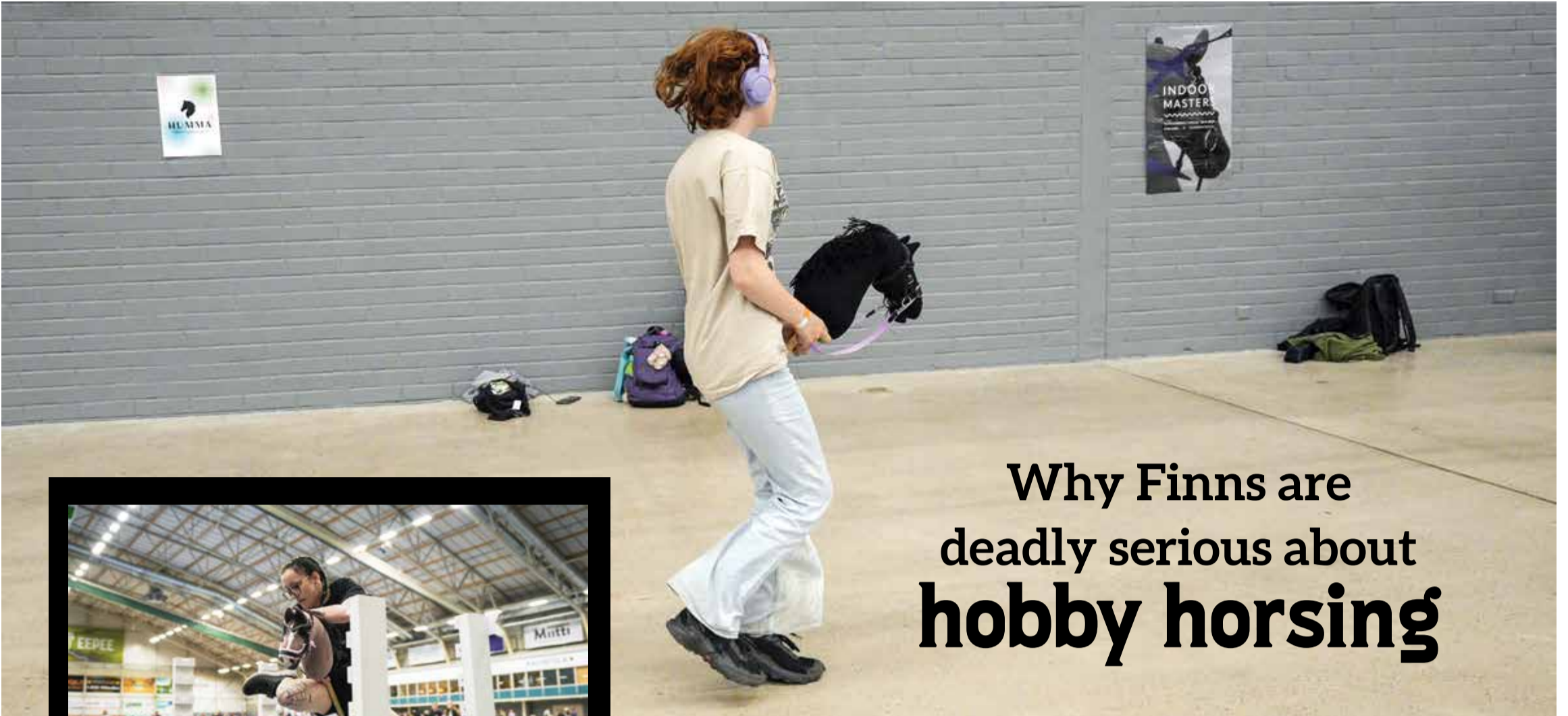
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MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024



Why Finns are deadly serious about hobby horsing

A buzz of excitement crackled through the hushed arena as the rider gripped the reins of her stuffed steed. Welcome to the strangely exacting world of hobby horsing, the Finnish sport guaranteed to put a smile on your face. Immaculately-coiffed equestrians leap athletically over fences just like in horse jumping, going as fast as they can against the clock straddling their stick steeds. Things are more stately in the dressage, with riders trotting their stick horses with intricately decorated stuffed heads before the discerning eyes of the judges.

Some 260 riders from 22 countries - most women and girls aged between 10 and 20 - turned up to compete at the 11th annual Finnish championship held in the town of Seinäjoki. But despite its vast international reach, from the Arctic to Argentina, hobby horsing is a sport that dares not speak its name.

'Insane' athleticism

Despite its soaring popularity, it is not officially recognized as a proper sport in its birthplace. "We have faced so much bullying and judgement," rider Nara Arlin, 24, told AFP. "We know what everyone in the hobby horsing has been through... I think that is the main thing that pulls us together." First invented in Finland more than a decade ago, hobby horsing has taken off at a gallop across the globe. "It is growing every year," said Julia Mikkonen, the chair of the Finnish hobby horse association. This year's championship was "the biggest we have had so far", she added.

Beyond the whimsy, great strength and skill is required to jump the obstacles while holding the hobby horse. Some top competitors could give elite hurdlers or gymnasts a run for their money. "If you jump over obstacles your hip mobility has to be absolutely insane," said Mikkonen, 20, with some fences up to 110 centimeters (3.6 feet) tall.

10,000 enthusiasts

"Of course we are all dreaming of having a world championship one day," said Mikkonen, who estimates there are around 10,000 hobby horsers globally. "I am still a bit breathless but I am happy with my performance", said 19-year-old Jojo Hanninen as she sat down after her dressage event. To succeed in the sport you have to channel your inner centaur, she said. "In hobby horsing, my legs are the horse... I am both horse and human,"

she said. Hanninen's hobby horse is a grey called Toope, with glittery reins and pink ribbons adorning its white mane.

Welcoming community

Competitors go to great lengths with their horses - which are also exhibited and judged - modelling and sewing the heads and adorning them with decora-

horsing through play as a child. "But the older I became, it became more serious," said the rider, who trains by riding real horses, working out in the gym and doing pole dancing.

Rainbow flags in the arena reflected the tolerant values underpinning the community. "Horses are mostly seen as a girls' sport, but that is not correct. Anyone



Participants compete in the showjumping category of the Finnish Hobbyhorse Championships 2024 at the local sport arena in Seinäjoki, Finland.



A participant competes in the dressage category of the Finnish Hobbyhorse Championships 2024 at the local sport arena in Seinäjoki, Finland.



A participant practices on her hobby horse during the Finnish Hobbyhorse Championships 2024 at the local sport arena in Seinäjoki, Finland.



Hobby horses have been placed on chairs during the Finnish Hobbyhorse Championships 2024 at the local sport arena in Seinäjoki, Finland.

tions. "Hobby horses are art," said Arlin, who makes her own. With the cheers of the crowd still ringing in her ears after an impressive showjumping round, she hailed the sport as "the best hobby ever". "You are doing so many things with your hands, brain and the whole body." Like many of her peers, Arlin found hobby

can come no matter what gender," Mikkonen said. Every enthusiast AFP spoke to praised the welcoming community that kept them devoted to hobby horsing despite the scornful attitudes all encountered at some point. "We have each other's backs," said Arlin. — AFP



Participants and visitors gather for the Finnish Hobbyhorse Championships 2024 at the local sport arena in Seinäjoki, Finland. — AFP photos



Kono village farmers plant mangrove stems at a restoration site in Kono village. — AFP photos



This aerial view shows mangrove and nipa palm tree forest along a river in Kono village.

Nigerians strive to bring mangrove forests back to life



Colin Love, Kono village farmer, plants a mangrove stem at the restoration site in Kono village.



A Kono village farmer plants a mangrove stem at a restoration site in Kono village.



This aerial view shows mangrove and nipa palm tree forest along a river in Kono village.

On a riverbank in the Niger Delta, a group of residents in rubber boots has been working to restore one of Nigeria's most precious and damaged ecosystems - its mangrove forests. The team members plunge their shovels into the mud and slot in saplings at the site in Bundu, a shanty town on the outskirts of the southern oil city Port Harcourt. In recent years, human activity has destroyed swathes of the world's mangrove forests, which form a vital barrier against the tides and a sanctuary for wildlife. But in this part of the Delta - plagued by leaks from multinational oil company pipelines and a host of other threats - a local community leader is pushing ahead with a project to restore the spoiled forests. "We're going to bring our mangroves back to life," said fisherman David Oba, 53, who represents around 10,000 people in the town.

'Refuge'

Mangrove forests are a biodiversity paradise. The specialist saltwater trees' huge root networks provide nurseries for juvenile fish, which are crucial to supporting stocks. The forests teem with life above water too - they are "refuges" for an array of birds that nest in their branches, explained Ijeoma Vincent-Akpu, a professor at the University of Port Harcourt. Vincent-Akpu said the trees also protect against coastal erosion, storms and flooding, providing a key shield in the face of climate change. Nigeria boasts some of the highest mangrove coverage in the world and more than anywhere else in Africa - but its forests are shrinking.

The country had around 8,442 square kilometers (3,259 square miles) of mangrove forest in 2020, according to the monitoring platform Global Mangrove Watch. Between 1996 and 2020 it lost 161.9 square kilometers of mangroves, the group said - around two percent of the total and an area equal to more than 22,500 football pitches. Experts say this is mainly due to human activity in the continent's most populous country.



This photograph shows a view of mangrove and nipa palm tree forest along a river in Kono village.

Oil pollution

In Bundu, around 30 people have learned how to restore mangrove ecosystems with the help of a Nigerian NGO, the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development. They have been through several weeks' training, said Nabie Nubari Francis, coordinator of the NGO, which has been running the project in three other communities in the Delta for nearly 15 years. Priority

is given to training community leaders so they can pass on their skills. David Oba said he had trained 70 people in Bundu since starting the project there several months ago.

One of the greatest threats to the mangroves is pollution from the multinational oil industry in the Delta. Residents say whole areas have been wiped out by spills. Oil spills are frequent in the region due to a lack of pipeline maintenance as well as vandalism. Over the last five years,

2020. Residents said the spill was caused by vandals targeting an oil pipeline. "When the spillage occurs, we cannot fish," 38-year-old fisherman Peter Opugulaya told AFP.

Invasive palms

Oil is not the only problem. Nigeria's mangroves are being damaged by illegal logging, waste dumping and urban expansion. They face another threat, too - the spread of Nipa palms, an invasive species that has muscled in among the mangroves. Imported from South Asia and Oceania, the palms are used for baskets and roofing, but do not provide shelter for fish like the mangroves' arched roots. Colin Love, from Kono village around 70 kilometers (over 40 miles) from Port Harcourt, complained the palms had taken root "everywhere".

The 40-year-old said he was planting mangroves "so that the fish will still come back for us." On a visit to the Delta earlier this year, Nigeria's environment minister promised to work with local authorities to protect mangroves and mitigate the effects of climate change. Four years earlier, the government announced its intention to launch a national mangrove restoration plan, but it was never implemented. Residents said the government has been slow to act, prompting them to take measures into their own hands. "We are helping each other," said 48-year-old driver and Kono resident Prince Nwile, saying that communities were ready to share saplings with their neighbors. "We are not sitting by and doing nothing," he said. — AFP

the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency has recorded almost 3,870 spills in Nigeria, mainly in the Niger Delta. Kwani Dick Velvet, a retired journalist, recalled the first sapling he planted in his community, bought from a nearby nursery. "If it was not for the fact that people came and planted some mangroves, this place would have been a very open field," he said, pointing to an area that he said was hit by an oil spill in

US rapper Kanye West visits Moscow

US rapper Kanye West was in Moscow, Russian media reported on Sunday quoting a well-known Russian producer. Western artists have mostly not performed in Russia during its Ukraine offensive, which led to massive US and European sanctions on Moscow, as well as travel restrictions to the country. Kanye West,

who has stirred controversy with his political statements in the United States and was recently accused of praising Adolf Hitler, has expressed admiration for President Vladimir Putin in the past.

"Kanye West is already in Moscow! This is great news, he is staying in the heart of the capital," the state TASS news agency quoted producer Yana

Rudkovskaya as saying on social media. Her announcement followed rumors last month that West will perform a concert in Moscow. But Luzhniki Stadium, where he was rumored to perform, told state media it does not have information on possible concerts by the famous rapper. — AFP

US rapper Kanye West attends the 2020 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 92nd Oscars at The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills on February 9, 2020. - AFP





Lebanese designer Elie Saab greets the audience at the end of his collection show during the Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, at le Musee des Arts Decoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts), in Paris. - AFP photos



ELIE SAAB RUNWAY CAPTIVATES WITH MOODY MIDNIGHT SHADOWS AT PARIS COUTURE WEEK



Elie Saab again transported his VIP guests at Paris' Musee des Arts Decoratifs into a realm of magic and splendor, a world of bridal queens and midnight shadows.

The Lebanese designer's fall collection came with dramatic flair, strikingly at midnight, enveloping the audience in a welcome dark mood. Models in black leather opera gloves and graphic bands of black satin set the tone. Men's couture capes, part of Saab's theme since fall 2022, were embroidered with sequins and gleaming threads, resem-

bling silver foliage kissed by morning dew. Saab's opulent men's couture line continues to add a new dimension to his brand, catering to a market segment that craves visibility.

In the predominantly women's display, organza whooshes swirled upward from the waist in a feat of artistry. As the collection progressed, the color palette softened. Tried-and-tested floor-length silhouettes dazzled in gemstone hues. A standout piece was a shoulderless gown in powder red, where sequins on the bodice morphed into a sea of feathers cascading down

the mermaid-like skirt. The transformation of textures underscored Saab's craftsmanship.

While Saab's designs may not always break the mold in innovation or surprise, the commitment to his signature style ensures that his creations remain timeless. His starry clientele appreciates the red carpet-ready classicism. Ellie Goulding and others applauded from the front row, a testament to Saab's enduring appeal.

— english.aawsat.com



Models present creations by Elie Saab during the Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, at le Musee des Arts Decoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts), in Paris.



Sports

No Messi, no problem as Argentina down Peru while Canada advance

Martinez has now scored in four consecutive appearances

MIAMI: Argentina shrugged off the injury absence of Lionel Messi to maintain their perfect start at the Copa America on Saturday with a 2-0 victory over Peru in Miami. Lautaro Martinez scored twice at the Hard Rock Stadium to seal a win that ensured Argentina advance to the quarter-finals as Group A winners. With Messi sidelined after complaining of a sore right hamstring, and coach Lionel Scaloni serving a one-game suspension, Argentina made nine changes to their starting XI at the Hard Rock Stadium.

But despite the makeshift-looking line-up, Argentina were always in control against a disappointing Peru side who managed just one shot on goal during a one-sided encounter.

Martinez's first goal came just after half-time. A sublime through ball from Angel Di Maria released the Inter Milan forward, who calmly lifted a deft finish over advancing Peru goalkeeper Pedro Gallese. Argentina had a chance to double their lead in the 72nd minute after Jesus Castillo handled in the area to concede a penalty. But Leandro Paredes crashed his ensuing spot-kick against the woodwork to leave the score at 1-0.

Martinez then grabbed a second in the 86th minute, latching on to a long pass forward before finishing past Gallese. Replays indicated Martinez appeared to shove defender Aldo Corzo in the build-up but referee Cesar Ramos waved Peru's protest and the goal stood.

"It was tough in the first half because they were defending deep, but the first goal opened up the game," Martinez said afterwards. "There's a lot more to come from us." Martinez has now scored in four consecutive appearances for Argentina and is relishing his hot streak. "Every time I put on this shirt, every training session, every meal, every team talk, I enjoy it," Martinez said.

Argentina will now face the runner-up from Group B in the quarter-finals in Houston next Thursday, most likely either Ecuador or Mexico.



MIAMI: Argentina's midfielder #14 Exequiel Palacios fights for the ball with Peru's midfielder #08 Sergio Pena during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament group A football match between Argentina and Peru at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, Florida. — AFP

In Saturday's other Group A game, Canada held 2015 and 2016 Copa America champions Chile to a 0-0 draw in Orlando, which was enough to see the Canadians into the last eight.

Chile needed a victory to leapfrog the Canadians into the knockout rounds but were left with a mountain to climb early in the game when Gabriel Suazo was dismissed for a second yellow card after only 27 minutes. "It took a lot of hard work - it's our first time

in this competition and it's not easy," Canada captain Alphonso Davies said about his team's advance to the last eight.

"There's a lot of good teams in this competition and a lot of good players. But we stuck to our plan and we played well. We showed a lot of fight. We had to show our teeth at times, but overall we did well." Canada will play the winners of Group B in the quarter-finals. — AFP

Stage set for Sesko clash with Portugal

FRANKFURT: Slovenia come into their Euro 2024 last-16 match-up with Portugal on Monday knowing they have already achieved their best-ever Euros result - and all without a goal contribution from star striker Benjamin Sesko. With no goals in three matches so far in Germany, the RB Leipzig striker is due to find the back of the net based on his form this season. He scored in each of his last seven games for Leipzig as they ended their Bundesliga campaign in the top four and was Slovenia's top scorer in qualifying.

And Sesko has come within a whisker of opening his account at the tournament - against Denmark he went close twice with superb long-range efforts that were just millimetres off target. The efforts from distance highlight how varied Sesko's skillset is. At 1.95 metres tall, Sesko is dangerous with his head but can also unleash fierce strikes from distance.

With speed to burn and physicality, the 21-year-old striker is already a complete package. Just one year after moving to Leipzig from sister club Red Bull Salzburg, his attributes have attracted the attention of several elite European sides, including Arsenal and Manchester United. In June however, he chose to extend his deal at Leipzig until 2029, continuing his development at one of Europe's best finishing schools.

Slovenia unbeaten

Slovenia may be yet to win a match at Euro 2024 but they are also yet to lose one, having drawn with England, Denmark and Serbia in the group stage. The 1-1 draw with Serbia was particularly agonizing for the Slovenians, who were on course for a first-ever Euros victory before Luka Jovic scored in the fifth minute of injury time to deny them. Such were the razor-thin margins in Group C that a win may have put Slovenia on course to win the section. But Slovenia finished the group stage in third spot and missed out on second spot on disciplinary record, having picked up one more yellow card than runners-up Denmark.

Third place in the group means a meeting with 2016 Euros winners Portugal who impressed in the group stage with wins over Czech Republic and Turkey, before a heavily-rotated XI lost to underdogs Georgia in their final match.

Slovenia are taking part in just their second Euros as an independent nation, having been eliminated at the group stage at Euro 2000. Their opponents in Frankfurt on Monday, however, have made the semi-finals five times and are among the favorites for the tournament. — AFP



BUDAPEST: (FILES) USA's Sha'Carri Richardson celebrates with a US flag after winning the women's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP

Richardson double Olympic bid over, Lyles marches on

LOS ANGELES: Sha'Carri Richardson's dreams of an Olympic sprint double ended in disappointment at the US trials on Saturday as men's sprint star Noah Lyles blasted to victory in the 200m. Richardson - the reigning world champion over 100m - had looked poised to claim at least a top-three finish in the women's 200m after clocking a blistering personal best of 21.92sec Friday's semi-finals.

But the 24-year-old from Texas never recovered after making a poor start in Saturday's final and was pipped for a top-three finish by winner Gabby Thomas, with Brittany Brown second and McKenzie Long third. Thomas won in a brisk 21.81sec, with Brown clocking 21.90sec and Long 21.91sec. Richardson finished in 22.16sec.

The defeat means that Richardson will only have the 100m to concentrate on in Paris in addition to her likely role in the 4x100m relay squad. Thomas, meanwhile, was delighted with a victory that puts her back on track for a possible tilt at the Olympic 200m crown.

"This is incredible," Thomas said. "I knew I needed to get today done and this is the first step - there's no gold medal in Paris without making the team today." While Richardson was left reflecting on a disappointing loss, there were no such difficulties for

Lyles in the men's 200m final.

The charismatic 26-year-old from Florida - the reigning 100m and 200m world champion - served notice that he is ready to extend his dominance to the Olympic arena with victory in the men's 200m final in a world-leading 19.53sec, a new trials record.

Lyles, who had already won the 100m last weekend, was made to work hard for victory, eventually reeling in Kenny Bednarek in the final 20m to take the tape. Bednarek finished in 19.59sec, while Erriyon Knighton was third in 19.77sec. Lyles, who has frequently talked of his struggles with mental health in recent years, said he was benefiting from being able to compete while no longer battling depression.

"I'm blessed, truly blessed," Lyles said after the win. "I've said it all season, but it helps not to have depression. I just thank God for getting me through each and every round, mentally and physically."

But there was more disappointment for former 100m world champion Christian Coleman, who was squeezed into fourth place to miss out. Coleman was also beaten out of the top three finishing places in the 100m last week.

Elsewhere on Saturday, reigning Olympic champion and world record holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone eased into Sunday's women's 400m hurdles final with another smooth performance.

The 24-year-old hurdling queen - who is bidding to qualify for her third straight Olympics - eased home in 52.48sec. Annal Cockrell was second quickest in 52.95sec with Shamier Little third fastest in 53.49sec. "Just focusing on getting out, going the back stretch and getting ready for tomorrow," McLaughlin-Levrone said after coasting home in her semi-final. — AFP

Italy, Spalletti at crossroads after Euros title disaster

BERLIN: Italy are once again staring into the footballing abyss after Saturday's humbling exit from Euro 2024 at the hands of Switzerland, the defence of their continental title ending in embarrassing fashion. A shockingly one-sided tie in Berlin, where Italy won the 2006 World Cup, led to a dismal last-16 exit after Luciano Spalletti's side had scraped through the group stage by the skin of their teeth.

Saturday's limp defeat was one of the lowest points in the history of the four-time world champions and reigning kings of Europe, and the latest in a worryingly large number of recent humiliations, including missing out on the last two World Cups.

Italy were pinned back by the Swiss in the first half and after Ruben Vargas' brilliant strike seconds after half-time they were easily held at arm's length as they limped out of the tournament. On Italy's national broadcaster RAI the verdict was swift and brutal: "unacceptable", "slow and predictable", said disconsolate commentators.

After the match, Spalletti lamented to RAI how Vargas' goal "took our legs out from under us" and said that his players didn't come into the tournament in the right physical condition to compete. He also suggested that Italy were affected by the heat in Berlin's Olympiastadion, even though it didn't stop the Swiss from performing at their best.

"Unfortunately, sharpness and tempo makes the difference," said Spalletti. "Right now, for too many reasons, we are unable to do anything more than this." It was not a convincing explanation for such disjointed performances over four matches and those comments followed a series of bizarre outbursts from Spalletti, who took the Italy job last summer with a huge amount of credit accrued after leading Napoli to a historic Serie A title.

Painful exit

Italian media are already questioning Spalletti's position after less than a year in charge, so bad was his showing in Germany and so confusing his constant chopping and changing of line-ups and formations. World Cup 2026 qualifiers begin in September and after Saturday's post-match press conference journalists were informed that Spalletti would have discussions with Italy's football federation on Sunday to "take stock" before another conference with reporters.

But Spalletti refused to directly address his future, only saying vaguely that "we need to change things" and taking it in turns to take responsibility and then blame outside factors. "I take responsibility for what happened, the players are mine, I chose them. I'm not happy with how we played today nor am I happy with how we played against Spain," said Spalletti. He added: "All of the other coaches had 20 games in charge, some had 30, before the Euros. I only had 10... We also had a number of players who sustained injuries, players I was counting on." Spalletti's new-look side had come into the tournament as a work in progress and there were promising signs from their opening 2-1 win over Albania.

However, things rapidly went downhill with a single-goal thumping at the hands of Spain, in which goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept the score respectable, and it took a 98th-minute equalizer against Croatia to send Italy through. — AFP



BERLIN: Italy's head coach Luciano Spalletti reacts during the UEFA Euro 2024 round of 16 football match between Switzerland and Italy at the Olympiastadion Berlin in Berlin. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Syed Mukhtar Ahmed Quadri, holder of Indian Passport No. T8211429 having permanent address No.30 15th cross Tajuddin street, Govindpura main road, Bangalore, 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

Germany pass Denmark test

Two VAR reviews within a minute going in favour of the hosts



DORTMUND: Germany's midfielder #17 Florian Wirtz shoots the ball past Denmark's defender #02 Joachim Andersen during the UEFA Euro 2024 round of 16 football match between Germany and Denmark at the BVB Stadion Dortmund in Dortmund. — AFP

DORTMUND: Germany are through to the quarter finals of a major tournament for the first time in eight years, but clouds remain for Julian Nagelsmann's Euro 2024 hosts.

The home side won 2-0 in Dortmund, coming up not only against a determined and organized Denmark, but also a 25-minute thunderstorm delay which derailed Germany's early momentum. In a match Nagelsmann called "bizarre" and "wild", Germany needed a fair share of luck to get past the Danes, with two VAR reviews within a minute going in favour of the hosts.

Nagelsmann's unforced changes to his starting XI will also come under fire, particularly the decision to replace the in-form Florian Wirtz with Leroy Sane, who had another frustrating night. Having ridden out the storm on Saturday, Germany will hope for a clearer week ahead,

particularly with a potential clash with in-form Spain on the horizon.

Selection changes

The first surprise of an unpredictable evening came when the starting XI was announced, with Nagelsmann making two changes to his starting line-up - the first time he has done so in 2024. Since sweeping the broom through Germany's squad in March, only injuries have stopped Nagelsmann playing his strongest XI.

Nagelsmann's decision to replace the defensive-focused Maximilian Mittelstaedt with the attack-minded David Raum was a reward for the latter's assist for Niclas Füllkrug's late equalizer against Switzerland.

The other unforced change was difficult to understand, with Nagelsmann dropping Wirtz for Sane, who showed

pace but struggled with control and timing. Nagelsmann explained the decision, saying he wanted to "reward a good week of training, as well as bring some speed into the game." "(Sane) has got different characteristics than Flo." Wirtz, 21, came on with nine minutes remaining and was an immediate upgrade, holding up possession and finding runners.

The coach's decision to again pick Kai Havertz over Füllkrug also raised eyebrows, despite the Arsenal forward converting a second-half penalty. In general play, Havertz had a number of chances but could not break through. His 10th-minute volley was saved by Danish goalie Kasper Schmeichel, with the goalkeeper gobbling up a tame Havertz header from point-blank range shortly before the break.

With Germany 1-0 up and 30 minutes remaining, Havertz broke through with

only the goalkeeper to beat. The goal would have sealed the game for Germany but Havertz chipped wide. Fortunately for Germany, Jamal Musiala had killer instinct when it mattered, scoring on the counter with 22 minutes remaining to wrap up the game. Musiala has now scored in three of Germany's four games at Euro 2024, the 21-year-old having established himself as the hosts' most reliable attacking force.

'We can be beaten'

The match again highlighted Germany's noted problems from dead-ball situations. A pre-tournament talking point, Germany conceded an own goal from a set piece against Scotland. Against Hungary, Nagelsmann's side were fortunate when a free-kick goal was ruled out for offside.

Minutes into the second-half, Denmark took a free kick which pinged around the box before Joachim Andersen turned it in.

A lengthy VAR review showed Andersen was a mere centimetre offside. In the post-match press conference, Denmark manager Kasper Hjulmand held up his phone to show the VAR images, telling reporters "it's one centimetre."

"It doesn't make sense. It's not how we are supposed to be using VAR." Moments after the goal was disallowed, Germany went up the other end and won a penalty, but the way Andersen was able to get a shot away despite the attention of several flat-footed Germany defenders will concern the coach.

With the quarter finals in sight, defender Joshua Kimmich summed up the uneven nature of the match - and Germany's tournament so far. "We're on a good run," the Bayern Munich defender said, adding "we know that we can beat anyone - but that we can also be beaten." — AFP

Rodriguez knocks out Estrada to win super flyweight belt

LOS ANGELES: Unbeaten American Jesse Rodriguez knocked out Mexico's Juan Francisco Estrada at the end of the seventh round on Saturday to take the World Boxing Council super flyweight title. The 24-year-old US southpaw Rodriguez, knocked down by Estrada for the first time in round six, answered late in the seventh with a devastating left to the body that crumpled Estrada and left him writhing on the canvas before referee Chris Flores counted him out.

"I got him with a good body shot," Rodriguez said. "I saw the way he was rolling on the floor. I knew that was it." Rodriguez improved to 20-0 with his 13th knockout victory while Estrada, 34, fell to 44-4 with the loss at Phoenix, Arizona.

"I've not felt a punch like that since my amateur days," Estrada said through a translator of the knockout blow. Rodriguez, a former flyweight and super flyweight champion, gave up his title at 112 pounds to move up to the 115-pound division and challenge Estrada.

"It was a tough fight," Rodriguez said. "I just dropped for the first time. That was crazy. I got caught with a punch and the next thing you know I was on the floor. I know it was bad, but I've always pictured myself in a fight like this and

in the ring with a legend and to take his best, it makes it that much more better."

Estrada entered on an eight-fight win streak, his most recent bout coming in December 2022 when he won the superfly crown with a majority decision over Nicaragua's Roman Gonzalez. The dethroned champion called for a rematch, which is in his contract.

"I know the mistake I made in there and I want the rematch. What I need to do in the next fight is box a little bit more," Estrada said. "He's a great fighter. I didn't underestimate him. I made some errors in this fight and I want to put them right in the second one."

"There's no doubt we'll win that rematch," Rodriguez caught Estrada with a hard right to the jaw in the first round and countered the champion's body punches in the second to set the early pace. Rodriguez stunned Estrada in the third round with a right hook to the jaw and in the fourth round knocked the champion to the canvas with a left uppercut followed by a straight left hand. "He didn't really know what to do when I was on the outside. I just stuck to the game plan and it worked out," Rodriguez said.

'Now I know'

A punishing left uppercut by Rodriguez staggered Estrada with a minute remaining in the fifth but the Mexican stayed on his feet to the end of the round despite a flurry of punches by the challenger. Estrada answered with a hard right hand to the chest of Rodriguez in the early seconds of round six that planted the American on his rear as the crowd roared.



PHOENIX, ARIZONA: Jesse 'Bam' Rodriguez of the United States celebrates his knockout victory over Juan Francisco Estrada of Mexico for the WBC world and Ring Magazine super flyweight title at Footprint Center on June 29, 2024 in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

"I got a little careless. That's why I got dropped," Rodriguez said. "I always wondered what it felt like. Now I know. I don't want it to happen again." Rodriguez would like to unify the 115-pound titles. "Definitely. It's something I've seen other fighters do and just to see them with all the belts, it's motivating," he said. "It's on to bigger things from here... I am taking over this division." — AFP