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Crackdown on visa violators

8 remain detained over Mangaf fire • Officer jailed for beating worker • Child abuse video probed

Amir receives senior officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: (Left) HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Monday Chairman of the Central Agency for Remedying Status of Illegal Residents Saleh Al-Fadhala. (Right) HH the Amir also received Minister of Justice and State Minister for Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi and Attorney General Saad Al-Safran, who presented to him newly appointed general attorneys Meshal Al-Ghanam and Nasser Al-Sumait. — KUNA photos

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A number of expats were arrested on Monday in the first day of a crackdown by the interior ministry on residency violators who failed to benefit from a three-month amnesty for illegals, the interior ministry said. The ministry did not specify how many people were arrested but said that they were referred to concerned authorities in preparation to be deported to their home countries.

During the amnesty which ended on Sunday, thousands of illegal expats are believed to have benefited by either legalizing their stay after paying fines or leaving the country without paying any fine and still have the right to return on new visas. The crackdown on the first day was led by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and a number of high-ranking officers, and covered several residential areas. The interior ministry had said the inspection campaigns would continue until violators are arrested and deported.

Meanwhile, a judge on Monday renewed the detention for two weeks of eight people — a Kuwaiti, three Indians and four Egyptians — in connection with last month's building fire in Mangaf that killed 49 people, 46 of them Indians and three Filipinos. The men were accused of manslaughter, wrongful injury and negligence.

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Kuwait expands 'open door' policy to virtual domain

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government has adopted the "open door" policy in line with guidelines by HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to further bolster confidence between state officials and citizens and improve public services. In addition to the removal of physical bureaucratic barriers, citizens can easily request meetings with top officials via the government's Tawassul system available on the smart service Sahel app.

The Cabinet, during a session held on May 19, stressed the necessity "to open the doors for citizens seeking to work out transactions at ministries and other government authorities". The digital service is designed to enable citizens to present queries and complaints quickly, boosting transparency and confidence between citizens and the government.

Amer Al-Ajmi, head of the local affairs sector and the government's official spokesperson, said in a statement to KUNA that the open door policy is in line with instructions by HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. Ajmi added that the government, through this mechanism, is seeking to bolster the confidence of the masses by creating a transparent medium for facilitating and speeding up solutions to diverse issues.

The smart service, available to deal with all ministries involved in utilities and public services, is helpful to cut red tape. Meetings can be requested with ministers, deputies or undersecretaries. Ajmi explained, indicating that the duration of the meeting and other relevant terms can be set by each department. Ministries have already declared that they are accessible via the online service, and a number of ministers have given instructions to tackle hurdles facing citizens while processing transactions at state departments. — KUNA

Kuwait Times and Kuwait News host Zain media interns

KUWAIT: Students participating in the Zain Summer Program have started their journey at many of the company's main branches and at Kuwait News, a leading local media institution, and Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf. The fifth season of the program recently kicked off to invest in aspiring young people's skills during the summer season.

Students began their internships at some of Zain's largest branches across Kuwait. Additionally, a group of students are interning at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, where they will learn about media operations, including creating news reports, editorial pieces, content creation and using cameras and audio equipment. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Students acquire media skills at Kuwait News and Kuwait Times.

UK govt, BA sued over 1990 Kuwait hostage crisis

LONDON: Passengers and crew of a British Airways flight who were taken hostage in Kuwait in 1990 have launched legal action against the UK government and the airline, a law firm said Monday. People on BA flight 149 were taken off the Kuala Lum-

pur-bound plane when it landed in the Gulf state on Aug 2 that year, hours after Iraq's then leader Saddam Hussein invaded the country.

Some of the 367 passengers and crew spent more than four months in captivity, including as human shields against Western attacks on the Iraqi dictator's troops during the first Gulf war. Ninety-four of them have filed a civil claim at the High Court in London, accusing Britain's government and BA of "deliberately endangering" civilians, said McCue Jury & Partners.

"All of the claimants suffered severe physical and psychiatric harm during their ordeal, the con-

sequences of which are still felt today," the law firm added. The action claims that the UK government and the airline "knew the invasion had started" but allowed the flight to land anyway. They did so because the flight was used to "insert a covert special ops team into occupied Kuwait", the firm added.

"We were not treated as citizens but as expendable pawns for commercial and political gain," said Barry Manners, who was on the flight and is taking part in the claim. "A victory over years of cover-up and bare-faced denial will help restore trust in our political and judicial process," he added.

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Gaza hospital chief tortured in Zionist detention

GAZA: The head of the Gaza Strip's biggest hospital said on Monday after being freed from more than seven months of detention that he had been tortured by the Zionist entity. Al-Shifa Hospital Director Mohammed Abu Salmiya was among dozens of Palestinians released and returned to Gaza for treatment, according to Zionist authorities.

Abu Salmiya said he and other pris-

oners were put through severe torture in Zionist prisons, after being detained since the Oct 7 cross-border attacks by Hamas. "Several inmates died in interrogation centers and were deprived of food and medicine," according to Abu Salmiya, who said he still had a broken thumb. "For two months no prisoner ate more than a loaf of bread a day," he added. "Detainees were subjected to physical and psychological humiliation."

The medical chief said no charge had ever been made against him. The Zionist Shin Bet intelligence agency said it had decided on the release with the Zionist military "to free up places in detention centers."

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GAZA: Al-Shifa Hospital Director Mohammed Abu Salmiya is welcomed by relatives after his release alongside other detainees at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on July 1, 2024. — AFP

Local

In my view

Anti-Zionism is not anti-semitism



Nejud Al-Yagout

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It is no secret that every time someone criticizes the government of the Zionist entity, they are accused of anti-semitism. When Arabs are called anti-semitic, it is even more bizarre, because Arabs are Semitic! In this article, to prove that supporting Palestine is not anti-semitic, we will explore some of the most vocal anti-Zionist voices in the world today and quote their stances. All of them are Jews.

Many followers of Judaism who criticize the Zionist state are referred to as self-hating Jews. But a true Jew believes in justice and equality, so these insults are nonsensical in the face of what is truly arising in Palestine today. And the only self-hating Jews are the ones who have disdained their religion yet use it to galvanize people to kill and hate or resurrect apocalyptic sentiments to justify aggression.

Another unfortunate tactic is mentioning the Holocaust any time the Zionist entity is criticized. Obviously in the face of this tactic, many prefer to remain silent, out of guilt for supporting Nazis during the WWII era; or, for the rest of us, sheer horror even at the recollection that something so horrific and brutal was allowed to happen in the first place. But many critics of the Zionist entity today are descendants of Holocaust victims! And what is shocking is that both the descendants of Nazis and previous anti-Nazis are now supporting Zionists.

Mentioning the Holocaust is yet another way to divert attention from the crimes that are being inflicted on Palestinians and turning away from what is happening today as more and more Palestinians fall victim to a rapid propaganda machine that knows how to garner "moral" support while immorally slaughtering humans. But let's not digress further.

Let's begin with Noam Chomsky, one of the most famous Jewish anti-Zionists. As per an article in Democracy Now, this was Chomsky's response when asked if the Zionist state was guilty of apartheid: "To call it apartheid is a gift to [the Zionist entity], at least if by 'apartheid' you mean South African-style apartheid. What's happening in the Occupied Territories is much worse. There's a crucial difference. The South African Nationalists needed the black population. That was their workforce... The [Zionist] relationship to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories is totally different. They just don't want them. They want them out, or at least in prison." Chomsky has defended the Palestinian cause, not because he is a self-hating Jew, but because he is a political expert and recognizes criminal activity and stands up against it regardless of whether the people who are perpetrating the crimes against humanity share his faith or not.

And let's not forget Norman Finkelstein, a Jewish political scientist and activist. His analysis on whether what is happening in Gaza is a genocide or not, as per TRF world, is as follows: "[The Zionist entity] has announced that it will not allow any food, water, fuel into the occupied territory. Use your own rational faculty: if for a protracted period of time, maybe running into months – similar to the last major [Zionist] assault on Gaza, Operation Protective Edge that lasted 51 days in 2014 – you withhold those essentials to life from a population, what do you have? Genocide. It's no secret, [the Zionist entity] is broadcasting its plans. It's not as if we have to tease them out. No, they've said it very clearly and that they want to decimate Gaza."

There is also Dr Gabor Mate, who was a former Zionist, and who is now one of the greatest Jewish vocal supporters of Palestinians. In an article published by the Middle East Monitor, Dr Mate argues "how [the Zionist entity] was founded on massacres and the expulsion of Palestinians from their lands. Speaking to British broadcaster Piers Morgan, Mate explained that he had realized the reality of the [Zionist] occupation during his visit to the occupied Palestinian territories, adding that he cried bitterly every day for two weeks after returning from his trip as a result of what he witnessed." This is from a man who once supported the Zionist entity. He is proof that our minds can change when we do enough research. He is also proof that we are called to stand up even to those who share our heritage. Otherwise, justice is biased.

There are many voices supporting Palestinians today, even voices who were once Zionists. For the first time, Palestinians are not only being sustained by Arabs. The world is waking up to the atrocities of living under a brutal occupation. Even those of us who did not want to take sides and once rooted for everyone have left the bubble of hippiedom and are now focusing on one side, the only side that needs our full-fledged attention, before any notion of peace can become a reality, both in our minds or in the world.

Only by standing up to injustice can the world know stability. Supporting Palestinians does not mean one is anti-semitic, and it should not mean that one wants destruction for the other side or that one supports violence in any form or resistance which results in the harm of others or loss of lives. All lives are honorable and deserve security. What supporting Palestine does mean is that we ask for a permanent ceasefire and an end to this occupation. It means one is for the rights and the dignity of all and one stands for non-violence and true peace on this planet we share together. And we cannot have dignity when our fellow brothers and sisters live in open-air camps, and are in constant fear of waking up under rubble or to family members who have perished, all while they are deprived of water and food and aid and the right to safety in schools, refugee camps, and hospitals. We cannot have dignity when Palestinians in the West Bank have their homes invaded by settlers while backed and protected by a forceful military.

One day, hopefully sooner rather than later, the world is going to change its mind and stance and say: "Stop!" One day, the world will see Palestinian children as worthy of saving as their own children. And only then will the region, and much of the world, by default, know peace. For now, it is essential we continue to read and research and even change our minds when we have to, regardless of our previous inclinations and sentiments, so we evolve from ideologies that promote aggression. We can continue to wish peace for all people, while ensuring that victims are where we direct our attention toward, so that aggressors know that they no longer have the support of the majority.

There are many resources available to learn more about what is happening to Palestinians. There is a poignant documentary titled "Where Olive Trees Weep" which shows life under the Zionist occupation. And there are many groups who expose the atrocities of the Zionist entity such as Breaking the Silence (former soldiers of the Zionist armed forces), and the Jewish Voice for Peace which reminds people: "In the lineage of our Jewish tradition, we call upon all people of conscience to stand in solidarity with Palestine, continue the fight for Palestinian rights, and demand an end to the theft of Palestinian land."

Many non-Arabs and non-Palestinians are finally speaking out, something unimaginable previously. The world is recognizing what is happening for the first time in eons. We have to come together and create a world that benefits everyone, not just a few. Nobody is more entitled than another person. Nobody's religion, power status, citizenship or wealth should justify aggression or impunity. We have to come together.

The time has come to recognize that Palestine is a nation, a nation that has the right to govern itself, and to raise a generation who no longer fall victim to being indiscriminate targets of the wrath of Zionist soldiers. It is not anti-semitism to support Palestine. It is anti-humanity not to.

Official highlights Kuwait's pivotal role in advancing aviation sector

Kuwait participates in ACAO Executive Council's 69th meeting



Head of the delegation of Kuwait and head of Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Participants take a group photo. — KUNA photos

RABAT: The 69th session of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO) began on Monday in Rabat, with the participation of representatives from member states, including Kuwait, whose delegation was led by Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah stressed in a statement to KUNA, during his participation in the opening of the meeting, Kuwait's keenness to support joint Arab action,

especially in the field of civil aviation.

In a statement to KUNA during the opening session, Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah emphasized Kuwait's commitment to supporting joint Arab efforts, particularly in the field of civil aviation. Sheikh Humoud highlighted Kuwait's pivotal role in advancing the civil aviation sector across Arab countries, aiming to develop and enhance this sector to achieve safe, efficient, and sustainable air trans-

port that aligns with the sustainable development goals of Arab nations. He stressed the importance of cooperation and integration among Arab countries in the civil aviation sector to boost this vital industry, which serves as a catalyst for development and economic growth. He also highlighted the crucial role played by the ACAO in this regard.

The Executive Council's agenda includes several key topics, such

as reviewing the recommendations from the 68th session of the Council, approving the recommendations of the ACAO's technical committees, and setting the organization's activity program for 2025 and 2026. The Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization is comprised of nine members elected by the General Assembly from the nominees of member states for a two-year term. — KUNA



Minister of Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan and Head of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mahari inspect the Darwaza Abdulrazzaq project. — KUNA photos

Darwaza Abdulrazzaq project set to reopen

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr Noura Al-Mashaan affirmed the development and maintenance completion of the Darwaza Al-Abdulrazzaq project, indicating the reopening of the Darwaza soon. In a statement to KUNA, Dr Al-Mashaan highlighted, during the inspection tour that the project's plans are well underway and would reopen in a time-

ly manner. The minister, who was accompanied by the Head of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mahari inspected the site.

The inspection tour is part of a commitment that follows up on the developments of the Ministry's projects, ensuring their progress in achieving the highest standards of quality and safety of its infrastructure, Dr Al-Mashaan added. She expressed her gratitude towards Kuwait's leadership and the Council of Ministers for their continuous confidence and support of the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Public Works, which, in turn, reflects their gratitude to the efforts of officials in the projects.

On his part, Head of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mahari reaffirmed that the inspection tour of the Darwaza Al-Abdulrazzaq underpass underscores the importance of the project's success. Al-Mahari also praised Dr Al-Mashaan's efforts and her keenness to see to the projects. Furthermore, Al-Mahari stated that the maintenance work occurring at the Darwaza would greatly contribute towards restoring the aesthetic appearance of the historical landmark. Darwaza Al-Abdulrazzaq is a historical landmark in Kuwait; it used to be a horse stable and camel passageway, as well as a current pedestrian underpass in the heart of Kuwait City and close to Souk Al-Mubarakiya. — KUNA

Interior cracks down on residency violators



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry on Monday launched a campaign to crackdown on residency violators in all governorates. Violators were given a grace period between March 14 and June 30 to adjust their residency status. The Interior Ministry announced previously that violators could adjust their status by paying a fine according to rules and regulations. — KUNA photos



Zain officials with the Summer Program participants.

Zain Summer Program kicks off

Interns begin their journey at company's branches and at Kuwait News, Kuwait Times



Work experience at Zain's branches covers many business skills.



Students acquire media skills at Kuwait News and Kuwait Times.

KUWAIT: Students participating in the Zain Summer Program have started their journey at many of the company's main branches, along with the headquarters of Kuwait News, a leading local media institution, and Kuwait Times, the first English daily in Kuwait. The fifth season of the program has recently kicked off to invest in aspiring young people's skills during the summer season.

Following the registration phase, applicants were interviewed, and the final participants were selected based on their competencies and interests. Afterwards, Zain hosted a special orientation session at its Innovation Center (ZINC) in Shuwaikh, where program details and daily tasks were outlined. Students also toured Zain's 107 Contact Center to gain insights into the company's leading customer service processes.

Before starting their new roles, students at-

- Students manage tasks related to business, sales, and media
- Fifth season comes under umbrella of FUN Program

tended a workshop titled 'Steer Your Career,' held in partnership with INJAZ Kuwait. This session focused on key career preparation topics, such as leadership in a changing environment, time management, communication, public speaking, and leveraging technology to enhance these skills. The workshop also covered verbal and written communication, business and creative writing, CV drafting, and job search strategies. Students learned about problem-solving, decision-making, and developing innovative solutions to overcome challenges.

Students began their internships at some of

Zain's largest branches across Kuwait, including Bibi Tower branch in Salmiya, the Warehouse Mall branch, Al Assima Mall branch, the Avenues Mall branch, Hawally branch, and Mishref branch. During their time at these branches, they will gain essential business skills in customer service, product marketing, sales of electronics and smart devices, promoting offers, as well as personal skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, and teamwork. Additionally, a group of students interning at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News will learn about media operations, including creating news

reports, editorial pieces, content creation, and using cameras and audio equipment.

The fifth season of the Zain Summer Program continues the company's mission to invest in young people's capabilities by offering interactive internship experiences. The program aims to prepare graduates for the job market by developing a variety of skills. The previous four seasons have been highly successful, with many ambitious students participating. The program offers a paid part-time system with dedicated weekly work hours for one month. The Summer Program is part of Zain's Future University Network (FUN) initiative, one of the company's most engaging sustainable programs since its launch in 2008. Over the years, FUN has provided hundreds of students with paid part-time experiences at Zain, helping them launch their careers.

SACGC celebrates 72 graduates, promotes innovation, creativity

KUWAIT: Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), one of the centers of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, celebrated on Sunday the graduation of 72 students from the center's fourth batch under the patronage and attendance of Bader Al-Humaidhi, the center's chairman. In an exclusive statement to KUNA, SACGC Director Neda Al-Daihani expressed his pride in the 72 graduates from the fourth batch.



Center Director General Neda Al-Daihani



KUWAIT: SACGC celebrates the graduation of 72 students under the patronage of Bader Al-Humaidhi, the center's chairman. — KUNA photos

tions. He highlighted the support and interest of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, which enriches students with important international scientific courses and involves them in international competitions to showcase their talents and abilities.

The graduates' speech in Arabic was delivered by the student who won ninth place in science at the level of Kuwait, Rayan Al-Marshed, noting that the journey of 12 years of study at the school

has ended, "so we move to an entirely new stage in which we complete the journey of ambition." Al-Marshed expressed gratitude to His Almighty Allah, vowing to continue her journey to achieve more accomplishments.

The graduates' speech was delivered in English by student Hassan Al-Wazzan, saying with determination and ambition, the journey ended, "and we reaped the fruits of staying up late and toil, adding



Rayan Al-Marshed



Hassan Al-Wazzan

that "I can only thank the center, the family, teachers, and colleagues." The SACGC, a center affiliated with KFAS, has won many awards in international and Arab competitions in various scientific fields. The center seeks to spread the culture of creativity and modern technology and encourage innovation by providing specialized training programs and courses to promote the youth and young people's artistic, technological, and creative advancement. — KUNA

Arab countries seek responsive, flexible health budgets

CAIRO: The joint Arab meeting of representatives of the ministries of health and finance to follow up on the implementation of the Arab Strategy for a health-friendly budget and review its objectives was launched on Monday at the Arab League headquarters of Arab States with the participation of Kuwait. The assistant secretary general and head of the Social Affairs department, Dr Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, said that the meeting is to follow up on the implementation of the decision issued by the 59th Ordinary Session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health in Geneva, Switzerland, last year on the launch of the Arab Strategy for a health-friendly budget.

Abu Ghazaleh added that the 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 own systems of public financial management. The strategy is geared towards identifying the principles that allow greater participation of the health sector in the interventions of public financial management and expanding the financial space so as to achieve the concept of universal health coverage.

The strategy also gives priority to the role of the ministries of health in the Arab countries in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of public funds by strengthening spending policies to make room for new health expenditures within the total current budget, especially within the framework of the limited ability to increase public revenues.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Director Dr Leila Bakr said the world is currently at a "pivotal moment" amid the rapidly evolving health landscape, coinciding with the increase in population. Bakr added that the adoption of health-friendly budgets will support the United Nations Population Plans, stressing the need to enable women to access health services and eliminate all harmful practices against women and girls. She pointed out the need to work on financing health systems, calling for an increase in financial allocations that support the implementation of that strategy. This, she said, will provide a road map for partnerships between governments and civil society organizations. — KUNA

New maternity hospital a qualitative addition



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadi inspects the new maternity hospital on Monday. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadi, said that the new maternity hospital is a qualitative addition to the health care system in the country and enhances the Ministry's ability to provide distinguished and comprehensive medical services. The Health Minister, in a press statement after a field tour of the new maternity hospital project in the Sabah specialized medical area on Monday, expressed his confidence that the hospital will contribute significantly to improving the health care services provided to women and children, stressing the importance of this project in enhancing the capabilities of the health sector.

The minister discussed with the specialists from the Ministry of Health during the tour the details of the operation of the hospital and ensuring the readiness of the necessary devices and supplies to

provide high-quality medical services, indicating that the visit comes within the framework of a keenness to follow up on the implementation of large health projects and to ensure their readiness to operate according to the highest international standards.

The tour comes as a prelude to the operation of the hospital within the framework of strengthening the health infrastructure in the country and developing the medical services provided, as it is one of the main projects included in the development plan. It is located on an area of 65,000 sq m, while the total area of the building covers 400,357 sq m.

The hospital is designed according to the latest international standards in the field of diagnosis and treatment of gynecological and obstetric diseases, including the specifications of environmentally friendly and energy-sav-



ing green buildings. It has a large capacity of up to 789 beds. It has 59 delivery rooms and 28 rooms for operations, 81 outpatient clinics, and 80 percent of the rooms have a sea view,

which contributes to providing a comfortable environment for visitors, as well as pharmacies and specialized laboratories to meet all the needs of the patients. — KUNA

Arab Parliament hails Spain's intervention in ICJ genocide case

CAIRO: The Arab Parliament hailed Spain's intervention in the case filed by South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which accuses Zionist occupation of violating its obligations under the Genocide Prevention Convention in its war on the Gaza Strip. The parliament's statement said that Spain's move aims to achieve justice. It also condemned the occupation forces for committing war crimes in the Gaza Strip. The ICJ announced that Spain submitted the declaration of intervention on Friday regarding the genocide allegations in Gaza.

In another development, the visiting Secretary General of the International Federation of Journalists

(IFJ), Anthony Bellanger, declared on Sunday that the association would seek to prosecute Zionist entity in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for fatally targeting Palestinians, namely the journalists. Bellanger said he had been anguished by the killing of Palestinian journalists for nine months, revealing that the association's death tally for this segment reached 116, which is a record figure for fatalities among the press corps worldwide.

A record of all kinds of (the deadly) targeting that included the Palestinian journalists would be submitted in a libel suit to the ICC by the IFJ and the Palestinian Journalists Association, said Bellanger, addressing a ceremony marking Iraq's Journalists Day. He called upon all Arab unions to jointly speak up in support of the journalists in the Middle East, namely the Palestinian press corps. Bellanger has added that he has been supporting the Palestinian journalists and their association with financial resources, demanding that Zionists allow correspondents to enter Gaza to cover the massacre happening there. — KUNA



GAZA: Palestinian men who had been detained by Zionist forces arrive after their release for a check-up at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on July 1, 2024. — AFP

Ministry of Information to unveil news channel

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information will unveil the news channel (its first phase) on July 21. The channel's main programming schedule reflects a Kuwaiti cultural ethos consistent with the Ministry's strategy to stay updated with local, regional, and international events. Speaking to KUNA Monday, the official spokesman for the Ministry of Information, Acting Undersecretary of the News and Political Programs Sector, Dr Bader Al-Enezi, said that the channel will officially launch its first phase on July 28, focusing on delivering local news, programs, and reports, including 24-hour news bulletins,

news summaries, cultural, and talk shows.

The channel will feature a variety of programs and reports covering economic, sports, social, and cultural topics, produced by highly experienced and skilled staff, and it is equipped with the latest technology and innovations in broadcasting, filming, and production, with several state-of-the-art studios prepared for this purpose. — KUNA



Dr Bader Al-Enezi

Army Chief of Staff receives envoys



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain on Monday received the Hungarian Ambassador to Kuwait Andras Szabo (top). Later in the day, he hosted the military attach of Bangladesh, Brigadier Hassan Uz Zaman, the military said in a statement, noting that the talks in the two sessions addressed issues of common interest, particularly in the military field. — KUNA



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China's adopted children return to seek their roots

Mauritania's Ghazouani gets re-elected

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Zionist forces warn Palestinians in eastern Khan Yunis to leave

New evacuation orders came hours after Islamic Jihad fired rockets into the Zionist entity



KHAN YUNIS: Palestinian women and boys walk towards destroyed buildings, as some residents return to the city of Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on June 30, 2024. — AFP

CAIRO/GAZA: The Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad fired a barrage of rockets into the Zionist entity on Monday as fighting raged in Gaza and Zionist tanks advanced deeper in parts of the enclave, residents and officials said. The armed wing of Islamic Jihad, an Iranian-backed ally of Hamas, said its fighters fired rockets towards several Zionist communities near the fence with Gaza in response to "the crimes of the Zionist enemy against our Palestinian people".

The volley of about 20 rockets caused no casualties, the Zionist military said. But the attack showed militants still possess rocket capabilities almost nine months into an offensive that the entity says is aimed at neutralizing threats against it.

Residents of several neighborhoods in eastern Khan Yunis, which is in southern Gaza, said they had received audio messages from Zionist phone

numbers ordering them to leave their homes. "For your safety, you must evacuate immediately to the humanitarian zone," army spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on social media platform X in a call to residents and displaced people living in those areas.

Some suggested this could mean Zionist forces will return to the area, which they left several weeks ago. The Zionist military said in a statement earlier on Monday the rockets were fired from the Khan Yunis area. Violence also flared on Monday in the Zionist-occupied West Bank, where the Palestinian health ministry said a woman and a boy were killed in the city of Tulkarm during an operation by Zionist forces. A day earlier, a Zionist strike in the same area killed an Islamic Jihad member.

In some parts of Gaza, militants continue to stage attacks on Zionist forces in areas that the army said they had left months ago. Zionist tanks deepened in-

cursions into the Shejaia suburb of eastern Gaza City for a fifth day, and tanks advanced further in western and central Rafah, in southern Gaza near the border with Egypt, residents said.

The Zionist military said it had killed a number of militants in combat in Shejaia on Monday and found large amounts of weapons there. Hamas said its fighters had lured a Zionist force into a booby-trapped house in the east of Rafah and blown it up, causing casualties.

The Zionist military announced the death of a soldier in southern Gaza without providing details. The entity's Army Radio said the soldier was killed in Rafah in a booby-trapped house — a possible reference to the incident reported by Hamas.

Also in Rafah, the Zionist military said that an airstrike killed a militant who fired an anti-tank missile at its troops. The Zionist entity has signaled that its op-

eration in Rafah, meant to stamp out Hamas, will soon be concluded. After the intense phase of the war is over, its forces will focus on smaller scale operations meant to stop Hamas reassembling, officials say.

The war began after Hamas-led fighters entered the south of the Zionist entity on Oct 7, killed around 1,200 people and took around 250 hostages, including civilians and soldiers, back into Gaza, according to Zionist tallies. The offensive that the Zionist entity launched in retaliation has killed nearly 38,000 people, according to the Gaza health ministry, and has left the heavily built-up coastal enclave in ruins. The Gaza health ministry does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, but officials say most of the dead are civilians. The Zionist entity says 317 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza and that at least a third of the Palestinian dead are fighters. — Reuters

In divided France, far-right victory is feted and mourned

HÉNIN-BEAUMONT, France: The champagne is flowing, the cheers are echoing and the Marseillaise is resounding. "Marine! Marine! Marine!" chant the crowd in triumphant mood as the results of France's first round of legislative elections stream in, showing a clear win for the far-right National Rally (RN).

They do not have to wait long before the icon of the French far-right, three-time presidential candidate and woman credited with turning the party into a competitive political force declares the party is seeking an absolute majority and the post of prime minister in round two. The results mark a "determination to turn the page after seven years" of rule by President Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen tells the crowds, adding that she wants her protegee Jordan Bardella to be prime minister.

She declared an outright victory in the first round for her seat of Henin-Beaumont, a gritty area in northern France and typical of the regions where the RN has thrived in recent years. The RN has promised to boost purchasing power, drastically curtail immigration and restore law and order, with Le Pen seeking to moderate past extremes even as opponents accuse it of still being racist. "We've tried everything and it doesn't work, so why not try the National Rally?" said Jonathan, who asked his last name not be given, at an in-



PARIS: Demonstrators react as they take part in a rally after the announcement of the results of the first round of French parliamentary elections, at Place de la Republique in Paris on June 30, 2024. — AFP

dustrial estate in the area. "Act on security, employment for young people, give more purchasing power, especially petrol which is too expensive. Some people can't go to work because they don't have enough money to put petrol in their car."

'Disrupt the way of life'

"I'm waiting for Mr Bardella or other people to maybe take a bit of a look at things and redefine purchasing power a bit," said Gilles Janiaczyk, self-employed, 60. "Maybe we should put things back in order with the people who live here and can't adapt to our country," he added. But Lydie Maffeis, a pensioner, 79, who voted for the presidential alliance, said: "My generation has known parties that were, shall we say, a little more moderate. And now we've gone to the extremes. And that's the problem."

At the other end of the country, in

France's Mediterranean port city of Marseille, in its densely populated districts with large immigrant populations, the mood is often quite different. "I'm worried about the possibility of the far right because we're in a working-class, cosmopolitan city and it could disrupt the way of life we have here. We risk the spread of racist speech in public services," said Jean-Francois Pepin, 49, a special needs educator.

In front of a school in the Cite des Oliviers, in the north of Marseille, "we've never seen a queue like that to vote, and so much the better" said the presiding officer as voting took place. Many were motivated to vote by the risk of the RN taking power, even those that shunned European elections earlier in June. "As long as we have the choice, it would be better to go and vote," said Nabil Agueni, 40. "I came to counter the FN because it will remove all assistances. The country needs help, we are not all equal," he said, referring to the party by its old name of the National Front (FN).

Ines Daoud voted for the first time, at 19, with her mother Ouahiba. "Honestly, we don't want the RN. We don't have a party in particular, but in the family there is a mix, from Algeria, the Comoros, Morocco," Ouahiba said. After voting in Wissembourg in France's eastern corner close to the border with Germany, Thierry, 58, would not say how he voted but said he believed Macron's decision to hold the polls was a good idea. "I hope that it will result in something coherent capable of responding to the wishes of the French. Whether it's Pierre, Paul or Jacques who wins, we have to be respectful of the choice," he said. — AFP



Announcement

Gulf Takaful Insurance Company is pleased to announce the advanced annual declaration of its Wakala & Mudaraba fees as approved by its Sharia'a Board for the financial year 2024:

1. Wakala Fee:

A maximum Wakala fee not to exceed 25% on gross contributions of general and family takaful respectively.

The actual percentage is agreed upon by the Board of Directors of the Company at the end of the financial year and approved by the shareholders.

2. Mudaraba share:

Mudaraba share of 30% on participants' realized investment returns.

With the Grace of Allah, the most merciful and the most beneficent.

International

Mauritania's Ghazouani gets re-elected

Supporters of anti-slavery rival candidate burn tires in protest; campaign manager arrested

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania: Mauritania's incumbent President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani has comfortably won re-election with 56.12 percent of the vote, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) said Monday. Victory gives the former army chief a second term as head of the vast desert country, seen as a rock of relative stability in Africa's volatile Sahel region and set to become a gas producer.

Ghazouani would have faced a second round had he not won more than half the votes in Saturday's election. As it was, he placed well ahead of his main rival, anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid, who won 22.10 percent, according to results announced by CENI chief Dah Ould Abdel Jelil. Abeid said Sunday he would not recognize the results of CENI, which he accused of being manipulated by the government.

Ghazouani's other main rival, Hamadi Ould Sid' El Moctar, who heads the Islamist Tewassoul party, came third with 12.78 percent, according to CENI. "We did everything we could to prepare the conditions for a good election and we were relatively successful," said the head of the electoral commission.

A 2019 election brought Ghazouani to power, marking the first transition between two elected presidents since independence from France in 1960 and a series of coups from 1978 to 2008. While the Sahel has in recent years seen a string of military coups and escalating jihadism, particularly in Mali, Mauritania has not experienced an attack since 2011. Ghazouani, 67, is widely regarded as the mastermind behind the West African state's relative security.

'Remain attentive'

Saturday's presidential election had an overall turnout of 55.39 percent, lower than in 2019. The results had trickled in since Saturday evening and were published continuously on an official online platform, giving an indication of the final outcome. "We will only recognize our own results, and therefore we will take to the streets" to refuse the electoral commission count, opponent Abeid said.

Some of his supporters demonstrated in the capital Nouakchott late Sunday, burning tires and disrupting traffic. At the end of the afternoon, Abeid's campaign headquarters were surrounded by security forces, according to an AFP journalist. His campaign manager was arrested, a spokesman said. The police presence in the capital increased significantly later in the evening.

Islamist candidate El Moctar said Saturday that he would "remain attentive" to any breach of voting regulations, while calling on his supporters to steer clear of anything that could create public disorder. Ghazouani has made helping the young a key priority in a country of 4.9 million people, where almost three quarters are aged under 35.

After a first term hit by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the incumbent says he hopes to make more reforms thanks to a favorable economic outlook. Growth should average 4.9 percent (3.1 percent per capita) for the period 2024-2026, according to the World Bank, spurred by the launch of gas production in the second half of this year. Inflation has fallen from a peak of 9.5 percent in 2022 to 5 percent in 2023 and should continue to slow to 2.5 percent in 2024. — AFP



NOUAKCHOTT: Voters wait outside a voting station in Nouakchott on June 29, 2024. — AFP photos



A voter folds her ballot at a voting station.



President of Mauritania and leader of the Union for the Republic, Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani waves to supporters celebrating his reelection on July 1, 2024.

Ruto insists not to blame for Kenya protest deaths

NAIROBI: Hundreds of people marched in the Kenyan capital Nairobi Sunday, to honor those who died in anti-government demonstrations this week, as President William Ruto insisted that: "I have no blood on my hands." Rights groups say at least 30 people died in protests driven by a government drive to substantially raise taxes in the East African country.

Following the violence, Ruto announced an about-turn earlier this week, saying he would "listen to the people" and would not sign the finance bill into law. Ruto, in a television interview, put the toll at 19 - the first figures issued by the authorities - and promised a full investigation into the deaths.

Largely peaceful rallies turned violent last Tuesday when lawmakers passed the deeply unpopular tax increases following pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Police opened fire on protesters who stormed the parliament complex and a fire broke out. "I have no blood on my hands," said Ruto during the interview with Kenyan TV. Referring to the deaths, he said: "It is very unfortunate. As a democracy that should not be part of our conversa-

tion ..." "There will be an investigation on how these 19 Kenyans died," he added. "There will be an explanation for each and every one of them.

"The police have done the best they could," said Ruto. "If there have been any excesses, we have mechanisms to make sure that those excesses are dealt with." And he added: "Any killer cop who went beyond what is provided for in the law will have action taken against them."

'We will catch' criminals

But he warned that those who had attacked parliament would also be held accountable. "Criminals infiltrated and caused mayhem," he said. "Those who attacked Parliament and the judiciary are on CCTV." "Many of them are on the run but we will catch them," he added.

Going back over his decision to scrap the finance bill at the last moment, Ruto said: "It means that we have gone back almost two years" and meant the government would have to borrow heavily. But he acknowledged: "We should have communicated better." "If I am given a chance to explain to the people of Kenya what the finance bill was all about and what it would have done for them, then every Kenyan would agree with me." The clashes were unprecedented in the history of the country since its independence from Britain in 1963. On Saturday, a few hundred people gathered in Uhuru Park in central Nairobi following an appeal on media. — AFP



NAIROBI: Kenyan youths light candles in memory of protesters killed during the nationwide deadly protest against a controversial now-withdrawn tax bill that left over 20 dead and shocked the East African nation, in Nairobi on June 30, 2024. — AFP

UK govt, BA sued over 1990 Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

British government files released in Nov 2021 revealed that the UK ambassador to Kuwait informed London about reports of an Iraqi incursion before the flight landed but the message was not passed on to BA. There have also been claims, denied by the government, that London knowingly put passengers at risk by using the flight to deploy undercover operatives and delayed take-off to allow them to board.

The UK government refused to comment on ongoing legal matters. British Airways has always denied accusations of negligence, conspiracy and a cover-up. The airline did not respond to a request for comment from AFP but said last year that the records released in 2021 "confirmed British Airways was not warned about the invasion".

McCue Jury & Partners had announced in September its intention to file the suit, saying then that the hostages "may claim an estimated average of £170,000 (\$213,000) each in damages". In 2003, a French court ordered BA to pay €1.67 million to the flight's French hostages, saying it had "seriously failed in its obligations" to them by landing the plane. — AFP

Crackdown on visa violators...

Continued from Page 1

They denied the charges and demanded to be set free, but the judge rejected their request.

Also, the court of cassation on Monday upheld a seven-year jail term against an interior ministry colonel for beating and partially paralyzing a Bangladeshi worker for not washing his car. The court learned that the officer caused a 50 percent disability to the Bangladeshi laborer and ordered the officer to pay compensation to him, which will be decided by the civil court. The verdict of the court is final and cannot be challenged. The court of appeals on Monday sentenced a former MP to 28 months in jail for publicly insulting a Kuwaiti tribe ahead of the April 4 parliamentary elections. The case now goes to the court of cassation.

Minister of Social Affairs, Family, Childhood, and Minister of Youth Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah on Monday ordered an investigation to the public prosecutor regarding an incident related to child exploitation. This came after a video circulating on social media showing a child - no more than 10 years old - tied with ropes and compelled to pull a vehicle with his body, an act deemed as physical abuse, according to the statement. Huwailah directed the Supreme Council for Family Affairs to follow up on the matter and take serious actions to protect children from violence according to the law, as she emphasized the necessity to combat child abuse, protect them from exploitation and raise awareness.

Gaza hospital chief tortured in...

Continued from Page 1

The agency said it "opposed the release of terrorists" who had taken part in attacks on Zionist civilians "so it was decided to free several Gaza detainees who represent a lesser danger". However commenting on X, formerly Twitter, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir called Abu Salmiya's release "with dozens of other terrorists" a "security abandonment". Zionist forces detained Abu Salmiya during one of a number of raids on Al-Shifa. Al-Shifa Hospi-

tal has been reduced to rubble by successive raids since the Zionist entity launched its assault on Gaza. After crossing back to Gaza near the city of Khan Yunis, five detainees were admitted to Al-Aqsa Hospital and the others were sent to hospitals in Khan Yunis, a medical source said. An AFP correspondent at Deir al-Balah saw some detainees in emotional reunions with their families. Abu Salmiya was not the only top medical practitioner detained. The Gaza European Hospital in Khan Yunis said the head of its orthopedic unit, Bassam Mliqdad, was among those freed on Monday.

In May, Palestinian rights groups said a senior Al-Shifa surgeon had died in a Zionist jail after being detained. The Zionist army said it was unaware of the death. The Zionist offensive has killed at least 37,900 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's health ministry. — AFP



GAZA: Palestinian men detained by Zionists speak to well-wishers and reporters after their release as they arrive for a check-up at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on July 1, 2024. — AFP

International



DIANJIANG: This photo taken on June 7, 2024 shows Corinne Wilson (right) distributing a flyer to local residents in the hope of finding her adopted daughter Loulee's biological parents.—AFP photos



Corinne Wilson (right) comforts her adopted daughter Loulee Wilson outside a now-demolished factory where Loulee believes she was found as a baby, in Dianjiang county, in southwestern China's Chongqing municipality.

China's adopted children return to seek their roots

2000s birth restrictions led to skyrocketing adoptions, infanticide, demographic imbalance

DIANJIANG: At an empty concrete lot in southwest China, Loulee Wilson scoops a handful of stones into a bag — a memento from the site where she believes she was abandoned as a baby. Wilson, an American college student, was born in China but given away by parents presumed fearful of violating the country's one-child policy, under which families were punished for having additional children until the strategy was ended from 2016. Soon after her birth, she was found outside a now-demolished factory in the town of Dianjiang, brought to an orphanage and later adopted by a couple in the United States. Now 19, she is among a growing number of Chinese adoptees returning to their birth country to trace their biological parents and understand where they came from. "If I (find them), that would be incredible. But I don't know if I'll be able to," she told AFP. "It'll help me to find out more of my story." Over 82,000 children born in China have been adopted by American families since 1999, according to State Department figures — mostly girls, owing to a Chinese cultural preference for boys. Many were handed over in the 2000s when Beijing more tightly enforced birth restrictions and laws around overseas adoptions were comparatively lax.

As those children reach adulthood, they are creating "very, very big demand" for reunions with their birth families, said Corinne Wilson, Loulee's adoptive mother. She is the founder of The Roots of Love, one of a cluster of organizations set up in recent years to reconnect adoptees with relatives in China. "There is a part of them that is proud to be Chinese," she told AFP.



A middle-aged man gives a DNA sample in the hope of finding his long-lost daughter as his wife stands next to him.

Traumatic past

In June, the Wilsons set out to search for birth families in rural Dianjiang, about 150 kilometers (93 miles) from the megacity of Chongqing. They handed out flyers bearing Loulee's and other adoptees' names, ages and photographs, and urged people who gave away children to provide DNA samples.

Finding a match is unlikely due to patchy record-keeping, language barriers, fading memories and local vigilance against potential scams. And some communities are wary of dredging up the traumatic past hidden among the sleepy villages and rice paddies, where birth quotas were once zealously enforced.

Under the one-child policy — in practice, a patchwork of varying birth restrictions — couples in Dianjiang were often permitted a second child if the first was a girl. But officials cracked down hard on unsanctioned births, threatening to demolish homes, confiscate farm animals and impose astronomical fines, villagers told AFP. "We were forced into it. We didn't have a choice," said carpenter Yi Enqing, 57, who hoped to track down an infant daughter put up for adoption in the early 1990s. "I'm scared she wouldn't accept us now. She must have some resentment in her heart," he told AFP at his sawdust-caked workshop.

Identity issues

In one village, a middle-aged man spat into a beaker while his wife tearfully recalled a daughter they last saw as a baby in 1990. "I've looked for so long but can't find her," she said as a Roots of Love helper carefully sealed and packaged the saliva sample. "I never wanted to send her away," she added. The couple requested anonymity to protect their privacy.

The samples are sent to a laboratory where their DNA is extracted and compared with existing databases. If there is a match, The Roots of Love puts long-lost relatives in touch, such as last year when twin girls reconnected with their birth mother after a nearly two-decade separation. Reunions can trigger complex emotions for adoptees, who experts say often struggle with mental health issues around identity and racial discrimination. "A lot of Chinese adoptees do express racial (or) cultural dissonance as a result of growing

up in very homogeneous, white settings," said Grace Newton, a researcher at the University of Chicago who studies transracial and transnational adoption.

"It is losing your identity, your birth culture, your birth language, your biological family," said Cassidy Sack, an adoptee volunteer with the US-based Nanchang Project, which has matched dozens of birth families since 2018. "That was the life you were supposed to live. And then out of your control, decisions were made for you, and you were taken to a new country."

Baby bust

China launched the one-child policy in 1979 amid fears its population would grow unmanageably large. It is estimated to have prevented hundreds of millions of births, but has been condemned for enforcement that in some areas included forced contraception, abortions and sterilizations. The policy was also blamed for driving up infanticide rates, spurring child trafficking and permanently skewing China's ratio of men to women. It "caused serious mental trauma to many Chinese people," He Yafu, an independent demographer, told AFP.

Beijing officially eased birth restrictions from 2016, and Chinese couples have been permitted to have three children since 2021. But the country's birth rate has continued to fall, leaving a diminishing number of young people to look after a soaring elderly population. For the Wilsons, the search for Loulee's birth parents goes on. "I just want them to know that I'm happy and healthy, and grateful for the life I'm living," Loulee said. — AFP

S Koreans surge to sign online petition to impeach president

SEOUL: An online petition calling for South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to be impeached experienced delays and disruptions due to the large number of people trying to sign it, the speaker of the parliament said, promising to fix the issue as soon as possible.

More than 811,000 people have so far signed the petition, hosted on the National Assembly's website, since it went live on June 20. The petition calls on parliament to introduce a bill to impeach Yoon on the grounds that he is unfit for the job. In a statement late on Sunday, National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik apologized for the disruption and said parliament would take action to uphold the public's constitutional right. People trying to access the petition on Monday faced delays that lasted up to four hours. At one point, an error message showed more than 30,000 people were waiting to access the site. There was no immediate comment from the presidential office.

The petition accuses Yoon of corruption, stoking the risk of war with North Korea and exposing South Koreans to health risks by not stopping Japan from releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant.



South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol

By law, parliament is required to assign any petition signed by more than 50,000 people to a committee which will then decide whether to put it to the assembly for a vote. But the opposition Democratic Party which holds a majority in parliament is hesitant about turning the petition into an impeachment bill, media reports say, with a spokesperson saying the party has yet to discuss the matter.

The parliament can call for a president's impeachment with a two-thirds majority. The Constitutional Court then deliberates that motion and decides to remove or reinstate the president. Yoon has been unpopular since taking office in 2022, with his latest approval ratings hovering around the 25 percent mark since April. South Korea's parliament has twice impeached presidents: Roh Moo-hyun in 2004 and Park Geun-hye in 2017. Roh was reinstated by the Constitutional Court while Park was removed. — Reuters



NYIRMARTONFALVA, Hungary: The canopy walkway is seen outside of Nyirmartonfalva village on June 25, 2024.

Tree-less canopy walkway highlights corruption in Hungary

NYIRMARTONFALVA: It should have been a forest canopy walkway — but instead it is a bridge above an expanse of saplings and open fields. The project in the Hungarian village of Nyirmartonfalva — built under an EU-funded, now corruption-accused program — showcases the deep-seated problem of graft and waste as the country takes on the bloc's rotating presidency from Monday.

"It is a stunning visual representation of the process, which has been ongoing for more than a decade, of how Hungary has been stealing and squandering EU funds," Akos Hadhazy, an independent MP known for his anti-corruption work, told AFP. Since nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's return to power in 2010, Hungary has fallen from 50th to 76th place in Transparency International's corruption perception index, ranking last among EU members in 2023. During the same period, Orban's inner circle has grown spectacularly wealthy from public tenders — from his confidant Lorinc Meszaros to his son-in-law Istvan Tiborcz who now control large swathes of the economy. And Brussels has frozen around 19 billion euros (\$20 billion) in EU funds earmarked for Hungary over alleged corruption in public procurement, among other issues. The central European country claims Brussels is withholding the funds to pressure it over its self-described "illiberal" transformation and denies corruption accusations.

'No need' for a forest

The Nyirmartonfalva 80-metre (90-yard)-long walkway became infamous overnight last year after a report by investigative site Atlatszo went viral. The re-

port sparked a graft investigation and led to journalists, opposition politicians and even US Ambassador David Pressman to descend on the remote 2,000-people village near the Romanian border.

"Quite a view!" Pressman — who has warned of corruption's "corrosive effect on democracy" and urged Hungary to address it — wrote on X in January, posting photos of him at the site. One of the whistleblowers, pensioner Zoltan Palfy, told AFP that some villagers still refuse to greet him on the streets, angry about their village's sudden notoriety.

The structure's saga started when entrepreneur Mihaly Filemon applied for an EU grant under a Hungarian rural development program to build a canopy walkway on his land. After winning a pledge in 2021 to get 64 million forint (160,000 euros or \$170,000), Filemon — by then elected mayor with the support of Orban's Fidesz party — proceeded with the construction. But as inflation pushed up prices, Filemon decided to cut down the forest and sell the wood to finance the work—resulting in the canopy-less walkway.

"There was no need to have a forest here. The forest will grow. As you can see, it has already grown," he told AFP when met at the walkway last week, pointing at the tree saplings now planted around the site and blaming the tender for not specifying a minimum height for the surrounding trees. A 10-month-long corruption investigation, meanwhile, found serious irregularities — including signs of collusion, overpricing and favoritism — in the EU-funded, Hungary-managed development program, under which the walkway and other projects have sought funds. The probe was led by the country's anti-graft watchdog, the Integrity Authority, which was set up in late 2022 under EU pressure to prevent misuse of the bloc's funds. The organization has filed a criminal complaint, as it does not have the competency to wrap up the case itself. No money has as yet been given to Filemon. Besides the financial losses, Filemon attributed his defeat in June's municipal elections to the scandal.—AFP

India overhauls colonial-era criminal laws

NEW DELHI: India on Monday implemented an overhaul of colonial-era criminal laws, praised as a "watershed" movement by the top judge but which critics said could worsen an already glacially slow pace of justice. Amit Shah, the interior minister, said the codes would help India "become the world's most modern justice delivery system". The three overhauled laws — the penal code, and codes relating to criminal procedure and evidence — were passed last year during India's previous parliament, but only came into effect on Monday.

Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said they "signify a watershed moment for our society". The government says the new laws were needed as colonial laws had been at the core of the criminal justice system for more than a century. Laws dealing with sexual assault have been strengthened, while a previous law criminalizing sodomy has been removed. Key changes include the amount of time police can hold a suspect rising from 15 days to 60, and, in some special cases, up to 90.

Previously it was up to a judge to decide if a case could proceed to trial, but the new laws bolster the power of the police to decide, something Supreme Court lawyer Nipun Saxena criticized. "Judicial functions cannot be transferred to police," Saxena said.

The code has also been modernized — requiring video recordings to be made at the scene of serious crimes, as well as updating admissible digital evidence. But critics say the new laws could create confusion, as they will run parallel to those on trial charged under the previous system.

Another key change is replacement of the seditious law frequently used as a tool of suppression, after its enactment under British colonial rule to jail Indian freedom fighters. Under the new laws — which replace the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure — sedition is replaced with a section on acts seen as "endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India".

"About 77 years after independence, our criminal justice system is becoming completely indigenous and will run on Indian ethos," India's interior minister told reporters. "Instead of punishment, there will now be justice." Criminal cases registered under the repealed laws before Monday will continue to follow them, Shah said, adding that the first case logged under the new law was that of a motorcycle theft in the central city of Gwalior, registered 10 minutes after midnight. "The laws were debated for three months ... It is not fair to give political color to this big improvement happening after centuries. I ask the opposition parties to support this legislation," Shah said. Opposition Congress party lawmaker P Chidambaram said the previous parliament session did not hold any "worthwhile debate" before passing the laws. — Agencies

TUESDAY, JULY 2, 2024

EU accuses Meta of breaching rules

US tech giant risks potential fines worth billions of euros

BRUSSELS: The EU accused Facebook owner Meta on Monday of breaching the bloc's digital rules, paving the way for potential fines worth billions of euros. The charges against the US tech titan follow a finding last week against Apple that marked the first time Brussels had leveled formal accusations under the EU's ground-breaking Digital Markets Act (DMA). The latest case focuses on Meta's new ad-free subscription model for Facebook and Instagram, which has sparked multiple complaints over privacy concerns.

Meta's "pay or consent" system means users have to pay to avoid data collection, or agree to share their data with Facebook and Instagram to keep using the platforms for free. "Meta has forced millions of users across EU into a binary choice: 'pay or consent,'" the EU's top tech enforcer, commissioner Thierry Breton, said. The European Commission said it informed Meta of its "preliminary view" that the model the company launched last year "fails to comply" with the DMA.

The findings come after a probe into Meta began in March under the DMA, which forces the world's biggest tech companies to give European users more choice online. Meta insisted its model "complies with the DMA." "We look forward to further constructive dialogue with the European Commission to bring this investigation to a close," a Meta spokesperson said.

Meta can now reply to the findings and avoid a fine if it offers an alternative to address the EU's concerns. If the commission's view is confirmed however, it can slap fines of up to 10 percent of Meta's total

global turnover under the DMA. This can rise to up to 20 percent for repeat offenders.

Meta's total revenue last year stood at around \$135 billion (125 billion euros). The EU also has the right to break up firms, but only as a last resort.

Under the DMA, the EU labels Meta and other companies, including Apple, as "gatekeepers" and prevents them forcing users in the bloc to consent to have access to a service or certain functionalities. The commission said Meta's model did not allow users to "freely consent" to their data being shared between Facebook and Instagram with Meta's ads services.

"The DMA is there to give back to the users the power to decide how their data is used and ensure innovative companies can compete on equal footing with tech giants on data access," Breton said.

The commission will decide on whether Meta's model is DMA compliant or not by late March 2025. Europe's BEUC umbrella consumer rights group said the findings were "good news for consumers using Facebook and Instagram who have been presented with unfair choices on the use of their personal data since November".

The EU has shown it is serious about making big online companies change their ways. The commission told Apple last week its App Store rules were hindering developers from freely pointing consumers to alternative channels for offers. The EU is also probing Google over similar concerns on its Google Play marketplace. Apple and Meta are not the only companies coming under the scope of the DMA. Google parent Alphabet, Amazon, Microsoft and TikTok owner By-



This picture taken on March 25, 2024, shows the Meta (former Facebook) logo on a smartphone in Mulhouse, eastern France. - AFP

tedance must also comply. Online travel giant Booking.com will need to adhere to the rules later this year. Meta has made billions from harvesting users' data to serve up highly targeted ads. But it has faced an avalanche of complaints over its data processing in recent years. The European data regulator in April

has also said the 'pay or consent' model is at odds with the bloc's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which upholds the privacy of users' information. Ireland - a major hub for online tech giants operating in the 27-nation bloc - has slapped Meta with massive fines for violating the GDPR. - AFP



PLEI BAU CAN, Vietnam: This photo shows Tran Thi Bich Ngoc pouring coffee beans into a roastery at Mori coffee farm in Plei Bau Can in Vietnam's central highlands, Gia Lai province. - AFP

Some Vietnam coffee farms thrive despite drought and heat

PLEIKU, Vietnam: Vietnamese coffee growers have been hit hard this year by the worst drought in nearly a decade, raising concerns of pricier espressos across the world, even as some farmers keep yields healthy with clever countermeasures. Domestic forecasts for next season's harvest in Vietnam, the world's second biggest coffee producer, remain grim.

The Mercantile Exchange of Vietnam (MXV) expects a 10-16 percent fall in output because of the extreme heat that hit the Central Highlands coffee region between March and early May, according to deputy head Nguyen Ngoc Quynh. However, a return of rains in recent weeks has improved the outlook, boosting confidence among farmers and officials. But it remains unclear whether the improved weather will help boost output and drive down prices of robusta beans, the variety most commonly found in espressos and instant coffees, of which Vietnam is the world's top producer.

"I expect the country's output to fall by 10-15 percent, but my farm will increase production", said Nguyen Huu Long, who grows coffee in a 50-hectare plantation in Gia Lai, one of the top coffee-producing provinces in Vietnam. To protect his trees during the heatwave, he kept the soil around the plants moist by covering it with leaves. Contrary to the local practice of cutting trees after a few years to boost soil quality, he keeps his growing for decades. As a result, plants have deeper roots and broader access to underground water reserves.

Farmers in his plantation also soften the soil around plants to improve absorption of rainwater and fertilizers, said Doan Van Thang, 39. Tran Thi Huong, a tenant farmer who works in another plantation 20 km from Pleiku, Gia Lai's capital, resorted to using more water than usual. Thanks to abundant reserves from canals built by local authorities, she could keep her plants sufficiently irrigated during the heatwave. Coffee cherries are smaller than in previous years, but she expects the overall output to be unaffected. It also helped that she timely intervened with biopesticides against bugs that were more numerous than usual because of the extreme weather. That is in line with the forecast from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which estimates Vietnam's next harvest would be roughly steady versus the current season's output - far less pessimistic than domestic projections.

Whatever the impact on the harvest will be, coffee prices for drinkers around the world are likely to rise. Wholesale prices in Vietnam and London-traded robusta futures have risen to record highs earlier this year mostly after an underwhelming harvest in Vietnam and because of fears over the country's next harvest after the drought, according to multiple traders and analysts.

Record wholesale prices have so far had a limited impact on consumer prices, with coffee inflation up by only 1.6 percent in the 27-country European Union in April, according to the latest Eurostat data, and 2.5 percent in robusta-loving Italy. - Reuters

Oil bulls advance cautiously as stocks expected to fall

LONDON: Investors purchased petroleum for the third week running as bearishness triggered by the OPEC+ meeting at the start of June waned and fund managers anticipated a big depletion of inventories in the third quarter. Hedge funds and other money managers purchased the equivalent of 86 million barrels in the six major petroleum futures and options contracts over the seven days ending on June 25.

Total purchases over the three most recent weeks reached 260 million barrels, according to records filed with ICE Futures Europe and the US Commodity Trading Commission. The combined position climbed to 467 million barrels (30th percentile for all weeks since 2013) up from just 208 million (1st percentile) on June 4 immediately after the meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, together known as OPEC+.

Funds, which had been extremely bearish, were now only mildly to moderately bearish about prices following reassurance planned production increases by OPEC+ will be contingent on market conditions. The exception was European gas oil where fund managers had amassed a very bullish position of 74 million barrels (78th percentile) up from 15 million (20th percentile) three weeks earlier.

Traders anticipate a large depletion of crude and fuel inventories in the third quarter, peak season for oil burning in Middle East power stations and the height of the summer driving season in the United

States. OPEC+ is expected to continue restricting production until benchmark crude prices climb sustainably above \$90 per barrel, delaying scheduled output increases if this condition is not met until 2025. The outlook has become dependent on a rebound in US gasoline consumption in the holiday period and an acceleration of crude buying after a subdued first six months of 2024 in China.

US natural gas

Hedge funds and other money managers trimmed their emerging bullish position in US gas slightly after a run up in prices and amid persistently high inventories. Funds sold the equivalent of 79 billion cubic feet (bcf) in the two major futures and options contracts linked to the price of gas at Henry Hub in Louisiana. It was only the second sale in the last eight weeks and comes after fund managers had purchased 2,845 bcf since Feb. 20.

Even after the adjustment, the net position was equivalent to 1,091 bcf, in the 58th percentile for all weeks since 2010. US gas inventories remain well above normal despite the onset of heatwaves driving higher electricity demand and more gas-fired generation.

Working inventories were the second highest on record for the time of year on June 21 and 568 bcf (+22 percent or +1.44 standard deviations) above the prior 10-year seasonal average. The surplus has only narrowed slightly if at all since the middle of March, which has begun to test faith in the bullish case for inventories to be sharply reduced by hot weather and high air conditioning demand this summer.

Reflecting the slow adjustment, futures prices for gas delivered during August 2024 have retraced to \$2.55 per million British thermal units from a high of \$3.19 three weeks ago. - Reuters



Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman

Saudi energy minister announces discovery of multiple oil, gas fields

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia's energy minister announced on Monday the discovery of multiple oil and gas fields in the country's Eastern Province and Empty Quarter, the official Saudi news agency said. The agency quoted Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman as saying, "Natural gas was also discovered in five reservoirs in previously discovered fields." Other discoveries were also announced in fields in the Eastern Province, according to the agency.

The discovery of Al-Hiran natural gas field was confirmed after gas flowed from Hanifa reservoir in the Al-Hiran - 1 well, at a rate of 30 million standard cubic feet (MMSCFD), and 1,600 Barrel of Condensates daily (BCPD), and from the Al-'Arab - C reservoir in the same field at a rate of 3.1 MMSCFD. On the other hand, the discovery of Al-Mahakik natural gas field was confirmed after gas flowed from the Al-Mahakik - 2 well, at a rate of 0.85 MMSCFD.

Furthermore, natural gas was also discovered in five reservoirs in previously discovered fields. Gas was discovered in the Jallah reservoir in the Usaikerak field in the Empty Quarter, after gas flowed at a rate of 46 MMSCFD, in addition to discovering an additional natural gas reservoir in Shadoun field, west of Haradh, after gas flowed from Unayzah - A reservoir, at a rate of 15.5 MMSCFD, with about 460 BCPD.

Natural gas was also discovered in 'Unayzah B/C reservoirs in Mazalij field, southwest of Dhahran, where gas flowed at a rate of 14 MMSCFD, with about 4,150 BCPD, and in Al-Sarah reservoir in Al-Wadhihi field and Al-Qusaibah reservoir in Awtad field, southwest of Hofuf city, where natural gas flowed at a rate of 11.7 MMSCFD and 5.1 MMSCFD, respectively, with about 57 BCPD. - Agencies

IMF revises up Ghana's 2024 growth forecast

ACCRA: The International Monetary Fund said on Monday it had revised up Ghana's growth forecast for 2024 to reflect the West African nation's improved economic stability. Ghana, which produces gold, cocoa and oil, is gradually emerging from its worst economic crisis in a generation that pushed it into default. It turned to the IMF in 2022 for a \$3 billion loan program.

"Ghana has truly come a long way," Stephane Roudet, IMF Mission Chief for Ghana, told a joint press conference with Ghana's finance ministry on Monday, adding that reforms to boost revenue and build reserves are yielding results. "Economic growth has proven more resilient than initially envisaged," Roudet said. "Therefore, we are revising our growth projection up from 2.8 percent to 3.1 percent for 2024." Ghana's central bank governor Ernest Addison, speaking during the joint briefing, said that Ghana's macroeconomic outlook was improving dramatically. - Reuters



NOLAN, Texas: An oil pump jack is shown in a field on June 28, 2024 in Nolan, Texas.--AFP

US manufacturing contraction deepens in June

WASHINGTON: US manufacturing activity edged lower in June, deepening a recent slump on continued weak demand, according to industry survey data published Monday. The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in at 48.5 percent last month, down 0.2 percentage points from May. The June data came in below market expectations of 49.1 percent, according to Briefing.com, and marked the third consecutive month where the reading was below the 50-point mark separating expansion from contraction.

"US manufacturing activity continued in contraction at the close of the second quarter," ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore said in a statement. "Demand remains subdued, as companies demonstrate an unwillingness to invest in capital and inventory due to

current monetary policy and other conditions," he continued, referring to the US Federal Reserve's ongoing battle against rising prices. Inflation has fallen sharply since the Fed began hiking interest rates in 2022, but remains stuck above its long-term target of two percent - keeping borrowing costs high for both consumers and producers. "Production execution was down compared to the previous month, likely causing revenue declines, putting pressure on profitability," Fiore said. June's data extends the recent slump, which began after a positive reading in March briefly snapped 16 straight months of contraction.

The ISM survey found that eight manufacturing industries reported growth in June, including petroleum and coal products, and chemical products, while nine contracted, including textile mills, transportation equipment, and electrical equipment. "Manufacturing activity remained in contraction territory in June, but in a sign of moderating inflation pressure, the prices paid component fell 4.9 points," Wells Fargo economists wrote in a note to clients. "New orders rose more than any other component but remains in contraction," they added. - AFP

Business

Boeing 'in definitive deal' to buy subcontractor Spirit for \$4.7bn

Airbus to buy Spirit AeroSystems facilities that produce parts for its aircraft

WASHINGTON: US aircraft manufacturer Boeing said Monday it had reached a "definitive deal" to buy its subcontractor Spirit, which has faced scrutiny over production quality control in recent months. "The merger is an all-stock transaction at an equity value of approximately \$4.7 billion, or \$37.25 per share," the company said in a statement.

Boeing disclosed in March that it was in talks to potentially reacquire Spirit, which it spun off in 2005 to lower costs. "We believe this deal is in the best interest of the flying public, our airline customers, the employees of Spirit and Boeing, our shareholders and the country more broadly," said Boeing president and CEO Dave Calhoun. He said by reintegrating Spirit, "we can fully align our commercial production systems", including safety and quality management systems, and "our workforce to the same priorities, incentives and outcomes - centered on safety and quality".

Spirit AeroSystems builds fuselages and other significant parts for both Airbus and Boeing.

Airbus said separately that it would buy Spirit AeroSystems facilities that produce parts for its aircraft for a nominal fee of \$1, and will be "compensated by payment of \$559 million from Spirit AeroSystems" for the transaction. This includes production sites related to the A350 in North Carolina and France, as well as the production of the A220's wings and mid-fuselage in Belfast and Casablanca in Morocco. It would also cover the A220 pylons which are made in Kansas in the United States.

Airbus said the agreement "aims to ensure stability of supply for its commercial aircraft programs through a more sustainable way forward, both operationally and financially."

Boeing is by far Spirit's biggest customer, with around 70 percent of its revenue coming from the

American plane maker in 2023. The two companies have faced intense scrutiny since a near-catastrophic incident in January when a fuselage panel blew off a 737 MAX operated by Alaska Airlines mid-flight. The Alaska Airlines investigation has focused on missing bolts on the door plug. The fuselage was produced by Spirit AeroSystems.

Boeing has been under heavy scrutiny from regulators at the Federal Aviation Administration, which has required the company to address safety concerns, including oversight of contractor Spirit AeroSystems. Boeing announced operational changes on March 1 intended to improve its interfacing with Spirit AeroSystems.

The Alaska Airlines incident undermined Boeing's contention that it has fully turned around its operations after two fatal 737 MAX crashes on Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines in 2018 and 2019.

Boeing could still face legal problems related to those two crashes, which claimed 346 lives. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) concluded in May that Boeing could be prosecuted for violating a deferred prosecution agreement reached following the two fatal 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019. A lawyer for the victims' families said Sunday that the DOJ is offering Boeing a plea deal that will allow it to avoid a trial related to two crashes.

Details of the deal, which requires Boeing to pay a fine and submit to an outside supervisor, were given to the families in a two-hour presentation by the DOJ on Sunday, said Paul Cassell, a University of Utah law professor who represents the families. Under that three-year deferred prosecution agreement signed in 2021, Boeing agreed to pay \$2.5 billion to settle fraud charges related to the certification of the 737 MAX. In addition to the financial penalties, the agreement required



A Boeing 737 MAX aircraft is assembled at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. - AFP

Boeing to strengthen its compliance program, meet regularly with US anti-fraud officials and submit annual reports documenting its progress.

The DOJ said in May that Boeing's violation of several provisions of the initial agreement, including measures requiring it to bolster its internal controls to detect and deter fraud, opened the company to prosecution. Boeing contested the DOJ's conclusions in mid-June, but has recognized the gravity of

the safety crisis. Victims' families have called for the criminal prosecution of Boeing and its executives, and are seeking a nearly \$25 billion fine. Boeing slowed production in the 737 program in the wake of the January Alaska Airlines incident as it addressed quality control issues, again pushing it into loss. Criminal prosecution could put the company, which is a major supplier for the US military aerospace program, in further financial difficulty. - AFP



A man walks past a delivery van from a US-based food remittance company in a neighborhood in Havana. - AFP

Cuba announces new measures for 'war time economy'

HAVANA: Cuba's government said late on Sunday it would double down on price controls and continue to fight tax evasion in an increasingly desperate bid to tamp down on a ballooning fiscal deficit and spiraling inflation that have devastated its economy.

The measures will bring the 2024 budget and goals in line with what the government refers to as a "war-time economy," according to a state-run media summary of a meeting of the Council of Ministers, the country's top executive body. "All of us are here to save the (Cuban) Revolution and save socialism," Diaz-Canel said in the meeting.

Cuba's economy has been decimated by a combination of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, stiffened US sanctions and a state-dominated business model plagued by bureaucracy, mismanagement and corruption. The social and economic crisis is widely seen as among the worst since Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution, leading to a

record-breaking exodus of Cuban migrants in the past two years. The announced measures - many long discussed and implemented in various forms by Cuba's socialist government - aim to bolster foreign exchange, encourage food production and bring order to flailing state-run businesses, said Mildrey Granadillo de la Torre, First Deputy Minister of Economy and Planning.

The government said it would announce a "single, inclusive and equal pricing policy...for all subjects of the economy, which includes both the state and non-state sectors," according to a report from the Communist Party's Granma newspaper. Cuba's socialist authorities in 2021 lifted a ban on private companies in place since early in Castro's revolution, but Communist party stalwarts say pricing disparities have contributed to soaring inflation.

The government also said it would centralize decision making on the national budget, allowing it slash line items and bring expenditures in line with revenue. The report painted a dire picture of the economy, but provided few figures and did not say when the announced actions would come into effect. Diaz-Canel earlier this year sacked his economy minister, Alejandro Gil, on allegations of corruption, part of a broader high-level shake-up that also appears aimed at solving festering economic woes. - Reuters



compete for blue-collar votes, putting the transaction into limbo, probably until after the November election at least. At stake are the Pittsburgh region's last remaining steel factories, located just outside the city.

For most Americans, Pittsburgh remains virtually synonymous with steel, partly owing to the prominence of the Pittsburgh Steelers American football team. But the complexion of a metropolis once known as the Smoky City changed fundamentally after the last plants shuttered in the 1980s. Steel "is still part of our identity, but we're disconnected from that identity," said former steelworker Edward Stankowski Jr, whose memoir "Memory of Steel" details his exit from the industry with thousands of others in the early 1980s. Stankowski, whose childhood Pittsburgh home looked out onto steel plants, started in the industry out of high school in the 1970s when many young men viewed the job as a ticket to the middle class, trading hard labor in a hazardous setting for good wages and a solid retirement. - AFP

Nippon Steel fight points to industry's grim future in US

BRADDOCK, US: Nippon Steel's proposed acquisition of United States Steel has been a source of unease in Pittsburgh, where the metal once dominated the economy and still looms large in the collective psyche.

Critics such as the United Steelworkers (USW) see the transaction as the latest threat to come along in a years-long struggle to keep the industry alive after plant closures in 1970s and 1980s battered the American rustbelt. "There's just so much history here and a lot of pride that comes with that," said the USW's Bernie Hall, a 4th generation metals worker. "It wouldn't be western Pennsylvania without steel."

In December, US Steel sealed a \$14.9 billion deal to sell itself to Japan's Nippon Steel, which has promised investments to keep Pennsylvania factories competitive with foreign producers and newer "mini mills" in the American South that are less taxing on the environment.

But Hall, head of the Pennsylvania chapter for the USW, said the Japanese company had been evasive about specific plans for Pittsburgh-region plants in an area called the Mon Valley, the earliest of which dates to 1875. Both President Joe Biden and challenger Donald Trump have vowed to annul the deal as the two

NBK hosts event in collaboration with Harvey Nichols at ROKA

KUWAIT: Within its constant dedication to offering customers a more luxurious banking experience, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored a private event for Harvey Nichols to unveil its exclusive new collection, which was held at the renowned ROKA restaurant.

In a truly immersive and luxurious experience, guests from NBK customers were chauffeured to the event in limousines, and treated to a night of unparalleled elegance. The private collection was showcased in a captivating display, highlighting NBK's commitment to providing its customers with more than just banking services.

The evening offered guests a chance to mingle with like-minded individuals, indulge in exquisite cuisine, and discover the latest offerings from NBK and Harvey Nichols. The event solidified NBK's position as a leader in providing a comprehensive and luxurious banking experience. "This event was a testament to NBK's dedication to exceeding customer expectations and offering a truly unique and luxurious banking experience," said Intekhab Abbas, Marketing Segment Manager, Consumer Banking Group at Na-



Intekhab Abbas

tional Bank of Kuwait."

"The collaboration with Harvey Nichols further underscores our commitment to providing our customers with access to the finest products and services, as we aim to provide a unique shopping experience tailored to customers' needs, redefining their luxurious lifestyle," he remarked.

In addition to "Harvey Nichols exclusive Event",

NBK has recently enhanced Privilege Banking benefits by having 10 percent discount when purchasing at Harvey excluding skincare and perfumes valid until September 11, 2024.

NBK has recently enhanced Privilege Banking benefits by introducing a new travel experience that redefines the travel experience for our Privilege Customers. Customers can now enjoy exclusive services such as Fast Track check-in, Extra luggage, Seasonal free Limousine ride during travel season, Exclusive Hotel Offers, Free Luggage Delivery, Discounted Umrah Packages, Visa Assistance, and discounts on luggage at Samsonite. As NBK maintains its dedication to top-notch Privilege Banking services, we continue to innovate and provide customers with unparalleled banking experience.

French debt risk premium falls but investors cautious

PARIS: The premium investors demand to hold French government bonds fell from a 12-year high on Monday as analysts said a hung parliament remained the base case, raising hopes for a limited increase in fiscal spending that would support France's debt sustainability.

Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) party scored historic gains to win the first round of France's parliamentary elections, but the final outcome will depend on days of alliance-building before next week's run-off vote. Political parties rushed to build a united front on Monday aimed at blocking RN's path to government. There was a feeling of relief on the financial markets, but "we are not out of the woods yet," Alex Everett, investment manager at abrdn said. "The National Rally (RN) exceeded expectations, and may yet pick up the second round votes for a relative or even absolute majority," he added.

The debt risk premium for other euro area countries also fell as investors saw France as less likely to endanger the stability of the bloc. German safe-haven Bunds underperformed their peers after the vote, tightening spreads across the euro area. Bond yields move inversely with prices. The gap between French and German 10-year sovereign bond yields DE10FR10=RR - a gauge for the risk premium investors demand to hold French bonds - tightened to 75 basis points (bps), after hitting 85.2 on Friday, its highest level since July 2012. It was less than 50 bps the days before Macron called for snap elections. France's 10-year government bond yield FR10YT=RR hit a fresh 8-month high at 3.344 percent, and was last up 4 bps. "Given the division in the French parliament, we find it unlikely that the new government can find support for any larger increases in spending," Rune Thyge Johansen, euro area economist at Danske Bank, said.

Other yield gaps tightened, with Italy and Greece down 7 bps each at 150 and 114, respectively, while Portugal fell 4 bps to 69 and Spain 1 bp to 85.50. Austria and Belgium's spreads tightened by about 3 bps. "In any case, France will likely remain politically unstable after the election, with very limited policy visibility and a substantial loss of influence in Europe, at a critical time for the continent," Citi economists said. - Reuters

Ruble eases against dollar and euro as tax deadline passes

MOSCOW: The ruble fell against the dollar and euro on Monday but held its ground against the yuan as the passage of an end-June tax deadline and a cut in central bank daily forex sales combined to exert pressure on the Russian currency. By 0825 GMT the ruble was trading 0.4 percent lower at 86.05 against the dollar. It was down 2 percent at 93.74 against the euro.

Trade in both currencies shifted last month from the Moscow Exchange to the less liquid and more volatile interbank market as a result of US sanctions against the exchange. The average dollar-ruble mixed composite rate, calculated by LSEG and based on data from international brokers and counterparties, stood at 85.74. The ruble sank initially below 11.80 to the Chinese yuan but by late morning had recovered to 11.72, up 0.1 percent. Traders said several factors would weigh against the ruble as it enters the new month. It no longer has support from exporters converting forex into rubles to pay end-of-month taxes, as the deadline for that was last Friday. "Today, at the start of trading, we expect continued pressure on the national currency against the background of a decrease in the supply of yuan from exporters after the June peak of tax payments has passed," said Bogdan Zvarich of Banki.ru, anticipating a push by the yuan towards 12 rubles. A second factor is that the central bank from Monday is reducing its daily sales of foreign currency to the equivalent of 8.4 billion rubles a day from 11.8 billion rubles in the first half of the year. The sales mirror flows in and out of the National Wealth Fund and are separate from currency operations the bank conducts on behalf of the finance ministry.

Finally, the government last month reduced the mandatory share of foreign currency revenue that exporters must convert into rubles to 60 percent from 80 percent, softening capital controls in part due to the ruble's recent strengthening. Brent crude oil, a global benchmark for Russia's main export, was up 0.65 percent at \$85.55 a barrel. - Reuters

Business

European manufacturing activity suffers setback in June: Surveys

Global factory activity has mixed performance; China's PMI rises

LONDON/TOKYO: Manufacturing activity in Europe suffered a setback last month but Asian factories enjoyed solid momentum, offering policymakers some hope the region can weather the hit from soft Chinese demand, surveys showed. The downturn in Europe was widespread, with Italy the only big player not to see a fall in its Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) despite manufacturers largely cutting prices.

HCOB's final eurozone manufacturing PMI, compiled by S&P Global, fell to 45.8 in June from May's 47.3. It has been below the 50 mark separating growth from contraction for two years. "What looks like the green shoots of recovery seem to be diminishing. We can't take a recovery for granted," said George Moran at Nomura.

Germany's factory sector, which accounts for about a fifth of Europe's biggest economy, experienced a retreat, while in France the manufacturing recession deepened. France's far-right National Rally party scored an historic win in parliamentary elections on Sunday, stoking risks of a crisis in the euro area even as other political parties rushed to build a united front to block its path to power.

In Britain, which holds a national election on Thursday, manufacturing growth slipped in June from May's 22-month high as ongoing disruption to shipping in the Red Sea led to lower demand from overseas customers. A eurozone index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI due on Wednesday that is seen as a good gauge of economic health, sank from May's 49.3 to a six-month low of 46.1, albeit just ahead of the 46.0 flash estimate.

A new orders index in the currency union dropped to 44.4 from 47.3, despite factories cutting prices

charged for a fourteenth month.

But cost pressures weighed on manufacturers in countries like Japan, where a weak yen is boosting the price companies pay for fuel and raw material imports. China's Caixin/S&P Global manufacturing PMI rose to 51.8 in June from 51.7. It marked the fastest clip in more than three years and exceeded market forecasts of 51.2. The private-sector reading followed official PMI data on Sunday showing China's manufacturing activity fell for a second month in June and services activity slid to a five-month low.

The surveys demonstrate how Chinese firms are ramping up production despite weak domestic demand, which Beijing has failed to reverse with a rescue package for an ailing property sector.

In a sign Asia is benefiting from solid global demand, South Korea's factory activity growth quickened in June to the fastest in 26 months on surging new orders, its PMI showed. Factory activity also expanded in June at a faster pace than in May in Vietnam and Taiwan, other surveys showed. "Another strong month of data provides further evidence that global industrial activity and trade are picking up," said Joe Hayes, principal economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, on South Korea's factory activity.

"Viewed as a bellwether for exports due to its integration in supply chains for key intermediate goods like batteries and semiconductors, South Korean manufacturing output and orders often provide leading signals for trends more broadly."

Japan's factory activity expanded in June, but at a slower pace than in May, as companies struggled with rising costs due to the weak yen.



Electric car charging stations are seen outside the outlet of German multinational sportswear manufacturer Puma in Herzogenaurach, southern Germany on June 27, 2024. — AFP

The final Jibun Bank Japan manufacturing PMI was 50.0, on the break-even line, after a brief improvement to 50.4 in May.

A PMI gauging Japanese firms' future output expectations rose to a six-month high thanks to a

better medium-term outlook for the car and chip sectors. Activity in India's manufacturing sector rebounded last month as output increased on robust demand, leading to the fastest rate of hiring in over 19 years. — Reuters

News in Brief

Tata Steel workers in UK suspend strike action

LONDON: Tata Steel workers in Britain have suspended a planned all-out strike and overtime ban after the company agreed to negotiations about future investment, the Unite trade union said on Monday. Around 1,500 Tata Steel TISCO workers at Tata's Port Talbot and Llanwern sites were due to begin an indefinite strike from July 8 over the company's plans to close two blast furnaces and cut up to 2,800 jobs in Wales. They had already begun an overtime ban on June 17. "This is a significant development in the battle to protect jobs and the long-term future of steel making in South Wales," Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said. "It is essential that these talks progress swiftly and in good faith with the focus on fresh investment and ensuring the long-term continuation of steel making in South Wales." — Reuters

Germany's renewable energy coverage rises to 58% in H1

FRANKFURT: Coverage from renewable energy sources rose to 58 percent of Germany's electricity consumption in the first half of the year, preliminary data from utility association BDEW and the Centre for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Research (ZSW) showed on Monday. The gain from 52 percent in the same period last year lifted the coverage to a record high for a six-month period, the research center said in a statement. Germany's electricity imports rose 21 percent during the period, while exports fell by 15.5 percent, it added. The new record in renewable energy use was driven in part by solar panels, which generated 12.8 percent more energy, accounting for 14.7 percent of gross electricity generation. That was after a record high in solar panel installations last year, the center said. — Reuters

Rand gains 1% after S Africa cabinet announcements

JOHANNESBURG: The rand led gains among most emerging market currencies on Monday after South Africa unveiled its long-awaited cabinet following recent elections, while investors also parsed through several factory activity surveys from local economies. The currency ZAR strengthened 1 percent and hit over a one-week high after President Cyril Ramaphosa announced his long-awaited new 32-member cabinet of the country's first coalition government, including appointing a former opposition leader as agriculture minister. Yields on South Africa's benchmark sovereign bond ZAR2030 slipped 12 basis points (bps), while the all-share equities index rose 0.9 percent and notched a one-week high. — Reuters

Japan supermarket chain director arrested in Myanmar

YANGON: Myanmar authorities have arrested a Japanese national working for retail giant Aeon for allegedly selling rice at artificially high prices, the junta said, with Tokyo demanding his immediate release. Hiroshi Kasamatsu, director of Aeon Orange, which runs several supermarkets in Myanmar, was detained following an investigation into rice mills and supermarkets, the junta's information team said late Sunday. Kasamatsu and three Myanmar nationals were suspected of breaching the reference price under the Essential Supplies And Services Law and "selling rice at higher price with the aim to make economic chaos", it said. It did not give details on when Kasamatsu was arrested or where he was being detained. — AFP

China poised for record soybean imports in July

SINGAPORE/BEIJING: China is likely to import record volumes of soybeans in July, drawn by lower prices and the prospect of Donald Trump returning as president and reigniting trade tensions between Beijing and the US, which was once China's top supplier of the oilseed.

The world's biggest soybean importer has booked higher volumes in recent weeks, traders and analysts said. "Chinese soybean importers are buying larger volumes as they are trying to protect themselves as much as they can from a possible increase in US tariffs if there is a trade war after US elections," said Vitor Pistoia, an analyst at Rabobank in Sydney. However, the impact of any trade escalation is likely to be muted for Chinese soybean buyers given the plunge in market share for US beans that was triggered during Trump's presidency.

Trump administration tariffs on Chinese goods provoked retaliation from Beijing including a 25 percent duty on US beans, which forced oilseed processors to seek alternative South American cargoes, slashing US soybean exports to China to 16.6 million metric tons in 2018, from 32.9 million tons in 2017. While the US and China signed a deal in January 2020 in which Beijing committed to buying more US agricultural products including soybeans, the US has ceded market share as ample supplies of cheaper Brazilian beans became entrenched in China.

Last year, Brazil accounted for 70 percent of China's soybean imports, while the US share was 24 percent, even though US beans are no longer subject to additional duty.

French vote, China trade row cast cloud over European earnings

LONDON: French political uncertainty and an EU trade spat with China are casting a shadow over European corporate earnings, investors say, despite forecasts that companies are set to deliver better results. Second-quarter earnings for companies in the pan-European STOXX 600 STOXX are seen rising 2 percent and revenues increasing by 1.7 percent, LSEG I/B/E/S data shows, in what would be the first quarter of growth since the first three months of 2023.

Investors had been warming to Europe's equity markets as the European Central Bank embarked on looser policy and the economic outlook improved, but French President Emmanuel Macron's shock decision to call parliamentary elections has sparked doubts. Concerns about France's fiscal discipline under new right- or left-wing governments have shaken confidence, as have fears of tax and minimum wage rises under the left.

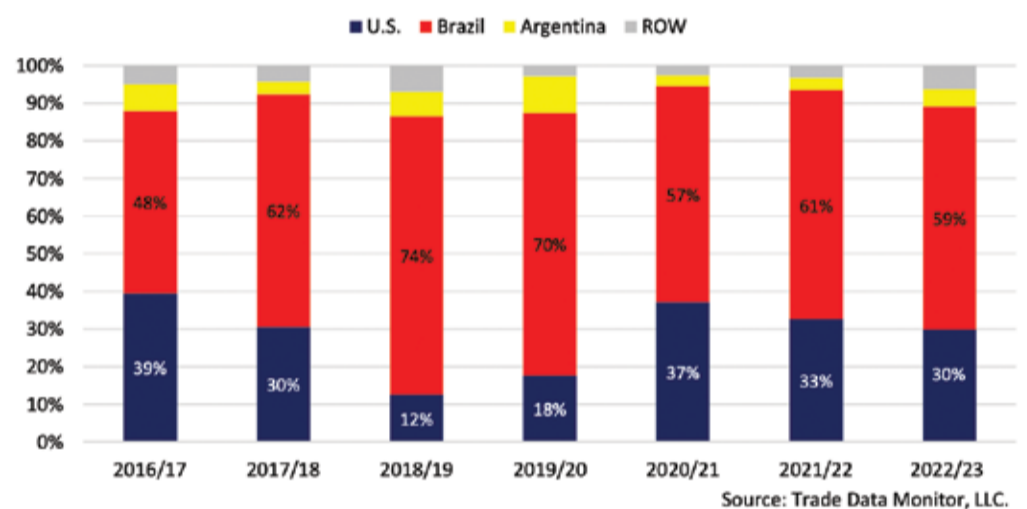
Analysts have responded by trimming earnings expectations for French blue-chip firms and reining in expectations for European shares in the last two weeks. The STOXX 600 index, which touched a record high on June 7, the last trading day before Macron dissolved parliament, is down 2.5 percent from that peak. France's CAC 40 FCHI, at its lowest since January, has borne the brunt of the selling.

"It could be the typical seasonal pattern where you get some downgrades going into earnings season, but you're not getting as positive a signal as you got last quarter," said Citigroup European equity strategist David Groman. "You have all these political risks coming to the fore, even as the fundamental story had been looking pretty strong," he said.

Results season kicks off in earnest from mid-July, with Barry Callebaut BARN.S releasing results on July 11, Richemont CFR.S on July 16 and ABB ABBN.S on July 18.

Last week, Nike's NKE.N worse-than-expected

China Soybean Import Share



Demand scenario

Chinese buyers have booked around 12 million-13 million tons of soybeans for July arrival, according to two Singapore-based traders and two analysts in China, compared with 9.73 million tons shipped in the same month a year ago. China's soybean imports hit a monthly all-time high of 12.02 million tons in May 2023.

"Just looking at the demand in China, purchases for July would have been 10 million tons if there was no fear of trade war," said one of the traders, declining to be named because he was not authorized to speak to media. Soybeans are crushed to make soy-meal, a protein-rich ingredient for feeding animals, and soyoil, used in cooking. China's soybean crush margins are negative in the spot market but are likely to recover in the coming months with expectations of ample animal feed demand, traders said. For now, oilseed crushers in the processing hub of Rizhao CNSOY-RZO-MRG are losing 198.37 yuan (\$27.29)

2024 outlook and H&M's HMB.ST downbeat trading update knocked confidence in consumer demand.

Uncertainty

On Sunday, Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) party won the first round of French parliamentary elections, a huge setback for Macron, although analysts noted the party won a smaller share of the vote than some polls had projected. "Up until the European election, we think the European market was getting a bit more interest from global investors," said Steffen Weyl, euro-area fund head at Union Investment.

Redemptions from French equity funds hit a four-week high in the latest week, data from fund flow data provider EPFR showed. Political risks were driving outflows from European funds, Citi's Groman said, adding: "The French election is a key flashpoint." "I wouldn't be surprised if European companies started acknowledging that it's been a general source of uncertainty and would expect equities to be sensitive to these political risks."

Political risks are a key reason why Citigroup recently downgraded continental European stocks to neutral in its global equity strategy. Markets are likely most fearful of a possible victory for the leftwing New Popular Front (NFP) alliance, Weyl said.

"It's much more unstable because you have so many different parties in there, from Greens to the ultra-left and the centre." An NFP victory would also likely increase labor costs for French firms, noted Gilles Guibout, head of European equity strategies at AXA Investment Managers. The NFP promises to raise the minimum wage by 14 percent.

As the broader European market trades near all-time highs, investors are looking for reassurance from the companies which were optimistic at the start of 2024. "A lot of the anecdotal evidence ... is that companies are clinging to their guidance and still have a positive view towards H2," said Mark Schumann, head of European large-cap mutual funds at DWS Group.

"Now with a lot higher altitude in terms of the index levels, the market is getting increasingly nervous about getting some tangible evidence when it comes to these H2 outlooks."

per ton. Low prices are a key driver of China's purchases, with benchmark Chicago soybean futures Sv1 dropping to their lowest level since 2020 on Monday on expectations of plentiful world supplies.

Global soybean production is expected to hit an all-time high of 422.26 million metric tons in 2024/25, up from 395.91 million tons produced in the current marketing year, according to US Department of Agriculture estimates. The bulk of China's buying is from Brazil. "Brazilian beans are cheaper and the demand from Chinese buyers is strong," said Rosa Wang, analyst at Shanghai-based agro-consultancy JCI.

Luiz Fernando Roque, an analyst at Safras & Mercado in Brazil, said a weaker Brazilian currency against the dollar incentivizes soybean exports, and he did not see the prospect of Trump returning to office playing a factor for now in the Brazilian market. Still, he said, "Trump's victory increasingly seems imminent, and this brings risk to China, given what has already happened in his first term." — Reuters



The euro area's growth indicators are mixed. While there had been signs that the contraction in the euro zone's manufacturing activity might have hit a trough, Citi's economic surprise index, which measures how economic data performs versus expectations, dropped into negative territory for the first time since January. And the closely watched Ifo Institute survey showed German business morale fell unexpectedly in June, underlying concerns about recovery in the euro area's largest economy.

Escalating trade tensions between the European Union and China are also clouding the picture. Brussels proposed hefty duties on imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles to combat excessive subsidies which has unleashed countermeasures from Beijing, which launched a dumping probe into EU meat imports. "Longer term it's a big problem for Germany as they're the big exporting economy within Europe," said Nathan Sweeney, CIO of multi-asset at Marlborough.

Sweeney highlighted German autos and industrials as sectors to monitor. Mathieu Savary, chief European investment strategist at BCA Research said he would like companies to recognize the heightened uncertainty. "There is risk around the EU's relationship with China, which is clearly souring," Savary said.

"Acknowledging the political risk could be positive as it decreases the risk of disappointment in Q3 and Q4 earnings, when we might see the impact of political uncertainty on activity and the impact of the tensions with China." — Reuters

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JULY 2, 2024

South Korea's skyscraper window cleaner with a fear of heights



In this photo Seo Seung-ho looks down from a special "gondola" suspended by cables from the 125th floor of the building in Seoul.

For nearly thirty years, Seo Seung-ho has cleaned the windows of some of South Korea's tallest buildings. It's a reliable, well-paying job. There's just one problem: He's scared of heights. Every day, starting from the 125th floor of the

would do this job," Seo told AFP. "But I had trouble making a living, and the job pays relatively well compared with other occupations, so I gathered my courage to start."

Weather is the biggest variable for Seo. The gondola "is heavily influenced by the wind", he said, and there are times when "we experience winds we would never encounter in a lifetime". One time, he said, the wind hit unexpectedly, causing the cleaners - who are harnessed to the gondola - to lose balance. Another time, they had to wait an hour in the gondola, swinging in high winds, until the weather calmed enough for them to move to safety. Between wind, rain, and snow, Seo and his team of seven barely manage to give the tower, which has some 42,000 windows, a full once-over every year. "We can't clean every day because of the weather," said Seo. "We usually start in April and work until the end of September or early October, which means we work about 65 to 70 days a year."

'Magnificent sight'

The tower's distinctive shape causes additional problems for the window cleaners. "We prefer straight, square-shaped buildings, but the tower's slender cone shape makes it difficult to descend and clean," Seo said. "There are many instances where the cage is pushed to the side and gets twisted as you go

down." His team use diatomaceous earth - a powder made from the fossilized remains of tiny aquatic organisms - to clean the windows, as it polishes the glass without scratching it and prevents complaints from pedestrians about getting splashed with soapy water.

er and the mall inside get nearly 50 million visitors annually, and the observation deck on the 123rd floor has become one of South Korea's most popular tourist attractions. Cleaning the windows of the observation deck makes Seo feel like he's "helping a little bit" to show the city



In this photo Seo Seung-ho kneels after coating his cleaning cloth with diatomaceous earth in a special "gondola" suspended by cables from the 125th floor of the building in Seoul.



In this photo Seo Seung-ho cleans a window with a cloth coated with diatomaceous earth as he stands on a special "gondola" suspended by cables from the 125th floor of the building in Seoul.



In this photo Seo Seung-ho climbs into a special "gondola" before starting work on the 125th floor of the building in Seoul.

Lotte World Tower, Seo and his team of cleaners get into a special "gondola" and work their way down the building, to keep the tower gleaming. Towering 555 meters (1,820 feet) over the Seoul skyline, the glass-and-steel spike is one of the tallest buildings in the world. "I was afraid of heights, so I never thought I

"It's a great method, but when the wind blows, the rough particles sting our eyes," said Seo. "It's more difficult to work in the hot summer." Even so, Seo says his job is "very rewarding as we are gifted with this magnificent sight" of Seoul from above. The Lotte World Tow-

at its best to visitors. "I live in Seoul, and I see the tower wherever I go," said Seo. "I feel proud, and I always will whenever I see the tower, even after I retire." — AFP



In this photo a visitor looks out from a glass-floored viewing deck (left) called the Seoul Sky Observatory in the Lotte World Tower.



This photo shows the view from a special "gondola" used to clean the windows of the Lotte World Tower as it hangs suspended by cables from the 125th floor of the building in Seoul.



This photo shows a special "gondola" (top center) used by window cleaners high up on the Lotte World Tower, South Korea's tallest building, in Seoul.



In this photo window cleaners stand in a special "gondola" as they clean the Lotte World Tower, South Korea's tallest building, in Seoul.



EXPLORING THE BEAUTY OF TRENDY KOREAN HAIR STYLES AND MAKEUP



Koreans have made a huge impact on the beauty and cosmetics industry through K-pop and K-drama, from collecting people's affection to setting modern trends with their Makeup and Hairstyles. From wet and moist bright skin to bright sparkly eyes, Korean makeup trends have captured the hearts of millions.

Korean Hairstyle and Makeup Trends in 2024

Beauty salons around the world try to recreate Korean looks and cosmetics, we at Dashe Beauty specialize in Korean hairstyles and makeup to make you feel like your favorite K-pop celebrity. From Won Jin-ah's look in Nal Nokyeojuo to Seol In-Ah's "Jin Young Seo" look in "Business Proposal", here we have the top 5 trendy Korean hairstyles and makeup that may suit you too.

Short Tassel Cut with Side Bangs

This beautiful hairstyle featured by Park Eun Bin looks absolutely stunning and this bang haircut style looks great on persons with straight or slightly wavy hair. The delicate fringe with short side bangs adds bold character and frames your face without becoming overly thick. At first, many Korean actors and stars go for this incredibly clean, elegant style, but it may seem like a dramatic cut if you've never had your hair this short.

Short Hush Cut Brown Hair

The K-drama star everyone is



obsessing over, Shin Se Kyung was rocking a short hush cut in the *Bride of the Water God*, the look brought a sense of elegance to the character. It's a layered cut with two unique sections: the top portion includes layers starting about the neck, while the lower section is thinner and longer and falls just over the shoulder.

Sleek Long Layered Cut

Long hair will always give you a wife vibe, This Layered Cut long hair look by Seohyun gives you a youthful, elegant, innocent appeal. It is a medium-length haircut with smoother and longer layers that gracefully frame the face and make people feel younger. Full-length hair, particularly if dressed with layers, gives off an effortlessly stylish and feminine look. It is most known for Korean actresses and K-pop artists.

Tips for a Flawless Korean Make-Up Look

These days, everyone opts for skin care-centric techniques and softer, more radiant looks with makeup, thanks to the widespread adoption of Korean cosmetics trends. Here's how to transform your eyes and lips into looking like your favorite K-drama star.

Korean K-drama Inspired Gradient Lips

Those on-screen perfectly gradient lips they show in the series have become more well-known for the gradient pink and plumper look.

To create a gradient lip

1. Select a lip tint or liquid liner in the color of your choice
2. Use a lip cleanser and an unpigmented lip balm to prepare your lips.
3. Use 2 lipsticks, one lighter color and one darker and to prevent color from seeping into the outside regions of your lips, apply a liberal amount of lip tint to the inner center of your lower lip and gently push it with the upper lip.
4. To produce a gradient appearance, softly spread the colors outward and mix them lightly with your fingertips or a small lip brush.

Korean Aegyo Sal Makeup: Secret to "Puffy Eyes"

Because of the famous Aegyo Sal makeup style, which welcomes under-eye bags, Korean eye make-



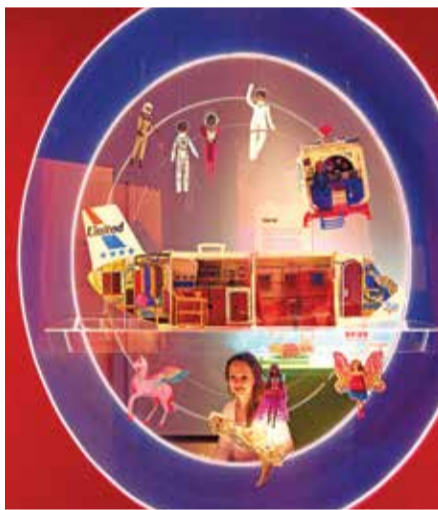
up appears quite different from other types. Use eye cream, primer, concealer, and a light-colored eyeshadow to hydrate the area under your eyes before applying any eyeshadow color to get this look. Right now Between the waterline and eyeshadow, apply highlighter or illuminating tones, and then use the same shade for both the eyeliner and the eyeshadow.

Korean Hairstyle and Makeup Trends

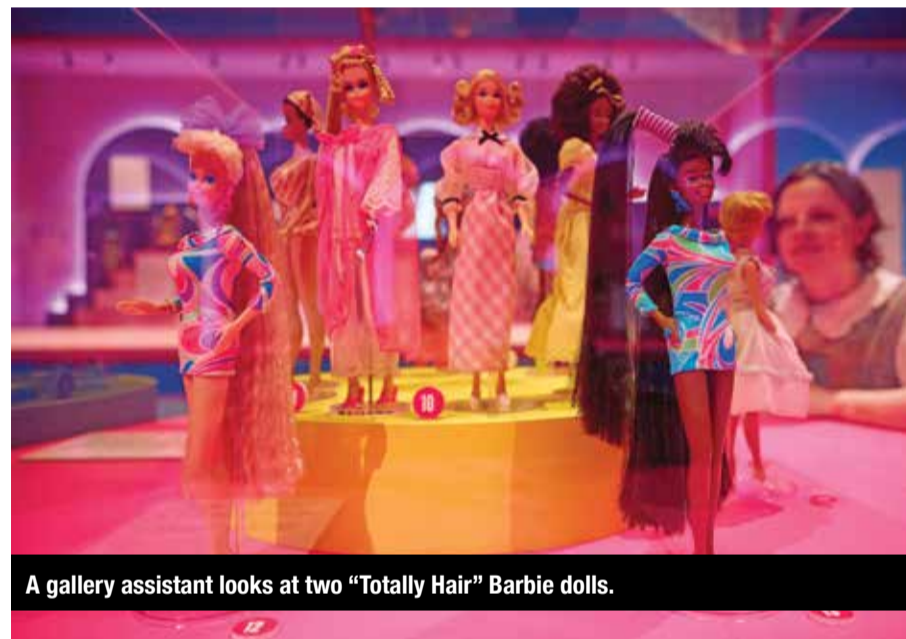
Korean beauty trends are known for their subtle approach to highlighting natural beauty and promoting skincare. Influenced by K-pop and K-drama, Korean makeup trends and hairstyles have gained attention worldwide in beauty salons and in the hearts of the young generation.



A gallery assistant looks at a Barbie doll taken to space by European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut and Europe's first female commander of the International Space Station Samantha Cristoforetti (top right) during the "Barbie: The Exhibition" photocall at The Design Museum in London. — AFP photos



A gallery assistant looks at Barbie dolls from the space and fantasy collections.



A gallery assistant looks at two "Totally Hair" Barbie dolls.

Barbie that went to space to go on display in London

A Barbie that spent six months orbiting the Earth on the International Space Station will go on public display for the first time this week at the Design Museum in London. It will be part of a new exhibition marking the 65th anniversary of the Barbie brand, set to open on Friday in partnership with the doll's creator Mattel. The Barbie was made to resemble Samantha Cristoforetti, the first female commander of the ISS. On the mission in which she was accompanied by her lookalike Barbie, Cristoforetti became the first European woman to complete a spacewalk.

There will be videos on display of Cristoforetti answering questions from space to encourage young girls to become scientists and astronauts—all while floating in zero gravity alongside the Barbie. "We're so excited that the first time anyone can see Samantha's doll since it returned from the International Space Station is at the Design Museum this summer," said curator Danielle Thom. "Its remarkable journey on Samantha's history-making mission 400 kilometers above the Earth was one of the most dramatic moments in Barbie's evolving story."

Cristoforetti said she was "thrilled"

her Barbie would play a "starring role" in the exhibition. Highlighting other connections between Barbie and the cosmos, there will be a rare edition of the first space-themed Barbie on display. The silver "Miss Astronaut" was Barbie's first depiction as an astronaut released in 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong reached the moon.

Another Barbie in a metallic pink spacesuit on display was released in 1985 after Sally Ride became the first American woman in space. Other rare dolls will include a prototype of the first Talking Barbie launched in 1968 and one of the earliest first edition Barbie

dolls. Visitors can also expect some more iconic figurines on display, including the Sunset Malibu Barbie and Day to Night Barbie. Charting the changing design of Barbie through time, the exhibition will also include friends of Barbie including Midge, and a while section dedicated to Ken, Barbie's male companion. Ever since the "Barbie" movie starring Margot Robbie hit cinemas and broke box office records last year, the doll has become ever-more prominent in popular culture, making forays into fashion, music, and now design. —AFP



A gallery assistant poses with the original first edition Barbie doll from 1959.



A gallery assistant takes pictures of a Barbie doll display during the "Barbie: The Exhibition" photocall at The Design Museum.



A gallery assistant poses with various Barbie dolls displayed.



A gallery assistant looks at Barbie dolls from the "Inspiring Women" collection including one of British model Adwoa Aboah (left) and US tennis legend Billie Jean King (right).



A gallery assistant looks at various Ken dolls displayed.



A gallery assistant poses with Barbie dolls (from left) "Career Girl" (1964), "Day to Night" (1985) and "Working Woman" (1999) along with the "Home & Office" playset (1985).



Robert Wun Couture Fall 2024 pays tribute to time with dramatic 10th anniversary collection



Models present creations by Robert Wun during the Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP photos

Ismail Kadare: A bright light in Albania's darkest days



Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare gestures during an interview with AFP on February 8, 2015 in Jerusalem. - AFP

Novelist Ismail Kadare - who has died aged 88 - used his pen as a stealth weapon to survive Albania's paranoid communist dictator Enver Hoxha. His sophisticated storytelling - often likened to that of George Orwell or Franz Kafka - used metaphor and irony to reveal the nature of tyranny under Hoxha, who ruled Albania from 1946 until his death in 1985. "Dark times bring unpleasant but beautiful surprises," Kadare told AFP. "Literature has often produced magnificent works in dark ages as if it was seeking to remedy the misfortune inflicted on people," he said.

He was often tipped to win a Nobel prize for his towering body of work which delved into his country's myths and histo-

Demanded his death
Born in Gjirokaster in southern Al-

bania on January 28, 1936, Kadare was inspired by Shakespeare's "Macbeth" as a child and counted the playwright, as well as Dante and Cervantes, among his heroes. Ironically, the dictator Hoxha hailed from the same mountain town. Kadare studied languages and literature in Tirana before attending the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow. After returning to Albania in 1960, he initially won acclaim as a poet before publishing his first novel "The General of the Dead Army" in 1963, a tragicomic tale that was later translated into dozens of other languages.

His second novel, "The Monster", about townspeople who live in a permanent state of anxiety and paranoia after a wooden Trojan horse appears outside the town, was banned. His 1977 novel "The Great Winter", though somewhat favorable towards the regime, angered Hoxha devotees who deemed it insufficiently laudatory and demanded the "bourgeois" writer's execution. Yet while some writers and other artists were imprisoned - or even

killed - by the government, Kadare was spared. Hoxha's widow Nexhmije said in her memoirs that the Albanian leader, who prided himself on a fondness for literature, saved the internationally acclaimed author several times.

Archives from the Hoxha era show that Kadare was often close to being arrested, and after his poem "Red Pashas" was published in 1975 he was banished to a remote village for more than a year. Kadare, for his part, denied any special relationship with the brutal dictator. "Against whom was Enver Hoxha protecting me? Against Enver Hoxha?" Kadare told AFP in 2016.

'Writers don't have to bow'
Academics have often pondered whether Kadare was a darling of Hoxha or a brave author risking prison and death? "Both are true," suggested French publisher Francois Maspero, who raised the question in his book "Balkans-Transit". Writing such work under a government in which a single word could be turned against its author "requires, above all, determination and

courage", Maspero wrote. "My work obeyed only the laws of literature, it obeyed no other law," Kadare said.

In one of his last interviews in October, when he was clearly frail, Kadare told AFP that writing transformed "the hell of communism... into a life force, a force which helped you survive and hold your head up and win out over dictatorship. "I am so grateful for literature, because it gives me the chance to overcome the impossible."

In 2005 Kadare won the inaugural Man Booker International Prize for his life's work. He was described by judge John Carey as "a universal writer in a tradition of storytelling that goes back to Homer". A father of two, Kadare told AFP that he enjoyed seeing his name "mentioned among the candidates" for the Nobel prize, even if the topic "embarrasses" him. "I am not modest because... during the totalitarian regime, modesty was a call to submission. Writers don't have to bow their heads." — AFP

Sports

Rohit hails India World Cup win as dream come true for a billion

India announces \$15 million World Cup team prize

NEW DELHI: World Cup-winning skipper Rohit Sharma said his team's victory was a "dream come true" for India, as he awaited his return home to a hero's welcome. The T20 triumph ended more than a decade of heartache after India's previous World Cup win came in the 50-over version in 2011.

"The team and I are very proud to be able to bring the cup home and are truly touched by how much happiness it has brought everyone back home," Rohit said in a post on social media on Monday. He also posted a picture of himself lying flat on his back with his eyes closed, wearing his blue team kit.

"This picture epitomizes how I'm feeling right now," he said. "Right now I'm basking in a dream come true for a billion of us." India won a thrilling final by seven runs in Barbados on Saturday to clinch their first global tournament since the 2013 Champions Trophy. It was not clear when the Indian team would arrive home, with Indian media on Monday reporting they were stuck in Barbados, delayed by Hurricane Beryl.

Meanwhile, India's World Cup-winning cricket team will share prize money of nearly \$15 million, the national cricket board said Sunday, as a reward for their "talent, determination, and sportsmanship".

India won a thrilling final by seven runs in Barbados on Saturday to clinch their first major title since the 2013 Champions Trophy.

Jay Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), announced the hefty re-

ward, which will be shared between around 25 people—the entire team including coaches and support staff.

"I am pleased to announce prize money of 125 crores rupees (\$14.9 million) for Team India for winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024," Shah said in a statement. If split equally, that works out to roughly \$600,000 each.

"The team has showcased exceptional talent, determination, and sportsmanship throughout the tournament," Shah added. "Congratulations to all the players, coaches, and support staff for this outstanding achievement".

The title victory comes after over a decade of heartbreaks in knockout matches of International Cricket Council (ICC) tournaments.

The cash prize is in addition to the International Cricket Council record prize pool of \$11.25 million for the tournament. India, as winner of the competition, will share a pot from that of \$2.45 million along with bonuses, which the ICC said is "the highest amount in the tournament's history".

South Africa will share \$1.28 million for finishing as the runner-up. After India's win, the cricket-crazy country erupted with midnight celebrations as fans in blue Indian shirts on cars and bikes took to the streets across cities including the capital New Delhi. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on social media Sunday that he had spoken to the team, congratulating them on their "excellent skill and spirit". — AFP



BRIDGETOWN: India's captain Rohit Sharma (4th L) and Jay Shah (4th R), Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), accept the trophy from Greg Barclay (3rd R), chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), as Team India celebrates after winning the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024. — AFP

Anderson to mentor England's quicks after Test exit

LONDON: England great James Anderson will join the team's backroom staff as a fast-bowling mentor when he retires from Test cricket following next week's series opener against the West Indies at Lord's. The 41-year-old is the first seamer and only third bowler to have taken 700 Test wickets after spinners Shane Warne and Muttiah Muralitharan.

Anderson, however, has decided to end his Test career after England made it clear they wanted to move on ahead of the 2025/26 Ashes. But England managing director Rob Key told reporters on Monday: "After the Lord's Test, Jimmy will continue in our set-up, and he'll help a bit more as a mentor."

Key added: "He has got so much to offer English cricket. We don't want to see that go. "When we asked him, he was keen. He is going to have a lot of options. English cricket would be very lucky if he chooses to stay in the game."

Anderson is currently playing for Lancashire against Nottinghamshire in the County Championship at Southport, but his first-class future remains uncertain. "What he does with Lancashire will probably work out after the Lord's Test," said Key.

England have included three uncapped players in their squad for the first two matches of a three-Test series against the West Indies, with Jamie Smith selected to keep wicket ahead of both Jonny Bairstow and Ben Foakes.

The 23-year-old Smith averages over 50 in the County Championship this season and celebrated his Test call-up by making exactly 100 for Surrey against Essex on Sunday. He usually plays as a specialist batsman for Surrey with Foakes keeping wicket for the reigning county champions.

"Sometimes you're selecting people for what they're going to be as well, and where you think they can progress to," said Key. "It's very much the start for Jamie Smith. We feel he's going to be a fantastic international cricketer."

Key, asked how Smith would cope with the demands of keeping wicket for 90 overs a day in a Test match when he is not a regular behind the stumps, said he had consulted several former England wicketkeepers in Chris Read, James Foster and Alec Stewart—Smith's boss at Surrey. "Some of the guys have been the best keepers in the country... We use them a lot really and we trust a lot of their opinions," Key explained.

'Wrong direction'

Key added Bairstow, 34, "needs to get back to what he was a couple of years ago", when the Yorkshireman hit six Test centuries in 2022. Bairstow, however, has struggled lately after nearly a year out of the game following a horrifying leg break in a freak accident on a golf course.

"Generally his form, in all formats, has just been going slightly in the wrong direction," said 45-year-old former England batsman Key. "It's an arduous task being a keeper and you want someone who can back up series after series. We weren't convinced that Jonny would be able to do that, especially at the stage of his career that he's at."

Key was speaking for the first time since defending champions England's defeat by India in the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup. England won just one of their four matches against fellow Test sides during a tournament in the Caribbean and the United States following a woeful defence of their 50-over World Cup title in India last year.

Those reverses have called into question the positions of England white-ball captain Jos Buttler and coach Matthew Mott. But Key said he would take his time regarding their future ahead of England's next white-ball series against Australia in September.

"I'm not going to rush anything on that," he said. "At times I thought we showed how good we were and at times we were inconsistent. We'll let the dust settle on the World Cup and then move forward from there." — AFP

China badminton player, 17, dies of cardiac arrest

JAKARTA: An "outstanding" 17-year-old Chinese badminton player died of cardiac arrest after collapsing on court during a tournament in Indonesia, officials said on Monday. Zhang Zhijie was suddenly taken ill during a match late Sunday against Japan's Kazuma Kawano at the Asia Junior Championships in Yogyakarta.

The score was 11-11 in the first game when Zhang fell to the floor between points. The teenager received treatment at the venue and was rushed to hospital by ambulance, but passed away later that night after repeated efforts to resuscitate him failed.

"Medical conclusions... indicated that the victim experienced sudden cardiac arrest," Broto Happy, spokesman for the Badminton Association of Indonesia (PBSI), told a press conference in Yogyakarta. Zhang's parents were heading to the city to retrieve his body, he said.

The spokesman defended the actions of medical staff and local organizers after footage showed what appeared to be a hesitant response to the teenager falling face down on the court. He said that medical teams had to wait for the referee to let them on the court.

"The world of badminton has lost a talented player," Badminton Asia and the PBSI said in a statement. Zhang started playing badminton in kindergarten and joined China's national youth team last year.

Alcaraz starts Wimbledon title defence

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz begins the defence of his Wimbledon title on Monday as two-time champion Andy Murray decides whether or not to call a halt to his All England Club singles career. As action got under way, world number three and Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka was heading home after withdrawing from the tournament with a shoulder injury.

Alcaraz, still only 21, is chasing his fourth Grand Slam title and hopes to become just the sixth man after Rod Laver, Bjorn Borg, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic to win the French Open and Wimbledon back-to-back.

"I know that there's going to be a really difficult and big challenge for me, but I think I'm ready to do it," said the third-seeded Spaniard. Alcaraz faces 21-year-old Estonian qualifier Mark Lajal, who had never won a Grand Slam qualifying match let alone a main draw tie before last week.

Lajal, the son of a motocross rider, has just two wins on the ATP tour in his career but if his playing statistics do not stand out, then his dreadlocked, blond hairstyle certainly turns heads. "I've had them for a very long time. It has kind of become a big part of me and my image. A lot of people know me just from my dreads. I think it's cool," said the world number 269.

This time last year, Lajal was losing a first-round match at a second-tier Challenger event in the US and earning a paltry \$780. For making the first round at Wimbledon he is guaranteed \$75,000. Two-time semi-finalist Sabalenka is one of seven players to have pulled out since the draw was made.

Sabalenka had admitted she was not 100 percent fit after suffering a shoulder injury that she described as "a rare one" and is replaced by Russian lucky loser



JAKARTA: Chinese badminton players and coaches (in white jackets and black armbands), along with all players competing in the 2024 Asia Junior Championship, praying together for the late Chinese player Zhang Zhijie, who collapsed during a match against Japan. — AFP

Earlier this year he won the singles title at the Dutch Junior International, a prestigious youth tournament. China's badminton association said it was "deeply saddened". "Zhang Zhijie loved badminton and was an outstanding athlete of the national youth badminton team," the CBA said in a statement.

The team tournament held a moment's silence on Monday and the Chinese team wore black armbands as a mark of respect before the competition carried on. China beat Taiwan 3-0.

India's PV Sindhu, who has won Olympic sil-

ver and bronze, called Zhang's death "absolutely heartbreaking". "I offer my deepest condolences to Zhang's family during this devastating time," Sindhu, who was not at the tournament, wrote on X.

"The world has lost a remarkable talent today." Governing body the Badminton World Federation said it was "saddened by the loss of emerging badminton talent Zhang Zhijie. "We offer our deepest condolences to his family, his teammates, to the Chinese Badminton Association, and the entire Chinese badminton community," it said in a statement. — AFP

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Carlos Alcaraz

Asher-Smith 'so happy' as she bids for Olympic gold

LONDON: European 100 metres champion Dina Asher-Smith believes she is well-placed to "create history" as she bids to become the first British woman to win an Olympic sprint gold medal at the upcoming Paris Games. Asher-Smith showed her class with victory in the 200m at the UK Athletics Championships in Manchester on Sunday.

The 28-year-old sealed her place in the British team for Paris by winning in a championship record time of 22.18 seconds, a performance made all the more creditable given the race was run in cold and wet conditions.

It was another encouraging sign for Asher-Smith following her 100m gold at the European Championships in Rome earlier in June. Now Asher-Smith is setting her sights on becoming the first British woman to win an Olympic gold in either the 100 or 200m.

"I'm so happy with my performance," said Asher-Smith. "Obviously we're in the north. It's cold, it's wet, it's windy—much to be expected from Manchester. "I was honestly just hoping for a healthy race and to qualify for the Olympic Games, but to come through in a season's best when I know that I can run faster when it's a little bit warmer—it bodes really well."

"I want to be so successful, I want to do myself proud and I want to create history. I'm running great. I'm happy that as we're coming into the crunch time in the season everything's coming together. I'm on track."

"It's not my first rodeo and I'm very excited going into my third Olympic Games in a really good place." Asher-Smith's buoyant mood is in marked contrast to the disconsolate figure she cut at last year's World Championships in Budapest, where she finished eighth in the 100m final and seventh in the 200m. She subsequently decided to change coaches, team up with Texas-based Edrick Floreal after parting company with longstanding mentor John Blackie. "I absolutely adore my previous coach, John. He's a phenomenal coach, a very intelligent man and we've had great success," said Asher-Smith.

"I don't think anything was wrong or broken but sometimes you need change. If you're physically in great shape but things aren't clicking, then you've got to look inwards and think of trying a new environment."

"Edrick is an amazing coach, an amazing technician. I'm having a lot of fun, just learning new things and trying new things. "I've just found when I'm smiling and just having a great day, I run really fast. I definitely do believe in what I can do." — AFP

'Need luck'

Four-time major winner Naomi Osaka tackles Diane Parry of France in her first appearance at Wimbledon since 2019. Osaka, who only returned to the tour at the start of the season after maternity leave, is ranked at 113 and required a wild card to play at Wimbledon.

At the recent French Open, she gave world number one Iga Swiatek a mighty scare, holding a match point in their second-round clash before the Pole prevailed. "People tell me I have the game for grass. I just need some luck," said the Japanese star. — AFP

At the recent French Open, she gave world number one Iga Swiatek a mighty scare, holding a match point in their second-round clash before the Pole prevailed. "People tell me I have the game for grass. I just need some luck," said the Japanese star. — AFP

Sports

Surging Astros cool off Mets in 11th

Rangers crush O's to end six-game losing streak

HOUSTON: Trey Cabbage's two-run double capped a five-run 11th inning for the visiting Houston Astros, who moved over .500 for the first time this season with a 10-5 win over the New York Mets on Sunday in the rubber match of a three-game series. Matt Festa (0-1) intentionally walked Jordan Alvarez to open the 11th before Yainer Diaz singled. Jake Meyers followed with a go-ahead RBI single before Joey Loperfido laced a two-run single down the third base line. Two outs later, Cabbage doubled to deep right-center field.

Taylor Scott (4-2), the sixth pitcher for the Astros, allowed an unearned run in two innings of relief and came away with the win. Brandon Nimmo finished with three hits, including a two-run, game-tying homer in the seventh, for the Mets. The Astros went 17-8 in June, the best record in the majors, to improve to 42-41. The Mets, who were 16-8 in June, lost the final two games of the series to fall under .500 (40-41) at the midpoint of their season.

Giants 10, Dodgers 4

Matt Chapman homered, Spencer Bivens worked a season-best five innings and San Francisco completed a series win over visiting Los Angeles with a romp. Making his first major league start, Bivens (2-1) took a shutout into the fifth inning before serving up a solo home run to Chris Taylor with one out. It was Taylor's second homer of 2024. Dodgers starter James Paxton (7-2) was pulled after four innings, charged with nine runs on 12 hits. The Giants finished with 11 extra-base hits and 10 doubles, a San Francisco-era franchise record.

Rangers 11, Orioles 2

Derek Hill homered twice and Texas finally got its offense going, pounding host Baltimore to salvage the finale of a four-game series. Andrew Heaney struck out 10 in seven solid innings and Wyatt Langford, who drilled a three-run home run, finished with four hits, drove in four runs and scored three runs as the Rangers snapped a six-game losing streak. Hill drove in three runs and Nathaniel Lowe added a pair of run-scoring singles. It was just the fifth victory in the past 16 games for Texas. Orioles starter Cole Irvin (6-5) was shelled for five runs on five hits in 3 2/3 innings. Heaney (3-9) had lost his past three decisions, but he held Baltimore to five hits and didn't walk a batter in his 93-pitch effort. Jose Urena pitched the final two innings. Ryan O'Hearn finished with three hits for the Orioles.

Pirates 4, Braves 2

Oneil Cruz and Rowdy Tellez each hit a tape-measure

two-run homer in the fifth inning as Pittsburgh defeated host Atlanta to salvage the finale of their three-game series. Bryan Reynolds went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts for the Pirates to end his 25-game hitting streak, the longest in the majors this season. Pittsburgh starter Bailey Falter (4-6) snapped a personal four-start losing streak with his first victory since May 24, allowing one run on two hits over five innings. He walked four and struck out five. Sean Murphy doubled and totaled two hits, and Marcell Ozuna doubled, walked and scored a run for the Braves, who finished with just six hits.

Yankees 8, Blue Jays 1

Aaron Judge hit a two-run home run, his major-league-leading 31st blast of the season. Gerrit Cole struck out six in five innings and visiting New York defeated Toronto. Trent Grisham and DJ LeMahieu added two RBIs each to help the Yankees gain a split in the four-game series. Cole (1-1) allowed one run, three hits and one walk. He hit two batters with pitches. Toronto right-hander Kevin Gausman (6-7) allowed seven runs, seven hits and five walks with seven strikeouts in 4 1/3 innings. Slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. was hit in the hand by a pitch in the third inning and stayed in the game until leaving for a pinch hitter in the eighth. He said X-rays on the hand were negative.

Rays 5, Nationals 0

Taj Bradley kept rolling with his strong June pitching. Isaac Paredes finished a single shy of the cycle and Tampa Bay earned a fourth straight series win, beating Washington in St. Petersburg, Fla. Bradley (3-4) struck out 11 and allowed just three hits over 5 2/3 innings, while walking two over 99 pitches. Across his past five starts (29 innings), the 23-year-old right-hander is 2-1 with a 1.24 ERA, striking out 40 and allowing just 18 hits. Nationals left-hander Patrick Corbin (1-8) surrendered four runs on eight hits in six innings. The left-hander fanned five, walked one and lost his fifth straight decision.

Red Sox 4, Padres 1

Rafael Devers collected two hits, including a two-run home run, to help Boston avoid a three-game sweep by beating visiting San Diego. Devers hit his 18th home run of the season in the first against Matt Waldron (5-7). Wilner Abreu, who reached on a walk, also scored on the home run. The two-run homer gave Devers 600 career RBIs. Josh Winckowski (2-1) earned the win for tossing five scoreless innings in his second appearance since being recalled from Triple-A.



NEW YORK: Umpire James Jean works behind the plate during the first inning as JD Martinez #28 of the New York Mets bats and Yainer Diaz #21 of the Houston Astros waits for the pitch at Citi Field on June 30, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

Phillies 7, Marlins 6

Trea Turner put Philadelphia ahead with a two-run single in the seventh inning, and salvaged a split of a four-game series against visiting Miami. The Marlins led 6-2 after the top of the fifth inning before Philadelphia battled back and capped their largest comeback of the season on Turner's two-run single against Anthony Bender. Seranthony Dominguez (3-2) earned the win in relief and reliever Andrew Nardi (1-1) took the loss.

Rockies 5, White Sox 4 (14 innings)

Michael Toglia hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the top of the 14th inning, helping lead visiting Colorado to a win over Chicago. After Colorado's Sam Hilliard moved Ryan McMahon to third on a sacrifice bunt, Toglia's sacrifice fly was just deep enough to score the game-winner, snapping the Rockies' five-game losing streak. Jalen Beeks (5-4) threw a perfect bottom of the 14th to finish the Colorado victory, the team's longest game since a 16-inning win over the Giants on Sept. 24, 2019. Michael Soroka (0-8) threw the final four innings for Chicago.

Cardinals 2, Reds 0

Lance Lynn and three relievers combined to throw a two-hitter as St. Louis blanked visiting Cincinnati. Lynn (4-3) surrendered both of the Reds' hits and tallied six strikeouts over six innings. Ryan Helsley converted his 30th consecutive save to extend his team record. Masyn Winn went 2-for-4 with an RBI double for the Cardinals, who earned a split of the four-game series. Cincinnati second baseman Jonathan India hit a double to extend his hitting streak to 12 games. He has at least one double in eight straight games, which is a team record.

Royals 6, Guardians 2

Seth Lugo tossed six shutout innings for his major league-best 11th win as Kansas City beat visiting Cleveland, taking three of four games in the series. Lugo (11-2) fanned 10 while allowing four hits and a walk to earn his 14th quality start in 18 games, matching Logan Gilbert for most in the majors. Starter Logan Allen (8-4) allowed three runs on six hits with three strikeouts.— Reuters

Biles books Paris Olympics spot

MINNEAPOLIS: Four-time Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles is headed to the Paris Games after a resounding all-around victory at the US gymnastics trials on Sunday. Biles capped her trials with another electrifying floor routine, her high-flying tumbling bringing the crowd to its feet. She piled up 117.225 over two days of competition to earn an automatic berth on the five-strong team for Paris later this month.

Three years after a bout of the disorienting "twisties" cut short Biles's Tokyo Games campaign, the gymnast considered the best of all time will return to the Olympic stage looking stronger than ever. The 27-year-old told an exultant crowd in Minneapolis that in the immediate aftermath of Tokyo she had "never pictured going to another Olympic Games."

"I never thought I would go back in the gym again, be twisting, feel free," said Biles, who returned to competition in August last year after a two-year break. She'll be joined in Paris by three other members of the Tokyo Olympics team: all-around gold medalist Suni Lee, floor gold medalist Jade Carey and Jordan Chiles, who helped the US to team silver. The quartet—who will be joined by 16-year-old Hezly Rivera—have branded the Paris Olympics their redemption tour. "I feel like we all have more to give and our Tokyo performances weren't the best," said Biles, who withdrew from the team final at the pandemic-delayed Games.

"I feel like we have a lot of weight on our shoulders to go out there and prove that we're better athletes. We're more mature, we're smarter, we're more consistent—but don't quote me on that, because not tonight!" she laughed after the closing night of trials saw Biles, Lee and Chiles all fall off the balance beam.

The always-tense trials were turned into an even more nervy affair as three top contenders were forced out of the competition by injury. Skye Blakely ruptured an Achilles tendon in training on Wednesday and Shilese Jones hurt her left knee in a warm-up vault on



MINNEAPOLIS: US gymnast Simone Biles celebrates being selected for the 2024 US Olympic Women's Gymnastics Team during the Women's Day Four of 2024 US Olympic Gymnastics Trials at the Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on June 30, 2024. — AFP

Friday, minutes before Tokyo Olympic alternate Kayla DiCello suffered what proved to be an Achilles injury on the opening vault of the trials.

The injuries unsettled everyone, but with less than a month before gymnastics competition begins in Paris, Biles was confident the team will be at its best. "If we can just do what we do in training, then I think we're going to hit it out of the ballpark," said Biles, who has captured world championships all-around gold and her eighth and ninth national titles since returning to competition last summer. Biles launched her night with a soaring version of her Yurchenko double pike vault, and even though she skittered backwards a few steps on landing, she scored 15.50 points for a vault so difficult that no other woman has attempted it in competition. After a sub-par balance beam performance on day one left her clearly furious, Biles was rolling through an impressive routine when she lost her balance and fell off—still scoring an impressive 13.900.

Lee, whose return to the Olympics comes as she

manages not one but two kidney diseases that threatened to end her career, finished second overall with 111.675 points. It was a triumphant and emotional night for Lee in front of ecstatic fans in her home state of Minnesota. "I'm so, so glad that I never gave up," she said. "There were so many times where I thought about just quitting and just kind of walking away from the sport because I didn't think that I would ever get to this point." Chiles finished third, Carey fourth and Rivera fifth in the all-around—although it was a nervous wait for the quartet behind Biles, who were named to the team after about half an hour of deliberation by the selection committee. Rivera was buoyed by a strong showing on the balance beam and capped her night with a solid vault to edge out 18-year-old Joscelyn Roberson for the final berth. All eyes in Paris, however, will be on Biles, who heads to France an overwhelming favorite to add to the four golds she won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. "I love these girls and I'm going to take care of them in Paris," Biles said.— AFP

Dutch to reignite 'will to win' against Romania

MUNICH: Netherlands captain Virgil van Dijk has called upon his side to rediscover their "will to win" ahead of Tuesday's Euro 2024 last 16 meeting with Romania. Despite boasting a talented squad, the Netherlands have so far struggled in the tournament.

Drawn in Group D alongside heavyweights France and Ralf Rangnick's impressive Austria, the Netherlands finished just ahead of a lacklustre Poland and qualified as one of the four best third-placed sides.

Van Dijk, in particular, was the target of criticism from former Dutch midfielder Rafael van der Vaart who slammed his "disgraceful performance" against Austria in the Netherlands' final group game. "I want him to show some passion," said the former Oranje playmaker.

Still considered among the best defenders in the world, 32-year-old Van Dijk was at fault for Austria's decisive third goal in the 3-2 win which sent the Alpine nation through as group winners. "I know I can do better and it should be better," admitted Van Dijk, but the Dutch captain was far from alone in bearing responsibility for the loss, with Memphis Depay and Donyell Malen missing several chances.

In the last 16, the Netherlands will face Romania, who surprisingly topped the closely-contested Group E thanks largely to their opening round 3-0 thumping of Ukraine, while they drew and lost their remaining matches. The Dutch will need to improve should they wish to reach the quarter-finals of the Euros for the first time since 2008, let alone emulate the 1988 Oranje side and win a European Championship on German soil.

With a win, a loss and a draw from three games, the Dutch have come under fire—criticism which Van Dijk "completely understands". "Things overall can and should be better," the Liverpool defender said after a 3-2 defeat to Austria, adding "maybe we've been overestimating ourselves".—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, Mahesh Kumar, holder of passport No. R5452716 do hereby change my name to Manish (as given name) Patel (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known by the name Manish Patel and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.
(#5629, 02/07/2024)

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)

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England avoid shock at Euro 2024 as Spain ease into quarter-finals

Georgia go home with their heads held high



GELSENKIRCHEN: England's midfielder #10 Jude Bellingham shoots an overhead kick to score his team's first goal during the UEFA Euro 2024 round of 16 football match between England and Slovakia at the Arena AufSchalke in Gelsenkirchen on June 30, 2024. — AFP

COLOGNE: England escaped an embarrassing exit from Euro 2024 on Sunday as they came from behind to beat Slovakia in extra time and reach the quarter-finals, while Spain defeated surprise packages Georgia 4-1 to set up a mouthwatering quarter-final showdown with hosts Germany.

A Jude Bellingham overhead kick deep in injury time and a Harry Kane strike early in extra time allowed England to beat Slovakia 2-1 in their last-16 tie in Gelsenkirchen. It was very nearly another ignominious exit for England that would have rivalled their defeat by Iceland at the same stage of Euro 2016.

They fell behind to Ivan Schranz's 25th-minute goal for Slovakia and were on their way out of the competition as a Phil Foden equalizer was disallowed for offside. But Bellingham's moment of inspiration five minutes into stoppage time at the end of the game saved Gareth Southgate's side, as the Real Madrid man acrobatically turned home Marc Guehi's flick-on from a throw-in.

Slovakia's resistance was broken,

and England got what proved to be the winner a minute into the extra period. Substitute Ivan Toney headed Eberechi Eze's mishit shot back across goal for Kane to power home his second goal of the tournament.

That set up a quarter-final meeting with Switzerland on Saturday in Duesseldorf. "That's the desire and the attitude from the boys. It looked tough for a second there but you keep going," said Kane. "Jude does what Jude does and what an unbelievable goal."

"We want to be better," admitted Southgate. "I'm not going to hide from that but the spirit and character was there for everybody to see and we're still in there fighting." Slovakia coach Francesco Calzona said he was proud of his team despite the defeat.

"My team showed a lot out there. They were great, gave away very little and came close to going through," said the Italian. "And in extra time we were in their half for long periods, I'm very proud."

Georgia give Spain scare

There was also a scare for Spain in

the late game in Cologne, as they fell behind against Georgia when Robin Le Normand put through his own net in the 18th minute. It was the eighth own goal scored at this year's competition and the first time Spain had conceded at all after they registered three clean sheets during the group phase. However, Spain had beaten Willy Sagnol's Georgia side twice in qualifying, winning 7-1 away and 3-1 at home, and their class ultimately told on a rainy night.

Rodri Hernandez stroked in the equalizer six minutes before half-time, and Fabian Ruiz headed in a Lamine Yamal cross to put Spain ahead on 51 minutes. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia had come close to scoring from inside his own half for Georgia just before that, but Ruiz's goal effectively ended their hopes of causing a monumental upset.

Nico Williams ran from halfway to score a brilliant third goal for Spain on 75 minutes and substitute Dani Olmo wrapped up their victory seven minutes from time. Luis de la Fuente's team, who missed a host of chances to win by a greater margin, will now go

to Stuttgart for a clash with the host nation on Friday.

That game is also a repeat of the Euro 2008 final which Spain won 1-0 to begin their golden era. "We're very happy because we know what it takes to be here. That's been shown by what the other teams have gone through," De la Fuente told Spanish television. "(The result) was deceptive because it could have been 8-1 or 9-1. We had to suffer, counter-attacking is their weapon."

Georgia go home with their heads held high after a memorable first appearance at a major tournament which saw them defeat Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal to reach the knockout phase. "I am very proud of what the players have done in the last months," Frenchman Sagnol said.

"Now it is the end of the journey but I am sure the next one will also be very exciting." The last-16 action continues on Monday as Kylian Mbappe and France take on Belgium in Duesseldorf at 1600 GMT before Portugal meet Slovenia in Frankfurt in the late game. — AFP

Ecuador reach Copa quarters, Mexico out

GLENDALE: Ecuador secured a place in the Copa America quarter-finals on Sunday after grinding out a 0-0 draw with Mexico, who bowed out of the tournament after finishing third in Group B. Ecuador, who are looking to reach their first semi-final since hosting the event in 1993, face defending champions Argentina in the quarters, while group winners Venezuela, who beat Jamaica 3-0, take on Canada.

Ecuador finished level with Mexico on four points but progress to the last eight thanks to a superior goal difference. "We would like to have a little bit more control," Ecuador coach Felix Sanchez told reporters.

"It's a very young squad, as I said, and we actually need to be able to overcome these situations in these matches. We know that even if you obtain the results you want, you need to be self-critical and continue improving." Mexico manager Jaime Lozano is likely to face increased scrutiny after they scored just one goal in their three group matches. Lozano, Mexico's third head coach in the last two years, also faced criticism after their 2-0 loss to the United States in the 2024 CONCACAF Nations League final, and defeats in two recent friendlies, including a 4-0 thrashing by Uruguay.

"Whenever an objective is not meant, there is certain discomfort and doubts, that's only natural, no matter who's here," Lozano said. "But the players kept believing until the very end, that's not easy. It's not easy to play that strong union and the commitment that they showed... over the whole tournament."

"That decision (about my future) is not up to me." In a physical first half, Mexico attacked with real intensity as they sought the win they needed but lacked quality on the ball and failed to record a shot on target.

Lozano's side continued to push after the break and full-back Gerardo Arteaga created a good opportunity after a powerful run into the box, before being denied by a last-ditch tackle from Felix Torres.

Winger Julian Quinones tested Ecuador goalkeeper Alexander Dominguez with a long-range effort in the 65th minute. Dominguez kept out Quinones' shot with a diving save, with Mexico's Santi Gimenez blasting the rebound off the post from a tight angle.

As Mexico threw bodies forward in their search for a winner, Ecuador increasingly posed a threat on the counter-attack and in the 68th minute Enner Valencia forced a save from Julio Gonzalez with a dipping strike. Mexico were then awarded a penalty in the seventh minute of stoppage time when Torres appeared to bring down Guillermo Martinez but the decision was overturned after a VAR review. — AFP

Pogacar takes Tour de France lead as rookie steals stage

BOLOGNA: Former champion Tadej Pogacar took the overall lead of the Tour de France on Sunday on a sweltering run to Bologna won by French rider Kevin Vauquelin. Pogacar, who won the 2020 and 2021 Tours, attacked from the closing peloton on a steep hill near the finish line of the second stage as he, Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel all gained time on the day.

"I was so close to taking the yellow jersey last year but then I cracked," said the 25-year-old Slovenian. "Maybe this is confirmation I'm the strongest. "Jonas was quite fast on my wheel, but I'm glad I blew that peloton open, took some time off some people."

Overnight leader Romain Bardet, winner of Saturday's opening stage, had predicted he would be unable to defend the yellow jersey and so it proved as he was dropped on the final ascent. A 10-man attack had led as the race arrived in Bologna through apricot and peach orchards from the coastal resort of Cesanatico.

Vauquelin, making his Tour debut, broke away from the remnants of the escape on the final hill, and won solo at a packed finish line in the city centre with temperatures hitting 33C (91F). "It was painful, but I did it for myself, my family and my team," said

the 23-year-old winner who had lost 30 minutes on the opening stage. "This is mad, yesterday I was on the bottom rung of the ladder. But today was perfect, how mad is that?"

Evenepoel at the party

Behind them Pogacar produced a blistering acceleration on the very steepest part of the final climb, but was immediately shadowed by defending champion Vingegaard of Denmark. This pair were then joined downhill by former Vuelta winner Evenepoel and former Giro winner Richard Carapaz.

"I made a mistake, I shouldn't have taken Carapaz with me," said Evenepoel. While Carapaz led that group across the line, official results gave Pogacar the yellow jersey, with the others on the same time.

"I managed to close the gap, but I could have done better," said Evenepoel, who took the best young rider's white jersey. While the Quick Step man did himself down, he received high praise from the man in yellow. "He's some rider, it was no surprise to see him get back on my wheel," said Pogacar. Along the road Sunday were many skull and crossbones flags in memory of former Italian rider Marco Pantani, whose 1998 Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double Pogacar is hoping to match this year.

Pantani, who faced a barrage of doping allegations during his career and later died aged 34 from a cocaine overdose, was born in the stage's start town. His parents were guests of honor for the day.

After two stages featuring some punishing climbs, stage three is a lengthy but flat 231km run from Pia-



TURIN: UAE Team Emirates team's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey cycles with the pack of riders (peloton) during the 3rd stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 230,5 km between Piacenza and Turin, in Italy, on July 1, 2024. — AFP

cenza to Turin that will have the sprint teams on red alert all day. Jasper Philipsen, the defending green jersey wearer for the best sprinter, said ahead of the Tour there were nine interesting stages for sprinters, starting with Monday's.

Two days after "seeing stars" and vomiting with heat sickness 39-year-old Mark Cavendish will continue his bid for a record 35th stage win. And Mads Pedersen, Sam Bennett, Wout van Aert and Fabio Jakobsen should also feature in any eventual bunch sprint in the industrial city home to motor giant Fiat and football legends Juventus. — AFP