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Gaza genocide enters 10th month

Zionist-Hezbollah clashes intensify • Hamas says talks possible without permanent truce



GAZA: Children react after Zionist bombardment as they take refuge at the Jaouni school run by UNRWA in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on July 6, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: The Zionist entity launched deadly strikes Sunday on the Gaza Strip as its war against Hamas entered its 10th month, with diplomatic efforts underway to secure a ceasefire and captive release deal. Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, an ally of Palestinian militant group Hamas, fired rocket salvos at the Zionist entity, in the latest cross-border clashes that have sparked fears of a full-scale war. Efforts towards a truce continued with US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators hoping to halt the Gaza war, which has caused mass civilian casualties and devastated swathes of the coastal territory.

Egypt's state-linked Al-Qahera News said Cairo was "hosting (Zionist) and American delegations to discuss the outstanding points", citing an unnamed high-level official source. Mediators were in contact with Hamas amid "intensive Egyptian meetings this week with all parties", said the news report late Saturday, without elaborating. A top Hamas official told AFP on Sunday that the Palestinian group was ready to discuss a captive deal and an end to the Gaza war without a "complete and permanent ceasefire".

The Zionist entity has said it would send a delegation to continue talks with Qatari mediators, though a government spokesman said Friday there were still "gaps" with Hamas. US President Joe Biden announced a plan in late May that included an initial six-week truce and the exchange of hostages for

Palestinian prisoners held in the Zionist entity.

Talks quickly stalled but a US official said Thursday that a new proposal from Hamas "moves the process forward and may provide the basis for closing the deal". Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told AFP that US mediators "welcomed" the group's latest proposals "and passed them on to the (Zionist) side". "Now the ball is in the (Zionist) court," said Hamdan. In the Zionist entity, anti-government protesters demanding a captive release deal blocked roads in Tel Aviv as they marked a nationwide "disruption day".

The fighting and bombardment in besieged Gaza raged on unabated, with medics and emergency services in the Hamas-run territory reporting at least 15 deaths in several strikes on Sunday. Among them were Ehab Al-Ghusein, the Hamas-appointed deputy minister of labor whose wife and children were killed in May, and three other people killed in a strike at a church-run school in western Gaza City sheltering families, Hamas media and the civil emergency service said. The Palestinian Red Crescent said two children were among six dead when a central Gaza house was hit, and paramedics reported nine fatalities in two strikes on Gaza City. An AFP correspondent said Zionist drones were firing in Gaza City's Shujaiya district, which has been largely evacuated and rocked by intense battles for nearly two weeks.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Only one banner outside husseiniyas

KUWAIT: The interior ministry reiterated Sunday husseiniya owners can only raise one banner without any slogans outside every husseiniya, while no banners are allowed outside homes. The ministry urged the public to adhere to the instructions and cooperate with security personnel to maintain public safety, following its meeting with husseiniya supervisors in Kuwait. Muharram processions remain banned. Earlier, former MP Saleh Ashour said he met Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, who toured husseiniyas to inspect security preparations. "On behalf of husseiniya owners, we thank the minister for his commitment to secure husseiniyas," he said.

Article 20 to 18 transfer to open

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah issued a decision allowing the transfer of domestic visas (article 20) to private sector visas (article 18) from July 14 to Sept 12, 2024. A domestic worker is required to obtain their employer's permission to transfer after spending at least one year of working for the employer. Furthermore, a KD 50 fee is collected for the transfer, in addition to KD 10 for every year of residency in the new contract.

Iran warship capsizes during repairs

DUBAI: The Iranian navy frigate Sahand capsized during repairs in the southern port of Bandar Abbas, Iranian state media reported on Sunday. "As Sahand was being repaired at the wharf, it lost its balance due to water ingress. Fortunately ...the vessel is being returned to balance quickly," the official news agency IRNA reported, citing a navy statement. It did not specify when the accident occurred. State media carried a picture of a capsized ship and said several people were taken to hospital with minor injuries. — Reuters

Pezeshkian win brings hopes of moderation

DUBAI: Iran's president-elect, low-profile moderate Masoud Pezeshkian, carries the hopes of millions of Iranians seeking less restrictions on social freedoms and a more pragmatic foreign policy. Pezeshkian, who defeated hardline Saeed Jalili in Friday's second-round presidential vote, is someone world powers are likely to welcome, hoping he might pursue peaceful ways out of a tense standoff with Iran over its fast-advancing nuclear program, analysts said.

HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Pezeshkian, wishing him a long healthy life and more prosperity and development for the Islamic republic. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah also sent congratulatory cables to Pezeshkian.

Pezeshkian managed to win with a constituency - whose core was believed to be the urban middle class and young - that had been widely disillusioned by years of security crackdowns that stifled any public dissent from Islamist orthodoxy. The 69-year-old cardiac surgeon has pledged

Continued on Page 6



TEHRAN: Newly-elected Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian gestures during a visit to the shrine of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on July 6, 2024. — AFP

'Restless' Starmer seeks 'reset', axes Rwanda scheme

LONDON: Newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Sunday began a whistlestop tour of UK nations, promising an "immediate reset" of relations with the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Starmer was due to meet Scotland's First Minister and leader of the pro-separatist Scottish National Party (SNP) John Swinney in Edinburgh ahead of trips to Cardiff and Belfast expected on Monday.

The meeting comes as the SNP was almost wiped

out at last week's election which put Starmer's Labour Party in power by a landslide. Labour, which crushed Rishi Sunak's ruling Conservatives at the polls, also overturned more than a decade of SNP domination in Scotland by capturing the majority of its 57 seats. Swinney lamented a "very, very difficult and damaging" election result for his party. He had set the party's sights on winning 29 seats as a mandate for reopening negotiations with the British government for another independence referendum, but it returned only nine MPs.

Under ex-premier Tony Blair, Labour was the architect of devolving power to the regions in the late 1990s with the setting up of parliaments or national assemblies in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. But under the Conservatives leaders in the three capitals complained that they were increasingly sidelined.

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LONDON: Britain's incoming Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria wave as they pose on the steps of 10 Downing Street on July 5, 2024. — AFP

Biden back on campaign trail amid pressure

PHILADELPHIA: US President Joe Biden was back out on the campaign trail Sunday, desperate to salvage his reelection bid as senior Democrats meet to discuss growing calls that he quit the White House race. The 81-year-old Democrat took the stage at a predominantly black church in Philadelphia, part of a two-stop swing

in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, before he hosts the NATO leaders' summit in Washington later this week.

He is campaigning under an increasingly unforgiving spotlight, as pressure mounts for him to drop out after his disastrous debate against Donald Trump last month ignited panic over his age and fitness to serve another four years. Biden has remained defiant, unequivocally declaring he is fit to serve, the only one who can defeat Trump, and staying in the race.

So far, five Democratic lawmakers have called on Biden to drop out, with the drumbeat of dissent slowly rising.

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PHILADELPHIA: US President Joe Biden stands with Bishop Ernest Morris, Sr during a church service and campaign event on July 7, 2024. — AFP



Local

MoI continues crackdown on traffic, residency law violators

Officers issue nearly 53,000 traffic tickets since June 29



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry officials have monitored and conducted several inspection campaigns across the country.

In my view

Need to prioritize patent holders for SME funding

By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

local@kuwaittimes.com

Young people often dream of building their wealth and projects to achieve quick success and escape the routine of working in a government or private sector job. This aspiration led the state to establish the National Fund for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in 2013, aimed at supporting these young entrepreneurs and enhancing the entrepreneurship market in the state.

However, the number of projects that succeed and bring wealth to their owners is very small. Many projects fail, leading to loans and debts, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The owners of these projects were unable to pay their debts, resulting in many companies declaring bankruptcy. Today, these owners are required by the government and banks to pay their accumulated installments.

Moreover, many of the failed projects, or even those that survived, did not bring anything new to the market. These projects are often repetitive, and the selling prices of their products or services are high. This lack of innovation and high prices make these projects less popular, especially since many large companies offer similar services in a better way and at lower prices. Consequently, SME find it challenging to compete with large companies and established brands, making their success less likely. In light of the bankruptcy of many project owners and their substantial debts, the fund should reconsider granting loans or approving projects except for limited groups to ensure the success of these project owners and their ability to compete with large companies. Only those with a patent should be considered.

In today's global markets, achieving wealth or creating a successful business is often limited to patent holders because they offer something unique without direct competition. The market needs such innovations. Patents cover all aspects, even in food and beverages. Therefore, the national fund must recognize the importance of stringent controls and conditions for granting loans and supporting projects. By doing so, project owners will have a better chance of success and achieving the wealth they dream of, provided they have something new to offer the market.

Recently, a number of young people have succeeded in obtaining patents for new discoveries not available in local or global markets. These patent holders should be the ones the fund supports and provides loans to, as their projects are more likely to achieve profits, prove themselves and compete with major companies. Ambitious young people must realize that today, in all parts of the world, achieving wealth is very difficult. The markets are saturated with various products and service providers, making it challenging for owners of small projects to achieve wealth. Even large companies are struggling, with the diversity and abundance of products and services leading to huge losses and bankruptcies.

It may be better to commit to a job with a stable income, which is much safer than the risks of freelance business, which often result in financial obligations, loans and losses, making individuals legally responsible for something they could have avoided by sticking to a job in the government or private sector.

Young people must understand that to achieve wealth or succeed in a project, they must offer something new, backed by knowledge and study of new specializations. Today, wealth is achieved by scientists and inventors who provide societies with something novel. We hope the national fund will stop granting loans except to patent holders who have invented something new. These individuals are the ones who will fulfill the goals of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises.

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior has continued to crackdown on residency law violators across the country after the amnesty deadline ended on June 30. An inspection campaign led by Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Public Security Affairs Major General Hamad Al-Munafi and Director-General of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Security Directorate Brigadier General Muhammad Al-Hamli has resulted in multiple arrests in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate. People found in violation of the law were referred to the competent authority to take the necessary legal measures and deport them from the country.

More were arrested in another campaign in Al-Jahra governorate for violating the residency law. Officers, led by Director-General of Al-Jahra Security Directorate Brigadier General Hamad Al-Tawala, also found people in possession of drugs and illicit substances.

A statement released by the ministry's traffic department said traffic officers have also booked 12 people found in violation of the residency law and 17 others who didn't have legal documents. The arrests were made as officers while conducting traffic inspections over the past week.

In a statement published on the Interior Ministry's website Thursday, the ministry urged everyone to cooperate with security personnel in reporting violators and outlaws by calling the emergency phone number (112).

Kuwait had extended the deadline for illegal expatriates to readjust their legal status or leave the country until June 30. The deadline was originally set to end on June 17. There are no official figures available on how many expats made use of the grace period. But an official was quoted last month saying that thousands of expatriates have benefited from the campaign.

The campaign, which was designed to address



the age-old residency violations issue plaguing the country went on for three months. Expats who took advantage of the grace period given by the Interior Ministry could either leave Kuwait without facing penalties or adjust their legal status by fulfilling the necessary legal requirements. Those who chose to adjust their status and remain in Kuwait would still have had to pay the fine, which could add up to KD 600. Expats who didn't have a valid passport were issued travel documents from their embassies to facilitate their departure.

Nearly 53,000 tickets

The ministry's traffic department has also intensified its clampdown on traffic law violators in

Shuwaikh Industrial area.

Inspectors with the department issued 187 tickets against mechanic shops for violating the law including fixing a car after an accident without getting written permission from police and changing the color of a vehicle without a permit. Inspectors seized 23 vehicles for illegal tinting and loud muffler noise.

Over the period between June 29–July 5, police issued 52,872 traffic tickets, according to statistics released by the department. Inspectors have also booked case on 17 minors for driving without a license and seized 61 vehicles for various violations. Officers have also responded to 2,375 traffic reports, including 1,365 accidents.



KUWAIT: French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and Dr Bashayer Al-Majed pose for group photo with the Sorbonne alumni. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sorbonne Society launches local chapter to deepen alumni ties

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of France held a ceremony on the occasion of launching the Sorbonne Alumni Club "Sorbonne Society" under the patronage and presence of Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. During her remarks, Claire Le Flecher, Ambassador of France to Kuwait, articulated France's aspiration to deepen connections with its global alumni network while enhancing the allure of French higher education worldwide, adding that the French Institute in Kuwait and the French Embassy have actively nurtured this collaborative approach, bringing together French alumni in Kuwait who cherish their formative years spent in France.

The French ambassador underscored both countries' pivotal roles in advancing educational and cultural collaboration, noting that this collective endeavor not only enriches bilateral relations but also heralds a future of strengthened cooperation across academic and diplomatic spheres. "I welcome the creation of the Sorbonne Society in Kuwait. ... And would like to sincerely congratulate the person without whom this ambitious project would never have seen the light of day. Dr Bashayer Al-Majed, Professor of Law at Oxford and the University of Kuwait, you are an alumnus of Sorbonne Paris I University, a journey which left its mark on you and confirmed your love for France," said Le Flecher. "Dr Bashayer is committed to promoting Kuwait internationally and has often taken courageous positions in the media to

defend France when it found itself in difficulty. Thank you for this great achievement which strengthens the friendship."

The French ambassador also praised Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a leading political figure in Kuwait who is very appreciated in France. "You are strongly committed to the Francophonie, as is your father, Sheikh Nasser Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Your unfailing commitment to Franco-Kuwaiti relations is a strength and a valuable support."

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the Sorbonne Society, stated "This event represents a significant step in strengthening the academic and cultural ties between Kuwait and France, as well as a historic moment for all those who share a connection with the Sorbonne and an interest in French culture and education."

He pointed out that the dedication and enthusiasm of Dr Al-Majed, Founding President of the Sorbonne Society, have made this day possible. "Having obtained my doctorate in political science from Pantheon-Sorbonne University, I am particularly moved by the launch of this society. My academic journey in France has been remarkable, marked by academic excellence, intellectual rigor, and cultural enrichment. The years spent in Bordeaux, Besançon, Strasbourg, and finally Paris have allowed me not only to appreciate the beauty, the dynamism, and the hospitality of the inhabitants of these cities but also the richness and diversity of the French university landscape. But also enriched my perspective and shaped my understanding of France and the world," Sheikh Ahmad said.

He added that the society's goal is "to create a space where inquisitive minds can meet, exchange ideas, and explore new perspectives. The Sorbonne Society in Kuwait will be a place for dialogue, discovery, and sharing, where each member can mutually enrich themselves through their



(From left) French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher is honored by Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the Sorbonne Society, and Dr Bashayer Al-Majed, Founding President of the Sorbonne Society.

knowledge and experiences."

In her address, Dr Al-Majed articulated the launch of the pioneering initiative aimed at forging academic and cultural ties between Kuwait and France. She emphasized the Society's mission to unite professionals from diverse academic backgrounds, fostering international cooperation and advancing scientific, cultural, and academic endeavors, highlighting the society's commitment to organizing conferences, workshops, and exhibitions as platforms for exchanging ideas and showcasing collaborative projects. "This association will serve as a vital hub for knowledge exchange and collaboration. I am confident that the Sorbonne Society will thrive as a beacon of knowledge and progress," she said.

Local

Row erupts over foreign scholarships

Ministry denies accusations of manipulation after withholding full list of accepted students

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Some high school graduates and their parents were outraged during the long weekend over the higher education ministry's decision to change the way it announces the names of those accepted into its foreign scholarship program.

Every year, thousands of Kuwaiti high school graduates anticipate the government's announcement to see if they made the cut for the competitive program. The program gives students the opportunity to get an all-expenses-paid scholarship to pursue their undergraduate studies in one of several countries approved by the ministry. Eligible fields of study are determined according to the needs of government agencies, the country's development plan, and the job market and in coordination with the ministry's cultural division offices. Students who obtained high school diplomas in the years 2023/2024 and 2022/2023 from various types from public, private, and foreign schools are allowed to apply.

On Saturday, Minister of Education Dr Adel Al-Adwani said it approved the names of 3,325 students admitted to the foreign scholarship plan for the year 2024-2025. But the announcement soon became a source of controversy. Unlike previous years, a full list of names of students who were accepted into the program was not published for the public to review. Instead, students and their families were asked to enter the graduate's civil ID number on a dedicated website to find out whether they were accepted in the government's study abroad post-secondary scholarship program.

'Nothing is clear'

People were skeptical on social media of the decision, claiming the ministry was not being transparent. Many said they were not accepted into the program despite having high grades that they think should be enough to qualify them. They questioned the ministry's policy and whether they had anything to hide.

"What's happening is not fair for our children," said one person with the handle @fjoora on Instagram. "Nothing is clear and there are discrepancies in the acceptance process ... Ministry employees are not answering my inquiries." Others complained about the new aptitude test for engineering and medical specialties announced in 2023, which was first adopted for graduates this year. The test, which has been in the works for 10 years, had been touted by the government as "a system with international standards to measure the capabilities of high school graduates and achieve

equal opportunities in higher education institutions." It has been recently criticized in local media for not meeting expectations - merely copying Kuwait University's outdated entrance test.

"Does it make sense to evaluate students based on a two-hour test and throw away three years of education?" asked a person with the handle @hamadi1543. "My daughter who went to a public school got 99 percent in the science stream and her friend got 97 percent. My daughter didn't get a scholarship but her friend who did better in the test did."

Some people accused the ministry's scholarship program of favoring students from foreign-language private schools, a claim the ministry denies every year.

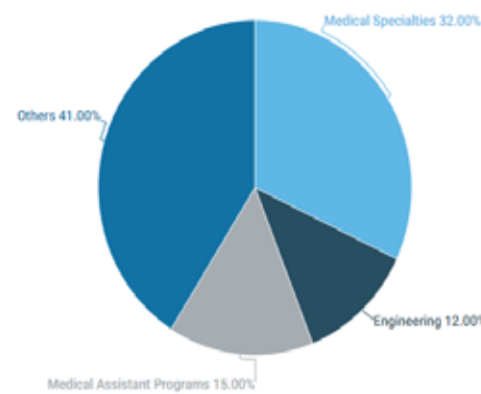
A spokesperson with Kuwait Transparency Society said in a statement on their Instagram account that the ministry's decision not to publish the names was in violation of the country's policies. "The Access to Information Law obliges government agencies to disclose the data they have about the future of individuals. We demand the ministry to release the names of the students accepted into the program," Lawyer Mohammed Al-Fahad was quoted on the organization's Instagram account.

Privacy concerns

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education Lamia Al-Mulhim said in a statement Sunday that comments on the ministry's policy being circulated on social media are not true. The ministry, she said, accepted students based on their high school grades and, for those applying to study engineering or medical specialties, the aptitude test. They also took into consideration the top eight choices designated by the student.

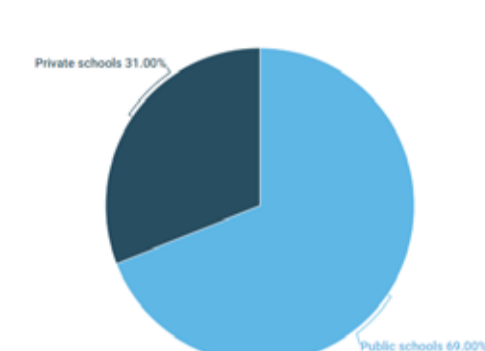
The ministry's choice not to publish a full list of students who were accepted into the program was to protect the students' privacy. Mulhim called on anyone with questions on why they were not accepted to reach out to the ministry. She added that the ministry also has other study-abroad programs, including merit scholarships and direct dispatch missions for medical specializations. Students wishing to receive foreign scholarships can apply through the official website of the ministry, with registration open until February 2025. She said the ministry does not specify specific seats for the direct scholarship plan. "If the conditions of the universities in the countries of delegation are met, the student obtains academic admission, and the conditions for direct scholarship missions are met, the student will be accepted directly into the scholarship," said the statement.

Accepted students in the Ministry of Higher Education's foreign scholarship plan



Source: Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education

More students from public schools were accepted into the program compared to private schools



Source: Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education

Scholarship acceptance rates: By the numbers

KUWAIT: Most students accepted into the higher education ministry's foreign scholarship program for the academic year 2024-2025 had graduated from public schools, statistics released by the ministry Sunday revealed.

The numbers come as rumors swirled for two days on social media that the government had accepted more students from private schools into its annual program. The controversy repeats every year as many public-school students feel the government's scholarship acceptance system favors students who graduate from foreign-language private schools. Those who make the claim say foreign-language schools give more leeway to their students,

enabling them to get higher grades. In posts on its Instagram account, the ministry said 69 percent of over 3,000 seats allocated to scholarship students were given to graduates of public schools.

The ministry also released the cutoff percentages they used for medical and engineering programs in countries included in the scholarship program. In dentistry, the lowest grade accepted into a program in the field was 94.23 percent, which got a student a seat to study dentistry in Australia. The lowest cutoff for medicine was at 94.88 percent and qualified students to study in Canada. Cutoffs in medicine and dentistry ranged between 94.23 percent and 98.75 percent.

The number of seats for students who wish to study medicine this year increased by 18.5 percent compared to the previous year, the ministry said, from 565 to 694.



Archive photo shows Sheikh Rashid Al-Maktoum with Murshid Al-Osaimi and others.

Dubai's Murshid Bazaar: Market with historical Kuwaiti connection

DUBAI: Dubai's Murshid Bazaar might seem like your local traditional market in the well-known Emirati city; however, some might be intrigued to know that it was named after a renowned Kuwaiti merchant of old, giving this facility an aura of historical connection between Kuwait and the UAE. Named after Kuwaiti businessman Murshid Al-Osaimi, the souk has left an imprint on relations.

Osaimi, born in the 1910s, left Kuwait in 1944, heading to Dubai to earn a living, and in the process became one of the most well-known merchants in the emirate. Osaimi, initially a wood merchant, expanded his real estate and commerce businesses to include entertainment, opening the first known cinema Al-Watan (Homeland), according to an article published by Al-Etihad newspaper in 2015.

Back to the story of the market, Murshid Bazaar is located in the Deira historical area. The souk sells a variety of retail products imported from India, China, Iran, Thailand, Hong



An archive picture taken inside one of the offices of the customs building in the UAE, with Murshid Al-Osaimi, Jame bin Khalifa and Rashid bin Ahmad.

Kong and Taiwan. Despite the emergence of top-notch and high-end malls in Dubai, Murshid Bazaar and other traditional markets remain popular, attracting visitors and tourists from far and wide. Providing further historical context - Osaimi's contributions, the Kuwaiti businessman was mentioned in various sources and publications, including the book "Qissati" (My Story), authored by none other than Vice President of the UAE, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashed Al-Maktoum.

Sheikh Mohammed mentioned Murshid Al-Osaimi by name in the book due to his impact and contributions to business in Dubai, which

if anything, shows gratitude towards the Kuwaiti figure. Osaimi, according to Sheikh Mohammed, was tasked by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to supervise the spreading of education in Dubai, which earned Osaimi the unofficial title of Father of Educators in this emirate.

Nevertheless, the highest honor was naming a souk after Osaimi, which shows his contribution to the development of Dubai economically. Osaimi was also mentioned in the 2008 book "Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success" by Christopher Davidson, where he referred to him as a successful Kuwaiti merchant who accumulated a considerable amount of wealth in the 1950s via his food import business. Davidson indicated that Osaimi also was a well-known figure in Emirati society, especially to the late ruler of Dubai Sheikh Rashid bin Said Al-Maktoum, who noted that he was one of his close advisors and confidants.

Osaimi was also one of those tasked by Dubai's leadership to oversee disputes via special courts prior to the establishment of official courts in 1956. After three decades, Osaimi returned home in 1972 and passed away in 1975 after a long illustrious career, in which he always had a special place for Dubai and the Emirati people. — KUNA



ISTANBUL: Director General of Kuwait National Library Siham Al-Azmi views Ottoman manuscripts from the archives during her visit to the Ottoman State Archives and Libraries. — KUNA photos

Library plans exhibit of Ottoman manuscripts

ISTANBUL: Director General of Kuwait National Library Siham Al-Azmi visited the Ottoman State Archives and Libraries in Istanbul Friday to discuss ways of cooperation between the two sides in the fields of archiving and documentation.

The visit, which came in response to an invitation by Deputy Director of the Ottoman State Archives and Libraries Sebahattin Bayram, focused on a draft cooperation protocol and the preparations for a joint exhibition of Ottoman manuscripts related to Kuwait and its rulers, Azmi told KUNA after the visit.

She praised the distinguished cooperation between Turkey and Kuwait in all fields. Director of the Department of Foreign Relations and Publicity Jawad Ikljji gave the delegation an explanation about the progress of work in the library and the nature of the documents and manuscripts it contains. Some important documents were shared, some of which were signed and sealed by Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah.

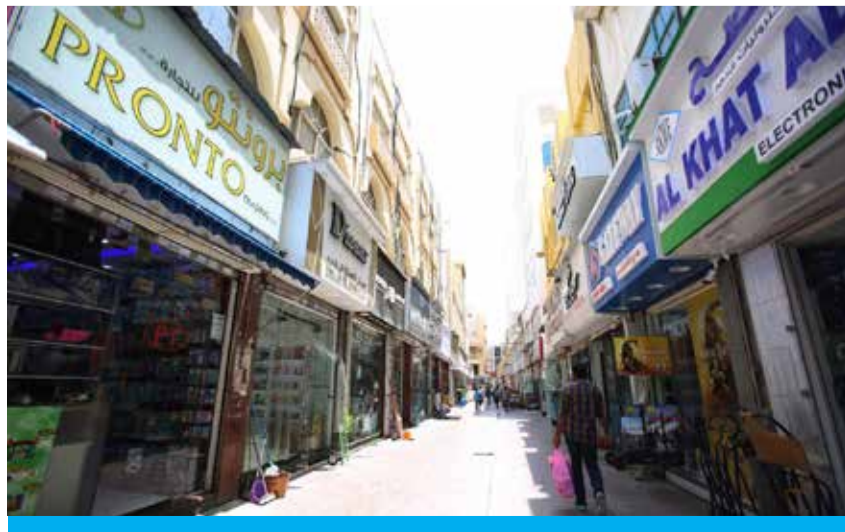
Ikljji also expressed the institution's full readiness to cooperate with the State of Kuwait with all the documents and manuscripts it possesses. The Deputy Director General of the Library presented souvenirs to Director General Al-Azmi bearing the signature of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. Methods of research in the electronic archive were presented, and then a tour of the manuscripts gallery was given. — KUNA



Director of the Department of Foreign Relations and Publicity Jawad Ikljji presents Azmi with a souvenir bearing the signature of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah.



Archive photo of Murshid Bazaar. - KUNA photos



Murshid Bazaar includes many important facilities and shops.

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Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This file photo shows Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and surrounding residential areas. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Tanmia project to help 1,500 families in Taiz access water



TAIZ: Yemenis celebrate the launch of Tanmia's water project. — KUNA

ADEN: Kuwaiti charity Tanmia launched on Saturday a water project benefiting 1,500 families in the coastal district of Mokha on the Red Sea in the Yemeni governorate of Taiz as part of the campaign "Kuwait by your side", which is ongoing for the ninth year in a row.

The foundation implementing the project, Al-twasul for Human Development, said in a statement that the project, which was inaugurated in the area of Zahari in the district of Mokha, includes a submersible pump and a main network of pipes extending from the well to the tower tank, which stands at 1,650 meters and a sub-network connecting water from the well to homes and distribution points with a length of 650 meters. Chairman of the Planning Committee of the Local Council of the District of Mokha Abdullah Al-Saraji praised the efforts of the State of Kuwait in supporting development projects in Yemen, pointing out that this project will contribute to improving the standard of living of the people and providing them with clean water. The Al-twasul's President Raed Ibrahim pointed out that this project comes as an extension of dozens of development projects implemented by the State of Kuwait and its civil humanitarian arms supported by the government of Kuwait and its people, including Tanmia, to alleviate the suffering of their Yemeni brothers in light of the harsh conditions they are going through. — KUNA



Romania, Kuwait to enhance cybersecurity cooperation

Two sides discuss importance of establishing AI-powered cybersecurity center

VIENNA: Kuwait and Romania announced that they agreed to strengthening bilateral cooperation in supporting scientific research programs in universities and research institutions in the two countries in the field of cybersecurity, Mohammad Bouarki, Chief of Kuwait National Cybersecurity Center told KUNA Saturday.

The statement came during an official visit to Romania that began last Tuesday and concluded on Friday, during which he met with several Romanian officials. Bouarki said talks between the Kuwaiti and Romanian sides emphasized the importance of national initiatives in the field of cybersecurity and the development of strategies to support technological innovation and the growth of industries such as artificial intelligence. He added that the two sides also discussed developing strategic plans and policies in the field of cybersecurity, with the aim of securing the digital infrastructure of Kuwait.

Cybersecurity operations center

Discussions also highlighted the importance of the exchange of information and experiences in the field of artificial intelligence. Bouarki said the establishment of a cybersecurity operations center operated by artificial intelligence to enhance the speed of data analysis and decision-making was also examined.



Kuwaiti officials pose for a photo with Romanian officials during the visit. — KUNA photos

Bouarki held a series of meetings with several Romanian officials. He met at the beginning of his visit with Valerio Zaguna, head of the National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications of Romania, an independent body that oversees the market for telecommunications and postal services in Romania. During his meeting with the Kuwaiti delegation, Zaguna highlighted the importance of having a clear strategy and policies that regulate the mechanism of work, the exchange of information between service providers, and follow-up on the compliance of the authorities with national policies and the policies of the European Union in this regard. Bouarki praised the work of the Romanian Authority during the meeting. He also addressed in his speech the role of the Kuwait National Center for Cybersecurity, which was established after the issuance of the Amiri decree which defined the responsibilities and tasks of the center in protecting the infrastructure of the State of Kuwait for the public and private sectors from cyber risks and threats.

Utilizing AI safely

During the visit, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation also met with the Romanian Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitization Ivan Bogdan-Gruia who spoke about the role of his ministry in promoting scientific research, innovation and digitization in the scientific and technological fields and provided examples of research and innovation projects supported by the ministry. Bogdan-Gruia explained the role of partnerships and cooperation with universities, research institutions and private companies, and the need for programs to support startups and innovation in the private sector



BUCHAREST: Mohammad Bouarki, Chief of Kuwait National Cybersecurity Center (left) shakes hands with the Romanian Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitization Ivan Bogdan-Gruia.

and provide funding and financial support for innovative projects. Bouarki stressed the importance of conducting more research on the safe ways to use artificial intelligence without revealing sensitive data that may affect the work of entities and institutions.

Bouarki also touched on his meeting with the Director General of the National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics, Adrian Victor Viveira, where the two sides also discussed ways to develop software and mobile applications. The Romanian official touched on the institute's contributions to blockchain technology, which supports centralization, transparency and security, in addition to the Institute's cooperation with major companies in the field of digital forensics. — KUNA



The Kuwaiti delegation is seen during the meeting with Romanian officials.



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AFRIN: Syrians attend the burial of a man killed during clashes with Turkish troops, in Afrin in northern Syria in this July 2, 2024 file photo. — AFP

Erdogan may invite Assad to Turkey 'at any moment'

A sign of reconciliation after 2011 war broke ties between Ankara, Damascus



DAMASCUS: This combination of file photographs shows Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) and Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. — AFP

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday said he might invite his Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad to Turkey "at any moment", in a sign of reconciliation after the 2011 war broke ties between Ankara and Damascus. Erdogan's comments come after tensions have mounted over the past week after a mob went on the rampage, vandalizing businesses and properties owned by Syrians in a central Anatolian city.

"We may send an invitation (to Assad) at any moment," Erdogan told journalists aboard a plane from Berlin where he watched Euro 2024, the official Anadolu news agency and other media reported. Turkey originally aimed to topple Assad's regime when the Syrian conflict erupted with the violent suppression of peaceful protesters in 2011 and backed rebels calling for his ouster.

But more recently, Ankara has shifted focus to preventing what Erdogan in 2019 dubbed a "terror corridor" from opening up in northern Syria. He has long said he could reconsider ties with Assad as his

government is working to ensure safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

Speaking to journalists, Erdogan said some leaders including Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested to mediate a meeting with Assad in Turkey. "Now we have come to such a point that as soon as Bashar Al-Assad takes a step towards improving relations with Turkey, we will show him the same approach," Erdogan said.

Turkish authorities this week detained over 470 people after anti-Syrian riots in several cities sparked by accusations that a Syrian man had allegedly harassed a Syrian minor in Kayseri. Erdogan on Monday blamed the opposition for stoking tensions and condemned the anti-Syrian violence as "unacceptable".

The fate of Syrian refugees is a burning issue in Turkish politics, with Erdogan's opponents in last year's presidential election promising to send them back to Syria. Turkey, which hosts some 3.2 million Syrian refugees according to UN data, has been shaken several

times by bouts of xenophobic violence in recent years, often triggered by rumors spreading on social media and instant messaging applications.

The riots in Kayseri spread to several other cities including Istanbul this week while clashes between armed protesters and guards of Turkish positions in Syria's north killed seven people. Turkey has launched a string of offensives in Syria since 2016 targeting Kurdish militias, Islamic State group jihadists and forces loyal to Assad. Pro-Turkish forces in Syria now control two vast strips of territory along the border. On Monday, hundreds of Syrians demonstrated throughout the Ankara-controlled area, with some armed protesters attacking Turkish trucks and military posts, and taking down Turkish flags. Erdogan has vowed to reveal "which dirty hands" triggered the clashes in northern Syria. According to the Syrian Observatory, four border crossings with Turkey have been shut in the wake of the violence. There was no immediate confirmation by the Turkish government. — AFP

NATO turns 75 with Ukraine and future on line

WASHINGTON: NATO's 75th anniversary summit was meant to showcase the triumph of a larger, stronger alliance. Instead, leaders are coming together in Washington in the shadow of setbacks in Ukraine and electoral headwinds on both sides of the Atlantic. US President Joe Biden, fighting for his political life after a disastrous debate against NATO skeptic Donald Trump, will turn his attention away from campaigning to welcome leaders of the 32-nation transatlantic alliance for three days from Tuesday. Biden has also invited the leaders of Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, a sign of NATO's growing role in Asia in the face of a rising China. But the star of the summit is set to be Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is looking for firm signs of support although NATO will not be extending his country an invitation to join. Founded in 1949 to provide collective defense against the Soviet Union, NATO returned in some ways to its

original mission when allies rallied to Ukraine's defense after it was invaded by Russia in 2022.

Ukrainians heartened most of the West by repelling Russia in its push for a quick victory. But Moscow's troops have been grinding on, making advances in the east. A European official acknowledged the mood ahead of the NATO summit has become "gloomy" with Ukraine slipping on a fragile frontline. "This summit will be very different from the initial plans because it is happening at a critical juncture for European security," the official said on condition of anonymity. "Russia is today in a situation which is quite comfortable. They think they can simply wait it out," he said.

Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the summit comes at "the best of times, and the worst of times." "The best of times, in the sense that the alliance knows what it's about—detering Russia. Alliance members are spending more," he said. "But it's also sort of the worst of times—obviously because of the war in Ukraine, challenges of ramping up European defense spending, concerns about the reliability of the United States." Trump, who has voiced admiration in the past for Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, has long criticized NATO as an unfair burden on the United States, which spends far more than any other ally.—AFP



BRUSSELS: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (right) embracing NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left) ahead of their meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

Dalai Lama turns 89, Tibetans fear a future without him

DHARAMSALA, India: In a monastery beneath snow-capped mountains in northern India, the Buddhist monk entrusted with protecting the Dalai Lama and foretelling his people's future is concerned. The Dalai Lama turned 89 on Saturday and China insists it will choose his successor as Tibet's chief spiritual leader. That has the Medium of Tibet's Chief State Oracle contemplating what might come next.

"His Holiness is the fourteenth Dalai Lama, then there will be a fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth," the medium, known as the Nechung, said. "In countries, leaders change, and then that story is over. But in Tibet it works differently." Tibetan Buddhists believe that learned monastics are reincarnated after death as newborns. The Dalai Lama, who is currently recuperating in the United States from a medical procedure, has said he will clarify questions about succession - including if and where he will be reincarnated - around his ninetieth birthday. As part of a reincarnation identification process, the medium will enter a trance to consult the oracle.

The incumbent Dalai Lama is a charismatic figure who popularized Buddhism internationally and won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for keeping alive the Tibetan cause in exile. Beijing sees him as a dangerous separatist, though he has embraced what he calls a "Middle Way" of peacefully seeking genuine autonomy and religious freedom within China. Any successor will be inexperienced and unknown on the global stage. That has sparked concerns about whether the movement will lose momentum or grow more radical amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington, long a source of bipartisan support for the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government-in-exile.

The CTA and its partners in the West as well as India, which has hosted the Dalai Lama in the Himalayan foothills for more than six decades, are preparing for a future without his influential presence. US President Joe Biden is expected to soon sign a bill that requires the State Department to counter what it calls Chinese "disinformation" that Tibet, which was annexed by the People's Republic of China in 1951, has been part of China since ancient times.



NEW YORK: Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama arrives at his hotel in New York on June 23, 2024, as he prepares to undergo knee surgery. — AFP

"China wants recognition that Tibet has been part of China ... throughout history, and this bill is suggesting that it would be relatively easy for Tibet supporters to get a western government to refuse to give recognition for such an extensive claim," said Tibet specialist Robert Barnett of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. US lawmakers, including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi, visited the Dalai Lama in June to celebrate Congress passing the legislation, which Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who heads the CTA, called a "breakthrough." The bill is part of a strategic shift away from emphasizing Chinese rights violations such as forced assimilation, the Sikyong, or political leader, told Reuters. Since 2021, CTA has lobbied two dozen countries including the US, to publicly undermine Beijing's narrative that Tibet has always been part of China, he said. With US weight behind this strategy, the exiles hope to push China to the negotiating table, he said. "If every country keeps saying that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, then where is the reason for China to come and talk to us?"

The Chinese foreign ministry said in response to Reuters' questions that it would be open to discussions with the Dalai Lama about his "personal future" if he "truly gives up his position of splitting the motherland" and recognized Tibet as an unalienable part of China.

Beijing, which has not held official talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010, has also urged Biden not to sign the bill. The office of the Dalai Lama, who has in recent years apologized for remarks he made about women and to a young child, referred an interview request to the Sikyong. — Reuters

International

Could Kamala Harris beat Donald Trump in Nov presidential race?

As pressure mounts on Biden, women, black voters and Gaza remain in focus

WASHINGTON: She worries Republican donors, has name recognition, and Democratic Party heavyweights are beginning to line up behind her. Vice President Kamala Harris would be President Joe Biden's natural successor if he bowed to growing pressure and stepped aside as the Democratic candidate in the 2024 election, top Democrats say.

Now party donors, activists and officials are asking: Does she have a better chance than Biden of beating Donald Trump? Biden is staying in the race, he has said repeatedly. Harris, 59, a former US senator and California attorney general, would be the first woman to become president of the United States if she were the party's nominee and prevailed in the Nov 5 election. She is the first African American and Asian person to serve as vice president.

Her three-and-a-half-year White House tenure has been characterized by a lackluster start, staff turnover, and early policy portfolios including migration from Central America that did not produce major successes. As recently as last year, many inside the White House and the Biden campaign team privately worried Harris was a liability for the campaign. The situation has changed significantly since then, Democratic officials have said, as she stepped forward on abortion rights and courted young voters.

Some polls favor Harris

Recent polls suggest Harris could do better than Biden against Trump, the Republican candidate, although she would face a tight contest. A CNN poll released on July 2 found voters favor Trump over Biden by six percent-

age points, 49 percent to 43 percent. Harris also trailed Trump, 47 percent to 45 percent, within the margin of error. It also found independents back Harris 43 percent-40 percent over Trump, and moderate voters of both parties prefer her 51-39 percent.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll after last week's televised debate between Trump and a faltering Biden found Harris and Trump were nearly tied, with 42 percent supporting her and 43 percent backing him.

Only former first lady Michelle Obama, who has never expressed any interest in getting into the race, polled higher among possible alternatives to Biden. Internal polling shared by the Biden campaign after the debate shows Harris with the same odds as Biden of beating Trump, with 45 percent of voters saying they would vote for her versus 48 percent for Trump.

Influential Democrats including US Representative Jim Clyburn, the man who was key to Biden's 2020 win; Rep Gregory Meeks, a New York congressman and senior member of the Congressional Black Caucus; and Sumner Lee, a House Democrat from Pennsylvania have signaled Harris would be the best option to lead the ticket if Biden chooses to step aside. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries has also privately signaled the same to lawmakers, a Congressional aide said.

Harris is taken so seriously, two Republican donors told Reuters they would prefer for Trump to face Biden than her. "I would prefer Biden to stay in place" rather than be replaced by Harris, said Pauline Lee, a fundraiser for Trump in Nevada after the June

27 debate, who said she thought Biden had proved himself to be "incompetent."

And some on Wall Street, an important Democratic fundraising center, are starting to indicate a preference. "Biden is already behind Trump, and is unlikely to be able to overcome that gap given where his campaign is currently. Having VP Harris likely improves Democrats' odds of taking the White House," said Sonu Varghese, global macro strategist at Carson Group, a financial services company, after the debate. "There's potentially more upside for her chances than Biden's at this point."

Some Democrats believe Harris could energize Democratic-leaning groups whose enthusiasm for Biden has faded, including black voters, young voters and those who do not approve of Biden's handling of the Zionist entity war.

"She would energize the black, brown, and Asian Pacific members of our coalition...she would immediately pull the dispirited youth of our country back into the fold," said Tim Ryan, a former Democratic Congressman from Ohio, in a recent op-ed. Democratic and Republican suburban women may also be more comfortable with her than Trump or Biden, he said. As vice president, Harris' public Zionist strategy is identical to Biden's, although she was the first senior leader of the US government to call for a ceasefire in March. "Simply swapping out the candidate does not address the central concern" of the movement, said Abbas Alawieh, a member of the national "Uncommitted" movement that withheld votes for Biden in the primary based on his support of Zionist entity.

If Biden were to step aside, there could be a



NEW ORLEANS, US: US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks at the Global Black Economic Forum during the 30th annual Essence Festival of Culture at the Ernest N Morial Convention Center on July 6, 2024 in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

competition between other Democrats to become the nominee. If the party were then to choose another candidate over Harris, some Democrats say it could lose the support of many black voters who were critical to Biden's election win in 2020.

Too lefty?

However, Harris may struggle to reel in moderate Democrats and the independent voters who like Biden's centrist policies, some Democratic donors said. Both parties seek independents to help pull them over the finishing line in presidential elections.

"Her greatest weakness is that her public brand has been associated with the far left wing of the Democratic Party ... and the left wing of the Democratic party cannot win a national election," said Dmitri Mehlhorn, a fundraiser and adviser to LinkedIn co-founder and Democratic megadonor Reid Hoffman. "That is the challenge that she will have to overcome if she is the nominee." Harris would take over money raised by the Biden campaign and inherited campaign infrastructure, a critical advantage with just four months before election day on Nov 5. — Reuters

Ruto proposes spending cuts after protests

NAIROBI: Kenyan President William Ruto on Friday proposed spending cuts and additional borrowing in roughly equal measure to fill a nearly \$2.7 billion budget hole caused by his withdrawal of planned tax hikes in the face of nationwide protests. Ruto scrapped the finance bill containing the tax increases in response to mass, youth-led demonstrations that have created the biggest crisis of his two-year-old presidency. At least 39 people were killed in clashes with the police and some demonstrators briefly stormed parliament last week.

Ruto said in a televised address that he would ask parliament for spending cuts totaling 177 billion shillings (\$1.39 billion) for the fiscal year that began this month and that the government would increase borrowing by about 169 billion shillings. The president has been caught between the demands of lenders such as the International Monetary Fund to cut deficits, and a hard-pressed population reeling from rising living costs.

Analysts have said the bill's withdrawal is likely to result in Kenya missing targets in its IMF programme, although the government does not have debts coming due for which it urgently needs cash.

Kenya's budget deficit is now projected at 4.6 percent of gross domestic product in the 2024/25 financial year, up from an earlier estimate of 3.3 percent, Ruto said. Austerity measures will include the dissolution of 47 state corporations, a 50 percent reduction in the number of government advisers, the suspension of non-essential travel by public office bearers and the removal of budget lines for the president and deputy president's spouses, he said.

"I believe these changes will set out our country on a trajectory towards economic transformation," Ruto said. He also announced a forensic audit of the country's debt, which sits at more than 70 percent of gross domestic product, and said he would announce changes to the government soon.

Following the speech, Ruto hosted a live audio forum on X meant to engage with young people. He faced sharp questioning about policy brutality, corruption and economic policy.

One activist involved in the protests, Osama Otero, questioned Ruto about alleged abductions of protesters by state security agents, saying he had been



MACHAKOS, Kenya: Family, friends and fellow protesters carry a portrait photo of Rex Masai 29-year-old man who was shot by the police during the anti finance bill protest. — AFP

taken at 3 am by men in plain clothes, blindfolded and taken to a house to be questioned. "Mr President, are we in a terrorist country?" Otero asked.

Ruto, who had previously denied police involvement in dozens of reported disappearances, apologized for the treatment Otero had suffered and promised to take action on his case. Protests have continued since Ruto scrapped the finance bill, with

many demonstrators calling for the president to resign. But turnout has been down and some activists have called for a rethink of their strategy after Tuesday's demonstrations were marred by violence and looting.

Activists have blamed the violence on thugs hired by politicians to discredit the protest movement. The government has said that opportunistic criminals are responsible. — Reuters

Sri Lanka pilgrims flee as elephant runs amok

COLOMBO: A Hindu religious festival in Sri Lanka ended in chaos after an elephant in the procession panicked, with 13 people in the crowd injured as they fled, police said Sunday. Video footage shared on social media showed one of the elephant's keepers trying to pull the agitated animal by its tail in a desperate attempt to control it, while screaming devotees lining the street rushed to escape.

The images show a parade of elephants covered in red, blue and gold robes from trunk to tail, in front of a large crowd while cymbals clanged.

Thirteen people were taken to hospital and treated for minor injuries in Kataragama, 280 kilometers (175 miles) south of the capital Colombo, a police spokesman said. A spokesman for the state-run Kataragama hospital said on Sunday, the day after the incident, that all the injured had been discharged. Elephants are considered sacred in Sri Lanka, but animal cruelty laws are rarely enforced.

Animal rights groups have criticized the widespread use of elephants at temple ceremonies in Sri Lanka. There have been instances when the animals have gone berserk at parades involving loud music and fireworks. — AFP

Gaza genocide enters 10th month...

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The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 38,153 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to data from the territory's health ministry. The health ministry toll includes 16 people killed Saturday in a strike on a UN-run school in the central Nuseirat refugee camp that was sheltering displaced Palestinians. The war has uprooted nearly all Gazans, left almost 500,000 people enduring "catastrophic" hunger and shattered most hospitals, UN agencies say.

Dr Muhammad Salha, acting director of Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia, said severe shortages amid the Zionist entity's siege of Gaza left the facility with "no fuel". "The situation is very difficult," he said. "We have postponed

many scheduled operations due to the lack of fuel."

The Zionist entity and Iran-backed Hezbollah have exchanged almost daily cross-border fire since the Gaza war began. The attacks and rhetoric have escalated in recent weeks, sparking fears of a wider conflagration. While the exchanges have been largely restricted to the border areas, the Zionist entity has repeatedly struck deep inside eastern Lebanon, including on Saturday in an attack that killed a Hezbollah operative.

Early on Sunday, air raid sirens sounded across the Zionist entity's north and the military reported that 20 rockets were fired, with some intercepted. Hezbollah said it had targeted a Zionist army base west of Tiberias "in response to the... assassination" carried out the day before. Zionist police said one person was wounded by shrapnel in Kfar Zeitim near Tiberias, around 30 km from the Lebanese border. Hezbollah later claimed a second barrage of rockets targeting a military base elsewhere in the Zionist entity. — Agencies

rum in the upper chamber. First Lady Jill Biden, who — according to some US media reports — is urging her husband to stay in the race, is scheduled to campaign for him Monday in Georgia, Florida and North Carolina.

But after Sunday's stops in Philadelphia and Harrisburg, the president will have to step away from the trail for the NATO summit beginning Tuesday. Here, too, he will find himself having to reassure allies at a time when many European countries fear a Trump victory in November. The 78-year-old Republican has long criticized the transatlantic defense alliance as an unfair burden on the United States, voiced admiration for Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, and insisted he could bring about a quick end to the fighting in Ukraine, where Moscow's invasion is in its third year.

For now, Democratic heavyweights are largely keeping a lid on any simmering discontent with their leader — at least in public. But with election day just four months away, any move to replace Biden as the nominee would need to be made sooner rather than later, and the party will be scrutinized for any signs of more open rebellion.

Meanwhile, for Biden and his team, the strategy seems to be to ride it out. The campaign has unveiled an intense battle plan for July, including an avalanche of TV spots and trips to all the key states. That includes a visit to the US Southwest during the Republican convention July 15-18, at which Trump is set to be anointed the party's official presidential nominee. — Agencies

Pezeshkian win brings hopes...

Continued from Page 1

to promote a pragmatic foreign policy, ease tensions over now-stalled negotiations with major powers to revive a 2015 nuclear pact and improve prospects for social liberalization and political pluralism.

Under Iran's dual system of clerical and republican rule, the president cannot usher in any major policy shift on Iran's nuclear program or support for militia groups across the Middle East, since Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calls all the shots on top state matters. However, the president can influence the tone of Iran's policy and he will be closely involved in selecting the successor to Khamenei, now 85.

Pezeshkian received more than 16 million votes, around 54 percent, and Jalili more than 13 million, roughly 44 percent, out of about 30 million votes cast, electoral authority spokesman Mohsen Eslami said. Turnout was 49.8 percent, Eslami added, up from a record low of about 40 percent in the first round. Pezeshkian will be sworn in before parliament

in early August as the Islamic republic's ninth president, state media reported Sunday.

In the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini in southern Tehran, Pezeshkian gave a speech thanking his supporters, saying their votes have "given hope to a society plunged into an atmosphere of dissatisfaction". "I did not give false promises in this election," said Pezeshkian, flanked by former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. "I didn't say anything that I wouldn't be able to do tomorrow." In an earlier post on X, Pezeshkian said the vote was the start of a "partnership" with Iran's people.

Khamenei congratulated Pezeshkian, urging him to "continue the path of Martyr Raisi and use the country's many capacities, especially the revolutionary and faithful youth, for the comfort of the people and the progress of the country". Khamenei accused "enemies of the Iranian nation" of being behind a "scheme of boycotting the elections".

Hassan Rouhani, a moderate in office until Raisi's victory in 2021, congratulated Pezeshkian on his win. Rouhani said voters had shown "they want a serious change in the state of governance in the country". They had voted "for constructive interaction with the world" and for revival of the nuclear deal, he added. — Agencies

Biden back on campaign trail...

Continued from Page 1

On Sunday, two high-profile congressional Democrats stopped short of calling for Biden to step aside, but warned that he still needed to win over voters worried about his age. "There's only one reason" the race between Trump and Biden "is close, and that's the president's age," Representative Adam Schiff told NBC's "Meet the Press." As some speculate about Biden handing off the campaign to Vice President Kamala Harris, Schiff added: "I think she very well could win overwhelmingly."

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy meanwhile said "the president needs to do more," including unscripted events like town hall gatherings, to reassure voters he has the mental acuity and physical fitness for a second term. "This week is going to be absolutely critical," Murphy told CNN's Sunday talk show "State of the Union".

Those comments came as House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries has scheduled a virtual meeting of senior Democratic representatives for Sunday to discuss the best way forward, and Democratic Senator Mark Warner is reportedly working to convene a similar fo-

'Restless' Starmer seeks 'reset', axes...

Continued from Page 1

Starmer said disagreement could be turned into cooperation "and a genuine seat at the table" to deliver the UK-wide change he has promised. "That begins today with an immediate reset of my government's approach to working with the first and deputy first ministers, because meaningful cooperation centered on respect will be key to delivering change across our United Kingdom."

Starmer will make his debut on the international stage as leader when he flies to Washington next week for a NATO summit. Foreign Minister David Lammy meanwhile travelled to Berlin to meet his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock, in his first in-post trip. The ministers discussed issues from boosting NATO's support for Ukraine to the situation in the Middle East, the German foreign ministry wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"The United Kingdom is an indispensable part of Europe," the ministry wrote, adding that Germany is "working with the new UK government to see how the UK can move closer to the EU". Earlier Sunday, as Starmer began his second full day at the helm, former three-time Labour prime minister Blair made an early intervention, urging him to have a "plan to control immigration".

Blair warned Starmer that the anti-immigration Reform UK Party also posed a challenge to Labour, not just the Conservative Party. "We need a plan to control immigration. If we don't have rules, we get prejudices," Blair wrote in the Sunday Times, advocating the introduction of digital ID. Business Minister Jonathan Reynolds later ruled the idea out.

Starmer on Saturday began his first full day in charge declaring the ousted Tories' plan to deport migrants to Rwanda "dead and buried" and pledging growth as his government's "number one mission". The Labour leader on Friday won a landslide election victory bringing to a close 14 years of Conservative rule. He said he was "restless for change" and that his party had received a "mandate to do politics differently". — Agencies

International

'Miracles' and hope: Fatal stampede spotlights India's craze for godmen

'People are insecure - economically, socially and otherwise'

BAHADURNAGAR, India: Just a pat on the back by preacher "Bhole Baba" and Ramkumari said a stone in her kidney vanished. The 85-year-old gave no proof but this story and countless others of similar "miracles" led to Baba's following rocketing in India's northern states. A gathering addressed by the former police head constable in a crowded field last week drew a quarter of a million people and caused one of the deadliest stampedes in the country.

Bhole Baba, or Innocent Elder, was born Suraj Pal Singh Jatav. He quit the police in 2000 to join a series of Hindu preachers and gurus in India who are sought by millions for miracle cures and spiritual advice. They are often called godmen, and many have been wooed by politicians for the influence they wield.

Their patrons have included international celebrities like the Beatles, who spent days in the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the late 1960s. Some of these gurus expanded beyond India, most famously Osho, who lived and preached in the United States in the early 1980s. Almost all of them are credited by their followers with miraculous powers.

"I had gone to one of his early gatherings and told him I had chronic pain from a kidney stone for many months," said Ramkumari, Baba's former neighbor in Bahadurnagar village in India's Uttar Pradesh state, where he was born and still has a home. The village has only about 50 homes in all and is set amid fields which grow corn, wheat and rice. On the periphery is a sprawling, pearly-white ashram run by devotees of Baba. "He smiled and blessed me with a pat on the back. The stone vanished soon after," said Ramkumari, who gave just one name.

Another resident in the village, 55-year-old Surajmukhi, said Baba's blessing helped her give birth to a son after seven daughters. Sons are sought after in many Indian families. "We desperately wanted a boy,"

said Surajmukhi. "Then I met Baba with my husband. He made me chant some mantras (verses), gave me some water to drink and patted me on my back. After nine months I had a baby boy."

Lying on a cot next to her, Baba's older sister Sonkali, thin and frail, said: "It was a miracle". Baba, formally known as Narayan Sakar Hari now, is estimated to be about 72 by his family and followers, who are spread across India's heartland states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.

Two neighbors who have known him since his childhood, including Ramkumari, said he took the path after a dream one night about 25 years ago that a divine spirit had given him supernatural powers. He quit the police in the city of Agra and started preaching, they said. Baba would later claim he had a direct line to God and could channel divine blessings to people.

"Soon after we saw a line of cars bringing Suraj Pal into the village and people said he would henceforth be called a Baba (elder)," Ramkumari said. Reuters could not contact Baba. He told Reuters partner ANI that he was grieving and his aides would help the injured and the families of the deceased.

The stampede at his gathering on Tuesday killed 121 people, mostly women, and injured scores out of about 250,000 who had congregated in a canopied paddy field to listen to him, many trampling over one another as they ran after his car when he was leaving. Police say authorities had allowed only 80,000 to attend, and have arrested six aides to Baba who were involved in organizing the event. The main organizer surrendered to police on Friday. Police said that in the initial days of his rise to fame, Baba had claimed that he could bring the dead back to life and even tried to take away the body of a 16-year-old girl from a crematorium promising a miracle to the family. Police intervened and the matter was closed soon after.



HATHRAS, India: Mourners gather as the deceased who died in a stampede during a sermon are kept at a mortuary at Hathras in India's Uttar Pradesh state on July 3, 2024. - AFP

Posters and videos posted on YouTube show him dressed in traditional Indian kurta tunics or pristine white suits and ties, often sporting sunglasses, a departure from the spartan image of most godmen.

Still, his clout is smaller than other gurus and godmen in India, including Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Sadhguru. Yoga guru Baba Ramdev, known to be close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, runs the Patanjali consumer goods brand that has boomed in recent years. Two godmen, Asaram Bapu and Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, were both convicted of rape in separate cases and jailed, after years of drawing thousands of devotees to their sermons and ashrams.

Sociologists say such gurus are often believed to possess healing powers, and are especially popular among those who are poor, sick or feel

underprivileged. "People are insecure - economically, socially and otherwise," said Dipti Ranjan Sahu, head of sociology at the University of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. "Unemployment, deprivation, discrimination, ignorance, illiteracy - these things play a part. So they see hope in the godmen, maybe some miracle will happen."

Surinder Singh Jodhka, who teaches social sciences at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University and has researched on the subject, said "people are kind of looking for some meaning in their life" and that's where godmen come in. "People are feeling lost and they are looking for some sense through which they can identify with other people, they feel less lonely," he said. "This gives them hope and they are willing to believe in it." - Reuters

Heavy rains trigger landslides in Nepal, 11 killed, 8 missing

KATHMANDU: Heavy rains triggered landslides and flash floods killing at least 11 people in the last 36 hours in Nepal and blocking key highways and roads, officials said on Sunday. Eight people were missing, either washed away by floods or buried in landslides, while 12 others were injured and being treated in hospitals, police spokesperson Dan Bahadur Karki said.

"Rescue workers are trying to clear the landslides and open the roads," Karki told Reuters, adding heavy equipment was being used to clear debris. In southeastern Nepal, the Koshi River, which causes deadly floods in the eastern Indian state of Bihar almost every year, was flowing above the danger level, a district official said.

"The flow of Koshi is rising and we have asked residents to remain alert about possible floods," Bed Raj Phuyal, a senior official of Sunsari district

"Our peoples have irrevocably turned their backs on ECOWAS," Tiani said in a speech. "It is up to us today to make the AES Confederation an alternative to any artificial regional group by building ... a community free from the control of foreign powers." It is not clear how closely the AES will harmonize political, economic and defense policies as it struggles to contain a decade-old battle with Islamist insurgents and grow economies that are among the world's poorest.

In March, the three states agreed to set up a joint force to tackle security threats across their territories. In a communique issued after the summit, the countries said they had agreed to coordinate diplomatic actions, create an AES investment bank and stabilization fund, and pool their resources to set up projects in strategic sectors including mining, energy and agriculture.

The heads of state "welcomed their irrevocable withdrawal without delay from ECOWAS," it said. ECOWAS has made diplomatic efforts to dissuade the three states from quitting the 50-year-old alliance. The split will reverse decades of regional integration and threatens a messy disentanglement from trade and services flows of nearly \$150 billion a year. The falling-out is linked to the ECOWAS decision to respond to the trio's coups with stringent sanctions and its unrealized threat to use force to restore constitutional rule in Niger last year. Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso accuse the regional bloc of abandoning its founding ideals and giving too little support against the Islamist insurgencies that have killed thousands of people and displaced over three million more. - Reuters



People waded through flood after Hanumante river overflowed following heavy rain in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu on July 6, 2024. - AFP

Junta-led Sahel states rule out return to West African bloc

NIAMEY: Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, three military-led West African states, signed a confederation treaty on Saturday, underscoring their determination to chart a joint course outside the regional political and economic bloc that has been urging them to return to democratic rule. The signing took place at the first summit of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and signals an ever-closer alignment between the neighbors in the insurgency-torn central Sahel. Juntas seized control in a series of coups in the three states in 2020-2023 and severed military and diplomatic ties with regional allies and Western powers.

Niger's military leader General Abdourahamane Tiani described the AES summit as "the culmination of our determined common will to reclaim our national sovereignty". Formalizing the treaty to establish a confederation confirms the rejection by Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso of the 15-member Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS). Its signing comes a day before a summit being held by ECOWAS, which had hoped to persuade the three to reconsider their decision in January to quit the bloc.



NIAMEY, Niger: The head of Niger's military government General Abdourahamane Tiani (center), Malian Colonel Assimi Goita (third right) and Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traore (second right) arrive ahead of the Confederation of Sahel States (AES) summit in Niamey on July 6, 2024. - AFP

where the river flows, told Reuters. He said at 0900 hours (0315 hours GMT) water flow in Koshi River was 369,000 cusecs per second, more than double its normal flow of 150,000 cusecs. Cusec is the measurement of the flow of water and one cusec is equal to one cubic foot per second.

Authorities said all 56 sluice gates of the Koshi Barrage had been opened to drain out water compared with about 10-12 during a normal situation. Authorities said the flows of Narayani, Rapti and Mahakali rivers in the west were also rising. In hill-ringed Kathmandu, several rivers have overflowed their banks, flooded roads and inundated many houses.

Local media showed people wading through waist-deep water or residents using buckets to empty their houses. At least 50 people across Nepal have died in landslides, floods and lightning strikes since mid-June when annual monsoon rains started.

Hundreds of people die every year in landslides and flash floods that are common in mostly mountainous Nepal during the monsoon season which normally starts in mid-June and continues through mid-September. In the northeastern Indian state of Assam, floods have killed dozens and displaced thousands of people in the past few days. - Reuters



Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike holds a flower bouquet as she wins the Tokyo gubernatorial election in Tokyo on July 7, 2024. - AFP

Women fight Tokyo election in male dominated Japan

TOKYO: Tokyo residents clutching fans and cold drinks took to polling stations Sunday to elect their governor, with two prominent women vying for the job in Japan's male-dominated political sphere.

Japan has never had a woman prime minister and a large majority of lawmakers are men, but Tokyo, accounting for a tenth of the national population and a fifth of the economy, has been run since 2016 by former minister and television anchor Yuriko Koike, 71.

She is being challenged by opposition figure Renho, 56, also a veteran political and ex-anchor who goes by one name. With temperatures topping 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of the capital, voters complained of the heat as they went to cast their ballots. Akiko Mimori, 58, held a parasol against the blazing sun moments after voting.

"I came here as I felt it's necessary to cast a ballot for (the election of) the governor of where I live," she told AFP. While few now tout Koike as a possible future prime minister, as many once did, polls suggest that the media-savvy conservative will win a third straight term in the metropolis of 14 million people.

This will be some relief to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of deeply unpopular Prime Minister Fumio Kishida which backs Koike, even though she broke away from the LDP in 2017. The government's public support rate has been dwindling to around 20 percent, partly due to a political funds scandal revealed late last year, and Kishida will face the LDP leadership election later this year before a national vote due by late 2025. The Tokyo vote comes after new government data showed the birth rate hit a record low of 1.20 last year, with Tokyo's figure 0.99 - the first Japan region to fall below one. - AFP

News in Brief

Eight killed in Kashmir battles

NEW DELHI: Two soldiers and six suspected militants were killed in two separate gun battles in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said Sunday. Kashmir police inspector general Vidhi Kumar Birdi told AFP that authorities in the disputed territory had "carried out two different operations" in villages in the Kulgam district. Birdi said two members of the security forces had been killed, with clashes continuing in Modergram and Frisal Chinnigam villages. "We have retrieved the bodies of two terrorists from Modergram, and four others from Frisal Chinnigam," said Birdi. This is the latest incident in an uptick of attacks in the disputed territory. - AFP

Venezuelan opposition rallies

BARINAS, Venezuela: Thousands of opposition supporters tooted bugles, cheered and waved flags as they vowed Saturday to defeat President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela's upcoming presidential elections. The crowd gathered in Barinas, which was home to the late Hugo Chavez, the long-time socialist firebrand who led Venezuela for more than a decade until his death in 2013 and was the political mentor of Maduro, whom he handpicked to succeed him. Maduro has overseen the collapse of oil-rich Venezuela's economy and is accused of running a repressive government. He is seeking a third straight term in the July 28 election. - AFP

PNG minister charged with assault

SYDNEY: Papua New Guinea's influential petroleum minister has been charged with assault following a "domestic dispute" near Sydney's famed Bondi Beach, Australian police said Sunday. Jimmy Maladina, a crucial player in ongoing international negotiations over a lucrative natural gas project, was arrested on Saturday morning. Police said they found a "31-year-old woman with facial injuries" after they were called to an address near Bondi, allegedly sustained in an "altercation" with Maladina. Maladina is listed to appear in a Sydney court on Thursday, court documents show, and has been charged with "assault occasioning actual bodily harm". - AFP

Top Myanmar general in China

YANGON: The Myanmar junta's second-in-command arrived in China on Saturday for an official visit, the junta's information team said, as clashes with ethnic minority fighters raged in the north of the country despite a Beijing-brokered ceasefire. Vice-senior General Soe Win arrived in Qingdao in Shandong province where he will attend a "Green Development Forum" hosted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the junta's information office said in a statement. Ties between the junta and Beijing - a major ally and arms supplier - frayed last year over the junta's failure to crack down on online scam compounds in Myanmar's borderlands. - AFP

Canada charges Syrian returnee

TORONTO: Canadian police said on Saturday they had charged a returnee from Syria with terrorism-related offenses after an investigation into allegations that she had gone to join the Islamic State group. Kimberly Polman, 51, was charged with two counts of leaving Canada to participate in the activity of a terrorist group and participation in the activity of a terrorist group, the police said in a statement. The charges under Section 83 of the Criminal Code stem from the investigation into the allegations Polman traveled to Syria from Canada in 2015 to join ISIS, police said. - Reuters

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'Bulldozed and shelled': Gaza's farming sector ravaged by war

Damage threatens Gaza's food sovereignty: FAO

GAZA: Tank tracks still fresh on his field in southern Gaza's coastal area of Al-Mawasi, Nedal Abu Jazar lamented the damage war has wrought on his trees and crops. "Look at the destruction," the 39-year-old farmer told AFP, holding an uprooted tomato plant. He pointed to his greenhouse's metal frame and its white plastic sheeting strewn across the plot, inside an area designated a humanitarian zone by the Zionist army. "People were sitting peacefully on their farmland ... and suddenly tanks arrived and fired at us, and then there were (air) strikes," Abu Jazar said the Zionist entity's operation in late June destroyed about 40 dunams (10 acres) of land and killed five laborers. His is not an isolated case. Across Gaza, 57 percent of agricultural land has been damaged since the war began, according to a joint assessment published in June by the UN's agriculture and satellite imagery agencies, FAO and UNOSAT.

The damage threatens Gaza's food sovereignty, Matieu Henry of the Food and Agriculture Organization told AFP, because 30 percent of the Palestinian territory's food consumption comes from agricultural land. "If almost 60 percent of the agricultural land has been damaged, this may have a significant impact in terms of food security and food supply."

The Gaza Strip exported \$44.6 million worth of produce in 2022, mainly to the West Bank and Zionist entity, with strawberries and tomatoes representing 60 percent of the total, according to FAO data. That number fell to zero after the Oct 7 attack. The damage assessment on the agricultural land comes as the UN's hunger monitoring system estimated in June that 96 percent of Gaza faces high levels of acute food insecurity. Contacted by AFP, the Zionist army said it "does not intentionally harm agricultural land".

No work, no income

The impact is worse in the Palestinian territory's north, where 68 percent of agricultural land is damaged, although the southern area encompassing parts of Al-Mawasi has seen the most significant increase in recent months due to military operations. UNOSAT's Lars Bromley told AFP the damage is generally "due to the impact of activities such as heavy vehicle activity, bombing, shelling, and other conflict-related dynamics, which would be things like areas burning". Near the southern city of Rafah, 34-year-old farmer Ibrahim Dheir feels helpless after the destruction of 20 dunams (five acres) of land he used to lease, and all his farming equipment with it.

"As soon as the Zionist entity's bulldozers and tanks entered the area, they began bulldozing cultivated lands with various trees, including fruits, citrus, guava, as well as crops like spinach, molokhia (jute mallow), eggplant, squash, pumpkin and sunflower seedlings," he said, before listing more damage in a testimony of the area's past agricultural abundance. Dheir, whose family exported its produce to the West Bank and Zionist entity, now feels destitute. "We used to depend on agriculture for our livelihood day by day, but now there's no work or income."

Lasting damage

Farmer Abu Mahmoud Za'arab also finds himself with "no source of income". The 60-year-old owns 15 dunams (3.7 acres) of land on which crops and fruit trees used to grow. "The Zionist entity army passed through the land, completely wiping out all trees and crops," he told AFP.

"They bulldozed and shelled the land,



GAZA: Palestinian farmers inspect on Jan 11, 2024 an agricultural greenhouse after it was hit by a Zionist air strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

turning it into barren pits." The harm done to farmland in Gaza will last far beyond tank tracks and explosions, said Bromley of UNOSAT. "With modern weaponry, a certain percentage is always going to fail. Tank shells won't explode, artillery shells won't explode ... so clearing that unexploded ordnance is

a massive task," he said. It will require "probing every centimeter of the soil before you can allow the farmers back onto it". Despite the risks, Dheir wants to return to farming. "We want the war to stop and things to return to how they were so we can farm and cultivate our lands again." —AFP

Cybercrime groups restructuring after takedowns

PARIS: Cybercrime gangs are looking to rebuild with new tactics after global police operations this year made a huge dent in their activities, experts have told AFP. The gangs have had a bad year so far, with law enforcement operations taking out some of prominent groups including LockBit, a loose network of largely Russian-speaking cyber criminals.

LockBit was one of the major developers of malicious software that allows criminals to lock victims out of their networks, steal their data and demand a ransom for its return. Ransomware attacks using LockBit and other software have led to major disruption of governments, businesses and public services like hospitals. Victims have paid hundreds of millions of dollars to gangs, usually in untraceable cryptocurrencies. The disruption of LockBit in February and another network of malicious bots in May led to a "cleaning up" of the ransomware scene, said Nicolas Raiga-Clemenceau of the XMCO consultancy in France.

But he said "a number of new groups" had since appeared and started to organize themselves. Allan Liska of US cybersecurity firm Recorded Future agreed and said there were worrying trends emerging with some of the new groups. Some of the newer gangs appeared to be considering threats of physical violence rather than just online intimidation, he said. Liska pointed out that gangs would already have stolen a bunch of personal information, like the addresses of senior executives.

"And so if you're not getting anywhere in your negotiations, that's something you can threaten," he said. "We're going to do something in the real world to hurt you or hurt your family." —AFP



LONDON: Nigel Farage, Reform UK leader and new MP for Clacton (right) speaks next to fellow MPs Richard Tice and Lee Anderson during a presentation of their program in London on July 5, 2024, a day after Britain held a general election. -- AFP

UK's new Labour govt faces tough economic challenge

LONDON: Britain's new Labour government on Friday pledged immediate action to grow the economy after the centre-left party won a landslide general election victory. However, its task could be hampered by strained state finances following huge spending by the previous Conservative administration to protect millions of jobs during the COVID pandemic. Labour, led by new Prime Minister Keir Starmer after it ended 14 years of Conservative rule, has promised investment in key areas such as health and education but also stresses the need to balance the books.

This after government coffers were further hit by subsidies for energy bills after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent oil and gas prices rocketing.

"Economic growth was the Labour Party's mission. It is now a national mission. Let's get to work," Britain's new finance minister Rachel Reeves said Friday after Starmer made her the country's first female chancellor of the exchequer. Starmer wants to avoid a repeat of October 2022, when the then-Conservative government's proposed unfunded tax cuts spooked markets and tanked the pound.

It also sank the chaotic premiership of Liz Truss, who lasted just 49 days before she was replaced by Rishi Sunak. Truss lost her parliamentary seat in Thursday's election. Britain's economy is currently on a more stable footing after exiting a mild recession, as inflation returns to normal and with Bank of England interest-rate cuts on the horizon.

"Labour talked a lot about wanting to boost the economy and help businesses during its election campaign," noted Dan Coatsworth, investment analyst at AJ Bell. "Now comes the hard part and delivering on its promises. Public finances aren't in the best shape given high levels of debt and it will take a lot of hard work to accelerate economic growth." Eight years

after Britain voted for Brexit, businesses still lament economic fallout caused by the country's departure from the European Union, with little prospect of change in the near future.

Starmer has ruled out returning Britain to the European single market, customs union, or bringing back free movement of EU nationals.

"I want investors to look at Britain and say it is a safe haven in a turbulent world, a place where I can invest with confidence in a world where perhaps other countries are tilting to more populist politics," Reeves said ahead of Thursday's UK vote and in her previous role as Labour's finance spokesperson. Reeves has added that "change will be achieved only on the basis of iron discipline".

British public debt has flirted with a level totaling 100 percent of gross domestic product in recent months—a situation not seen since the 1960s. Heading into the election, Labour won support of company bosses and key UK publications—including the Financial Times -- who believe the party can successfully manage the economy. Business organizations on Friday welcomed Labour's victory.

"By working with business, the new government can deploy the capability and capacity of industry to deliver the connected transitions across net zero, the digital economy, and the future of work needed to put the economy on a pathway to sustainable growth," the Confederation of British Industry said in a statement. The City of London Corporation—the local authority for the capital's financial district—said it would work with the new government to "deliver high-skilled jobs, opportunities, and economic growth right across the country".

Included in Labour's spending plans is the creation of publicly-owned Great British Energy, with the aim of slashing bills as millions of Britons still struggle with a high cost of living. The party has an ambition also to hike defence spending to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product from around two. According to Daniel Sopher, senior partner at tax specialists Sopher + Co, "tax is going to go up" to fund public services. "There's only so much to what one can increase debt to," he said. —AFP

Is AI a major drain on world's energy supply?

PARIS: When Google announced this week that its climate emissions had risen by 48 percent since 2019, it pointed the finger at artificial intelligence. US tech firms are building vast networks of data centers across the globe and say AI is fuelling the growth, throwing the spotlight on the amount of energy the technology is sucking up and its impact on the environment.

How does AI use electricity? Every time a user punches a request into a chatbot or generative AI tool, the request is fired off to a data centre. Even before that stage, developing AI programs known as large language models (LLMs) needs a huge amount of computer power. All the while, the computers are burning through electricity and the servers get hotter, meaning more electricity to cool them. The International Energy Agency (IEA) said in a report earlier this year that data centers in general used roughly 40 percent of electricity on computing and 40 percent on cooling.

Why are experts worried?

Big tech firms have been rushing to pack all their products with AI ever since OpenAI launched its ChatGPT bot in late 2022. Plenty of experts are concerned these new products will cause electricity usage to spike. This is firstly because AI services require more power than their non-AI analogues. For example, various studies have shown that each request made to ChatGPT uses roughly 10 times the power of a single Google search. So if Google switches all search queries to AI—about nine billion a year—it could hugely inflate the company's electricity usage. And most of these new services and products rely on LLMs. Programming these algorithms is extremely intensive and usually requires high-powered computer chips. They in turn require more cooling, which uses more electricity.

How much energy does AI use?

Before the era of AI, estimates generally suggested data centres accounted for around one percent of global electricity demand. The IEA report said data centres, cryptocurrencies and AI combined used 460 TWh of electricity worldwide in 2022, almost two percent of total global electricity demand. The IEA estimated that the figure could double by 2026 -- the equivalent of Japan's usage figures. Alex De Vries, a researcher who runs the Digiconomist website, modeled the electricity used by AI alone by focusing on sales projections from the US firm NVIDIA, which has cornered the market in AI-specialized servers. He concluded in a paper late last year that that if NVIDIA's projected sales for 2023 were correct and all those servers ran at full power, they alone could be responsible for between 85.4–134.0 TWh of annual electricity consumption—an amount similar to Argentina or Sweden. "The numbers I put in that article were already conservative to begin with because I couldn't include things like cooling requirements," he told AFP. And he added that adoption of NVIDIA's servers had outstripped last year's projections, so the figures would certainly be higher.

How are data centers coping?

Fabrice Coquo of Digital Realty, a data centre company that leases its services to others, told AFP during a visit to one of its enormous facilities north of Paris in April that AI was going to transform his industry. "It's going to be exactly the same (as the cloud), maybe a bit more massive in terms of the deployment," he said. Part of Digital Realty's latest data centre hub in Courneuve—a gigantic edifice that looks like a football stadium—will be dedicated to AI. Coquo explained that normal computing requests could be handled by server racks in rooms with powerful air-conditioning.—AFP

Algeria and Italy sign \$455 million agriculture deal

ALGIERS: Algeria and Italy on Saturday signed a 420-million-euro deal (\$455 million) for an agricultural project in the North African country, the Algerian agriculture ministry said in a statement. The scheme, which Italian officials called their country's largest agricultural investment in the southern Mediterranean, covers 36,000 hectares (89,000 acres) in Algeria's Timimoune province.

It will produce wheat, lentils and beans, among other foods, in the hopes of increasing Algerian non-hydrocarbon exports, officials said during the agreement ceremony. It is also expected to create 6,700 jobs, they said. The deal came months after Algeria signed a \$3.5 billion agreement with Qatar's largest dairy producer Baladna to establish a vast cow-breeding facility for the production of powdered milk.

Saturday's agreement was part of Algeria's strategy to expand production areas in its desert south to 500,000 hectares, Algerian officials said. The project is also in line with the goals of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's "Mattei Plan", which is aimed in part at reducing irregular migration from Africa via investment in the continent. The plan is named after Enrico Mattei, founder of the Italian energy company Eni.—AFP

NBK first bank to implement Super iPaaS solution in region

Bank signs partnership agreement with SAG to integrate applications

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) signed a strategic partnership agreement with Software AG technology solutions company that will allow NBK to use the company's solution as a unified platform to integrate applications and data, across its international locations of KSA, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, London and France. The five-year agreement was signed by Mohammed Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology at NBK, and Rami Kichli - Senior Vice President - ME and Turkey at SAG, in the presence of Mark Diamond - Chief Technology Transformation Officer at NBK, and Yaser Nasif - Country Manager - Kuwait Jordan and Qatar at SAG, and Feras Juma - Pre Sales and Solution Lead - ME and Turkey at SAG.

Speaking on this, Mohammed Al-Kharafi stated: "We are happy to sign this partnership with SAG, which will provide us with integration suite that serves as a unified platform, seamlessly integrating applications, data, API management for our operations. This standardization will enable digital integration with beyond our Kuwait Head Office and across our international locations."

"Under this agreement, NBK will obtain the cutting-edge Super iPaaS solution which will enable integration of applications, data and API management across our international locations, thus enhancing execution efficiencies for our Consumer and Corporate offerings. This comes as we develop further our digital propositions into our international markets, marking a pivotal transformation towards increasing our operational efficiency," added Al-Kharafi.

"Group Operations and Information Technology play a fundamental role in serving NBK's strategy by providing cutting-edge digital banking solutions. We are always seeking to embrace innovation across all of the bank's operations and business models to keep pace with the fast-paced technological advancement in the banking industry," he remarked. On his part, Rami Kichli - Senior Vice President - ME and Turkey at SAG stated: "This signing with National Bank of Kuwait is significant for two reasons. First, it extends our robust and successful strategic partnership with



Officials pose for a group photo following the signing ceremony.

- **Mohammed Al-Kharafi:** This step will enable operational execution efficiencies, in line with our strategy to develop digital propositions in our international markets
- **Rami Kichli:** The agreement marks SAG's first Super iPaaS implementation in Middle East and Turkey



Mohammed Al-Kharafi and Rami Kichli during the signing of the agreement.

Kuwait's leading bank, which began in 2017, to modernize and refine its digital backbone to also include its international subsidiaries." "Second, it marks Software AG's first Super iPaaS implementation in Middle East and Turkey, a milestone that underscores our commitment to innovation. The project highlights the critical role of integration in digital transformation, paving the way for innovative and unified services that support long-term goals and foster a more connected digital future," he added.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is committed to making digital and technology investments across its network, which comprises 140 branches, subsidiaries, and representative offices in 13 countries on four continents. These locations encompass major financial hubs like London, New York, Paris, Geneva, and Singapore, as well as Shanghai in China, with regional coverage extending to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon.

'Not the end of the world', says data scientist on big issues

PARIS: Humanity has made great strides in recent decades: air is cleaner; poverty, deforestation and childhood mortality have fallen; gasoline cars - and maybe coal - are on the way out. This optimistic take on the state of affairs may be startling to some, but not Hannah Ritchie, a Scottish data scientist whose first book lets the facts speak for themselves.

"We just are unaware of how bad the past was," Ritchie told AFP from Edinburgh. "People are just unaware that at least half of kids died, that diseases were rife, that most people lived in poverty, that most of the world were hungry." Her book, "Not the End of the World", presents an evidence-rich counterpoint to the view that everything is going in the wrong direction, and offers possible approaches to the burning challenges of our time.

That also means climate change, a problem that Ritchie - who is lead researcher at the Our World in Data website based out of Oxford University - is careful not to understate. "If you skew too far in one direction, I don't actually think you're telling the true story. We need to be clear-eyed about the problem in front of us," she said. "That's actually not useful - to deny it, or downplay it, or not be serious about it. But at the same time, you also need to focus on solutions, so we actually drive progress forward."

Those solutions are not always obvious, Ritchie said, and focus can be misguided when it comes to choosing what personal action to take in aid of the planet. Ritchie pointed to the tendency in rich countries to hype behaviors that have little real impact - such as recycling or ensuring televisions are not left on stand-by mode - while continuing to drive, fly and eat meat.

Assuming everything 'natural' is automatically good can also mask some inconvenient realities, she added. Huddling around a campfire can produce a sense of closeness to nature, but burning wood belches out smoke harmful to humans and the planet.

"What looks sustainable is the natural cow in a green field eating grass. But actually, when you do the numbers on this, the meat substitute burger is vastly, vastly better on almost any environmental metric compared to the cows," she said. An advocate of lab-grown meat, nuclear power and GMO, Ritchie does not relish being contrarian on tackling environmental problems. "I don't take delight in being provocative. I just care about the truth," she said.

Ritchie's data-driven conclusions can run counter to the conventional wisdom about how to save the planet. But they can be illuminating, identifying areas where resources might be better spent elsewhere. For example, reducing the amount of plastic bags or bottles consumed in Europe might seem a good idea on paper.

But hardly any of the plastic in the sea originates from Europe, with most flowing from Asia, which does not have the same rigorous waste management schemes in place. "If everyone in Europe stopped using plastics tomorrow the world's oceans would hardly notice the difference," Ritchie wrote in her book.

Palm oil - the sworn enemy of environmental defenders - is "an insanely productive plant" that generates far more oil per hectare of land than alternatives like soybean and coconut, she added.

"If we were to boycott palm oil and replace it with one of these alternatives, we would need far more farmland." Synthetic fertilizers - another target of environmental movements - were essential to grow the food that sustains half the world's population. — AFP

Rachel Reeves: UK's first woman finance minister

LONDON: Rachel Reeves, Britain's first woman finance minister, is a former child chess champion and Bank of England economist who has pledged to grow the nation's economy while showing strong fiscal discipline. Reeves, 45, becomes chancellor of the exchequer after her centre-left Labor party won Thursday's UK general election by a landslide, ending 14 years of rule by the right-wing Conservatives. "It is the honor of my life to have been appointed chancellor of the exchequer," Reeves wrote on social media platform X after her appointment by new Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

"To every young girl and woman reading this, let today show that there should be no limits on your ambitions." Labor had put the economy at the heart of its election manifesto, targeting growth and wealth creation as key priorities in government, while its emphasis on the latter is not normally associated with the party's traditionally leftist policies. "Economic growth was the Labour Party's mission," Reeves added Friday.

"It is now a national mission. Let's get to work," said the married mother of two children. Reeves recently told company bosses that Labour had become "the

natural party of British business", adding that the party would show "iron discipline" over public finances. The comments drew comparisons with 'Iron Lady' Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first woman prime minister.

Unlike Conservative leader Thatcher, who privatized key sectors after becoming prime minister in 1979, Reeves wants a form of renationalization, notably for energy, as she takes inspiration from policy enacted by US President Joe Biden. Labour has pledged to create Great British Energy, a publicly owned company that would spearhead funding, alongside the private sector, for the "green" transition away from fossil fuels.

James Wood, senior teaching associate in political economy at the University of Cambridge, said Labour and Reeves were seeking a "responsible" approach to the public purse.

"When she talks about being an iron chancellor, I think what she means is: we're going to balance the books and we're going to be responsible - and we're going to try and get Britain's economy running... in a responsible way," he told AFP. London-born Reeves tapped into public anger over Sunak's predecessor Liz Truss, whose unfunded 2022 mini-budget crashed the pound and sent mortgage rates soaring, worsening a cost-of-living crisis.

"They want to distance themselves from fiscal irresponsibility, not making big promises about spending that they can't possibly keep," Wood added. Reeves, whose parents were teachers, is no stranger to outmaneuvering opponents. She became British girls' chess champion aged 14 before studying philosophy, poli-



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves arrives to attend a cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in London on July 6, 2024. — AFP

tics and economics at the University of Oxford, which was followed by a Master's degree at the London School of Economics. After graduating, she worked as an economist for a decade, first at the Bank of England before switching to the private sector.

While working for British retail bank HBOS, the global financial crisis struck in 2008, resulting in her employer receiving a huge bailout, along with other lenders, from Gordon Brown's Labor government.

In 2010, when the Conservatives entered power in a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, Reeves was elected Labour MP for Leeds West in northern England. Eleven years later, Starmer appointed her as Labour's finance spokesperson. Her sister Ellie Reeves is also a Labour MP. — AFP

Samsung Electronics forecasts major Q2 profit jump

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics said Friday it expects second-quarter operating profits to rise more than 15-fold on-year as chip prices bounce back and demand for generative AI continues to grow. The firm is the flagship subsidiary of South Korean giant Samsung Group, by far the largest of the family-controlled conglomerates that dominate business in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

The world's largest memory chip maker said in a regulatory filing that its April-June operating profits were expected to rise to 10.4 trillion won (\$7.54 billion), up 1,452.2 percent from 670 billion won a year earlier. The expectation exceeded the average estimate by 25.8 percent, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, which referenced its financial data firm.

Sales, meanwhile, are expected to rise 23.3 percent to 74 trillion won, Samsung said.

African leaders urge UN to prioritize tree planting drive

BRAZZAVILLE, Congo: Six African leaders called Friday for the United Nations to prioritize a decade of planting trees to combat climate change, according to a declaration released at the end of a summit in the Republic of Congo.

The declaration said the leaders had urged "the adoption of a resolution by the 79th General Assembly of the United Nations to officially endorse" the

plan ahead of the annual gathering in New York in September. Congo's capital Brazzaville hosted days of talks this week that brought together experts, representatives of indigenous populations and technical and financial partners.

Six leaders attended the summit, which is part of an "African and global decade of afforestation and reforestation" launched by Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso at COP27 in Egypt in 2023.

Sassou Nguesso was joined by his counterparts including, Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, Umaro Sissoco Embaló of Guinea-Bissau, Faustin Archange Touadera of the Central African Republic, Brice Oligui Nguema of Gabon and Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia.

A "Brazzaville Declaration" released at the conclusion of the summit called on the UN to realize the "crucial importance for the planet" of the initiative to



A man walks past the Samsung logo displayed on a glass door at the company's Secho building in Seoul on July 5, 2024. — AFP

equipped with AI features, along with a range of accessories including a new health-monitoring "smart ring", on July 10 in Paris.

The tech giant should see a "greater uptick" going into the second half of this year, also driven by its mobile experience division, "which will benefit from 'pre-miumisation' trend of smartphones in its key markets," Neil Shah, research vice resident at Counterpoint Research, told AFP. — AFP

plant more trees to combat climate change and its consequences. Leaders also called on the UN to hold an international conference on reforestation "biennially and on a rotating basis, from one continent to another", according to the text, which was read out by Congo's minister for forest economy Rosalie Matondo.

"This conference seems to be the beginning of a process of research and a life-saving response. The situation we already know (climate change) remains worrying," Sassou Nguesso said.

"The need for action is clear... it's all about the will to act and putting in the necessary effort," he added. "The great challenge today is not only to stop the disappearance of forests, but also to restore those that have disappeared and then create new ones," said Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairman of the African Union Commission. — AFP



Photos of Burgan Bank's semi-annual draw of the Kanz account held at 360 Mall.

Burgan Bank crowns Kanz semi-annual draw winner of KD 500,000 cash prize

As part of bank's dedicated strategy for rewarding customers



Bank encourages people to adopt better saving practices

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced its latest winner of the semi-annual draw of the Kanz account, during a recent event held at 360 Mall. At the center of the festivities, Mohammad Hassan Zeinalpour was crowned as the winner of the KD 500,000 cash prize, in the presence of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative and representatives of Burgan Bank's Executive Management.

Presented by prominent media figure Dana Al-Owaisi, the event featured a competition that called on the audience to guess the number of coins in the Kanz treasure chest for a chance to enter the cash draws. The festivities also included the introduction of Kanz's new song, "The Call That Changed My Life", by the creative artist Khaled Al-Muthafar, which was met with public enthusiasm and wide engagement for its catchy tune and memorable lyrics that center on Kanz's ability to turn its winners' lives around.

"We are delighted to announce our latest semi-annual draw winner as Kanz account upholds its success for a third year," Yousef Al-Ali, Manager - Products and Segments at Burgan Bank, said. "On behalf of the Burgan family, I would like to congratulate Mohammad Hassan Zeinalpour on winning the KD 500,000 cash prize, and I wish all of our Kanz customers better luck in the upcoming Kanz draws, especially the annual draw, which will grant our third millionaire

winner a life-changing KD 1,500,000 cash prize."

He noted that Kanz is among Burgan Bank's most special draw accounts, thanks to its regular year-long cash prizes, whether the monthly KD 2,000 prize awarded to 20 winners, the semi-annual KD 500,000 prize granted to one customer, or the annual KD 1,500,000 prize allocated to a single lucky winner. This comes as part of the Bank's committed strategy for rewarding its loyal customers with life-changing experiences and a progressive banking journey that is line with their modern lifestyles and financial aspirations.

"Through the Kanz account and its innovative benefits, Burgan Bank seeks to raise awareness about the importance of saving and adopting a sound and balanced financial plan that guides our customers' spending," Al-Ali added. "Kanz is also a testament to the Bank's commitment to reinforcing financial literacy across Kuwaiti society, in line with its continued support of the banking awareness and financial literacy campaign, 'Let's Be Aware' (Diraya), which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, with the support of Kuwait's local banks."

To enter the Kanz draws, existing or new customers must have a Kanz account with a minimum balance of KD 200 – or the equivalent in USD, GBP, or EUR. Upon meeting the entry requirements, every KD 25 counts as a draw entry.



An executive guide to public-private partnerships

By Hassan Abdulrahim

The public-private partnership (PPP) approach enables governments to procure and deliver public infrastructure or services by leveraging the resources and expertise of the private sector through risk-sharing arrangements. If properly designed and executed, PPPs can provide significant benefits to both the public sector and the private sector. For the public sector, advantages include project funding, faster project completion, efficiency, expertise, risk sharing, and innovation. The private sector benefits from stable revenue streams, profit potential, risk mitigation, market expansion, and access to public assets. Over the last decades, countries worldwide have increasingly adopted dedicated PPP laws and established special PPP units with varying responsibilities, jurisdictions, and locations within governments.

The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) is a prime example of such an initiative. At Visionary Consulting, we believe strongly in the significance of PPPs for infrastructure development. Consequently, we prepared this executive guide to educate those involved in PPPs, such as public officials, professionals, engineers, project managers, and lawyers. The guide aims to introduce the



PPP concept as an option for procuring and managing infrastructure, highlighting the main differences between PPP and traditional infrastructure procurement (TIP), and explaining the characteristics of the PPP approach. Additionally, we discuss other key PPP-related issues such as benefits and limitations, PPP models, risks, project cycles, and financing.

PPP, the concept

A PPP is a long-term contract, typically over 20 years, between a public party and a private party for the development and/or management of a public asset or service. The private party bears significant risk and management responsibility throughout the contract's life, and remuneration is significantly linked to performance or the demand or use of the asset or service. PPPs can be applied in various sectors such as transportation, energy, utilities, education, healthcare, and digital infrastructure.

Types of infrastructure

Infrastructure is broadly categorized into two types: Economic Infrastructure and Social Infrastructure. Economic Infrastructure: This type of infrastructure supports economic growth, trade, and competitiveness. It includes transportation networks (roads, railways), utilities (power plants, water supply systems), and other facilities that enable business activities. Fees are typically charged for using these services. Examples include toll roads, airports, and energy supply systems.

Social Infrastructure: This type of infrastructure promotes social cohesion, equality, and human development. It includes facilities such as healthcare centers, educational institutions, prisons, social housing, and courts. These infrastructures do not usually generate user payments. Their primary purpose is to provide essential services that enhance the quality of life for individuals in the community.

PPPs vs privatization

PPP and privatization are often confused but have distinct differences. Asset Ownership: In privatization, the

private sector owns the asset entirely. In PPPs, the government typically retains ownership, and the asset is handed back at the end of the contract. Contractual Relationship: Privatization involves regulations rather than contracts. PPPs, on the other hand, involve detailed contracts outlining the rights and obligations of each party. Time: Privatization has no time limit for operating the asset, while PPPs are limited by the contract duration.

Output specifications and pricing: Privatized entities set their own quality, quantity, and pricing of goods or services. In PPPs, the government specifies these details in the contract, ensuring that public needs and standards are met.

PPPs vs TIPs

Key differences between PPPs and TIPs include financing, duration, output specifications, and risk allocation. Financing: TIP projects are funded by the national budget, with payments made to contractors based on construction progress. In PPPs, private partners finance the infrastructure, expecting a return on their investment through user fees or government payments. No public funds are disbursed during the construction phase in PPPs; payments are spread over the project's lifetime based on asset availability and performance. In "user-pays PPPs", the public authority grants "Rights" to the private partners to collect fees from users, such as tolls on highways or fees from airlines using airport facilities. In government-pays PPPs, the government compensates the private partners through "Availability Payments", where the private operator is paid upon the availability of the asset, meaning it meets the quality standards and specifications set out in the PPP contract. If these criteria are met, the government pays a fixed fee to the private operator over a pre-agreed period.

Duration: In TIPs, the relationship between the public authority and the private partner ends once construction is completed. In PPPs, structures such as DBFOM (Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain) and DBOM (Design-Build-Operate-Maintain) ensure that the relationship continues far beyond construction. The private partner is

responsible for operating and maintaining the asset for a predetermined period, often more than 20 years. During this time, the public authority regularly checks the private operator's performance. At the end of a PPP contract, asset rights typically revert to the public authority.

Input vs. Output: PPP contracts focus on outputs and performance, specifying the desired outcomes rather than the means to achieve them. This allows private partners to employ innovative techniques for delivering public services. For example, in a highway project, PPP specifications might refer to road surface quality indicators rather than specific construction details. In an airport project, output could be the capacity to handle 12 million passengers per year. This output-focused approach encourages private sector innovation and can lead to high-quality services and cost savings. However, it requires a different mindset from public authorities used to traditional, input-oriented approaches.

Risk Allocation: Risk allocation is central to any PPP model. In TIPs, risks are primarily borne by the public sector. In PPPs, risks are shared, with each party handling the risks they are best equipped to manage. For example, the private sector is usually better at managing construction and operational risks due to its resources and expertise.

In TIP projects, cost overruns and delays are financial risks borne by the public sector. In PPPs, these risks are transferred to the private partner, reducing the public sector's exposure. PPP contracts typically undergo thorough risk assessment during the project preparation phase to allocate risks appropriately. In short, PPPs offer a strategic approach to infrastructure development, combining public oversight with private sector efficiency and innovation. By understanding the distinctions between PPP and traditional methods, and the specific benefits and challenges of PPPs, stakeholders can better navigate the complexities of infrastructure projects and achieve more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Note: Hassan Abdulrahim is Senior Instructor - Economics & Finance, Canadian College Kuwait and Deputy CEO, Visionary Consulting Company

MONDAY, JULY 8, 2024



Singaporean film director Nelicia Low poses with the Crystal Globe for Best Film Director for her film 'Pierce / Ci xin qie gu'.



Northern Irish film director Mark Cousins poses with the Grand Prix Crystal Globe for Best Film 'A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things' during the closing ceremony.



Norwegian actress Helga Guren poses with the Crystal Globe for Best Actress for her role in the film 'Loveable / Eiskling'.



Dutch actor Guido Pollemans poses with the Crystal Globes for Best Actor. — AFP photos

Winners

Grand Prix – Crystal Globe
"A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things"

Special Jury Prize
"Loveable"

Best Director Award
Nelicia Low for the film "Pierce"

Best Actress Award
Helga Guren for her role in the film "Loveable"

Best Actor Award
Award was awarded ex-aequo.
Ton Kas and Guido Pollemans for their roles in the film "Three Days of Fish"

Special Jury Mention
"Xoftex"

Právo Audience Award
"Waves".

BRITISH DOCUMENTARY WINS TOP PRIZE AT CZECH FESTIVAL

"A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things" by Northern Irish director Mark Cousins won the top Crystal Globe award at the Karlovy Vary film festival on Saturday, organizers said. Cousins' documentary "explores themes of gender, neurodiversity, climate change, and the mysteries of

creativity from youth to old age" through the eyes of Scottish painter Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (1912-2004), its authors said. The 58th edition of the festival in the western Czech spa city of Karlovy Vary started on June 28. US actor Viggo Mortensen, known for playing Aragorn in "The Lord of the Rings" films, received

the Festival President's Award at the opening ceremony.

Other guests at Karlovy Vary included "Closer" and "Sin City" star Clive Owen and "Erin Brockovich" and "Traffic" director Steven Soderbergh. Both Owen and Soderbergh also received the Festival President's Award, as did Ger-

man actor and director Daniel Bruehl, known for roles in "Inglourious Basterds" and "Rush". Oscar-winning British actor Geoffrey Rush, known for "Shine", "The King's Speech" and "Pirates of the Caribbean", was a member of the festival jury. — AFP



English actor Clive Owen delivers a speech after having been awarded with the KVIFF President's Award.



Australian actor Geoffrey Rush and his wife Australian actress Jane Menelaus arrive on the red carpet for the closing ceremony.

Brad Pitt at Silverstone for filming of F1 movie

Brad Pitt's previously untitled Formula One film, co-produced by seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, will be called F1, it was announced at the British Grand Prix. After months of speculation, the title was confirmed by Formula One, and is due for release next year.

Pitt, 60, was at Silverstone where he is filming scenes for the movie using an adapted Formula Two car that

he drives on track between sessions involving other racing series. The long-awaited movie was delayed by the United States actors' and writers' strike last year. Hamilton has been involved in the script creation to ensure authenticity. The film is being directed by Joseph Kosinski, who made Top Gun: Maverick. — AFP



Hollywood actor Brad Pitt, acting in an upcoming Formula One-based movie, follows the second practice session ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. — AFP

French rapper jailed for abusing ex-partners

A French court on Friday sentenced a former rap star to three years in jail after finding him guilty of abusing, threatening and sometimes forcibly confining six former partners. Moha La Squale, 29, has already served 17 months behind bars. Fashion brand Lacoste dropped the hip hop artist, born Mohamed Bellahmed in a Parisian suburb, in 2020 after a police investigation was opened following accusations on social media.

The Paris court banned him from contacting the six women, and sentenced him to pay each between 2,500

and 10,000 euros (\$2,700 and \$10,800) in damages. Throughout the trial, the French rapper of Algerian origin said his accusers were lying and claimed he was the victim of a "plot", though he also apologized for "hurting" them.

His lawyer Elise Arfi said her client probably would not appeal what she called a "balanced" decision, adding that he had "changed a lot" since the period in question.

She had previously argued he was "isolated" and "completely overwhelmed" by suddenly becoming famous in his early 20s, adding that his consumption of cannabis could have explained his "mood swings". Moha La Squale rose to the top of the French charts in 2018 after making a name for himself by publishing freestyle tracks on social media. — AFP

France film director Jacquot charged with raping two actors

A magistrate Wednesday charged prominent film director Benoit Jacquot for allegedly raping actresses Julia Roy and Isild Le Besco, prosecutors said, in a high-profile MeToo case that has rocked France. The charges come after a flurry of allegations against several men in the French filmmaking industry, which critics say has too long provided cover for abuse. Jacquot, 77, and another filmmaker, 80-year-old Jacques Doillon, were detained for questioning on Monday over alleged sexual abuse of much younger actresses who starred in their films, charges both have denied.

Investigators opened a probe after Judith Godreche, 52, earlier this year filed a complaint against Jacquot for allegedly raping her during a relationship of several years that started in the 1980s, when she was 14 and he was 25 years her senior. After two days of questioning, prosecutors did not request charges linked to Godreche's accusations because they were past the statute of limitations, she and her lawyer said. But they did in the case of Roy, 34, and Le Besco, 41. Roy, who acted in four of Jacquot's films that came out between 2016 and 2021, had accused Jacquot of sexual assault.

Le Besco had accused him of rape during a toxic relationship that began when she was a minor and he was 52. An examining magistrate charged Jacquot with raping Roy during a relationship in 2013, the Paris prosecutor's office said. They also charged him with "rape of a minor" against Le Besco between November 1, 1998, and November 21, 2000, the Paris prosecutor's office said. She would have been 15 at the start of this period.

'Judicial cancellation'

Jacquot was also to be investigated over the alleged rape of Roy between 2014 and 2018 and Le Besco in 2007, the prosecutor's office said. He will be released from custody but remain under judicial supervision, preventing him from getting in touch with plaintiffs and witnesses, or carrying out any activity "linked to minors", it added. He could not work as a film director or make public appearances as such. His lawyer Julia Minkowski said she would appeal the de-

cision. "More than a professional ban, it is a real measure of judicial cancellation, on the basis of an embryonic investigation and before any judgement," she said. A source close to the case said Jacquot has answered the questions of investigators but denied all charges.

Roy's lawyer, Margot Pugliese, said the charges against Jacquot were "im-

portant" for her client, whose state of post-traumatic stress she described as "profound". Le Besco's attorney, Benjamin Chouai, said he was happy "the judiciary had got the exact measure of the criminal acts" suspected.



This combination of pictures shows (from left) French-Austrian actress Julia Roy, French movie director Benoit Jacquot and French actress and director Isild Le Besco. — AFP

portant" for her client, whose state of post-traumatic stress she described as "profound". Le Besco's attorney, Benjamin Chouai, said he was happy "the judiciary had got the exact measure of the criminal acts" suspected.

Another director released

The other director, 80-year-old Doillon, was released on Tuesday evening "for medical reasons", the prosecutor's office said, adding it still had to decide on follow-up measures. This came despite mounting accusations against him. Godreche had accused Doillon of sexually assaulting her during a film shoot when she was 15, when the filmmaker was in a relationship with British actress and singer Jane Birkin.

Le Besco had claimed he made advances during work sessions, and another actor, Anna Mougialis, 46, alleged the filmmaker forcefully kissed her in 2011. Lawyer Laure Heinrich, who has been representing Godreche, told AFP she had also filed a complaint against

'Heard'

Godreche said on Instagram that she felt "heard" after prosecutors sought charges against Jacquot, even though her own case did not yield any. Godreche has become a leading voice in France's MeToo movement since she spoke out. After she appealed for a cinema oversight body, French lawmakers in May voted to create a commission to investigate sexual and gender-based violence in the cultural sectors. Rare cases have advanced through the judicial system.

The head of France's top cinema institution, Dominique Boutonnat, stepped down on Friday and will serve a one-year jail term at home after he was convicted of sexually assaulting his godson in 2020. And screen icon Gerard Depardieu, 75, is to stand trial in October over accusations of sexually assaulting two women. He was also charged in 2020 with rape two years earlier. He denies all charges. — AFP

Bass beats bring Shanghai's deaf and hearing clubbers together



Photo shows a deaf dancer (center right) dancing as Chinese entertainer Zhang Yixing looks on during a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai. — AFP photos



Photo shows deaf people dancing during a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai.



Photo shows deaf artist and BassBath's organizer Alice Hu using sign language during an interview with AFP at a club in Shanghai.

Crowds bopped to bass-heavy electronic music at a weekend party in Shanghai that brought together deaf and hearing clubbers, with staff taking food and drink orders through sign language. It was the second "BassBath" club night organized by a culture-bridging group working in the Chinese metropolis. "This event is intended to break down the barrier between deaf and hearing people through play and body language," Alice Hu, BassBath co-organizer and a visual artist who is deaf, told AFP.

BassBath "allows deaf people to understand hearing people's culture, and also allows hearing people to understand deaf people's culture, leading to mutual integration", Hu said. Deaf communities around the world have increasingly built such spaces for nightlife and other cultural events. However, nightlife and entertainment events for deaf partyers are still rare in China despite recent efforts to improve inclusivity in education and everyday life.

'Happier together'

Animated art and music videos featuring sign language artists such as Finland's Signmark were project-

ed onto graffiti-strewn walls at Saturday's party. Posters scattered across the venue showed visitors the Chinese sign language versions of words such as "dream" and "dance", while deaf professional dancers showed off their "popping" and breakdance moves.

DJs played tracks selected for their catchy rhythms and bass beats deep enough to be felt as vibrations. BassBath's Hu led the crowd in a game where players changed their dance moves according to signed words. For 34-year-old Xiaozhou, the party was his first opportunity to go out dancing. "I hope I can have some exchanges with friends and have fun together, feel happier together," Xiaozhou, who asked to be identified by a nickname, told AFP.

At 68, Hu Jingqi was among the oldest revelers. She stood at the centre of a circle of dancers, moving her hands to the music while clubbers decades younger towered over her in their flashy streetwear. Hu Jingqi also attended BassBath's debut party in May. "It was really crazy, the whole atmosphere was really great and it was really bustling," she said of her first experience clubbing. "I really liked the activity, to

the point that I forgot some of the physical discomforts I have in my body," she told AFP.

For hearing clubber Alice Liu, who is learning sign language, the event was a window into the deaf community's rich culture, which is usually relegated to the sidelines of mainstream society. Liu said she learned of the event through a sign language class taught by BassBath's Alice Hu. "In the past, I believed in some stereotypes, like I felt (deaf people) would only appear in certain fixed places, or that they were unwilling to interact with other people," Liu told AFP. "I had heard that there were some very talented deaf dancers, but I didn't understand how they could dance." Jia-yue Ding, another of BassBath's organizers, said society was "very centered on ableism". "But actually, if you step just a little bit outside of that (mindset), everyone is the same, and everyone can be friends and play together," Ding told AFP. "There are very few opportunities for deaf and hearing people to make deep connections, so we hope that an event like this will help people to see each other in the moment and understand each other," she said. — AFP



Photo shows a worker sticking sign language instructions on a speaker in preparation for a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai.



Photo shows deaf people using sign language to communicate during a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai.



Photo shows a deaf man (center) using sign language to communicate on his phone during a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai.



Photo shows a deaf dancer performing during a deaf-friendly party at a club in Shanghai.

Alec Baldwin set for legal showdown over 'Rust' shooting

A long-awaited showdown will take place this week in a historic Wild West frontier town, with both sides seeking justice for a fatal bullet fired from a six-shooter. But if Alec Baldwin's trial for manslaughter sounds like the plot of a Hollywood movie, the victims, the stakes and the tragic consequences are all too real. In October 2021, on the New Mexico set of his low-budget Western "Rust," a gun pointed by Baldwin discharged a live round, killing the film's cinematographer and wounding its director.

Such is Baldwin's A-list fame and the rarity of on-set deaths in the tightly controlled US film industry, the story quickly became a global sensation. It also polarized opinion, with sympathetic observers viewing Baldwin - an actor who did not know the prop gun contained a real bullet - as a victim, and others seeing the death as a result of his allegedly reckless behavior.

Almost three years later, after multiple failed attempts by Baldwin's formidable New York legal team to have the case thrown out, those same arguments will be settled by a jury at a court case in Santa Fe starting on Tuesday. If found guilty, Baldwin faces a maximum 18 months in prison - the same term already being served by the film's armorer, who was convicted in the same courthouse earlier this year.

'Basic gun safety'

The death of Halyna Hutchins occurred during a rehearsal in a small chapel on the Bonanza Creek Ranch, 20 miles (30 kilometers) outside Santa Fe, on a sunny afternoon midway through the filming of "Rust." Baldwin was practicing a scene in which his character, an aging outlaw who has been cornered in the church by two marshals, draws his Colt gun. The actor says he did not pull the revolver's trigger and had been told that the gun was safe. Live bullets are in any case banned from movie sets, and Baldwin has argued that it was not his responsibility as an actor to check.

Yet the gun did go off. And the trial of Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armorer who loaded the weapon, revealed many of the arguments that the prosecution will level against Baldwin, who was also a producer on the movie. At the time, Gutierrez's defense lawyers said Baldwin "violated some of the most basic gun safety rules you can ever learn," including never pointing a gun at a person unless you intend to fire it. "Alec Baldwin's conduct and his lack of gun safety inside that church on that day is something that he's going to have to answer for," said special prosecutor Kari Morrissey, in a rare moment of agreement between the two sides. "Not with you and not today. That'll be with another jury, on another day," Morrissey said.

'No control'

That day has now arrived, with jury selection on Tuesday and opening arguments expected Wednesday. That the matter is being heard in court at all is already a victory



A still from a video clip featuring Alec Baldwin shown during the involuntary manslaughter trial of Hannah Gutierrez-Reed at the First Judicial District Courthouse on February 29, 2024 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. — AFP

of sorts for prosecutors, who have fended off multiple attempts by Baldwin to have the case dismissed. Among these, Baldwin's lawyers said damage to the gun caused by an FBI testing lab meant the actor could not get a fair trial. That is significant because the FBI found the gun could not have fired without its trigger being pulled - a conclusion that the defense says they were robbed of a chance to disprove.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer was not convinced and ordered the trial to proceed. Baldwin's team have also suggested that his status as a celebrity and liberal darling has provided incentives for prosecutors to pursue him with unusual tenacity. The prosecution's response to recent pre-trial proceedings offered further insight into how they are likely to attack Baldwin in court. Court filings allege that Baldwin's unpredictable behavior contributed to the tragedy and that he kept changing his story in its aftermath. — AFP

PARIS' MOULIN ROUGE INAUGURATES NEW WINDMILL SAILS AHEAD OF OLYMPICS



Dancers perform in front of the Moulin Rouge cabaret during the inauguration of the theatre's windmill sails in Paris in an event that marks the return of the cabaret lights ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games after the collapse of the former windmill sails last April. — AFP

Paris' Moulin Rouge cabaret club, whose landmark windmill sails fell down in April, inaugurated its new blades on Friday, nearly a week before the Olympic torch was due to pass the venue. Several hundred delighted locals and tourists gathered outside the club, one of the most visited attractions in the French capital, to celebrate the four red blades, decked out in gold and red. "The windmill without its wings is a void for Paris, it was just sad," said managing director Jean-Victor Clerico, who runs the family business that attracts 600,000 visitors every year. "The idea was to be ready for the Olympic Games," he added, which begin on July 26. The Olympic torch is due to pass the venue on July 15.

A show of French cancan, the wild traditional dance from Jacques Offenbach's operettas of the early 19th century, was performed in front of the club on Friday by dancers in traditional petticoats and frills. "I live in the neighborhood and the Moulin Rouge has been part of my life for 65 years. I'm a fan of dancing, the French cancan, bubbles and good humor," Nicole Doucin, 86, told AFP. "I heard of the inauguration on TikTok and I've always wanted to come to a show but it's so expensive, so it's so cool to watch this," said Autumn Mansfeld, 25, from California. The sails fell down on the night of April 25. — AFP



Some iconic dresses from Christian Dior: The revolutionary who created 'The New Look'

Christian Dior lived a life full of unexpected changes, from extreme wealth and abundance to dire poverty and homelessness, and back again. It's fascinating how this unusual visionary managed to establish one of the most powerful fashion brands on the planet.

sparkling or frivolous, but his greatest love was for flowers and plants. His father, Alexandre wanted him to become a diplomat. Although it didn't interest young Dior at all, he eventually caved to his father's wishes and, in 1925, enrolled at the prestigious École des Sciences Poli-

job as a design assistant with Swiss-born but Paris-based couturier Robert Piguet. Dior later said that Piguet taught him the virtues of simplicity, through which true elegance must come. Working with Piguet was Dior's first step toward a serious involvement in fashion, opening many doors for him.

In 1947, Dior opened his boutique at 30 Avenue Montaigne, and the Christian Dior brand was finally created. Dior began working harder than ever before. While he had a degree in political science, his true education came from associating with some of the world's greatest artists. His early years of privilege also shone through.

Some of Dior's iconic dresses and how it changed the beauty standard for good

Dior wanted to reintroduce femininity and luxury, and he did so with his first couture collection, Corolle. The collection was groundbreaking, harking back to an earlier Belle Époque silhouette, romantic, lavish, and feminine. The designs featured lifted busts, softly sloped shoulders, cinched waists, and puffy long skirts made from opulent fabrics.

Despite some backlash, especially from Coco Chanel, who criticized Dior for dragging women back to 19th-century ideals of femininity, Dior persevered. His designs were revolutionary, and his collection was a huge success. By 1948, Dior had opened a store in New York City, expanding his collection and creating a fragrance, Miss Dior, named in honor of his sister, Catherine. He also licensed the Dior name for accessories, allowing Dior lovers to capture the New Look from head to toe.

Throughout the following years, the brand flourished. Dior dressed the biggest stars of the time and became a respected fashion empire. In 1957, Dior traveled to Italy for a vacation but suffered his third heart attack and died at 52. Yves Saint Laurent, who had been working as Dior's assistant, succeeded him as artistic director, keeping Dior's legacy alive.

Charlize Theron's golden J'Adore Dior campaign

Charlize Theron returned for the J'Adore Dior fragrance campaign in 2014, wearing a gold Dior dress designed specifically for the campaign. The dress follows the original design of Christian Dior,

internationally, opening stores in cities like London and Hong Kong. By the late 1970s, Dior had created worldwide brand recognition but also became a hidden asset in the failing Boussac Group. In 1978, when the group filed for bankruptcy, billionaire Bernard Arnault saw an opportu-



Christian Dior brought a fashion revolution and his first collection for his own fashion house, which debuted at 10:30 am on February 12, 1947, at his salon on Avenue Montaigne, was famously known as "The New Look."

At Dashe Beauty, we exclusively feature Christian Dior's hairstyle and make-up trends and his legacy still lives on. The collection was officially titled "Corolle," which is French for the circle of petals on a flower. Dior described this collection saying, "I created flower women with gentle shoulders and generous bosoms, with tiny waists like stems and skirts bell-ing out like petals."

History of Christian Dior and how the 'Dior' brand established

As a boy, little Christian lived in his own world. He was amused by anything

tiques, majoring in political science.

After graduating in 1928, 23-year-old Dior returned to the creative world. Happy to return to art, Christian quickly accepted, and the gallery soon opened. He sold art by the likes of Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Jean Cocteau, and Max Jacob. However, in 1931, tragedy struck. Both Christian's mother and older brother passed away, and due to the Great Depression, his father lost control of the family business. Just three years after opening the gallery, Christian was forced to close it, facing financial troubles.

Despite these setbacks, he found new ways to make money, starting by selling his fashion sketches for about 10 cents each. He also began selling sketches of hat designs to newspapers. Dior clearly had talent and was offered a



made of chiffon, tulle, and silk organza, and is covered in golden beads, which took 750 hours to sew onto.

Cream-color Dior dress from Princess Margaret's 21st birthday

Christian Dior and Princess Margaret formed a fashion friendship in 1951. The dress wouldn't exist without the private fashion show Dior gave the Queen (the late Queen Mother) and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret at the French Embassy in London, in April 1950, at their royal request.

The aftermath and why everyone still loves Dior

Under various creative directors, including Marc Bohan, who was credited with rescuing the firm in the 1960s, Dior continued to thrive. The brand expanded



nity. Obsessed with Dior since childhood, Arnault took charge, assuming roles of chairman, CEO, and managing director. Under Arnault's leadership and the direction of several impressive creative directors, Dior continued to stand out.

Conclusion

Despite being folded into LVMH, Dior remains an impressive standalone brand. Today, Dior thrives, recording significant revenue and maintaining its status as an epitome of the fashion industry, known for meticulous attention to detail and timeless style. Get more inspiration by visiting our website <https://dashebeauty.com> or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dashe Beauty Kuwait.

'Fashion power': Zarny, the Myanmar refugee turned Tokyo designer

Having fled Myanmar for Japan with his parents as a child, Shibuya Zarny began his fashion career as a model in Tokyo and went on to make clothes for royalty. "Fashion is an art that has enabled me to survive," the designer, whose label recently held a 10-year anniversary show in Bangkok, told AFP. The runway looks featured nods to Southeast Asian design, from leaf and eye motifs to jewelry worn under colorful jackets by shirtless male models. Zarny's parents came to Japan as political refugees in 1993 when he was eight. As a teenager, dressing with style became a way for him to avoid being bullied.

His mother first taught him dress-making, and before long Zarny, with his slim silhouette and intense stare, had been scouted as a model on a dance floor in the capital. "At the time we had no Instagram," he recalled, so to see



This photo shows Myanmar-born fashion designer Shibuya Zarny (left) checking the fitting of a dress on a model in his workshop in Tokyo.

and be seen he would hang out at bars, arcades and novelty photo booths called purikura. Zarny often went to Shibuya, the youthful district he later took as his first name. "At that time Shibuya was really dangerous. There was a whole underground scene" with yakuza gangsters, he said.

As his career took flight, Zarny launched his eponymous label in 2011, a year before finally securing Japanese nationality. The fledgling designer gifted 70 longyi -- a traditional garment that ties at the waist -- to Myanmar democra-

cy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. She wore a lilac one to accept the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, a moment which Zarny said "changed my life".

'Brave heart'

Alongside his catwalk endeavors over the following years, Zarny acted as a mediator between Japan and Myanmar. He even accompanied Japan's Princess Yoko of Mikasa -- dressed in a Zarny original -- on a visit there in 2019. Now, with Suu Kyi detained since Myanmar's 2021 coup, he is raising funds for



This photo shows Myanmar-born fashion designer Shibuya Zarny viewing a photo book containing commemorative photos with the former prime minister at his workshop in Tokyo. — AFP photos

others escaping his native country. When the junta seized power, Zarny received a stream of messages asking for help. "So many refugees from Myanmar came to Thailand, at the border," said the 39-year-old. He sprang into action, working with the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) and organizing events in Tokyo. "Myanmar people lost their pride, they are sad. So I want to show my fashion power, to give them confidence and a brave heart." Zarny's professional connections in Myanmar were scattered -- just one challenge he has faced in recent years.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to jet-set parties, decimating demand for his expensive clothes and eventually forcing him to abandon his showroom in Tokyo's high-end Omotesando district. One of his top clients -- politician Shinzo Abe, for whom he made suits -- resigned as prime minister in 2020 and was shot dead two years later.

Starting over

But Zarny is no stranger to starting over and has branched out into interior design. He also made a suit for the captain of the refugee Olympic team ahead of the upcoming Games in Paris, where he hopes to one day present a collection. These days Zarny runs his studio from a compact apartment in northern Tokyo, where dozens of small paintings showing bucolic scenes of Myanmar adorn the walls.

"My grandfather, who was an art professor, made these watercolors for me when I was a child, because I was missing Myanmar," he said. The recent show in Bangkok has generated demand from Thai customers, leading Zarny to reflect on his roots. "I was always thinking: where am I from? Am I a Japanese designer, or something else?" he said. "I realized finally 'I'm from Southeast Asia'," Zarny said, adding that he wants to focus on this "original" source of inspiration. —AFP

Sports

Girmay wins again as Tour de France remembers De Gaulle

Girmay's second stage win after his historic triumph at Turin

COLOMBEY-LES-DEUX-GLISES: Eritrean sprinter Biniam Girmay won stage eight of the Tour de France on Saturday at a finish line in the village where former French president Charles de Gaulle lived and is buried. Girmay became the first black African to win a stage on the Tour de France on stage 3.

"One win on the Tour is amazing but to win a second on a stage like this, that suits me, I feel just amazing," said the smiley Girmay. Overnight leader Tadej Pogacar retained his 33-second lead over Remco Evenepoel in the general standings while defending champion Jonas Vingegaard is third.

Girmay's second stage win after his historic triumph at Turin on Monday extended his lead atop the best sprinter standings in the green jersey. The final sprint was raced up an incline that favored the more slightly built sprinters even though Jasper Philipsen, the 2023 green jersey, came second while Belgian 22-year-old Arnaud de Lie was third.

Girmay is the first rider to win two stages so far with rival sprinters Dylan Groenewegen and Mark Cavendish having won previous sprint stages but who were outside the top 10 Saturday. "We had a good plan," said Intermarche rider Girmay.

"I stayed near the front on the way up the hill and it was easy because I followed two Cofidis riders up the hill. It was like teamwork." Norwegian rider Jonas Abrahamsen of Uno-X raced ahead of the peloton for most of the afternoon staying ahead for 170km and extending his lead in the king of the mountains polka dot jersey race for at least two more stages.

Hommage to de Gaulle

The stage ended in Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, home of de Gaulle and his wife Yvonne. De Gaulle led the Free French during WWII and was later president and architect of the Fifth French Republic. In a much remembered race incident in 1960 De Gaulle and his wife came out to see the Tour de France pass by their village and, seeing him there, the peloton stopped briefly to greet him.

Olympic medal hope and 2019 world road race champion Mads Pedersen pulled out of the Tour "to focus on other goals" ahead of stage eight having failed to shake off a shoulder injury. Sunday's circuit around Troyes in the Champagne-growing region features 14 gravel sections in a Tour de France first, opening up to the growing popularity to gravel racing.

"There's no favorite for tomorrow (Sunday). Maybe someone on a breakaway. Whoever wins will have to be good," said the yellow jersey.

'It could be chaotic'

Aiming for a Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double that was last achieved in 1998 by Marco Pantani, Pogacar dismissed any idea he might be tired. "The Giro is already a long time ago, I don't feel it has hurt me racing both because I have honestly never felt better. We'll see later though, who knows," said the 2020 and 2021 champion who races for UAE.

His twin concerns are Sunday's gravel stage and then keeping his team focused until they get to the mountains next weekend. "I did a recon



COLOMBEY-LES-DEUX-EGLISES: Wanty team's Eritrean rider Biniam Girmay celebrates on the podium with the best sprinter's green jersey after the 8th stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 183.5 km between Semur-en-Auxois and Colombey-les-deux-Eglises. — AFP

ride on this interesting stage," said the race leader kitted out in a woolen hat in stark contrast to a week ago in Florence where the temperature was

around 20 celsius higher on a sizzling opening day. "You need to be careful from start to finish, it could be really chaotic." — AFP

Displaced Gazan karate champ forges a future in Egypt

CAIRO: On October 6, 2023, Palestinian karate champion Mais Elbostami went to bed thrilled after winning a competition in the Gaza Strip. She awoke the next day to a different world. "I'd won first place," the shy 18-year-old told AFP from a Cairo suburb, where her family now lives after escaping the war and where she is training in the hope to one day represent her country internationally.

She said she "hadn't even hung up the medals" she won on October 6 before Hamas militants launched an unprecedented attack on Zionist entity that resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, according to an AFP tally based on Zionist figures. Immediately, she and her family fled south from their home in the northern Gaza Strip as Zionist entity launched a relentless retaliatory military campaign.

Over the past nine months, the war has reduced much of the besieged Palestinian territory to rubble and killed more than 38,000 people, according to Hamas-run Gaza's health ministry. Amid the hell of bombing and displacement, "every hour that passed felt like it aged you by a year", said Elbostami.

Death was all around her. "In the first 10 days alone, I lost my coach Jamal al-Khairi, and his granddaughter who used to train with me," she said. When the family made it to the Egyptian capital in April, Elbostami had two things on her mind:

New-look Springboks get mixed reviews after Ireland win

PRETORIA: South Africa's rugby media gave mixed reviews to the more expansive game played by the Springboks in their 27-20 win in the first Test against Ireland at Loftus Versfeld on Saturday.

The Afrikaans language Rapport newspaper hailed South Africa's first win over Ireland since 2016 in a titanic battle between the top two teams in the world. A headline awarded a "cum laude" ("with praise") to Springbok coach "Doctor" Rassie Erasmus for improving the formula that won a second successive Rugby World Cup title last year.

"The new Springbok model is still the V8 machine of 2023 but under the bonnet there is now significantly more speed," wrote rugby journalist Bokkie Gerber. According to Gerber, new assistant coaches Tony Brown and Jerry Flannery had helped the Springboks evolve into a team that was more willing to play with ball in hand than the side that won the World Cup. There was a recognition, though, that there were risks with the new strategy, with the Springboks conceding three tries — two of them in the closing stages. And flyhalf Handre Pollard, a key figure in the World Cup campaign, had an off day, missing three place kicks and playing "like a fish out of water," according to Gerber.

Rapport awarded Pollard only four out of 10 in their player assessments, while Cheslin Kolbe, Jesse Kriel, Siya Kolisi and Piet-

Stevenson out-points Harutyunyan to retain WBC lightweight crown

NEW YORK: Unbeaten American Shakur Stevenson retained his World Boxing Council lightweight world title with a methodical unanimous decision victory over Artem Harutyunyan on Saturday in Newark, New Jersey.

Stevenson improved to 22-0 with 10 wins inside the distance, making his first defence of the title he won with a narrow decision over Dominican puncher Edwin De Los Santos last November. That made Stevenson a

Making sure relatives back home were safe, and getting back to her karate training.

'Raise the flag'

Despite being trapped in Gaza, Palestinian national team coach Hassan al-Raiy put her in touch with the Egyptian team, and within two weeks she was back on the mat. "My coaches here in Egypt have practically adopted me, and they're working with me so I can get good enough to compete in the next championships," she said.

Whenever she can, she spars on the mat. But with limited resources and gym time, Elbostami has also had to train in the streets and gardens around her house. She often finds her mind wandering to Gaza's Mediterranean shore. "Training back home was different. Every Friday my teammates and I would go and train by the sea," she said.

Karate is known for its strong focus on discipline and self-control, and this has helped the young karateka to "detach from reality"—living as a refugee from a brutal war—even for a little while. "My emotions sometimes get the best of me. There are times I can't get through a full session" without remembering "fleeing on foot as air strikes fell all around us", she said. Elbostami tries to focus on her goal—"to represent my country and raise its flag in international competitions".

'It's for my country'

She has a long way to go, and her first stop on that journey is Egypt's own national championships in August. "It's a tough challenge," she said, because Egyptian karate athletes have historically outperformed their Palestinian counterparts.

"But it will bring my level up, too," Elbostami's Egyptian coach, Mamdouh Salem, told AFP that



CAIRO: Palestinian Karate-ka, 18-year-old Mais Elbostami, trains in a park near her home, east of the Egyptian capital Cairo on June 25, 2024. — AFP

the teenager was an "athlete with a lot of potential, dedication and persistence". "We're working on her technique, but ultimately karate is more a game of skill than talent—I expect Mais will excel."

He said he wants to help her raise the Palestinian flag around the world. "If we can't fight with them" in Gaza, "we can at least help them represent their country abroad", he said, echoing widespread Egyptian solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

Her Gazan teammates, coaches and most of her relatives may remain trapped in Gaza—and she said dozens of them have been killed—but against all odds, Elbostami has survived. "So I don't have any excuse to keep me from achieving my goal," she said. "I'll do everything I can to highlight the Palestinian cause. Every championship and every time I represent Palestine, it's for my country, for the martyrs and for the wounded." — AFP



PRETORIA: Ireland's Ryan Baird (R) dives to score a try during the first Rugby Union test match between South Africa and Ireland at Loftus Versfeld stadium in Pretoria on July 6, 2024. — AFP

er-Steph du Toit were given nines. Chief rugby correspondent Hendrik Cronje quoted Erasmus as acknowledging that mistakes would be made in the quest for a more attacking style.

Cronje wrote that Brown's influence could be seen in the way the Springboks used the ball, with flanks Kolisi and Du Toit both used as attacking ball carriers in the wide channel. The Sunday Times, South Africa's biggest-selling weekend newspaper, also singled out the impact of Brown, a former New Zealand All Black. "There was a willingness to explore width earlier in their attack and when they did so it was with pace and power," wrote rugby correspondent Liam del Carme.

But columnist Mark Keohane was a dissenting voice: "Great Springboks result. Terrible Bok performance," was his verdict. "Tony Brown is consid-

ered among the most innovative attack coaches in the world but watching the Springboks in Pretoria was like watching a limp All Blacks backline trying to play with width and offloads to beat an aggressive Bok defence. It looked awful," wrote Keohane.

"The scrum, the set piece and the breakdown, the pillars of South Africa's World Cup successes in 2019 and 2023, seemed to have been forgotten as South Africa sought to play a romantic new age game."

Keohane urged the Springboks to return to their World Cup-winning formula in the second Test in Durban on Saturday. The Sport24 website's Simmikiwe Xabanisa described the Springbok performance as "a mixed bag" but noted that it was the beginning of a new World Cup cycle, with the Springboks having four years to work on a new playing style. — AFP

Foster's jaw dropped in stunned consternation as the scores were read out after a fight in which he—and many onlookers—felt he had done enough against an opponent who didn't appear to land any damaging blows.

But two judges saw the bout for Conceicao 116-112 and 115-113, while the third scored it 116-112 for Foster. "I do think I was actually the winner," said Conceicao, a 2016 Olympic gold medalist who improved to 19-2 with one drawn and nine knockouts.

"I tried way more. He didn't come to fight, he was actually running, running, running, I kept on striking, so I was the winner." Foster fell to 22-3 with 12 knockouts. "I thought it was a shut-out," Foster said. "I didn't get touched but with a head-butt. I don't know, man ... I want a rematch." — AFP

Tennis federation elects Al-Aryan as Chairman

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Federation's general assembly selected a transitional committee of five members during its extraordinary meeting at the weekend. The committee will carry out the federation's affairs and prepare for the election of new board of directors according to its statute within 90 days of its formation.

The extraordinary meeting was attended by seven clubs out of 10. The meeting was chaired by Kuwait Club Board Member, Assistant Secretary Abdullah Al-Dayeen being the eldest member.

The general assembly selected Abdulsamad Al-Aryan Chairman, Saad Al-Kandary deputy chairman, Ahmad Al-Qallaf secretary, Nayef Al-Otaibi assistant secretary and Talal Al-Muhaini treasurer.

Abdulsamad Al-Aryan said the committee will act according to the rules regulating work at the federation, and will be kept during the transitional period to keep Kuwait national team participation in international tournaments from being affected, and keep the preparation and development programs on.

He said, "we hope to be up to the confidence the general assembly put in us during the next three months, and we wish the upcoming board all success".



Abdulsamad Al-Aryan

Greece end Olympic hopes of Slovenia and Doncic

PIRAEUS: Slovenia and its star Luka Doncic will miss the Olympic Games after losing 96-68 in a qualifying semi-final to Giannis Antetokounmpo and hosts Greece on Saturday in Piraeus. Doncic, a 2.01-metre (6 foot 7 inch) point guard, who led Slovenia to the last four in Tokyo three years ago and steered the Dallas Mavericks to the National Basketball Association finals this season, became a big-name absentee from the Olympic basketball tournament, which tips off on July 27.

"Congrats to Greece. They played better than us," said Doncic. "They have an amazing team. Very well coached. They have Giannis, it's a lot. But also other players. Very experienced team. They know how to play basketball."

Doncic was his team's top scorer with 21 points, but Slovenia always trailed after the Greeks raced away to lead 32-14 by the end of the first quarter. "We wanted to get Luka out of the game," said Greece coach Vassilis Spanoulis. "We wanted to press him all over the court. All the lads did an excellent job."

The comfortable lead meant Antetokounmpo played only 21 minutes, scoring 13 points. Thomas Walkup led Greece with 19 points. Greece, which has not taken part in the Olympic Games since 2008, must beat either Croatia or the Dominican Republic in the tournament final on Sunday to qualify for Paris.

"There's a fantastic atmosphere in this team. We're a team that's not afraid of anyone," said Spanoulis. The event in Piraeus is one of four tournaments this weekend to determine the last four places in Paris. The others are in Riga, Valencia and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Hosts France, defending champions the United States, Canada, Australia, South Sudan, Japan, Serbia and Germany have already qualified. — AFP

Sports

England beat Switzerland on penalties to keep Euro 2024 dream alive

Goalkeeper Jordan Pickford was the Three Lions' hero in the shoot-out

DUSSELDORF: England's quest for a first major tournament win in 58 years remained alive after another late fightback before beating Switzerland 5-3 on penalties to book their place in the Euro 2024 semi-finals on Saturday. After the 120 minutes finished level at 1-1, goalkeeper Jordan Pickford was the Three Lions' hero in the shoot-out as he saved Switzerland's first spot-kick from Manuel Akanji.

Cole Palmer, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka, Ivan Toney and Trent Alexander-Arnold converted their penalties to send England into a semi-final meeting with Turkey or the Netherlands in Dortmund on Wednesday. After needing Bellingham's 95th-minute equalizer before going on to beat Slovakia in extra time in the last 16, England were again staring at defeat with 10 minutes to go.

A dreary encounter for the first 75 minutes came to life after Breel Embolo put Switzerland in front. Saka's fine strike from outside the box levelled with England's first shot on target five minutes later. Manchester City defender Akanji was then the unfortunate penalty villain as Switzerland's horrible record in major tournament quarter-finals goes on.

They have now lost five without ever reaching a semi-final. By contrast, England march on despite another in a string of underwhelming performances from Gareth Southgate's men. "We know there are two more games, we can change our lives and make more history that's not been done before," said man-of-the-match Saka. In his 100th match in charge of his country, Southgate again resisted calls for mass changes in personnel but did alter his system. Ezri Konsa made his first ever competitive international start in place of the suspended Marc Guehi as England switched to a back three.

However, contrary to expectation, Saka remained on the right in what proved to be an inspired decision by Southgate. The Arsenal winger was by far the biggest threat of a first half in which neither side managed a shot on target. Saka was skipping beyond Michel Aebischer at will and created the best chance of the first period when Kobbie Mainoo saw an effort deflected behind just before the half-time whistle.

The game continued at the same labored pace from both sides into the second half. Southgate has been repeatedly criticized for being too slow to influence games with his substitutions.



DUSSELDORF: England's midfielder #10 Jude Bellingham fights for the ball with Switzerland's defender #05 Manuel Akanji during the UEFA Euro 2024 quarter-final football match between England and Switzerland at the Duesseldorf Arena in Duesseldorf. — AFP

England make belated changes

Despite having one of the most richly-talented squads at the tournament, it took until they fell behind for the England boss to shake things up. England looked headed for a meek exit when Embolo pounced at the far post to turn in Dan Ndoye's deflected cross at the back post. Southgate reacted immediately with Palmer, Eberechi Eze and Luke Shaw, making his first appearance since February, sent on. Within five minutes they were level as Saka cut inside and fired low and hard in off the far post.

Switzerland were indebted to a brilliant save from Yann Sommer to deny Declan Rice a second for England early in extra time.

Harry Kane was then forced off injured after a nasty fall into the England dugout. And it was Swit-

zerland who came closest in the second half of extra time as Xherdan Shaqiri's corner came back off the woodwork before Pickford parried Zeki Amdouni's powerful strike from distance.

England had won only one of five previous penalty shoot-outs at the Euros, including defeat by Italy in the final three years ago. But they were perfect from the spot as Saka erased some of the pain from his decisive miss in the Euro 2020 final.

"For me it is something I embrace," added Saka. "You can fail once but you have a choice whether to put yourself in that position again. I believe we have some of the best takers in the Premier League and in the world. We were pretty confident if it came to penalties and showed that today. We scored five out of five and into the next round." — AFP

Duplantis headlines Paris Diamond League with eyes on Olympics

PARIS: Pole vault star Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis headlines a host of global track and field stars who will get a taste of elite competition in Paris at Sunday's Diamond League, just three weeks out from the Olympic Games in the French capital. The Olympic athletics programme starts on August 1 at the Stade de France, once used for Diamond League meets during the Usain Bolt era. The Diamond League is now held at the Stade Charlety in the south of the city, with a near sell-out crowd of 20,000 expected on Sunday.

Duplantis is one of five Olympic champions, six world champions and 12 reigning European champions set to test their mettle in Paris. "I've been jumping for a very long time. I've got good at it and figured out how to jump high," said Duplantis, who this season alone has already won a second world indoor title and a third European gold, as well as bettering his own world record to 6.24 metres. Those triumphs have all added to the US-born Swede's vast medal haul including Olympic gold from Tokyo and two world outdoor titles. Pressure to perform, however, was not something that overly bothered Duplantis, with Sunday's competition his last before the July 26-August 11 Olympics.

"It's something you get used to, in a way. I focus on myself and try to get the best out of me." Turning to Sunday's meet, he added: "I definitely want to make sure that everything's where I want it to be, to try to gather as much information as I possibly can because I want everything to be as perfect as it can be."

"I hope to jump high tomorrow and show myself I'm in world record shape going into the Olympics. "I want to make sure that everything's where it should be. I'm going to give it 110 per cent like I always do. "We do have a really great field. It's basically the Olympic final."

Duplantis said he had been working on his speed on the runway. "It feels like the more speed I can control on the runway and consistently bring, then I can get on stiffer poles," he said. "The stiffer the poles the more energy I'm bringing to the take-off, then it's like a catapult, the more it can just fling me up there in the air."

Kenya's Faith Kipyegon, a double Olympic champion and four-time world gold medalist, will also be competing, a year after shattering the world 5,000m record at the same stadium. Kipyegon, however, will be racing the 1500m, an event in which she also holds the world record and will use to hone her speed in the run-in to the Olympics. Other Olympic champions in the French capital are German long jumper Malaika Mihambo and Polish hammer thrower Wojciech Nowicki, who both won European titles in Rome in June, and American discus thrower Valerie Allman.

Nine other newly-crowned European champions are set to hit the track in Paris with an eye on the Olympics. French athletes Alice Finot (steeplechase) and Gabriel Tual (800m), Ukrainian Yaroslava Mahuchikh (high jump), Switzerland's Timothe Mumenthaler (200m), Poland's Natalia Kaczmarek (400m), Ireland's Ciara Mageean (1500m), Croatia's Sandra Elkasevic (discus), Italy's Lorenzo Ndele Simonelli (110m hurdles) and Czech Jakub Vadlejch (javelin) will all be present.

Tual will face Kenya's world 800m silver medalist Emmanuel Wanyonyi, who clocked a world leading and personal best time of 1:41:70 at the Kenyan trials last month. "I feel pressure going into the Paris Olympics," Wanyonyi said. "I need to prepare well. Tomorrow I will just try to run my best." — AFP



SILVERSTONE: Mercedes' British driver George Russell reacts after the qualifying session ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. — AFP

Russell 'riding a wave' as drivers storm Silverstone

SILVERSTONE: George Russell said he was "riding a wave" on Saturday when he secured pole position ahead of Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton and compatriot Lando Norris of McLaren in a British one-two-three ahead of Sunday's British Grand Prix.

Fuelled by energy from the noisy home crowd after a thrilling finish to a tense qualifying session run in changing conditions after a rainswept morning, the 26-year-old Mercedes driver paid tribute to the fans and his team after claiming his second pole of the season and third of his career.

"What a feeling!" he said as the spectators began a celebratory party. "At the start of the year, I don't think we could have dreamt of being on pole here with a one-two for me and Lewis - and with Lando. It's just mega. "It's down to these fans. They give us so much energy, for all three of us. I don't think Silverstone could have dreamt of three Britons in the top three! "The car at the moment is feeling so good. The team has done so much work. It has really come alive in 'quali' and it's a joy to drive around this circuit. We are riding this wave at the moment and I am absolutely buzzing."

"But eyes on tomorrow! We've got a race to win and it's going to be tight with Lando and Max is going to be fast as well." Hamilton, who missed pole by 0.171 seconds, also praised the crowd and congratulated Russell. "He did an amazing job," he said. "We definitely didn't expect to be front row this weekend, but this is huge for us. The car felt fantastic and everyone in our team really deserves this." He added that he felt Russell had found time on his final lap that he had 'left on the table'.

"But I feel really confident about the car and in the conditions we have to work together to keep Lando behind us." Norris, who had been fastest in both sessions on Friday, said: "I'm happy with P3, three Brits locking out the top three - so that's pretty cool. George and Lewis put in some nice laps and there was a little mistake on my part."

"It's going to be a good race. We're quick, I can bring the fight to George and Lewis, so I am excited." It was the first time three British drivers had taken the top three places in qualifying at their home race and the first British triple top in qualifying at any race since the 1968 South African Grand Prix when Jim Clarke headed Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart.

Russell took pole with a best lap in one minute and 25.819 seconds to beat seven-time champion Hamilton by 0.171 seconds in the final minute as the track improved. The British trio left series leader and three-time champion Max Verstappen to qualify fourth in his slightly damaged Red Bull following an off through a gravel trap that affected the floor of his car.

Luckless Perez

Oscar Piastri was fifth in the second McLaren ahead of Nico Hulkenberg of Haas, Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, Lance Stroll of Aston Martin, Alex Albon of Williams and two-time champion Fernando Alonso in the second Aston Martin.

"We did what we could and we are still in the fight," said Verstappen, who thanked his team for their attempts to repair the damage to his car after running through the gravel trap at Copse. "Without that, I think we could have fought for pole."

It was a day to forget again for two of the leading drivers with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc qualifying only 11th and luckless Sergio Perez sliding out of Q1. He was classified 19th, the third time in five races that he failed to make it into Q2, heaping more pressure on Red Bull as they seek to maintain their fight for the constructors' world championship. — AFP

Rodriguez inspires Colombia into semis with win over Panama

GLENDALE: Confident Colombia marched into the semi-finals of the Copa America with an impressive 5-0 win over Panama on Saturday setting up a meeting with Uruguay in the last four. James Rodriguez delivered another top class performance for Colombia, creating two goals and scoring a penalty as Panama were put to the sword.

Colombia, now unbeaten in 27 games, will face Uruguay in Charlotte on Wednesday after Marcelo Bielsa's side beat Brazil 4-2 on penalties on Saturday after the game ended goalless. The other semi-final, on Tuesday in New Jersey, will see world champions Argentina take on surprise package Canada.

Colombia went ahead in the eighth minute when Jhon Cordoba showed great strength to hold off his marker and power home a header from a Rodriguez corner. Seven minutes later Rodriguez converted from the penalty spot after Jhon Arias burst into the area and was brought down by diving Panama keeper Orlando Mosquera.

Panama, who had qualified from the group stage after beating the USA in group play, desperately needed a foothold in the game and went close when Roderick Miller headed against the post after a cross from Eric Davis.

But four minutes before the break, Colombia put the game beyond the reach of the Central Americans when Rodriguez showed great awareness to take a quick free-kick from in his own half, lifting the ball over the top to Luis Diaz.

The Liverpool winger raced goalward and with Mosquera caught in no-man's land pulled off a wonderful chip to make it 3-0. Colombia kept calm control of the game after the break and added a fourth in the 70th minute with a 25-yard blast from Richard Rios. Daniel Munoz had looked to be brought down inside the box but before the referee could blow his whistle, Rios pounced on the loose ball and blasted home.

In stoppage time, Panama defender Jose Cordoba crashed into Santiago Arias in the area and with Rodriguez having been substituted, Miguel Borja slotted home the penalty to complete the rout.

Rodriguez has had a mixed career at club level but has been outstanding in this tournament, recapturing the kind of form that he showed when he emerged on the global stage at the World Cup in Brazil ten years ago. The 32-year-old's inventive passing and deft touches have added class to a team which has an abundance of pace and solid organization.

Committed to the objective

"It was a tough game despite how the result looks. They are strong, but we came in very well, we were able to score goals quickly and that gave us control of the game," said the midfielder, who now plays in Brazil for Sao Paulo.

"Let's hope we can reach the final we all want that. We're all going through a good moment and that's good," added the former Real Madrid and Bayern Munich playmaker. "We have a very good team, all committed to the objective, and we'll see what comes for us in the semi-finals," he said.

Panama coach Thomas Christiansen felt the scoreline was harsh on his team but said they needed to remember their achievements at the tournament as they turn their attention to qualifying for the 2026 World Cup.

"The result was excessive from my point of view. But the mistakes we made cannot be made against teams of Colombia's quality, with their speed, their intensity and the moment they are living," he said. "I'm honestly satisfied with the players' performance, it wasn't the result we wanted or deserved, but we have to learn from it."

"I'm proud of my players... we must congratulate them for this great Copa America, which has not ended as we would have liked, but this is also a learning experience," he said. — AFP



GLENDALE: Colombia's forward #07 Luis Diaz fights for the ball with Panama's defender #24 Edgardo Farina during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament quarter-final football match between Colombia and Panama at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Uruguay's defender #08 Nahitan Nandez fouls Brazil's forward #10 Rodrygo during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament quarter-final football match between Uruguay and Brazil at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Uruguay beat Brazil on penalties to reach Copa America semi-finals

Weghorst emerges as Dutch wildcard ahead of Euros semi

LAS VEGAS: Uruguay beat Brazil on penalties (4-2) to reach the semi-finals of Copa America after an ugly game ended goalless on Saturday. Uruguay, who finished the game with ten men after Nahitan Nandez was sent off in the 74th minute, will face Colombia in Charlotte, North Carolina, in their semi-final on Wednesday. Colombia, now unbeaten in 27 games, beat Panama 5-0 in Saturday's other quarter-final earlier in Arizona. The other semi-final, in New Jersey on Tuesday, will see world champions Argentina face surprise package Canada. For five-times world champions Brazil it was a disappointing early end to a tournament in which they never truly clicked, and a lot of work remains to be done if Dorival Junior's team are to be in shape to compete for the title in the 2026 World Cup.

In a city better known for boxing than for the beautiful game, it was a bruising contest with little quality play and a tournament high 41 fouls. A poor quality playing field hardly helped with both teams struggling to produce their best football on an uneven surface. The first - and best - chance of a game of few opportunities came in the 35th minute when Uruguay striker Darwin Nunez had a clear header in front of goal but mis-timed his effort which flew wide off his shoulder. Within moments, Brazil created an opening of their own with Raphinha breaking clear, but Uruguay keeper Sergio Rochet stayed tall and made a vital save. Marcelo Bielsa's Uruguay were as tenacious as always, harrying Brazil in midfield and never afraid to interrupt their flow with a foul.

Brazil resorted too often to long balls forward but with only their 17-year-old talent Endrick, in for the suspended Vinicius Junior, as a central striker they lacked the physical presence to make that approach effective. The game deteriorated the longer it went on with foul after foul, not deterred by lenient refereeing. But Uruguay's hopes of wearing Brazil down were dealt a blow when Nandez hacked down Rodrygo with a dangerous slide into his ankle and after a VAR review the defender was sent off. From then on it was clear that Uruguay were simply trying to make it to full-time and penalties and with no extra-time in Copa America, they were able to achieve their aim.

Tight game

After Federico Valverde scored with the first spot kick, Eder Militao saw his effort saved by the diving Rochet. When Douglas Luiz hit the post for Brazil, they trailed 3-1 and Jose Gimenez had the chance to clinch the game for Uruguay. His effort was superbly saved by Alisson Becker. Substitute Gabriel Martinelli scored to keep Brazil alive but midfielder Manuel Ugarte kept his cool to drive home the decisive kick and send the 15-times Copa champions into the last four. Bielsa praised his team's calmness in the shoot-out and their desire during the 90 minutes.

"I'm more seduced by attacking than defending, but I have to appreciate that in a tight game we created one more situation than our opponents, we defended well and we played 15 minutes with one less player, which

at this level is a real factor," he said. "If you ask me if I'm happy with having created three goal situations in 90 minutes, no, I'm not. But our opponents had two," he said. "Today we outplayed Brazil in segments of the game and were outplayed in others," added the Argentine. For Brazil the thoughts turn to the need to ensure they make it to the next World Cup after a poor start to CONMEBOL qualifying. "We leave the tournament undefeated but not satisfied," said Dorival Junior whose team won once and drew twice in the group stage.

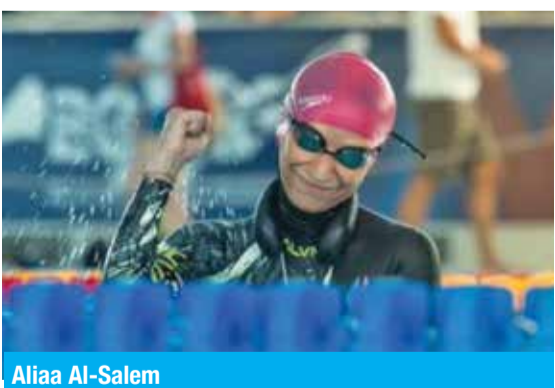
"We didn't play at a high level from a technical point of view, but I don't dismiss any of the games. I think there was commitment, fighting spirit. At no time did the team stop going for the result," he added. "This process needs patience. We have two years to work before the World Cup. The first thing is to qualify for the World Cup because we are sixth in the (South American qualifiers) and it is a position that makes us uncomfortable," he said.

Meanwhile, the scoresheet may not reflect it but the key to the Netherlands' progress to the Euro 2024 semi-finals was target man Wout Weghorst. The Dutch came from behind to beat Turkey 2-1 in Berlin on Saturday in a tense quarter-final, with the balance tipped in their favor by the burly Burnley striker's appearance from the bench. With Turkey comfortably sitting 1-0 up at half-time fervently backed by raucous support at the Olympiastadion, Ronald Koeman rolled the dice and called for his wildcard option. Weghorst burst into football's global consciousness with a stunning brace as

a substitute against Argentina in the 2022 World Cup quarter-final and is still devastating in that role.

The 31-year-old six-foot-six striker rescued the Netherlands a 2-1 win over Poland in their Euros opener with a well-taken goal off the bench. Koeman restricted Weghorst to 44 minutes across the Netherlands' opening four matches but gave him a full 45 against Turkey and it paid dividends, as the team booked a semi-final date with England. Instantly the Dutch had a target to aim for in the box, with Memphis Depay's drifting denying them a focal point until Weghorst's appearance. "Because of (Weghorst) you create a little bit more chaos in the box and they have to defend more, so I think Wout helped a lot," said Dutch defender Nathan Ake. "He's a nightmare to play against. He is strong, is a nuisance in a box and he fights for everything. He runs off everything. So for us he is a great asset." Weghorst, who spent the season on loan at Hoffenheim, put the jitters into Turkey's previously solid defence.

Mert Gunok's save from Weghorst led to the corner from which the Netherlands equalized, with Stefan de Vrij heading home Depay's cross. With the Turkish rear-guard tying themselves in knots to stifle Weghorst, the Netherlands netted again six minutes later with Mert Muldur, under pressure from Cody Gakpo, bundling into his own net from Denzel Dumfries' raking ball. "We started quite well but it changed after 20 minutes, (then) they were dominating," explained Koeman. The tournament's final will be held in Miami on July 14. — AFP



Aliaa Al-Salem

3 Kuwaiti divers set new records at World Championship

KUWAIT: Three Kuwaiti female divers set new records for Kuwait during their participation in the 14th CMAS World Freediving Indoor Championship, held in Belgrade, Serbia. Dr Mai Al-Bader set a new Kuwaiti record in the Master Women Dynamic Apnea Without Fins category, recording a distance of 75 meters.

Meanwhile, Aliaa Al-Salem set a new Kuwaiti record in the Dynamic Apnea with Bi-fins category, recording a distance of 123.5 meters and Fay Al-Awadhi set a new Kuwaiti record in the Speed Apnea 8x50 category, recording a time of 12:29 minutes.



Dr Mai Al-Bader



Fay Al-Awadhi

Alcaraz faces piano man at Wimbledon

LONDON: Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz targets the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Sunday against a piano-playing Frenchman, while Emma Raducanu has British fans dreaming of a first home women's champion in 47 years. Alcaraz, chasing a fourth Grand Slam title, is attempting to become just the sixth man to win the French Open and Wimbledon back-to-back.

After cruising through the first two rounds, the Spanish world number three twice trailed by a set before defeating Frances Tiafoe in the round of 32. "I realize that I'm a good player in the fifth set," said the 21-year-old. "I push the opponent just to be at his 100% physically and mentally, and play at his 100%. Sometimes for the other player it is difficult to keep at this kind of intensity." World number 16 Humbert is in the fourth round for the second time, five years after reaching the same stage. Away from the courts, the left-handed French number one can be found playing the piano, a passion since he was five years old.

"I love music. I play a little bit of electric guitar, but I'm better at piano," he said. "When you play piano, you are only with you. It's great to have the time to be alone, to enjoy, in tennis, it's the opposite." Humbert is one of three Frenchmen to have made the last 16 at this year's Wimbledon. Three years after her breakthrough summer when a run to the last 16 at Wimbledon was followed by an historic US Open title, Raducanu is making headlines again. The British star, now ranked 135 after a depressing run of injuries, indifferent form



Emma Raducanu

and questionable coaching changes, finds herself with a potentially clear run to the semi-finals. On Sunday, the 21-year-old faces Lulu Sun, the first New Zealand woman in the fourth round since 1959. If she gets through that, a quarter-final date with either Paula Badosa or Donna Vekic awaits.

Raducanu's win over Maria Sakkari on Friday was just her second over a top 10 player - both have come in the last two weeks. "I'm just trying to cherish every moment I have here," said Raducanu. On Saturday, Raducanu pulled out of the mixed doubles where she had been set to play alongside Andy Murray. That decision meant Murray's All England Club career ended on a low note. Judy Murray, the mother of the two-time Wimbledon champion, described Raducanu's decision as "astonishing". — AFP