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KUWAIT MAKES GIANT OIL FIND

New reserves equivalent to country's entire production for three years



KUWAIT: CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah announced on Sunday a huge discovery of light oil and natural gas at the maritime Noukhatha oilfield, east of Failaka Island. Sheikh Saud said the total deposits of light oil and gas in the field are estimated at 3.2 billion oil-equivalent barrels, which is equal to three years of Kuwait's production.

The initial estimated area of the newly discovered oil well is around 96 sq km, KPC said in its statement. It added that the preliminary estimates of the hydrocarbon reserves present at the well were estimated at approximately 2.1 billion barrels of light oil and 5.1 trillion standard cubic feet of gas, which correspond to 3.2 billion barrels of oil equivalent.

The field was discovered and developed by Kuwait Oil Co (KOC), the exploration and production arm of KPC. The launch of the current marine exploration project was based on two-dimensional seismic surveys of the area, along with geophysical and geological studies to understand the earth's layers and compositions, identify and secure the best drilling sites, and prepare for logistical operations, KOC said in a statement. KOC revealed the marine area represents about one-third of Kuwait's



The Noukhatha offshore oilfield, located east of Failaka Island.

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KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah – in the presence of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah – receives Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, CEO of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmad Al-Eidan and KOC Deputy CEO of Exploration and Drilling Khaled Mohammad Al-Mulla during an official reception at Seif Palace on Sunday. — KUNA

Kuwait to raise service charges, cut subsidies, fix spending for 5 yrs

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The finance ministry said on Sunday that it plans to take serious measures to achieve "financial sustainability" that include raising charges for public services, reducing the huge bill of subsidies and placing a cap on public spending, in addition to reviewing employment and wages.

In the first financial forum held by the ministry in the presence of representatives of government departments, the ministry said it plans to "reprice public services and state land and revise subsidies". "Kuwait is an extremely generous state" said Finance Minister Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, in a reference to uncontrolled spending which has been rising at a fast rate, causing a sharp increase in budget deficits.

Mudhaf said that the assets of the state reserve have almost diminished from KD 33.6 billion in 2015/2016 to less than KD 2 billion currently, using them to meet accumulative budget deficits totaling KD 322 billion over the past nine fiscal years. The ministry also drew a gloomy picture of the country's finances in the next four fiscal years, 2025/2026 to 2028/2029, estimating an accumulated budget deficit of KD 26 billion if things remain unchanged under the assumption that oil prices will average \$76 a barrel.

The ministry said it plans to reduce the budget deficit through rationalizing spending by fixing spending at its current level of KD 24.5 billion through to the fiscal year 2027/2028. It will also be accompanied by diversifying sources of income to reduce almost total dependence on oil income by raising non-oil revenues from KD 2.7 billion now to KD 4 billion in the 27/28 fiscal year.

The ministry is also exploring ways to save part of the spending on wages and subsidies. The minister said on average, the wages bill accounted for 75 percent of public spending, as government salaries increased from KD 9.9 billion in 15/16 to KD 14.5 billion in 23/24, a staggering rise of 85 percent. Subsidies increased by 45 percent from KD 3.1 billion to KD 5.9 billion during the same period.

Kuwait is projecting a deficit of KD 5.9 billion in the current fiscal year 2024/2025, which started on April 1. The country posted a surplus only once since 2015/2016, of KD 6.4 billion in 2022/2023.

BLOODIED TRUMP SURVIVES ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Shooter, spectator killed • Amir condemns heinous attack



BUTLER, Pennsylvania: (Left) Former US President Donald Trump pumps his fist as he is rushed offstage during a rally on July 13, 2024 after an assassination attempt. (Right) Secret Service agents tend to Trump onstage. — AFP photos

BETHEL PARK, Pennsylvania: Donald Trump survived a weekend assassination attempt days before he is due to accept the formal Republican presidential nomination, in an attack that will further inflame the US political divide and has raised questions about the security failures.

HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable to Trump, voicing his relief over his safety and for surviving the heinous assassination attempt. HH the Amir strongly condemned

the criminal act that went against human principles and values, wishing Trump swift recovery and good health. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad

Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Trump. Authorities identified a rally attendee who was

shot and killed as Corey Comperatore, 50, of Sarver, Pennsylvania, who Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro told reporters was killed when he dove on top of his family to protect them from the hail of bullets. "Corey was an avid supporter of the former president, and was so excited to be there last night with him in the community," Shapiro said, adding, "Political disagreements can never, ever be

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SEE PAGES 5 & 6

Hamas quits Gaza truce talks after Zionist massacres

GAZA: A Hamas official said Sunday the Palestinian group was withdrawing from Gaza truce talks, following a deadly Zionist strike that targeted commander Mohammed Deif more than nine months into the war. The Islamist group's military chief Deif was "well and directly overseeing" operations, another Hamas official told AFP, despite the bombing raid on a southern

Gaza displacement camp on Saturday, which the Zionist entity said was an attempt to kill him.

The first senior official from the group said Hamas was pulling out of negotiations towards a ceasefire partly because of Zionist massacres. The health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said at least 92 people had been killed and 300 wounded in a strike on Al-Mawasi, a Zionist-designated "safe zone" on the Mediterranean coast.

Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' Qatar-based political chief, told international mediators of the "decision to halt negotiations due to the (Zionist) occupation's lack of seriousness, continued policy of procrastination and obstruction, and the ongoing massacres against unarmed civilians", the official said. But Hamas was "ready to resume negotiations" when the Zionist enti-

ty's government "demonstrates seriousness in reaching a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner exchange deal", the official quoted Haniyeh as saying.

Talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt, with United States support, have for months tried but failed to bring a halt to the war. The Zionist entity's military offensive has killed at least 38,584 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to data provided by the Gaza health ministry. Al-Mawasi, near the cities of Khan Yunis and Rafah, had in May been declared a safe humanitarian zone by the Zionist military, which told civilians to evacuate to it. However, there have been multiple deadly incidents there blamed on Zionist strikes.

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Local



The Indonesian traditional dish "Beef Rendang".



Chicken Satay



Indonesian spices

Indonesia spices up the world

Indonesia Embassy promotes rich culture, showcases cuisine



Indonesian Ambassador Lena Maryana poses for a group photo with diplomats and officials.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Indonesia Embassy held an event (lunch) for officials as part of the "Indonesia Spices up the World" at the Official Residence of Indonesia. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Indonesian Ambassador Lena Maryana, said "The Indonesian cuisine is a rich tapestry of flavors and ingredients. Today, we introduce five main dishes from Indonesia that is sure to captivate and delight Kuwaitis and other Middle Eastern food lovers."

She added: "The unique blend of spices, some known and some new, adds to the allure of these dishes. For instance, while you may not be familiar with

galangal a Southeast Asian spice similar to ginger or cardamom, which resembles macadamia but must be cooked before consumption, these ingredients contribute to the distinct flavors that make Indonesian cuisine so special."

The Ambassador noted that Indonesia is not just about its delicious food; it is also a land rich in culture and breathtaking tourist destinations that makes a visit to Indonesia an unforgettable experience. During the lunch many traditional dishes were served to guests. The Ambassador said, "Today we served five amazing Indonesian dishes. The first one is Nasi Goreng, which is a fried rice typically made with Kecap Manis a sweet

soy sauce, shallots, garlic, tamarind, and chili. It is often served with fried eggs, prawns, or chicken, and garnished with pickled vegetables and krupuk (crackers)."

"The second dish is chicken Satay - the skewers of marinated chicken are grilled and served with a savory peanut sauce. Third one is beef rendang known as one of the most delicious dishes in the world. It is a slow-cooked dry curry made with beef simmered in coconut milk and a mixture of lemongrass, galangal, garlic, turmeric, ginger, and chilies," she added.

She continued, "The fourth dish is Gado-Gado, a mixed vegetables with peanut sauce, where it is considered as the Indonesian salad but also can be the

main dish in some cultures. The last is Soto Ayam, a flavorful chicken soup, made with turmeric, lemongrass, lime leaves, and shallots. It is often served with boiled eggs, vermicelli, and crispy fried shallots."

The Indonesian ambassador revealed at the end of the event that her embassy will hold the Indonesian week, stating "The Indonesian Week will be for the small and medium enterprises, trade, and people investment and also for the cultural mission, etc. In addition, we will have a fashion week. This event, known as Amazing Nusantara, will highlight Indonesia's rich heritage and the development of its new capital city, Nusantara that will be by 2045."

KRS and OIC organizations ink strategic agreement

DOHA: Kuwait Relief Society (KRS) signed on Sunday in the Qatari capital, Doha, a strategic cooperation agreement with the humanitarian funds of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The chairman of the society, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh, said in a statement to KUNA that the agreement aims to set up a platform for joint humanitarian work, strengthen the regional and international presence of both institutions, and create a tangible impact in the areas of humanitarian work and rapid intervention in disasters and crises.

Al-Saleh, who represented the society in inking the agreement, pointed to the necessity of cooperation in humanitarian programs, relief projects, exchanging experience, and sharing knowledge and information between the two institutions in the field of humanitarian work and emergency response. For his part, the Kuwait Relief Society Engineer Jamal Al-Nouri confirmed in a similar statement to KUNA that areas of cooperation will include implementing joint qualitative humanitarian initiatives and jointly joining already existing humanitarian or relief initiatives. He added that according to the agreement, each party pledges to allocate half a million Qatari riyals (about \$137,000) to support the rapid intervention initiative in cases of disasters, crises, and emergencies. Al-Nouri thanked the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry's Development Affairs and International Cooperation Sector for approval. — KUNA



Chairman of the Kuwait Relief Society Dr Ibrahim Al-Saleh is pictured with OIC's official. — KUNA



Officials and group representatives meet on Sunday. — KUNA

Arab declaration for Belonging and Legal Identity launched

CAIRO: The Arab League, in cooperation with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), at a meeting held on Sunday, welcomed the launch of the Arab Declaration for Belonging and Legal Identity. Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector at the Arab League Ambassador, Dr Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, said in a statement the launch is an execution of the resolution taken at the 42nd session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Social Affairs—as a guiding legal document.

Abu Ghazaleh stated that the aim of this step is to enhance the protection of children and women by raising awareness about the importance of be-

longing and legal identity and demonstrating their connection to human rights and development goals. She added that this step envisages progress towards achieving sustainable development goals, assessing the situation, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the field.

For her part, the Supervisor of the Family and Childhood Administration at the Arab League, Lubna Azzam, confirmed in her speech during the meeting that the issue is one of the most important guarantees of Arab national security. Azzam stressed that strengthening belonging and consecrating Arab identity is a mission that requires continuous progress at all levels to enhance awareness of belonging and legal identity as they are related to human rights and development objectives, including progress towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

She affirmed the significance of the declaration to ensure a better future for children in the Arab region and consolidate their basic rights, including the right to obtain a legal identity. This issue is a "high

priority," Azzam said, adding that the Arab League is giving it all attention, especially because of the difficulties that many children face in enjoying their basic rights, especially in areas of armed conflict and conditions of asylum and displacement. Azzam said, "In parallel with the event of launching the Arab Declaration on Belonging and Legal Identity, we are remembering children living in our Arab homeland under occupation."

"Their dream is to live a safe and reassured life away from all causes of fear and all forms of violence." She added, "Our hearts ache for the innocent children of Palestine," who have been suffering due to the brutal aggression of Zionist occupation against the Gaza Strip in front of the eyes of the world." The meeting was attended by experts, media figures, and representatives of Arab and international organizations concerned with belonging and legal identity in Arab countries. Kuwait was represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs envoy, First Secretary of the Human Rights Affairs Department, Mohammed Al-Bishara. — KUNA

GCC condemns Zionist brutality

RIYADH: The chief of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Al-Budaiwi, on Sunday "strongly" condemned a Zionist attack on a tent camp in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, which left scores of Palestinians either dead or injured. The incident is part of "systemic" Zionist violence and brutality, said a statement by the Riyadh-based bloc, lamenting these actions as grave violations of established international laws and principles while urging the international community to intervene and put an end to targeting innocent Palestinians. Gulf Arab states will continue to support Palestinian rights until their statehood aspirations come to fruition, based on

1967 border lines with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state, it underlined.

UAE dispatches aid

Meanwhile, United Arab Emirates has urgently begun dispatching three tons of medical aid to Gaza to aid hospitals suffering from a shortage of medicines in the enclave. The UAE news agency, WAM, said on Sunday that the supplies include necessary medical items badly needed by the hospitals, including drugs for diabetics. The UAE is seeking, in coordination with international medical organizations and hospitals, to back up the health sector in Gaza, where scores of hospitals could no longer function due to the massive destruction inflicted by the occupation forces. Abu Dhabi had dispatched medical supplies, including 10 ambulance vehicles, to Gaza. So far, it has sent up to 337 tons of medical equipment and drugs to the war-battered enclave. — KUNA



GAZA: A Palestinian woman mourns by the body of a relative killed in a Zionist airstrike which hit a makeshift prayer hall at Al-Shati refugee camp west of Gaza City. — AFP

Local

Volunteers selflessly assist husseiniya visitors in Kuwait

‘It makes me feel connected to Ahlulbayt’



Husseiniya volunteers prepare food for visitors. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Ayoub Mustafa

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Upon the sighting of the Muharram crescent according to the Islamic calendar, husseiniyas begin to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Shiite Muslims start wearing black and perform mourning rituals for Imam Hussein, the son of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As people visit husseiniyas for condolences, Kuwait Times spoke to volunteers known as “servants of Imam Hussein” to understand the reason behind their service.

“I have been serving at husseiniyas since I was 12 years old. I learned to serve Imam Hussein’s mourners from my father and my grandfather’s house because they originally had a husseiniya. I serve the visitors for the sake of the ninth of his progeny, Imam Mahdi, and in obedience to the teachings of Ahlulbayt - the family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as we were taught to be helpful to everyone without

discrimination or preference among people. Servers do this in emulation of Imam Hussein and his good path,” Ayoub Mustafa, a servant of Imam Hussein, said. “We share this reward and mourning with the mourners who visit husseiniyas to express their sorrow to the family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH),” he added.

“I have served Imam Hussein since my early childhood, and in this service, I am serving his twelfth descendant, the ninth of Imam Hussein’s progeny, the awaited Imam Mahdi from the family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). We console Imam Mahdi for his grief over his grandfather Imam Hussein,” said Zainab, a servant of Imam Hussein.

“My service often involves organizing and facilitating the movement of visitors in the husseiniya, ensuring that seating arrangements guarantee comfort for everyone during their visit. I also distribute food, candles and other traditional items related to each of the 10 days of Muharram. I



A volunteer checks the sound system.

learned to serve at husseiniyas from my friends, as one of them had a husseiniya, and we would go to help her family with preparations. Since then, we have continued to serve,” she explained.

“Volunteering to serve at husseiniyas cannot be compensated or equalized with any other type of volunteering because it makes me feel connected to Ahlulbayt - the family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). I feel that through my service, I am consoling the Prophet of God (PBUH) and his beloved family for their loss of Imam Hussein,” said Abdulaziz, another servant of Imam Hussein.

“Therefore, you see the servants offering their service to the awaited Mahdi, who is present among us from the family of the Prophet (PBUH) in this time. We do not see the family of the Messenger of God (PBUH) with our physical eyes, but we certainly see them with our insight, and this motivates us to serve the mourners who come to the husseiniyas to share in the grief of the awaited Imam Mahdi for his grandfather Imam Hussein. This is the main reason behind serving at husseiniyas. Serving the visitors of the husseiniyas is the least we can do,” he pointed out.



Interior Ministry boosts security at husseiniyas

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to maintaining preparedness and vigilance to protect the security at the husseiniyas. During an inspection tour of husseiniyas in the governorates of Jahra and Hawally on Saturday, he urged the security services to ensure the safety of the visitors and remove any obstacles or difficulties that might face them. Sheikh Salem also met with several field leaders to review the Ministry’s field security plan for securing places of husseiniyas during these days, according to a press release from the Ministry’s General Department of Security Relations and Media. — KUNA



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior during an inspection tour of husseiniyas. — KUNA photos



In my view

Social media has stolen children’s reading time



Azzah Al-Ghamdi

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When we were children, before social media appeared and technology developed, the time to read a story was sacred to us. Wonderful stories published by well-known publishing companies occupied our time, and we eagerly anticipated the new editions of the series we followed. This led to the strengthening of children’s language skills all over the world, enhancing their spelling and eloquence.

Today, with the emergence of social media, children around the world have become enamored with these applications and programs, which have stolen their time for reading and engaging with stories that once played a prominent role in teaching language, eloquence, and good morals. As a result, we are now witnessing a language deficiency among children, who often reach advanced stages of life without mastering their mother tongue. This is a serious issue that must be addressed by educational ministries and families worldwide.

In the past, children would spend their free time either watching an episode of a TV program or reading short stories that benefited them. These stories were captivating and imparted important moral values. There were stories tailored for boys and others for girls, ensuring everyone could find something suitable.

However, today, social media has taken over children’s time and attention. Most of their time is spent watching social media, with parents struggling to control or guide them. The purposeful stories that children used to read helped produce a generation that was more mature and dependable. In contrast, today’s children, despite being ten years old, often lack the maturity and responsibility seen in previous generations.

Reading is far more beneficial than social media programs, which have numerous negatives. Reading builds the reader’s personality, imparts wisdom, and develops imagination. In the past, many brilliant authors, such as the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery and the Egyptian writer Kamel Kilani Ibrahim (known as the pioneer of children’s literature in the Arab world), produced wonderful children’s stories. From my childhood, I remember reading “Cinderella” and “The Little Mermaid,” which left a lasting impression with their moral values and excitement.

Today, every country is keen on book fairs. Schools often organize trips for students to these fairs, encouraging them to shop and buy stories that interest them. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the state and educational ministries to promote reading, children remain captivated by social media. Even if they buy stories at book fairs, they often do not read them, preferring to spend their free time on social media.

It would be beneficial if the ministry of education coordinated with social media celebrities to promote reading. Advertisements for stories by social media influencers could reignite children’s desire to read. Social media celebrities have a significant influence on children today, often more so than parents.

We cannot remain silent about the weakness in language skills that students suffer from. The solution lies in encouraging children to read stories again. A new generation of employees, upon whom the state will rely for various types of correspondence and report writing, will emerge. Whether in medical, engineering, administrative, or legal fields, strong language skills are essential. By encouraging early reading, we can ensure that writing correspondence and reports does not become a rare profession, which would pose a serious risk to the future of countries.

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The fifth batch of participants in the 'Partners to Hire' program.

Burgan Bank renews participation in 'Partners to Hire' graduation ceremony, employment forum

Bank upholds its commitment to the value of inclusivity for Kuwaiti talents

KUWAIT: In its latest effort to support people with disabilities in Kuwait, Burgan Bank participated in the graduation ceremony for the fifth batch of talented participants in the "Partners to Hire" program. The ceremony was organized and hosted by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs, with the support of leading Kuwaiti institutions across all industries and led by the banking sector.



Ghalia Al-Saleh

Held under the auspices and presence of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, the ceremony celebrated a group of outstanding graduates who completed the tailored training program that equips professional talents with disabilities to join Kuwait's workforce as customer service agents. Burgan Bank's renewed participation in the event along with the employment of several graduates is a testament to its commitment to inclusivity, social responsibility,

and social sustainability in its community.

"The health of any ecosystem can be measured by its diversity and inclusivity, and at Burgan Bank, we take a similar approach to evaluating the health and sustainability of our workforce," said Ghalia Al-Saleh, Senior Manager – Talent Acquisition at Burgan Bank. "We are both honored and delighted to welcome new, exceptionally talented calibers to our Burgan family who have shown remarkable resilience in the face of challenges. We firmly believe that our varying capacities and skills are at the heart of our integrated success. That's why we continue searching for the unique value everyone holds in tailoring a holistic employment and growth plan that suits their capabilities and brings out their best."

Al-Saleh added that paving a smooth path for integrating national talents with disabilities in the workforce is central to the social cohesion and collective welfare that Burgan Bank continues to contribute to achieving under the umbrella of its comprehensive social responsibility program. In addition to its previous support of the "Partners to Hire" graduation ceremonies and employment events, Burgan Bank has also partnered with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs and the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped as part of efforts to provide Al-Ahmadi Educational Center with es-



Ghalia receives the honorary award on behalf of Burgan Bank.

sential equipment and supplies that guarantee an elevated quality of life for many among this segment of the community in Kuwait.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's efforts to ensure the integration and empowerment of all national talents with disabilities span all fronts, beginning with employment and healthcare and extending to

areas such as sports. Among the icons of national pride whom the Bank continues to support well into his journey of athletic achievement and success is Tareq Al-Qallaf, a celebrated wheelchair fencing world champion, in addition to others who are recipients of Burgan's direct and indirect support as they unveil their full potential and unique passion.

KRCS assists, honors 100 Rohingya students

NEW DELHI: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Sunday that it helped and honored 100 female university students from the displaced Rohingya graduate at the Asian University for Women in the city of Chittagong, situated in southeastern Bangladesh. On this occasion, Director General of the KRCS, Abdulrahman Al-Aoun, said in a statement to KUNA that this humanitarian project was carried out with a generous grant from the Kuwait Finance House (KFH) to support the education of 100 displaced Rohingya female students in Bangladesh. Al-Aoun stressed that education constitutes the cornerstone of society, underscoring the importance of ensuring the right to education for all, including displaced people affected by armed conflicts, and that the association continues to support and provide relief to displaced Rohingya in cooperation with local partners and international organizations.

He expressed his sincere thanks to KFH for support of this humanitarian initiative, saying that it was the result of this gen-

erous support that led to the graduation of a group of displaced female students, which embodies Kuwait's role and its slogan 'Kuwait by your side' based on the guidelines of the leadership and humanitarian help of the Kuwaiti people.

He also thanked the Embassy of Kuwait in Bangladesh for their cooperation with the association's delegation and overcoming all obstacles to facilitate the delegation's mission. On his part, Kamal Ahmad, founder and president of the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, said that this project contributed greatly to providing a great opportunity for those deprived of education due to war and conflicts.

Kamal pointed out the role of the government and people of Kuwait in their contribution and efforts in supporting displaced Rohingya brothers in Bangladesh. He said that Kuwait's global humanitarian roles are appreciated by everyone, expressing his gratitude for this partnership and Kuwait's support for the university education project for female students, which contributes to the development of the next generation and the building of humanity. Kuwait Red Crescent Society has implemented many relief, medical, and educational programs to support the displaced Rohingyan in Bangladesh. — KUNA



Graduation ceremony at the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh. — KUNA

Kuwaiti-Saudi committee meeting reviews reports of petroleum operations

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti-Saudi Permanent Joint Committee held its 116th meeting on Sunday at the headquarters of Al-Wafra joint operations in Saudi Arabia in the presence of undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr Nimr Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah and assistant Saudi Energy Minister Mohammed Al-Ibrahim. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil said in a press release that the meeting of the committee reviewed the reports of petroleum operations in the onshore divided zone and the adjacent submerged divided zone, strategic plans, existing and future major projects, obstacles facing the implementation of plans, and the use of advanced modern technologies in petroleum operations.

The meeting also reviewed the progress report of the Office of the Permanent Joint Committee, which will consider the plans prepared for emergency situations and the procedures followed in the current period and contribute to providing the available capabilities as well as their continuous development and

evaluation in order to obtain the best results.

They discussed the efforts of the members of the operational committee, the achievement of the goals of joint operations, and the formulation of a joint action plan to achieve the strategic interests of the two countries. The officials appreciated all the efforts made by the human resources from the Kuwaiti and Saudi sides, praising the continuous and tireless efforts of the leaders of the two sides in the joint operations of Khafji and Wafra, which had a great impact on the implementation of operational plans.

The statement stressed the importance of continuing to hold meetings of the Joint Committee to address the obstacles facing the implementation of strategic plans, environmental and safety projects, development plans, training of national labor, the use of advanced modern technologies at the stages of petroleum operations, and reviewing the progress report.

The Kuwaiti-Saudi Permanent Joint Committee was established in accordance with the agreement on the division of the neutral zone signed by two sides in 1965. It reports directly to the ministers of oil and energy of both sides. This is to ensure the continuation of efforts in the proper exploration of the common natural resources and the establishment of related studies in this regard. — KUNA



Kuwaiti-Saudi Permanent Joint Committee holds its 116th meeting on Sunday at the headquarters of Al-Wafra joint operations in Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



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The Bronx: A steaming symbol of climate inequality in US

World leaders condemn Trump shooting

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DELAWARE: US President Joe Biden departs a press conference where he spoke to reporters after his Republican opponent Donald Trump was injured following a shooting at an election rally on July 13, 2024. — AFP photos



BUTLER, Pennsylvania: Republican candidate Donald Trump is seen with blood on his face surrounded by Secret Service agents as he is taken offstage at a campaign event at Butler Farm Show Inc on July 13, 2024.

Biden scrambles after Trump shooting upends campaign

Making the case against Trump to get much harder as Biden rethinks criticizing rival

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's reelection campaign is scrambling for a new strategy after an assassination attempt on Republican rival Donald Trump in western Pennsylvania, including deciding to call off verbal attacks on the former president for now.

Within hours of Saturday's shooting, Biden's campaign was pulling down television ads and suspending other political communications, including those that had highlighted Trump's May conviction in New York state court on felony charges relating to hush money paid to a porn star to avert a sex scandal before the 2016 US election.

Rather than verbally attacking Trump in the coming days, the White House and the Biden campaign will draw on the president's history of condemning all sorts of

political violence including his sharp criticism of the "disorder" created by campus protests over the Zionist war in Gaza, according to campaign officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Biden's advisers had hoped to tamp down recent calls from some of his fellow Democrats and others that he step aside and let another candidate represent the party in the November 5 election, sharpening his focus on the dangers he has said Trump presents to US democratic norms and reproductive rights as well as Trump's false statements about winning the 2020 election.

"This changes everything," one campaign official said of the assassination attempt. "We're still assessing. Making the case against Trump, drawing that split

screen, will get much harder." "The president is trying to lower the temperature," the official added.

The Biden campaign officials said they expect that the assassination attempt will lower the pressure from congressional Democrats for Biden, 81, to step aside in the race amid concerns about his fitness for office. Some Democrats in the House of Representatives and Senate have publicly called upon Biden to drop out in the aftermath of his shaky performance in a June debate against Trump.

Biden's planned trip on Monday to the Lyndon B Johnson presidential library in Austin, Texas — where he was expected to speak on the landmark Civil Rights Act that Johnson signed into law in the 1960s and criticize Trump's attacks on immigrants and

American diversity — is under review and may be canceled, the officials said.

Because the shooting happened in the election battleground state of Pennsylvania, which Biden won over Trump in 2020 by a narrow margin, the incident could be especially impactful, according to some political strategists, by increasing Republican turnout by voters sympathetic to Trump.

"This doesn't guarantee that Trump flips Pennsylvania," Republican pollster Frank Luntz wrote on social media. "But the long and winding road for Joe Biden just became even longer and windier. Just as what happened to George Floyd had a lasting impact on tens of millions of Americans, the shooting of Donald Trump will be significantly consequential in a way the shooter never intended."

Floyd is the Black man who was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis in 2020, a murder that prompted protests in many US cities and abroad.

Other Democratic candidates running this year are also rethinking their plans to focus on the dangers they have said Trump poses if elected. "The real question is whether in two weeks we can go back and declare Trump a threat to the country. That was our playbook, and it's fair, but unclear how much of our spurs were taken off," said a Democrat involved in a Senate campaign, speaking on condition of anonymity. Trump, 78, is due to receive his party's official nomination for president during the four-day Republican National Convention in Milwaukee beginning on Monday. — Reuters

Security lapses in focus after Trump shooting

WASHINGTON: Republican lawmakers said they would launch swift investigations into how a person managed to evade Secret Service agents and climb onto the roof of a building near where former US President Donald Trump was speaking at an election rally and fire multiple shots before being killed. Mike Johnson, speaker of the Republican-controlled US House of Representatives, said panels in the chamber will call officials from the Secret Service, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI for hearings soon. The House oversight panel called Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to testify on July 22.

While information about the incident was still sparse, early media reports said the shooter was outside the security perimeter of the rally venue in Butler, Pennsylvania. One person interviewed by the BBC said he had seen the man with gun and tried unsuccessfully to alert police and the Secret Service.

Trump supporters blasted the Secret Service, which is responsible for protecting Trump as a former US president. Billionaire Elon Musk called for the agency's leadership to resign. "How was a sniper with a full rifle kit allowed to bear crawl onto the closest roof to a presidential nominee?" asked conservative activist Jack Posobiec on social media site X.

FBI Special Agent Kevin Rojek, speaking at a press briefing, called the number of shots the attacker was able to

fire "surprising." The Secret Service did not have a representative in that press briefing late on Saturday, which included FBI and state law enforcement officials. The Secret Service said shortly after the shooting that it has begun an investigation and briefed Democratic President Joe Biden, Trump's rival in the November 5 election, though the agency did not immediately respond to additional requests for comment regarding its protocols.

The Pennsylvania State Police referred questions to the Secret Service. Ben Maser said he was outside the rally perimeter, listening to Trump, when he noticed two officers seemingly looking for someone. Maser, a 41-year old welder, started scanning the area too. "I saw the guy on the roof. I told the officer that he was up there. He went about looking for him," said Maser.

Security review

The attack is certain to lead to a review of Trump's security, and going forward he will likely be provided with a level of protection more akin to a sitting president, said Joseph LaSorsa, a former Secret Service agent who served on the presidential detail. "There will be an intensive review" of the incident and "there's going to be a massive realignment," LaSorsa said. "This cannot happen."

The Secret Service had said it recently added "protective resources and capabilities" to Trump's security detail, without providing further details. A retired agent who worked in protective services, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the incident should spark an internal review, and ideally an external one too. "The gravity of the situation demands thorough scrutiny to prevent such failures in the future and to ensure accountability on all levels," said the former agent.

Trump survives assassination attempt

US Secret Service said the alleged assailant "fired multiple shots" toward the stage at a Donald Trump campaign rally July 13 in Butler. A spectator was killed and two others critically injured



Reproduction of campaign rally elements not to scale. Sources: US media/AFP bureaus. Map data: OSM. Maxar satellite image, June 2, 2023.

Securing trump rallies

During most of Trump's campaign stops, local police aid the Secret Service in securing the venue. Agents from other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security, such as the Transportation Security Administration, occasionally help. Many Trump rallies feature thousands of audience members, take place in the open air and last for hours. Before the event, agents scan the venue for bombs or other threats, and Trump invariably arrives in a fortified motorcade. Law enforcement officials typically put up barriers as a perimeter, and require all attendees to go through a metal detector to enter the venue. Armed protective agents search all attendees' bags and even wallets. Many rallygoers are patted down by hand.

Paul Eckloff, a former Secret Service agent who retired in 2020, said agents would have surveyed all the rooftops with a line of sight ahead of time. "This person either concealed themselves until they became a threat, or were not a threat until they revealed their weapons," said Eckloff.

In the moments after Trump was injured, the former president was quickly surrounded by Secret Service personnel who formed a human shield, while heavily armed agents in body armor and toting rifles also took to the stage and appeared to scan the area for threats. Trump was whisked by the agents to a black SUV, and taken to a local hospital, according to the campaign. — Reuters

US leaders who were killed or survived assassination attempts

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump was shot by a gunman during a campaign rally on Saturday in what the FBI called an attempted assassination of the former US president. Below is a list of other previous attempts on the lives of American leaders, successful or not.

Assassinations

Four US presidents were assassinated while in office. Abraham Lincoln was killed in 1865 by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre in Washington. James Garfield was shot in 1881 in Washington at a train station, and died of his wounds two and a half months later.

William McKinley was assassinated in 1901 by an anarchist in Buffalo, New York. John F Kennedy was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963 in Dallas, Texas as the president rode in a motorcade.

Survivors

Four presidents were wounded but survived assassination attempts, while in office or afterwards. Donald Trump had just started a campaign speech in Pennsylvania on Saturday, when shots rang out. A bullet appeared to have grazed his ear, which was bleeding. He was rushed by security officials to a black SUV.

Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981 outside the Hilton Hotel in Washington but survived the attack. Reagan was wounded when one of the bullets ricocheted off a limousine and struck him under the left armpit. President Gerald Ford survived two attempts on his life in less than three weeks in 1975 without being hurt. Theodore Roosevelt was shot in the chest in 1912 while campaigning for elections in Milwaukee and survived.

Attempts on other leaders

Robert F Kennedy, a US presidential candidate, was assassinated in 1968 at the age of 42 by a gunman in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Alabama Governor George C Wallace was shot in 1982 and became paralyzed from the waist down. — Reuters

International

World leaders condemn Trump shooting

Russia accuses Biden administration of creating atmosphere for attack

WASHINGTON: World leaders have mostly condemned Saturday's attack on Donald Trump at a rally in Pennsylvania in which the former president was shot in the ear, expressing shock, denouncing political violence and wishing him a quick recovery. The FBI identified 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, as the attacker. He was shot dead and law enforcement officials said they had not yet identified a motive.

A spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the shooting and called it an "act of political violence." Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said: "We must stand firm against any form of violence that challenges democracy." British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "appalled by the shocking scenes" at the rally. "Political violence in any form has no place in our societies and my thoughts are with all the victims of this attack." China's foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday that President Xi Jinping has expressed his condolences to former President Trump.

Russia blames Biden

The Kremlin said on Sunday it did not believe the US administration was responsible for Saturday's assassination attempt but accused it of creating an atmosphere that provoked the attack.

"We do not believe that the attempt to eliminate and assassinate Trump was organized by the current

authorities," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "But the atmosphere around candidate Trump ... provoked what America is confronting today." His comments echoed those of some of Trump's Republican allies, who immediately pinned the blame on Biden. "After numerous attempts to remove candidate Trump from the political arena - using first legal tools, the courts, prosecutors, attempts to politically discredit and compromise the candidate - it was obvious to all outside observers that his life was in danger," Peskov said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said there was "no justification" for such violence and he was "relieved" that Trump, who has frequently criticized US military aid to Ukraine amid Russia's invasion, was safe and wished him "a speedy recovery."

A 'tragedy' for democracy

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the shooting was "concerning and confronting," while Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said it left him "sickened." Trudeau added: "Political violence is never acceptable." Similar comments were also made by the leaders of the European Union, Egypt, Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea, New Zealand, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and the Philippines.

"It is a tragedy for our democracies," French President Emmanuel Macron said of the shooting. "France shares the shock and indignation of the American people." Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also said the



BEIJING: A news program about the assassination attempt on former US president Donald Trump is seen on a giant screen at a shopping mall in Beijing July 14, 2024. — AFP

shooting left him shocked. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who met Trump this week while visiting the US for a NATO summit, said his prayers were with the former president "in these dark hours."

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula

da Silva called the shooting unacceptable while also urging others to condemn it. "The attack against former President Donald Trump must be vehemently repudiated by all defenders of democracy and dialogue in politics. What we saw today is

unacceptable," the Brazilian leader said. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Trump a friend and wished him a speedy recovery while saying: "Strongly condemn the incident. Violence has no place in politics and democracies." — Reuters

Bullet and ballot box: Violent US rhetoric comes 'home to roost'

MILWAUKEE: The attempted assassination of Donald Trump by a gunman at his Pennsylvania rally has confirmed the worst fears of public figures warning that an escalation in incendiary political rhetoric on all sides could lead to bloodshed. US lawmakers and analysts have been voicing concern since the 2021 US Capitol riot that increasingly bellicose campaign language was becoming a worrying confusion on the US body politic ahead of November's presidential election.

The danger was vividly illustrated in 2022, when then-House speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband was attacked with a hammer by a far-right conspiracy theorist who wanted to hold the Democratic leader hostage and "break her kneecaps." The political affiliations of Saturday's shooter, identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, were not immediately clear - but analysts and politicians immediately pointed the finger at extreme political discourse.

"For weeks Democrat leaders have been fueling ludicrous hysteria that Donald Trump winning re-election would be the end of democracy in America," House Republican Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who was seriously wounded in a mass shooting at a congressional sports event in 2017, said on X. "Clearly, we've seen far left lunatics act on violent rhetoric in the past. This incendiary rhetoric must stop."

Senior Trump campaign aide Chris LaCivita assailed the language of "leftist activists, Democrat donors and even Joe Biden." While Ajamu Baraka, Green Party candidate Jill Stein's running mate in 2016, suggested Democratic rhetoric might have led the gunman to see it as his "patriotic duty to eliminate an existential threat to the nation." "The chickens have really come home to roost," he posted on X.

Private security

What none of the three acknowledged was that Trump himself has been a major architect of the coarsening in US political discourse in recent years. Many of Trump's targets in Congress and the government - from Republican Senator Mitt Romney to retired top government scientist Anthony Fauci - have disclosed having to take on private security after threats from Trump's supporters.

member of the former President's security team requested additional security resources that the US Secret Service or the Department of Homeland Security rebuffed is absolutely false," said Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi in a statement. "In fact, recently the US Secret Service added protective resources and capabilities to the former President's security detail."

Residents of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, where the alleged shooter lived, expressed shock at the news on Sunday. "It's a little crazy to think that somebody that did an assassination attempt is that close, but it just kind of shows the political dynamic that we're in right now with the craziness on each side," said Wes Morgan, 42, who added that he rides bikes with his children on the street where the alleged shooter lived. "Bethel Park is a pretty blue-collar type of area. And to think that somebody was that close is a little insane."

While mass shootings at schools, nightclubs and other public places are a regular feature of American life, the attack was the first shooting of a US president or major party candidate since the 1981 attempted assassination of Republican President Ronald Reagan. In 2011, Democratic then-Congresswoman Gabby Giffords was seriously wounded in an attack on a gathering of constituents in Arizona. Republican US Representative Steve Scalise was also badly wounded in a politically motivated 2017 attack on a group of Republican representatives practicing for a charity baseball game.

Giffords later founded a leading gun control organization, Scalise has remained a stalwart defender of gun rights. Americans fear rising political violence, recent Reuters/Ipsos polling shows, with two out of three respondents to a May survey saying they worried violence could follow the election.

Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in an attempt to overturn his election defeat, fueled by his false claims that his loss was the result of widespread fraud. About 140 police officers were injured in the violence, four riot participants died that day, one police officer who responded died the following day and four responding officers later died by suicide. Trump is due to receive his party's formal nomination at the Republican National Convention, which kicks off in Milwaukee on Monday.

The shots appeared to come from outside the area secured by the Secret Service, the agency said. Hours after the attack, the Oversight Committee in the Republican-led US House of Representatives summoned Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to testify at a hearing scheduled for July 22. Leading Republicans and Democrats quickly condemned the violence, as did foreign leaders. "There's no place for this kind of violence in America. We must unite as one nation to condemn it," Biden said in a statement.

Some of Trump's Republican allies said they believed the attack was politically motivated. "For weeks Democrat leaders have been fueling ludicrous hysteria that Donald Trump winning re-election would be the end of democracy in America," said Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican. "Clearly we've seen far-left lunatics act on violent rhetoric in the past. This incendiary rhetoric must stop." — Reuters

The former US president sparked fury last year when he implied that the country's top military officer should be executed and joked about the Pelosi hammer attack. Trump's exhortations to violence are nothing new - he suggested that protesters should be "roughed up" at a rally in 2016, and that looters should be shot during the 2020 racial protests over the police murder of George Floyd.

He has also repeatedly described the attorneys leading the multiple civil and criminal cases he faces as "monster," "deranged" and "psycho." And, of course, many argue he incited the deadly Capitol riot on January 6, 2021, when he exhorted his followers to "fight like hell" shortly before they stormed the seat of US government, leaving five people dead.

Republicans have in the past accused Democrats of overreacting to figurative language and ignoring leftist aggression, such as harassment of conservative Supreme Court justices and the 2017 shooting that wounded Scalise. Still, law enforcement agencies say that while threats have proliferated from every corner, right-wing violence is the bigger worry.

'Attack on our democracy'

Discourse that was once taboo is now commonplace on the far right, with Republican flamethrow-

ers in Congress incorporating violent language and imagery into their stump speeches. Threats against members of Congress of all stripes reached a record high of 9,625 in 2021, according to data provided by the Capitol Police, compared with just 3,939 in 2017.

Robert Pape of the University of Chicago has conducted several polls on political violence since the Capitol assault. In his latest last month, 10 percent of respondents said the use of force was "justified to prevent Donald Trump from becoming president." "The shooting of former President Trump is a consequence of such significant support for political violence in our country," he told AFP. "We also need to worry about threat in retribution to President Biden. Our survey shows seven percent of American adults - 18 million - support force to restore Trump to the presidency, half of whom own guns."

Political analyst Charlie Kolean called for Americans to stand together "in condemning such violence and work towards ensuring the safety and security of all public officials." "Today's events are a stark reminder of the threats our leaders face," Kolean, the chief strategy officer at conservative-leaning political consultancy RED PAC, told AFP. "An attack on the presidential candidate is an attack on our democracy." — AFP

Bloodied Trump survives...

Continued from Page 1

addressed through violence." Two other spectators were critically injured in the worst act of US political violence in decades. On Saturday, Trump, 78, had just begun a campaign speech in Butler, Pennsylvania, about 50 km north of Pittsburgh, when shots rang out, hitting the former president's right ear and streaking his face with blood. "Fight! Fight! Fight!" Trump mouthed to supporters, pumping his fist, as Secret Service agents rushed him away. His campaign said he was doing well and appeared to have suffered no major injury besides a wound on his upper right ear.

The FBI identified 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, as the suspect in what it called an attempted assassination. He was a registered Republican, according to state voter records and had made a \$15 donation to a Democratic political action committee at the age of 17. Law enforcement officials told reporters they had not yet identified a motive for the attack. Both Republicans and Democrats will be looking for evidence of Crooks' political affiliation as they seek to cast the rival party as representing extremism.

The shooting occurred less than four months before the Nov 5 election, when Trump faces an election rematch with Democratic President Joe Biden. Most opinion polls including those by Reuters/Ipsos show the two locked in a close contest. The shooting whipsawed the discussion around the presidential campaign, which had recently focused on whether Biden, 81, should drop out following a disastrous June debate performance. The Biden campaign had been seeking to reset its message, depicting Trump as a danger to democracy for his continued false claims about election fraud but said on Saturday it was suspending its political advertising for now.

Secret Service agents fatally shot the suspect, the agency said, after he opened fire from the roof of a building about 140 m from the stage where Trump was speaking. An AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle used in the shooting was recovered near his body, according to sources. The firearm was legally purchased by the suspect's father, ABC and the Wall Street Journal reported, citing sources. Bomb-making materials were found in the suspect's car, the Associated Press reported, citing sources. Two other rally attendees were critically wounded, the Secret Service said.

"In this moment, it is more important than ever that we stand United, and show our True Character as Americans, remaining Strong and Determined, and not allowing Evil to Win," Trump said on his Truth Social service on Sunday. The Republican added that it was "God alone who prevented the unthinkable from happening" and that he would "FEAR NOT".

The Secret Service in a statement denied accusations by some Trump supporters that it had rejected campaign requests for additional security. "The assertion that a

Kuwait makes giant oil discovery...

Continued from Page 1

total land area and covers more than 6,000 sq km. The first phase includes drilling six exploratory wells for oil and gas, with subsequent stages to be determined based on the drilling results.

KOC underscored the importance of the offshore exploration project as a national endeavor with the goal of enhancing Kuwait's hydrocarbon reserves

Hamas quits Gaza truce talks after...

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Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said on social media site X: "The claim that people in Gaza can move to 'safe' or 'humanitarian' zones is false." The Zionist entity said it had on Saturday targeted Deif, who heads the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, as well as an associate, Rafa Salama. The Zionist military on Sunday said Salama, commander of Hamas' Khan Yunis brigade, had been killed by a strike "in the area of Khan Yunis".

The Zionist entity accuses both Salama and Deif of helping to "mastermind" the Oct 7 attack. Deif has been among the Zionist entity's most wanted men for decades and is blamed by Zionist authorities for the killings of multiple civilians and soldiers. At the site of the strike, an AFP photographer saw the charred remains of tents as Palestinians searched through the wreckage for any salvageable items. Plastic covers, broken water tanks and other equipment used for makeshift shelters was scattered on the sand.

Scott Anderson, director of UNRWA affairs in the Gaza Strip, said that on a visit to Khan Yunis's Nasser hospital, where many of the casualties were taken, he had "witnessed some of the most horrific scenes I have seen" in the war. "I saw toddlers who are double amputees, children paralyzed and unable to receive treatment, and others separated from their parents," he said in a statement. Anderson added that "impediments to humanitarian operations prevent us from supporting people anywhere near the scale necessary".

The deaths in Al-Mawasi drew condemnation from governments across the region, with Egypt's foreign ministry saying such "crimes... cannot be accepted under any justification whatsoever". Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, during a press conference with his visiting Saudi counterpart, said the Zionist entity does not intend to end the war and

sustainability and meeting global demand, aiming to elevate Kuwait's status as a reliable global oil and gas producer and place it prominently on the regional map of leading offshore operators adhering to international standards.

Additionally, the project contributes to developing new technical skills in drilling and offshore production, creating varied employment opportunities for national talents, KOC pointed out. Based on initial test results, a developmental plan will be established to commence actual production from the field at the earliest opportunity, boosting KOC's production capacity and laying another cornerstone for achieving its 2040 strategy, it indicated.



GAZA: A wounded Palestinian girl is treated at the Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat refugee camp after Zionist military bombardment of UNRWA-run Abu Araban school turned shelter on July 14, 2024. — AFP

commits "new massacres each time there is a positive atmosphere" towards peace.

Separately on Sunday, rescuers said at least eight people were killed in strikes on different parts of Gaza City, where the Zionist military said its operations were ongoing. The Zionist entity has also intensified attacks on Syria, where on Sunday state media said a soldier was killed in strikes on Damascus. The Zionist military — in a rare acknowledgment of military action in Syria — said it was responding after the launch of two drones from Syrian territory. — AFP

International



NEW YORK: Workers repair a subway train platform during a summer heat wave in the Bronx borough of New York on July 11, 2024. — AFP photos



Children cool off with water from an open fire hydrant in the Bronx.

The Bronx: A steaming symbol of climate inequality in US

Racist urban policies allow Bronx communities to become urban heat islands: Activist

NEW YORK: As much of America baked in heat waves last week, the relatively poor New York borough of the Bronx suffered disproportionately. Reynaldo Morales, a 68-year-old military veteran, went to a seniors' community center with air conditioning because turning it on at home is too costly. "We live in a cement jungle," he said. "It's nice that they have a cooling center like this. But the idea that we can't even afford to cool our home is outrageous," said Morales.

Temperatures soared as high as 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 C) this week in New York, far from the 118F (48 C) that roasted Las Vegas. But one image here stuck out: a swing bridge linking the Bronx and Manhattan got stuck in the half-open position for hours on Monday as the heat expanded the metal in its hydraulics. Boats pumped water to cool it off.

The Bronx endures problems with poverty, health care and air pollution, and some of its neighborhoods suffered more than others in the heat because of a lack of trees to cool things off. "We have limited

shading so it does get very hot especially when the sun is at its peak," said Sandra Arroyo, program director of Casa Boricua, the seniors' center where Morales went to cool off.

'You are suffocating'

Many residents of the Bronx are low-earning Latinos or African Americans, who say the heat-absorbing buildings that line street after street make life - and even breathing - difficult in the scorching, muggy New York summer. "You walk a block and you are suffocating," said Juan Lorenzo, a 72-year-old Dominican. "You just get really tired," added Stephanie Rodriguez, a 21-year-old cashier watching her two-year-old son play in waterspouts at the only large park in all the borough. "We need more green spaces," said Arif Ullah, head of a community organization called South Bronx Unite.

All along one bank of the Harlem River in the Bronx stand waste treatment facilities, a power plant and warehouses - all sources of industry and thus, more

heat. Nearby sits a small shadeless kids park, under a series of highway overpasses. Ullah said racist urban policies have allowed communities like his to become urban heat islands that lead to health problems. "And really, it's a matter of life or death," he said.

Neighborhoods like Hunts Point and Mott Haven in the south of the Bronx have above-average rates of emergency room visits for respiratory problems attributable to pollution, according to a report issued in April by the New York city government, its first to address the issue of what is known as environmental justice.

The city says around 350 people in New York die each year because of the heat or health problems made worse by it, and black residents are hit twice as often as their white counterparts. The city says aggravating factors include a lack of air conditioning at home, a situation more common in the Bronx than New York's other boroughs. Deadly heat waves in major cities in America and elsewhere have become more common because of climate change and things will only get worse, experts say. — AFP



SARMADA: A woman fills a bucket with water at a camp for displaced people near Sarmada in the northern Syrian Idlib province on June 28, 2024. — AFP

Water shortages worsen as funding dries up in Syria

SARMADA: Hussein Al-Naasan struggles to provide water for his family in the scorching summer, as aid funds have dried up and conditions deteriorated in impoverished displacement camps in Syria's rebel-held northwest. "Water is life, it is everything ... and now we are being deprived of water," Naasan told AFP from a camp near Sarmada, close to the Turkish border. "It's like they are trying to kill us slowly," said the 30-year-old father of two, who has been displaced for more than a decade. After 13 years of conflict, a lack of international funding has severely undercut the provision of basic services such as water, waste disposal and sanitation in displacement camps in northwest Syria, according to the United Nations. More than five million people, most of them displaced, live in areas outside government control in Syria's north and northwest, the UN says, and many rely on aid to survive.

Residents told AFP that tap water was unavailable at the camp and aid organizations had stopped trucking water in, blaming aid budget cuts. Naasan is sharing a water tank with three other families to reduce costs. "We are finding it very difficult to secure water that we can't even afford to buy," he said.

Neglected

Diminishing water access could lead to a "major disaster", Naasan warned as the summer sun beat down on the camp. He said waste was piling up, adding to the risk of disease in an area with war-ravaged medical facilities. Syria's war, which broke out after President Bashar al-Assad repressed anti-government protests in 2011, has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry. In the northwestern Idlib region, some 460 displacement camps hosting around 571,000 people do not have any water, sanitation and hygiene support from UN partner organizations, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told AFP. "Without increased funding, 111 additional camps hosting nearly 165,000 people will be cut off" from such support by the end of September, it warned in a statement.

About 80 percent of northwest Syria's popula-

tion requires water and hygiene support including "access to drinking water, waste disposal, and rehabilitation of sanitation facilities," OCHA said. Yet the critical sector is "consistently" neglected, having received only two percent of necessary funding in the first quarter of 2024, it added.

Camp resident Abdel Karim Ezzeddin, a 45-year-old father of nine, filled plastic barrels of water from a nearby well for his family, grateful to have a truck to transport them. "How can they stop supplying water in the summer?" he said. "Do they want us to die?"

'90 percent' with scabies

David Carden, UN deputy regional humanitarian coordinator for the Syria crisis, said conditions in camps in the northwest were "deplorable". "Families in worn-out tents face suffocating heat," he told AFP. "Rubbish is piling up in camps without sanitation support. Children are getting sick".



Syrian children spray each other with water.

Response Coordination, an umbrella of local organizations in Syria's northwest, warned skin diseases were spreading in camps as temperatures soar and water becomes scarcer. "In some camps, more than 90 percent of residents have scabies," said Fidaa al-Hamud, a doctor in charge of a mobile clinic near Sarmada, decrying "water scarcity, refuse piling up ... and the lack of sewage networks".

Firas Kardush, a local official in the Idlib region, ruled by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham jihadist group, said authorities were "trying to find alternatives" but warned of a "humanitarian catastrophe" if aid money runs dry. In another camp in the Idlib countryside, Asma al-Saleh said her five children had made it harder to cook and bathe her five children, expressing worry as one of them has a rash. — AFP

Nigeria school exam day turns into disaster

JOS, Nigeria: After her early morning class ended, 16-year-old Nigerian student Chidera Denis was waiting to join classmates for end-of-term exams. Teachers had scheduled a raft of last-minute revisions. Moments later, she was trapped under rubble as her school building suddenly collapsed, with pupils barely protected by the desks where they were sitting.

Denis was one of the lucky ones. The collapse of the Saint Academy school in Jos North district in Plateau State killed 22 students on Friday, with dozens more in hospital for treatment, including Denis' friend. "She said she was going to die ... that if they rescued me, I should tell her mother," Denis told AFP a day after the disaster. "I said she should stop saying that, that we'll be alive, that God is our strength."

Her mother Amaka Denis tended to her on a hospital bed on Saturday morning. She had yet to see her son, who also attended the school. "I am yet to see her brother," she told AFP. "I am still searching, I am in pain." A spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Yohanna Audu, told AFP on Saturday that rescue efforts had ended after the disaster, the latest fatal building collapse in Nigeria.

Audu said there were 22 fatalities, "all of whom are students". The Red Cross posted on X on Saturday that a teacher and a student were still missing. "I was beside someone who died," 14-year-old Chidima Emmanuel told AFP. "He fell down on my arm and it broke. The falling debris landed on his head and killed him."

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu described the incident as a "huge loss to the nation". A day after, 58 people were still in hospital while 74 were discharged, the state commissioner for information Musa Ibrahim Ashoms said in a statement Saturday. Building collapses are fairly common in Africa's most populous country.

The accident Friday was the deadliest since November 2021, when a high-rise building under construction in the country's commercial hub of Lagos collapsed and killed at least 45, most of them construction workers. Poor quality of work, lack of oversight, and official corruption to bypass checks are often blamed for the incidents. — AFP

Syrian state media says soldier killed in Zionist strike

DAMASCUS: A Syrian soldier was killed early on Sunday and three others wounded in Zionist strikes on several positions in and around Damascus, Syrian state media said. The Zionist military, meanwhile, said it had targeted a Syrian military command center as well as targets and infrastructure belonging to the Syrian army and air defense in response to two drones launched towards the Zionist entity from Syrian territory.

The strike "was launched from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights", which the Zionist entity seized in 1967, and targeted "several military positions in the southern region and a residential building in the Kafr Sousa district of Damascus", Syria's state news agency SANA reported. SANA said that aerial de-

July 15th: Another milestone for victory of democracy in Türkiye

By Tuba Nur Sönmez
Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait

It has been eight years since Turkish people have bravely stood against the bloody coup attempt launched by the "Fethullahist Terrorist Organization" (FETO) targeting the foundation of Turkish democracy and its elected government. On the night of July 15, 2016, Türkiye witnessed an unprecedented danger that threatened the very fabric of its democracy.

FETO affiliated army units or Putschists left their barracks to occupy key locations, such as the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul and fighter jets and attack helicopters bombed strategic targets including the Parliament, Presidential compound, army and police headquarters in the capital city of Ankara. They even tried to assassinate H E President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The state broadcaster, TRT, was forced to read a statement proclaiming the so-called military takeover.

However, H E President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, addressing the nation via a FaceTime call broadcasted on television, called on our citizens to defend their democracy. His appeal resonated deeply, galvanizing millions to resist the coup. Mosques broadcasted calls for unity and resistance, echoing the sentiment that democracy was worth defending at any cost.

Then, Turkish public rose with remarkable unity and courage and defended democracy with their lives, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to their democracy. Citizens from all walks of life, regardless of political affiliation, took to the streets in defiance of the coup. Men, women, and even children confronted armed soldiers and tanks, driven by a deep-seated belief in the sanctity of their democratic institutions thereby marking a "Victory of Democracy."

Nevertheless, the heinous plotters did not even hesitate using deadly military force against innocent civilians, martyring 251 people and leaving thousands injured. Police officer Ms Zeynep Sagir, who has served in our embassy for three years, was also martyred in the attack of the traitors.

The crimes committed on the night of July 15th were just the tip of the iceberg. If the coup had succeeded, there would be no democracy, and fundamental rights and freedoms of Turkish nation would be frozen indefinitely. The nation would have fallen in the hands of an extremist government as the traitors attempted to usurp country's rule and law.

However, putschists could not estimate people's strong perseverance and heroism. FETO's long standing will to dominate whole country was defeated by people's will to protect democracy. On the other side, we have to understand the true nature of FETO. This terrorist organization was established in the late 1960s as a so-called "religious movement". In the guise of promoting education and inter-religious dialogue, it managed to cover its malign intentions.

The well-planned and wide-spread infiltration by FETO members and converts into the army, law enforcement, judiciary and numerous government institutions, was carried out for decades clandestinely for an overarching plan, of which the final phase was unleashed on July 15, 2016 with a coup attempt. Due to complexity and gravity of this betrayal, the fight against FETO in and outside Türkiye has constituted one of the main priorities of our state. The perpetrators of the coup attempt have been brought to justice on the basis of the rule of law. FETO's organizational structure within governmental institutions has been revealed; administrative and judicial procedures have been started against its members. We have a resolute determination to fight against FETO and eliminate any upcoming threat that may come from this heinous terrorist organization in the future.

The events of the 15th of July will be forever etched in our collective memory as a testament to the power of brave citizens in defending their democratic way of life. The courage and resilience of the Turkish public in the face of a grave threat to their democracy is an inspiring story of national unity and determination. It is a powerful reminder that the true strength of a nation lies in the hands of its people, and their unwavering commitment to the principles of democracy. For this reason, July 15 is commemorated as the "Day of Democracy and National Unity", a day to keep collective memory alive. With these feelings, we remember with gratitude our martyrs and veterans, who defended democracy with their lives. They are the heroes of the "Century of Türkiye". May Allah Almighty (swt) grant those who sacrificed their lives heroically Jannah.

fense systems had intercepted and downed a number of missiles "despite their intensity". The news agency published a photo showing a fire in what appeared to be a crater caused by the blast. An AFP journalist visiting the scene said the strike caused a crater about 30 meters (nearly 100 feet) long and 10 meters wide. The facade of an eight-storey building was damaged, with its windows shattered, while around 30 cars were left charred or damaged around the impact site. The vicinity was cordoned off by police, while firefighters attempted to extinguish the fire in the area.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a Syrian pro-government fighter had been killed and six others wounded in Zionist strikes targeting a building in Kafr Sousa and a military headquarters south of Damascus. Local radio station Sham FM had reported "the explosion of a munitions depot following a (Zionist) attack that targeted a position near the capital". "The blasts were very strong and came in succession," a resident of the eastern Damascus neighborhood of Mazzeh told AFP, adding that this was followed by "the strong odor of gunpowder". — AFP

MONDAY, JULY 15, 2024

UK's new govt puts economic growth at heart of its agenda

Govt plans over 35 bills for parliament opening

LONDON: Britain's new government is preparing over 35 bills for the formal start of the parliamentary year on Wednesday and has put economic growth at the heart of its agenda, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office said.

Starmer, who ended 14 years of Conservative rule earlier this month with a sweeping election win for his Labour Party, said his government aimed to deliver stability, boost growth and create wealth across the country. Legislation will include a bill to enforce tough new spending rules and strengthen the role of the independent Office of Budget Responsibility, meaning significant fiscal announcements will be properly scrutinized, the statement from his office said.

"Our work is urgent. There is no time to waste," said Starmer, who has returned to Britain after attending the NATO summit last week in his first major international meeting as the country's leader. "We are hitting the ground running by bringing forward the laws we will need to rebuild our country for the long-term - and our ambitious, fully costed agenda is the downpayment on that change."

Within days of taking office as the country's first female finance minister after the election, Rachel Reeves set out plans to increase house building, unblock infrastructure projects and attract private investment. Through a new National Wealth Fund, the government hopes to attract private capital into nascent and growing industries to support growth and meet net zero commitments.

The State Opening of Parliament is the only regular occasion when the three constituent parts

of parliament - the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the elected House of Commons - meet. The pomp and ceremony tends to attract large crowds and a significant TV audience.

Britain's economic output grew better-than-expected in May, official data showed Thursday. Gross domestic product growth came in at 0.4 percent in May, which compared with flat GDP in April, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. Analysts' consensus had been for economic expansion of 0.2 percent in May.

"Delivering economic growth is our national mission, and we don't have a minute to waste," Britain's new finance minister Rachel Reeves has said in response to the data on Thursday. Reeves on Monday also vowed to immediately "fix the foundations" of Britain's economy, fuelled by onshore wind power and house building. ONS director of economic statistics, Liz McKeown, said the UK economy grew across all the main sectors in May.

"Many retailers and wholesalers had a good month, with both bouncing back from a weak April" when rainy weather kept shoppers away from physical stores, noted McKeown.

She added that "construction grew at its fastest rate in almost a year after recent weakness, with housebuilding and infrastructure projects boosting the industry".

The services sector meanwhile remained a key driver of growth after Britain exited a short-lived recession earlier this year. — Agencies



LONDON: Pedestrians walk in the winter sunshine down Oxford Street in central London in this Feb 16, 2024 file photo. — AFP

Investors: Trump's victory odds to swell after shooting

SINGAPORE: Saturday's shooting at former US President Donald Trump's election rally raises his odds of winning back the White House, and trades betting on his victory will increase this coming week, investors said on Sunday.

Trump was shot in the ear during the rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday in what the authorities were treating as an assassination attempt. Trump, his face spattered with blood, pumped his fist moments after the attack and his campaign said he was fine after the incident.

Before the shooting, markets had reacted to the prospect of a Trump presidency by pushing the dollar higher and positioning for a steeper US Treasury yield curve, and those trades could strengthen in the coming week, said Rong Ren Goh, a portfolio manager in the fixed income team at Eastspring Investments in Singapore.

The first shooting of a US president or major party candidate since a 1981 assassination attempt on Republican President Ronald Reagan could upend the Nov 5 rematch between Republican Trump and President Joe Biden, a Democrat, which has been tight in opinion polls.

"From memory, Reagan went up 22 points in the polls after his assassination attempt. The election is likely to be a landslide. This probably reduces uncertainty," said Nick Ferrer, chief investment officer at Vantage Point Asset Management. World leaders and US politicians condemned the shooting, while some industry executives, including Tesla chief Elon Musk, declared their support for Trump.

Since a shaky performance against Trump in a presidential debate two weeks ago, Biden has faced growing doubts from donors, supporters and fellow Democrats about his ability to beat Trump and keep up with the demands of the job. Immigration and economy have been the main issues for US voters and, according to Reuters/Ipsos polls, they see Trump as the better candidate for the economy, even as Biden's White House seeks to benefit from a solid economy with inflation slowing and unemployment low. Under Trump, market analysts expect a more hawkish trade policy, less regulation and looser climate change regulations.

Investors also expect an extension of corporate and personal tax cuts expiring next year, fuelling concerns about rising budget deficits under Trump. Trump said in an interview in February he would not re-appoint Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, whose second four-year term as chair will expire in 2026.

Longer-end Treasury yields have risen alongside the odds of a second Trump administration. While the moves in the still-inverted Treasury curve have primarily been driven by changing expectations about the Fed's first rate cut in this cycle, the gap between 2-year and 30-year notes has narrowed to a negative 6 basis points from a negative 30 bps around the time of the Biden-Trump debate.

The more closely watched gap between two- and 10-year Treasury yields was at a negative 27 basis points, half the levels three weeks ago. "Trump has always been more 'pro-market'. The key issue looking forward is whether fiscal policy remains irresponsibly loose and the implication that might have for (renewed) inflation and the future path of interest rates," said Ferrer. — Reuters

Boeing starts 777-9 certification process with US regulator

WASHINGTON: Boeing has begun certification flight testing for its long-delayed twin-engine 777-9 jet in order to be granted approval by US authorities, the aviation giant said Saturday. "We began certification flight testing with US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) personnel on board the aircraft," the company said in a statement.

"The certification flight testing will continue validating the airplane's safety, reliability and performance." Reached by AFP, the FAA declined to comment except to say that the certification process usually takes several months. The testing comes as welcome news for Boeing, which has faced a series of setbacks amid con-

Argentina plans to sell dollars on parallel market

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's central bank will start selling US dollars in the country's parallel foreign exchange markets in an effort to combat inflation and freeze the country's money supply, the government said on Saturday. Economy Minister Luis Caputo announced the new strategy on messaging platform X on Saturday, saying it would "contribute to deepening the disinflation process." Starting Monday, when Argentina's central bank issues pesos to buy US dollars on the formal exchange market, the bank will effectively balance Argentina's monetary base by selling an equivalent amount of dollars on the parallel "CCL" exchange market, Caputo said.

"There are no more pesos printed in Argentina by any means. It is a historic novelty," Caputo later said in a radio interview. "We were beating inflation by (a

2024 bull market leaves out US small caps, so far

NEW YORK: A famous aphorism holds that a "rising tide lifts all boats," but small capitalization equities are still waiting for a boost from the 2024 bull market on Wall Street. While the S&P 500, which is comprised of larger companies, has piled on more than 17 percent so far this year, the small-cap Russell 2000 has risen a scant 0.4 percent.

Market watchers point to lofty US interest rates - at 22-year highs - as one factor behind the yawning gulf in fortunes, given that smaller companies typically borrow more than larger peers because they are less profitable. Smaller equities "tend to get hurt more by the higher rates," said Sam Burns, chief strategist at Mill Street Research. "I think it's causing a big divergence in earnings, which then shows up in the relative returns."

But that dynamic also means that small cap equities could be poised to prosper if the Federal Reserve pulls the trigger and cuts interest rates soon. A Fed interest rate cut in September could be the "first catalyst" for small caps to take off, said Art Hogan of B Riley Wealth Management.

cerns over the safety of its planes following a January in-flight incident that required an emergency landing.

The company says it has received over 530 orders for the entire 777-X family, which includes the 777-9. That fuel-efficient craft seats 426 passengers in a typical two-class configuration, with a range of over 13,500 kilometers (8,400 miles). Boeing faced renewed scrutiny of its 737 MAX this year after a fuselage door plug blew out during an Alaska Airlines flight in January.

Earlier this week, Boeing said it had reached a deal with the US Justice Department over two fatal 737 MAX crashes, in 2018 and 2019 - with court documents indicating that the aviation giant would plead guilty to fraud. Prosecutors had concluded that Boeing flouted an earlier settlement addressing the disasters, in which 346 people were killed in Ethiopia and Indonesia.

The high-profile agreement follows a Justice Department finding in May that Boeing failed to improve its compliance and ethics program, in breach of a 2021 deferred prosecution agreement reached



Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 plane sits at the gates of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington Virginia. — AFP

in the wake of the MAX crashes. In more bad news for the company, the aviation regulator announced earlier this week that over 2,600 737 jets would need inspections, amid concerns that passenger oxygen masks could fail in emergencies. — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: A sign with exchange currency values of the unofficial so-called "Blue Dollar" of the parallel market is displayed in the window of a store in Buenos Aires on December 12, 2023. — AFP

few) points and this is the 'knock out' blow," the minister added. The announcement comes after official data published on Friday showed a five-month streak of slowing inflation ended in June when monthly inflation came in higher than in May.

The strategy outlined by the government of President Javier Milei aims to stabilize the money supply, bring down inflation and help close the widening gap between Argentina's official and parallel exchange

rates traded in financial markets. The South American country's peso has been sliding since the beginning of the year in parallel markets, which for years has diverged sharply from the official rate due to strict currency controls. At Friday's close, the official exchange rate traded at 919.5 pesos per dollar, while the so-called "CCL" rate traded at 1,416.2 pesos per dollar. Meanwhile, the widely-used black market "blue" rate weakened to a historic low of 1,500 pesos per dollar on Friday.

Slowing economy?

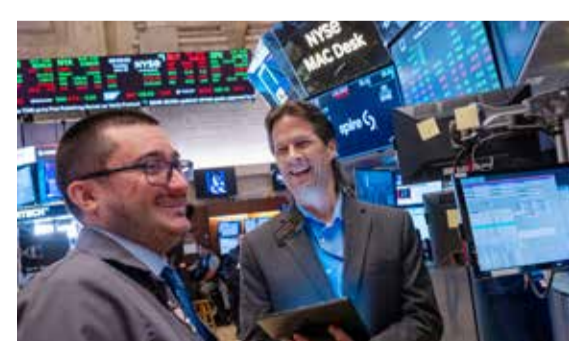
But not all market watchers attribute small caps' underperformance to high interest rates. "It's more about what the economy is doing," said Kim Forrest, chief investment officer at BofE Capital Partners, who describes conditions as "soft." "It's not even really tied to interest rates, because the companies certainly aren't going to borrow for expansion," she said.

CFRA Research's Sam Stovall considers high interest rates a reason for the initial lagging performance of small cap stocks. But the stocks "did not tend to skyrocket shortly thereafter because of concern of an economic slowdown," he said. Burns notes that a disproportionate share of the market's advance in 2024 has been enjoyed by large technology companies leading the generative artificial intelligence business, adding that the biggest companies are the best positioned to monetize advances.

Technology "is a much bigger proportion of the S&P 500 than it is for, say, the Russell 2000," Burns said. "And even within the tech sector, I think the

large caps are still doing better than the smaller cap technology companies on average." Forrest agrees, saying of "unloved" stocks in her portfolio, that "fundamentally, there's nothing wrong with them, other than they're not Nvidia."

Market participants also note the rising influence of exchange traded funds, or ETFs, which account for some \$8 trillion held in US markets. These investment vehicles are largely comprised of large cap companies. Market watchers also see a bias in sentiment towards larger companies, even outside of tech. "Big banks have gotten bigger," notes Burns, who sees multiple industries where smaller players "are struggling or just can't keep up." — AFP



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — AFP

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Mixed US inflation data bolsters expectations of further rate cuts

UK GDP growth exceeds expectations, China inflation eases

KUWAIT: Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell testified that inflation has significantly decreased from its peak two years ago, but more progress is needed before cutting interest rates. Powell emphasized the need for confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward the 2 percent target. While recent inflation data shows modest progress, the Fed remains cautious. Powell's testimony before the Senate Banking Committee highlighted the balance the Fed seeks between stabilizing prices and maximizing employment, and that key decisions are being taken without considering political pressure.

"Our undertaking is to make decisions when and as they need to be made, based on the data, the incoming data, the evolving outlook and the balance of risks, and not in consideration of other factors, and that would include political factors" Powell said. The Fed's key interest rate remains high, with officials projecting a single rate cut this year, down from previous forecasts. Powell also noted that the job market is strong but not overheated, with recent signs of cooling. The Fed is also monitoring consumer spending, which has shown signs of weakening, adding complexity to their decision-making on interest rates.

Mixed inflation data

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) report for June showed inflation slowing down more than anticipated, coming in at 3 percent annually from 3.3 percent in May and 3.1 percent forecasted. On a monthly basis, inflation fell 0.1 percent whereas it was expected that it would rise 0.1 percent. This marks the first monthly decline of inflation since the COVID pandemic in May 2020 driven by a fall in energy prices as well as new and used cars. Core inflation, which excludes volatile energy and food components, rose 0.1 percent on the month and 3.3 percent annually, a three-year

low. On the other hand, the Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 2.6 percent annually versus 2.2 percent previously and 2.3 percent forecasted. Annual core PPI increased 3 percent versus 2.5 percent forecasted and 2.3 percent previously and jumped 0.4 percent on the month while it was expected to rise 0.2 percent. The higher-than-expected PPI print conflicts with the CPI report released prior, leaving traders scrambling to gauge the direction of inflation and monetary policy. Markets are pricing in three rate cuts by year-end totaling 75 bps worth of reductions beginning in September's meeting.

Consumer sentiment falls

The University of Michigan's preliminary reading of consumer sentiment showed continued frustration on the inflation front, with the print coming in at 66.0 versus 68.2 in June and 68.5 forecasted. Nearly half of consumers are frustrated about the impact of high inflation, despite the survey demonstrating that one-year and the five-year inflation expectations fell to 2.9 percent from 3.0 percent previously. The current economic conditions index declined again coming in at 64.1 from 65.9 the previous month and reaching a 19-month low. The sour sentiment comes amid recent readings that show progress on the consumer price inflation front however an easing labor market as well as squeezed budgets in households due to elevated interest rates could be playing a role in the weakening sentiment. The US dollar index closed the week at 104.093.

French elections

The second round of parliamentary elections in France saw a surprise victory for the left-wing coalition. The leftist alliance won 198 seats compared to 169 seats for President Emmanuel Macron's

Rates - 14th July 2024

| Currencies | Previous Week Levels | | | | This Week's Expected Range | | 3-Month Forward |
|------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Open | Low | High | Close | Minimum | Maximum | Forward |
| EUR | 1.0864 | 1.0860 | 1.0911 | 1.0906 | 1.0815 | 1.1060 | 1.0954 |
| GBP | 1.2909 | 1.2899 | 1.2993 | 1.2992 | 1.2820 | 1.3270 | 1.3002 |
| JPY | 158.80 | 157.37 | 159.44 | 157.89 | 156.55 | 160.00 | 155.75 |
| CHF | 0.8964 | 0.8931 | 0.8970 | 0.8940 | 0.8830 | 0.9000 | 0.8845 |

party, and 143 seats for the far-right National Rally party led by Marine Le Pen. The result was a major blow for Le Pen's party, who were projected to be first but ended up third in the elections, and centrist President Emmanuel Macron, who called for early elections and is set to deal with a heavily divided parliament made up of three factions with opposing outlooks on key policies. The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0906.

UK growth

The UK economy grew by 0.4 percent in May, exceeding expectations of a 0.2 percent increase and is a welcome sign after April's reading came in flat. The growth in GDP was driven mainly by the services sector, which saw a 0.3 percent increase in output. Additionally, both production output and construction grew on the month at 0.2 percent and 1.9 percent respectively. The sterling rose to its highest level in nearly a year, as a combination of higher economic growth in the UK and lower than expected US inflation data boosted sentiment. Moreover, the strong growth in May suggests that quarterly

GDP growth could come in more than the Bank of England's forecasts, potentially complicating the decision of an interest rate cut. Markets are split on the BoE's early August meeting, with traders slightly favoring the central bank to hold rates at 5.1 percent as opposed to delivering a cut at 49 percent. The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2992.

China inflation eases

China's consumer price inflation rate continued to slow in June 2024, dropping to 0.2 percent year-on-year, which was lower than market forecasts. This marked the fifth consecutive month of consumer price increases, but it was also the weakest inflation reading since March. Food prices fell for the twelfth month in a row, despite a rise in pork prices during a key holiday, the Dragon Boat Festival. On the other hand, non-food inflation remained stable, with price increases seen in sectors like clothing, housing, healthcare, and education. The cost of transportation, however, continued to decline. Overall, China's inflation is subdued, posing

challenges for the country's economic recovery. The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.2500.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand maintained the cash rate at 5.5 percent, meeting market expectations. The central bank signaled that monetary policy needs to remain restrictive, however the effects of tightening are starting to reflect positively as inflation goes down. In their policy statement, RBNZ members said that "The Committee agreed that monetary policy will need to remain restrictive. The extent of this restraint will be tempered over time consistent with the expected decline in inflation pressures." Additionally, the committee is "expecting headline inflation to return to within the 1 to 3 percent target range in the second half of this year." Markets are slightly favoring a rate cut in the August meeting, and an additional rate cut by year-end for a total of 50 bps worth of cuts. The NZD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6117.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30600.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 11 JULY 2024

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| Market | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Premier Market | 34,521 | 7,751.86 | 2.0% | 2.3% | 3.7% | 444,670,689 | 141,193,688 | 32,402 | 17.7 | 1.3 | 82.1% |
| Main Market | 7,524 | 5,923.31 | 0.0% | -0.3% | 6.3% | 335,843,721 | 44,030,057 | 18,977 | 11.7 | 0.9 | 17.9% |
| All Share | 42,045 | 7,097.75 | 1.6% | 1.9% | 4.1% | 780,514,410 | 185,223,745 | 51,379 | 13.6 | 1.0 | 100% |

| Sector | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-------|-----|-------------------|
| Banking | 25,650 | 1,752.10 | 1.6% | 1.6% | 6.4% | 199,370,362 | 73,080,409 | 13,375 | 18.3 | 1.3 | 61.00% |
| Basic Materials | 423 | 754.24 | 0.2% | -0.8% | 1.1% | 6,474,508 | 3,785,324 | 967 | 9.4 | 1.4 | 1.01% |
| Consumer Discretionary | 1,055 | 1,587.19 | 1.9% | 1.3% | -1.0% | 91,964,370 | 16,974,072 | 6,326 | 11.6 | 1.3 | 2.51% |
| Consumer Staples | 253 | 899.07 | 4.6% | 9.6% | 36.5% | 2,039,377 | 1,520,631 | 262 | 26.6 | 1.4 | 0.60% |
| Energy | 212 | 1,081.91 | 2.3% | 3.8% | 14.0% | 2,306,182 | 291,971 | 238 | 10.4 | 0.9 | 0.50% |
| Financial Services | 4,588 | 1,351.08 | 2.4% | 3.2% | 11.5% | 273,461,423 | 41,446,271 | 12,153 | 12.2 | 0.9 | 10.91% |
| Health Care | 212 | 466.20 | 5.6% | 5.6% | -3.3% | 42,111 | 30,442 | 5 | 14.2 | 1.6 | 0.50% |
| Industrials | 2,627 | 793.48 | 1.2% | 4.0% | -12.6% | 50,275,142 | 20,012,466 | 6,356 | 13.3 | 0.9 | 6.25% |
| Insurance | 1,039 | 2,237.94 | -6.0% | -13.1% | -2.4% | 3,019,178 | 376,892 | 464 | 9.5 | 1.2 | 2.47% |
| Real Estate | 2,773 | 1,365.41 | 3.9% | 5.4% | 12.6% | 135,757,500 | 20,662,954 | 8,521 | 13.8 | 0.7 | 6.60% |
| Technology | 23 | 1,673.25 | 0.0% | -12.2% | 189.3% | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 277.1 | 1.9 | 0.05% |
| Telecommunications | 3,010 | 998.71 | 1.2% | 1.7% | -9.6% | 14,305,204 | 6,794,181 | 2,465 | 16.3 | 1.3 | 7.16% |
| Utilities | 180 | 439.47 | 1.8% | 5.0% | -3.5% | 1,499,053 | 248,133 | 247 | 14.2 | 1.4 | 0.43% |

Top Gainers

| Stock | last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-------|------------|----------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| AGHC | 377 | 17.81% | 5,082,116 | 1,832,665,847 | 915 |
| IFAHR | 1,039 | 12.93% | 1,927,555 | 1,818,527 | 558 |
| KBT | 59 | 10.28% | 128,035 | 7,177 | 19 |
| MIDAN | 795 | 10.11% | 42,056 | 30,419 | 4 |
| SECH | 60 | 10.09% | 5,748,495 | 330,251 | 300 |

Top Losers

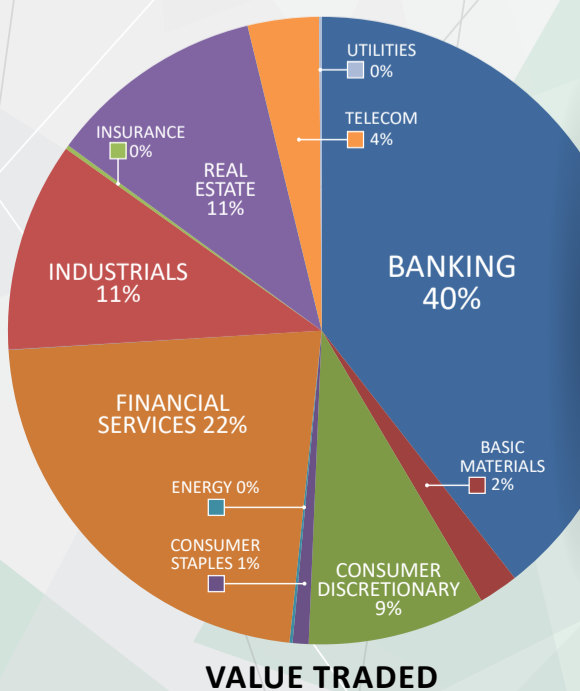
| Stock | last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| FUTUREKID | 124 | -18.95% | 66,087,332 | 8,655,294 | 2,857 |
| GINS | 1,480 | -15.09% | 126 | 195 | 7 |
| KMEFIC | 98.2 | -10.73% | 294,639 | 30,815 | 47 |
| KCIN | 1,224 | -9.60% | 15 | 20 | 3 |
| UPAC | 180 | -7.69% | 170,025 | 30,530 | 91 |

Top Volume

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-----------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| FUTUREKID | 124 | -18.95% | 66,087,332 | 8,655,294 | 2,857 |
| GFH | 93.5 | 3.89% | 58,418,698 | 5,431,763 | 986 |
| KIB | 189 | 3.28% | 45,154,554 | 8,478,702 | 805 |
| GBK | 278 | 0.36% | 43,405,260 | 12,104,710 | 1,223 |
| MANAZEL | 36.6 | -1.35% | 29,324,635 | 1,091,939 | 726 |

Top Value

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-----------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| KFH | 727 | 1.96% | 27,291,553 | 19,745,290 | 4,198 |
| NBK | 859 | 1.06% | 16,981,911 | 14,583,058 | 2,343 |
| GBK | 278 | 0.36% | 43,405,260 | 12,104,710 | 1,223 |
| FUTUREKID | 124 | -18.95% | 66,087,332 | 8,655,294 | 2,857 |
| KIB | 189 | 3.28% | 45,154,554 | 8,478,702 | 805 |



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main markets witnessed a significant increase in volume and value last week before it dropped again.
- The Premier index showed strength last week, seeing the index rally while the Main index is facing significant volatility.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7097, with support levels at 7085, 7041, and 7000, and resistance at 7105. The Premier index closed at 7751, with support levels at 7716, 7685, and 7650, and resistance at 7767. The Main index closed at 5923, with support levels at 5902, 5881, and 5845, while resistance was at 5925.

Business

Gulf Bank renews partnership with Emirates to offer installment plan for flight tickets

Bank's credit cardholders can use Easy Pay service for bookings starting from KD 50



Gulf Bank signs partnership agreement with Emirates Airline.



A group photo taken during the ceremony.

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to provide the best services, and just in time for the summer travel season, Gulf Bank has partnered with Emirates Airline to enable its customers to pay for their flight tickets through Easy Pay on the airline's website in 12 months installments, with 0 percent interest and no administrative fees.

As part of the partnership, all Gulf Bank credit cardholders can use the Easy Pay service for bookings starting from KD 50. Customers can take advantage of this service by booking through the Emirates Airline website, or by contacting Gulf Bank's Call Center to convert their purchase into an Easy Pay plan.

Mohammad Al-Qattan: The Easy Pay service offers convenient payment options for credit cardholders to access products and services from 42 merchants

Mohammad Al-Qattan, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, stated, "We are pleased to partner with Emirates Airline, the world's largest international airline, to offer our customers the Easy Pay installment service." He emphasized the bank's commitment to continuously improving its services to meet the needs and requirements of its customers, by providing easy and innovative solutions.

He added that the bank strives to offer an

exceptional banking experience by simplifying procedures and transactions, and providing solutions that are straightforward, efficient, and transparent. He emphasized that the bank prioritizes communication with customers, understanding their needs, and responding quickly to meet them.

Al-Qattan also mentioned that the service enables customers to access a wide range of products and

services from 42 merchants in the following categories, including travel, cars, health and beauty, electronics, home furnishings, jewelry, fashion, sports, fitness, home appliances, and more.

Additionally, he highlighted that Gulf Bank offers its credit cardholders the best rewards program in Kuwait. This program allows them to redeem points for flight tickets without being restricted to a specific airline, book hotel stays at over 300,000 hotels worldwide, and enjoy special travel offers. He noted that points earned on international purchases are higher than those on local transactions, providing customers with more rewarding returns when using their credit cards.

News in Brief

US unveils \$1.7bn boost to electric vehicle manufacturing

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's administration said Thursday it is issuing \$1.7 billion in grants to help expand or revive auto facilities for making electric vehicles and parts - including in election battlegrounds Michigan and Georgia. The funds will go towards converting 11 shuttered or at-risk facilities in eight states, covering another battleground Pennsylvania, and others like Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. The aim is to help them retrofit to make EVs and officials said the investment - paid for by the Inflation Reduction Act - will save 15,000 jobs. — AFP

Hungary, North Macedonia agree on 500-m-euro loan

SKOPJE: North Macedonia's Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski said that he had reached agreement with his Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orban for a 500-million-euro (\$543-million) loan to Skopje. The loan is part of a deal on future "special economic cooperation" between the two countries, reached during a meeting in Washington where the two prime ministers attended a NATO summit, Mickoski said. "We agreed that the finance ministries of both governments will immediately launch a process in which the Hungarian government will lend to the Macedonian government 500 million euros," the right-wing prime minister said in a statement. — AFP

World Bank grants Togo \$200m to tackle power cuts

LOME: The World Bank will grant Togo \$200 million for energy infrastructure projects to help tackle the West African country's devastating electricity crisis, according to agreements signed Friday. In recent months, Togo has been battered by power cuts that have spurred rising discontent at a time of already febrile political tensions. Hailing the agreement as timely, the country's economy and finance minister Sani Yaya said the funding would help build new transmission lines, benefitting Togolese living in rural areas in particular. — AFP

Swedish inflation falls to lowest level in three years

STOCKHOLM: Swedish inflation fell to its lowest level in almost three years in June, official figures showed Friday, increasing the likelihood of an interest rate cut. Consumer prices in the Scandinavian country rose by 2.6 percent year-on-year in June, down from 3.7 percent in May, according to Statistics Sweden. The agency noted it was the lowest reading of the consumer price index since September 2021. The inflation measure used by Sweden's central bank to guide monetary policy, which is adjusted for interest rates, fell to 1.3 percent, well below its two percent inflation target. — AFP

London simplifies listing rules to boost City district

LONDON: Britain launched a simplification of stock market listing rules, designed to attract more companies and boost the appeal of the capital's City finance district. The shake-up, unveiled by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) watchdog and due to come into force on July 29, was also praised by new UK finance minister Rachel Reeves. "The new rules are the biggest changes to the listing regime in over three decades," the FCA announced in a statement. — AFP

Gulf Bank announces 10 winners of AIDanah monthly draw

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to reward its customers, Gulf Bank has announced the 10 monthly winners of the AIDanah account draw for June 2024. Each lucky winner will receive a prize of KD 1,000. The winner of the KD 1 million prize will be announced on July 18, 2024.

The winners are:

1. Rafat Mohammed Ali Al-Masry
2. Abdullah Hasan Abdullah Mohammed (Minor)
3. Abdullah Abdul Rasool Ali Saad
4. Hana Abdullah Rashed Al-Duajj
5. Nasra Abdullah Abbas Abu Alhasan
6. Salwa Abdullah Mohammed Al-Jasme
7. Saleh Ismael Mohammed
8. Moustapha Adnan Badra
9. Joyal Dominic Aerath
10. Shaikha Fahid Manoukh Al-Dafiry

Gulf Bank recently made two significant announcements regarding its prizes. Firstly, to divide the KD 100,000 prize among 100 winners, with each receiving KD 1,000 instead of one winner taking the full amount. Secondly, to increase the annual grand prize from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, earning it a place in the Guinness World Records as the largest cash prize linked to a bank account globally.

Following these adjustments, Gulf Bank has revised its AIDanah Millionaire account draw schedule. Now, there will be two major draws held annually,

Empty beds and lost jobs: Price of India's crackdown on NGOs

MUMBAI: Lakshman Yeme saw firsthand what happens when foreign funds are cut off under laws the Indian government says are meant to crack down on corruption but that critics say hurt the poorest most. Yeme works as a doctor at a hospital in Anjanwel in the coastal region of Maharashtra, and for years, he toiled alone in a poorly equipped, nearly empty building.

Three years ago, the Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Centre (BSFC), a Mumbai-based NGO, came to his rescue, building an operating theatre, paying for extra staff and subsidizing surgeries. But BSFC's license to receive funds from foreign donors expired in October 2021 and since then it has not been able to renew it. Overnight, its activities collapsed, and Yeme found himself back at square one.

"The operation theatre has stopped functioning entirely and even the doctors, who were coming here to see patients, have stopped coming," he said. Today, the hospital cuts a sorry sight - beds are empty, the X-ray room and operating theatre are shut, chairs are covered in dust and the paint is peeling from the rain-drenched walls. Thousands of civil society groups in India have had their licenses to receive overseas donations cancelled since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government tightened surveillance on non-profit groups regulated under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

The government has said alleged irregularities on the part of NGOs were to blame, but civil society activists said the cancellations were part of a larger crackdown to stifle criticism of the government. The list of those affected includes Oxfam, Amnesty International and World Vision as well as reputed think tanks like the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), which had its license cancelled in January. Modi's government has said the rule changes were needed to beef up accountability for the receipt and use of foreign funding because few of the more than 230,000 registered non-profits met basic statutory requirements or used the funds properly.

each granting a grand prize of KD 2 million. Additionally, there will be a semi-annual draw with a KD 1 million prize, along with monthly draws where 10 winners will each receive KD 1,000.

Furthermore, a separate draw for KD 100,000 will take place, with the winner announcement scheduled for July 18, 2024. Furthermore, on Oct 17, 2024, there will be another draw where 100 lucky winners will each receive a prize of KD 1,000. The deadline for participation and deposits for this draw was June 30, 2024.

It is worth mentioning that the semi-annual draw for the AIDanah Millionaire account, where the winner of the KD 1 million prize will be announced, is scheduled for July 18, 2024. Representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young, will be present at the event.

Gulf Bank announced the grand prize winner of the annual draw for the AIDanah Millionaire account on Feb 1, 2024 for the first time, following the increase in the prize's value to KD 2 million in 2023. This is part of the bank's continuous efforts to reward its customers and foster a culture of savings within the community.

Renowned as one of the top savings accounts in Kuwait, the AIDanah account offers numerous benefits, including periodic draws with substantial prizes. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million and a grand draw prize of KD 2 million.

One of the many advantages of the AIDanah account, is being the only account in Kuwait that transfers the customers' chances of winning from the previous year to the next, as part of a program



that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank. In order to increase one's chances of winning, customers must maintain a minimum of KD 200 in their accounts, or deposit continuously to increase their chances of winning. AIDanah account holders are eligible to win Gulf Bank's monthly, quarterly, and annual AIDanah draws.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Vendors chop raw mangoes as they wait for customers along a street in Amritsar on July 13, 2024. — AFP

For BSFC, the damage rippled out beyond Anjanwel. "We had to cut our staff strength from 30 to about seven people; our programs had to be discontinued," said BSFC's trustee Anil Hebbar in a phone interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation. According to the government's FCRA dashboard, only 15,947 NGOs with an FCRA license are still active - the permissions for 35,488 NGOs have either been cancelled or have expired and not been renewed.

This has left many organizations struggling to survive and left some of the most vulnerable in this nation of 1.4 billion lacking vital services. Mukta Naik, a fellow at the CPR, which had its license cancelled, said the NGO sector was filled with uncertainty about what might be considered "subversive" in the future and were tending to lean towards working with government-backed projects.

She said the government should not seek to control the important sector. "Civil society can be an

important ally, it is a space for governments to understand what people really want." India's Ministry of Home Affairs did not respond to several emails requesting comment.

The FCRA dates from 1976, a time of national emergency declared by then prime minister Indira Gandhi, who was seen as using the law to target critics of a civil rights clampdown. In 2020, the regulations were tightened to include a ban on NGOs transferring money from overseas contributions to other NGOs with similar licenses and imposed a spending limit of 20 percent on administrative costs such as staff and offices. "Many grassroots organizations, that had the FCRA license but didn't have fundraising capabilities, would depend on larger organizations for their funding," said Avinash Kumar, the former head of Amnesty India, who left after the organization shut down operations in India in 2020 after the government alleged it had committed FCRA violations. — Reuters

MONDAY, JULY 15, 2024



This picture shows Lei Fangyan (right) gesturing as he teaches African drums at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre.

Chinese kindergartens pivot to senior care as population ages



This picture shows a participant playing a drum during an African drum class at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre in Taiyuan, in China's northern Shanxi province.



This picture shows a participant dressing up prior to a dancing class at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre.

Senior citizens sway to old-time tunes at a former kindergarten in northern China, as educators turn their sights away from children in the face of a rapidly ageing population and a baby bust. Hundreds of millions of Chinese are set to enter old age in the coming decades while the country's chronically low birth rate leaves ever fewer people to replace them, official statistics show. The crisis is already hitting the education sector, with thousands of preschools closing around the country as enrollments dry up. But others are changing with the times - such as a facility in Shanxi province, which has traded chortling children for a more mature cohort.

"(The problem) became particularly evident as the number of children continued to decrease," principal Li Xiuling, 56, told AFP. "After my kindergarten emptied out, I thought about how to make the best use of it," she said. Li's preschool was founded in 2005 and once served as many as 280 children, but closed last year. It reopened in December as Impressions of Youth, a recreational center for people of retirement age and above. The space in the provincial capital Taiyuan boasts around 100 adult learners of music, dance, modelling and other subjects. "It's quite a progressive idea," Li said. "They come to fulfil some of the dreams they had when they were young."

'I'm young again'
On a rainy morning this month, a modelling instructor led a line of immac-



This picture shows participants practicing a dance at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre.

ulately coiffed older women as they sauntered around the classroom in traditional cheongsam dresses and pink oil-paper parasols. In another class, students sat in a semicircle beating African drums in time to soaring socialist songs. He Ying, 63, said joining the center had helped her overcome a post-retirement lack of confidence and meet new friends. "I used to feel that my cultural life... was very impoverished, that there wasn't much meaning in going on living," she told AFP. "(People here) are not just waiting to grow old."

Nearly 15,000 kindergartens closed in China last year as enrollments plunged by 5.3 million compared to 2022, according to government data. In dusty, industrial Shanxi - where the

overall population is falling - there were 78,000 more deaths than births last year. The center bears traces of its past, with bunkbeds and dinky writing desks lining the colorfully decorated walls of former classrooms. For Yan Xi, who used to teach at the kindergarten but now leads classes for retirees, the shift has taken some getting used to. "Little kids just believe whatever you say, but the elderly... have their own ways," she said. "I have to think harder about how to communicate with them," Yan told AFP.

Several other facilities across China have found success by pivoting from preschool to senior education, according to local news reports. Student Sun Linzhi, 56, said they met "a need for

universities for the elderly". Since joining the center in Taiyuan, "I feel like I'm young again," she told AFP.

'Silver economy'

China saw a significant rise in the senior population last year, adding nearly 17 million people aged 60 and above, according to official statistics. That age group already makes up more than 20 percent of the population, a proportion that is expected to rise to nearly a third by 2035, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, a research group. Beijing plans to introduce a "relatively sound" national elderly care system by 2025, but the country lacks nursing homes and faces wide regional disparities in coverage. Top leaders will likely discuss the future of what they call the "silver economy" at a key economic meeting in the capital next week.

The government estimates that products and services catering to the elderly - from senior-friendly tourism to technology-driven medical care - could be worth 30 trillion yuan (\$4.13 trillion) by 2035. But it has struggled to revive the plummeting birth rate, a major driver of China's mismatched demographics. Li, the principal, said she felt nostalgic for the days when her school teemed with boisterous kids. "I was very emotionally invested in it," she said, gesturing towards the disused bunks and desks. "We kept those as a kind of memento." — AFP



This picture shows participants attending an African drum class at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre.



This picture shows beds that once were used by children to take naps at a kindergarten-turned-elderly centre.



This picture shows ex-kindergarten teacher Yan Xi (center) attending a dancing class with others at a kindergarten-turned-elderly center.—AFP photos

Swiss cities battle to host Eurovision 2025 - or not

Swiss singer Nemo's 2024 Eurovision victory means Switzerland gets to host the glitzy TV extravaganza next year - though battles are now raging over footing the bill. Zurich, Geneva, Basel, plus Bern in conjunction with Nemo's hometown Biel, are the four declared candidates to stage the 69th Eurovision Song Contest. The winner should be announced by the end of August, with the kitsch annual spectacle set for mid-May 2025. But the financial demands of hosting Eurovision - and, in some parts, even fear of the occult - have sparked threats of local referendums to ensure cities don't get saddled with the event.

The contest puts host cities in the spotlight, with 163 million viewers worldwide watching this year's event in Malmo, Sweden, where Nemo triumphed with the highly personal song "The Code". Hosting also has a knock-on boost for the hotel and tourism industries as Eurovision fanatics, artists and country delegations flock in. Following a surge of early enthusiasm, four formal bids emerged by the end of June deadline. However, Swiss voters are used to having a direct say on how their taxes are spent, and some are bristling at the potential costs and hassle of bringing the Eurovision circus to town.

Satanism concerns

Under Switzerland's direct democratic system, popular votes can be triggered on most any issue if enough signatures are gathered. The Christian fundamentalist, right-wing Federal Democratic Union (EDU) minor party is pushing for referendums against public financial support in every potential host city. "What bothers us most is that Satanism and occultism are increasingly being celebrated or at least tolerated," said EDU executive board member Samuel Kullmann, according to the public broadcaster SRF.

"More and more artists are openly presenting occult messages," he said, citing Ireland's witchcraft-inspired 2024 entrant

Bambie Thug. But Switzerland's next window for popular votes comes after the August host city selection date - potentially throwing a spanner in the works. In the end, the host broadcaster SRG will make the location decision, supported by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) public service media alliance which owns Eurovision. "Financial commitments without a referendum requirement are of course less risky and offer us more planning security," said SRG spokesman Edi Estermann. "Ultimately, however, this is only one aspect of a comprehensive list of requirements." — AFP



(From left) Lead candidates for the presidency of the European Commission Italian Sandro Gozi of the group Renew, German Terry Reintke of Greens - European Free Alliance, Austrian Walter Baier of Party of the European Left, German Ursula von der Leyen of the European People's Party (EPP) and Luxembourg Nicolas Schmit of Party of European Socialists pose ahead of the Eurovision presidential debate at the European Parliament in Brussels. — AFP

US rapper Wiz Khalifa charged with illegal drug possession in Romania

US rapper Wiz Khalifa has been charged with illegal drug possession after performing at a seaside festival in Romania, where he allegedly consumed cannabis on stage, prosecutors said Sunday. The hip-hop star was headlining at the "Beach, Please!" festival in the Romanian village of Costinesti on the shore of the Black Sea, when he got caught with the drug early Sunday, prosecutors say.

Cannabis is considered a "risk drug" in Romania, and possession is punishable by up to ten years in prison. Videos posted on social media show the rapper being escorted from the venue by Romanian authorities. "During a performance at a music festival held in the resort of Costinesti, the accused was found to have possessed more than 18 grams of cannabis and to have consumed (on stage) another quantity in the form of a handmade cigarette," Romanian anti-organized crime prosecutors (DIICOT) said in a statement on Sunday.

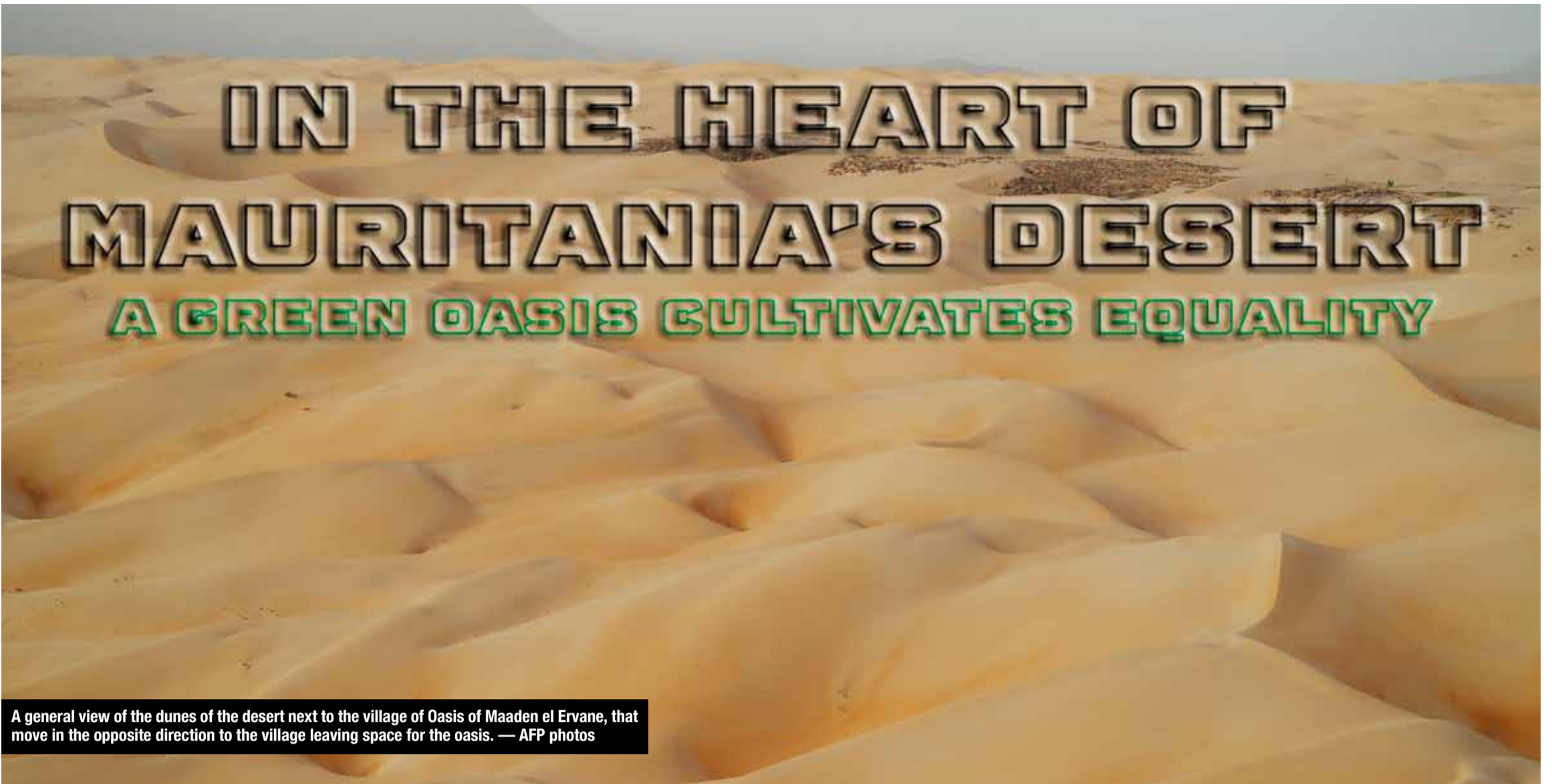
A source close to the investigation confirmed to AFP that Wiz Khalifa, together with other people, had been taken in for questioning early on Sunday. Khalifa was subsequently charged, but not kept in custody, the source added. The investigation into the musician is ongoing, according to prosecutors.

Khalifa often refers to the delights of marijuana in his lyrics. Legal cannabis companies in the US have drawn celebrity funding or endorsements from known aficionados of marijuana like Wiz Khalifa and rapper Snoop Dogg, but also from actor Seth Rogen and former boxing champ Mike Tyson.

In another recent controversy rocking the music scene in Romania, US rapper Nicki Minaj earlier this month abruptly cancelled her appearance at the Saga Festival in Bucharest, citing safety concerns due to upcoming protests. — AFP



Wiz Khalifa performs at the Palomino Stage during the 2024 Stagecoach Festival at Empire Polo Club on April 28, 2024 in Indio, California. — AFP



A general view of the dunes of the desert next to the village of Oasis of Maaden el Ervane, that move in the opposite direction to the village leaving space for the oasis. — AFP photos



An aerial view of Oasis of Maaden el Ervane, in the Adrar region.



A general view of Oasis of Maaden el Ervane, a village in the north-east of Mauritania.



An aerial view of the oasis of Terjit, in the Adrar region of Mauritania.



A group of women prepare cous-cous in the village of oasis of Maaden el Ervane, in the Adrar region of Mauritania.



Khalil Ould Talib sets up a protection from birds on a date palm in the oasis of Maaden el Ervane in the Adrar region of Mauritania.



Women sell vegetables at the market of oasis of Maaden el Ervane, in the Adrar region of Mauritania.

For the residents of Maaden, a green oasis nestled in the depths of the vast Mauritanian desert, communal living, spirituality and sustainable agriculture are the keys to a harmonious existence. In 1975, Sufi spiritual guide Mohammed Lemine Sidina founded a village in this remote spot at the center of the West African state, naming it Maaden el Ervane, or "the deposit of knowledge" in the local Arabic dialect. On a patch of fertile land overlooked by a small outcrop, Sidina built a community based on equality, fraternity, tolerance and hard work.

More than 20 years after the Sheikh's death, his legacy lives on. "Here, there is equality. No caste, no race," said Djibril Niang, 70, who arrived from Senegal 50 years ago and never left. "We are all brothers. If someone needs something, we all work together to help them." Niang ended up marrying his spiritual mentor's daughter - an interracial union "which was unthinkable" at the time, he said. On the site of the oldest building in the village, Imam Taha Sidina recalled his father's vision for Maaden. "Every evening, the community would get together to plan the next day's program - digging a well, creating a road, planting a palm tree," he said. The village grew house by house.

Residents first built a small dam to retain precious water, then laid out fields, founded a school and set up a community clinic. Hospitality is a central tenet of Maaden's philosophy, with a visitors' center welcoming, housing and feeding all who pass through. While most surrounding villages are losing residents, Maaden is thriving.

'I'll never leave'

The community's arable land expands a little day by day, helped by a wind which

pushes the sand away from the fields. "This year's harvest is excellent," said Mohamed Ould Vaide, a 45-year-old farmer, who proudly displayed his crop of tomatoes, peppers, onions, carrots and watermelons which he had grown using a drip irrigation technique. "I'll never leave Maaden. There's no place like it," he said. Vaide makes a living from farming like most of his fellow villagers, who have transformed their agricultural practices thanks to techniques brought by Pierre Rabhi, a pioneer of organic farming in France.

Rabhi travelled to Mauritania in 2018, three years before his death, and fell under the spell of Maaden - passing on his environmental ethos to the local population. Compost replaced chemical fertilizers and solar panels took over from fuel-powered motor pumps, allowing the village to become virtually self-sufficient. Rabhi also organized the delivery of a henna grinding machine which meant women could process the local plant for cosmetics when not involved in crafts, agriculture or trade.

"In Maaden, a woman can farm, put on boots, do manual work and wave to a man. It's different from other villages," said Zeinab Mintou Boubou, 57, president of the women's farming cooperative. The rest of Mauritania is governed by Islamic law, forbidding contact between men and women from different families and traditionally excluding women from certain activities. On the edge of Maaden, as the sun slipped behind the dunes, Mohamed Ould Ali Abdein lit a small fire and prepared tea, soon to be joined by a few friends. His camels prepared to spend the night nearby. For Abeid, his wife and seven children, Maaden is home and where their future lies. — AFP



Djibril Nyang poses for a portrait in Oasis of Maaden el Ervane, in the Adrar region.



A boy observes the Imam Taha Sidina while leading the Friday prayer at the Mosque of Maaden el Ervane, in the Adrar region.



A breeder brings camels to the village of oasis of Maaden el Ervane for drinking.



The Imam of Oasis of Maaden el Ervane, Taha Sidina, greets children in the streets of the village in the Adrar region.

Lifestyle



Gabrielle Carteris, Brian Austin Green, Shannen Doherty, Ian Ziering, Jennie Garth and Tori Spelling of BH 90210 speak during the Fox segment of the 2019 Summer TCA Press Tour at The Beverly Hilton Hotel on August 7, 2019 in Beverly Hills, California. --AFP photos



US actress Shannen Doherty attends the FOX Summer TCA 2019 All-Star Party at Fox Studios in Los Angeles.



US actress Shannen Doherty attends the Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C) event, at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

SHANNEN DOHERTY, '90210' ACTRESS, DIES AT 53, PEOPLE MAGAZINE REPORTS



US actress Shannen Doherty poses on the carpet at the Farrah Fawcett Foundation's "Tex-Mex Fiesta" honoring Marcia Cross at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, California.

American actor Shannen Doherty, best known for her role as high school student Brenda Walsh on hit 1990s television drama "Beverly Hills, 90210," has died after years living with cancer, People magazine reported on Sunday. She was 53. "It is with a heavy heart that I confirm the passing of actress Shannen Doherty. On Saturday, July 13, she lost her battle with cancer after many years of fighting the disease," the magazine cited Doherty's publicist Leslie Sloane as saying.

Doherty had been public about her battle with breast cancer, disclosing in 2015 that she was undergoing treatment for the disease. In 2023, she had a brain tumor removed and revealed that the cancer had spread to her bones. The actress, who had previously starred in the movie "Heathers," gained widespread popularity on "90210" for her portrayal of Brenda, an honor roll student from Minnesota who struggled to fit in with her classmates in the wealthy zip code.

Her character on the show became entwined in a love triangle with Dylan McKay (Luke Perry) and Kelly Taylor (Jennie Garth). In real life, Doherty clashed with Garth and other castmates and left "90210" during its fourth season



Shannen Doherty poses for a portrait in the Getty Images & People Magazine Portrait Studio at Hallmark Channel and American Humanes 2019 Hero Dog Awards at the Beverly Hilton on October 05, 2019 in Beverly Hills, California.

in 1994. The show continued through 2000 without her. In 1998, "90210" producer Aaron Spelling cast Doherty in supernatural series "Charmed" as Prue Halliwell, the oldest of three sisters with magical abilities. The show was a hit, but also subject to reports of behind-the-scenes turmoil.

People magazine called Doherty

"the iconic 'bad girl' of the nineties," citing her reputation for partying, turning up late on sets and feuding with actors - and her bosses. In 2023, on a podcast called "Let's Be Clear with Shannen Doherty," the actor said she took "full responsibility for her actions" and acknowledged her behavior "would get a little carried away" when she was frequenting nightclubs in her early 20s.

She also said she spoke up more than other women working in television at the time, telling Spelling and others when she thought a script needed improvement. "I was raised to have an opinion, and that my opinion should be valued, so I just kept on pressing up against that machine, up against men who didn't really want to hear my opinion," she said on the podcast. Later, "I learned the simple art of diplomacy. I learned that there might be a nicer way to say some things," she said. The actor reprised the role of Brenda for "90210" reboots in 2008 and 2019 and said she and Garth had reconciled after the two became adults and left their teenage conflicts behind.

Doherty was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 12, 1971, and began acting as a child. At age 11, she played Jenny Wilder in the final season of TV



Shannen Doherty poses with a dog in the Getty Images & People Magazine Portrait Studio at Hallmark Channel and American Humanes 2019 Hero Dog Awards at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

classic "Little House on the Prairie." In 1988, Doherty was cast in the dark comedy film "Heathers," which went on to become a cult classic. Doherty was married three times, most recently to photographer Kurt Iswarenko. She filed for divorce from him in 2023. — AFP

Archaeologists recover Roman marble statue from ancient Bulgarian sewer

An exceptional white marble statue from Roman times was recovered Friday from the sewer ruins of an ancient city in southwestern Bulgaria. The 2.1-metre (6 foot 10 inch) tall statue, likely dating from the 2nd century AD, is missing an arm but has a perfectly preserved head, a rarity for Roman statues and a unique find for Bulgaria, archaeological excavations chief Lyudmil Vagalinski told AFP. "Such Roman copies of ancient Greek models can be seen in Athens and northern Greece, as well as in the Louvre Museum, but they are rare," he said, also noting its "very high quality" as a work of art.

Archaeologists stumbled upon the unexpected find last week in the ancient Roman town of Heraclea Sintica while digging in the so-called Cloaca Maxima, the city's tunnel-shaped urban sewage canal. They first came upon a foot before the whole statue—lying on its left side facing the wall—emerged little by little as they kept digging. The sculpture, which archaeologists think depicts a king with a slender profile and divine traits, was spared from strong earthquakes in the 4th century AD and from floods by a covering of earth. "This was the period when Christianity was forcing its way into the Roman Empire. The statue, a symbol of pagan times, was therefore carefully hidden," Vagalinski explained.

The statue's height "was intended to demonstrate the superiority of God over mankind," he added. A week after the surprising discovery, archaeologists proceeded with the statue's meticulous excavation. Its most fragile parts—the neck and the ankles—were covered in protective foam to prevent them breaking when the one-tonne figure was lifted

upright from the ground. It was placed in a wooden box for transportation to the museum in the nearby town of Petrich, where experts will study and restore it before putting it on display for the public.

Long neglected site

The discovery highlights the splendors of the ancient Roman city of Heraclea Sintica, mentioned in the writings of Homer and Herodotus. Its ruins were first discovered in the late 1950s at the foot of the volcanic mountain Kozhuh near Bulgaria's southwestern borders with Greece and North Macedonia. But lack of funds for excavations in a poor country plagued by corruption left authorities long unaware of its value. Its mosaics and works of art were looted and its marble streets and pillars were even blown up to make room for the construction of a railroad in the 1970s.

It wasn't until police seized a plaque with a Latin inscription in 2002, identifying the town as Heraclea Sintica, that people realized the historical importance of the site, said Katia Stoyanova, who is in charge of cultural heritage in Petrich. Archeological excavations then began in 2007. Barely 10 percent of the ancient city, which covered an area of around 10 square kilometers and had an estimated population of 50,000 inhabitants, has been explored to date.

It was founded in the fourth century BC and prospered under the Romans thanks to its trade in wood and painted ceramic masks for the theatre. A series of natural disasters however led its inhabitants to seek refuge on Mount Kozhuh, around the acropolis, while the city itself was abandoned. — AFP



These handout photographs, released by The Museum of History in Petrich show archeologists lifting ancient statue, discovered last week at the Heraclea Sintica archeological site, near the city of Petrich. --AFP photos



Cosplayers pose on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the UK sneak peek event for "Deadpool & Wolverine", at the Eventim Apollo, Hammersmith, west London. —AFP photos



Canadian-US actor Ryan Reynolds (left) and Australian actor Hugh Jackman.

'Deadpool & Wolverine' celebrates friendship, Ryan Reynolds says

The global promotional tour for "Deadpool & Wolverine" touched down in London, with stars Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman bringing their bromance to the movie's UK sneak peek event. The two have entertained fans with their humorous, high-energy appearances at previous stops in Shanghai, Seoul and Berlin. The third installment in the "Deadpool" movie franchise sees Jackman's Wolverine return from retirement to help wise-cracking Deadpool (Reynolds) save his world. "It's about friendship, and friendship is another version of a love story," said Reynolds, who also co-wrote and produced the film.

"There's so many moments in the movie where it's hard to tell if Deadpool's talking to Wolverine, Wolverine talking to Deadpool, or it's Hugh and Ryan talking to each other. And I'm really proud of those moments." Jackman had not planned to reprise the role of the gruff, clawed X-Man Wolverine. But the Australian actor said his mind started changing after he watched the first "Deadpool" film. "It was something in here," he said, pointing at his heart. "I really thought I was done. And then, five or six years later, I was driving and I just knew in my bones I wanted to do that." "I knew for fans it would be the thing they'd waited for, I knew it'd be a kind of dynamic that we've never seen before. I had no idea how hard it would

be physically at age 55 to do it but it's absolutely worth it. I have loved every second."

Secrecy surrounds the film's plot details. Respecting the characters and their legacy was at the heart of the writing process, said director and co-writer Shawn Levy. "But then we pushed them into areas that other movies haven't," he said. "I think you're going to see some aspects to both their performances that are quite different than what we've seen in their prior films." The only Marvel-Disney movie released this year, "Deadpool & Wolverine" is expected to be a box office

hit when it begins its global cinematic rollout on July 24. "There is a lot riding on it but we've worked really hard to deliver the goods," said Levy. "I focus on the opportunity, not the expectation. The creative opportunity to connect with a huge global audience in a new way, in a surprising and fresh way, that was delicious," he said. For Reynolds, 47, releasing the film to the world comes with other concerns. "I feel like I've waited my entire life to do this one movie. The only problem that poses is I don't know what the hell we're supposed to do next." — Reuters



(From left) US-Canadian actor and producer Ryan Reynolds, Canadian director Shawn Levy and Australian actor Hugh Jackman wave during a press conference to promote their new film 'Deadpool & Wolverine' in Seoul.

Sports

India complete 4-1 cricket series win over Zimbabwe

Chasing was something we talked about: Shubman Gill

HARARE: Middle-order batter Sanju Samson struck a brisk 58 from 45 balls and seamer Mukesh Kumar took 4-22 as India defeated Zimbabwe by 42 runs at the Harare Sports Club on Sunday to complete a 4-1 victory in their five-game T20 International series.

After being sent in to bat by their hosts, a youthful India without several regulars posted 167 for six in their 20 overs before restricting Zimbabwe to 125 all out in reply to complete a comfortable win. Samson struck four sixes and was the only one of the visitors' batters to post a score of significance. Shivam Dube blazed his way to 26 from 12 deliveries before he was run out.

Zimbabwe were still in the chase at 85 for three in the 13th over, but lost four wickets for the addition of 12 runs to lose momentum. Their collapse started with the loss of innings top scorer Dion Myers for 34 from 32 balls. Kumar was the pick of the tourists' bowlers with career-best figures as he took wickets at the start and end of the Zimbabwe innings, with fellow seamer Shivam Dube taking 2-25 in four overs.

Earlier, Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Shubman Gill thrashed Zimbabwe's bowlers to all parts of the Harare Sports Club on Saturday to secure a 10-wicket in the fourth T20 international and with it claim the series.

Chasing Zimbabwe's 152 for seven, India cruised him with 28 balls to spare to take a 3-1 lead in the five-match series. The left-handed Jaiswal hammered 93 not out off 53 balls and was named player of the match while Gill made 58 not out off 39 deliveries.

"Chasing was something we talked about," Gill said at the post-match presentation. "We couldn't do it in the first game so it was good to get it done." Zimbabwe won the first match by 13 runs last Saturday but India have taken charge since then, dominating the next three matches.

Although captain Sikandar Raza hit 46 off 28 balls, Zimbabwe were unable to capitalize fully on their first good start of the series. Wessly Madhevere (25) and Tadiwanashe Marumani (32) put on 63 for the first wicket after Zimbabwe were sent in to bat. But the openers fell in successive overs to part-time bowlers Abhishek Sharma and Shivam Dube.

India again opted to field only four specialist bowlers, including new cap Tushar Deshpande, who claimed the wicket of Raza while conceding 30 runs in three overs. Raza said he had thought after his team's innings that 160 was a par score but admitted: "The way they batted, 180 would not have been enough."

Jaiswal set the tone in the first over of India's innings, hitting three boundaries off Richard Ngarava. There was no let-up as India's fifty was posted inside four overs and the hundred inside 10 overs. Jaiswal hit 13 fours and two sixes, while Gill hit six fours and two sixes.

Brief scores:

India 167-6 in 20 overs (S. Samson 58; B. Muzarabani 2-19).

Zimbabwe 125 in 18.3 overs (D. Myers 34; M. Kumar 4-22, S. Dube 2-25).

Result: India won by 42 runs.

Series: India won the five-match series 4-1. — AFP



HARARE: India's Shubman Gill plays a shot during the fourth T20 International cricket match between Zimbabwe and India at Harare Sports Club in Harare. — AFP

Coody clings to lead in Kentucky

WASHINGTON: Pierceson Coody shook off a slow start, picking up four strokes on the back nine in a four-under 68 that left him with a one-stroke lead Saturday going into the final round of the US PGA Tour ISCO Championship in Nicholasville, Kentucky.

The 24-year-old rookie, who led by three after the first round and by two after the second, had three birdies and three bogeys on the front nine and had fallen off the pace at Keene Trace Golf Club. But he rolled in a six-foot eagle putt at the par-five 11th, birdied the par-five 15th and drained a 19-foot birdie at 17 to top the leaderboard on 20-under 196.

He was one stroke in front of England's Harry Hall, who carded a 64, and Rico Hoey of the Philippines, who shot 67. "The front nine, just a few things didn't go my way," Coody said. "Didn't quite hit it the way I wanted to, left myself in some tough spots."

"But every hole feels like out here you can have a chance at birdie with one good shot, so I just tried to stick with that mindset and luckily some good bounces and some good putts on the back nine got me back in it."

Hoey chipped in for eagle at the 15th then drained a 21-foot birdie putt from off the green at 16 to become the first player to reach 20-under. He arrived at 18 tied for the lead but hit his tee shot left into hip-high rough and finished with a bogey for a five-under 67 to join Hall on 19-under 197.

"I just kind of rushed the swing on the first tee ball and pulled it left," Hoey said of his first bogey of the week. "It's unfortunate that just one bad swing I made a bogey, but it's golf so I can't complain. I set myself up for tomorrow and we'll see how it goes."

Sam Bairstow had 10 birdies in a 10-under 62 to head a group on 198, tied with fellow Americans Neal Shipley (66) and Johannes Veerman (67). The top six players on the leaderboard are all chasing a first US PGA Tour title. — AFP

Red Sox, Royals look for leg up in wild-card race

BOSTON: The Boston Red Sox have won their past three series, and they'll have to beat the visiting Kansas City Royals on Sunday to extend that streak to four. After dropping the opener of a three-game series against the Royals 6-1 Friday night, Boston bounced back to earn a 5-0 victory Saturday. It was Boston's 11th shutout of the season, which ties the Red Sox with the Atlanta Braves for most shutout victories in Major League Baseball.

The Red Sox were held to five hits in Friday's loss, but collected 12 hits Saturday. Boston scored five runs on 10 hits against American League All-Star Seth Lugo, who entered Saturday's game with the lowest ERA in the major leagues (2.21) but failed to make it out of the sixth inning. Rafael Devers hit a solo home run Saturday. Devers, Reese McGuire, Dominic Smith and Jarren Duran each had two hits in the victory.

"We put some good at-bats against (Lugo)," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "We were relentless today. Not swinging and missing, putting the ball in play. ... It was an overall, good offensive performance."

The Red Sox and Royals entered Saturday's matchup tied for the American League's third wild-card spot, with the Red Sox taking a one-game lead with a game to go until the All-Star break.

Boston's Kutter Crawford tossed seven shutout innings and limited the Royals to two hits. Kansas City had four hits in the loss. — Reuters

Caddie help Aussie Kyriacou take control of Evian Championship

EVIAN: Stephanie Kyriacou will take a one-shot lead into the final day of the Evian Championship after advice from her caddie and a four-letter mantra helped her overcome a touch of nerves. The Australian shot a third round, four under par 67 on Saturday on a busy day at the women's golf major with Kyriacou two shots behind Japan's Ayaka Furue in a tie for second after the completion of the second round in the morning.

Play on Friday had to be suspended due to dangerous weather conditions. In the afternoon Kyriacou, who only had two holes to complete from the second round, added a 67 to her brace of 66s to go 14 under for the tournament, one shot clear of Furue and Lauren Coughlin of the United States.

Kyriacou, who took a quick nap before setting off on her third round, is chasing her first major title. And she admitted to a touch of nerves during the tournament. "That's what my caddie is for. Coming down the stretch here, I know it's Saturday, but you still get nervous. So he kind of just keep my head screwed on and just said like I'm still playing golf. It's the same as playing a practice round, the same as yesterday. So just trying to keep that perspective."

She continued: "I think just staying like in the moment and taking it one hole, one shot at a time. I kind of have like a mantra that works for me. I probably shouldn't say it. "It has swear words in it. Basically if you didn't give a crap about everything else, how would you play this. Along those lines. Yeah, that kind of gets me through it."

Coughlin was beaming after her third round 65 featured eagles on the par-five 9th and 18th. Third in the Chevron, another of the tour's five majors, Coughlin said: "This will be my first final group on a Sunday."

"Yeah, I think everything I've been working on

Mallet blames change of tactics for Springbok defeat by Ireland

DURBAN: Former Springbok coach Nick Mallett said a change of tactics late in the match led to South Africa's one-point defeat in a rugby thriller against Ireland at King's Park on Saturday. In a battle between the two top-ranked teams in world rugby, Ireland won the second Test 25-24 when replacement flyhalf Ciaran Frawley kicked a last-minute drop goal.

Speaking on SuperSport television, Mallett gave credit to Ireland and their coach Andy Farrell for the way they came back after being beaten 27-20 in the first Test in Pretoria. "It was a brilliant Test match. It was very, very astute coaching," he said of the way Farrell prepared the visiting team at the end of a campaign that effectively stretched for a full year.

"They didn't need to do any fitness training, they needed to relax. It was a lot of mental preparation," Mallett said the match was a reversal of the first Test. "We (South Africa) came out and shot the lights out in that first 40 minutes and put them under pressure (in Pretoria) and they did exactly the same to us this time."

But he was impressed by the way the Springboks came back after trailing 16-6 at half-time. "It wasn't by kicking the ball back, it was by running the ball back," he said, with replacement fullback Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu beating defenders and getting the Springboks on the front foot, forcing Ireland into errors and conceding penalties.

Springbok flyhalf Handre Pollard scored all South Africa's points by kicking eight penalty goals, six of them in the second half. But having turned a 10-point deficit into a five-point lead with 15 minutes to go, the Springboks went on the defensive, according to Mallett.



EVIAN: Australia's Stephanie Kyriacou plays a shot in the final round of the Amundi Evian Championship at Evian Resort Golf Club at Evian-Les-Bains, central-eastern France on July 14, 2024. — AFP

has been leading me to this. My whole team has been helping." She added: "With the rain yesterday (Friday) the greens were pretty soft so I could still feel like I could fire away overall, but still had to pick and chose when."

'Huge par saves'

"I've just been hitting the ball extremely well all week, so I—yesterday and kind of this morning I just didn't really make all that much, and today they started to go in again." Furue said her shot-making was not as good as the first two days.

"But I had huge par saves today so that was kind of good for me," she noted. "Steph made a lot of birdies today, and otherwise I couldn't get any like birdie chances today. So that was a little bit frustrating."

The Japanese player, who has been a model of consistency this season in securing eight top-10 finishes in 16 tournaments, revealed how she was going to prepare for Sunday's pressure finish. "Just go out for dinner and resting, because today was really long day for me. So just chilling out here in Evian."

Thai Pajaree Anannarukam was a further three shots off the pace in fourth. "I actually played 24 holes today, so it was a long day. But I think I played some really good golf, especially the third round, as well as the morning."

"So really pleased with how I played overall and hopefully keep this momentum going to tomorrow." Her compatriot, Patty Tavatanakit, in a share of second, two shots off the lead after the second round, signed for a 72 and a three-way tie for fifth place one shot further back. — AFP



DURBAN: Ireland's wing James Lowe jumps for the ball as South Africa's wing Cheslin Kolbe (3rd L) reacts during the second Rugby Union test match between South Africa and Ireland at Kings Park stadium in Durban. — AFP

"We tried to protect the lead," he said. "Everything we did to get ahead we stopped doing. We started kicking downfield hoping to get territory but they decided to hold onto the ball. "It's just such a pity we didn't carry on playing the way we had before that."

Mallett also pointed out that the Springboks had won three successive knockout matches by one point on their way to winning the World Cup last year. "Just as those teams went away thinking of all the 'what-ifs', so the Springboks can think of those small margins," said Mallett.

'Why no third Test?'

Former Ireland flank, South African-born CJ Stander, said Ireland had controlled the narrative in "a great Test match". Stander said it was unfortunate that the two sides will not meet again in the immediate future, with the Springboks not playing against Ireland on their end-of-year tour to the northern hemisphere.

With the series between the two top teams in the world tied up at 1-1, many were asking why there was no decider. "We always knew this series would come down to special moments," said former Springbok captain Jean de Villiers. — AFP

Sports

US swimmer Ledecky still the gold standard going into fourth Olympics

Ninth American swimmer to qualify for at least four Olympic teams

LOS ANGELES: Twelve years on from her stunning 800m freestyle victory at the London Olympics, Katie Ledecky is headed to her fourth straight Games in Paris aiming to extend an astonishing run of sustained excellence. The American freestyle great, whose talents were once dubbed "otherworldly" by Michael Phelps' mentor Bob Bowman, brings an even-keeled approach that doesn't hide a fierce competitive streak as she vies to add to her cache of 10 Olympic medals—seven of them gold.

She's just the ninth American swimmer to qualify for at least four Olympic teams, and to hear Ledecky tell it, the competition on her sport's biggest stage, and the grinding work needed to make it happen, never get old. "I think it's kind of the opposite for me," Ledecky says. "I feel like I enjoy this more and more each year. I think it's a testament to the people that I have around me, the people that I've had around me my whole career in Bethesda, Maryland, and out at Stanford, now in Florida, just really great communities that keep me excited about the sport—great teammates that push me every day, great coaches that believe in me and push me to continue to reach for bigger and bigger goals."

Ledecky has dominated distance freestyle swimming for more than a decade. She was just 15 when she won the 800m free at the London Games. She repeated in Rio four years later, when her 800m triumph was part of a four-gold haul that included the 200m and 400m free. At the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics, Ledecky grabbed a third straight 800m free gold and won the 1,500m free when it was added to the Olympic

women's programme for the first time. But she was relegated to silver in the 400m free in Tokyo, and she'll be tested right out of the gate in that race in Paris, with Australian Ariarne Titmus and Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh—who briefly held the world record last year—favored ahead of the American. McIntosh also handed Ledecky her first defeat in an 800m free final since 2010 at a meet in Florida in February. "I care a lot about the 800 and the 1,500, and then the 400 is a great race," Ledecky said. "I want to be right in there, and same with that (4x200m) relay."

Ledecky said the addition of the 1,500m to the Olympic slate for women had changed her training focus somewhat—making the 200m free more of a stretch and prompting her to drop the individual 200m. It's the kind of adjustment she appears to make seamlessly, just as she has moved through the age-group and collegiate ranks and now to her Florida training base with coach Anthony Nesty—who won a pioneering Olympic butterfly gold for Suriname in 1988.

No one-hit wonder

"It's definitely been a learning process, and it's changed as I've gotten older," Ledecky says. "There's different things I've learned about myself, about my training, about my nutrition, about my recovery, all those things that come into play."

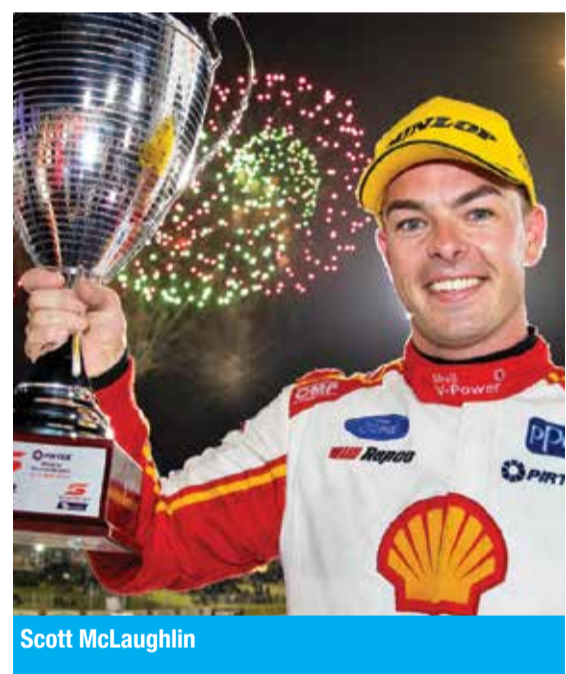
Ledecky's longevity means she now finds herself competing against a raft of young rivals that she herself inspired. "I don't think I would really be here if it weren't for her," says US Olympian Erin



Katie Ledecky

Gemmel—who dressed up as Ledecky for Halloween back in 2013 and will now likely team with her in the 4x200m free relay in Paris. It's not something Ledecky ever imagined when she took up swimming as a six-year-old. "I never dreamed of that as a young kid, to make it to an Olympics," Ledecky

says. "After London I wanted to get back to that level, prove I wasn't just a one-hit wonder, but at the same time I reminded myself that anything more than that is just like icing on the cake, cherry on top—because I just never thought I'd make it to that one Olympics." — AFP



Scott McLaughlin

McLaughlin wins at Iowa in first IndyCar oval track

LOS ANGELES: Scott McLaughlin grabbed his first IndyCar oval track victory on Saturday, leading most of the way to triumph at Iowa Speedway in the first race of a weekend double-header. The Penske driver from New Zealand kept his cool during a series of late restarts leading 164 laps of the 250-lap race to finish .4814sec ahead of Mexico's Pato O'Ward.

Penske's Josef Newgarden—winner of four of the past five races at Iowa—was third, climbing through the field to round out the podium after starting 22nd. "I never was going to call myself an IndyCar driver until I won one on an oval," McLaughlin told broadcaster NBC. "I'm going to call myself an IndyCar driver now."

McLaughlin posted his second victory of the season and the sixth of his career. He started alongside pole-sitter Colton Herta in a race that saw the caution flag come out almost immediately thanks to a first-lap crash involving David Malukas, Agustin Canapino and Romain Grosjean.

McLaughlin was trailing race leader Herta when the leaders made for the pits for the first time. He edged Herta coming out of the pit lane and held off an aggressive move by Herta on a lap 94 restart from caution, staying in front the rest of the way.

Series points leader Alex Palou crashed out, spinning coming out of turn four and hitting the wall. His mishap proved disastrous for Herta, who had pitted for fuel and tires while running second but with the caution flag out had to rejoin well down the field.

Palou remained atop the standings with 336 points, O'Ward moved into second place on 299 points as Australian Will Power dropped from second to third on 293. McLaughlin will get a chance to double his tally of oval victories on Sunday, when he starts from pole in the second race of the weekend.

"That's a big deal today," said McLaughlin, who moved up three places in the standings into fifth. "I've been working for that for a couple of years." — AFP

Egyptian cyclist disqualified from Paris Olympics

CAIRO: An Egyptian cyclist was disqualified from the Paris Olympics on Sunday by the local Olympic committee after her selection caused a social media backlash stemming from a video that appeared to show her knocking a competitor off her bicycle months ago. The largest Arab country is building its credentials for a possible bid for the 2036 Games, which if successful would bring the Olympics to Afri-

Olympic torch relay seeks to win over sceptical Parisians

PARIS: The torch relay ahead of the Paris Olympics reached the French capital for the first time on Sunday, with organizers hoping to build enthusiasm for the Games among the city's sceptical residents. The flame was first glimpsed during the traditional military parade held every year on the July 14 national holiday and then began its tour around the city from the Champs-Élysées.

World Cup-winning footballing great Thierry Henry was given the honor of the first leg on the capital's most famous avenue, with the torch then heading for landmarks including the parliament and Notre-Dame cathedral.

"It's not something you turn down, on our national day, on the Champs-Élysées, the Olympics in Paris," Henry told reporters of his star turn. "Just extraordinary." The build up to the Paris Games has been marked by what chief organizer Tony Estanguet has called "Olympics-bashing", with many Parisians the sternest critics of the event and the disruption in the city.

In the wealthy districts, many families have already left for extended summer holidays, deliberately missing the July 26-August 11 extravaganza. "I'm following them putting up the equipment, the stadiums, the impact that it will have on us, not really the torch," 22-year-old student Manon Skura told AFP at the Champs-Élysées.

The Games have been designed to take place at locations in the heart of the City of Light, with temporary stadiums built at tourist hotspots such as the Eiffel Tower, Invalides and Place de la Concorde. Using the capital's fabled streets and the river Seine as a backdrop will ensure "iconic" Olympics, organizers



PARIS: French football Olympics 2024 coach Thierry Henry (R) holds the Olympic torch as he runs during an Olympic torch relay along the Champs-Élysées avenue, on the sides of the Bastille Day military parade in Paris on July 14, 2024. -- AFP

ca for the first time, spending billions on facilities and sending its biggest delegation to Paris.

During the national championship in April, a video showed Shahd Saied colliding with one of her challengers, Ganna Eliwa, pushing her to the ground before racing ahead. Eliwa accused Saied of a deliberate attack and said she suffered concussion, a broken collarbone, bruises and temporary loss of memory. Saied insisted the incident was an accident but was handed a one-year ban from local competition.

The Egyptian Cycling Federation raised eyebrows on Tuesday when it named her for the Paris Games, saying she had qualified prior to the incident. Saied started her career in her hometown in Fayoum, south of Cairo, about four years ago. She won two gold medals in individual contests at an African champi-

say, but it has also led to large parts of the center being closed off and left traffic in gridlock.

'Delighted'

The latest change to the capital's streets has been the appearance of around 44,000 metal barriers around the river Seine, where a spectacular opening ceremony is being planned on July 26. "Some residents have shared with us their amazement, as well as the physical impossibility of leaving their homes," the mayor of the upmarket river-side 7th district of Paris, Jean-Pierre Lecoq, said last week.

Chief organizer Tony Estanguet told AFP that pushing back the pessimists had been one of his most difficult tasks. "My role has been to protect our vision against everyone who criticizes, those who don't believe in it, those who would take pleasure in seeing it not go well," he said during an interview on Thursday. The torch relay had been a huge success nationally, he said, with around five million people turning out to see it since May 8. "We're delighted with how it has gone so far," he explained. "It has completely met the targets we gave ourselves."

Most importantly, the relay through 450 French towns and cities has taken place without any major security problems—testimony to the huge numbers of police officers deployed and careful planning. Around 200 members of the security forces are positioned permanently around the torch, including an anti-terror SWAT team and anti-drone operatives.

A 26-year-old man was arrested and charged in Bordeaux in May over suspected threats to the procession as it travelled through the southwestern city. Although polls generally find a slim majority of French people support the Olympics, a survey on March 25 by the ViaVoice group found that 57 percent of respondents felt "little" or "no" enthusiasm about them in Paris.

The flame will remain in the capital on Monday for a second day when it is scheduled to be greeted by can-can dancers outside the famed Moulin Rouge cabaret show and travel up to the hill-top Montmartre cathedral. — AFP

Smith on target as US sink Mexico in Olympic warm-up

NEW YORK: Sophia Smith scored the only goal as the United States warmed up for the Olympics with a 1-0 victory over Mexico in New Jersey on Saturday. Portland Thorns striker Smith rounded off a superb team move with an emphatic finish on 64 minutes to seal a deserved win for Emma Hayes's youthful US Olympic squad at the Red Bull Arena.

Mexico had scored a 2-0 defeat over the Americans when the teams last met in February during the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup in California. But that shock loss—only the second time ever Mexico have beaten the US women—seemed like a distant memory on Saturday after a dominant performance by the four-time Olympic champions. Hayes controversially omitted veteran striker and two-time World Cup-winner Alex Morgan from her 18-strong squad for the Olympics, where the Americans are chasing their first gold medal since the 2012 London games.

However the movement of Smith and attacking partners Trinity Rodman and Mallory Swanson on Saturday suggested that the US women will be among the main contenders for gold in France. Smith in particular carved out a number of promising chances and only some desperate goalkeeping from Mexico stopper Stephany Barrera prevented the home team from scoring more. Barrera pulled off superb saves to deny Smith in the 22nd and 52nd minutes, before Smith finally broke the deadlock in the second half. Rose Lavelle's pass released Rodman down the right, who in turn fed Swanson in the penalty area who unselfishly laid off to Smith, who cut inside and curled a shot past Barrera.

"We have such dynamic players up front I think we can create in so many ways," Smith said after the win. "I should have put away a few more. But I think it goes to show the different ways we're creating and working together." The US play Costa Rica in a final friendly on Tuesday before heading to France for the Olympics, where they will open their campaign against Zambia in Nice on July 25. — AFP

Nadal to face Borg in Bastad

PARIS: In the world of fantasy tennis, pitting Nadal against Borg may seem everyday but in the real world it has never happened before. Sadly, although obviously given the age difference, fans at the ATP event in Bastad next week will not be watching the two kings of Roland Garros - Rafael Nadal and Bjorn Borg with 20 French Open titles between them. Instead Nadal will be up against Leo Borg, the 21-year-old son of the long-retired former world number one, now 68. "It was crazy because we were looking when they did the draw and my name just popped up against Rafa," said Borg, currently ranked 467 in the world.

"I'm feeling very excited and it's going to be a great match." According to his ATP biography, Borg has never watched a single point of his father's storied career which included six French Open titles and five successive Wimbledon. Instead he credits Nadal as one of the reasons he turned to tennis as a child, making Friday's practice session together all the more special. "It was a very good practice and of course he's been my idol since I was very young, so it's going to be a very special moment in my career," Borg said.

"But I'm looking forward to that and I'm feeling really, really excited." Borg's only ATP Tour match win last year was in Bastad against Elias Ymer. The 22-time Grand Slam champion Nadal on the other hand, has competed in Bastad on three previous occasions, most recently in 2005, when he lifted the trophy. The 38-year-old, who was knocked out of the first round at Roland Garros before choosing to skip Wimbledon, will also be taking part in the doubles in tandem with Casper Ruud in preparation for the Olympics when he will team up with fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz. — AFP

onship earlier this year.

Many Egyptians expressed anger and embarrassment, accusing the federation of disregarding sportsmanship. "What is she doing there, didn't she crash into her competitor on purpose?" asked one Facebook user under the announcement of Shahd's participation in the games.

"This is beyond shameful and I hope you fail." After the country's sports ministry asked for a review of the decision, the Olympic Committee ruled on Sunday that the local ban made her ineligible for international competitions. Saied had, however, already told a local TV host she was retiring. "I'm not going to bike anymore. If they don't want me to represent Egypt, fine, I won't go to the Olympiad," she said on Saturday. — AFP



Alcaraz blows away Djokovic to retain Wimbledon title

'A great feeling to play and lift this amazing trophy'

LONDON: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz produced an utterly ruthless performance to dismantle Serbia's Novak Djokovic 6-2 6-2 7-6(4) in a rematch of last year's Wimbledon final to successfully defend his title on Sunday.

Alcaraz now has four Grand Slam trophies with a perfect record in major finals, after his two Wimbledon triumphs, his US Open victory in 2022 and his French Open win last month. Defeat denied Djokovic a 25th Grand Slam title to surpass Margaret Court in the all-time list and also equal Swiss Roger Federer's haul of eight men's singles titles at Wimbledon.

"It's a dream for me, winning this trophy," said Alcaraz, who became the ninth man to retain his Wimbledon title in the professional era.

"In an interview when I was 11 or 12 I said my dream was to win Wimbledon, so I'm re-playing my dream. I want to keep going but it's a great feeling to play in this beautiful court and to lift this amazing trophy.

"This is the most beautiful tournament, most beautiful court and most beautiful trophy."

Victory made him the sixth man in the professional era to claim the Roland Garros and Wimbledon titles in the same year, joining Rod Laver, Bjorn Borg, Rafa Nadal, Federer and Djokovic. "It's a huge honor for me to be part of those players who have achieved Roland Garros and Wimbledon in the same year. They are huge champions," Alcaraz said.

"I don't consider myself as a champion yet, not like them, but I'll keep going to build my path, my journey."

Alcaraz pounced on his fifth break point in a tight first game that lasted 14 minutes as Djokovic's usually impenetrable defence was breached early on a sunlit Centre Court. The 21-year-old third seed dropped the hammer from there and powered through the first set on the back of some solid serving, leaving Djokovic with a mountain to climb.

Second seed Djokovic came under more pressure at the start of the next set as Alcaraz bullied the 37-year-old in the early exchanges to break and capitalized on his service woes for an imposing two-set lead.

Djokovic and Alcaraz went toe-to-toe until 4-4 in the third set before the Spaniard broke with a big backhand winner to take a 5-4 lead, as the Centre Court crowd sensed an early finish.

However, despite racing to 40-0 with some sublime tennis, he squandered three match points and dropped serve as fans rose to their feet to egg Djokovic on.

There was to be no comeback, however, as Alcaraz tamed his nerves to clinch victory in the tiebreak around 20 minutes later when Djokovic crashed a return into the net.

"Obviously it's not the result I wanted and especially in the first couple of sets, the level of tennis wasn't up to par from my side," Djokovic said. "But credit to Carlos for playing some complete tennis. From the back of the court, on serve, he had it all today. I tried to push him and saved the three match points, extended the match a little bit, but it wasn't meant to be really. "He was an absolutely deserved winner today. Congratulations to him for amazing tennis." — Reuters

Saudi to host first Esports Olympics in 2025

LAUSANNE: Saudi Arabia will host the inaugural Esports Olympics in 2025 the International Olympic Committee said on Friday. "The International Olympic Committee (IOC) today announced that it has partnered with the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Saudi Arabia to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games 2025 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the body said.

"The proposal will be made to the IOC Session, which will be held on the eve of the Olympic Games Paris 2024. "The duration of the partnership between the IOC and the Saudi NOC will be 12 years, with Olympic Esports Games held regularly."

Riyadh is already to host the Esports World Cup in July and August, when 2,500 gamers will battle for \$60 million in prize money. The IOC, in its perpetual quest to reconcile Olympic tradition with attempts to attract a younger audience, held an initial "Olympic e-sport week" in Singapore in June 2023, consisting of "ten mixed-gender category events".

Last October, the IOC set up an

"e-sport commission" chaired by Frenchman David Lappartient, the president of the international cycling union (UCI), to consider a dedicated competition. However, IOC president Thomas Bach has said in the past he does not see e-sports as part of the traditional Olympics.

"With respect to esports, our values are and remain the red line that we will never cross," he said. Nevertheless he expressed his delight that the Esports Games had a natural home in Saudi Arabia. "We are very fortunate to be able to work with the Saudi NOC on the Olympic Esports Games, because it has great—if not unique—expertise in the field of esports with all its stakeholders," Bach said in a statement.

"The Olympic Esports Games will greatly benefit from this experience. "By partnering with the Saudi NOC (National Olympic Committee) we have also ensured that the Olympic values are respected. "In particular, with regard to the game titles on the programme, the promotion of gender equality and engagement with the young audience, which is embracing esports."

'New chapter'

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, Minister of Sport and President of the Saudi Arabian Olympic and Paralympic Committee, said he was happy his country was part of sporting history. "Saudi Arabia is hugely excited by the prospect of partnering with the IOC and helping to welcome a completely new era



SINGAPORE : (FILES) This picture shows the logo during the Olympic Esports Week in Singapore on June 22, 2023. Saudi Arabia will host the inaugural Esports Olympics in 2025. — AFP

for international sport," he said.

"We believe that to take part in the Olympic Games is one of the greatest honors any athlete can achieve. And we are proud to support the writing of a new chapter in Olympic history that has the potential to inspire new dreams and new ambitions for literally millions of athletes around the world."

Conservative Saudi Arabia's bid to become a sports powerhouse is part of a larger attempt to soften its austere image. That rebranding is central to the success of its Vision 2030 economic and social reform agenda, designed to prepare the world's biggest crude exporter for a prosperous post-oil future. — AFP

France suffer Argentina loss

BUENOS AIRES: France captain Baptiste Serin said on Saturday his side had experienced a "terrible" week following a 33-25 defeat by Argentina in Buenos Aires, which came hours after two members of the visitors' squad were charged with rape and beating a woman.

France forwards Hugo Auradou, 20, and flanker Oscar Jegou, 21, were arrested on Monday and formally charged on Friday after a woman accused them of raping her multiple times and beating her in a hotel room in the city of Mendoza after last weekend's first Test. The players have denied the accusation, and say sexual relations with the woman were consensual. Serin's side were also without full-back Melvyn Jaminet after he was removed from the squad on Sunday for making racist comments in a video on social media.

Prop Thomas Gallo scored twice for the hosts, who levelled the two-match series after losing last Saturday to claim a first win over France since 2016. "It's hard to find the words, because we experienced a terrible week," Serin told Canal+.

"We wanted the tour to be unforgettable, but unforgettable on the field. "Things have happened which don't reflect what we want to reflect, I won't go into details. Today, I'm proud of what we did on the field." Youngster Mickael Guillard and veteran flanker Judicael Cancoriet replaced Auradou and Jegou in the starting line-up as Fabien Galthie's second-string side eyed a first series success over Los Pumas since 1998.

Another player missing was scrum-half Antoine Dupont as French rugby's poster boy prepares to play sevens at this year's Paris Olympics. Argentina head coach Felipe Contepomi handed flanker Pablo Matera his 100th cap for the game at a sold-out Estadio Jose Amalfitani, having lost his first game in charge of the team seven days ago.

Half-time lead

Galthie's side began sluggishly lacking possession and territory before Dupont's stand-in Serin



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's players pose with the trophy after winning the rugby union Test match between Argentina and France at Jose Amalfitani Stadium in Buenos Aires. — AFP

pounced on an Argentina error to open the scoring after 10 minutes. The teams were level by the end of the first quarter as prop Eduardo Bello responded for the visitors with Santiago Carreras' conversion making it 7-7. Contepomi's outfit continued to dominate and led 21-10 at the break after the referee awarded the hosts a penalty try after a powerful scrum and fly-half Carreras crashed over after France outside-half Antoine Hastoy kicked a penalty.

Les Bleus returned from the interval better and were back ahead with half an hour remaining as Pau team-mates Emilien Gailleton and Theo Attissogbe scored to make it 25-21.

Argentina's hopes of a first win over France in

five games were handed a boost as Les Bleus prop Georges-Henri Colombes was shown a yellow card for a high tackle on lock Lucas Paulos with 23 minutes to go. The hosts made Colombes' absence count as 25-year-old Gallo crossed twice, with Carreras converting one of the tries, to take the score to 33-25 with 13 minutes left.—AFP