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Biden calls to 'cool it down'

Trump stars at Republican convention clouded by shooting



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden addresses the nation from the Oval Office of the White House on July 14, 2024 about the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden sought to calm a divided nation Sunday after his rival Donald Trump survived an assassination bid, saying in a rare Oval Office address that it was time to lower the temperature of America's hostile politics. "It's time to cool it down. We all have a responsibility to do that," Biden said in a televised address following the attack in which Republican Trump was injured in the ear and a bystander was killed by gunfire.

As the country reeled from images of a bloodied Trump waving his fist after the gunman opened fire at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, Biden added that US politics "must never be a literal battlefield, God forbid a killing field". The 20-year-old shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was shot dead by Secret Service agents amid scenes of chaos. Authorities say his motive remains unclear.

The FBI said it was investigating the attack as a potential act of domestic terrorism and studying Crooks's phone to discover any

"ideologies" he may have had. Biden, giving just the third Oval Office address of his presidency, also mentioned the Jan 6, 2021, Capitol attack by pro-Trump supporters as proof that the situation is getting out of hand.

"We can't allow this violence to be normalized," the 81-year-old Democrat said, adding that the November 5 election would be a "time of testing" for the United States. The short but forceful speech went without any major hitches — bar Biden twice referring to the ballot box as a "battle box". Democrats are closely watching the president following a disastrous debate performance renewed concerns about his age and ability to govern.

Meanwhile, Trump was set to unveil his running mate on Monday as supporters gathered in Milwaukee for the Republican Party convention, an extravaganza turbocharged by the attempted assassination of the former president. With the country still reeling from images of a bloodied Trump being escorted off a rally stage at

the weekend, some 50,000 Republicans descended on the shores of Lake Michigan for the four-day convention.

Convention organizers insisted the show would go on despite the attempt on Trump's life on Saturday. Trump himself dismissed any calls to postpone the convention in the hours after the shooting, vowing to be "defiant in the face of wickedness". "I'm not supposed to be here, I'm supposed to be dead," he told the New York Post in an interview aboard his plane en route to Milwaukee, during which he reportedly had a white bandage on his ear and a large bruise on his forearm from where the Secret Service agents gripped him.

"By luck or by God, many people are saying it's by God I'm still here," he said. Riding high in the polls despite being convicted at his hush-money case in New York, Trump appears on course for victory as Biden, 81, faces calls from his own side to

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Minor fire at Mubarak Hospital

KUWAIT: Firefighters controlled a small fire at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital early Monday with no injuries reported, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said. Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and acting KFF Chief Maj Gen Khaled Abdullah were on site to follow up on the incident. (See Page 2)

Zionists kill Syria businessman

BEIRUT: A monitor of Syria's civil war said a Zionist strike on a vehicle near the Lebanon border killed two people Monday, including a businessman close to President Bashar Al-Assad. The businessman, Baraa Katerji, "was responsible for funding" a Hezbollah-linked group formed to attack the Zionist-annexed Golan Heights and "was killed when a (Zionist) drone targeted the car he was in, along with another person," said the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. — AFP

Two vessels attacked off Yemen

DUBAI: Two vessels came under attack on Monday in the Red Sea off Yemen's port city of Hodeidah. A vessel 97 nautical miles northwest of Hodeidah was attacked by an uncrewed surface vessel that hit its port side causing some damage and light smoke, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said. Another merchant vessel, 70 nautical miles southwest of Hodeidah, reported three missiles had exploded nearby, after the ship earlier came under attack by three small craft, UKMTO and security firm Ambrey said separately. — Reuters

Child immunization levels stall

GENEVA: Global childhood vaccination levels have stalled, leaving millions more children un- or under-vaccinated than before the pandemic, the UN said Monday, warning of dangerous coverage gaps enabling outbreaks of diseases like measles. In 2023, 84 percent of children, or 108 million, received three doses of the vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP), with the third dose serving as a key marker for global immunization coverage, according to data published by the UN health and children's agencies. — AFP

Kuwait, Interpol discuss boosting security cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah on Monday met President of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) Dr Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi. In the meeting, both officials discussed ways to deepen cooperation and coordination between Kuwait and the organization in the field of security and information exchange.

The ministry of interior stated in a press release that Minister Fahad Yusuf received Dr Al-Raisi on Monday, where they discussed several common issues. Sheikh Fahad emphasized Kuwait's role in cooperation with international organizations and its support for achieving security, peace and human rights at the global level. The talks also addressed ways to enhance cooperation and coordination be-



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah meets President of Interpol Dr Ahmed Al-Raisi on July 15, 2024. — KUNA

tween Kuwait and Interpol in the field of security and information exchange, the statement added.

Dr Raisi expressed his gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality, affirming the impor-

tance of Kuwait's role in supporting the organization and commending the efforts of the ministry of interior in international cooperation and combating organized crime. — KUNA

Zionists pound Gaza from land, sea and air

GAZA: The Zionist entity hammered the Gaza Strip from the air, sea and land Monday as the war in the Palestinian territory showed no sign of abating, with Hamas saying it was pulling out of truce talks. Shells rained down on the neighborhoods of Tal Al-Hawa, Sheikh Ajlin and Al-Sabra in Gaza City, AFP correspondents reported, while eyewitnesses said the Zionist army had shelled the Al-Mughraqa area and the

northern outskirts of the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Paramedics from the Palestinian Red Crescent said they had retrieved the bodies of five people, including three children, after Zionist air strikes in the Al-Maghazi camp, also in the central Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, eyewitnesses reported Zionist gunship fire east of Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza, and shelling and Apache helicopter attacks in western areas of the southernmost city of Rafah.

The relentless bombardments came as prospects dwindled for a truce and hostage release deal being secured any time soon. Hamas, the Islamist group that the Zionist entity has been fighting in Gaza for over nine months, Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A Palestinian child walks past piles of smouldering waste at the Al-Maghazi Palestinian refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on July 15, 2024. — AFP

Pro-Palestinian activists protest at UK Cenotaph

LONDON: UK police on Monday arrested two pro-Palestinian demonstrators after a protest at Britain's Cenotaph war memorial in central London. A Palestinian flag was laid in front of the Cenotaph and "180,000 killed" spray-painted on the ground in front of the monument, photos and video footage showed. The Cenotaph is the focus every year of national events to commemorate Britain's war dead.

"Two women were quickly arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and are in custody," the Metropolitan Police said on X, adding that damage was caused to the road and not to the monument itself. In a statement, the Youth Demand group said its supporters had taken action to "commemorate the thousands killed in (the Zionist entity's) genocidal assault on Gaza".

It said Youth Demand was calling for a two-way arms embargo on the Zionist entity and for the new UK government to halt all new oil and gas licenses granted since 2021.

Supporters planned to disrupt the State Opening of Parliament by head of state King Charles III on Wednesday, it added. Youth Demand last month staged a protest at the constituency home of former prime minister Rishi Sunak. — AFP



LONDON: Youth Demand activists hold placards after laying flowers and a Palestinian flag at the Cenotaph war memorial on July 15, 2024 during a protest to commemorate the thousands killed in the Zionist entity's genocidal assault on Gaza. — AFP



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Electricity crunch: Addressing the energy problem at its core

Experts suggest ways to reduce overload, consumption rate

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: "The beginning of the real crisis," said former consultant to the ministry of electricity and water and renewable energy Salem Al-Ajmi regarding the current electricity crunch in Kuwait. He anticipates the situation will worsen if delays in introducing new solar power plants to the country remain, such as the Shagaya renewable energy project and Kabd waste to energy plant, if existing power stations continue to be suspended for maintenance, and if Kuwait continues approaching power shortages the same way it has for the past two decades.

On June 19, multiple residential areas in Kuwait experienced massive power outages as temperatures soared to 52 degrees Celsius across most of the country. The Ministry of Electricity and Water and Renewable Energy resorted to scheduled power cuts because the power generation plants could not meet the rising demand during peak hours. "The country's electricity production capacity is unlikely to meet the growing demand in the coming years, particularly with the growth of residential areas," Ajmi told Kuwait Times. "Probably, the strain on the existing power stations is expected to only escalate."

Splitting working hours

To address the issue in July and August, Ajmi stressed on the need to reduce electricity overload during peak hours from 11 am to 5 pm by implementing an "electricity demand management" approach. Given that most sectors operate concurrently throughout the day, contributing to these peak hours, Ajmi proposed that institutions, particularly governmental ones (excluding critical sectors like healthcare), adopt a two-shift work schedule for employees.

Under this plan, the day shift would operate from 8 am to 11 am, while the night shift would commence after 5 pm, thereby reducing the over-demand on electricity during the peak hours. Similarly, for commercial sectors such as malls and shopping centers, instead of operating straight from 10 am to 10 pm, he advised the government to let them to start later, from 3 pm to 12 am, noting that providing citizens with incentives is also crucial to guarantee effective results.

Drawing inspiration from Saudi Arabia

As the existing power plants are usually prone to frequent maintenance issues, which affect their func-



Ahmad Salmeen



Salem Al-Ajmi

tionality, Ajmi suggested the need for managing the quality standards of the country's power sources before installing them to reduce the rate of failure and increase the lifetime of power stations.

For that purpose, he recommended establishing dedicated bodies inspired by Saudi Arabia's Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) and GCC Laboratory to oversee and test the high standards, specifications and reliability of government-operated power stations. Ajmi also proposed collaboration with GCC Laboratory to conduct necessary testing, ensuring that Kuwait's power infrastructure meets efficiency benchmarks.

By forming a standards and specifications authority for efficiency and quality, he believes that the ministry will be able to invest more effort in the research and development sector by enhancing the quality of power stations from the early beginning to avoid any later defects. For instance, it will be able to introduce what he called "a prefiltering system" that will avoid the accumulation of dust or any impurities in the power stations during summertime, which will reduce its high maintenance rates.

According to Ajmi, the authority's role is also crucial for tightening controls on the specifications of electrical appliances entering the country, such as ACs, ensuring they adhere to national and international efficiency standards, which will play a major role in reducing electricity consumption by more than 30 percent.

Ajmi suggested that Kuwait should follow Saudi Arabia's example with the Red Sea solar energy and smart grid project by reducing dependence on large, centralized grids and power plants. Instead, he



KUWAIT: The sun sets behind the high pressure electricity pylons in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

proposed the introduction of small to medium-sized, independent smart solar power stations. This approach, as he noted, will allow for more optimal use of renewable energy and decrease the load on centralized grids. He particularly suggested their implementation in remote northern and southern regions, which are considered strategic locations for expanding renewable energy capacities.

Role of sustainable architecture

Ahmad Salmeen, an architectural engineer and advocate for sustainability, highlighted the pivotal role of architectural designs in reducing electricity consumption. Salmeen believes Kuwait lacks strict architectural guidelines and policies, which he thinks must be implemented in new buildings and the renovation of old ones. Key strategies include optimizing window sizes based on the "Window-wall ratio", typically ranging from 10 percent to 50 percent, depending on the façade and orientation of building, to control the amount of daylight entering buildings.

This ratio indicates the proper proportion of window area relative to the total exterior wall area, crucial for enhancing energy efficiency.

Additionally, Salmeen suggested integrating shading elements such as shading screens, which are installed on the exterior of windows and can be made from materials like fabric, metal or specialized systems. These screens effectively manage heat gain by blocking excessive sunlight. Lastly, he pointed to thermal insulation, which involves using materials and techniques in construction to minimize heat transfer between a building's interior and exterior environments.

He said that these elements should be flexibly and collectively managed by architects in a manner that aligns with the building's location, spatial constraints and client preferences, ensuring environmental sustainability. If implemented, Salmeen aimed for this strategy to reduce the strain on cooling systems indoors, noting that they currently constitute nearly 70 percent of our energy consumption.

In my view

Wishes for the year 1446 AH



Dr. Khalid A Al-Saleh

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If we let our minds think critically about what we hear, most rumors spread for various reasons, especially on social media, would disappear. Always make good use of your brains. If optimism prevailed in our hearts, the flame of rage that drives some people to incessantly criticize and insult Kuwait as if it were a failed country would subside. True failure lies within them.

If every employee complied with their job description and performed with a spirit of giving, most patron complaints would disappear. If each official prepared a time schedule with a list of duties and worked on implementing it, the wheels of development would move faster than they do now. If influential individuals stopped interfering for the benefit of their relatives, many citizens would receive their rights, and we would not waste promising energies on individuals who are unable to achieve success.

If some businessmen viewed Kuwait as a homeland, a refuge and a future, they would stop saying that every official has a price, and some people would not put their personal interests ahead of the country's interests. If some officials stopped using their positions to collect unlawful money, state projects would not stall, and development would proceed at the competitive speed Kuwait needs.

If we all believed in Kuwait, we would express our love for it creatively in all aspects. If our differences were resolved maturely, without screams, threats and conspiracies, social security would spread among the people of Kuwait. If we prioritized the state above all else, we would begin the march towards a modern Kuwait where classism is eradicated. If we understood our religion without fanaticism, the country would have enough room for love among all sects, and the sectarianism that threatens the country would die. Twelve wishes, the same number as the months of the year. I hope they all become a reality.

Kuwait and China discuss renewable energy projects

KUWAIT: The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Dr Mahmoud Boushehri, on Monday discussed renewable energy projects with the CEO of State Power Investment Corporation (SPIC) and Representative of China in the Middle East and North Africa, Ma Shao. The Ministry said that the meeting covered bilateral relations and energy cooperation between Kuwait and China, exploring ways to enhance this cooperation based on a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding signed between the ministry and China's National Energy Administration for developing the electrical energy system and renewable energy. They also discussed some quick and applicable solutions to boost electricity production for the summer of 2025, the statement added. — KUNA



Members of KRCS distribute aid to displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis' Al-Mawasi. — KUNA photos



Firefighters battle blaze at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital

KUWAIT: Firefighters controlled a miniscule fire, which occurred at Mubarak Al-Kabeer hospital early Monday dawn with no injuries reported, said Kuwait Fire Force (KFF). A statement by the KFF revealed that Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and acting KFF chief Major General Khaled Abdullah were present on site to follow up on the incident. Meanwhile, Health Ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad affirmed in a press statement on X that all hospital staff and patients were safe. Health Ministry officials are on site to make sure that all were unharmed and that medical services would continue, he added. — KUNA



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and acting KFF chief Major General Khaled Abdullah on the site to follow up on the incident.



Firefighters controlling the miniscule fire that broke out at Mubarak Al-Kabeer hospital. — KUNA photos

KRCS implements urgent relief aid project in Gaza

GAZA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Monday started its urgent relief aid project implementation to Palestinians by distributing relief items to thousands of displaced people in Khan Yunis' Al-Mawasi neighborhood, southern Gaza. General Director of Wafaa Capacity Building and Microfinance, the project's executing body, Muhaisen Al-Atawna, said to KUNA that the project comes in light of the Zionist entity's ongoing war on Gaza since October. Al-Atawna added the project supports and provides help to the displaced and refugee camps that were recently targeted by the occupation forces, noting that food and bread are included as there is no gas for cooking, as well as medical and personal hygiene supplies. Kuwait Red Crescent Society has implemented many relief and medical aid projects to support Palestinians in need. — KUNA

Local



Al Dehani, Al Musaiibeh and Al Mana with Zain, SACGC and Assima Mall officials.



The camp runs daily until July 21.

Innovation Nation 2nd summer camp kicks off to foster youth's tech skills

In partnership between Zain, SACGC and in collaboration with Assima Mall

KUWAIT: For the second year in a row, the Innovation Nation (IN) Summer Camp has kicked off in strategic partnership between Zain and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) - a KFAS center, and in collaboration with Assima Mall. The initiative aims to foster young people's tech skills through engaging mini-workshops that run daily from July 15-21.

The camp's recent launch was attended by SACGC General Manager Neda Al Dehani, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaiibeh, Zain Kuwait Innovation and Entrepreneurship Expert Haya Al Mana, and officials from Assima Mall. The opening day was a tremendous success, with many ambitious young individuals signing up to seize this opportunity to develop their passion for technology.

Designed for children and youth aged 7-14, the Innovation Nation Summer Camp features a combination of daily courses and engaging workshops located on the ground floor of Assima Mall. Each workshop is approximately two hours long, and those interested can easily walk in and sign up for their favorite course without the need for pre-registration. The workshops are supervised and facilitated by experts and certified trainers from Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity. The content is presented in an innovative and engaging manner that appeals to young people.

The IN Camp covers a variety of topics, includ-



The initiative features engaging tech workshops.

ing digital drawing and 3D printing, augmented reality (AR), robotics and programming, electronics, mechanical and software engineering, and more. Additionally, Zain hosted a similar camp dedicated to the children of Zain employees. This special two-day camp was held at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh and featured rich and engaging content for children aged 5-13.

The youngsters had fun learning about technology, robotics, and more. This partnership between Zain, SACGC, and Assima Mall is part of the broader Innovation Nation initiative, which encompasses all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs. The initiative focuses on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and primarily targets young people and entrepreneurs, aiming to foster a digitally capable generation.

CAN launches 'lose-you-win'

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) campaign Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh has stressed the importance of focusing on a healthy lifestyle through relying on two important elements. This includes physical activity and eating healthy food as the obesity rate in Kuwait is becoming high. He emphasized on the idea of the 'lose-you-win' contest for women. Registration has been extended until 15/8/2024. Dr Al-Saleh said the first batch of women contestants are being received by the team of nutritionists, and each lady will be given a suitable program. Participants will be followed by the team during the contest. He urged them to call 60961145 and register (free of charge) - wishing all ladies good health.



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh



Claire Le Flecher



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad receives Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher.



Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah and French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher.

Turkish Embassy marks July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Turkey in Kuwait held a commemorative ceremony on the occasion of the July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day. The ceremony featured a series of events - a moment of silence, the singing of the National Anthem, a recitation from the Quran, a speech by Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez, and an informational video about July 15. The Embassy also opened a small photo exhibition regarding events that took place on July 15, 2016. Participants included ambassadors, other diplomatic corps members, Turkish citizens, and individuals from the Kuwaiti community.

In her speech, Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez highlighted the significance of the day, marking the 8th anniversary of the failed coup attempt committed by the FETO terrorist organization. She honored the memory of the 252 martyrs and over 2,200 injured from that night, emphasizing the nation's resilience and unity in the face of such a threat. She also praised the courageous response of the Turkish people and security forces, who thwarted the coup attempt with an unprecedented display of bravery and solidarity.

She stated, "On the night of July 15, thanks to the honorable stance and unprecedented courage of our noble nation and heroic security forces, the 40-year plan of the FETO betrayal gang was thwarted." She further remarked that July 15 has been etched into the nation's memory as a new victory, demonstrating the people's determination to defend their democracy and independence. Ambassador Sonmez also called for continued vigilance and effort to prevent similar threats in the future, stressing the importance of international cooperation in combating terrorism.

The ambassador also addressed the broader implications of the coup attempt, highlighting that it was not merely an attempt to seize political power but part of a larger scheme by external forces to undermine Turkey's progress in various sectors. She emphasized that FETO is a terrorist and criminal organization posing a threat to every country where it operates, and she called for continued international cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Ambassador Sonmez concluded her speech by stressing the importance of remembering the events of July 15 to prevent future threats. She called for continued dedication to protecting the nation's unity and independence and reaffirmed Turkey's commitment to upholding democratic values. "As long as the 'spirit of July 15' remains alive in these lands, no power will be able to enslave our nation or seize its will," she said. The ceremony concluded by serving of Turkish style-cooked Ashura dessert on the occasion of the holy month of Muharram.

Strengthening bonds, France Embassy marks Bastille Day

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The French Embassy in Kuwait held an event to mark Bastille Day celebration and bilateral relations between France and Kuwait. The event took place on Sunday, July 14, 2024. The occasion of Bastille Day holds special significance this year as France is hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. During the event, France's Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher expressed her gratitude for the presence of a delegation from the Kuwait Olympic Committee, extending a warm welcome to President Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah and conveyed her best wishes to the Kuwaiti team. She thanked the partners and sponsors whose generous support has made the event possible.

During the tenure of the Ambassador of France to Kuwait over the past three years, significant milestones have been achieved, reinforcing the enduring ties between our nations. "The elevation

of France-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue to a ministerial level underscores our longstanding friendship and mutual aspirations for enhanced bilateral relations. Against the backdrop of regional challenges, France and Kuwait have demonstrated a joint commitment to multilateralism, peace, and international solidarity. Particularly commendable are Kuwait's humanitarian efforts, notably in Gaza and Sudan, reflecting shared values of compassion and global responsibility," she elaborated.

Le Flecher also emphasized that economically, there has been notable enthusiasm among French and Kuwaiti companies to cultivate strong business relationships. Events such as the "Vision Golfe" and "Choose France" forums have facilitated productive exchanges and collaborations. "The establishment of the France-Kuwait Friendship Society further underscores our commitment to fostering enduring partnerships between private sectors and civil societies in both countries," she said.

With regards to cultural and educational exchange, she mentioned the upcoming Francophonie Summit in France, which serves as a testament to the rich cultural exchange between France and Kuwait. Kuwait has shown a strong commitment to Francophonie, evident in the dedication of teachers, alumni, and Francophone advocates. Le Flecher's recognition was

extended to His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohamed Al-Sabah and the Council for the Promotion of Francophonie for their genuine support. Initiatives such as the Sorbonne Society and the French Research Center of the Arabian Peninsula play a crucial role in promoting academic and research collaborations, enhancing educational opportunities for scholars from both nations.

Moreover, she elaborated on France and Kuwait's partnership in defense and security, anchored by the 1992 defense agreement - the oldest of its kind signed by France in the Gulf region. "Our defense cooperation is exemplified by joint trainings and exercises, including recent air superiority drills involving French and Kuwaiti jet fighters. The CARACAL helicopter program stands as a testament to our enduring collaboration, with Kuwait now boasting one of the largest CARACAL fleets globally, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Airbus and DCI personnel," she said.

"The bilateral relationship between France and Kuwait continues to thrive across diplomatic, economic, cultural, educational, and defense sectors. As we celebrate Bastille Day and eagerly anticipate the Olympic Games, we are confident that our shared commitment to innovation, partnership, and mutual respect will pave the way for even greater achievements in the future," Le Flecher concluded.

KISR obtains patent for poultry project

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced that its Environment and Life Sciences Research Center has obtained a patent for a project to develop a new bioproduct to support the poultry industry and food safety in Kuwait without the use of antibiotics (probiotics). The institute said on Monday that the research team was led by Tahani Al-Saree, with the participation of Dr Hanan Al-Khalifa, Hamad Al-Mansour, Mohamed Kishk, Dr Thunayan Al-Enezi,

Anwar Al-Mutairi, Hanan Sultan and Haya Al-Saleem. KISR explained that the probiotic product includes a mixture of bacteria in the form of a powder that can be added to water or food to support the food industry. It is one of the safest alternatives to antibiotics to control infections that cause intestinal diseases. The powder works to enhance the animal intestinal microbial balance, improve the digestive health of poultry, increase meat and egg production, combat salmonella, and withstand harsh climatic conditions.

The team stated that the experiments showed the effectiveness of the product in maintaining the health of birds. KISR added that the expected strategic impact of this project will contribute to enhancing national food security. The project opens new horizons for the devel-



oment of the poultry industry in Kuwait and promotes reliance on effective local products and reduces dependence on imported products. — KUNA

Authority prioritizes developing skills of young people

KUWAIT: Enhancing and developing the skills of young people are the top priorities of the Youth Public Authority, said the Authority's Acting Director General Nasser Al-Sheikh. They aim to achieve this through innovative training programs, projects, and comprehensive development initiatives that periodically provide the youth with the necessary tools to achieve their ambitions and contribute to building their society.

In a press statement on Sunday, Al-Sheikh said the authority will provide appropriate education and training opportunities for young people to create an appropriate environment that drives the wheel of development forward. His remarks were made on International Youth Skills Day, which falls on Monday. The United Nations General Assembly has designated July 15 of each year as "World Youth Skills Day" to recognize the strategic importance of providing young people with the skills they need for employment and to enable them to obtain decent work, as well as entrepreneurship.

He explained that the Authority's most prominent projects and programs for the development of youth skills are the "Youth Valley" project, which offers workshops and courses in science, scientific research, technology, and technical software, and the "Work Makers" project, which aims to qualify and train newly graduated students to provide them with job opportunities in the labor market.

Another initiative the Authority offers is the "Youth Creativity League," which improves young people's skills in various areas such as drawing, robotics, mathematics, debating, and the Holy Quran. Sheikh added that the Authority offers a "Professional Entrepreneur" program to support young people in the field of entrepreneurship and turn their ideas into small and medium-sized projects, as well as seasonal training programs at the Academy of Arts and Media. Additionally, the Authority's Heritage Professions Training Center provides specialized courses to help refine the skills of young people in making authentic Kuwaiti crafts.

He pointed out that in addition to the activities, the Authority has conducted over the years in its youth centers located throughout six governorates' distance training courses via the Emkan electronic platform. The platform provides more than 75 free development courses in the most significant scientific fields that young people have an interest in. He mentioned these efforts, which have the direct support of Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah (the Minister of State for Youth Affairs), aim to strengthen the nation's human capital and promote a culture of excellence and creativity among the youth.

NBK supports LOYAC's 'KON' program



KUWAIT: As a platinum sponsor, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomes the participants from LOYAC's program "KON". This social entrepreneurship program is co-created with Babson College, the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. The program aims to introduce young adults between the ages of 12 to 16 to the world business and to turn their ideas into action.

The program will take place in the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and includes 50 student trainees. NBK will take part in the training sessions that will be ongoing until the 15 of August 2024. Throughout the five weeks program, leaders from NBK along with a group of professional leaders mentors and trainers, locally and regional-

ly will encourage the participants to create a profitable business that solves social challenges.

NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with LOYAC. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young people and empowering them towards achieving their goals. "KON" is one of these initiatives that help invest and support young youths. NBK supported KON for eight consecutive years. The program provides its expertise to young people through training sessions and workshops and looks forward to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future.

"KON" students will experience different stages during the program, thinking, planning and doing. The experiential learning journey the students undertake throughout the five weeks supports

them to learn skills that include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration. The students also learn technical skills to write up a successful business plan, and how to pitch their business ideas to investors. By the end of the program, students will be able to present their business ideas before a jury panel, in addition to a professor from Babson College.

NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. The KON program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in youth and support their aspirations. LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.

NCCAL organizes glass workshop

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) organized a workshop entitled "Jewelry Making Using Italian Murano Glass" at the Bait Al Othman Museum as part of the activities of the 16th Summer Cultural Festival. The event attracted a number of participants between the ages of 14-17 who produce pieces of artwork. The presenter of the workshop and owner of the Jazaz Academy, Mohamed Al-Duwaisan, said on Sunday that the workshop is aimed at helping young people go through the experience of shaping glass by using it in an interesting and beautiful way.

Al-Duwaisan added that the art of glassmaking is suitable for all ages, praising the observance of safety requirements and the use of tools with caution, especially when dealing with fire. The 16th Summer Cultural Festival was launched on July 1st under the patronage of the Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and its activities will continue for two months to cover the summer vacation period, taking into account the diversity in cultural activities, especially for children and youths.—KUNA



Participants between the ages of 14-17 produce pieces of artwork.



KISR launches 45th summer training

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has launched the 45th summer training course with the participation of 152 high school students and 47 undergraduate students at its headquarters in Shuwaikh. The program will last until August 15. Mona Al-Failkawi, Director of the Manpower Development Department at the institute, said in a press release that the aim of holding such courses is to encourage the younger generation to practice scientific research.

She explained that the students participating in the course were distributed to different scientific programs, namely microbiology, healthy food for a better life, birds in our lives and their languages, a program to make what we imagine and explore the world of engineering and the world of nano-engineering, and genetic and artificial intelligence applications.



For her part, the director of the summer session, Dr Dalal Al-Baijan, stressed, according to the statement, the need for participating students to adhere to the rules and regulations that will ultimately benefit them and invest time in the optimal way. The course is being held under the auspices of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, Kuwait University, and a number of private sector companies. — KUNA



Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research on Sunday launched the 45th summer training course with the participation of 152 high school students and 47 undergraduate students. — KUNA photos



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Pakistan to ban Imran Khan's party

Kenya suspect in dumped bodies case confesses to 42 murders

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BETHEL PARK, Pennsylvania: Police continue to block roads around the home of Thomas Matthew Crooks as the FBI continues its investigation into the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, on July 14, 2024. (Inset) An undated image shows Thomas Matthew Crooks, the suspected shooter of former US President Donald Trump. — AFP Photos

Trump gunman's motive eludes investigators

Suspect who worked at nursing home described as bright, quiet, respectful

Trump scores major legal win after judge tosses documents case

MILWAUKEE: Donald Trump won a major legal victory on Monday when a federal judge dismissed one of the criminal prosecutions against him, as he prepared to accept the Republican Party's presidential nomination just days after surviving an assassination attempt.

A US judge in Florida appointed to the bench by Trump dismissed the case that accused the former president of illegally holding on to classified documents after leaving office, ruling that the prosecutor handling the case was unlawfully appointed to his role.

The news comes at outset of the 2024 Republican convention in Milwaukee, where Trump is due to formally accept the party's nomination to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden in the November 5 election. Federal Judge Aileen Cannon made her ruling after lawyers for the 78-year-old argued for a partial stay of proceedings to allow for an assessment of a Supreme Court ruling that a former president has broad immunity from prosecution.

"Former President Trump's Motion to Dismiss Indictment Based on the Unlawful Appointment and Funding of Special Counsel Jack Smith is granted," Aileen wrote in her order. In a 93-page opinion, Cannon said Smith's appointment and funding usurped the role of Congress.

"The Court is convinced that Special Counsel's Smith's prosecution of this action breaches two structural cornerstones of our constitutional scheme - the role of Congress in the appointment of constitutional officers, and the role of Congress in authorizing expenditures by law," she concluded. She did not make a ruling on the merits of the case. But the fact she came to a decision after being accused by critics of slow-walking the case, opens the door for prosecutors to appeal and potentially have it reheard by another judge.

Election looms

Trump and Biden, 81, are locked in what opinion polls show to be a tight election rematch. Trump continues to falsely claim that his 2020 loss to Biden was the result of widespread fraud and has not committed to accepting the results of the election were he to lose. The race was upended on Saturday when Trump was shot in the ear at a rally in Pennsylvania by a 20-year-old gunman whose motive remains unknown.

In the wake of his near-death experience, Trump said he is revising his acceptance speech to emphasize national unity, rather than highlight his differences with Biden. "This is a chance to bring the whole country, even the whole world, together. The speech will be a lot different, a lot different than it would've been two days ago," Trump told the Washington Examiner.

Trump said that following the judge's decision on Monday dismissing the documents case, his other outstanding prosecutions should also be thrown out. He is still awaiting trial on two cases — a federal prosecution in Washington and a Georgia state prosecution — for his attempts to overturn his 2020 election defeat. — Agencies

BETHEL PARK, Pennsylvania: The motive behind a 20-year-old gunman's attempt on the life of Donald Trump remained a mystery two days later with the suspect having been shot dead and the FBI unable to identify an ideology that may have driven him to attack the former president. The FBI has taken the lead in an investigation of the shooting at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania that wounded the former president, overshadowing his November 5 election rematch with President Joe Biden.

The Secret Service, responsible for protecting presidents and former presidents, went on the defensive on Monday against criticism of its failure to detect the gunman whose shots wounded Trump in his right ear and killed a spectator.

"Secret Service personnel on the ground moved quickly during the incident, with our counter sniper team neutralizing the shooter and our agents implementing protective measures to ensure the safety of former president Donald Trump," Kimberly Cheatle, the Secret Service director, said in a statement. Biden ordered an independent review of how the gunman, who was shot dead by agents moments after opening fire, could have come so close to killing or severely wounding Trump despite the heavy security provided by the Secret Service at Saturday's event in Butler, Pennsylvania.

The early details about the investigation into the gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, a nursing home aide, were sketchy. He was a young man working an entry-level job near his hometown of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. He graduated from high school in 2022 with a reputation as a bright but quiet classmate. His guidance counselor described him as "respectful" and said he never knew Crooks to be political. The FBI said on Sunday that his social media profile contained no threatening language, nor had they found any history of mental health issues. They said Crooks acted alone and they had yet to identify a motive.

Crooks stands out among other recent, high-profile shooters who opened fire at schools, churches, malls and parades because he came within inches of killing a US

presidential candidate, something that has not occurred in decades. Trump, who traveled in Milwaukee on Sunday to make final preparations for accepting his party's formal nomination at the Republican National Convention this week, appeared both reflective and defiant late on Sunday.

Trump pumped his fist in the air several times and appeared to mouth the words "Fight! Fight! Fight!" as he descended the stairs from his plane. In an interview during the trip, he said the realization that he came so close to being killed was sobering. "That reality is just setting in," Trump was quoted as saying by the Washington Examiner. "I rarely look away from the crowd. Had I not done that in that moment, well, we would not be talking today, would we?" "I want to try to unite our country," the New York Post reported Trump saying during the flight. "But I don't know if that's possible. People are very divided."

Shooter was registered republican

On Saturday afternoon, Crooks was able to slip onto a rooftop location 150 yards (140 meters) from the stage where Trump was speaking in Butler, Pennsylvania. He then began firing an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle, purchased by his father, officials said. The gunfire killed a 50-year-old man, critically wounded two other spectators, and struck Trump's ear.

The officials said "a suspicious device" was found in the suspect's vehicle, which was inspected by bomb technicians and rendered safe. A resident of Bethel Park, about an hour away from where the shooting occurred, Crooks was a registered Republican who would have been eligible to cast his first presidential vote in the November 5 election. Public records show his father is a registered Republican and his mother a registered Democrat, and that as a 17-year-old Crooks made a \$15 donation to a Democratic Party cause.

Crooks was employed as a dietary aide at a nursing home at the time of the shooting, the home's administra-

tor said in a statement. "We are shocked and saddened to learn of his involvement as Thomas Matthew Crooks performed his job without concern and his background check was clean," said Marcie Grimm, administrator of the Bethel Park Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Two years ago, Crooks graduated from the local high school, where he showed no particular interest in politics, according to one classmate who asked not to be identified. Crooks' interests centered on building computers and playing games, the classmate said in an interview. "He was super smart. That's what really kind of threw me off was, this was, like, a really, really smart kid, like he excelled," the classmate said. "Nothing crazy ever came up in any conversation."

Jim Knapp, who retired from his job as the school counselor at Bethel Park High School in 2022, said Crooks had always been "quiet as a church mouse," "respectful" and kept to himself, although he did have a few friends. He rarely came across Crooks because "he wasn't a needy type kid."

Knapp said Crooks was content to occasionally eat lunch by himself in the school cafeteria, said Knapp, who would engage such students to see if they wanted company. "Kids weren't calling him names, kids weren't bullying him," Knapp said. Knapp said he never knew Crooks to be political in any way, even as other kids would sometimes wear Trump or Biden attire. He added that he couldn't recall Crooks ever being disciplined in school.

Residents near the Crooks' home described feeling shocked and unsettled that an assassination attempt had been linked to a person from the sedate city of 33,000 people. "Bethel Park is a pretty blue-collar type of area, and to think that somebody was that close is a little insane," said Wes Morgan, a 42-year-old who works at an investment management company and bikes with his children on the same street as the Crooks' residence. The officials said "a suspicious device" was found in the suspect's vehicle, which was inspected by bomb technicians and rendered safe. — Reuters

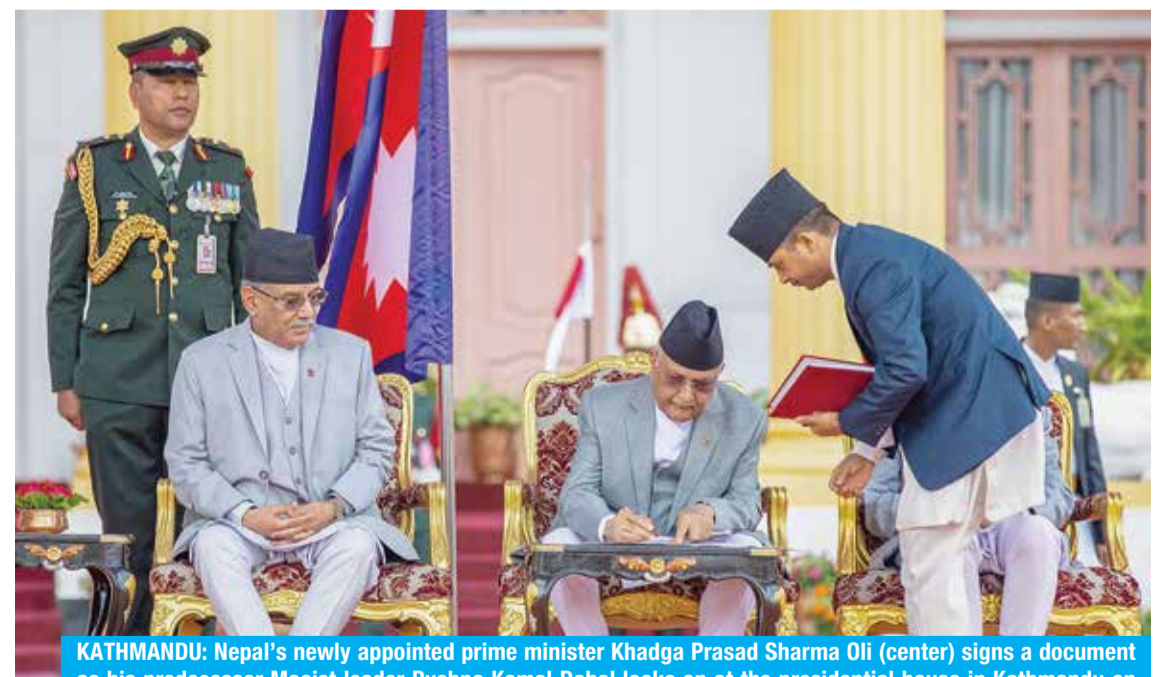
Nepal's Communist PM takes power for fourth time

KATHMANDU, Nepal: Nepal's Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli was sworn in as prime minister on Monday after his Communist Party forged a coalition government with the center-left Nepali Congress, shifting power in the country's often-volatile parliament. Oli, 72, chief of the second-largest party in the parliament, the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), returns as prime minister for the fourth time.

In the Himalayan republic of about 30 million people, overshadowed by giant neighbors India and China, Oli previously trod a fine balance between the rivals, cordial to both but reaching out to Beijing to decrease Nepal's dependency on New Delhi. "I, KP Sharma Oli, in the name of the country and people, pledge that I will be loyal to the constitution ... and fulfil my duty as the prime minister," Oli said, as President Ram Chandra Poudel administered the oath of office. First elected as prime minister in 2015, he was reelected in 2018 with a rare majority government, and then reappointed briefly in 2021. His predecessor and former coalition government ally, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, lost a vote of confidence on Friday, barely 18 months after taking office.

Dahal, a former Maoist guerrilla commander better known by his nom de guerre Prachanda ("The Fierce One"), was forced to step down after Oli's party withdrew its support. Oli instead forged a deal with Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress. He has promised to yield the post to the former five-time prime minister Deuba, 78, later in the parliamentary term. Nepal's next general elections are due in 2027.

The country became a federal republic in 2008 after



KATHMANDU: Nepal's newly appointed prime minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli (center) signs a document as his predecessor Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal looks on at the presidential house in Kathmandu on July 15, 2024. — AFP

a decade-long civil war and a peace deal that saw the Maoists brought into government and the abolishment of the monarchy. Since then, a revolving door of ageing prime ministers and a culture of horse-trading have fueled public perceptions that the government is out of touch with Nepal's pressing problems.

But political journalist Binu Subedi said that while Oli was an old face in parliament, he faces fresh challenges. "As new parties challenge old leaders, we have to see how this coalition performs", Subedi said. "Will they be more democratic and work well for the peo-

ple?" she added. "Or think that they can do anything, because they have the strength of numbers?"

When he was previously in power, Oli made overtures to Beijing, telling Nepalis a closer relationship would bring economic growth. He also stoked populist rhetoric against India, which is often portrayed as acting like an overbearing "big brother" to Nepal. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first to offer his congratulations to Oli, saying in a statement on Monday that he wanted to "further strengthen the deep bonds of friendship between our two countries". — AFP

International

Suspected serial killer 'confesses' to 42 murders of women in Kenya

Official says 9 bodies have been recovered as watchdog probes police connection

NAIROBI: Kenyan police said they arrested on Monday a suspected serial killer who confessed to murdering 42 women, including his wife, and discarding their dismembered bodies in a Nairobi rubbish dump. Since Friday, nine butchered bodies trussed up in plastic bags have been recovered from the site of an abandoned quarry in the Mukuru slum, a gruesome discovery that has horrified the nation.

Acting Inspector General of Police Douglas Kanja said the 33-year-old suspect, named as Collins Jumaisi Khalusha, was arrested at around 3:00 am (0000 GMT) near a Nairobi bar where he had been watching the Euro 2024 football final. "We are dealing with a serial killer, a psychopathic serial killer who has no respect for human life," the head of the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) Mohamed Amin told reporters. "We are dealing with a vampire, a psychopath."

Amin said Khalusha claimed the murders took place between 2022 and July 11 this year. "The suspect confessed to have lured, killed and disposed of 42 female bodies at the dumping site," he added. "Unfortunately, and this is very sad, the suspect alleged that his first victim was his wife ... who he strangled to death, before dismembering her body and disposing it at the same site." Police said Khalusha would appear in court Tuesday.

'Luring another victim'

The suspect was tracked down after analysis of one of the victim's mobile phones, Amin said, in a joint operation by the DCI and the National Police Service. As officers swooped, "he was in the process of luring another victim", Amin said. Khalusha had confessed to having had "carnal knowledge" with some of his victims, he added.

Officers searched his one-room house, located just 100 meters (300 feet) from where the bodies were found, discovering a machete, nylon sacks, rope, a pair of industrial rubber gloves — as well as a "pink female handbag", and "two female panties". The areas will remain "active crime scenes", Amin said, promising a thorough investigation.

Nine mutilated and dismembered bodies have so far been retrieved from the crime scene, according to police, with Kanja saying autopsies on the victims would



NAIROBI: A volunteer searches through a rubbish dump for human remains at Mukuru slum in Nairobi on July 14, 2024. — AFP

be carried out on Monday. Eight have been confirmed to be female. A second suspect who was caught with a phone belonging to one of the victims has also been arrested, Amin said.

After the discovery of the bodies, Kenya's State Department For Gender and Affirmative Action on Sunday condemned the "horrific act" and urged more action against gender-based violence. In 2022 the East African country recorded 725 femicide cases according to a UN report, the highest number since data collection began in 2015.

The dumped bodies have thrown yet another spot-

light on Kenyan police and added more pressure on President William Ruto, who is struggling to contain a crisis over widespread anti-government protests that saw dozens of demonstrators killed. Kenya's police watchdog, the Independent Police Oversight Authority (IPOA), said Friday it was looking into whether there was any police involvement in the bodies found in the dump, noting the dumpsite was just 100 meters from a police station. IPOA was also investigating if there had been a "failure to act to prevent" the grisly killings. Kanja told reporters on Sunday that all officers at the nearby police post had been transferred.

Still, tensions ran high at the crime scene over the weekend, as volunteers combed through the vast piles of rubbish in search of more victims with officers briefly firing tear gas to disperse the crowds. Kenyan police are often accused by rights groups of using excessive force and carrying out unlawful killings or running hit squads, but few have faced justice. The Mukuru killings follow the so-called "Shakahola forest massacre" when the bodies of some 400 members of a doomsday cult were discovered in mass graves near the coast last year. — AFP

Lawyers go on strike in New Delhi over criminal law overhaul

NEW DELHI: Thousands of lawyers in India's capital protested on Monday against an overhaul in criminal legislation by staying away from work and boycotting court hearings, as opposition mounted to the changes. Many have been angered by new laws that came in on July 1 expanding police powers to keep people in pre-trial detention and requiring judges to issue written rulings within 45 days of the end of a trial.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has defended the changes — which also include the death sentence for gang rape of women under 18 — saying they are "victim-centric", modernize the system and "end the endless wait for justice".

But lawyers' bodies, opposition parties and activists have called for a pause, saying the changes will give excessive powers to the police and pile pressure onto an already overburdened justice system as lawyers try to interpret and challenge the new legal provisions. Lawyers in seven district courts around New Delhi took part in the strike on Monday, N C Sharma, the spokesperson of the All District Courts Bar Associations of Delhi, said.

"Lawyers are protesting because the changes will create confusion," he added. New Delhi's Patiala House district court was much quieter than usual on Monday when Reuters visited. One court official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said many cases were not argued and lawyers sought adjournments. The Supreme Court of India and the High Court continued to operate normally. — Reuters

100 injured in student protests over job quotas in Bangladesh

DHAKA: Rival students in Bangladesh clashed on Monday leaving at least 100 people injured, as demonstrators opposing quotas for coveted government jobs battled counter-protesters loyal to the ruling party, police said. Police and witnesses said hundreds of anti-quota protesters and students backing the ruling Awami League party battled for hours on Dhaka University campus, hurling rocks, fighting with sticks and beating each other with iron rods. Some carried machetes while others threw petrol bombs, witnesses said.

The quota system reserves more than half of well-paid civil service posts totaling hundreds of thousands of government jobs for specific groups, including children of heroes from the country's 1971 liberation war from Pakistan. "They clashed with sticks and threw rocks at each other," local police station chief Mostajirur Rahman told AFP.

Masud Mia, a police inspector, said "around 100 students including women" were injured, and had been taken to hospital. "More people are coming", Mia added. Students launched protests earlier this month demanding a merit-based system.

They have continued despite Bangladesh's top court suspending the quota scheme. Anti-quota protesters blamed the ruling party students for the violence. "They attacked our peaceful procession with rods, sticks and rocks," Nahid Islam, the national coordinator of the anti-quota protests, told AFP. "They beat our female protesters. At least 150 students were injured including 30 women, and conditions of 20 students are serious."

'Sticks, machetes, iron rods'

Critics say the system benefits children of pro-government groups who back Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.



DHAKA: Student activists shout slogans before they submit their memorandum to the country's president on quota reforms for civil service jobs, during a demonstration held in Dhaka on July 14, 2024. — AFP

Hasina, 76, won her fourth consecutive general election in January, in a vote without genuine opposition parties that saw a major crackdown against her political opponents, who boycotted the poll.

Injured student Shahinur Shumi, 26, said the protesters were taken by surprise. "We were holding our procession peacefully", she said from her hospital bed at Dhaka Medical Hospital. "Suddenly, the Chhatra League (the ruling party student wing) attacked us with sticks, machetes, iron rods, and bricks."

Police said hundreds of students from several private universities shouting anti-quota slogans joined the protests in Dhaka, halting traffic near the US embassy for more than four hours. "Some 200 students squatted and stood on the road," deputy police commissioner Hasa-

nuzzaman Molla told AFP.

Thousands of students also marched in a dozen universities overnight Sunday into the early hours of Monday morning, protesting against what they said were Hasina's disparaging comments. Protesters said they were compared to collaborators of the Pakistani army during Bangladesh's war of independence. "This is unacceptable," a female student from Dhaka University said, asking not to be named for fear of reprisal. "We want a reform of the quota system so that meritorious students can get a fair chance." Violence also erupted during protests in Bangladesh's second city Chittagong late on Sunday, anti-quota students said. Khan Talat Mahmud Rafy, the organiser, said two fellow protesters were injured. "Dozens of Chhatra League activists attacked one of our processions," Rafy said. — AFP

Biden calls to 'cool it down'...

Continued from Page 1

quit the race over concerns around his age. Trump scored another victory Monday as a judge dismissed the criminal case against him over accusations he endangered national security by holding on to top secret documents after leaving the White House.

He immediately took to Truth Social to call for the dismissal of all legal cases against him, insisting again that he was being targeted for political reasons. Trump told the Post he had "prepared an extremely tough speech" about Biden's "horrible administration" to deliver when he becomes the official Republican nominee on Thursday.

The attempt on Trump's life has opened a dark new chapter in an already polarized election rematch with Biden, who beat him in 2020. Despite their bitter enmity, both Biden and Trump called for calm after the most serious attack on a US president or ex-president in more than four decades. Trump said it was "more important than ever that we stand United" and added that Americans should not allow "evil to win," in a post on social media.

Numerous Republicans — who themselves often pose with guns in political ads — have claimed Democrats have promoted extreme rhetoric that led to the shooting. US Secret Service insisted the agency

is "fully prepared" to maintain security at the convention, as it comes under severe scrutiny over the attempt to kill Trump. The agency faces searching questions about how the shooter was able to climb onto a rooftop around 150 meters from where Trump was speaking and fire multiple rounds.

The FBI was "looking at it as a potential domestic terrorism act," the bureau's assistant director of counterterrorism Robert Wells said. The shooter's father was believed to have bought the semi-automatic weapon used in the attack but it was unclear how the shooter accessed it. Investigators also found a "suspicious device" in the shooter's car.

Crooks' former schoolmates described him as a quiet student who often came across as lonely. "He was quiet but he was just bullied. He was bullied so much," Jason Kohler, who said he attended the same high school as Crooks, told reporters. The attack threatens to further inflame tensions at an already febrile moment in the race for the White House.

Trump was recently convicted of criminal charges while Biden's dismal debate performance sparked Democratic party fears over his age and mental acuity. The shooting will likely now upend how both campaign. Trump and his supporters are likely to use it to back their narrative of persecution by Biden. While the president canceled a trip to Texas on Monday he will continue with a visit to the battleground state of Nevada later this week. "That's how democracy should work," he said in the Oval Office address. "We debate and disagree." — AFP

Zionists pound Gaza from land...

Continued from Page 1

said on Sunday it was withdrawing from ceasefire talks. The decision followed a Zionist strike targeting the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, which the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said killed 92 people.

Deif's fate remains unknown, with Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying there was "no certainty" he was dead while a senior Hamas official told AFP that Deif was "well and directly overseeing" operations. Speaking after the strike on Al-Mawasi, a second senior official from the militant group cited Zionist "massacres" and its attitude to negotiations as a reason for suspending negotiations.

But according to the official, Haniyeh told international mediators Hamas was "ready to resume negotiations" when the Zionist government "demonstrates seriousness in reaching a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner exchange deal". Last week, US President Joe Biden had suggested a deal might be close, saying at a NATO summit that both sides had agreed to a framework he had set out in late May.

Hamas on Monday lashed out at the US, accusing it of supporting "genocide" by supplying

the Zionist entity with "internationally banned" weapons. "We condemn in the strongest terms the... American disdain for the blood of the children and women of our Palestinian people... by providing all types of prohibited weapons to the (Zionist) occupation," a statement from the Hamas government media office said.

The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 38,584 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to data provided by the Gaza health ministry. The war and accompanying siege have devastated the Palestinian territory, destroying much of its infrastructure, leaving the majority of its 2.4 million residents displaced and causing a dire shortage of food, medicines and other basic goods.

Among the devastated facilities have been multiple schools. On Sunday, Zionist forces struck a UN-run school in Nuseirat camp that was being used as a shelter for displaced people but which the military said "served as a hideout" for militants. The civil defense agency in Gaza said 15 people were killed in the strike.

The civil defense agency said on Monday that a Zionist strike on a school in Gaza City killed at least one person. The strike on Salah al-Din School in Gaza City's Al-Rimal neighborhood was the latest to hit schools, many of which have been turned into shelters for people displaced by the war in the Palestinian territory. At least six schools have been hit over the past nine days. — Agencies

International

Pakistan to ban Imran Khan's party

Critics say move, which comes after a top court ruling to grant party more seats, 'a sign of panic'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is planning to ban former Prime Minister Imran Khan's political party and move the country's top court to press treason charges against him, the information minister said on Monday. The move to ban Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was based on the "proven" charge of the party receiving foreign funds from sources that are illegal in Pakistan, and rioting by its supporters last year that targeted military installations, Minister Attaullah Tarar said. "The federal government will move a case to ban the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf," he said, adding that the plan will be taken up before the cabinet, which was empowered to take a decision.

The government will also file a legal reference against Khan and former President Arif Alvi for treason charges under the country's constitution before the Supreme Court, Tarar said.

Khan's aide Zulfikar Bukhari said the decision was a move towards "soft martial law". "This is a sign of panic as they have realized the courts can't be threatened and put under pressure," he said.

The latest turmoil comes at a time when the country has to make politically unpopular reforms such as raising taxes on farm income to get \$7 billion from the IMF. "A weak government, hobbled by questions about its legitimacy and consumed with desperate attempts to keep Imran Khan from being released will struggle to

take the kinds of decisions that are needed to keep the IMF program on track," Khurram Husain, an economic analyst and journalist.

The Supreme Court had last week ruled that PTI was eligible for more than 20 extra reserved seats in parliament, ramping up pressure on the country's weak coalition government. PTI candidates contested the February 8 election as independents after it was barred from the polls.

It was not immediately clear what impact the planned ban would have on the court's decision to grant reserved seats. Minister Tarar said the government would seek a legal review of the reserved seats issue.

The reasons behind the move to ban Khan's party included PTI lobbying in Washington to get the US House of Representatives to support a resolution against Pakistan's elections and writing to the IMF for an election audit before helping the country. Independent rights group, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said on social media platform X it was "shocked" and called on the government to withdraw its decision.

Jailed since August, Khan was on Saturday acquitted, along with his third wife, on charges that they married unlawfully but he will not be freed after authorities issued new orders to arrest him. Khan came to power in 2018 and was ousted in 2022 after falling out with Pakistan's powerful military. — Reuters



LAHORE: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan (center) arrives at a registrar office in Lahore High court to sign surety bonds for bail in various cases in this file photo. — AFP

Somalia cafe attack kills nine during Euro final

MOGADISHU, Somalia: A car bombing at a cafe in Somalia's capital Mogadishu that was packed with football fans watching the Euro 2024 final has killed nine people, security sources said Monday.

Witnesses described scenes of panic and chaos after the powerful blast late Sunday, with people scrambling for safety and the main entrance to the cafe destroyed by the blaze. Mohamed Yusuf, an official from the national security agency, said nine civilians were killed and 20 others wounded in the explosion, raising the official toll of five given by police late Sunday.

The popular Top Coffee restaurant, which is located near the presidential palace in the center of the city, was thronged with young men watching the final that Spain won 2-1 against England. "There were many people inside the restaurant, most of them youth who were watching the football match ... but thanks to God, most of them made their way out safely after using ladders to climb up and jump over the backside perimeter wall," Yusuf said.

No group has claimed responsibility for the bombing, but the state-run Somali National News Agency

said Sunday it was carried out by Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab jihadists. Images posted online showed a huge fireball and plumes of smoke billowing into the night sky as the explosion ripped through the cafe.

'Bleeding and screaming'

"I was inside the restaurant watching the football match when I heard a huge explosion, there was smoke, dust and fire at the front side of the restaurant and we panicked," Said Muktar told AFP. "I and several other people rushed towards the main entrance, but it was completely inaccessible," he said, adding that he saw people "bleeding and screaming". "The whole situation was chaos."

Images of the aftermath of the bombing on Monday showed piles of rubble where the restaurant once stood and several burnt-out vehicles, as local residents inspected the scene. Police officer Mohamed Salad told AFP he rushed to the site a few minutes after the blast. "Five people died outside the building and on the main road including drivers of vehicles that were passing by the area," he said. "Four people died inside the restaurant, some of them removed from under the debris."

Attempted jailbreak

Al-Shabaab has been waging a bloody insurgency against Somalia's fragile federal government for more than 17 years and has carried out numerous bombings in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the coun-

try. There had been a relative lull in attacks in recent months as the government presses on with an offensive against the Islamist militants.

But on Saturday, five inmates said to be Al-Shabaab fighters were killed in a shootout with guards in an attempted jail break from the main prison in Mogadishu. Three guards were also killed and 18 others wounded, prison officials said, after the inmates managed to get hold of weapons.

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has vowed "all-out" war against the jihadists and government troops have joined forces with local clan militias in a military campaign supported by an African Union force and US air strikes. But the offensive has suffered setbacks, with Al-Shabaab earlier this year claiming it had taken multiple locations in central Somalia.

Although driven out of Mogadishu by AU forces in 2011, Al-Shabaab still has a strong presence in rural Somalia. Somalia last month called for the African Union to slow the planned withdrawal of its forces from the troubled country.

UN resolutions called for troop numbers in the AU peacekeeping mission, known as ATMIS, to be reduced to zero by December 31 with security handed over to the Somali army and police. The third and penultimate phase was to see the departure of 4,000 soldiers out of a total 13,500 ATMIS troops by the end of June. But Somalia's government said it wanted to see only 2,000 troops leave in June and the remaining 2,000 in September. — AFP



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky gestures as he speaks during his press conference in Kyiv on July 15, 2024. — AFP

Zelensky says Russia should attend second Ukraine summit

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday that Russia should be represented at a second summit aiming to secure lasting peace with the Kremlin, after more than two years of war. Both sides have shunned direct peace talks since negotiations between Russian and Ukraine delegations fell through in the early weeks of Russia's invasion launched in February 2022. But dozens of world leaders voiced support for a just resolution to the fighting in Ukraine after a high-level summit convened by Zelensky last month in Switzerland. Russia was not invited. During a press conference in Kyiv following his visit to the United States for a NATO defense alliance summit, Zelensky opened the door to direct talks with officials from Moscow.

"I believe that Russian representatives should be at the second summit," Zelensky said, describing preparations for a follow up gathering of Ukraine's allies. He announced separate meetings on key issues, including energy, to be held in Qatar and on food security in Turkey ahead of a second summit. He also said there would be a separate meeting on prisoner exchanges and humanitarian issues at a meeting in Canada.

25 Patriots would 'cover' Ukraine

Leaders and top officials from more than 90 states gathered at a Swiss mountainside resort on June 15 for the two-day summit dedicated to resolving the largest European conflict since World War II. The Kremlin responded to the gathering saying that any discussions around ending the conflict that did not include Russia were "absurd." Zelensky also reiterated Monday that Ukraine was not being pressured to enter negotiations with Russia and that Western military or financial support was not being conditioned on holding talks with the Kremlin. He said levels of support from abroad were allowing Ukraine to hold out against Russian attacks but do not give it a sufficient advantage to "win," without elaborating. In recent months, Zelensky has been appealing to Ukrainian allies to provide more air defense systems. He said on Monday that 25 Patriot air defense batteries or comparable would be enough to defend all of Ukraine, but declined to say how many were already deployed. He also said he was not concerned at the prospect of another Donald Trump presidency in the United States, despite indications his administration could be more sympathetic to the Kremlin. A Trump victory in the US November elections would put into question Washington's continued support for Ukraine.

Kyiv to 'work together' with Trump

"I think that if Donald Trump becomes president, we will work together. I'm not worried about this," Zelensky told Monday's press conference. The Republican Party candidate has suggested that he would end the conflict very quickly if he won back the presidency, which Kyiv fears would mean it would be forced to negotiate with Moscow from a weakened position. Zelensky said that during his recent trip to the US for a NATO defense alliance summit he had met Republican governors and was assured of the party's backing. "There are hawks whose messages are more right-wing or more radical," Zelensky said. "But I want to tell you that the majority of the Republican Party supports Ukraine and the people of Ukraine." Trump previously said during a debate with President Joe Biden that if elected, he would have the Ukraine conflict "settled" before he took office in January 2025. Zelensky declined to say whether he was worried about Biden, who has been facing calls to step aside following a disastrous debate performance against Trump. He did however acknowledge that "turbulence" during the US election cycle was having a "big impact" on his country. He cited a \$61 billion aid package from the US that was approved in April following months of political wrangling and that unlocked much-needed arms for Ukraine's outgunned troops. — AFP



MOGADISHU: A Somali police officer looks at debris and destruction at a cafe in Mogadishu on July 15, 2024 following a car bomb blast. — AFP

Libya orders arrest of airline executive over migrant smuggling

TRIPOLI: Libyan authorities on Monday ordered the arrest of an airline official on charges of helping to illegally transport migrants to the United States via Nicaragua. The commercial director of Ghadames Air was under investigation for "committing an activity harmful to the interests of the country," said a statement from the Tripoli-based Attorney General's office, which did not name the suspect.

It said Ghadames Air had transported hundreds of people to the Central American country of Nicaragua, who intended to then illegally enter the United States. Ghadames Air is a private airline founded in 2021 and headquartered in Tripoli, according to the company's website. The carrier could not immediately be reached for comment. "The company had engaged in an activity ... operating flights carrying hundreds of people from East Asian countries without taking into account the obligations of the air carrier and national legislation related to immigration," the Attorney General's office statement said.

It gave no further details on the origin countries of the migrants. Oil-rich Libya plunged into chaos following the toppling of long-time ruler Muammar Gaddafi in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011. It has since become the main gateway for migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. — Agencies

Bangladesh PM's millionaire servant sparks graft probe

DHAKA: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina says she is "taking measures" after a slew of corruption scandals - including one involving her former household servant who now travels by helicopter after amassing a staggering \$34 million fortune. Recent accusations dominating Bangladesh's normally pliant media have involved a former army chief, an ex-police chief, senior tax officers and state recruitment officials. "Corruption is a longstanding problem," Hasina told reporters late Sunday. "These messes must be cleaned up ... we have been taking measures."

She said that included action against her household assistant - a "peon" or low-level orderly - who Bangladeshi media reported had previously been a water-bearer, in case she needed a drink at events. "The man who worked as a peon in my house - he now owns 400,00,00,000 Taka (\$34 million)," Hasina said. "He can't move without a helicopter. How has he earned so much money? I took action immediately after knowing this."

It would take an average Bangladeshi more than 13,000 years to earn that amount. The average GDP per capita in the nation of around 170 million people is \$2,529, according to the World Bank. Hasina did not identify the servant, but several newspapers named him as Jahangir Alam, nicknamed "Pani" or "water", due to his old job. The Dhaka Tribune daily reported the or-

derly had used his position in Hasina's office to engage in "lobbying, tender manipulation and bribery".

The fat-cat servant report spread rapidly on social media - with opposition parties seizing on it to accuse Hasina's administration of endemic corruption. "If Sheikh Hasina's peon could make such an astronomical amount of money, you can guess how much his boss has made," said A K M Wahiduzzaman, a spokesman for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main opposition party. "The most shocking thing is he has not been prosecuted for his crime," he added. "He was just removed from his post".

Hasina, 76, won her fourth consecutive general election in January, in a vote without genuine opposition parties, with a widespread boycott and a major crack-down against her political opponents. But since May, a series of high-profile corruption scandals have put the spotlight on her more than 15-year-long rule.

The anti-corruption commission launched a probe into former national police chief Benazir Ahmed - once viewed as a close Hasina ally - accused of stashing an illegal multi-million-dollar fortune. He rejects the allegations. Washington imposed sanctions against Ahmed in 2021, for his alleged role in hundreds of disappearances and extrajudicial killings when he led the feared Rapid Action Battalion paramilitary force.

Top local newspapers have also laid out graft allegations against the former army chief of the capital Dhaka, Aziz Ahmed. He denies the claims. The anti-corruption commission has ordered the seizure of properties and frozen the bank accounts of several top tax officials for allegedly siphoning off tens of millions of dollars. Last week, police busted a gang of civil servants selling recruitment papers before job tests, reportedly illegally generating millions of dollars. — AFP

TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024

China asks WTO to set up panel to settle US e-vehicle subsidies dispute

Italy, Spain back EU tariffs on China-built electric vehicles

BEIJING: China has requested the World Trade Organization to set up an expert panel to help settle a dispute over electric vehicles subsidies under the US Inflation Reduction Act, the country's commerce ministry said on Monday. The world's No 2 economy opened the WTO dispute in late March after the Biden administration passed the IRA, a wide-ranging law that provides billions of dollars in tax credits to help consumers buy EVs and firms to produce renewable energy, as the White House looks to decarbonize the US power sector.

China has failed to reach a solution with the US through consultations that would safeguard the rights and interests of its EV industry, the ministry said in its statement, and so is advancing its case at the WTO. The IRA "excludes products from WTO members such as China, artificially sets trade barriers, and pushes up the costs of green energy transition", China's commerce ministry said.

"We urge the US to abide by WTO rules and stop abusing its industrial policies to undermine international cooperation on climate change," China said.

Meanwhile, Italy and Spain are backing European Union tariffs on imports of China-built electric vehicles, government sources said ahead of a Monday midnight deadline for all 27 EU members to take their stand on the matter. The vote is non-binding,

but it could influence the final conclusion of the European Commission, which oversees the bloc's trade policy. It set provisional duties of up to 37.6 percent on EVs imported from China, ratcheting up tensions with Beijing.

The EU executive is canvassing EU governments' views in an "advisory" vote, which the Commission is expected to take into account when deciding whether to follow up with definitive duties in what is the EU's highest profile trade case yet. Government sources said on Monday that Italy had voted in favor and that Spain would do the same in their written submissions. Poland's development ministry said Warsaw's position was still the subject of consultations between ministries. Germany is set to abstain, sources said on Friday. Greece had yet to take a position as of Saturday.

A decade ago, the EU executive did not impose tariffs on Chinese solar panels after it became clear that a large group of EU members did not support them. EU manufacturing subsequently collapsed.

The Commission will continue its investigation and determine whether to propose definitive duties that would typically apply for five years. If it does push for tariffs, they will come up for a binding vote among the EU members, and would be blocked if a qualified majority of 15 member countries representing 65 percent of the EU population vote against. — Reuters



SANTA MONICA, US: Tesla electric vehicles charge on EV charging stations beneath solar panels at a Tesla Supercharger location in Santa Monica, California. — AFP

'Strawberry': OpenAI working on new reasoning technology

WASHINGTON: ChatGPT maker OpenAI is working on a novel approach to its artificial intelligence models in a project code-named "Strawberry," according to a person familiar with the matter and internal documentation reviewed by Reuters. The project, details of which have not been previously reported, comes as the Microsoft-backed startup races to show that the types of models it offers are capable of delivering advanced reasoning capabilities.

Teams inside OpenAI are working on Strawberry, according to a copy of a recent internal OpenAI document seen by Reuters in May. Reuters could not ascertain the precise date of the document, which details a plan for how OpenAI intends to use Strawberry to perform research. The source described the plan to Reuters as a work in progress. The news agency could not establish how close Strawberry is to being publicly available. How Strawberry works is a tightly kept secret even within OpenAI, the person said. The document describes a project that uses Strawberry models with the aim of enabling the company's AI to not just generate answers to queries but to plan ahead enough to navigate the Internet autonomously and reliably to perform what OpenAI terms "deep research," according to the source.

This is something that has eluded AI models to date, according to interviews with more than a dozen AI researchers. Asked about Strawberry and the details reported in this story, an OpenAI company spokesperson said in a statement: "We want our AI models to see and understand the world more like we do. Continuous research into new AI capabilities is a common practice in the industry, with a shared belief that these systems will improve in reasoning over time."

The spokesperson did not directly address questions about Strawberry. The Strawberry project was formerly known as Q*, which Reuters reported last year was already seen inside the company as a breakthrough. Two sources described viewing earlier this year what OpenAI staffers told them were Q* demos,

capable of answering tricky science and math questions out of reach of today's commercially-available models.

A different source briefed on the matter said OpenAI has tested AI internally that scored over 90% on a MATH dataset, a benchmark of championship math problems. Reuters could not determine if this was the "Strawberry" project. On Tuesday at an internal all-hands meeting, OpenAI showed a demo of a research project that it claimed had new human-like reasoning skills, according to Bloomberg. An OpenAI spokesperson confirmed the meeting but declined to give details of the contents. Reuters could not determine if the project demonstrated was Strawberry.

OpenAI hopes the innovation will improve its AI models' reasoning capabilities dramatically, the person familiar with it said, adding that Strawberry involves a specialized way of processing an AI model after it has been pre-trained on very large datasets.

Researchers Reuters interviewed say that reasoning is key to AI achieving human or super-human-level intelligence. While large language models can already summarize dense texts and compose elegant prose far more quickly than any human, the technology often falls short on common sense problems whose solutions

seem intuitive to people, like recognizing logical fallacies and playing tic-tac-toe. When the model encounters these kinds of problems, it often "hallucinates" bogus information. AI researchers interviewed by Reuters generally agree that reasoning, in the context of AI, involves the formation of a model that enables AI to plan ahead, reflect how the physical world functions, and work through challenging multi-step problems reliably. Improving reasoning in AI models is seen as the key to unlocking the ability for the models to do everything from making major scientific discoveries to planning and building new software applications.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said earlier this year that in AI "the most important areas of progress will be around reasoning ability." Other companies like Google, Meta and Microsoft are likewise experimenting with different techniques to improve reasoning in AI models, as are most academic labs that perform AI research. Researchers differ, however, on whether large language models (LLMs) are capable of incorporating ideas and long-term planning into how they do prediction. For instance, one of the pioneers of modern AI, Yann LeCun, who works at Meta, has frequently said that LLMs are not capable of humanlike reasoning. — Reuters

Wall Street gains as investors bet on second Trump term

NEW YORK: The Dow hit a record high in Wall Street's upbeat trading on Monday, on a greater chance of presidential candidate Donald Trump winning a second term after surviving an assassination attempt, while interest-rate cut hopes also aided sentiment. Under Trump, markets expect a hawkish trade policy and looser regulations over issues from climate change to cryptocurrency. Online betting site PredictIt showed bets of an election win for Trump at 66 cents, up from Friday's 60 cents, with a victory for Joe Biden at 26 cents. "In a Republican administration, you'll see a lower tax policy, lower regulatory policy... that's typically good for stocks. We're seeing some of that in terms of forward looking expectations from investors at this point," said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Independent Advisor Alliance. Trump-linked stocks soared, with Trump Media & Technology Group, software firm Phunware and video-sharing platform Rumble jumping between 6 percent and 32 percent. Crypto stocks also leapt as bitcoin rose to a two-week high. Coinbase Global, Marathon Digital Holdings and Riot Platforms advanced between 5.3 percent and 8.2 percent.

Other stocks that are expected to benefit from Trump's second term also climbed, with Gunmaker Smith & Wesson and prison operator GEO Group gaining 12.6 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively. The Dow hit a record high, boosted by a 2 percent gain in UnitedHealth as health insurers also jumped on a likely Trump win. The small-cap Russell 2000 gained 1.2 percent to its highest since January 2022, in continued evidence of broad-based market gains.

Investors priced in an 88 percent odd of a 25-basis-point rate cut by September and two cuts for 2024, according to LSEG data, even though the Fed's last set of economic projections had indicated only one rate cut this year. Rate cut hopes aided Friday's strong rally, which saw the Dow and S&P 500 touch intraday record highs after cooler-than-expected inflation data, and the Russell 2000 notch its best week since November. Comments from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell and San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly, expected later on Monday, will be parsed for clues on their assessment of last week's inflation data. At 9.49 am ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 201.52 points, or 0.50 percent, at 40,202.42, the S&P 500 was up 23.67 points, or 0.42 percent, at 5,639.02, and the Nasdaq Composite was up 93.90 points, or 0.51 percent, at 18,492.34. As the quarterly corporate earnings season ramps up this week, it remains to be seen if megacaps can justify their high valuations. — Reuters



GENEVA: OpenAI CEO Sam Altman (right) appears on a giant screen, speaking remotely during a keynote with Nicholas Thompson, CEO of The ITU AI for Good Summit, in Geneva, in this file photo. — AFP

Macy's ends talks with Arkhouse and Brigade

WASHINGTON: Struggling US department store chain Macy's said Monday that it has ended discussions with an investor group which sought to buy the company for roughly \$6.9 billion - after months of negotiations. Macy's said its board of directors "has unanimously determined to terminate discussions with Arkhouse and Brigade," according to a statement. "At this time, after careful review, we have concluded that Arkhouse and Brigade's proposal lacks certainty of financing and does not deliver compelling value," said Macy's lead independent director Paul Varga. In March, Arkhouse Management and Brigade Capital Management upped their offer of \$5.8 billion by offering \$24 per share - valuing the takeover at \$6.6 billion.

It then raised its offer to \$24.80 per share in cash, bringing the value to around \$6.9 billion. On Monday, Macy's said its board and management team engaged in "good faith" with Arkhouse and Brigade, providing documents with a level of detail going "well beyond what is customarily required to obtain financing for a public company acquisition." This included store-by-store profit and loss information and leases for each location.

Macy's shares slumped 14.6 percent in pre-market trading on Monday. Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData, said in a note that the news of talks ending "is to be welcomed."

"Other than seeking to monetize Macy's real estate assets for short term gain, neither party brought any long-term value to the table," he added. Saunders noted that many of the activist investor proposals would also have "significantly weakened Macy's and hampered its ability to survive as a retail operation." Department stores have seen their results suffer for years as consumers increasingly move online, and have been forced to reduce in size - a dynamic worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. These trends have put pressure on shopping malls in the United States, especially older retail sites that have fallen out of favor. — AFP



NEW YORK: Shoppers carry Macy's bags during "Black Friday" in New York on November 24, 2023, the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season. — AFP

Peru economy expands 5% in May year-on-year

LIMA: Peru's economy expanded 5.04 percent in May compared with the same month last year, the government's INEI statistics agency reported on Monday, as the Andean economy recovers from the recession it fell into last year. The figure built on the expansion logged in the prior month and was in line with a forecast of around 5 percent growth from Peru's central bank. May's gross domestic product (GDP) expansion was driven by an 18.59 percent boost in manufacturing, followed by fishing and transportation, which grew 329.16 percent and 7.03 percent respectively, official data showed.

Peru's critical mining and hydrocarbons sector expanded 1.83 percent in May, returning to growth after a 4.34 percent contraction in April. Peru is one of the world's top copper producers.

For years one of South America's top performers, Peru's economy struggled last year in the aftermath of adverse weather events and anti-government protests that hampered the mining industry.

Peru's government has since spent millions of dollars to boost the mining sector. Peru's central bank said on Friday that it expects the economy to grow around 4 percent in the second quarter, compared to the second quarter of last year. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). The Dow hit a record high in Wall Street's upbeat trading on Monday. — AFP

Business

Goldman Sachs profit doubles in Q2 on robust debt underwriting

Resilient US economy gives corporate execs confidence to pursue acquisitions

WASHINGTON: Goldman Sachs' profit more than doubled in the second quarter and beat analysts' estimates on strong debt underwriting and fixed-income trading, but slipped from a bumper first quarter when earnings were the highest since 2021.

The resilience of the US economy has given corporate executives the confidence to pursue acquisitions, debt sales and stock offerings. "We are pleased with our solid second quarter results and our overall performance in the first half of the year, reflecting strong year-on-year growth in both Global Banking & Markets and Asset & Wealth Management," CEO David Solomon said in a statement on Monday. Earnings were \$3.04 billion, or \$8.62 per share, for the three months ended June 30, about 3 percent higher than analysts' average expectation of \$8.34, according to LSEG.

The beat was narrower than in the prior two quarters, when Goldman's profit was 35 percent and 56 percent higher than estimates. Shares were last marginally up in volatile premarket trading. Stephen Biggar, an analyst at Argus Research, attributed the stock performance to the narrow beat and investment banking underperforming peers such as JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup.

Goldman's investment banking fees rose 21 percent to \$1.73 billion in the quarter. Fees earned from advising on mergers and acquisitions (M&As) jumped 7 percent, while debt and stock underwriting climbed 39 percent and 25 percent, respectively. Last week, JPMorgan reported a 46 percent jump in investment banking revenue while it jumped 60 percent at Citigroup.

Goldman's profit in the second quarter last year was also hit by writedowns related to GreenSky, its

former fintech business that Goldman has since sold. After a foray into consumer banking flopped, Goldman has refocused on its traditional mainstays - investment banking and trading.

Investors have supported the move, pushing the Wall Street titan's stock up 24.4 percent so far this year, compared with rivals Morgan Stanley's 11.6 percent gain. Goldman's revenue from fixed income, currency and commodities (FICC) trading rose 17 percent, boosted by FICC financing, which makes loans to institutional investors and others.

FICC financing revenue climbed 37 percent to \$850 million, just a shade below the record \$852 million in the first quarter, driven by mortgages and structured lending. Goldman has significantly increased short-term loans to private funds as part of a push since 2021. Equities trading revenue increased 7 percent. The asset and wealth management unit, which manages money on behalf of wealthy and institutional clients, reported 27 percent higher revenue in the second quarter.

The bank oversees \$2.93 trillion of assets. In May, it signed a deal to manage the \$43.4 billion pension fund portfolio of parcel delivery giant UPS. Platform solutions, the unit that houses some of Goldman's consumer operations, reported 2 percent higher revenue. The bank's provisions for credit losses were \$282 million for the second quarter, compared with \$615 million a year earlier.

Credit cards

Goldman Sachs took a \$58 million charge on the General Motors credit card business in the second quarter as it prepares to exit the partnership. Gold-



NEW YORK: The headquarters of Goldman Sachs in New York City. — AFP

man had decided to sell the GM card loan portfolio last year. GM is in talks to replace Goldman with Barclays, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters in April. A similar partnership Goldman has with tech giant Apple is facing an uncertain future.

Credit cards were an important facet of Goldman's consumer strategy, but it decided to retreat from re-

tail banking after big losses. In its annual stress test, the Federal Reserve indicated credit cards could be a headache for banks. The potential losses on Goldman's credit card loans were among the worst under the central bank's hypothetical scenario. Still, Goldman raised its quarterly dividend to \$3 per share versus \$2.75 earlier. — Reuters

Ruble strengthens after forex sales threshold lowered

MOSCOW: The Russian ruble strengthened slightly against the dollar on Monday after the government lowered a mandatory foreign currency sales requirement on major exporters to 40 percent from 60 percent over the weekend. By 0753 GMT, the ruble was 0.7 percent higher at 87.30 against the dollar.

Sanctions on Moscow Exchange and its clearing agent, the National Clearing Centre (NCC), led to a range of varying prices and spreads as trading shifted to the over-the-counter (OTC) market on June 14, obscuring access to reliable pricing for the Russian currency. A requirement to sell 80 percent of foreign currency earnings was introduced to support the ruble in October 2023, and then reduced to 60 percent in June. The government made the announcement about the new cut on July 13.

The Russian central bank has said that compulsory forex sales have helped to calm volatility in the ruble market, allowing for controls to be relaxed. In its latest financial markets risk report for June the regulator said currency sales by exporters remained strong. Analysts have estimated that foreign currency sales are well above the government's threshold, while the measure was likely to support the local stock market whose main index hit over two-year highs on May 20 but has been steadily declining since then.

"Lowering the threshold for the sale of foreign currency plays in favor of the stock market," said Alexei Golovinov, chief analyst at Promsvyazbank, pointing out that avoiding excessive ruble strengthening is positive for exporters' securities. The index was 0.4 percent lower on Monday. Shares in VTB Bank traded around 0.2 percent higher at 99.85 a piece as trading resumed after the lender conducted a reverse share split, which raised the value of each individual share by 5,000 times.

Against the yuan, which had already become the most traded foreign currency in Moscow before the latest sanctions were imposed, the ruble was unchanged at 11.97, according to an analysis of the OTC market. It was down 0.3 percent at 96.14 against the euro.

Brent crude oil, a global benchmark for Russia's main export, was down 0.2 percent at \$84.83 a barrel but generally held ground despite political uncertainty in the US and the Middle East. — Reuters

UK court throws out Tesla's lawsuit for 5G patent license

LONDON: US technology firm InterDigital and a patent licensing platform on Monday won their bid to throw out a London lawsuit by Tesla which was seeking a patent license ahead of the automaker's launch of 5G vehicles in Britain. Elon Musk's company sued InterDigital and Avanci - which licenses patents from multiple owners, largely for automotive uses - at London's High Court in 2023.

Tesla wanted the court to determine the fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) terms of a license for Tesla to use patents owned by patent holders, including InterDigital and which are licensed by Avanci. Tesla's lawyers said in court filings for a hearing in May that the company "plans imminently to launch 5G vehicles in the UK".

InterDigital and Avanci, however, asked the court to throw out Tesla's bid for a ruling on FRAND terms for a license. The High Court ruled in their favor on Monday, with Judge Timothy Fancourt saying in a written ruling that Tesla's bid for a license must be thrown out but Tesla's claim to revoke three of InterDigital's patents can continue. — Reuters

ECB to opt for summer pause after rate cut

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is expected to leave interest rates unchanged Thursday, giving the eurozone time to digest last month's first cut since 2019 as the inflation path remains unpredictable. ECB governors lowered the closely-watched deposit rate from a record four percent to 3.75 percent at their June meeting, following an unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening to tame red-hot inflation.

ECB president Christine Lagarde said the cut was made possible thanks to steadily falling consumer prices. But she stressed it would not automatically kick off a rapid rate-cutting cycle.

Speaking in Portugal's Sintra earlier this month, Lagarde said "it will take time" for the bank to "gather sufficient data" before deciding the next move. "The ECB will probably go into the summer break without lowering interest rates again," said Fritzi Koehler-Geib, chief economist at German public lender KfW. After a surprise uptick in May, eurozone inflation slowed again in June to reach 2.5 percent.

While still above the ECB's two-percent target, it's a far cry from a 10.6-percent peak in 2022 after Russia's war in Ukraine sent energy and food prices surging.

Sri Lanka to cut power prices by 22.5% from Tuesday

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will cut power prices by 22.5 percent from Tuesday, the utilities regulator said, as the Indian Ocean nation attempts to ease the cost of living for millions of people amid its worst financial crisis in decades. After the crisis shrank its economy 7.8 percent in 2022, Sri Lanka boosted power prices by 75 percent that September, and by another 66 percent the following February, to meet the terms of a \$2.9-billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Industries would also see a cut of about 33 percent in power tariffs, the regulator added, with poorer users getting a reduction of about 2,000 rupees (\$7) in their bills. "We expect this reduction to assist in the rejuvenation of the economy and help the public get relief," Manjula Fernando, chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL), told reporters on Monday.

The cut will help Sri Lanka stick to an inflation target of 5 percent set by its central bank, analysts

said, in an economy expected to grow by 3 percent this year after a gap of two years. Together with higher taxes, a weaker rupee and fuel cost increases, the power price hikes had pushed inflation in the nation of 22 million to a record high of 70 percent in September 2022. But it declined to

Sticky services

In June's updated forecasts, the ECB said it now expects inflation to return to target in late 2025. But policymakers still see several risk factors on the path to disinflation, and have reiterated their "data-dependent" approach. They are in particular keeping a close eye on wages in the 20-nation euro area, as workers have in recent years pushed for salary hikes to compensate for higher living costs. Although wage growth remains elevated, ECB officials appear less concerned than a few months ago amid signs that wage increases could ease over the course of the year.

Stubbornly high inflation in the services sector is another headache for the ECB, staying sticky at 4.1 percent in June. The eurozone economy meanwhile emerged from recession with greater-than-expected growth of 0.3 percent in the first quarter.

Policymakers will only be armed with new forecasts on growth and inflation in September, strengthening the case for a July pause. Most observers believe the ECB will lower borrowing costs again at the September meeting, and then once more before the end of the year.

"A key prerequisite" for a September cut however "is that there are signs of a slowdown in wage growth by then," said the KfW's Koehler-Geib. "In addition, the ECB's scope for cutting interest rates also depends on the fiscal policy of European governments," she said.



Concerns have grown about France's government finances after snap elections produced a hung parliament, plunging the eurozone's second-largest economy into uncertainty. French central bank chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau last week called for reducing the country's large deficit, and warned that "excessive wage costs" or "taxes that are too heavy" could harm France's competitiveness.

Across the Atlantic meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve is also increasingly expected to opt for a September rate cut. Initially tipped to begin lowering borrowing costs before the ECB, stalling progress on US inflation has seen the Fed keep rates frozen at a 23-year high for months.

But observers say Fed chair Jerome Powell recently hinted at a September cut when he told Congress that waiting "too long" to lower rates could weaken economic activity. — AFP



Monsoon clouds loom over the skies of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo. — AFP

said, in an economy expected to grow by 3 percent this year after a gap of two years. Together with higher taxes, a weaker rupee and fuel cost increases, the power price hikes had pushed inflation in the nation of 22 million to a record high of 70 percent in September 2022. But it declined to

This causes shortages, schedule disruptions and delays that drive up costs for sea transport that handles about 80 percent of international trade volume.

US retailers and other shippers have responded by bringing in goods earlier. This quickly made rates much more expensive in the busy "peak" season for importing back-to-school, Halloween and Christmas merchandise. "It is a bubble and it will eventually pop," Simon Heaney, senior manager for container research at Drewry, said of container rates.

Customers polled by the consultancy expect prices to fall in the first half of next year, Heaney said.

Meanwhile, the speed and magnitude of the increase has customers and industry experts asking whether market dynamics justify current rates. And some customers who remember the last round of inflation-driving ocean shipping costs worry that there are more increases ahead.

"There's never transparency about what's actually driving it, only assumptions. What's the rhyme or reason?" said Greg Davidson, CEO of Lalo, which sells stylish infant high chairs online and through Pottery Barn Kids stores. Davidson said container shipping pricing is something of a black box and that large and

small shippers in his professional network are bracing for rates of \$20,000 per container. That is partly due to concern that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump could impose sweeping tariffs on imports if the former president wins the election in November, he said. Importers will often rush in goods before tariffs hit, causing shipping rates to soar.

The closely watched Shanghai Containerized Freight Index rate for Shanghai to the US West Coast topped \$8,100 this month to set a new record, even though sea cargo volumes remain below early pandemic highs. Drewry's index had the rate on that trade lane at around 60 percent of its pandemic peak of \$12,400 per container.

Large carriers like Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd have raised profit forecasts as robust demand and higher rates buoy their results. "It is difficult to understand the magnitude and pace of the rate rises," Deutsche Bank Research analyst Andy Chu said in a client note.

For example, he said, May data on new orders from customers of manufacturing firms - which historically tracks with container demand - broke that trend. A drop in demand could quickly deflate prices, Chu said. — Reuters

China's economy falters, raises pressure for further stimulus

Property downturn, job insecurity knock the wind out of a fragile recovery

BEIJING: China's economy grew much slower than expected in the second quarter as a protracted property downturn and job insecurity knocked the wind out of a fragile recovery, keeping alive expectations Beijing will need to unleash even more stimulus.

The world's second-largest economy grew 4.7 percent in April-June, official data showed, its slowest since the first quarter of 2023 and missing a 5.1 percent forecast in a Reuters poll. It also slowed from the previous quarter's 5.3 percent expansion. Of particular concern was the consumer sector, with retail sales growth grinding to an 18-month low as deflationary pressures forced businesses to slash prices on everything from cars to food to clothes. "Overall, the disappointing GDP data shows that the road to hitting the 5 percent growth target remains challenging," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING.

"A negative wealth effect from falling property and stock prices, as well as low wage growth amid various industries' cost cutting is dragging consumption and causing a pivot from big ticket purchases toward the basic 'eat, drink and play' theme consumption," he added.

Among those under pressure was Swatch Group, the world's biggest watchmaker, which reported a steep drop in sales and earnings amid weak demand in China. The years-long property crisis deepened in June as new home prices fell at the fastest pace in nine years, battering consumer confidence and constraining debt-laden local governments' ability to generate fresh funds through land sales.

Analysts expect cutting debt and boosting confidence to be the main focus of a key economic leadership meeting in Beijing this week, although solving one of those problems may make it difficult to fix another. The government is aiming for economic growth of around 5.0 percent for 2024, a target that many analysts believe is ambitious

and may require more stimulus.

The sharper-than-expected growth slowdown in the second quarter prompted Goldman Sachs to lower its forecast for China's 2024 growth to 4.9 percent from 5.0 percent. "To counteract weak domestic demand, we believe more policy easing is necessary through the remainder of this year, especially on the fiscal and housing fronts," said Goldman Sachs economists, led by Lisheng Wang, in a note on Monday. On a quarterly basis, growth came in at 0.7 percent from a downwardly revised 1.5 percent in the previous three months, the data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

To counter soft domestic demand and a property crisis, China has boosted infrastructure investment and ploughed funds into high-tech manufacturing. China's yuan and stocks fell following the disappointing data, but share markets later closed higher as investors bet on more stimulus.

The NBS said while bad weather accounted for some of the hit to growth in the second quarter, the economy faced increasing external uncertainties and domestic difficulties in the second half.

Economic growth in China has been uneven with industrial output outstripping domestic consumption, fanning deflationary risks amid the property downturn and mounting local government debt. While solid Chinese exports have provided some support, rising trade tensions now pose a threat. Broadly reflecting those trends, separate data on Monday showed factory output growth beating expectations in June but still slowing from May.

That follows data released earlier this month that showed China's exports in June were up 8.6 percent from a year earlier, while imports unexpectedly shrank 2.3 percent, suggesting manufacturers were frontloading orders to get ahead of tariffs from trade partners. The bigger pain point on Monday, how-



HANGZHOU, China: A worker sorts wheels at a factory which produces bicycle parts for export in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on July 15, 2024. — AFP

ever, was seen in retail sales, which rose 2.0 percent year-on-year, missing forecasts and the slowest growth since December 2022.

"Among all the monthly figures released today, the highlight is the weak retail sales," said Xing Zhaopeng, senior China strategist at ANZ. "Household consumption remains very weak ... with employers slashing salaries and high youth unemployment, households will still be cautious going forward," Xing added. Property investment fell 10.1 percent in the first half of 2024 from a year earlier, and home sales by floor area declined 19.0 percent.

Bank lending for June released last week

showed demand faltering again, with some key gauges hitting record lows. To shore up growth, China's central bank governor last month pledged to stick to a supportive monetary policy stance. Analysts polled by Reuters expect a 10-basis points cut in China's one-year loan prime rate as well as a 25-basis points cut in banks' reserve requirement ratio in the third quarter. Citi analysts expect the government to unleash another round of property-supporting measures after a meeting of the Politburo, a top decision-making body of the ruling Communist Party expected in late July after this week's Central Committee meeting.

Authorities in May allowed local state-owned enterprises to buy unsold completed homes, with the central bank setting up a 300 billion yuan re-lending loan facility for affordable housing.

"While the case for reform is high, it's unlikely to be a particularly exciting affair," said Harry Murphy Cruise, economist at Moody's Analytics. "Big policy pivots can be taken as an admission of failure and a sure-fire way to lose face... assuming reforms are only modest, we expect China to only just scrape through to hitting its 'around 5 percent' target for the year," he added. — Reuters

Yandex split ready as Russian assets sold in \$5.4bn deal



MOSCOW: People walk past food delivery robot by Russian IT giant Yandex in Moscow. — AFP

MOSCOW: A deal to split the assets of Russian technology company Yandex was finalized on Monday, with a Russian consortium of investors buying the bulk of Yandex's businesses in a cash and shares deal worth around \$5.4 billion. The split marks the end of foreign ownership in Yandex, often dubbed "Russia's Google", potentially tightening the Kremlin's control of the Internet space in Russia, while also finalizing the largest corporate exit from Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine over two years ago.

Yandex's Dutch parent company Yandex NV (YNV) said it had sold its remaining minority 28 percent stake as part of the deal's second closing, receiving a total of \$2.8 billion in cash and 162.5 million YNV class A shares. "With the second closing, YNV has received the agreed upon purchase price and now fully disposed of its remaining interest in the Russian businesses," YNV said.

Yandex blazed a trail for Russian technology after setting up in the late 1990s dotcom boom and listing on Nasdaq, becoming a dominant force in search and advertising, ride-hailing, e-commerce and other online services. Four AI-focused businesses in cloud, data labeling, self-driving cars and education technology are being retained by YNV and will be developed under the Nebius Group name, YNV said. Yandex in Russia said YNV would stop using Yandex brands by July 31.

The deal is the result of around two years of negotiations and faced various setbacks and hurdles, from Kremlin demands for a discount of at least 50 percent on foreign asset sales to nationalization risk and an anti-war outburst from Yandex co-founder Arkady Volozh. After EU sanctions on Volozh were lifted in March, he is now set to return as CEO of Nebius and lead the renamed group, now free from the shackles of its Russia ties, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters. YNV Chairman John Boynton thanked the company's 1,300 employees, paying particular tribute to Vadim Marchuk, who led the deal team. "All connections with Russia have now been severed," he said.

With the deal done, attention may turn to the future of YNV's Nasdaq listing, where many Western shareholders are stuck holding stakes in which trading has long been suspended. — Reuters

Kenya to slash spending in revised budget

NAIROBI: Kenya's government plans to cut 2024-25 spending by 1.9 percent and widen the fiscal deficit to 3.6 percent of GDP in a revised budget, the treasury said, weeks after it was forced to roll back tax hikes due to mass protests. President William Ruto last week fired almost his entire cabinet and pledged to set up a broad-based government in his latest concession to demands from protesters.

Public demonstrations began last month against the now-banned tax hikes, but went on to demand Ruto's resignation and deep-rooted political changes to tackle corruption and poor governance. Ruto had earlier

this month proposed spending cuts and additional borrowing in roughly equal measure to fill the nearly \$2.7 billion budget hole caused by the withdrawal of the tax hikes.

When lawmakers return to parliament next week they will need to debate and pass the supplementary budget, which was signed by Chris Kiptoo, principal treasury secretary on July 11, and shared on parliament's website. The supplementary budget projects total spending at 3.87 trillion Kenyan shillings (\$30 billion), down from 3.99 trillion shillings (\$31 billion), Kiptoo said.

Recurrent expenditure is estimated to fall 2.1 percent, while development expenditure will drop 16.4 percent, he said. Despite the withdrawal of the tax-hike legislation, the energy regulator on Monday raised the road maintenance levy to 25 shillings per liter of fuel, up from 18 shillings.

Facing the worst crisis of his two-year presidency, Ruto has been caught



NAIROBI: Youth attending a special dedication service at the Holy Family Basilica hold roses in honor of lives lost during recent protests against government proposed tax hikes on "saba-saba" day, a local euphemism for July 7. — AFP

between the demands of lenders such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cut deficits, and a population struggling with the high cost of

living. The IMF said on Thursday it was assessing recent developments in Kenya and making adjustments to evolving circumstances. — Reuters

N Korean hackers sent stolen crypto to wallet used by Asian firm

LONDON: A major Cambodian payments firm received crypto worth over \$150,000 from a digital wallet used by North Korean hacking outfit Lazarus, blockchain data shows, a glimpse of how the criminal collective has laundered funds in Southeast Asia.

Huione Pay, which is based in Phnom Penh and offers currency exchange, payments and remittance services, received the crypto between June 2023 and February this year, according to the previously unreported blockchain data reviewed by Reuters. The crypto was sent to Huione Pay from an anonymous digital wallet that, according to two blockchain analysts, was used by Lazarus hackers to deposit funds stolen from three crypto companies in June and July last year, mostly via phishing attacks.

The FBI said in August 2023 that Lazarus plundered about \$160 million from the crypto firms: Estonia-based Atomic Wallet and CoinsPaid; and Alphapo, registered in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The agency didn't disclose specifics. They were the latest in a series of heists by Lazarus that the United States has said is funding Pyongyang's weapons programs. Cryptocurrency allows North Korea to circumvent international sanctions, the United Nations has said. That may in turn help it to pay for banned goods and services, according to the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based defence and security think tank.

Huione Pay's board said in a statement the company had not known it "received funds indirectly" from the hacks and cited the multiple transactions between its wallet and the source of the hack as the reason it was unaware. The wallet that sent the funds was not under its management, Huione said.

Third parties cannot control transactions to and

from wallets that aren't under their management. However, blockchain analysis tools enable companies to identify high-risk wallets, and to seek to prevent interaction with them, crypto security experts say. Huione Pay - whose three directors include Hun To, a cousin of Prime Minister Hun Manet - declined to specify why it had received funds from the wallet or to provide details of its compliance policies. The company said Hun To's directorship does not include day-to-day oversight of its operations.

Reuters was unable to reach Hun for comment. The news agency has no evidence that Hun To or Cambodia's ruling family had any knowledge of the crypto transactions. The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) said in a statement to Reuters that payments firms such as Huione weren't allowed to deal or trade any cryptocurrencies and digital assets. In 2018, it said the ban sought to avoid investment losses due to crypto's volatility, cybercrime and the anonymity of the technology "which may cause risks of money laundering and financing of terrorism."

The NBC told Reuters it "would not hesitate to impose any corrective measures" against Huione, without saying if such action was planned. The North Korean mission to the United Nations in New York did not respond to a request for comment. A person at its mission to the United Nations in Geneva told Reuters in January that previous reporting on Lazarus was "all speculation and misinformation." Atomic Wallet and Alphapo didn't respond to requests for comment. CoinsPaid told Reuters that its own data showed crypto stolen from it worth \$3,700 reached the Huione Pay wallet.

While cryptocurrency is anonymous and flows outside the conventional banking system, its movements are traceable on the blockchain - a public, immutable ledger that records the amount of crypto sent from wallet to wallet, and when the transactions occurred.

US blockchain analysis firm TRM Labs told Reuters in a statement that Huione Pay was one of a number of payment platforms and over-the-counter (OTC) brokers that received a majority of the cryp-

to stolen in the Atomic Wallet hack. Brokers connect buyers and sellers of crypto, offering traders a greater degree of privacy than crypto exchanges.

In its statement, TRM also said that the hackers, to hide their tracks, had converted the stolen crypto via a complex laundering operation into different cryptocurrencies, including tether (USDT) - a so-called 'stablecoin' that retains a steady value in dollars. For their transactions, they used the Tron blockchain, a fast-growing register that is popular for its speed and low cost, TRM added.

"This majority of funds were converted to USDT on the Tron blockchain, and appeared to be sent to exchanges, services, and OTC - one of which, was Huione Pay," TRM Labs told Reuters, referring to the actions of the hackers. It did not provide further details. A spokesperson for the British Virgin Islands-registered Tron said: "Tron condemns the abuse of blockchain technologies and is dedicated to combating these, and other malicious actors, in all forms, and wherever they may be found." The spokesperson did not comment directly on the Atomic Wallet hack.

Estonia's investigation into the 2023 hacks of Atomic Wallet and Coinspaid remains open, said Ago Ambur, the head of Estonia's cybercrime bureau. Cybercrime police in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did not respond to requests for comment on the Alphapo hack. US blockchain analysis firm Merkle Science, which counts as clients law enforcement agencies in the United States and Britain and has previously examined Lazarus heists, examined the movement of coin from the 2023 hacks for Reuters. Its CEO, Mriganka Pattnaik, said tracing funds from the Lazarus attacks was difficult due to the complex methods used to conceal the money trail.

Merkle Science said its investigation showed that there were three "hops" - or transfers - from the Atomic Wallet hackers to the anonymous wallet that later transferred funds to Huione. Transfers between multiple crypto wallets are typically a red flag for organizations seeking to launder funds, financial crime experts and blockchain analysts say. — Reuters

TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024



A woman from Sibiu region arranges traditional blouses at an exhibition for traditional Romanian blouses in Vaideeni village, south-central Romania. — AFP photos



Maria Gioanca, who still hand-sews the black-and-white traditional blouses, poses in Vaideeni village, south-central Romania.



Children take part in a parade for traditional Romanian blouses in Vaideeni village, south-central Romania.

Romania faces down Vuitton for 'stealing' its beloved blouse

Villagers in Vaideeni at the foot of Romania's Carpathian mountains are fuming at French luxury brand Louis Vuitton for "stealing" the design of their traditional blouse. Maria Gioanca, 69, one of two dozen women who still hand sew the black-and-white garment in the village, told AFP she "won't let the costume be stolen" for fancy beach wear. Calls for luxury brands to acknowledge the inspirations of their designs have grown in recent years, as the fashion industry has been faced with accusations of cultural appropriation and exploiting the heritage of minority groups.

In Romania, activist group La Blouse Roumaine (The Romanian Blouse) has been asking brands since 2017 to come clean and "credit" the places of origin when their clothes are similar or inspired by Romanian folk costumes. Dedicated to promoting the traditional "ie" blouse - known to have inspired fashion designers like Yves Saint-Laurent, Jean Paul Gaultier and Kenzo - their complaints



A woman from Sibiu region with braided hair and wearing a traditional blouse, takes part in an exhibition for traditional Romanian blouses in Vaideeni village.

have yielded mixed results.

'Violating cultural rights'

In Vaideeni, many of the seamstresses had not heard of Louis Vuitton, but noticed the similarity to their traditional "ie" blouses right away when they saw

a photo of the French brand's white linen blouse embroidered with black motifs for their new "LV by the Pool" collection. "Why mock our stuff?" said Ioana Staniloiu, 76, scoffing at the blouse created by star designer Nicolas Ghesquiere and advertised on the Louis Vuitton website as "airy" and having "a fresh, bohemian look". "Next to our blouse, it's ugly," she said.

Accusing the French company of "violating the cultural rights of the communities", La Blouse Roumaine founder Andreea Tanasescu said people felt offended that a blouse traditionally worn on special occasions is used as beach wear. "You have to be very careful... It's better you go and talk to the community, spend time there," the former casting director, 49, told AFP, adding fashion could help "protect and promote cultural heritage" if there was an exchange.

Romania's culture minister asked the company last month to acknowledge the heritage. Louis Vuitton de-

clined to comment when contacted by AFP, but confirmed media reports that it apologized to Romania and stopped selling the blouse. It no longer appears on the brand's website, and 20 as yet unsold blouses have been put aside, according to reports.

'Scared' for future

In the past, La Blouse Roumaine convinced US designer Tory Burch to change the description of a coat crediting its Romanian inspiration. They didn't get any reply from Dior in a similar case. Romanian traditional clothes and textiles have "an exceptional, special aesthetic", according to textile specialist Florica Zaharia, pointing at the blouse's "discretion and elegance". "There is a beauty that we cannot ignore," said Zaharia, who opened the first textiles museum in Romania in 2018 after almost 30 years working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

But critics say these controversies

don't end up helping communities to save their dying crafts. It's like "airing dirty laundry in public", Romanian Peasant Museum curator Horatiu Ilea said, adding "the only thing" that could help is for young people to learn the crafts. While the making of the Romanian blouse has been added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage in 2022, there is no patent on it, and there are different styles even among the same group of seamstresses. In Vaideeni, some women have recently taken up the craft they learned from their elders, but it is far from easy. It takes at least a month to sew a blouse selling for around 300 to 400 euros (\$320-\$430), and they don't exactly sell like hot cakes. "I'm a bit scared (about the future), but we won't give up here," said Staniloiu, whose daughter and four granddaughters have all left the village to look for work elsewhere. — AFP



Participants attend a parade for traditional Romanian blouses in Vaideeni village.



A woman from Sibiu region wearing a traditional blouse, takes part in an exhibition for traditional Romanian blouses in Vaideeni village.



A woman stands next to traditional Romanian blouses.

Burberry replaces CEO after 'disappointing' results

British fashion label Burberry on Monday announced the immediate departure of chief executive Jonathan Akeroyd as it posted "disappointing" results with the luxury sector pressured by weak Chinese demand. Akeroyd, 57, departs after less than two and a half years at the helm, while the Briton is being replaced by Joshua Schulman, a former CEO at American fashion brands Michael Kors and Coach. In a statement, Burberry chair Gerry Murphy described US national Schulman, 52, as "a proven leader with an outstanding record of building global luxury brands and driving profitable growth".

Schulman, who officially joins the group on Wednesday, said he looked "forward to working alongside (creative director) Daniel Lee and the talented teams to drive global growth, delight our customers, and write the next chapter of the Burberry story". In a separate statement, Murphy said the group's recent "performance is disappointing". Revenue slid 22 percent to £458 million (\$595 million) in Burberry's first quarter, or three months to the end of June.

The 168-year-old label - famous for its trench coats and trademark red, camel and black check design - announced plans to cut costs, which involve suspending dividend payments. Murphy

warned that the group risked an operating loss in its first half.

Shares slump

Burberry's share price slumped 14.5 percent to £7.57 following the announcements, making it by far the largest faller on London's top-tier FTSE 100 index, which was flat overall in morning trade. "Burberry grabbed the headlines in company news, bringing forward its first quarter update amid some developments which came as a shock," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor. "The level of the group's appeal



Branding for a fashion retailer Burberry is pictured outside a store in west London on May 15, 2022. — AFP

has been thwarted by weakening consumer demand, especially in the likes of China." Burberry's share price is down 46 percent since the start of the year.

Highlighting troubles across the luxury fashion sector, Gucci owner Kering in April issued a profit warning, citing a weak Chinese economy. China on Monday posted lower-than-expected growth of 4.7 percent in the second quarter. That represented the slowest rate of expansion since early 2023, when China was emerging from a crippling zero-Covid policy that strangled growth. — AFP

Blind Spanish actors take on Chekhov's 'The Seagull'

With no scenery, few props and a handful of raised floor markers, a troupe of blind and partially-sighted Spanish actors are offering a new take on Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull". Produced by Peruvian director Chela de Ferrari, who has a history of working with people with disabilities, the play debuts on Monday at the prestigious theatre festival in the southern French city of Avignon. "Chekhov's characters tend to be looking for some kind of lost paradise... with ambitions which are greater than their own abilities," De Ferrari told AFP. "I thought these characters could connect very well with a group of blind actors."

Well-versed in inclusive theatre after staging Shakespeare's "Hamlet" with Down syndrome actors, she soon turned her attention to another major work, this time by Russian playwright and short story master Chekhov. She is working with a dozen actors from Spain's Centro Dramatico National theatre company, only two of whom are sighted. The rest are blind or partially-sighted, with no more than 10 percent vision.

But on the stage, there are no mobility canes, nor dark glasses - except for one scene on a beach. De Ferrari likes to play with prejudices. What cannot be seen with the eye is bridged by stage manager Macarena Sanz, an actor whose role is to "make the invisible visible". Wearing a headset and with a

notebook in hand, she describes the unseen set and the stage furniture to the spectators, while in turn describing them to the cast. Playing the character Nina is Belen Gonzalez, a 25-year-old amateur actor who was born blind and moves with a particular grace and ease, sometimes seeking out the shoulder of her seeing partner Angés Ruiz, who plays Boris.

"I see Belen and feel absolutely fascinated because a sighted actor could never do it like that," says De Ferrari, who refuses to tiptoe around their abilities. "I've told them not to hide... If they need to feel around, or if they trip, there's no problem. Some thought it was going to be a performance in which they would be pretending to act as if sighted, but it's not."

A plot twist

Their visual impairments even add a plot twist as can be seen in a scene between Nina and Boris on a dance floor in the middle of a crowd of unseeing actors. Gonzalez said that given her upbringing, it was easy for her to infuse the character of Nina with a sense of both "vulnerability and a fighting spirit".

"Since I was small, they always told me: 'Being blind, everything is more difficult'," she told AFP, saying portraying Nina as blind accentuates her character. "Chela loves the way I move.. she tells me: 'When you're searching for

something that you can't find and you have to keep looking for it, that frustration works well for your character." With only 38 days of rehearsals, they work meticulously on set design and several scenes involving group choreography, one with Chekhov lines set to a heady techno beat in the style of Belgian superstar Stromae, and another exuberant karaoke number.

"Adapting the space on stage is essential," said Lola Robles, who plays Arkadina and can see "absolutely nothing" but is no stranger to the inclusive stage. As the play's "accessibility adviser", she has set up a system of tassels suspended behind the curtains to let the actors know which backstage area they are in.

On the stage itself, several thin strips of wood have been nailed to the floor to let the actors know where they are, their feet being their guide. "We who can't see find our way around by what we feel underfoot on stage," Robles said. "If I can't reach somewhere or I need to go, I will sigh and they will direct me by clicking their fingers," she added. The important thing for her is to avoid emphasizing any sense of disability, "so I can go onto the stage alone without someone grabbing my arm and taking me on stage," she noted. — AFP



View of temples in Bagan in Myanmar's central Mandalay Region.



People visiting That Bin Nyu temple in Bagan.



Myanmar temple city pines for tourists as conflict rages

This photo shows a temple in Bagan.

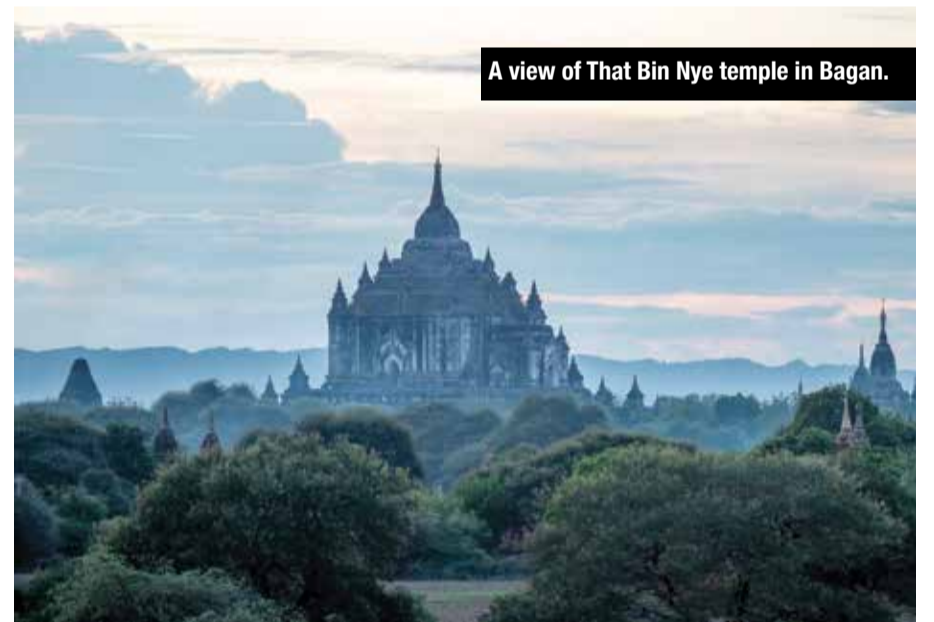


People visiting Bupaya Pagoda in Bagan.

The domes and spires of Myanmar's temple city of Bagan mark an island of calm in the country's raging civil war, but with conflict keeping tourists away locals are struggling to make ends meet. The UNESCO world heritage site on the banks of the Ayeyarwady River became a travel showpiece after decades of military rule were relaxed in 2011. Myanmar became popular with travelers seeking a destination away from the well-trodden backpacker haunts of Southeast Asia.

But the tourism industry was battered by the coronavirus pandemic and then in February 2021 the military seized power again, unleashing conflict across swathes of the country. In the year following the coup around 200,000 international visitors came to Myanmar, according to figures from the junta's tourism ministry. Five years earlier the figure was 3.4 million. Hundreds of centuries-old Buddhist pagodas rise from the dusty earth around Bagan, once the capital of a regional empire.

The 50-square-kilometre (12,355-acre) site is also strewn with stupas, temples, murals and sculptures, some of which date back to the 11th to 13th centuries. But many hotels and restaurants are shuttered, and guides and



A view of That Bin Nye temple in Bagan.

vendors are out of work. On a hill usually thronged with tourists watching the evening shadows lengthen over the old city, there were as many souvenir vendors as visitors. "I think people don't want to spend much money and they rarely travel and buy from us," one seller said. "On some days we don't see even a single person."

On the far bank of the Ayeyarwady River the atmosphere is far more wor-

rying, locals told AFP. The area has seen sporadic clashes between the military and pro-democracy "People's Defense Forces", with Bagan residents saying they often hear the sounds of gunfire from across the river. All spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons.



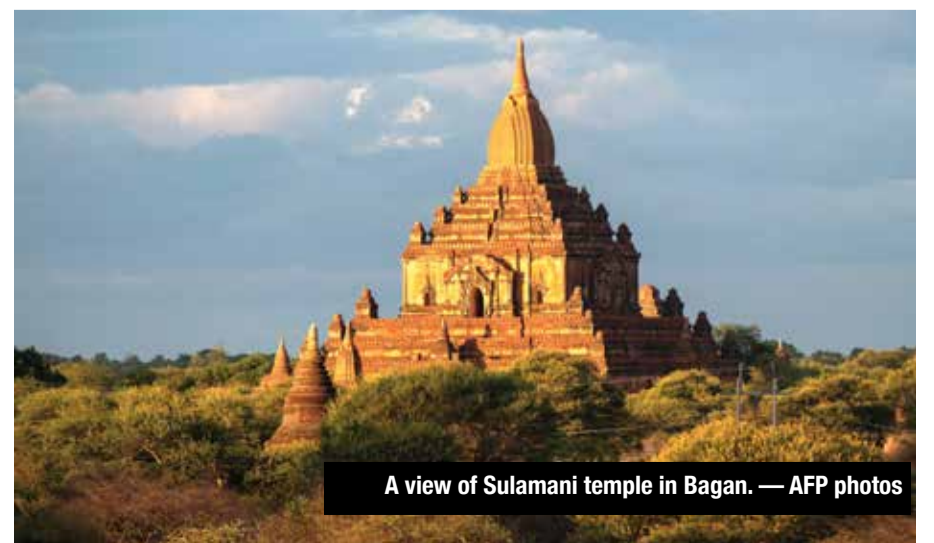
A herd of cattle walking past Sulamani temple in Bagan.



A man riding a horse cart in Bagan.



A woman walking with a herd of cattle in Bagan in Myanmar's central Mandalay Region.



A view of Sulamani temple in Bagan. — AFP photos

Lifestyle



A woman posing for photos at a gift shop in Bagan.



Buddhist novice nuns visiting Sulamani temple in Bagan.



A man riding past a temple in Bagan.



View of the Dhammayangyi temple in Bagan.

'Tarnished'
As sanctions bite and the local kyat currency plunges against the dollar, the isolated junta says it wants more international tourists to bring their money to Myanmar. According to an official at the junta's ministry of hotels and tourism, foreign tourist arrivals in 2023 reached over one million, up from around 200,000 the previous year. Neighboring Thailand saw about 28 million people visit in the same year. Most arrivals to Myanmar in 2023 were from China and Thailand, according to state media. But in September of that year, the junta lashed out at a blockbuster Chinese film about human trafficking and scam compounds that had "tarnished" Myanmar's reputation. "No More Bets" tells the story of a computer programmer who is trafficked to an unnamed Southeast Asian country and forced to work as an online scammer for a syndicate.

It does not mention Myanmar by name but its setting resembles the country's lawless northern reaches, where China says its citizens are reg-

ularly lured or trafficked and forced to work scamming their compatriots. The junta also wants travelers from major ally Russia and has said it is working to allow payments using Mir, Russia's domestic card payments system.

'People are suffering'
During three days in Bagan AFP reporters did not see a single foreign tourist. One restaurant owner in the city said he was only able to keep half of his staff because of the difficulties. "At least our shop is still running. Many other shops have been closed as they cannot afford rents and staff salaries," he said. "There have been almost no visitors." "We are not doing okay but at least we still have houses to live in and food to eat," added a flower seller at one of the pagodas. "I can feel how the people living in other areas are suffering. The only wish I have is that the country and our jobs may improve. That's the wish all the people want to come true." —AFP



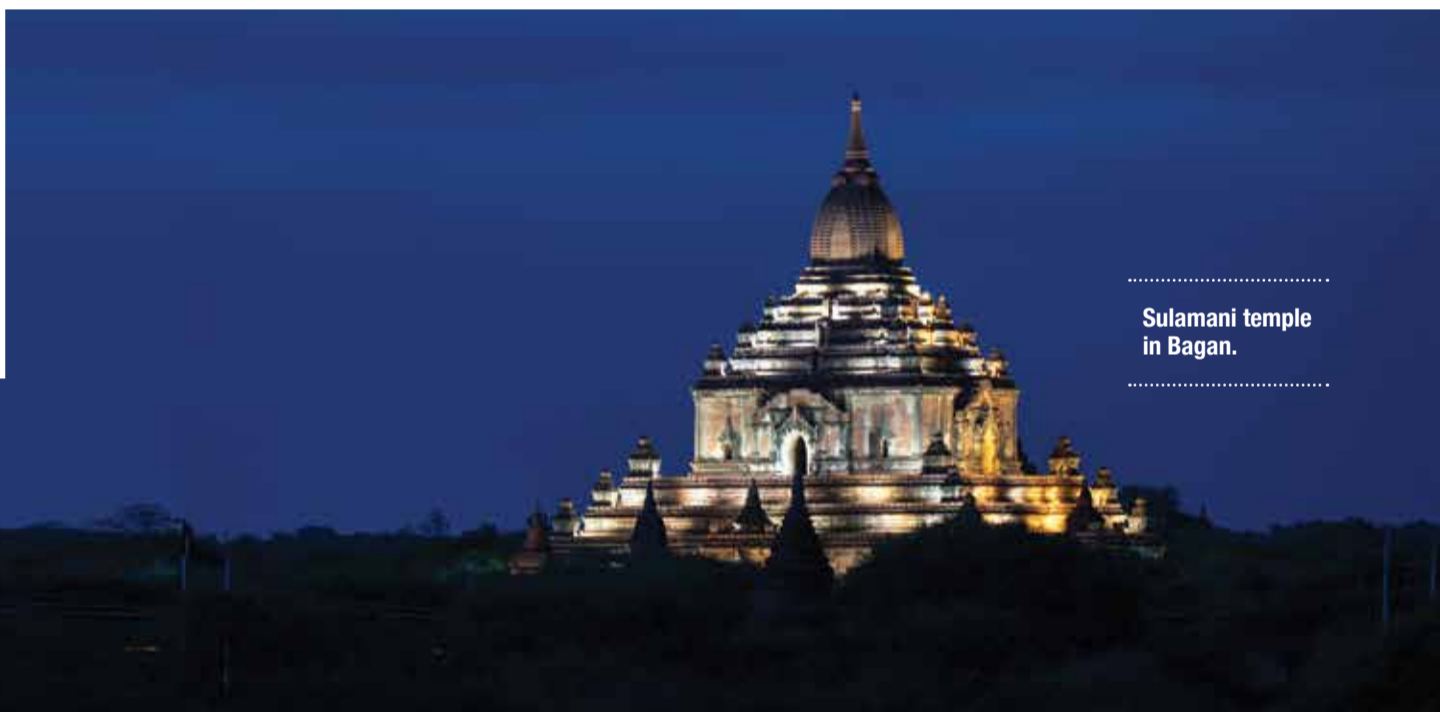
That Bin Nyu temple in Bagan.



The Myauk Gun temple in Bagan.



People visiting the Ananda Temple in Bagan.



Sulamani temple in Bagan.

K-pop stars Stray Kids prepare for comeback with upbeat London show

This is a career highlight," popular K-pop group Stray Kids said as they headlined the British Summer Time (BST) Hyde Park Festival on Sunday. The eight-man group from South Korea debuted in 2018 after being formed by JYP Entertainment through a reality show. They have won over fans around the world with their genre-mixing sound and hit songs such as "God's Menu", "S-Class" and "Maniac". Made up of members Changbin, Felix, Hyunjin, Lee Know, Han, Seungmin, Bang Chan and I.N, Stray Kids returned to London after nearly five years to make their UK festival debut. "It's a really big festival and it's a really big space. It'll be really interesting to see how much the energy we bring to it will change that," said Han shortly before the group took to the stage to perform a high-energy one-hour-40-minute-long set in front of a crowd of thousands.

Named by Time magazine as one of the Next Generation Leaders, Stray Kids placed third on recorded music industry body IFPI's top ten list of global recording artists last year. Their third Korean-language studio album "5-Star" was last year's second biggest-selling album globally, IFPI said. All eight

members also walked the famed MET Gala red carpet this May, wearing custom Tommy Hilfiger suits. Bang Chan said the group were grateful for their strong streaming numbers and successes but added that the onus was on bringing meaningful music to their fans, known as STAYS. "Lots of STAYS and a lot of people are giving us a lot of attention, so I don't think we should sit still and do nothing about it. That's why all the members are working hard in their parts," added Seungmin.

Part of that is the group's "comeback", their new EP, titled "ATE", which will be released on July 19. ATE represents the eight members who have "eaten up" their comeback, said Felix, adding that fans could expect new concepts and styles. "It really means a lot to us. It's been a while since our last album. With this album we really want to emphasize our eight members, how genuine we are with music and we've also put in a lot of styles of music for everyone out there to enjoy," said Bang Chan. "We're bringing out all we can at this time and that makes us confident," added Changbin. —AFP



(From left) Bang Chan, Han, Felix, Seungmin, Hyunjin, I.N, Lee Know and Changbin of Stray Kids attend The 2024 Met Gala Celebrating "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 06, 2024 in New York City. — AFP



(From left) US actor Dana Gaier, Chloe Fineman, Will Ferrell, Madison Polan, Kristen Wiig, Steve Carell, Miranda Cosgrove and Joey King arrive for the "Despicable Me 4" premiere at the Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center in New York City on June 9, 2024. — AFP photos

'Despicable Me 4' stays comfortably atop North American box office

Animated comedy "Despicable Me 4" held on to the top spot in the North American box office this weekend with an impressive \$44.7 million take, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations estimated Sunday. That brought total ticket sales for Universal Pictures' latest Minions-universe release to \$211.1 million in the United States and Canada since its release last weekend. Will Ferrell joins the voice cast this time as aptly named supervillain Maxime Le Mal. Overall, the Despicable Me/Minions franchise has crossed the \$5 billion mark in global ticket sales, the Hollywood Reporter said.

Meanwhile, "Longlegs" from indie studio Neon rode excellent reviews and a potent viral marketing campaign to an unexpectedly strong second-place opening. The horror mystery took in \$22.6 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period, a "phenomenal" opening for the genre and Neon's best-ever result, Variety said. Critics compared the marketing campaign for the film to the highly successful launch of 1999 cult hit "The Blair Witch Project." Neon crafted a 1990s-style website and offered fans a phone num-

ber to call to hear a creepy message from Nicolas Cage, who stars in the tale of an FBI agent tracking a serial killer.

Last weekend's number two film, Disney and Pixar's "Inside Out 2," slipped a spot, with ticket sales of \$20.7 million. The coming-of-age film has now taken in

\$572.6 million domestically and an additional \$777 million globally. In fourth, also down one spot, was Paramount's apocalyptic horror film "A Quiet Place: Day One," at \$11.8 million. This third installment in the series stars Lupita Nyong'o as a seriously ill woman in a New York invaded by extraterrestrial creatures with frighteningly keen hearing. And in fifth was new Sony rom-com "Fly Me to the Moon." Its \$10 million take was considered disappointing for a big-budget film starring the likes of Channing Tatum and Scarlett Johansson -- who play a NASA official and a marketing guru during the Apollo 11 mission -- but Apple TV+ expects a boost when it streams the film.



Landon Boyce attends as Universal Pictures and Illumination present a special "Despicable Me 4" screening at IMAX Headquarters on June 20, 2024 in Los Angeles, California.

Rounding out the top 10 were:
"Bad Boys: Ride or Die" (\$4.4 million)
"Horizon: An American Saga -- Chapter One" (\$2.4 million)
"MaXXXine" (\$2.1 million)
"Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot" (\$1.3 million)
"The Lion King," a 1994 reissue (\$1.1 million) — AFP

Sports

Novak Djokovic vows Wimbledon return despite clock ticking

Djokovic is due to return to the French capital for Olympic Games

LONDON: Novak Djokovic insists he will return to Wimbledon next year and attempt to clinch an eighth All England Club title despite a shattering straight-sets defeat to Carlos Alcaraz in Sunday's final. Djokovic saw his hopes of a record-setting 25th Grand Slam title ruthlessly brushed aside by the 21-year-old Spanish star who had also defeated the Serb in last year's championship match.

Even though the clock is ticking on Djokovic's career, he said he will keep playing into 2025, when he will turn 38. "As far as coming back here, I would love to. I don't have anything else in my thoughts right now that this is my last Wimbledon," he said after his 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) loss.

"I don't have any limitations in my mind. I still want to keep going and play as long as I feel like I can play on this high level." So far this season Djokovic has seen his Australian Open title pass to Jannik Sinner, the 22-year-old Italian who has also taken his world number one ranking.

Alcaraz succeeded him as French Open champion in Paris last month, where Djokovic was forced to withdraw before his quarter-final due to a knee injury which then required surgery. Djokovic is due to return to the French capital in under two weeks' time, when he will try to win an

elusive Olympic Games gold medal.

After that, he will attempt to defend his US Open title in New York. "I have intentions to play the Olympic Games, hopefully have a chance to fight for a medal for my country," he said. "On a completely different surface (clay) obviously, going back to the place where I got injured some weeks ago. Let's see how physically and mentally I'm going to feel." Despite the upbeat forecast on his future plans, Djokovic is enduring a sub-par year by his standards. He is without a title since winning the ATP Finals in November last year and has yet to defeat a top-10 opponent in 2024.

On Sunday, he was out-hit by Alcaraz, who clubbed 42 winners to 26 and created 14 break points, five of which he converted. "To beat these guys (Alcaraz and Sinner) in Grand Slam latter stages or the Olympics, I'm going to have to play much better than I did today and feel much better than I did today," admitted Djokovic.

"I'm going to work on it. It's not something I haven't experienced before ever in my life. I've had so many different experiences throughout my career. In the face of adversity, normally I rise and I learn and get stronger. That's what I'm going to do." — AFP



WIMBLEDON: Second-placed Serbia's Novak Djokovic lifts his price following his defeat against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz during their men's singles final tennis match. — AFP

MacIntyre wins Scottish Open in dramatic fashion

NORTH BERWICK: Robert MacIntyre staged a dramatic fightback as the local hero won the Scottish Open with a stroke of good fortune on Sunday. MacIntyre was denied the Scottish Open title by Rory McIlroy's stunning finale 12 months ago.

But the 27-year-old Scot produced a memorable revival of his own to take the trophy by one shot after trailing Australia's Adam Scott by two with three holes to play in the final round. MacIntyre made an eagle on the par-five 16th following a brilliant approach shot, albeit only after a free drop from knee-high rough after discovering a sprinkler head near his ball. That took MacIntyre alongside Scott on 17 under par and, to the delight of a raucous home crowd, he holed from 20 feet for birdie on the 18th to complete a remarkable triumph. MacIntyre is only the second Scot to win the Scottish Open after Colin Montgomerie in 1999.

His third European Tour victory—after wins at the 2020 Aphrodite Hills Cyprus Showdown and 2022 Italian Open—was the perfect way to warm up for the British Open, which gets underway at Royal Troon on Thursday. "I think I lost my voice after the scream on that hole. I thought I was short," MacIntyre said. "I've put a lot of work into this. I've changed a lot within the team and I've just worked hard. I wanted the Scottish Open.

"I'm going to celebrate this one hard. We'll pitch up to the Open when we pitch up to the Open." Scott had set the target after a closing 67, but the 43-year-old fell just short in his bid to win a first title since 2020. Magnanimous in defeat, Scott said: "I'm pleased for Bob. This is a big win. I played with him



Robert MacIntyre

yesterday, and you can hear them singing over there. "A shame to come up short but Bob did what he had to do to win. Eagle, par, birdie, that's great stuff. "I think that's awesome for him. Hopefully I can take some good form into next week."

'You need a bit of luck'

MacIntyre began the day two shots behind European Ryder Cup team-mate Ludvig Aberg and his challenge looked to have fizzled out as he covered his first 13 holes in one over par. A long birdie putt across the 14th green saw MacIntyre close the gap to Scott to a single shot before the Australian doubled his lead thanks to a birdie on the 16th.

The former world number one looked a certain winner at this point, especially with MacIntyre driving into heavy rough on the par-five 16th. But after

gle week, so I'm glad that I might not have to now. Super happy." Hall, NeSmith and Coody had all parred the second playoff hole, the par-four 18th, to extend the playoff that had started at 18 -- where Zac Blair and Rico Hoey were eliminated with bogeys. All five had finished 72 holes at Keene Trace Golf Club at 22-under 266.

Hall had grabbed the solo lead at 23-under with his fourth birdie of the day at the 14th—the toughest hole on the course. But he bogeyed the par-five 15th—the easiest hole on the course, and closed with a three-under par 69.

Hoey took the lead at 23-under after his fourth birdie of the day at the 15th but he closed with a bogey at 18 -- where his second shot flew the green and found the rocky edge of the water hazard. "Four rounds in the 60s is all I can ask for and I thought I played great," said Hoey, who settled for a 69 and a chance in the playoff.

"It kind of sucks on 18, but I hit a great shot, hit a great tee ball and hit a great second shot. Adrenaline's pumping, I've never really been in that situation where it like comes down to it." Coody, who

taking a practice swing MacIntyre discovered a sprinkler near his ball.

He was therefore allowed a free drop and took full advantage, hitting a stunning approach from 247 yards to six feet and calmly rolling in the eagle putt before sealing the win with a birdie on the last. "I got a bit of luck on 16 that you need a bit of luck to win golf tournaments," MacIntyre said.

"I couldn't believe when I heard a sprinkler under my foot where my spike is at and I'm like no way. It was covered and I thought, I got lucky, it was meant to be." McIlroy finished in a six-way tie for fourth on 14 under following a closing 68, with Aberg also on the same score after a disappointing 73. England's Richard Mansell equalled the course record with a superb 61, matching the mark set by Ben An last year. — AFP

carded a superb 61 on Thursday and had led after each of the first three rounds, holed out for eagle at the 11th but found himself chasing the lead after a bogey at the 12th.

He drilled a 12-foot birdie putt at the 72nd hole to get into the playoff with a final-round 70. NeSmith and Blair had set the 22-under target early, both carding eight-under par 64s. It was a couple of hours before it became clear that no one in the final groups was going to get past them.

Blair said he was "halfway to Cincinnati" when he realized from the tournament coverage he could be in a playoff and turned around for a 40-minute drive back to the course. NeSmith had an eight-foot putt to win at the first playoff hole but it slid by on the right. He had the best birdie look at the second playoff hole but knocked his 12-foot birdie attempt two feet past.

"I had two great opportunities on 18, that's all I can do," said NeSmith, who like all five players in the playoff was chasing a first PGA Tour title. "I can't be mad, I wouldn't have changed anything I did the entire way." — AFP



PLATEAU DE BEILLE: UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar cycles to the finish line to win the 15th stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 197.7 km between Loudenvielle and Plateau de Beille. — AFP

Pogacar pulverizes opposition at Tour de France

PLATEAU DE BEILLE: Tadej Pogacar extended his overall lead at the Tour de France to more than three minutes on Sunday with a convincing second-straight stage win in the Pyrenees.

The Slovenian dropped the last of his rivals with five kilometres to go after five more Pyrenean peaks. A valiant Jonas Vingegaard could only finish 1 minute and 8 seconds adrift in second, with Remco Evenepoel in third at 2min 51sec on the day.

As Pogacar crossed the line at the magnificent Plateau de Beille deep in the Pyrenees, resplendent in his yellow outfit, he had racked up a second straight iconic mountaintop triumph and a 14th Tour de France stage win aged just 25.

The overall leader expressed surprise at Vingegaard and his team. "Jonas did most of the work," Pogacar said after Visma hogged the front of the peloton most of the day. "With today being the 14th of July you might have expected a French win, but Visma went at it very strong."

"I wasn't sure myself I'd be able to keep up the pace, but this year I've adopted a different approach and it seems to be working," said Pogacar, munching on a candy bar. The Team UAE leader's audacious bid for a Tour de France and Giro d'Italia double in the same season seemed closer after a third stage win on this year's Tour lifted him comfortably clear.

The last man to win such a double was Marco Pantani in 1998. On his way to his French triumph, the Italian also won a stage ended on the Plateau de Beille. Pogacar on Sunday ascended the mountain over four minutes faster than Pantani.

"That's a very good sign," Pogacar's team director Mauro Gianetti said. There are two murderous mountain slogs to go in the Alps, where the weather will likely be much hotter, which Pogacar dislikes.

The final-day lottery is a fearsome 34km individual time trial on the corniche between Monaco and Nice. For now, the sun shines on the Slovenian as he leads the two-time defending champion Vingegaard by 3 minutes 9 seconds with the young Belgian Remco Evenepoel on his first Tour de France third at 5min 19sec. Evenepoel also looked happy with his day's work after he arrived for his debut Tour de France stating he was targeting the best young rider's jersey, which he looks good for now. "I felt it was a mistake to try and follow them when they went. It was a race between them two," he said. "I kept going at my steady rhythm, it was a good weekend for us."

'A big smile'

Evenepoel is third overall, five minutes clear of Mikel Landa, and leads the young rider category by six minutes from Carlos Rodriguez. Vingegaard and Evenepoel were both involved in a bone-breaking crash in March, and it remains to be seen how their stamina stands up in the third week. After Monday's rest day the race rushes back to the Alps, where tradition holds that the Tour is won.

Pogacar agreed with that Sunday. "Only when I cross the finish line will I believe I have won," said the 2020 and 2021 champion. The weekend crowds were well-behaved Sunday. A roadside spectator who threw crisps in the faces of Pogacar and Vingegaard on Saturday was charged with violent behaviour Sunday morning, after spending a night in the cells to sober up. —AFP

Hall wins playoff with birdie for first US PGA title

WASHINGTON: England's Harry Hall chipped in for birdie at the third hole of a five-man sudden-death playoff to win his first US PGA Tour title on Sunday at the ISCO Championship in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Hall, Pierceson Coody and Matt NeSmith had all missed the green at the par-three ninth, the third hole of the playoff, but Hall popped his chip over the fringe and it rolled into the heart of the cup.

"It's massive," said Hall, who said the infusion of 300 FedEx Cup playoff points might give him a chance to take a week off with his wife, Jordan, expecting their first baby next week. "I can probably afford to take the week off now," he said. "I think it was a bit dicey there, just my position in the FedEx Cup and I probably needed to play every sin-

Aussie Will Power wins crash-marred IndyCar race in Iowa

LOS ANGELES: Australia's Will Power won the second race of IndyCar's Iowa Speedway double-header on Sunday, taking the checkered flag as a frightening last-lap crash sent backmarker Sting Ray Robb airborne.

Power held off series points leader Alex Palou by 0.3915 seconds to give Team Penske a second victory in as many days. Teammate Scott McLaughlin, who won the opener on Saturday night, finished third.

"I've been trying to win this race for years—years," said Power, who had started from pole seven times in 18 prior appearances but managed just five podium finishes. That included four runner-up finishes, most recently last year.

Power also notched his first oval-track win in almost five years, taking his tally to 10. He admitted the lack of oval victories was starting to weigh on him. "I thought coming into this season, I'm going to win an oval this year," he told broadcaster NBC. "I want

to win an oval and I want to win multiple races and we're still pushing and getting it done."

The 43-year-old, who won IndyCar crowns in 2014 and 2022, climbed from the 22nd starting spot and got the jump on Palou in the final pit stop exchange under green flag racing conditions. With his second victory of the season, Power cuts Palou's lead in the standings to 35 points with six races remaining.

Power's celebrations were just beginning when drama unfolded at the rear of the field. Robb ran up the back wheel of a slowing Alexander Rossi and went airborne, the car flipping and coming to rest upside down.

The crash collected Ed Carpenter and Kyle Kirkwood, Carpenter's car coming to rest partly on top of Kirkwood's. Carpenter, Kirkwood and Rossi all exited their vehicles with the help of safety workers and walked away.

Safety personnel righted Robb's car and he was taken on a stretcher to the on-site medical center, giving a thumbs-up on the way. IndyCar director of medical services Julia Vaizer said Robb was in good shape but would be sent to hospital for further tests.

"Sting Ray's doing well," she told NBC. "He's awake, he's alert, he's in good condition. We're going to send him to the hospital for precautionary measures." — AFP



Will Power

Thomas Mueller ends Germany career following Euro 2024

'It always made me very proud to play for my country'

BERLIN: Germany striker Thomas Mueller said Monday he was drawing a line under his 14-year career with the national team following the conclusion of Euro 2024. "After 131 national team games and 45 goals, I am saying goodbye," Mueller said in a video statement announcing his decision.

Mueller, who turns 35 in September, was a key member of the German team that won the 2014 World Cup, beating Argentina in the final after extra time. "When I played my first international match for the German national team over 14 years ago, I could never have dreamed of all this," Mueller said in the video.

"Great victories and bitter defeats. Sometimes on the floor, only to get back up again," he said. "It always made me very proud to play for my country. We celebrated together and sometimes shed a tear together." Germany's 2-1 loss to Spain in the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 will go down as Mueller's last game for the national team. A late extra-time goal by Spain's Mikel Merino dashed Germany's hopes of winning the tournament on home soil. A tearful Mueller hinted after the game that he had played his last game for Germany. Mueller said he would hold talks with national team coach Julian Nagelsmann and decide whether it was the "sensible option" to step aside in favor of younger players.

'Unorthodox... unpredictable'

Following Mueller's announcement, Nagelsmann lauded his qualities as a player, adding that the German team would "miss him very much". "Nobody is like Thomas Mueller," said Rudi Voeller, the Germany national team director and a prolific striker in his own right. "His value to German football cannot be overestimated," Voeller said in a statement. Mueller was "unorthodox, intuitive, unpredictable and that is precisely why (he) is successful", Voeller said. Mueller won the Golden Boot at the 2010 World Cup in his debut year with the national team, scoring five goals at the tournament in South Africa. The charismatic striker also



STUTTGART: (FILES) Germany's forward #13 Thomas Mueller greets the fans after the UEFA Euro 2024 quarter-final football match between Spain and Germany at the Stuttgart Arena in Stuttgart on July 5, 2024. — AFP

scored the opening goal in Germany's famous 7-1 victory over the hosts Brazil in the 2014 World Cup on their way to lifting the title. Of the players to have won the World Cup with Germany that year, only goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is still involved in the national team set-up. Germany and Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos announced before Euro 2024 that he would retire from football after the tournament. Unlike Kroos, Mueller will continue to play for his club Bayern Munich, where he is under contract until 2025.

Goal machine

"The younger generation doesn't know the national team without Thomas Mueller and I can't really imagine it without him," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said in a statement. "I'm delighted that Thomas will continue to play for our club." With 131 appearances under Mueller's belt, only Lothar Matthaus and Miroslav Klose have played more games for Germany. Mueller also ranks sixth on Germany's all-time scoring list behind Klose and Voeller, among others, and level with

Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "His achievements and his titles speak for themselves," German football association president Bernd Neundorff said in a statement. "With his goals and his ingenuity, he played a key role in shaping one of the most successful periods in the history of our national team," Neundorff said. In his goodbye message, Mueller called on fans to "keep your fingers crossed for the team on the way to the 2026 World Cup". "I'm doing that too. Now as a fan in the stands and no longer as a player on the pitch." — AFP

Kane's trophy wait goes on after more Euros heartbreak

BERLIN: Harry Kane's tears at the end of Sunday's 2-1 defeat to Spain in the Euro 2024 final told the story of another tale of major tournament torment for England and their captain, whose wait to win a trophy goes on. The Bayern Munich striker had to watch on in anguish after being hauled off as Mikel Oyarzabal landed the decisive blow four minutes from time.

Kane had just 13 touches in his hour on the field and in keeping with his tournament was unable to make any telling impact. "It's hard to put into words how we're all feeling right now," he said. "These finals aren't easy to get to. You have to take it when it comes and we haven't done it again. It's extremely painful and it'll hurt for a long time." Kane still walked away with a share of the Golden Boot thanks to his three goals, but that will do little to dull the pain of losing a second European Championship final in three years. He will turn 31 before he plays again and admitted on the eve of the game that with every passing year he is more acutely aware of the need to break his trophy drought.

Defeat rounded off a frustrating tournament for England's all-time record goalscorer. He was a lightning rod for the barrage of criticism that came England's way earlier in the competition as they stuttered and stumbled their way towards Berlin, thanks to isolated moments of individual brilliance and a kind draw.

Kane has been the focal point for all of England's rise from perennial underachievers to persistent contenders under Gareth Southgate. Named captain just before their first major tournament together at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Kane picked up the Golden Boot as his six goals helped fire his nation to the semi-finals for the first time in 28 years.

Kane scored four times in the knockout stages as England then reached the final of Euro 2020 on home soil three years ago, only to fall short on penalties to Italy. So often a trusted marksman from the penalty spot, it was his wayward spot-kick in the closing stages that condemned England to defeat in the quarter-finals of the 2022 World Cup to France. Just over six months later, he made the decision to leave boyhood club Tottenham behind to chase trophies at Bayern Munich. Kane smashed in 44 goals in 45 games but could not prevent a first trophyless season for the German giants since 2012 as Bayer Leverkusen stormed to an unbeaten league and cup domestic double. — AFP



BERLIN: England's forward #09 Harry Kane shakes hands with Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales after the UEFA Euro 2024 final football match between Spain and England at the Olympiastadion in Berlin on July 14, 2024. — AFP



KUWAIT: Acting Director General of Public Authority for Sport Bashar Abdullah with representatives of Kuwaiti clubs. — KUNA

PAS implements Amir's directives

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Bashar Abdullah expressed on Monday the authority's keenness to implement the high directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to support young athletes locally and abroad.

Abdullah said in a press statement that the support of His Highness the Amir for the winners of first

places in His Highness' Cup is an incentive for all players to achieve more victories.

He handed over the Amiri grant for the Amir Cup Championship to the representatives of Qadsia (title holder), Salmiya (runner-up), Al-Arabi and Al-Tadamon (third place) clubs for the sports season (2023-2024) in the presence of the Secretary-General of Kuwait Football Association Salah Al-Qanaei. He also extended his highest thanks and gratitude to His Highness the Amir for his support, noting the support of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah for all athletes. — KUNA

Former Ravens star receiver Jones dies at 40

WASHINGTON: Jacoby Jones, a star wide receiver for the Baltimore Ravens known for the "Mile High Miracle" catch and his ebullient personality, has died at the age of 40, the Ravens said Sunday. The cause of Jones's death was not immediately available.

The NFL Players Association released a statement on Sunday afternoon on behalf of Jones' family confirming he "passed away peacefully at his home in New Orleans, Louisiana." "We are completely heartbroken to learn about the passing of Jacoby Jones," the Ravens said in a statement.

"Jacoby had the unique ability to connect with everyone he encountered. His charisma, joy and love created a one-of-a-kind presence that could light up any room or brighten any dark day." Jones played nine NFL seasons for four different teams, but he'll be best remembered for his contributions to the Ravens' run to the Super Bowl after the 2012 campaign.

His 70-yard touchdown catch from quarterback Joe Flacco with 31 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter against the Denver Broncos - the "Mile High Miracle" - was a season-saving play for Baltimore. The Ravens went on to win the game in double-overtime to advance, eventually booking a Super Bowl showdown with the San Francisco 49ers.

In the championship game, scored two touchdowns, diving to catch a long pass late in the second quarter and bouncing up to score. He



Jacoby Jones

opened the second half with a 108-yard kickoff return touchdown - the longest play in Super Bowl history.

"I loved Jacoby Jones," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said in a statement. "We all did. His spirit, enthusiasm and love for people were powerful. He was a light." Jones started his NFL career with the Houston Texans as a third-round pick in 2007.

He arrived in Baltimore as a free agent in 2012 and spent three seasons with the Ravens. He played for Pittsburgh and the San Diego Chargers during his final NFL season in 2015. Several former teammates, includ-

ing Ray Lewis, Torrey Smith and J.J. Watt, remembered Jones with posts to social media.

"Jacoby was one of the most fun-loving teammates and people I've ever been around," Watt, a teammate in Houston, said on X, formerly Twitter. "Always dancing and laughing, with a permanent smile on his face. Gone far, far too soon." Former Ravens teammate Smith called Jones "1 of 1!" in his X tribute. "Your play on the field and jokes will live on forever!" Smith wrote while iconic Ravens linebacker Lewis wrote: "My brother, you will truly be missed." — AFP

Fraser-McGurk gets nod for Australia-UK tour

SYDNEY: Young batsman Jake Fraser-McGurk was selected Monday for Australia's white-ball tour of the UK in place of the retired David Warner, as selectors gave pace spearhead Pat Cummins a "pre-planned" rest. Mitchell Marsh will be captain for the September trip which will start with three Twenty20 internationals against Scotland before three Twenty20 and five one-day internationals against England. Former captain Steve Smith, who was overlooked for the T20 World Cup earlier this year, will play only in the 50-over format.

Test skipper Cummins "will miss the entirety of the UK tour in line with a pre-planned, long-term load management strategy", Cricket Australia said in naming the squads. Destructive opening batsman Fraser-McGurk, 22, made his one-day international debut earlier this year and had been a travelling reserve at the Twenty20 World Cup but now gets his chance after veteran Warner stepped away at the end of the tournament.

Explosive all-rounder Cooper Connolly, 20, is also in line to make his T20 debut but veteran wicketkeeper Matthew Wade was left out. "This tour gives us a great opportunity to bring in some new players," said chair of selectors George Bailey.

"We are particularly pleased to offer Cooper his first opportunity in the T20 squad having introduced the likes of Jake (Fraser McGurk), Spencer (Johnson), Xavier (Bartlett) and Aaron (Hardie) in the past 12 months. "They are exciting prospects to join the likes of Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis and Josh Inglis in the white ball set-up." — AFP

Spain beat England to win Euro 2024 final with Oyarzabal goal

Spain confirm their re-emergence as a force on the international stage



BERLIN: Spain's forward #07 Alvaro Morata holds the trophy and celebrates with teammates after winning the UEFA Euro 2024 final football match between Spain and England at the Olympia stadium in Berlin on July 14, 2024. — AFP

BERLIN: Substitute Mikel Oyarzabal scored a dramatic late winner as Spain triumphed in Sunday's Euro 2024 final, beating England 2-1 to confirm their re-emergence as a force on the international stage. England had been dreaming of winning a first title in almost six decades and it looked as if it could be their night as Spain lost influential midfielder Rodri to injury at half-time.

Yet Spain shrugged that off to take the lead within two minutes of the restart through Nico Williams, who was set up by his fellow star winger, Lamine Yamal. England came from behind as they have done so often at this Euros, substitute Cole Palmer driving in the equalizer on 73 minutes, moments after entering the fray.

But their resurgence in the game was cut short when Oyarzabal, the Real Sociedad forward, turned in a cross in the 86th minute to hand Spain a record fourth European Championship crown,

and a third in the last five editions.

"It has been a marvellous day in which a team has been deservedly crowned champions of Europe," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente told broadcaster TVE.

They previously won in 1964, 2008 and 2012, the last two titles coming either side of their triumph at the 2010 World Cup during the golden era of Xavi Hernandez, Xabi Alonso and Andres Iniesta. Whether this generation, led by the brilliant Yamal playing here a day after his 17th birthday, manage to repeat the achievements of that magnificent side remains to be seen, but theirs was a fitting victory.

Spain have been comfortably the best team over the last month in Germany and were not intimidated by the atmosphere at the Olympiastadion, where the majority of the crowd were given over to England's cause.

England had hoped to finally claim a

first men's international title since their fabled victory at the 1966 World Cup, but fell just short in their first ever final on foreign soil. "To lose the final is incredibly tough," said their manager, Gareth Southgate. "Congratulations to Spain, they were the best team in the tournament and the best team tonight."

After the agony of their defeat on penalties to Italy three years ago, England are the first side ever to lose back-to-back Euros finals. Captain Harry Kane, meanwhile, is left at the age of 30 still looking for the first trophy of a career so rich in goals.

Spain overcome Rodri injury

It was always likely that Spain would control this game, and England spent most of the first half chasing the ball. Despite Spain's domination, it took until first-half stoppage time for either team to manage a shot on target, with

Phil Foden's effort from a Declan Rice free-kick being saved by goalkeeper Unai Simon. But it was just before that chance that Rodri hurt himself, sliding into teammate Aymeric Laporte as he blocked a Kane shot. Spain's outstanding holding midfielder was unable to continue, and made way for Martin Zubimendi at the restart.

It felt like the loss of such a presence in the middle could completely throw Spain off course, and yet they wasted no time in opening the scoring.

England were braced for the danger to come from Spain's two wingers, and it was they who combined for the goal, as Yamal collected Dani Carvajal's pass and darted inside.

He released Williams, who scored with a controlled, low shot into the far corner. England would now need to come from behind, but that was what they had done in their three previous knockout games.

Southgate took off his talisman Kane on the hour mark and sent on Ollie Watkins, a repeat of the substitution that won the semi-final against the Netherlands.

Spain had chances to increase their lead and their fans began to greet every pass with an 'ole', as Southgate decided to send on Palmer for Kobbie Mainoo. Within three minutes of that England were level when Bukayo Saka's ball from the right was laid off by Jude Bellingham for Palmer, who found the net with a low first-time effort into the corner.

However, Spain grabbed the winner with four minutes to go thanks to their own super-sub.

Oyarzabal played the ball to Marc Cucurella on the left before racing into the middle to turn his teammate's cross into the net, staying just inside in the process. Spain then held on, although only after a vital clearance off the line from Dani Olmo to deny Marc Guehi. — AFP



AMMAN: Kuwait's and China's players in action. — KUNA

Kuwait defeats China in Asian handball tourney

AMMAN: Kuwait defeated China (28-24), Sunday, in its first match in the 18th Asian Youth Handball Championship, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman. In remarks to KUNA, Head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Qaid Al-Adwani, praised the players' efforts and technical level.

He stated that the Kuwaiti team is playing in a difficult group in this tournament that includes Iran and China. After the game, the President of the Jordanian Handball Federation, Tayseer Al-Mansi, announced Kuwait's Abdulaziz Al-Najjar as man of the match.

The championship will serve as a qualifying event for the 25th IHF Men's Junior (U21) Handball World Championship in Poland in 2025. — KUNA

Argentina defeat Colombia to win record 16th Copa

MIAMI: Lautaro Martinez scored an extra-time winner as Argentina beat Colombia 1-0 to win a record 16th Copa America title at Hard Rock Stadium on Sunday.

A poor game which had been marred by security and crowd issues, forcing a 82-minute delay, was decided by a quality finish from Martinez - his fifth goal of the tournament. The win was the third straight major tournament title for Argentine following their 2021 Copa victory and their triumph in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

There were tears before the celebrations though with Argentina captain Lionel Messi going off injured in the 66th minute watching the rest of the game distraught on the bench, while there was an emotional farewell for Angel Di Maria in his final game for the national team.

For Colombia, whose only title came in the 2001 Copa America, it was a disappointing night when little seemed to work for Nestor Lorenzo's team. There was chaos around entry to the stadium for fans, with organizers blaming supporters for trying to enter without tickets while fans blamed the lack of an efficient entry system to the venue.

The scenes were alarming with some fans needing medical attention for heat exhaustion but after the decision to suddenly throw open the gates, with no checks on those entering, the situation was largely resolved and the game finally went ahead.

Colombia's Jhon Corboba hit the bottom of the post with a speculative shot in the seventh minute but neither side were able to find their flow in the early stages. Di Maria found Messi in the 20th minute with a low ball into the box and Messi's left-foot shot was saved by Colombia keeper Camilo Vargas.

Colombia had looked the more lively in the opening period and they went close in the 33rd minute when Jefferson Lerma tried his luck from 25 yards out and his low drive forced Emiliano Martinez into a diving save.



MIAMI: Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi lifts up the trophy as he celebrates winning the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament final football match between Argentina and Colombia at the Hard Rock Stadium, in Miami, Florida on July 14, 2024. — AFP

There was concern for Messi in the 36th minute when he dribbled to the byline but was halted by a sliding challenge from Santiago Arias which was ruled fair left the Argentine captain needing treatment.

Messi, who now plays his club football in Miami, then curled a free-kick in from the left flank but Nicolas Tagliafico's header was just off target. It had been a disappointing first half and it didn't improve much after the break, when the fans had at least received some entertainment from Colombian singer Shakira.

Argentina failed to deal with a James Rodriguez corner and the ball looped to Davinson Sanchez but he was unable to keep down his header which floated over the bar. There was finally some of the expected quality when Di Maria produced one of his trademark runs in from the left and forced Vargas into action, the Colombia keeper turning the ball wide of the post.

Then came a major blow for Argentine hopes

when Messi went down, without contact, as he ran in midfield, and clearly in pain he went off to be replaced by Nicolas Gonzalez in the 66th minute. It was too much for Messi, in what may have been his last major tournament, as he sat in tears on the bench, unable to hold back his emotions.

The Argentine fans thought they had grabbed a winner in the 75th minute when Tagliafico found Gonzalez in the box, who beat Vargas with a low drive but the effort was ruled out for offside. Little changed in extra-time with a half-chance from Miguel Borja after a flick from Jorge Carrascal but the game was settled by a worthy winner.

Leandro Paredes won the ball in midfield for Argentina with a perfectly timed tackle, found Giovanni Lo Celso whose first time pass was perfect for the on-running Martinez who confidently fired home the winner. — AFP