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3 Governors affirm coordination necessary to face challenges



5 Zionists wage 'war of revenge' against Palestinian prisoners



10 IMF maintains 2024 growth forecast, warns of inflation



16 Mbappe dream comes true at Real Madrid unveiling



6 killed in Oman mosque attack

Four Pakistanis, one Indian among dead • 3 gunmen, policeman killed

Amir appoints new deputy army chief



KUWAIT: An Amiri order was issued on Tuesday appointing Air Vice Marshal Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army. HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah later received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace and was introduced to Vice Marshal Sheikh Sabah on his appointment to his new position. — KUNA

MUSCAT: Nine people were killed, including three attackers, and around 30 wounded in a shooting near a Shiite mosque in the Omani capital Muscat, officials said Tuesday, a rare attack in the otherwise stable Gulf sultanate. Monday's mosque attack, which has yet to be claimed, came as Shiites mark Ashura. Four Pakistanis, an Indian and a police officer were killed in the attack.

"The Royal Oman Police have responded to a shooting incident that occurred in the vicinity of a mosque in the Al-Wadi Al-Kabir area" of the capital, a police statement said. The three gunmen behind the attack were killed and police officers have "concluded the procedures for dealing with the shooting," it said. It gave a toll of six killed, including a police officer. It said 28 people "from various nationalities" were wounded, including rescuers and paramedics.

The foreign ministry in Islamabad said at least four Pakistanis were killed. "Four Pakistanis were martyred as a result of gunshots in the dastardly terrorist attack on the Ali bin Abi Talib mosque," it said in a statement. "Another 30 Pakistanis are under treatment in hospitals." One Indian was killed and another was wounded. India's embassy in Oman said on social media platform X. Footage verified by AFP shows people fleeing the Imam Ali Mosque, its minaret visible, as gunshots ring out. A voice can be heard saying "Oh God" and repeating "Oh Hussein". Speaking to AFP, Pakistan's ambassador to Oman

Imran Ali said the mosque was mostly frequented by south Asian expatriates. Oman is home to at least 400,000 Pakistanis, he said. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was "deeply saddened by the terrorist attack". In a statement on X, he said: "Pakistan stands in solidarity with the Sultanate of Oman and offers full assistance in the investigation." Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the shooting as a "divisive" act.

Pakistan's ambassador said the attack started with gunfire from a building adjacent to the mosque as hundreds of people gathered for prayers.

The worshippers were held "hostage" by militants before "they were later freed by Omani forces", Ali told AFP. He said there was little information on the perpetrators of the attack or their possible motive. "Everyone is being tight-lipped about this," he said, adding that the attack created a "difficult situation".

Some Pakistanis were detained by law enforcement while fleeing the attack and were later released, though others remained in detention. Ali said, adding he was not aware of any arrests or whether a motive for the attack had been identified. "This is a very unprecedented event... the likes of it we have not seen in Oman's history," said Ali, expressing gratitude to law enforcement and hospital staff.

Earlier on Tuesday, Ali toured hospitals treating the wounded. In a video message on X, he urged

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Juan Pizzi new Kuwait coach

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association announced the hiring of Juan Antonio Pizzi as the head coach of Kuwait's national team, adding he will start from the third round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers. Pizzi brings with him a long experience in coaching, including leading Chile to the Copa America title in 2016 and coaching Saudi Arabia from 2017 to 2019.

US, Saudi Arabia ink space deal

WASHINGTON: The United States and Saudi Arabia have signed a framework agreement for cooperation on a range of space issues, from exploration and aeronautics to operations and education, NASA and the US State Department said on Tuesday. The deal, citing cooperation "for peaceful purposes," sets up a legal framework for the two nations to work together on efforts using airspace and outer space, NASA said in a statement. — Reuters

Gold price hits record high

LONDON: The price of gold soared Tuesday to a record peak, propelled by trader expectations of falling US interest rates in September as inflation cools. In late afternoon London deals, gold soared 1.7 percent to touch \$2,463.80 per ounce, crushing its previous pinnacle of \$2,450.07 reached in May. — AFP

Crew of capsized tanker missing

DUBAI: The 16-strong crew of a Comoros-flagged oil tanker that capsized off Oman are still missing, the country's maritime security center said on Tuesday. The crew of "Prestige Falcon" comprised 13 Indian nationals and three Sri Lankans, the Omani center said in a post on X. The center told Reuters that the vessel remains "submerged, inverted". — Reuters

Zionist bloodbath in Gaza despite US criticizing high toll

GAZA: Zionist forces battled Hamas-led fighters in several parts of the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, and Palestinian health officials said at least 57 people were killed in Zionist bombardments of southern and central areas, despite renewed US criticism of the high civilian toll. The Palestinian Islamist group Hamas has accused the Zionist entity of stepping up attacks in Gaza to try to derail efforts by Arab mediators and the United States to reach a ceasefire deal.

In Rafah, a southern border city where Zionist forces have been operating since May, five Palestinians were killed in an airstrike on a house, Gaza health officials said. In nearby Khan Younis, a man, his wife, and two children were killed, they said. Later on Tuesday, a Zionist airstrike on a car killed at least 17 Palestinians and wounded 26 others in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, the officials said.

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GAZA: Two martyred children lie on a stretcher while being moved past other people being treated at a trauma ward at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on July 16, 2024. — AFP

With bandaged ear, Trump in spotlight after Vance VP pick

MILWAUKEE: Donald Trump began the second day of the 2024 Republican Party convention on Tuesday with a visual reminder of his recent assassination attempt, a young running mate who shares his hardline populist views and the backing of the world's richest person. Trump's rapturous reception at the Republican National Convention on Monday made clear that he enjoys the enthusiastic support of his party — a marked contrast to President Joe Biden, who has faced a wave of calls from his fellow Democrats to abandon his re-election bid.

The Republican former president walked into the Fiserv Forum in downtown Milwaukee to an uproarious response, his ear heavily bandaged from having been grazed by a bullet, hours after he was officially nominated to be the party's 2024 standard-bearer. "Fight! Fight! Fight!" the crowd chanted while pumping their fists, echoing Trump's own defiant response in the moments after he was shot. Uncharacteristically subdued, Trump, 78, waved from a box

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MILWAUKEE: US former President Donald Trump smiles as he is cheered on by US Senator and 2024 Republican vice-president candidate J D Vance (right) and his sons Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump during the first day of the 2024 Republican National Convention at the Fiserv Forum on July 15, 2024. — AFP



Local

Kuwaitis, expatriates urged to rationalize energy consumption

Governors meet; Ministry of Electricity signs deal to set up digital meters

KUWAIT: Al-Assima Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah on Tuesday affirmed the necessity of coordination among the public departments and lauded the existing continuous coordination among the country's governorates to tackle hurdles in the environmental, health, and municipal spheres.

The affirmation was publicized in a statement issued after the governor chaired a coordination meeting with Hawally Governor Ali Al-Asfar, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Adhbi Nasser Al-Adhabi Al-Sabah, Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Sabah Al-Salem, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Volunteering Action Center Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, representatives of the Ministries of Electricity and Water, Commerce, Industries, Municipal Affairs, and Information.

Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali stated that the discussions dealt with prospective mechanisms for closer coordination among the governorates and government apparatuses, in addition to the cooperation at the social level. He praised the great efforts that have been exerted by the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy. Such close coordination proved helpful in tackling the recent power outages due to excessive consumption.

He urged citizens and residents to cooperate and rationalize the power consumption in line with their patriotic responsibilities. The capital governor affirmed that the broad meeting is aimed at examining means of supporting the state apparatuses during the peak summer period. They promoted awareness to rationalize power consumption.

KD 9,979 million deal

In another development, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy signed a deal on Tuesday with stc worth KD 9,979 million (\$32 million) to set up around 500,000 smart electricity meters around the country. Following the signature of the agreement, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry Maha Al-Asousi said in a press release that this deal aims to reduce energy consumption and help the ministry collect its dues.

The electricity meters will reduce the energy consumption through reducing human intervention and error and will also provide remote control, which will ease maintenance work, Al-Asousi continued. These smart meters also provide a real-time consumption tracker, which will help in managing energy reduction, rationing, and improving usage, thus contributing to attaining sustainability.

On his part, the CEO of stc, Muataz Al-Dharrab, said in a statement that the company is utilizing



KUWAIT: Al-Assima Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Hawally Governor Ali Al-Asfar, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Adhbi Nasser Al-Adhabi Al-Sabah, Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Sabah Al-Salem, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chairperson of the Volunteering Action Center Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, representatives of the Ministries of Electricity and Water, Commerce, Industries, Municipal Affairs and Information held a meeting.

its experience in energy, IT, and telecom to reinforce the country's infrastructure. Al-Dharrab also affirmed that executing this deal will take Kuwait

one step closer to sustainability, highlighting the effective cooperation between the public and private sectors. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Monday met President of the 78th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly Dennis Francis. — KUNA

FM calls for global synergy to achieve development goals

NEW YORK: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya underlined Monday the need for synergy to overcome cross-border challenges impeding the implementation of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs). "The cross-border challenges facing the entire world need more concerted regional and international efforts to confront them," Minister Al-Yahya said in his speech at the general debate session of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN Headquarters in New York City. He praised the efforts made over the past year to meet development aspirations.

Kuwait's top diplomat, however, lamented that the UN Secretary-General report on the progress made towards achieving the seventeen UN sustainable goals reflected the bitterness of the international economic reality. He noted that the report has indicated that the SDGs implementation rate did not exceed 17 percent. It also estimated that more than 23 million people live in severe poverty and more than 100 million people face famine and malnutrition, and the majority of the victims are from the least developed regions, the minister regretted.

"This challenge also requires careful action from the United Nations," he stressed, adding that the developed countries have to transfer their expertise to the least developed countries to help build their capabilities to face the cross-border challenges. Al-Yahya highlighted Kuwait's initiative since its independence in 1961 by establishing the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development with the aim of helping the least developed countries achieve greater economic and development progress.

Since its inception, the Kuwait Fund has provided loans to more than 100 countries to finance various development projects, he said. "The decision to establish the KFAED was only a translation of the principled and firm belief of the State of Kuwait in supporting developing and least developed countries in order to achieve sustainable development goals and to finance development projects that contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals and serving humanity and the world at large," he concluded. —KUNA

Conference seeks ways to support disabled people

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: The 17th conference of countries that are parties to the international treaty for disabled rights was held at the United Nations premises in New York with the participation of a Kuwaiti delegation headed by Minister of Social, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah. Representatives from the Social Affairs Ministry, Public Authority for the Disabled, and NGOs also attended the conference.

Ministry of Justice holds successful marriage course



KUWAIT: The Justice Ministry in coordination with the Al-Awqaf Secretariat General organized a course for training citizens who are planning to get married. Family experts are running the two-day "wafaq" training course - giving guidelines on how to protect the family from break-up. — KUNA

Collagen: The body's major anti-ageing elixir

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Collagen is a protein that serves as a major component of connective tissues such as skin, bones, tendons and ligaments. It provides structural support, elasticity and strength to various tissues and organs. It is widely cherished for its ability to promote a youthful and healthy appearance. To learn strategies for preserving collagen levels and maintaining production as we age, Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Manal Dashti.

Kuwait Times: Do doctors recommend taking collagen supplements, and what is the recommended dosage?

Dashti: Collagen is a protein in our body that makes up many tissues and organs. Supplementing with the protein may help preserve skin health, muscle mass, bones and joints. The most common types of collagen used in supplements are hydrolyzed collagen, undenatured collagen and gelatin. However, because our body is capable of producing all of the collagen we need — if

we eat a balanced diet, supplements may not be necessary for everyone.

Certain foods, including bone broth, bone marrow, fish, beef, chicken, dairy and eggs, either contain collagen or help our body produce it on its own by providing essential amino acids and other nutrients needed to do so. There are many types of collagen supplements available and how much we should take depends on the type of collagen. Each one of us may have different needs depending on our lifestyle and on the doctor's assessment after running blood tests to get certain health benefits or help treat collagen deficiency or other conditions.

KT: What is the best type of collagen supplement?

Dashti: A lot of people take it to slow down age-related collagen loss. Again, while most people who eat a balanced diet that includes adequate animal sources of protein can make enough collagen, some people choose to take collagen supplements to support muscle growth, bone and joint health, and/or skin and hair health. Many types of collagen supplements are available, and the type you choose determines how much you should take.

Type 1 hydrolyzed marine collagen has been scientifically proven to be the most bioavailable to the body. Collagen cannot be absorbed unless it's broken down into smaller amino ac-



ids. So, collagen supplements are not actually collagen, but rather components of collagen that are already broken down into absorbable form. Collagen supplements come in pill or powder form. Like all other supplements, I recommend talking with your healthcare professional before adding any type of processed collagen to your diet.

KT: What dietary and lifestyle factors can enhance collagen production?

Dashti: I recommend consuming a diet full of protein-rich foods, whether from plant or animal sources, to help supply these critical amino acids. Zinc, vitamin C and vitamin E are critical nutrients that aid collagen production. Fruits and vegetables high in vitamins and minerals are also good for supple skin.

Several recommendations were issued at the end of the conference, the most important of which is to support digital technology and the development of creative initiatives. The conference called for strengthening support of digital technology and the development of creative initiatives that must have accessible digital systems to help the disabled. Technology is considered a vital tool to achieve equality, and it is necessary to be available for all.

The conference stressed the need to design and implement comprehensive strategies to limit the risks of disasters with consideration for the needs of both genders. The strategies must include protection mechanisms for the disabled and provide the necessary support for them during emergencies and natural disasters, and that requires intensive cooperation between government entities and NGOs to guarantee efficacy.

The conference highlighted the importance of having comprehensive markets that are characterized as being fair

to guarantee training, education, and equal employment opportunities. Policies and legislation must include guarantees for the disabled rights at the workplace and provide suitable work environments from them. The conference also called all those concerned to continued cooperation and joint action to achieve the goals and guarantee the implementation of international treaties concerned with the disabled rights.

President of the Kuwait Society for Guardians of Persons with Disabilities and delegation member Rihab Buresli said the conference addressed the needs of the disabled in the societies and strengthened their right to reach information in the way that suits their abilities. Buresli is proud of Law 8/2010, which is considered an international example for caring for the disabled. She spoke about the importance of consolidating the efforts of state entities, NGOs, and guardians of the disabled in order to strengthen their psychological stability.



Minister of Social, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, Rihab Buresli, Abdulrahman Al-Adwani and other officials take a group photo.

Local

Cabinet lauds oil discovery, slash in prices of medicines

Ministers call for speedy railway execution

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly session on Tuesday at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The Cabinet praises the Minister of Health for cutting prices of necessary medicines and recommending speedy execution of the key project. They discussed the railway network, among other things.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maouasherji, said that the ministers were briefed by the Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and the Acting Minister of Oil, Dr Ali Al-Mudhaf, regarding the declaration by the Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, and Kuwait Oil Company, last Sunday, about the discovery of commercial amounts of light oil and associated gas at Al-Nokhatha maritime field east of Failaka Island.

The Finance Minister, in his address, affirmed that this discovery places Kuwait on the map of leading regional producers of oil and gas and lifts its status in this field to an international level. This discovery is a national project aimed at boosting Kuwait's hydrocarbon resources' reserves, he added. The ministers lauded the great efforts that have been exerted by the KPC and the KOC, resulting in the discovery of these huge amounts of light oil and gas at Nokhatha field. The ministers examined a visual presentation by the Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, regarding the new application (Kuwait Soha), noting that this venture aims at unifying all systems of the ministry and providing full and innovative services.

Moreover, it is a qualitative step forward in the realm of digital medical services and comes as a continuation of the ministry's policy of digital transformation and overhauling medical services. The ministers commended the sincere

efforts of the minister and personnel executing the project. They also applauded the minister's decision to approve the list of downgraded prices of medicines and pharmaceutical products in the private sector, where the cut reached 60 percent, thus relieving patients in need of some necessary drugs.

They later discussed a recommendation from the meeting of the ministerial public services committee regarding the route of the planned railway in Kuwait and a report presented by the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transportation. They decided to task the authority to complete its efforts for executing the Cabinet resolutions regarding the venture and take the appropriate measures to speed up the pace of the work, cut red tape, and embark on the execution phase ahead of the set schedules. Furthermore, the authority has been advised to submit a report every six months about the latest execution phases, along with timetables. — KUNA



Crown Prince receives Defense Minister, new deputy army chief

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Tuesday received First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister

Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, who introduced to him newly appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff Air Vice Marshal Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presided over the Cabinet weekly session on Tuesday at Bayan Palace. — KUNA

Health Ministry warns of sunlight exposure

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health warned the public against direct exposure to sunlight for long or frequent periods, specifically during peak periods (from 10 am until 4 pm). The official spokesman of the ministry, Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, said in a message broadcast on social networking sites that direct exposure to sunlight during peak periods may pose a risk to health and may cause sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, and even muscle laceration.

Therefore, Al-Sanad advised everyone to avoid going out during that peak period, unless necessary, so as to avoid direct exposure to sunlight while taking preventive measures. He explained that with the high temperatures these days, there has been a record number of cases associated with direct exposure to sunlight or high

heat-related cases, and hospitals have dealt with about 33 cases of different age groups in the six governorates during the first ten days of July.

Al-Sanad urged children, beachgoers, and water sports enthusiasts to avoid spending long hours outdoors during the peak hours. He also advised workers and employers who work in open spaces to use shade and air conditioning so as to avoid heat exhaustion, pointing out that these groups may be more vulnerable to heat stress and sunburn.

He added that the elderly people are among the most vulnerable groups, so their families and health care providers should ensure that they drink enough water and stay in shaded and air-conditioned environments. Al-Sanad stressed the need to monitor the symptoms. He stressed the importance of being aware of the symptoms of heat stress and heat stroke, such as dizziness, headache, nausea, heavy sweating, and general weakness. He pointed out that when symptoms persist or worsen, medical help should be sought immediately. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah reviews security at Karbalaee Husseiniya in Daliya as Shiite Muslims take part in a traditional Ashura mourning ritual on July 16, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Toronto University and MoH enhance nursing department

KUWAIT: The Nursing Services Department on Tuesday organized a training course, "Training Nursing Officers," in cooperation with the University of Toronto in Canada to develop the vision of the Nursing Services Department in the Health Ministry. The five-day training course was presented by the visiting Samar Sami from the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS). Twenty-six participants from the head faculty attended the course.

The head of the nursing services, Dr Eman Al-Awadhi, tackled during the opening speech



the vision and mission of the administration, programs, and future plans in the field of training, stressing the keenness of the Nursing Services Administration to hold training courses on

an ongoing basis with the aim of advancing the nursing sector, which reflects positively on the quality of health services provided. She added that the course aims to train the largest

possible number of nursing personnel in various specialized fields to develop clinical and technical skills and enhance health communication, management, and leadership skills. — KUNA

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 359
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 361
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An aerial view shows Fatima Mosque in Abdullah Al-Salem area. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sahel adds 5 e-services

KUWAIT: The official spokesman for Sahel, Yusuf Kazim, announced that the Public Authority for Industry has added five new electronic services through the government application (Sahel Business) for business owners related to contracts and licenses. Kazim explained that the new electronic services are 'inquiry about contract data'; 'request to pay rent for vouchers in industrial areas'; the possibility of issuing 'To Whom It May Concern certificate' for license holders; approval of customs exemption for raw materials or packaging materials, etc.; and service 'inquiry about license data'.

The services came under the directives of the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar and the follow-up of the acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Mohamed Al-Adwani. This is aimed at enhancing the experience of users of the government application (Sahel Business) for business owners, especially owners of industrial plots. He praised the efforts of the Public Authority for Industry in developing its services. — KUNA

PACI showcases geographic info systems in US

KUWAIT: The General Authority for Civil Information (PACI) presented its projects related to geographic information systems during the opening presentation of the largest global conference for users of geographic information systems, held in San Diego, US. In a statement on Tuesday, the Authority's Acting Director General, Mansour Al-Methen, said that the Authority was chosen for this inaugural presentation after being classified among the best four entities out of more than 350,000 that use geographic information systems worldwide. Al-Methen pointed to the distinguished experience of the Authority in the field of geographic information systems, especially pioneering projects such as the Kuwait Finder, the Artificial Intelligence Project, the high-resolution imaging project using laser technology, and drone photography. — KUNA

KUWAIT: On Monday, Kuwait University began receiving applications for admission for the first semester 2024/2025 electronically for students who meet the admission requirements from Kuwaitis. The admissions are for children of Kuwaiti women, citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, graduates of the unified system, the religious institute, American schools, and graduates of English schools (Kuwait schools only). The program will continue until July 25.

The University Acting Secretary General's spokesman, Dr. Fayez Al-Dhafiri, said in a press release that the admission and registration hall in Sabah Al-Salem University City is open to receive those wishing to apply for admission from July 18 to 25 during official working hours. Al-Dhafiri stressed the university's keenness to provide a detailed guide for the admission, the programs available for selection, and the required university periods.

He added that there are clear guidelines mentioned on the official websites of the university for the categories for enrollment with the time periods for accepting applications for admission, indicating that the number of student admissions for the year 2024/2025 will be announced after the completion

Kuwait University kicks off e-applications for students



of the registration process. Regarding the new specializations offered for the year 2024/2025, Al-Dhafiri pointed to the nursing specialization (College of

Allied Medical Sciences), which the university reintroduced in response to the labor market in order to solve the shortage of staff. — KUNA

3rd culture kids: When home is everywhere and nowhere

By Nafisa Maleah

KUWAIT: Ahmed Saleh, who was born and raised in Kuwait away from his Jordanian roots, has always felt he didn't fully fit in. He describes it as being "in-between" - neither belonging in Kuwait nor Jordan. "I feel like a part of me is all Kuwaiti. I'm used to the Kuwaiti dialect, the food, the culture. So, it's a little bit strange when I go back to Jordan. But also, when I come to Kuwait, they consider me Jordanian because of my dialect - Arabic Jordanian is very different from the Kuwaiti one. So, I cannot call either country my home."

People like Saleh who were raised in a different culture from their parents or of their country of origin are called "Third Culture Kids" (or TCKs), a term coined by sociologist Ruth Useem in the 1950s. In Kuwait, this phenomenon is common among expatriates who have grown up away from their passport country. But what does the "third culture" refer to? This is the mixed identity that an individual develops, involving influences from both their parents' cultures and the one they grew up in. Although TCKs are usually adept at building relationships with other cultures, they may struggle to feel a sense of security in their mixed cultural identity.

Alexis De Leon, a Filipino who moved to Kuwait at only two years old, expressed feeling a disconnect from her country of nationality. Although she often visited the Philippines for summer break, she said, "It feels like a vacation more than it feels like home to me." Additionally, she mentioned that she is beginning to lose her mother tongue, Tagalog, which is one of the biggest challenges she had to face as a TCK. "Whenever you speak here, the universal language is going to be English just to be understood by other nationalities. So, that's one of the biggest challenges I had to face because I'm losing one of the biggest parts of myself that allows me to connect and interact with other Filipinos."

Having gone to a Filipino school, De Leon describes school as one of the only ways she

felt connected to her culture. "Now that I'm out of school, it's harder for me to connect. There are times when Filipinos make inside jokes or mention recent news from the Philippines, and I have to actively ask what's going on because I'm so disconnected."

But being a TCK can also have advantages. Kuwait's majority expat population makes it a melting pot of different cultures. When everyone in your environment is different from you, the idea of the foreign "other" often becomes dismantled, breaking down the invisible barriers that stand between you and other people. Zainab Al-Mashoor, who is half Indian and Egyptian, shared how her mixed ethnicity and growing up in Kuwait have positively shaped her interactions with people. "The mixed nationalities that I have sometimes make me confused, I won't lie to you, but it served me very well because I can understand people more. I'm able to communicate with Arabs. I'm able to communicate with Asians. I'm able to connect with different ethnicities and cultures because it's all around me," she said.

Despite feeling different due to her mixed ethnicity, Mashoor emphasized feeling secure in her identity. "When I go to India and Egypt, I do feel different and experience some culture shock because my mindset and upbringing are entirely different from theirs. But people mostly accepted me the way I was. Of course, there were jokes made when I was in school, but I believe because my parents brought me up with confidence, I don't feel insecure," she said.

When you are exposed to foreign cultures at a young age, you also learn how to embrace the beauty of difference. Saleh described how being surrounded by multiple nationalities broadened his worldview. "For me, it makes travelling easier because I accept every culture and dialect. I can fit in with people who are close-minded or open-minded - it's easier for me to interact with everyone."

Seemingly rootless, TCKs may not be tied to one particular country. However, it can also create a sense of freedom. "When you've only lived in one country, I feel that people can have this tiny box in their brains that is not accepting of everyone. But since I'm dealing with many nationalities and am surrounded by so many people from around the world, the box is expanding each time I interact with people," Saleh said.



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French PM to assume caretaker role amid parliamentary deadlock

Bangladesh shuts schools nationwide



AL-MAGHAZI: A Palestinian youth carrying sacks of salvageable items walks past piles of waste, as garbage collection and any other municipality services come to a halt due to the Zionist bombardment of the Gaza Strip, at the al-Maghazi Palestinian refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip on July 15, 2024. — AFP

Waste crisis deepens misery in Gaza

NGOs slam Zionist entity's systematic obstruction of aid, attacks on aid operations

GAZA: Bulldozers plough through piles of waste, but angry residents find little relief as their children sift through garbage on Gaza's streets in a growing sanitation crisis that's adding to the misery of war. "We can't sleep, we can't eat, we can't drink, the smell is killing us," said Ahmed Shaloula, one of many displaced Palestinians, who is from Gaza City and lives in Khan Yunis.

Palestinians have faced one crisis after another since the Zionist entity began bombing Gaza after Hamas attacked communities in the entity's south. Aside from Zionist air strikes, shelling and a ground offensive, Palestinians are crippled by shortages of food, fuel, water, medicine and functioning hospitals. Garbage is piling up in the impoverished enclave — one of the world's most densely populated places — which has been reduced mostly to rubble. At night, people stay awake fighting mosquitoes, and some are catching diseases like scabies, Shaloula said. "We are calling on the municipality of Khan Yunis to remove the waste."

But the call for government services is wishful thinking in Gaza after nine months of Zionist bombardment, which killed more than 38,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities.

Khan Yunis is the second-largest

city in Gaza, home to 2.3 million people. Damage from the war and a shortage of fuel have created a waste problem, said Omar Matar, the official responsible for the removal of solid waste at Khan Yunis Municipality. "The piling up of waste has led to bad smells, spread of insects and rodents in addition to the leakage of liquids from the waste to the underground water reservoir," he said.

The reservoir is the main source of drinking water for residents of Khan Yunis. Clean water is unavailable in most of Gaza. "This dumping land was not correctly designed to stop the leakage of waste liquids into underground water," said Matar.

NGOs slam siege

Access to war-torn Gaza has become increasingly difficult for humanitarian groups, 13 leading NGOs warned on Monday, accusing the Zionist military of blocking much-needed aid from reaching the besieged Palestinian territory.

Denouncing "(the Zionist entity's) systematic obstruction of aid and its ongoing attacks on aid operations", the humanitarian organizations said that the entity had facilitated only 53 — less than half — of the 115 relief missions they had planned.

The aid groups slammed what it called the Zionist entity's "siege tactics"

in its struggle against Palestinian militant group Hamas. It said the so-called "humanitarian zone" where most of the strip's population of 2.4 million people now reside had become "an active combat zone" and "extremely unsafe".

The charities also criticized the bombing of United Nations schools used as shelters by displaced Palestinians. At least six schools have been hit over the past nine days. "These recent events are exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe at a time when NGOs continue to come up against the obstacles imposed by the continuation of Zionist military operations on the ground," a press release summarizing the 13 NGOs' views warned.

Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council were among the charities to contribute to the document. Since the entity began its ground offensive in the far-southern city of Rafah in May, humanitarian workers have faced major difficulties in delivering aid to the Gaza Strip's south.

Tons of aid stuck

The entity's capture at the beginning of May of the Rafah crossing, which has since been destroyed, brought aid deliveries to a "complete halt", the NGOs added. Tons of "absolutely necessary

aid" were left blocked at the crossing points in the south "due to the deterioration in security conditions", the statement said.

More than 1,500 trucks of humanitarian aid containing medicines, first-aid kits and basic necessities were stuck in the Egyptian city of Al-Arish as a result. Meanwhile, in the north of the Gaza Strip — which has been isolated from the south by the Zionist army — aid delivery is "very limited". Oxfam said it took it five weeks to transport just 1,600 food parcels from Jordan to Gaza — a journey it said "should take no more than six hours".

At Karam Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom), designated since May as a priority crossing point for humanitarian aid, the situation had "deteriorated significantly since (the entity's) offensive in May", the aid groups said. This had made the crossing "unsafe to access from within Gaza and currently not logistically viable".

The Zionist entity denies any famine in Gaza and accuses the United Nations of blocking aid deliveries. "Yesterday, 211 trucks entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom," Zionist government spokesman David Mencer said on Monday. In addition, "eight trucks were collected on the Gaza side" of the Erez along with "103 from the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom", he added. — Agencies

Zionist entity used US-provided bomb on Gaza 'safe zone'

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity's deadly strike on Al-Mawasi, one of the bloodiest attacks in more than nine months of war in Gaza, used massive payload bombs provided by the United States, according to weapons experts.

The bombing of the Zionist-declared "safe zone" transformed the tent city on the Mediterranean coast into a charred wasteland, with nearby hospitals overrun with casualties. According to the health ministry in the territory, the barrage killed at least 92 people and wounded more than 300.

The Zionist military said it targeted two "masterminds" of the October 7 attacks by Hamas that triggered the war. It said a top commander, Rafa Salama, was killed in the strike, but uncertainty remains over Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif. Hamas did not confirm the death of either.

AFP videos of the attack showed a white mushroom cloud billowing over a busy street, leaving behind a huge crater strewn with the wreckage of tents and a building blown to bits. Here is what we know about the weaponry used in the attack:

US-made JDAM

Two weapons experts told AFP that a sliver of unline seen in a video of the blast striking a building was a tail fin from a US-made Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM). AFP could not independently verify the video. The GPS-aided kit converts un-

guided free-fall bombs — so-called "dumb bombs" — into precision-guided "smart" munitions that can be directed towards single or multiple targets.

The United States developed the kit to improve accuracy in adverse weather after Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The first JDAMs were delivered in 1997 and, according to the US Air Force, have a 95 percent system reliability.

Trevor Ball, a former US Army explosive ordnance disposal technician, concluded from images of the Al-Mawasi strike "it's 100 percent a JDAM kit" made in the United States. He said that given the types of bombs compatible with the guidance system and the size of the fin fragment, the JDAM was most likely used with either a 1,000 or 2,000 pound (450 or 900 kilogram) payload. He said the fragment could also be compatible with the BLU-109 "bunker buster" warhead, which is designed to penetrate concrete. Ball said it was not possible to definitively determine where the payload itself was made without "very specific fragments of the bomb body".

New delivery

Repeated use of such large bombs in the densely populated Gaza Strip has sparked humanitarian outcry and heaped pressure on US President Joe Biden to reconsider the munitions supplied to the Zionist entity.

On July 12, the entity's main military backer announced it was ending a pause on supplying 500-pound bombs, though Biden said the 2,000-pound type would be withheld. The White House has repeatedly voiced frustration over the civilian death toll in Gaza.

Zionist officials said their "precise strike" in Al-Mawasi hit an open area that housed a Hamas compound and not a civilian camp. When contacted by AFP regarding the weapons used, the Zion-



KHAN YUNIS: Palestinians look at the debris of destroyed tents and makeshift housing structures following a Zionist military strike on Al-Mawasi camp for internally displaced people (IDP), near the city of Khan Yunis, southern Gaza Strip on July 13, 2024. — AFP

ist military declined to comment.

Based on the entity's stated target, Wes Bryant, a retired US Air Force master sergeant and strike and joint targeting expert, said it would have been feasible to avoid collateral damage in the surrounding area. "My assessment is that any civilians killed in this strike were in the compound — not in the surrounding vicinity. So the IDF either failed to assess presence of civilians, or ... deemed the risk to civilians proportional to the military advantage of taking out the Hamas leaders."

The strike left Al-Mawasi a scene of "absolute destruction" with no water, electricity or sewage treatment, the Islamic Relief charity said. It condemned the Zionist entity for its willingness "to kill innocent men, women and children in pursuit of its end goals". — AFP

Zionist entity waging 'war of revenge' on Palestinian prisoners

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority's prisoners affairs minister on Monday accused the Zionist entity of waging an abusive "war of revenge" against Palestinian detainees since the start of the Zionist war in Gaza.

"(The Zionist entity) has been waging a war of revenge against prisoners within the walls of prisons and detention centers since the first day of the decision to go to war against Gaza," said the PA's Prisoners' Affairs Authority head Qadura Fares. Speaking at a press conference in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, he added that Palestinian prisoners were treated as "hostages" and the mistreatment was part of the "pressure". The authority's lawyer Khaled Mahajna denounced abuses which he said he had been told of when he visited detained Gaza journalists Mohammed Arab and Tariq Abed at the Ofer detention center near Ramallah.

Mahajna said he was told how guards forced one prisoner to "lay on his stomach naked and then a fire extinguisher tube was inserted into his buttocks and the fire extinguisher was turned on". He said he was told how other inmates had "electric prods" used on their bodies.

In parallel to increasing complaints by Palestinians, some rights groups in the Zionist entity are fighting for a court order to close Sde Teiman, a desert detention camp just for detainees during the current Zionist war.

Accounts of alleged mistreatment including torture, rape and other sexual abuses in Zionist jails have all been denied by Zionist authorities. The Zionist military said it "rejects outright allegations concerning systematic abuse of detainees in the 'Sde Teiman' detention facility, including allegations of sexually abusing detainees". It also said that it acts within international law.

The lawyer said prisoners were handcuffed when they ate and that meals consisted of 100 grams (3.5 ounces) of bread or tomatoes with some milk. Mahajna quoted Arab as saying that he saw one handcuffed prisoner die after being beaten for demanding medical treatment. He said about 100 detainees had diseases and wounds in desperate need of treatment. He alleged that some prisoners had their hands bound before dogs were then set upon them.

'Unconstitutional and untenable'

Five rights groups have gone to court over conditions at Sde Teiman. The Association for Civil Rights in (the Zionist entity) (ACRI), one of the five, said that the high court on Monday ordered the government to respond within three days to the original petition filed in May.

ACRI, Physicians for Human Rights, HaMoked, the Public Committee Against Torture in (the Zionist entity) and Gisha have demanded the closure of Sde Teiman, saying that "severe violations of detainees' rights" make imprisonment at the facility "unconstitutional and untenable". The government has not commented on the case. — AFP

International

Bangladesh shuts schools nationwide

6 killed as police, pro-government groups clash with students protesting job quotas

DHAKA: Bangladesh ordered schools around the country to close indefinitely on Tuesday after six students were killed in violent protests that prompted the mobilization of paramilitaries to keep order. Every high school, Islamic seminary and vocational education institute around the country was told to remain shut until further notice following weeks of escalating demonstrations against civil service hiring policies.

Tuesday saw a significant escalation in violence as demonstrators and pro-government student groups attacked each other with hurled bricks and bamboo rods, and police dispersed rallies with tear gas and rubber bullets. Education ministry spokesman M A Khair told AFP the shutdown order was issued in consideration of "the security of the students".

The order does not include Bangladesh's universities, where most students participating in the protests are enrolled, as the education ministry ordinarily does not have the authority to demand their closure. At least six people were killed on Tuesday as demonstrators mobilized for another day in cities around the country, defying earlier calls by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the supreme court to return to class.

Three died in Chittagong and had signs of "bullet injuries", hospital director Mohammad Taslim Uddin told AFP, adding that another 35 had been injured during clashes in the port city. Another two died in Dhaka, where rival student groups threw bricks at each other and blocked roads in several key locations that ground traffic to a halt in

the megacity of 20 million.

Police inspector Bacchu Mia confirmed the deaths to AFP, saying one had succumbed to head injuries, while at least 60 people were also injured. In the northern city of Rangpur, police commissioner Mohammad Moniruzzaman told AFP that a student had been also killed in clashes there. He did not give details as to how the student died, but said police had fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse protesters.

Rangpur Medical College hospital director Yunus Ali said the "student was brought dead to the hospital by other students". Tauhidul Haque Siam, a student reporter from the city's Rokeya University, told AFP that ruling party supporters had attacked anti-quota protesters, while police fired rubber pellets from shotguns. "Police opened fire from their shotguns on the protesters," Siam said, adding he had been injured.

He said the dead student had been "killed in the firing", but it was not possible to independently verify his account. As the day wore on and with some key highways around the country blocked by the protesters, authorities deployed the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) force in five major cities including Dhaka and Chittagong. They had been tasked with controlling "the law and order situation in view of the quota protests", a BGB spokesman said.

'Violence against peaceful protesters'

Tuesday's clashes came a day after confrontations between anti-quota demonstrators and members of the ruling Awami League's student wing that



DHAKA: Anti-quota protesters and students backing the ruling Awami League party clash in Dhaka on July 16, 2024. — AFP

left more than 400 people injured in Dhaka. "We are not here to do violence," one protester in Dhaka, who declined to give their name for fear of reprisal, told AFP. "We simply want our rights. But the ruling party goons are attacking our peaceful protests."

Near-daily marches this month have demanded an end to a quota system that

reserves more than half of civil service posts for specific groups, including children of veterans from the country's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan. Critics say the scheme benefits children of pro-government groups that back Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 76, who won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote

without genuine opposition.

Amnesty International afterwards urged Bangladesh to "immediately guarantee the safety of all peaceful protesters". US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller also denounced the "violence against peaceful protesters", prompting a rebuke from Bangladesh's foreign ministry. — AFP

5 Indian security personnel killed in Kashmir fighting

SRINAGAR, India: Five security personnel were killed in a firefight with gunmen in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, the army and police said Tuesday, with security sources saying militants had made a "tactical shift" in attacks. Muslim-majority Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947, and each side claims it in full.

Pakistan military says 28 dead in 2 militant attacks

PESHAWAR: Two separate attacks by militants on an army base and a health center in northwest Pakistan killed 28 people, including 10 soldiers as well as female health workers and children, the military said on Tuesday. The attacks, both of which occurred on Monday, coincide with a resurgence of Islamist militancy in the northwest border region with Afghanistan, which last month prompted the government to

start a counter-insurgency operation in the area. Rebel groups have waged an insurgency since 1989, demanding independence for the territory or its merger with Pakistan. The clash brings the number of soldiers and police killed this year on the Indian side of the disputed Himalayan territory to 17.

A security official, who asked not to be named, said militants had shifted operations from the mainly Muslim Kashmir valley to the Hindu-dominated southern Jammu area, where "counterinsurgency measures are not as strong". Kashmir's top political official Manoj Sinha said forces would "avenge" their deaths.

The Indian army's 16 Corps said security forces had launched an operation in the Doda forest on Monday evening, some 135 kilometers (85 miles) southeast of the territory's capital Srinagar, in the Jammu area. A "heavy firefight ensued," the army

said, saying four men were killed, including a captain. Indian army chief Upendra Dwivedi sent his "deepest condolences" to the families of the men. A police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP a police officer also died of his wounds, adding two other soldiers had been hospitalized.

'Cowardly'

Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh said he was "angushed to learn about the cowardly attack" on the soldiers and police who had made the "supreme sacrifice". Reinforcements were deployed to track the gunmen in the forested mountains.

This year, 61 people have been killed - including 17 civilians, 17 members of the security forces, and 27 militants, according to the New Delhi-based

South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), which tracks the violence. That compares to 132 people killed in 2023, including 12 civilians, 33 security officers and 87 militants, according to SATP data.

This year, almost all the soldiers killed were in Jammu, while last year almost all were killed in the Kashmir valley. Monday's clash came a day after the Indian army said it killed three suspected militants as they tried to cross from the Pakistan-controlled side of the heavily militarized dividing line, in Kashmir's Kupwara district. New Delhi and Islamabad accuse each other of stoking militancy and espionage to undermine each other, and the nuclear-armed rivals have fought multiple conflicts for control of the region. The fighting has killed tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels. — AFP

used for attacks. The matter has led to clashes between the border forces of the two countries. The militant group involved in the latest attack was the same one targeted by Pakistan in a rare cross border operation.

"Pakistan Armed Forces will ... take all necessary measures as deemed appropriate against these threats emanating from Afghanistan," the military said on Tuesday. In the second, separate, attack late Monday night, five civilians, including two female health workers and two children, were killed in an attack on a health facility in the Dera Ismail Khan district. Two soldiers and all three militants were killed in subsequent clashes, the military said. No group has yet taken responsibility for the second attack. — Reuters

6 killed in Oman mosque attack...

Continued from Page 1

Pakistanis in Oman to cooperate with the authorities and avoid the area around the mosque. "We are in touch with Omani authorities as well as hospitals. Our officers are on standby for emergency blood donations in the embassy," he said, adding that a hotline has been set up to assist the wounded and their relatives.

The US embassy in Muscat issued a security alert following the shooting and canceled all visa appointments for Tuesday. "US citizens should remain vigilant, monitor local news and heed directions of local authorities," it posted on X. Police said "all necessary security measures and procedures have been taken to handle the situation" following the attack. "The authorities are continuing to gather evidence and conduct investigations to uncover the circumstances

surrounding the incident," police added on X.

The area remained cordoned off on Tuesday, with journalists unable to access the mosque, an AFP photographer reported. Oman has a population of more than four million, of whom upwards of 40 percent are expat workers, mostly from south Asia, according to government figures. Shiites make up a small minority of Oman's overwhelmingly Muslim population. Most Omanis follow the Sunni or Ibadi branches of the faith.

While several attacks on Shiite mosques have roiled the Gulf in recent years, Tuesday's attack is a first for Oman. A 2015 suicide attack on a Shiite mosque in Kuwait killed at least 27 worshippers and wounded more than 200. It was claimed by extremists of the Islamic State group. The same year, Saudi Arabia saw two attacks on Shiite mosques in the space of a week, with at least 25 people killed. The attacks were again claimed by IS. In 2005, a former teacher opened fire inside a government building in Muscat, killing two people and wounding several others, before shooting himself. — Agencies

Meanwhile, the Wall Street Journal reported that Elon Musk has said he plans to commit around \$45 million per month to a pro-Trump political action committee. The Tesla chief executive, who is the world's richest person, endorsed Trump on Saturday following that assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania campaign rally. The attack raised fears of a more deeply fractured political landscape ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

Biden, who has portrayed Trump as a threat to US democracy, condemned the shooting and urged Americans to rely on the ballot box, not violence, to resolve their differences. Authorities were still trying to identify a motive for the shooting, after the gunman was killed by the US Secret Service. In an NBC interview broadcast opposite the convention on Monday evening, Biden said he made a mistake by saying Trump should be put in the "bullseye" politically last week but added that Trump has frequently employed violent rhetoric on the campaign trail.

Biden has ordered an independent review to determine how the gunman could have come so close to killing Trump despite the Secret Service's heavy security presence. The four-day convention will culminate with Trump's prime-time address on Thursday, when he formally accepts the party's nomination to face Biden in a rematch of their 2020 race. — Agencies

Zionist bloodbath in Gaza despite...

Continued from Page 1

The airstrike hit near a tented area housing displaced families in Attar Street in the humanitarian-designated area of Al-Mawasi, the health ministry said. Reuters footage showed residents carrying bodies of the dead and wounded on donkey carts and in rickshaws to hospitals. "The car was targeted, the blood was splashing, and shrapnel hit our tents and martyrs were left on the street. We screamed: 'We need an ambulance'. We put (the casualties) on carts and rickshaws and the ambulance came after a while," said eyewitness Tahir Matir, who lives in a tent nearby.

In the historic Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, at least four Palestinians were killed in separate shelling and aerial strikes in central Gaza, medics said. A Zionist airstrike also killed four in Sheikh Zayed in northern Gaza, they said. Hours later, a Zionist air strike on a UN-run school that housed displaced families in the Nuseirat camp killed 23 people and wounded many others, health officials said.

Among those killed was local journalist Mohammad Meshmesh, taking the number of journalists killed in the conflict to 160, the Hamas-run Gaza government media office said. "Where is the safety for (UN) agency schools? There are no more safe agency schools, or safe clinics, no more safe houses, no safe streets. We have been left desolate, displaced and destroyed," said eyewitness Umm Omar Ahmed at Nuseirat camp.

"Why do they target us when we are innocent people?" asked Umm Mohammed Al-Hasanat, sheltering with her family at a UN-run school in Nuseirat, which was among those hit. "We do not carry weapons but are just sitting and trying to find safety for ourselves and our children."

Hours earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told two senior Zionist officials of Washington's "serious concern" following deadly Zionist strikes in Gaza, his spokesman said. "We have seen civilian casualties come down from the high points of the conflict... but they still remain unacceptably high," spokesman Matthew Miller said after Blinken met Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Na-

With bandaged ear, Trump in spotlight...

Continued from Page 1

where he sat alongside his newly anointed running mate, US Senator JD Vance, 39. Turning his back on previous Republican opposition to Trump, whom he once said might be "America's Hitler", Vance reinvented himself and ultimately won the ex-president's endorsement in the 2022 Ohio Senate race, launching his meteoric rise. Nikki Haley, the former US ambassador to the United Nations, was expected to address the convention on Tuesday, despite having mounted a spirited primary challenge to Trump.

The convention's opening night also featured a speech from the head of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters labor union, an unusual decision for a party that has traditionally favored business owners. While Teamsters head Sean O'Brien did not endorse Trump, he also might not endorse Biden either, which would be the first time since 1996 that the union does not back the Democratic candidate.

tional Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi.

On Tuesday, the military claimed it had eliminated half of the leadership of Hamas' military wing, with about 14,000 fighters killed or captured since the start of the war. At least 38,713 Palestinians have been killed in the Zionist offensive, Gaza health authorities said in their latest update on Tuesday.

Relatives visited Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza to say farewell to relatives before funerals. "We're exhausted... we are extremely tired, our patience is over," said elderly Palestinian Sahar Abu Emeira. "Whether Hamas or the others (the Zionist entity) they need to agree as soon as possible."

The Zionist military has also detained scores of Gazans, who have made allegations of torture, rape and other abuses in custody. Palestinian lawyer Khaled Mahajna said Monday that prisoners had recounted guards using "electric prods" on inmates' bodies. In one prisoner's case, a "fire extinguisher tube was inserted into his buttocks and the fire extinguisher was turned on," Mahajna said after visiting detained Palestinian journalists. He said prisoners were handcuffed when they ate the meagre meals provided, while detainees reported widespread disease and untreated wounds.

Efforts to end the conflict stalled on Saturday after three days of negotiations failed to produce a viable outcome. Egyptian security sources said, and after a Zionist strike targeting Hamas' top military chief, Mohammed Deif. That attack killed more than 90 people in the Khan Younis area, according to Gaza health authorities.

A Palestinian official close to the negotiations told Reuters Hamas was keen not to be seen as halting the talks despite the stepped-up Zionist attacks. "Hamas wants the war to end, not at any price. It says it has shown the flexibility needed and is pushing the mediators to get (the Zionist entity) to reciprocate," the official said. He said Hamas believed Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was trying to avoid a deal by adding more conditions that restrict the return of displaced people to northern Gaza, and to keep control over the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. — Agencies

Business

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2024

NBK reports net profits of KD 292.4m for H1 2024, reflecting 6.2% y-o-y growth

Board resolved to distribute semi-annual cash dividends of 10 fils per share

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the six-month period ended June 30, 2024. The bank reported a net profit of KD 292.4 million (\$953.6 million), compared to KD 275.3 million (\$897.9 million) for the corresponding period in 2023, improving by 6.2 percent year-on-year. Total assets as of the end of June 2024 grew by 4.4 percent year-on-year to reach KD 37.7 billion (\$122.9 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 5.4 percent year-on-year to reach KD 22.7 billion (\$74.1 billion), while shareholders' equity reached KD 3.8 billion (\$12.5 billion), growing by 6.5 percent year-on-year.

Based on these results, the Board of Directors has resolved to distribute semi-annual cash dividends of 10 fils per share for the period ended June 30, 2024, representing 10 percent of the nominal value of the shares.

Impressive financial performance

Commenting on NBK's H1 2024 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "In the first half of 2024, NBK maintained its growth momentum with strong financial results, highlighting the resilience of its diversified and resilient business model amidst evolving operational landscapes." "Despite regional and international geopolitical tensions impacting the global economy, the bank has continued to leverage strategic diversification in its products and services across diverse regions. This success was supported by a strong balance sheet, solid capital base, high asset quality, ample liquidity, targeted investments, and prudent risk management," Al-Bahar added.

He also indicated that in the first half of this year, NBK continued to strengthen its operations across its markets, adopting the highest standards of sustainability and adhering to the best ESG practices. This commitment underscores the Bank's dedication to seizing optimal and sustainable opportunities while serving as a key partner for its customers in their efforts to secure sustainable financing.



Hamad Al-Bahar



Isam Al-Sager

Social responsibility

On the social responsibility front, Al-Bahar stated that, as part of NBK's commitment to supporting the sustainable development of Kuwait's economy and leveraging its position as the leading contributor to social responsibility in Kuwait, the Bank signed an agreement in 2Q2024 to develop Sharq area. This collaboration with Kuwait Municipality and Al-Shaab National Real Estate Company involves the establishment of a new public park and parking facilities, with an estimated investment of KD 8 million. The execution of this initiative is projected to take approximately two and a half years.

Sustainable growth

Meanwhile, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "NBK's robust financial results for the first half of 2024 highlight the successful implementation of our strategy for sustainable growth. This achievement reflects our commitment to delivering long-term value to our shareholders, customers, the communities we serve, and all stakeholders". Al-Sager explained that NBK's ability to sustain profit growth across various economic cycles clearly reflects its resilient business model and prudent approach to risk management. He noted that the group's net operating income increased by 8.2 percent year-on-year in 1H2024, reaching KD 612.4 million (\$2.0 billion).

"Through its strategic investments in technology and innovation, as well as its commitment to investing in its employees as its most valuable asset, NBK has succeeded in delivering a banking experience that meets the evolving needs of its customers with a range of carefully designed digital services and products. The bank remains dedicated to investing in these areas, recognizing innovation as a key driver of future growth," Al-Sager added. Al-Sager highlighted that NBK Group continued to strengthen its leading banking brand across all business sectors, emphasizing strong performance in key areas in 1H2024. This includes notable growth in international operations which continues to support the Bank's diversification strategy and contributing positively to both the Group's operating income and net profits.

He explained that the strong contribution attributed to the international operations to the Bank's profits, reflects the soundness of the Group's vision and the proved success of its diversification strides. He also stressed that the Group will continue with its endeavor in strengthening its global banking operations, with an eye on key growth markets.

In parallel with the bank's vision to increase international operations' contribution to profits, expanding its global banking services, its commitment to providing exceptional mortgage solutions and tailored service that meet the investment needs of its clients in

international real estate; NBK opened during the second quarter of this year the first international mortgage loan center of its kind in Kuwait at the bank's headquarters; dedicated to serving clients intending to buy or finance real estate in the United Kingdom, France and the UAE. "The Group is also witnessing a significant expansion in the area of wealth management, particularly following the recent launch of "NBK Wealth", positioning it as the largest local wealth management firm and a major player in the region," Al-Sager added.

Economic reform

Al-Sager expressed confidence in the government's ability to tackle significant economic challenges and execute a pragmatic reform agenda, uplifted by the backing of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He emphasized that upon the implementation of these reforms and the initiation of significant development projects, alongside increased investment expenditure and alignment with policies that attract investments and bolster the role of the private sector in project operation and management, it will revitalize the local business environment. He highlighted NBK's commitment to solidifying its role as the primary partner of the government sector in funding major strategic initiatives. On the prospects of domestic credit growth for the year 2024, Al-Sager said: "We are optimistic that credit growth will further improve for the remainder of the year for both business sector and household credit, compared to a decline in growth levels last year." He attributed this to the positive momentum of project awards during Q2 2024, and anticipates an acceleration in its pace throughout the remainder of the year. Additionally, he cited expectations of lower interest rates in the second half of the year and an influx of Kuwaitis entering the labor market as contributing factors.

Driving sustainable leadership

In 1H2024, NBK maintained its leadership

in sustainability by successfully issuing its first green bonds totaling USD 500 million. This issuance, oversubscribed by more than three times (\$1.5 billion), marks the first green bond from a Kuwaiti financial institution and the first by a bank in the region this year. It stands as one of the largest green issuances by a conventional financial institution in the region.

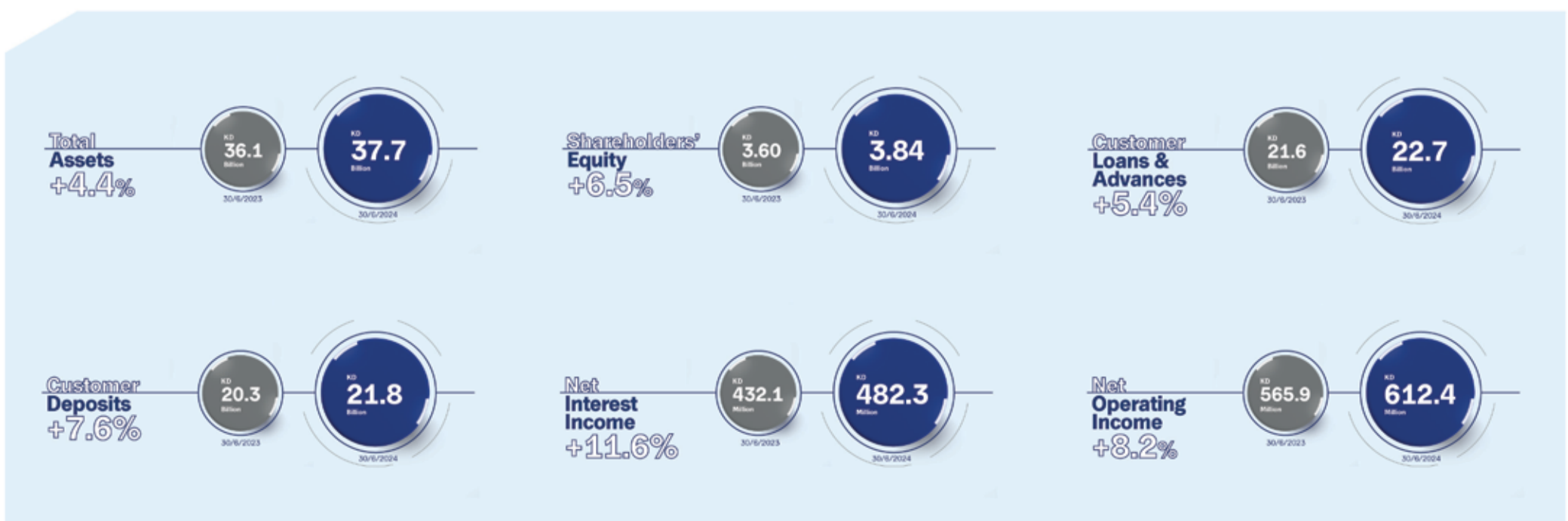
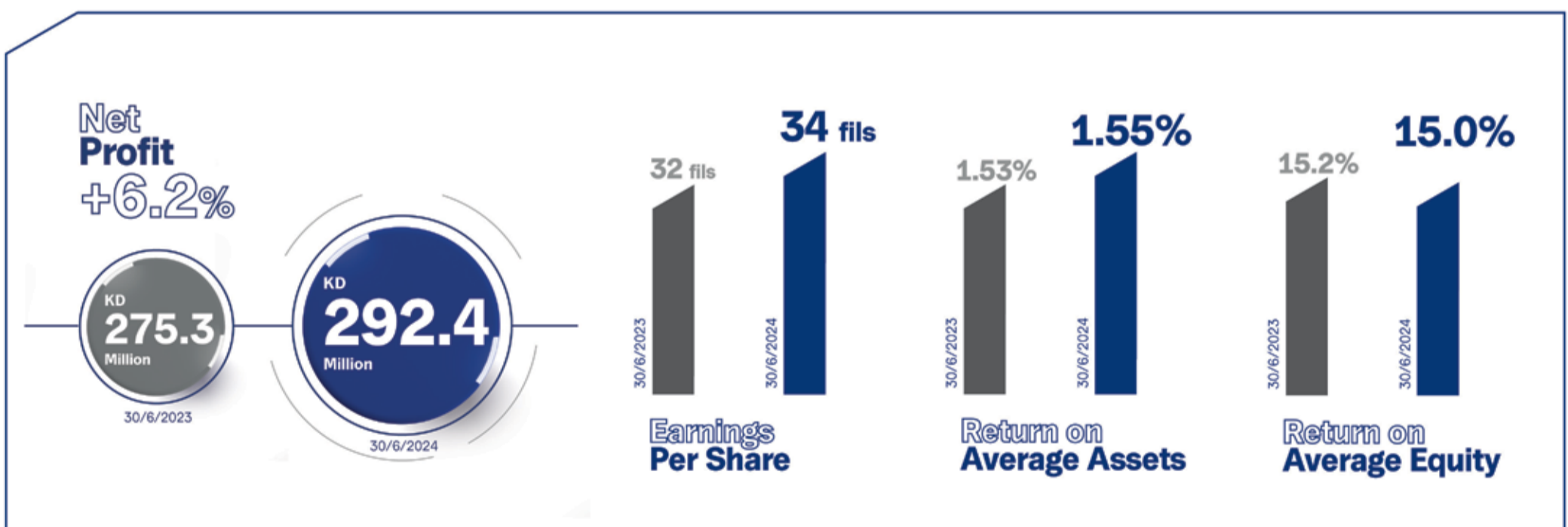
In another milestone in sustainability, Al-Sager announced that NBK has joined the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF) initiative. This move positions NBK as the first bank in Kuwait and one of only six banks in the MENA region to join leading global financial institutions in measuring and disclosing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions related to its lending and investment activities. He emphasized that this significant step strengthens the Bank's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

He further elaborated that in 1H2024, NBK has entered a strategic partnership with DHL to use the "DHL GoGreen Plus" service. Through its participation in GoGreen Plus, NBK ensures that all its international shipments are transported using Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) rather than traditional jet fuel. This transition leads to a substantial reduction in carbon emissions that are linked to transportation.

Prestigious awards

Al-Sager highlighted that during the first half of 2024, NBK reinforced its leadership in Kuwait and the region by earning prestigious awards, further enhancing its global recognition. He explained that NBK has received several prestigious awards from MEED international magazine as part of its MENA Banking Excellence Awards for 2024. The accolades include Best Retail Bank in Kuwait (NBK), Best Innovation Program in MENA, and Excellence in Sustainable Investment in MENA. Additionally, Weway was recognized as the Best Digital Bank in Kuwait, and NBK Wealth was honored as the MENA Fund Manager of the Year.

Financial Highlights 1H 2024



Business

Kuwait Airways ranks third in ME, Africa with 91.1% for its on-time performance

Airline affirms its unwavering commitment to punctuality

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways has been ranked third in the Middle East and Africa region in terms of its on-time performance ensuring timely flight departures with a growth rate of 91.13 percent, according to the periodic report for the month of June 2024 issued by Cirium, which specializes in aviation analytics and data that includes the on-time performance of airlines around the world.



Kuwait Airways confirmed an increase in the punctuality rate of flight departure timings, as the company achieved an on-time performance of 90.6 percent in May 2024, compared to 88.2 percent in April 2024 and 85.6 percent in March 2024.

Kuwait Airways affirmed its unwavering commitment to implement its

adherence to punctuality in an effort to achieve further progress and development in the various performance standards expected of international airlines with competence and expertise, achieved with the determination of its dedicated employees. The on-time performance results come in accordance with the policy implemented by the company since the last quarter of 2023 in the aircraft maintenance schedule, as well as plans adopted in the flight operating schedule, which was after a detailed study of the operational sectors that has resulted in a gradual increase and improvement of accuracy of its take-off timings.

These results are also one of the fundamental and significant steps that reflect the national carrier's progress and development in response to the challenges of the air transport industry and signifies the company's pursuit to provide the best levels of services to its valued customers.

It is worth noting that Cirium Aviation Analytics provides reliable sources of data and analytics to empower a wide spectrum of industry sectors, equipping airlines, airports, travel enterprises, aircraft manufacturers and financial entities for optimizing their operations, and for implementing their strategy and policy.



Serbia greenlights disputed lithium mining project

BELGRADE: Serbia's government on Tuesday said operations can restart at a disputed lithium mining project, days after a top court ruling overturned a 2022 cancellation of its permits. The future of the vast mineral deposits, to be mined by Rio Tinto near western Serbia's Loznica, has been a perennial political fault line in the Balkan country in recent years. Billions of euros are at stake, with Rio Tinto saying the mine would provide thousands of jobs and secure Serbia's position in emerging energy markets.

"The government... takes measures to restore the legal order to the state that existed before the adoption of the regulation that was declared unconstitutional," the government said.

The decision follows a ruling by the constitutional court last week, saying a 2022 government move to revoke permits awarded to the Anglo-Australian mining giant was "not in line with the constitution and the law". The mine has long pitted Serbians' festering distrust in their government against Europe's plans for a greener future, with mass protests held over the years calling for a permanent halt to the project. Rio Tinto said the area holds one of Europe's largest reserves of lithium, a strategically valuable metal crucial for electric vehicle battery production.

The deposits were discovered in 2004, but the Serbian government moved against the mining project in 2022, after weeks of protests sparked by fears over the environment and public health.

President Aleksandar Vucic has hinted that Serbia could begin mining lithium as early as 2028, following new guarantees from Rio Tinto. "We believe that the mine would not endanger anyone or anything, but first we need to receive guarantees from Europe that the environment and the lives of ordinary citizens will be preserved and improved with new jobs and higher wages than today," Vucic said on Monday. — AFP

Japan finds 'stealth' cure for zombie firms: Let them fail

KAKAMIGAHARA, Japan: For much of its 72 years, Hitoshi Fujita's company was just another mom-and-pop business grinding out metal parts. Then it did something unusual for a small Japanese manufacturer: it expanded, buying two neighboring firms in the last decade. If more small companies don't follow suit, Fujita says, the country that transformed global manufacturing in the 20th century is looking at a dim future. Years of faltering growth and population decline left many of Japan's small and medium-sized firms squeaking by on state help and almost-free funding. These companies, which account for around seven out of 10 jobs, now face a shake-up as pandemic-era support dwindles and interest rates rise for the first time in 17 years.

Japan's government is willing to let more underperforming companies fail, three senior government officials told Reuters, a previously unreported acknowledgment that they said reflects an urgent need to replace sclerotic businesses with those able to deliver growth. While the officials did not expect such change to occur quickly, they described the shift in thinking as a clear departure for a country that has typically sought to avoid bankruptcies and protect existing jobs at the cost of productivity.

The move will help Japan channel workers and investment to its most productive companies in a tight labor market, boosting wages, said the officials, granted anonymity to discuss a sensitive issue.

To be sure, the government expects the change to come via mergers and acquisitions, rather than large-scale bankruptcies and lay-offs, one of the people said. The government has help centers to advise small businesses on M&A. This rethink of Japan's traditional approach to business faces several hurdles, not least the social contract that has governed the postwar economy, according to interviews with 20 people, including five government

officials, bankers, industry experts and three business owners. "Many owners of small manufacturers are from the generation before me and tend to manage their business as engineers," said the 46-year-old Fujita, who runs Sakai Seisakusyo in Kakamigahara, central Japan. "They don't really have applicable skills when it comes to buying another company."

Fujita's firm makes parts for faucets and semiconductors, and he wants to expand more into higher-value components. In a written response to questions, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said it would continue to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with funding and other measures, adding that companies needed to boost their earning power through investment and increased productivity. It said bankruptcies were now "on a slight upward trend" and had returned to pre-pandemic levels, while workers were changing jobs for better conditions, including higher wages. "We will continue to closely monitor the situation to ensure bankruptcies do not increase to an inappropriate level that would cause the unemployment rate to rise," it said.

Zombie problem

Some 251,000 companies were "zombies" last year, meaning their profits didn't cover interest payments over an extended period, according to research firm Teikoku Databank, the highest in more than a decade. The vast majority had 300 or fewer employees. Under government measures released in March, banks are encouraged to help turn around weak companies instead of continuing to prop them up with loans. The measures don't directly mention zombies or "economic metabolism," a term policymakers use to refer to stronger companies replacing weaker ones.

When asked if more companies would be allowed to fail, one of the senior offi-



TOKYO: People walk along a street in Tokyo. — AFP

cial said, "Yes, that is correct." But the government "cannot say that explicitly" as it would risk a public backlash that would be unwelcome for the ruling party, the official added. "By stealth, we are doing this, gradually doing this," the official said. "Japan's future will be bleak if we cannot raise productivity."

Japan ranks below the OECD average for annual wages and per capita GDP. The latter, a barometer of labor productivity, shows Japan at \$33,834, behind France and Italy. Still, there are limits to how much creative destruction Japan can stomach. In some rural areas, underperforming businesses remain essential to communities, a fourth official said. The government is careful not to be seen as "abandoning" support for small companies, said Tatsuro Oya of law firm Ohe Tanaka and Oya, who has experience restructuring small companies.

"They are trying to ease the pain as much as possible through the safety net of redirecting workers to growing companies," he said. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has pressured companies to boost pay. They delivered the biggest increase in three decades this year, averaging 5.1 percent, with smaller ones averaging 4.5 percent, according to the Rengo union group, although that doesn't reflect wages

at many non-unionized small companies.

'Zero-zero'

SMEs shouldn't be recipients of "welfare policies," said Akira Amari, an influential lawmaker from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The aim is to help them increase productivity, profits and wages, so they can pay taxes, he said in an interview. Japan spent 63.2 trillion yen, or about \$400 billion, on SME support in the pandemic, according to a 2022 finance ministry report, with around \$267 billion disbursed as "zero-zero" loans, which required zero collateral and had zero-interest-payment grace periods.

Bankruptcies have surged as the loans came due. Almost 5,000 companies went under between January and June, the highest first-half tally in a decade, according to Teikoku Databank. Bankruptcies jumped by a third last year.

Amari said repeated M&A would allow smaller companies to expand into higher-margin industries, and allow employees to learn new skills. "We do not want medium-sized enterprises to remain medium-sized, they should aim to become large," he said. Fujita's company in Kakamigahara made its most recent acquisition in 2020, buying a maker of auto and medical parts. — Reuters

Farms vs forests in Brazil's Amazon as climate hurts crops

RIO DE JANEIRO: As drought and floods wreak havoc across Brazil, farmers are feeling the effects of the climate emergency but despite poor harvests and rotting crops, they are fighting to protect their right to fell more trees and convert grasslands. The southern Rio Grande do Sul state offers a clear example of the damage wrought by consecutive disasters: after prolonged droughts, analysts were predicting a record soybean harvest this year but instead the area was hit by devastating floods in June.

Around 170 people were killed and half a million people were driven from their homes. The floods also wiped out crops, with farmers predicting a drop of up to 15 percent in the soybean harvest in the world's top grower. "I now have debt from the droughts and from last year's crop," said Grazielle de Camargo, a soy and wheat producer in Sao Sepe municipality who had invested heavily to try to make up for previous losses.

"But I haven't reaped anything," said Camargo, a leader of the SOS Agro movement, which is seeking financial help from the government to cope with the effects of the climate crisis.

Farmers are also under pressure in Brazil's midwest, a grains powerhouse, and in the north where drought has damaged crops while wildfires have also raged. And they are bracing for more fires over the coming months. Last year's drought was the most severe on record in the Amazon. River levels fell sharply, disrupting shipments

of grain for export. Brazil's food supply agency Conab now says grain production will likely fall by 7 percent in 2023/24, a downward revision from its initial forecast of a 1 percent fall. Climate change cost the agricultural sector 240 billion reais (\$44.3 billion) between 2020 and 2023, according to analysis of government data carried out by Eduardo Monteiro, leading researcher on climate risk at the agricultural research agency Embrapa.

That's 2.5 times more than in the previous four years but farmers in the world's seventh largest emitter of greenhouse gases are often reluctant to discuss climate change, Monteiro said.

"In many agribusiness strongholds," he said, farmers see climate change as an excuse to promote "conservationist practices". And even though she has seen the effects of the climate emergency herself, Camargo does not believe the farming sector needs to change.

"Many say that 'agro' is responsible for climate change but this is a normal change. Eighty years ago there have been floods, it is part of a global cycle." Scientists said climate change made the flooding in Rio Grande do Sul twice as likely to happen and they warn that climate change, deforestation, fires and other human impacts are pushing the Amazon to a "tipping point" that could turn it into a drier environment resembling a savannah. But Marcelo Bertoni, president of the Federation of Cattle Ranching and Agriculture in the Mato Grosso do Sul state, said that weather extremes were a normal part of farmers' business.

"I am not a climate change denier," he said, but "society has always been through cycles of droughts and floods ... fires will always exist."

"Farmers are used to losses and gains, and with all that is happening we are still the biggest (soybean) producers in the world." Around 76 percent of Brazil's emissions are caused by ranching and the conversion of

forests and other wild spaces to farmland, according to a 2022 assessment from the Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removals Estimation System. When forests are cut down, the planet-heating carbon stored in their trees is released into the atmosphere if they rot or are burned, contributing to global warming.

But farmers are pushing back against calls to rein in deforestation and land conversion. They say that Brazil's 2012 Forest Code guarantees their right to cut down trees on sections of their properties.

Many farmers are also undeterred by international efforts to stop deforestation, such as the European Union's Regulation on Deforestation Free Products (EUDR), which will bar agricultural products produced on recently deforested land from entering the bloc from December. Such bans "come from American and European (environmental) foundations, and we don't even sell to them," said Luis Marasca Fuchs, vice president of the Rio Grande do Sul section of Aprosoja, the association of soybean growers. "Our markets are much more in China and the Middle East," he said.

Crops and pastures now cover 33 percent of Brazil's territory, according to data from MapBiomass, a collaboration between universities, non-profits and technology firms, and this area is expanding, legally and illegally. Under the Forest Code, about 85 million hectares (around 210 million acres) within private properties could be legally deforested, according to analysis from the Forest Code Observatory.

Last year, lawmakers with ties to agribusiness championed and passed a bill limiting Indigenous land claims, which may free up further areas for conversion to farmland. Brazil's Supreme Court is expected to decide if the law is constitutional, but there is still no date for a ruling. And now pro-farming legislators are trying to change the constitution to bypass an eventual ruling by



JOSE BOITEUX, Brazil: Farmer Cuzu Nukle, 66, volunteers at the camp for indigenous people who fled their villages due to the flooding of the Hercilio River after heavy rains in the region, in José Boiteux, Santa Catarina state, Brazil. — AFP

the country's top court. And there are more threats to nature on the horizon.

The Climate Observatory, a network of Brazilian environmental NGOs, found that there were 25 bills and three proposed constitutional amendments that could expand what is considered legal deforestation, including in the Amazon, if passed. Under current rules, private properties in the Amazon biome must protect the natural vegetation on 80 percent of their land but a new bill would reduce that threshold to 50 percent in municipalities where half of the territory is already protected as natural reserves. In a written response to questions from the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the Parliamentary Agricultural Front, the most powerful Congressional caucus, said the bill seeks a "balance between environmental conservation and economic development in the Amazon region". — Reuters

IMF maintains 2024 global growth forecast at 3.2%

US, Japan outlooks cut; inflation and trade risks loom

WASHINGTON: The IMF held its global growth expectations for 2024 steady in a report Tuesday even as it cut forecasts for the United States and Japan, while warning of inflation risks and trade tensions ahead. The International Monetary Fund expects the world economy to grow 3.2 percent this year, unchanged from its April forecast, according to its World Economic Outlook update.

"Global activity and world trade firmed up at the turn of the year, with trade spurred by strong exports from Asia, particularly in the technology sector," said the fund. For 2025, it expects global growth of 3.3 percent.

But even as many countries saw better growth than anticipated in the first three months this year, the IMF flagged what it called notable surprises in Japan and the United States. The Washington-based lender also cautioned that upside risks to inflation have increased, with services prices holding up disinflation.

This increases the prospect of interest rates staying elevated for longer, "in the context of escalating trade tensions and increased policy uncertainty." An area of concern is trade and industrial policy, with countries potentially adopting measures that impact the global economy's integration, said IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas. Asked if risk assessments have shifted after the attempted assassination of former US president Donald Trump, the Republican Party's nominee in November's election, Gourinchas noted the fund will consider its implications.

While world growth appears stable, the IMF has lowered projections for the United States and

Japan. US growth in 2024 was downgraded to 2.6 percent, 0.1 percentage points below April's forecast, due to a "slower-than-expected start to the year," said the fund. Japan's economy was seen expanding 0.2 percentage points less than expected, by 0.7 percent this year.

This was mainly thanks to temporary supply disruptions and weak private investment in the first quarter. The euro area meanwhile is showing signs of recovery, with relatively strong services activity, Gourinchas said, although manufacturing shows weakness.

China and India are expected to power activity in Asia - with China's 2024 forecast revised up to 5.0 percent on a private consumption rebound and strong exports. India, meanwhile, is set to grow 7.0 percent, partly on better prospects for consumption. Gourinchas also flagged risks to China stemming from weak confidence and unresolved property sector problems.

Should domestic demand weaken, China would rely more on the external sector - a situation that countries like the United States are pushing back against.

There also remain risks of sticky inflation amid renewed trade or geopolitical tensions, the IMF cautioned, even as it expects inflation to return to target by end-2025. Wage growth, if accompanied by weak productivity, could make it tough for firms to ease price increases. An escalation of trade tensions could also raise near-term inflation risks, by lifting costs of imported goods, IMF said.

Higher inflation could heighten the chances that interest rates stay elevated for longer, increasing fi-



AMRITSAR, India: A man transports bananas on a horse-cart along a road in Amritsar. The IMF held its global growth expectations for 2024 steady in a report Tuesday. — AFP

ancial risks. The IMF called for careful monetary policy adjustments.

A resurgence of tariffs can also trigger retaliation and a "costly race to the bottom," said the report.

Another source of uncertainty is the chance of "significant swings in economic policy as a result of elections this year, with negative spillovers to the rest of the world." — AFP

News in Brief

Uganda's coffee shipments up

KAMPALA: Uganda's coffee exports in June rose 18.2 percent from a year earlier helped by a bumper crop in the south and south-west, major growing regions where the harvest is underway, the state-run sector regulator said. Shipments of the beans rose to 667,037 60-kilogram bags from 563,832 bags a year earlier, the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) said in a report seen by Reuters on Tuesday. Coffee and gold are Uganda's two biggest exports and major sources of foreign exchange. The country earned \$1.1 billion from its coffee crop in the 12 months to June, UCDA said, up from \$846 million the previous year. — Reuters

Japan continues forex intervention

TOKYO: Japan may have spent an additional 2.14 trillion yen (\$13.50 billion) on Friday in the foreign exchange market as it intervened to shore up the yen late last week, Bank of Japan data suggested on Tuesday. The central bank's projection for Wednesday's money market conditions indicated a 2.74 trillion yen net receipt of funds, compared with a 600 billion yen net receipt estimate from money market brokerages, that excludes intervention. The data suggests the Ministry of Finance could have spent around 2.14 trillion yen intervening in the market on Friday. That's on top of the 3.37-3.57 trillion yen it is estimated to have spent on Thursday. — Reuters

Russian ruble strengthens slightly

MOSCOW: The Russian ruble strengthened slightly against the dollar on Tuesday after weakening a day earlier, the first day of trading following the government's move to loosen further mandatory foreign currency sales requirements for exporters. By 1050 GMT, the ruble was 0.3 percent higher at 88.05 against the dollar. Sanctions on the 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. — Reuters

Byju's begins bankruptcy proceedings

MUMBAI: An Indian tribunal began bankruptcy proceedings against troubled educational technology firm Byju's on Tuesday over a \$19 million unpaid sponsorship debt owed to the country's powerful cricket board. Byju's had rode a boom in demand for online learning products during the coronavirus pandemic but crashed hard after locked-down students returned to classrooms. Tuesday's ruling was the latest blow to the crashed company, once one of India's most hyped start-ups that has since lost more than 90 percent of its peak \$20 billion valuation. — AFP

Bolivia finds natural gas 'mega-field'

LA PAZ, Bolivia: Bolivia has discovered a massive natural gas field with reserves of 1.7 trillion cubic feet, its biggest discovery of the fuel since 2005, President Luis Arce said Monday. The South American nation, which was hit by an attempted coup last month, is battling a severe economic crisis due to a shortage of US dollars prompted by a dramatic drop in exports of natural gas - once a mainstay of the economy. The discovery amounts to enough gas to power Mexico or Italy for a year, according to 2020 consumption figures from the US Energy Information Administration. Arce said during a public appearance that "we have discovered a mega-field" north of the capital La Paz, after a \$50 million investment in exploration. — AFP

China making youth unemployment a 'top priority'

SHANGHAI, China: At a job fair for soon-to-be graduates in central Shanghai, recruiters sat bored under washed-out tarps as rain and an apparent lack of interest kept potential young employees away.

The empty seats belied China's stubbornly high youth unemployment rate - a problem so pressing that President Xi Jinping has told top Communist Party (CCP) cadres it should be a "top priority".

His words have been seen by many analysts as a signal that reforms could be in the pipeline ahead of the ongoing Third Plenum, a meeting that has historically unveiled important changes in economic policy direction. Youth unemployment stood at 14.2 percent in May, official data showed - and last month, another 11.8 million students graduated from university, adding to the bottleneck. That number had soared to an unprecedented 21.3 percent in mid-2023 before officials paused publishing monthly figures. They began releasing them again in December after adjusting the calculation method.

Hospitality and human resources firms dominated the small job fair in late May, one of many hosted by local authorities in anticipation of an influx of university leavers.

"It's difficult to find a job that matches your degree and aspirations," one of the few young jobseekers at the fair, a data sciences student, told AFP. "Lots of college students actually have too high expectations," said Julia Shao, who was recruiting for a restaurant chain. "They do not prefer this kind of basic position. They prefer... a fancy job."

Xi specifically mentioned graduates in a speech to the CCP Politburo in May, noting that "more jobs should be created for them to apply what they have learned and what they are adept at". His remarks follow "a steady drumbeat of comments from China's leadership underlining the urgency" of the matter, Erica Tay, director of macro research at Maybank, told AFP. The issue has been hanging over the government for some time. Together with persistently low consumption and a long-running property sector crisis, the unemployment situation has been labelled a key culprit for China's uneven post-pandemic recovery.

"While details in Xi's comments are vague, it's clear a policy shift is under way," said Harry Murphy Cruise of Moody's

US retail sales flat in June as consumption cools

WASHINGTON: Retail sales in the United States slipped less than analysts anticipated in June on a weaker performance in the auto and gas segments, government data showed Tuesday. The slower consumption growth adds to recent data showing that the world's biggest economy is cooling gradually, although there is still some way to go.

A downward trend is likely to raise the central bank's confidence that it can soon begin cutting interest rates. To ease demand and bring inflation back down sustainably, the Federal Reserve has rapidly lifted the benchmark lending rate and in recent months, held it at a decades-high level.

In June, overall retail sales were \$704.3 billion, virtually unchanged from May's figure, according to the Department of Commerce. Analysts had expected a 0.3 percent drop, and May's increase was revised slightly higher as well. From a year ago, the rise in June was 2.3 percent, a cooldown from the prior month as well. Analysts have long been expecting consumers to pull back as higher interest rates bite, lifting borrowing costs for consumers and businesses.

"We believe that consumption growth will, if anything, slow further in (the second half this year), as high interest rates continue to weigh on demand and the labor market takes a further turn for the worse," said Pantheon Macroeconomics



SHANGHAI: People visit a job fair in Shanghai. — AFP

Analytics. "We expect policies aimed at reducing youth unemployment to be a key pillar of the discussions (at the Third Plenum)." Xi has said young people should be encouraged "to find jobs or start businesses in key fields (and) industries". "Market-oriented and social channels should be expanded for young people to find a job," he was quoted as saying. Murphy Cruise said he expected the government to increase wage subsidies to persuade companies to hire recent graduates, as well as create more work placements for students. However, these were only "band-aid solutions", he said.

In the long term, "larger industrial and education policy reforms" were needed to ensure a better match between graduates' skills and employer demands, he said. There is now a push to fill roles that "dovetail with key policy priorities" or where skills shortages exist, said Tay, like industrial upgrading and scientific innovation. With job opportunities drying up for those holding sociology, journalism and law degrees, she said, some kind of "government-sponsored earn-as-you-learn training programs" might be needed to fill more in-demand roles. Near the law faculty

of a top Shanghai university, final-year students said the job market was indeed tough.

"Post-pandemic, it is a little more difficult than before," 22-year-old Qian Le said, referencing recent layoffs and pay cuts at top Chinese law firms. "Even those who are already in jobs may not be able to keep them, so it may be more difficult for new people to get in." Qian and her classmate Wang Hui had both opted to pursue further study. "The economic situation is quite sluggish, many companies have gone bankrupt, and many jobs have been reduced," Wang told AFP.

China's once-free-wheeling private sector has slowed significantly, in part because of past government crackdowns on companies including tech giants and private tutoring firms. Many young people are opting to study for civil service exams - seen as a more stable option - or like Wang and Qian, taking on post-graduate degrees. In March, universities urged their students to actively look for jobs instead, said Tay. But "competition is huge, and the number of undergraduates is gradually increasing every year", Wang said. — AFP



CHICAGO, US: Merchandise is offered for sale in a Neiman Marcus store along the Magnificent Mile in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

in a recent note. Even as consumption appears to have slowed, "conditions are far from weakening to a point that would be considered recessionary," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in a note.

She expects the latest data - coupled with improved readings on inflation - will allow the Fed to ease monetary policy, likely in September. Among sectors, sales at auto dealers dropped 2.3 percent from May, while those at gas stations dropped 3.0 percent.

But excluding auto and gas, total retail sales was up 0.8 percent in June - indicating that there is still some way to go in easing demand. Sales at restaurants and bars was up 0.3 percent from a month prior, the Commerce Department report showed.

The Fed is set to make its next rate decision at the end of July, and analysts widely expect the central bank to begin lowering rates in September. — AFP

Iraq invites private companies to run Baghdad airport

BAGHDAD: Iraqi authorities called on international private sector companies to bid for the expansion and operation of Baghdad's international airport after years of neglect in the conflict-scarred country.

In September, the government signed an agreement with the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) to invite private companies to upgrade Iraq's main airport. Iraq "is launching a two-stage public tender to select a private partner to rehabilitate, expand, finance, operate, and maintain Baghdad International Airport under a long-term Public-Private Partnership (PPP) contract," according to the official document calling for bidders and seen by AFP Tuesday. It is the "first time that the Iraqi government, in cooperation with the IFC, opens its airports to private international investment," Farhad Alaaldin, the prime minister's foreign affairs adviser, told AFP.

It is "a step that will elevate the aviation sector to international standards", he added.

The deadline to submit bids is September 12, and the winner "is expected to modernize and rehabilitate the airport infrastructure, expand passenger and cargo terminal facilities... and operate and maintain the airport in line with international best practice," the document added.

The IFC, according to the document, "is acting as the lead transaction advisor for this PPP project".

Alaaldin said the tender process relies "on the IFC to have oversight over the project from its inception and to work on the economic model". The IFC's involvement, it is hoped, will "give more confidence to the world class companies to bid", Alaaldin said. — AFP

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2024



A Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) perches on the branch of a bush in the Hummingbird's House.



Zonzuncito hummingbirds (*Mellisuga helenae*) feed at the Hummingbird's House.



A Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) perches on the branch of a bush in the Hummingbird's House.

In Cuba, a haven for the world's tiniest bird



A Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) perches on the branch of a bush in the Hummingbird's House.

The wings of the world's tiniest birds are a near-invisible blur as they whizz around tourists visiting a private Cuban garden that has become a haven for the declining species. The bee hummingbird, which measures just five to six centimeters (two inches) long, is only found in Cuba. Its losses have been huge, with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) saying it has disappeared from many areas due to deforestation. But in Palpite, in the southwest of the country, Bernabe Hernandez, 75, has turned his garden into a paradise for the bitty bird.

"We never get tired of it. We always discover something new!" he said as he watched two of the hummingbirds (*Mellisuga helenae*) zip towards a hanging water bath. Cubans call them "zunzuncito," a word evoking the sound of the buzzing of their tiny wings, which can flap up to 100 times a minute. When Hurricane Michelle, one of the strongest to ever hit Cuba, devastated crops and homes in the area in 2001, "the zunzuncito disappeared. There were no more flowers, many died," according to local bird lover Orestes Martinez.

Hernandez moved to the village of Palpite after the hurricane destroyed his home. The government gave him land to rebuild on the edge of the Cienaga de Zapata, the largest wetland in the Caribbean. "I moved here, but there were no birds," he told AFP. "So I planted a 'ponasi' to provide shade and attract some birds," he said, referring to a shrub whose fruit is sought after by birds. He did not know that the shrub's flowers were a delicacy for bee hummingbirds, who quickly flocked to his garden, which

also boasts mango, guava and avocado trees. "When I first saw a zunzuncito, I thought it was an insect," he said. He decided to plant more of the shrubs and his lush garden soon buzzed with hummingbirds, which nested in nearby woods.

of the Hummingbirds." Visitors hold up bird feeders to lure the tiny birds closer. Guides from the Cienaga de Zapata National Park, known for its diversity of bird life, with over 175 species, aided Hernandez and his wife Juana Matos with

only during the mating season.

For the amateur ornithologist Martinez, the garden is an important sanctuary for the minuscule hummingbird, classified as "near-threatened" by the IUCN, which estimates its numbers at



'The House of the Hummingbirds'

Another hummingbird, the Cuban Emerald, which measures up to 10 centimeters, also frequents the garden, which was opened to tourists in 2003 and is now known as "The House

of the Hummingbirds." Visitors hold up bird feeders to lure the tiny birds closer. Guides from the Cienaga de Zapata National Park, known for its diversity of bird life, with over 175 species, aided Hernandez and his wife Juana Matos with

between 22,000-60,000. The garden helps "protect the bird. During the breeding season, the female can more easily gather food for the chicks." — AFP



Tourists take photos of a Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) in the Hummingbird's House.



A Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) perches on the branch of a bush in the Hummingbird's House.



Bernabe Hernandez prepares a mixture of water and sugar to feed Zonzuncito hummingbirds (*Mellisuga helenae*) in his backyard, which he baptized the Hummingbird's House.



A Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) feeds at the Hummingbird's House.



Bernabe Hernandez feeds a Zonzuncito hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) a mixture of water and sugar in his backyard, which he baptized as the Hummingbird's House.



Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya (left) and her husband Alexei Kuchko (right) pose for the picture in the kitchen on their farm. — AFP photos



The Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya prepares cheese on their farm.



Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya presents cheeses she and her husband Alexei Kuchko made on the farm.

Cheese heals pain of exile for Belarusians who fled to Poland

With a smile enveloped by steam rising from a pot of milk simmering on a stove, Yulia Bachurinskaya reminisces about the moment she fell “deeply in love” with cheese. The Belarusian cheesemaker traces the start of this love affair back to trips to Italy as a child in the mid-1990s. The tours were organized by a nonprofit organization helping Belarusian children like her who grew up in the zone contaminated by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear

parents, or go back,” said the 40-year-old from the city of Gomel in southeastern Belarus.

“But we can’t think about that all of the time, we have to move forwards,” she added. Bachurinskaya and her husband Alexei Kuchko, 42, remain in frequent contact with many other exiles, with whom they speak their native Belarusian rather than the Russian language preferred by the government back home.

Hundreds of thousands have fled the country in the last few years following a crackdown on protests after President Alexander Lukashenko claimed victory in a 2020 presidential election that rights groups said was fraudulent. The couple arrived in Poland in late 2021 and are now settled on a farm in the village of Balazowka in the Carpathian Mountains, where they live alongside 37 sheep and five goats.

No permission

The couple have been making cheese since ditching their office jobs in Minsk—Bachurinskaya was a translator from Italian and Kuchko worked in marketing—and settling in the northern Belarus countryside in 2015. Their efforts paid off with the duo specializing in farm-to-table artisanal cheese in a country where the agricultural sector remains largely linked to its collectivist past and where most farms are state-owned. Lukashenko—a former collective farm director—boasts that he has created a paradise for farmers. The reality on the ground and in the fields was very different, according to the couple. “Let’s imagine you want to buy French sheep in Belarus... If you’re an average guy, no one will give you permission. If you’re a friend of Lukashenko, you’ll have everything,” said Kuchko.

Five years after they left the capital, Belarus was upended after Lukashenko claimed to have won 80 percent of

the vote in polls, as he sought a sixth term as president. For weeks, tens of thousands took to the streets to protest against the alleged fraud.

Under mounting pressure from the demonstrations, Lukashenko turned to

hko feared arrest after campaigning for imprisoned opposition figure Viktor Babaryko.

And then in late 2021, they decided it was time to leave the country. The couple managed to leave with their two

that Bachurinskaya says combines the “piquant taste of goat cheese with the creaminess of brie”. The concoctions are later sold in the city of Krakow, a 90-minute drive away, or via their Instagram account, Krapacheese. Despite



The Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya take cares of sheep on the farm.

disaster. “The farmers made ricotta the old-fashioned way,” she said of the experience that prompted her to learn both Italian and the art of traditional cheese making.

And then in central France’s Auvergne—home to some of the nation’s most beloved cheeses such as Saint-Nectaire, Cantal and Fourme d’Ambert—she discovered the “obligatory plate of cheese enjoyed after each meal”. These experiences set Bachurinskaya, alongside her husband, on a lifelong journey dedicated to making cheese, both before and after fleeing political repression in Belarus and resettling in Poland. “We can’t see our



Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya prepares cheese on the farm.

Russian President Vladimir Putin for support, as he brutally cracked down on the protests. Opposition figures were rounded up and some allegedly tortured, while more than 300,000 of the country’s 9.3 million residents fled abroad, according to UN figures. For months, Bachurinskaya and Kuc-

horses by passing them off as race-horses, but parted with most of their livestock. Once across the border in Poland, they started to slowly rebuild after finding a piece of land and buying new sheep and goats. In their kitchen, they make around 10 varieties of cheese by hand, including one creation

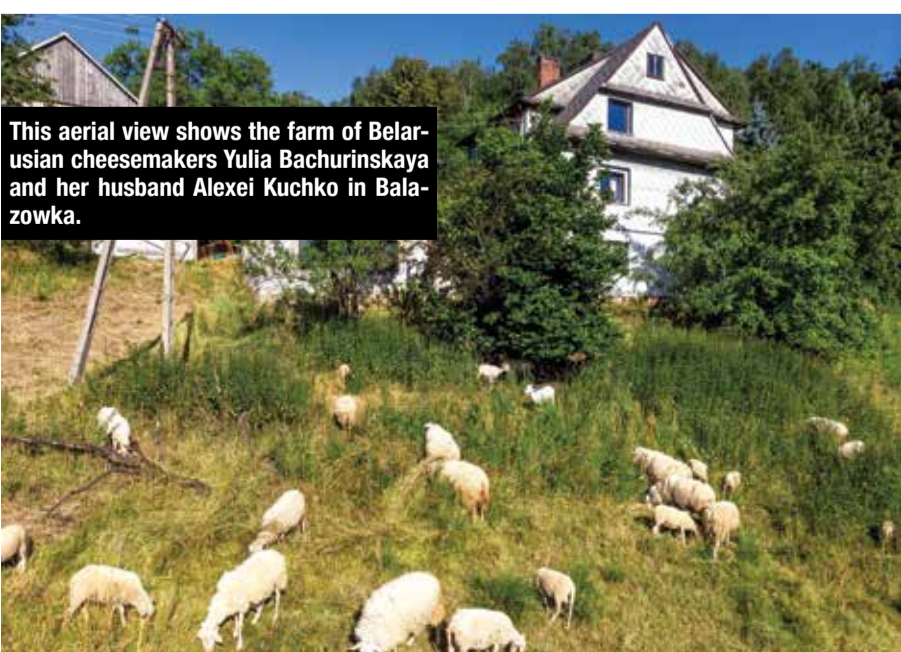
all the hardships, the couple say they remain grateful for what they have and the cheese they are able to share with the world. “We have very little time to be sad,” Bachurinskaya told AFP. “And I’m happy about that.”—AFP



This aerial view shows the farm of Belarusian cheesemakers Yulia Bachurinskaya and her husband Alexei Kuchko.



Two goats belonging to the Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya and her husband Alexei Kuchko are seen on their farm in Balazowka, Lesser Poland region.



This aerial view shows the farm of Belarusian cheesemakers Yulia Bachurinskaya and her husband Alexei Kuchko in Balazowka.



Belarusian cheesemaker Yulia Bachurinskaya (left) and her husband Alexei Kuchko (right) are seen in the barn taking care of their horses on the farm.



Belarusian cheesemaker Alexei Kuchko takes care of horses on his farm.

Lifestyle



This photo shows actress Guo Ting (right) performing during an audition in Hengdian in east China's Zhejiang Province.—AFP photos



Ouyang (left) reacting during a livestream at an e-commerce company in Yiwu in east China's Zhejiang Province.



Actress Guo Ting putting on make-up at her apartment in Hengdian in east China's Zhejiang Province.

YOUNG CHINESE SEEK ALTERNATIVE JOBS IN SHIFTING ECONOMY

Braving loneliness, tough auditions and an unfamiliar hot and humid climate, aspiring actor Guo Ting is determined to make it in China's answer to Hollywood. The 27-year-old from northern China quit her white-collar job in Beijing this year to move to subtropical Hengdian, home to major movie studios and casting agencies.

Guo is part of a trend of young Chinese giving up the traditional aspiration of a stable, mainstream job in exchange for alternative careers and a chance at self-fulfillment. She has dreamed of becoming an actor since childhood, an ambition initially squashed by pragmatic adults around her.

But after a few years working in an office, Guo now believes "happiness is most important". Chinese media and online posts in recent years have drawn public attention to young people trading in their careers for a diverse range of other options, including a nomadic "van life", becoming an influencer, or pursuing art. While they remain a small minority, the growing discussion around their choices reflects broader changes in the world's second-largest economy after decades of breakneck growth. Some people, especially those from more prosperous backgrounds, now "try to redefine what is successful", said Miao Jia, a sociology expert from New York University Shanghai.

"When they receive better education and after they have enjoyed the benefits brought by rapid economic growth, (young people) begin to think about what things can make you happy," she told AFP.

Shifting norms

Guo's decision to restart her career comes at a time of major shifts in how young Chinese people perceive work.

In recent years, more defeatist concepts like "lying flat" and "letting it rot" have gained popularity among those grappling with intense job competition.

At the same time, other jobseek-

Miao of NYU Shanghai. And while going to an office may be the norm for urban middle-class youth, for large parts of the country, desk jobs are a rare opportunity.

For Ouyang, a 20-year-old middle school graduate living in global trading hub Yiwu, the small fluorescent-lit office where he helps run an e-com-

merce business is a novelty.

'Routine was meaningless'

Back in Hengdian, Guo prepared for an audition with a meticulous multi-step skincare routine in the apartment she shares with other film industry hopefuls. Getting ready to play a cor-

porate character working at a fictional firm, she rummaged through her wardrobe for an outfit similar to those she wore for her office job.

The casting agent's office was next door to a community space run by an actors' union, where dozens of people sat waiting for auditions and job interviews. "I feel some pressure, because when you're just starting, you don't decide when to act in a

film, the choice is in someone else's hands," Guo told AFP.

Currently, she only makes around 2,000 yuan (\$275) a month from the handful of jobs she can secure. "In the past, I had a stable monthly salary, and I never had to worry that I wouldn't have enough to spend," she said.

The change from the more social



Ouyang (left) reacting during a livestream at an e-commerce company in Yiwu in east China's Zhejiang Province.



Actress Guo Ting getting ready for an audition in Hengdian.

ers anxious about an ongoing economic slowdown and a volatile private sector have flocked to the "iron rice bowls" of civil service and state-owned enterprise jobs. Many others have trouble finding work altogether, with youth unemployment reaching 14.2 percent in May.

"The younger generation in China is becoming more and more diverse than the previous generation," said

commerce business is a novelty. In his hometown in central China's Henan province, Ouyang, who asked to be identified by a nickname over privacy concerns, "did everything".

"I was a restaurant server. It was very chaotic, and it felt like I was just killing time with work," he said. Put off by the lower pay in his hometown, Ouyang recently jumped at the chance to become a livestream seller of cheap

porate character working at a fictional firm, she rummaged through her wardrobe for an outfit similar to those she wore for her office job.

The casting agent's office was next door to a community space run by an actors' union, where dozens of people sat waiting for auditions and job interviews. "I feel some pressure, because when you're just starting, you don't decide when to act in a

environment of her former workplace to a solitary freelance life was also hard to adjust to initially. But Guo said she and her peers were motivated by more than just money. The other Hengdian transplants she knows who left mainstream jobs "felt that following a prescribed routine was meaningless."—AFP



Japanese actor and producer Hiroyuki Sanada (left) with Japanese actors Anna Sawai and Tadanobu Asano (right) attend FX's "Shogun" FYC Event at the Directors Guild of America Theater in Los Angeles, California, on June 11, 2024. —AFP photos



Jessica Gunning and Richard Gadd at the SAG-AFTRA Foundation Robin Williams Center on June 6, 2024 in New York City.

'Shogun' v 'The Bear'? Hit TV shows await Emmy nominations

Hit series "Shogun," "The Bear," and "Baby Reindeer" are expected to rack up nominations for this year's Emmys as the contenders for television's version of the Oscars are unveiled Wednesday. Nominees will be announced in a live-streamed ceremony starting at 8:30 am Pacific time (1530 GMT), after which final-round voting begins for the 76th Emmy Awards, set for September 15.

Here are five things to look out for:

'Shogun' brings the drama

"Shogun" -- adapted from James Clavell's historical fiction novel -- transported viewers to early 17th-century Japan. Starting from the perspective of a marooned English sailor, its scope widens over 10 acclaimed episodes to span the intricate and deadly court politics of the era, fleshing out a remarkable cast of Japanese heroes and villains.

With another two seasons already in the works, it is a hot favorite in this year's drama categories. "Because it's got everything going for it in terms of acting, writing, directing" and many technical categories, "Shogun is probably going to be the top one," Deadline awards columnist Pete Hammond told AFP. "Shogun" faces competition from the final season of Netflix's British royal saga "The Crown," and Apple's "The Morning Show," starring Jennifer Aniston.

'Bear' continues rampage?

Set in a chaotic Chicago restaurant run by a group of close-knit but abrasive and occasionally abusive chefs, "The Bear" was a big winner for its debut season at last year's Emmys. It returned with an even more ambitious and experimental second run. Sumptuous montages of Michelin star-level dishes were paired with extraordinary episodes like "Fishies" -- an hour-long portrait of a dysfunctional family tearing itself apart over one excruciating dinner. Bizarrely entered in the Emmys' comedy categories, despite dealing with hard-hitting issues like grief and addiction, "The Bear" is expected to contend again. It is up against shows including "Hacks," "Abbott Elementary," "Only Murders in the Building" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm."

'Baby Reindeer' controversy

Limited series, for shows that end after a single season, is a category always packed with water-cooler hits. But this year, one made far more noise than the rest. Netflix's "Baby Reindeer," adapted from Scottish comedian Richard Gadd's pitch-black one-man show about his encounters with a female stalker, was a global phenomenon.

It was billed as a "true story" -- a claim that helped lure audiences, but sparked a lawsuit from a British woman who says she was the inspiration for the stalker and is demanding \$170 million in dam-

ages. "I don't think the controversy is going to hurt it in terms of nominations," said Hammond. "Baby Reindeer" is in contention against the likes of " Fargo," "True Detective," "Ripley" and "Lessons in Chemistry."

Deja vu

It often feels that award shows like the Emmys come round faster with each passing year. But this time, it really is true. The 76th Emmy Awards, scheduled for September 15, will be the second to take place in 2024, after last year's ceremony was postponed to January due to Hollywood strikes. Complicating matters further, some shows like "The Bear" have recently released new seasons that will not become eligible for awards until the 2025 Emmys. Confused? The upcoming edition of the Emmys will honor television series that were broadcast between June 2023 and May 2024.

Nominations announcement

Tony Hale ("Veep") and Sheryl Lee Ralph ("Abbott Elementary") unveil the nominations this Wednesday from 8.30am in Los Angeles (1530 GMT). Voting members of the US-based Television Academy will then have a month to catch up on their viewing, before final-round voting takes place in mid-August.—AFP

Romania seeks to cull nearly 500 bears after hiker killed

Romania's parliament on Monday approved the culling of almost 500 bears this year in a bid to control the protected species' "overpopulation" after a deadly hiker attack sparked nationwide outcry.

Romania is home to Europe's largest brown bear population outside of Russia with 8,000, according to the environment ministry. Bears have killed 26 people and severely injured 274 others over the last 20 years in the southeastern European country, the ministry said earlier this year.

After a young hiker was mauled to death on a popular trail in Romania's Carpathian Mountains, Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu summoned lawmakers back from their summer recess to attend an emergency session of parliament.

As well as adopting legislation to control the brown bear population, the parliament held a moment of silence in the 19-year-old hiker's memory.

The law adopted Monday authorizes the culling of 481 bears in 2024, more than twice last year's total of 220. Lawmakers argued that the bears' "overpopulation" had led to an increase in attacks, while admitting that the law will not prevent attacks in the future.

But environmental groups have denounced the measure. "The law solves

absolutely nothing," World Wildlife Fund biologist Calin Ardelean told AFP, arguing that the focus should be shifted towards "prevention and intervention" as well as so-called "problem bears".



A bear waits for passing cars that might provide food.

According to WWF Romania, culls will not remedy the problem unless measures are put in place to keep bears away from communities, such as better waste management or preventing people from feeding animals.

In 2023, about 7,500 emergency calls to signal bear sightings were recorded, more than double the previous year, according to data presented last week by Romanian authorities.—AFP



A bear waits for passing cars that might provide food, on September 29, 2023, on a road in Covasna, Romania.—AFP photos

Sports

Dodgers slugger Hernandez wins MLB Home Run Derby

Dominican slugger captured \$1m top prize in homer-bashing contest

WASHINGTON: Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Teoscar Hernandez edged Kansas City shortstop Bobby Witt Jr. 14-13 in the final to win Major League Baseball's Home Run Derby on Monday. The 31-year-old Dominican slugger captured the \$1 million top prize in the homer-bashing contest at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, ahead of Tuesday's MLB All-Star Game.

"This is amazing. Everything I'm feeling right now, there are no words to describe," said Hernandez, the first Dodger and seventh Dominican hitter to win the event. Each batter faced 27 pitches over two minutes plus bonus throws in the final.

Hernandez hit first and got to 11 with five homers off six swings late in his timed session. He then added three on bonus pitches to reach 14. Witt smashed 11 in his timed session and, after two off extra pitches, sent his final blast off the bottom of the centerfield wall, missing out by a couple feet to hand Hernandez the victory.

"I was getting pressured but he missed the first one and I was hoping he would miss that second one," Hernandez said. Witt, the son of a 16-year MLB pitcher, is a 24-year-old Texan who grew up a 20-minute drive from the ballpark.

In the semi-finals, Witt outsmashed Dominican third baseman Jose Ramirez of Cleveland 17-12. In a matchup of first-time Derby sluggers, Philadelphia third baseman Alec Bohm and Hernandez each hit 14 homers to set up a three-swing tie-breaker.

Hernandez belted two homers into the second

deck of the left-field stands and Bohm followed with a homer but popped up on his final swing to send Hernandez into the final. "I just need to make better decisions with the pitches I want so I can hit four or five in a row," Hernandez said after the semis.

In a rule change from past years, all eight batters competed together in the first round rather than in one-on-one duels, with the four top homer hitters advancing to the semis. Bohm opened with 21, Witt followed with 20, Adolis Garcia was next with 18 and Hernandez blasted 19 to set to the bar for the last four batters.

New York Mets first baseman Pete Alonso, the 2019 and 2021 Home Run Derby winner trying to match the record win total of Ken Griffey Jr., managed only 12 homers and was the first hitter eliminated. Ramirez went next and crushed 21 homers to match Bohm for the top spot and eliminate host-team favorite Garcia, a 31-year-old Cuban outfielder who helped spark the Texas Rangers to last year's World Series title.

Atlanta outfielder Marcell Ozuna followed and hit only 16 to clinch a spot for Witt. Baltimore shortstop Gunnar Henderson, third in MLB with 28 homers, smashed only 11 homers to send Hernandez into the last four with the smallest total.

"I have to get better pace and not be in a hurry because I've got plenty of time," Hernandez said after the first round. "Just try to get a good pitch and try to be consistent hitting it out." — AFP



ARLINGTON: Teoscar Hernandez #37 of the Los Angeles Dodgers poses with the trophy after winning the T-Mobile Home Run Derby at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

Moerat to debut as Springboks captain against Portugal

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa will be captained by Stormers lock Salmaan Moerat for the first time when a much-changed team plays Portugal in Bloemfontein on Saturday in a one-off Test. He takes over the captaincy of the reigning world champions from flanker Siya Kolisi, one of many regulars being rested after a bruising, drawn two-Test series against Ireland.

"Salmaan commands respect from his teammates, so we would like to congratulate him on this achievement," head coach Rassie Erasmus said of the six-cap forward. "We have no doubt that he will take on this responsibility as well as he has for the other teams he has led."

"He has come through the SA Rugby ranks and he went on to captain the Junior Springboks and SA Schools teams, as well as the Stormers and Western Province," Erasmus had made 14 changes to the side which started against Ireland in a 25-24 loss last Saturday.

There are also five changes to the bench, meaning only Moerat, fellow lock RG Snyman, winger Kurt-Lee Arendse and utility back Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu remain from the last matchday 23. Arendse is the lone

France sets 'zero tolerance' policy after horror tour

MARCOUSSIS: Florian Grill, the president of the French Rugby Federation (FFR), declared on Tuesday that the sport would impose a "zero tolerance" policy towards anti-social behavior from players. Speaking at a press conference in Marcoussis on his return from Argentina, where he had to deal with the arrest and subsequent indictment for aggravated rape of two players as well as the expulsion from the tour of another player for posting a racist video online, Grill said players needed "to have a sense of responsibility".

He also conjectured that the two players left behind under arrest in Argentina, Hugo Auradou, 20, and Oscar Jegou, 21, would likely face trial within "nine to 14 months". The two men were arrested on July 8 in Buenos Aires after a 39-year-old woman accused them of raping her multiple times and beating her in a Mendoza hotel room after the first Test match between Argentina and France, in which they both made their international debuts.

They deny the accusation, saying they had consensual sexual relations with the woman. If found guilty, the players face between eight and 20 years in prison. The examination of their request for house arrest is expected to take "at

Harman prepares for defence of 'coolest trophy'

TROON: Defending British Open champion Brian Harman heads to Royal Troon this week in the belief that he can become the first man since Padraig Harrington 16 years ago to claim back-to-back victories. The 37-year-old American shot a 1-under 70 in the rain-soaked final round at Royal Liverpool a year ago to finish six strokes clear of Tom Kim, Sepp Straka, Jason Day and Jon Rahm.

It was his first major championship title and made him just the third left-hander after Bob Charles (1963) and Phil Mickelson (2013) to win the Open but he is hoping it is not his last. "Any time that you become a major champion it certainly elevates your status in the game, elevates the way that you're perceived in the game," said Harman in his pre-tournament press conference.

"I try to take all of that in my stride, but at the same time understand that the golf is the most im-

portant thing. "I've tried to improve my golf game and get it in a place where I can maybe contend in some more majors down the road."

The world number 13 is certainly keen to get his hands back on the Claret Jug. He described it as the "coolest trophy" in sport and admitted that during his year of custody he had used it to enjoy some "unusually expensive wine" and some "unusually exceptional bourbon". Harman has just three career PGA Tour wins and none since his 2023 Open but he did finish second, just one stroke behind Scottie Scheffler, at the Players Championship at Sawgrass and professes to be pleased with his game.

"My stats this year have been really good, my ball striking has been as good as it's ever been," he said. "The only thing I haven't done well this year is I haven't putted especially well. So I'm just kind of waiting for it all to line up correctly."

"You can work and work and work. You just never know when that work is going to pay off. You never know when the peak is coming, when you're going to catch a little bit of momentum. "I've worked really hard, and my game is in really good shape. I'm happy with what I'm going into this week." Harman also played down the heckling he received in Liver-

pool last year. "It doesn't bother me," he said. "I'm ready to take whatever in my stride. I'm here to play the best golf that I possibly can. That's my main focus. "I've always loved the fans over here. I've spoken a bunch of times about how I find them the most knowledgeable fans of any that we play in front of. I kind of chalk last year up as more of an anomaly than anything else." — AFP

least 10 days", according to the public prosecutor's office in Mendoza.

Grill said Auradou and Jegou had failed to respect the framework governing foreign tours and deflected any blame from the tour management. "There is an extremely precise (tour) framework which has existed for years, based on autonomy and accountability," said Grill. "This framework was not respected by the players. It's not the staff who are to blame, it's the players who decided to step out of line." On the same night, full-back Melvyn Jaminet, 25, made racist remarks in a video posted on social networks, leading to his immediate exclusion from the squad.

'Raising awareness'

A report was made to the public prosecutor on July 12, Grill said on Tuesday, adding that the FFR would be looking to clamp down much harder on anti-social behavior. "We're going to step up raising awareness," he said.

"And we're also going to increase the penalties, which will now be financial but could go as far as temporary or permanent exclusion from the French teams. "For the rest, there will be zero tolerance."

"There will be a before and after Mendoza," Grill, however, kicked back at suggestions that rugby's traditional 'third half' in the bar afterwards was detrimental in itself with critics now claiming that cocaine is as much in evidence as beer.

At the start of last season, La Rochelle flanker Jegou was handed a one-month suspension when he tested positive for cocaine. "I don't believe that the spirit of the 'third half' should be called into question," he said.

depth by naming a few debutants."

Meanwhile, Former All Blacks hooker Norm Hewitt, who had been diagnosed with motor neuron disease, has died aged 55. New Zealand Rugby said Tuesday. Hewitt played 23 times for the All Blacks, including nine Tests, after he was first selected as an understudy to Sean Fitzpatrick for the 1993 series against the British and Irish Lions.

In 1997, Hewitt had an intense face-to-face showdown with England's Richard Cockerill during the haka before a match at Old Trafford. Hewitt later described the incident, which ended with pushing and shoving between the pair, as an ingrained part of "rugby folklore".

Researchers have found that professional rugby players are as much as 15 times more likely to develop motor neuron disease. English rugby league player Rob Burrow died earlier this year aged 41 after a four-year battle with the rare, degenerative illness. "I played against Norm as a young player, and he was uncompromising on the field but always gracious with his time off it," New Zealand Rugby chief executive Mark Robinson said.

Off the field, Hewitt made headlines in 1999 when he drunkenly broke into the wrong hotel room. It proved to be a life-changing incident as it made Hewitt realize he had to deal with his drinking problem and lead him to becoming a youth mentor. His name was immortalized in the television comedy series "Flight of the Conchords" starring Jemaine Clement and Bret McKenzie. — AFP



MARCOUSSIS: French Rugby Federation (FFR) President Florian Grill (L), next to FFR Vice-President Jean-Marc Lhermet, answers to journalists during a press conference in Marcoussis, south of Paris, on July 16, 2024. — AFP

"On the other hand, the spirit of responsibility, the acceptance of sanctions, the sense of duty, the sense of the collective interest, are also part of the values of rugby. "And I think we have to be capable of both letting off steam... and at the same time accepting a principle of responsibility and sanctions."

French rugby has had to deal with a number of incidents over the past year with international props Mohamed Haouas and Wilfried Houkpatin both convicted for domestic violence while lock Bastien Chalureau was also found guilty of assaulting two former rugby players. — AFP



TROON: US golfer Brian Harman (L) plays from the 15th tee during a practice round ahead of the 152nd British Open Golf Championship at Royal Troon on the south west coast of Scotland on July 16, 2024. — AFP

News in Brief

Euro 2024 referee rule

BERLIN: A rule that only a team captain can talk to referees, introduced at Euro 2024, will be applied to all levels of German football, the German FA (DFB) announced Tuesday. Under the rule, players who approach a referee to discuss a decision will be given yellow cards. The German FA said the rule would be adopted in both men's and women's football from the professional level through to local leagues. The rule, designed to promote more respect for referees and clearer interactions with match officials, was implemented in all UEFA club competitions early in July. Several yellow cards were handed out for non-captains approaching referees at Euro 2024. A total of 161 yellows were handed out in the group stages alone. At Euro 2020, the total for the entire tournament was 151. Ansgar Schwenken, the Director of Match Operations and Fans at the Bundesliga, said the rule was "the logical step for more fairness and respect." — AFP

France unhappy with insults

PARIS: The French Football Federation (FFF) plans to complain to FIFA about racist chants from members of Argentina's Copa America winning team. The chants were heard during a live video posted on social media by Chelsea and Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez from the team bus in the wake of the Copa victory over Colombia in Miami on Sunday. Some players, including Fernandez, sing a chant that dates back to the 2022 World Cup final that Argentina won against France that targets France's star striker Kylian Mbappe and includes homophobic insults. A source close to the FFF told AFP on Tuesday that the French body plans to write to the Argentinian football federation and refer the matter to FIFA. Two years ago, the FFF also filed a complaint against racist comments on social media. — AFP

Stuttgart sign Demirovic

BERLIN: Bundesliga side Stuttgart on Tuesday announced the signing of striker Ermedin Demirovic from Augsburg until 2028 ahead of their return to the Champions League this season. The Bosnia and Herzegovina international joins for a reported fee of 21 million euros (23 million dollars) plus up to 5 million euros in additions, which makes the deal both a record purchase for Stuttgart and a record sale for Augsburg. Stuttgart, who needed to win a relegation playoff to stay in the Bundesliga in 2023, surprisingly finished second in the table last season, ahead of perennial champions Bayern Munich. The second-place finish meant Stuttgart qualified for the Champions League for the first time since 2009-10. Demirovic looks set to replace Serhou Guirassy, who scored 28 goals in 28 games for Stuttgart last season but has been linked with a move to Borussia Dortmund. Guirassy had arrived in Dortmund but the transfer was postponed after a medical check. Dortmund announced on X, formerly Twitter, "an injury was discovered which requires further investigation." — AFP

Colombian soccer chief released

MIAMI: Colombian Football Federation president Ramon Jesurun has been released on bail following his arrest at Copa America final, according to videos published in Colombian media on Monday. A Miami-Dade County police file indicated Jesurun had been arrested on charges of "assault on officer/employee" on Sunday night at Hard Rock Stadium. Security guards refused Jesurun access to the field, with his son and other family members, for the awards ceremony after Argentina defeated Colombia 1-0, a scuffle broke out and Jesurun and his son were arrested, Colombian newspaper El Tiempo reported. "This badge says 'full access' and a security guard... disregarded it," Jesurun said, pointing to his official credentials after he was released having reportedly posted \$2,000 bail. "I insisted (to the security guard) that I should enter and he pushed me and a ridiculous, unnecessary melee broke out," the 71-year-old Jesurun told the El Heraldo newspaper. There was chaos at the match, which was delayed by 82 minutes, as spectators stormed the gates at the home of the NFL Miami Dolphins, with people pushed to the ground and others trying to sneak into the stadium through air-conditioning ducts. — AFP

Sports

France's leading goalscorer Olivier Giroud ends international career

'France team I served for 13 years will always be engraved in my heart'

PARIS: France's all-time leading goalscorer Olivier Giroud confirmed his international retirement on Monday, calling time on a career that saw him score 57 goals in 137 appearances. "The long-dreaded moment has arrived: The moment of saying goodbye to the French national team," Giroud wrote on Instagram. "We've become an inseparable band of mates under the watchful eye of one man: The coach, Didier Deschamps, whom I thank for his trust. Despite our ups and downs, he has enabled me to become Les Bleus' all-time top scorer."

"The France team I served for 13 years will always be engraved in my heart. It is my greatest pride and my fondest memory," added the 37-year-old.

Over the course of his international career, Giroud won the World Cup in 2018 and was also a World Cup and European Championship runner-up. He broke Thierry Henry's national goalscoring record of 51 at the 2022 World Cup finals in Qatar where France did not surrender the title they won in 2018 easily, losing to Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina on penalties in the final.

Giroud made his debut in 2011 and scored his first goal during his third cap when he netted the opener in a 2-1 friendly win against Germany.

He scored the last of his record-setting 57 goals for the French national team in March 2024 with what

proved to be the winner in a narrow victory over Chile.

The striker had said in May that Euro 2024 would be his last major international tournament. He made four appearances from the bench as France reached the semi-finals where they lost to eventual winners Spain.

The former Arsenal, Chelsea and AC Milan striker will join Major League Soccer outfit Los Angeles FC next season. "He had a lot of good moments, but also some more difficult ones," coach Didier Deschamps said. "He is an example of longevity, seriousness and professionalism. Even though he had less playing time at this Euro, he was fully with the squad. He is one of the leaders. I want to say well done and thank you."

Giroud won his first cap in 2011 against the United States, when Laurent Blanc was coach, and was a member of France's World Cup-winning team in 2018. Ironically, World Cup success in 2018 came as Giroud led France's attack but failed to score at the tournament in Russia. In Qatar four years later, he netted four as the French reached the final and lost it to Argentina on penalties. When he announced his international retirement, Giroud said he still had two good years in his legs, but that he was starting to feel his age. "I thought about it carefully. Playing every three days is more and more difficult, especially at this level." —Agencies



MUNICH: France's forward #09 Olivier Giroud warms up ahead of the UEFA Euro 2024 semi-final football match between Spain and France at the Munich Football Arena in Munich. — AFP

Biles poised to reclaim Olympic throne

LOS ANGELES: Simone Biles is headed to Paris poised to cement her legacy as gymnastics' Greatest of All Time, an Olympic icon who transcends her sport in both triumph and defeat. The diminutive dynamo dazzled at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, winning gold in all-around, vault, floor exercise and team events. She arrived at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics with superstar billing and history in her sights, but withdrew from the majority of her events as she struggled with the disorienting and "petrifying" mental block that gymnasts call the "twisties".

Hailed by many as a mental health trailblazer but criticized by a few as a quitter, Biles has returned from a two-year hiatus, at the age of 27, as good as or even better than ever. In 2023 she took her tally of world and Olympic medals to 37 -- a cache she started with her first all-around world title in 2013, when she was just 16. Now the owner of a record six world all-around crowns, Biles remains a must-see sensation even among such superstars as NBA legend LeBron James and pop diva Taylor Swift. More than seven million Instagram followers basked in the fairytale photos of Biles's wedding to NFL player Jonathan Owens, who has received special dispensation from the Chicago Bears to miss a few days of training camp to watch her in Paris.

Swift took a moment during her Eras tour in Europe to tweet her approval when Biles chose a phrase from Swift's "...Ready For It" to kick off her floor routine at the US Olympic trials. But Biles's ascent has featured as many twists as one of her signature tumbling moves.

Tokyo capped a tumultuous period that included



TOKYO: (FILES) USA's Simone Biles waits ahead of the artistic gymnastics women's balance beam final of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at Ariake Gymnastics Centre in Tokyo on August 3, 2021. — AFP

Biles's revelation, in 2018, that she was among the hundreds of gymnasts who were sexually abused by former Olympic team doctor Larry Nassar. She was a vocal critic of USA Gymnastics and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee over their handling of the scandal and a leading voice calling for their accountability after Nassar was convicted and imprisoned.

Biles, who will be the oldest woman gymnast to compete for the US since Marie Margaret Hoesly in 1952, had to laugh when she was reminded that she poked fun at a 22-year-old Aly Raisman as the "grandma" of the 2016 US team.

'Always running'

"I definitely have to apologize to Aly for calling

her grandma because, whew, I feel like I'm way older now," said Biles, noting that nowadays her body feels it after a big competition. "Back in Rio, I could do anything," Biles said. "I'd never needed tape, nothing. I was just like a little hamster on a wheel, always running." Biles also pays meticulous attention to her mental health, "religiously" continuing the weekly therapy sessions she says are key to her successful return. Olympics broadcaster NBC calculated that one tumbling pass in her trials floor routine saw her soar 12 feet above the mat.

She's made the Yurchenko double pike vault—a vault so difficult no other woman has attempted it in competition—a staple and it's now the fifth skill to be named for her. "I think we always knew she could be better," says coach Cecile Landi, who with husband and co-coach Laurent Landi has shepherded Biles through her return.

"She's the most talented athlete I've ever worked with and so we just knew if she could get her mental game as well as her physical game, then she would be close to unstoppable." Biles's path has been made easier by the supportive environment at World Champions Centre, the Texas gym owned and operated by Biles's parents, Nellie and Ron.

The couple, in actuality Biles's grandparents, adopted Biles and her sister Adria after they ended up in foster care, their biological mother unable to care for them amid substance abuse struggles. Biles is joined on the US Olympic team by WCC buddy and Tokyo Olympic teammate Jordan Chiles.

Tokyo Olympic all-around gold medalist Suni Lee and floor gold medalist Jade Carey and 16-year-old newcomer Hezly Rivera round out the squad. Biles, who was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2022, knows that she and her teammates will still face haters who "want to see us fail".

But she's glad to be back on her own terms. "Nobody's forcing me to do it," Biles said. "I wake up every day and choose to grind in the gym and come out here and perform for myself." "Just to remind myself that I can still do it—that's my why." —AFP

Australia's Jack seeks redemption after doping ban

SYDNEY: Australian freestyler Shayna Jack heads to the Paris Olympics seeking redemption after her world was rocked by a contested doping ban that left her deeply depressed and unsure whether she would swim again. While Ariarne Titmus, Kaylee McKeown and Mollie O'Callaghan are the big names in Australia's powerhouse swimming squad, Jack's journey "through hell" to make the grade is compelling. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in her sights, her world came crashing down after testing positive for the muscle growth agent ligandrol in an out-of-competition test in June 2019.

She was banned for four years despite proclaiming her innocence, insisting the substance entered her system by contamination. "I won't stop until I clear my name," she vowed. Her case has similarities to the Chinese doping scandal that blew up in the sport this year.

In that instance, 23 Chinese swimmers tested positive for the prescription heart drug trimetazidine before the Tokyo Games, but they escaped suspension or sanction. Instead, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accepted the explanation of Chinese authorities that the results were caused by food contamination. The case was revealed by the New York Times and German broadcaster ARD in April.

An independent report this month said that WADA had not shown "favoritism" towards China and the International Olympic Committee expressed its "full confidence" in the anti-doping body ahead of the Paris Games, which begin next week. Jack is yet to address the issue and how it compares to her treatment, not wanting it to impact her Olympic preparations. "To be honest, I've tried to put it on the back burner for now," the 25-year-old told reporters at the Australian trials in Brisbane of the Chinese scandal.

"But I'll definitely be commenting on it after the Olympics." Ahead of the Covid-delayed Japan Olympics, the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport concluded that "on the balance of probabilities" Jack "did not intentionally ingest ligandrol". It reduced her ban to two years, but by then it was too late and she missed out on her childhood dream of becoming an Olympian. —AFP



Shayna Jack



PARIS: (FILES) Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo (C) poses with swimmers during the inauguration of the Bras Marie nautical base in Paris on July 9, 2023, as she announces the river Seine's bathing sites planned for Parisians in 2025, as a legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. — AFP

Paris mayor to swim in Seine ahead of Olympics

PARIS: The mayor of the French capital Anne Hidalgo is set to take a long-awaited dip in the Seine on Wednesday to demonstrate the river is clean enough to host the outdoor swimming events at the Paris Olympics, her office said. Despite an investment of 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) to prevent sewage leaks into the waterway, the Seine has been causing suspense in the run-up to the opening of Paris Games next week after repeatedly failing water quality tests.

Only since the beginning of the month, with heavy rains finally giving way to drier weather, have samples shown the river to be ready for the open-water swimming and triathlon—and for 65-year-old Hidalgo.

"On the eve of the Games, when the Seine will play a key role, this event represents the demonstration of the efforts made by the city and the state to improve the quality of the Seine's waters and the ecological state of the river," Hidalgo's office said in a statement.

The Socialist city leader had originally planned to swim last month, but had to delay because bacteria levels indicating the presence of faecal matter were sometimes 10 times higher than authorized limits. —AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Omer Mohammed Basalama, holder of Indian passport No. Z 3017406, Maqbooi Gulshan Colony, Mumtaz Bagh, H.No.18-11-30/1 Barkas, Balaguda, Telangana, 500005- Hyderabad, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Omer Mohammed Basalama to Omer Mohammed Basaad (#5632, 17/07/2024)

I, Krishnan Kumar (as given name), Ponnusamy Navaneedha (as surname), holder of passport No. Z 7067773 do hereby change my name to P.N.Krishna Kumar (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known by the name P.N. Krishna Kumar and I also undertake to carryout this name change in all my documents. (#5631, 17/07/2024)

Mbappe says dream has come true at Real Madrid unveiling

I'm a happy boy. I'm going to give my life for this club: Mbappe



MADRID: French forward Kylian Mbappe (2nd L) poses with his parents Wilfrid Mbappe (L) and Fayza Lamari (2nd R) and Real Madrid's President Florentino Perez during his first appearance as a Real Madrid player at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on July 16, 2024, after signing his new five-season contract. — AFP

MADRID: French superstar Kylian Mbappe was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player on Tuesday, telling 80,000 fans "my dream has come true". The striker, who had completed his medical earlier on Tuesday morning, signed a five-year contract and was handed a No. 9 shirt by club president Florentino Perez.

"Wow," Mbappe said in Spanish to roars from a packed Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. "For years I've dreamed of playing for Real Madrid and today my dream has come true," said the 25-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain player.

"I'm a happy boy. I'm going to give my life for this club," said Mbappe. Accompanied by his parents watching from the crowd and with a former French hero of the club, Zinedine Zidane, in attendance, Mbappe was emotional as the crowd chanted his name, and at one point kissed the jersey of the

reigning Spanish and European champions. Mbappe is "an exceptional player who comes to help us continue winning, a player who today fulfils the dream of his life," said Perez. "Welcome to your home."

Exciting offensive trio

Although his new teammates began training on Monday, the forward, who captained France during their unsuccessful Euros campaign, will have a few more days off before kicking off his season in the Spanish capital.

The unveiling of Real's latest Galactico allowed its fans to continue celebrating following Spain's Euro 2024 triumph on Sunday. The crowd was expected to be bigger than that 15 years ago when Cristiano Ronaldo was unveiled.

The free tickets were snapped up rapidly with

some fans reportedly trying to resell them to take advantage of the hype surrounding the arrival of arguably the world's best striker. At Real, Mbappe will form part of an offensive trio alongside England midfielder Jude Bellingham and Brazil attacker Vinicius Junior under the watch of veteran Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti.

That prospect is already exciting fans of the club who won their 15th Champions League title in June. Los Blancos begin the defence of their La Liga crown with a match against Real Mallorca on the weekend of August 17-18. Mbappe's debut might have to wait until the following week when Real Madrid face Real Valladolid who were recently promoted from the second division. Number 9 Mbappe shirts went on sale last Thursday in Real's club shops which are covered with his image.

Mbappe arrives after a personally disappointing Euros campaign, where he was overshadowed by Spain's new teenage sensation Lamine Yamal of Madrid's rivals Barcelona and France lost to Spanish in the semi-finals.

That followed a difficult season with PSG following his decision not to renew his contract, with the striker - who was the Paris club's all-time top scorer - admitting he felt "liberated, relieved" by his transfer to Real.

The club is hoping to offset the costs - a salary of at least 15 million euros (\$16.3 million) per season and a signing bonus of more than 100 million euros - through sponsorship deals and ticket and merchandise sales. Mbappe is hoping the move will finally see him win a Champions League and the Ballon d'Or, two of his lifelong objectives. — AFP

Jubilant Spaniards greet Euro winners

MADRID: Waving flags and dressed in Spain's red and yellow colours, tens of thousands of people jubilantly greeted the country's triumphant Euro 2024 men's football team on Monday during a parade in Madrid.

"Champions, champions!" fans shouted out to the players and coach, who celebrated the win in an open-top double-decker bus, with the trophy placed on the front and the message "It's only the beginning" emblazoned. Spain beat England 2-1 in Sunday's final in Berlin.

Spanish authorities praised the players' victory and style of play, while some fans said they were fostering unity in a country with a history of territorial tensions and political polarization. "We are a great country. In days like today it's important to remember that this flag represents all of us," a young fan named Borja told national broadcaster TVE.

He praised Spain's 17-year-old rising star Lamine Yamal, who is Black, with his father hailing from Morocco while his mother was born in Equatorial Guinea. "We are seeing the (ongoing) problems with racism. Lamine Yamal will define an era because people in Spain are of all colours," Borja added.

Standing on balconies and crowded sidewalks, excited fans, many of them kids and some who had travelled from distant parts of Spain, waved at the players who were wearing white t-shirts reading "Kings of Europe" accompanied by a big number four to mark Spain's fourth continental title.

"I want to thank you for your efforts and for the way you played, with the joy you do it," Spain's King Felipe VI told the team in a ceremony at his palace, accompanied by Queen Letizia and his two daughters dressed in national jerseys. "A joy like this one was good for us," he added. — AFP

Southgate quits as England manager

LONDON: Gareth Southgate resigned as England manager on Tuesday, two days after they lost to Spain in the Euro 2024 final, with Prince William describing him as an "all-round class act". "It's time for change, and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager," Southgate said in a statement. William, who attended the 2-1 defeat to Spain in his role as Football Association president, paid a fulsome tribute to Southgate on social media. "Thank you for showing humility, compassion, and true leadership under the most intense pressure and scrutiny," said the heir to the British throne.

"And thank you for being an all-round class act. You should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved." The names immediately mentioned as 53-year-old Southgate's successor are Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, and two former Chelsea managers, Graham Potter and Mauricio Pochettino.

Former international defender Southgate took over in 2016 when England's fortunes were at a low ebb - they had exited the Euros after defeat to Iceland and then Roy Hodgson's successor Sam Allardyce had to resign over a scandal.

Southgate steadily introduced change and led England to three semi-finals and to the last two European Championship finals. Prior to his appointment, the Three Lions had reached just three major tournament semi-finals and one final in their history, when they won the 1966 World Cup.

But despite changing the fortunes of the England team, Southgate was unable to land a first trophy in over half a century as England first lost to Italy in the Euro 2020 final and then came up short to a sparkling Spain team on Sunday. "Gareth has made the impossible job possible and laid strong foundations for future success," said FA CEO Mark Bullingham in a statement. "We came so close to winning the Euros in London and securing the first trophy for our men's team for over 50 years - and came so close again in Berlin



BERLIN: (FILES) England's head coach Gareth Southgate walks with his silver medal past the trophy after the UEFA Euro 2024 final football match between Spain and England at the Olympiastadion in Berlin on July 14, 2024. — AFP

on Sunday." Southgate, who is also credited for restoring pride to the team as well as turning the players into role models off the pitch, said the job had been a dream of a lifetime for him. "As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England," he said. "It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all."

"So proud of them"

However, not all was rosy at Euro 2024 as England were one of the pre-tournament favorites in Germany but showed resilience more than skill in reaching the final. Southgate admitted the stinging criticism that came his way - fans threw beer cups at him after a 0-0 group-stage draw with Slovenia - had taken its toll. But he leaves behind a squad filled with young players of huge talent. The likes of Cole Palmer, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka and Phil Foden, who are all 24 or under, and 26-year-old Declan Rice will all still be in their prime for the 2026 World Cup should they qualify.

"The squad we took to Germany is full of exciting

young talent and they can win the trophy we all dream of," said Southgate. "I am so proud of them." Southgate's overall record was 61 wins in 102 matches with 24 draws and 17 defeats.

He ranks third for all-time victories as England manager and only two previous England managers have taken charge of more matches than him. Four of the players who played in the loss to Spain, led by captain Harry Kane, who was capped 81 times under Southgate, were to be the backbone of his team through his reign - Kyle Walker had 70 caps and goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and John Stones had 68.

Bullingham did not drop any hints about who will succeed Southgate and said there would be no rushed decision even if England's next match against the Republic of Ireland is on September 7. "The process for appointing Gareth's successor is now under way and we aim to have our new manager confirmed as soon as possible," he said. "Our UEFA Nations League campaign starts in September, and we have an interim solution in place if it is needed." — AFP