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Gazans braving Zionist brutality

3 Syrian children among 5 killed in Lebanon • Hezbollah vows to hit new Zionist targets



TYRE, Lebanon: A Lebanese cleric performs funeral prayers over the bodies of three children killed in a Zionist strike, 12-year-old Khalil Khalil, 10-year-old Jan Jarkas and his 7-year-old brother Mohammed Jarkas, during their funeral in Al-Qasmiya near this southern city on July 17, 2024, the day after they were killed in the town of Umm Toot in southern Lebanon — AFP

GAZA: The Zionist entity kept up its air strikes on Gaza Wednesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to ramp up the pressure on Hamas as hopes faded for a US-announced ceasefire plan. Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh accused the Zionist entity of deliberately undermining negotiations for a truce and hostage release deal because it did not want to end the war. The Zionist military said it had carried out 25 strikes in 24 hours.

The health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said 52 people, most of them women and children, had been killed in Zionist strikes over the previous 24 hours. The UN humanitarian office OCHA said multiple strikes across Gaza on Tuesday killed and wounded dozens. The territory's civil defense agency said 30 people had been killed in three strikes in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza — one on a UN-run school, another on a house and a third on a mosque.

In southern Gaza, two people were killed in Zionist bombardment of the Shakush area, northwest of Rafah, a medical source at Nasser Hospital said. At least 90 percent of Gazans have been forced from their homes, many of them seeking refuge in UN-run schools. Seven of these schools have been hit by Zionist strikes since July 6. Nearly 70 percent of UN-run schools across Gaza have been hit during more than nine months of fighting, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Tuesday.

In a telephone call with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan late Tuesday, the Hamas leader blamed the Zionist entity for the deadlock. "We dealt positively with the proposals put to us by the mediators but the occupation is avoiding the required outcome and does not want to reach an agreement under which it ends its war," Haniyeh said.

The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 38,794 people, mostly women and children, according to figures from the Gaza health ministry. At a press conference on Wednesday, the World Health Organization's representative in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, Rik Peepkorn, said that only 16 aid trucks had entered the Gaza Strip via the Kerem Shalom border crossing during the last month, while dozens of trucks were still waiting to do so. The WHO also said that out of the territory's 36 hospitals, only 15 were partially functioning and that there had been more than a thousand attacks against health facilities in Gaza since October.

The Zionist entity's policy toward the West Bank is dooming any prospect of a two-state solution with the Palestinians, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Wednesday. Violence and arrests have soared in the Zionist-occupied territory since the Gaza war erupted. Through administrative and legal steps, the Zionist entity is changing the geography

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait hails Oman response

KUWAIT: Kuwait praises the measures taken by the competent authorities in the sisterly Sultanate of Oman in the wake of the deadly shooting attack at a mosque in Al-Wadi Al-Kabeer, a statement from the Kuwaiti ministry of foreign affairs said on Tuesday. Kuwait, firmly opposed to all forms of violence, reaffirms support to the Omani authorities in whatever measures they adopt to protect the security and safety of the sultanate. Kuwait expresses sincere condolences to the victims of the tragic incident and wishes those wounded a quick recovery, the statement added. — KUNA

KOC to drill 6 offshore wells

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company announced Wednesday moving the Oriental Phoenix drilling rig to the Jazza area to begin digging a new exploratory well (Jazza 1) after the successful oil discovery in the Noukhatha offshore field. During the current phase, six exploratory wells will be drilled, and based on promising results, the company will conduct a three-dimensional seismic survey of the various marine sectors in Kuwaiti waters to obtain more accurate data, so that a more comprehensive picture is provided prior to the start of the second phase, KOC said. — KUNA (See Page 2)

9 rescued from capsized tanker

MUSCAT: India's navy said Wednesday that one of its warships had rescued nine of 16 crewmembers aboard an oil tanker that capsized off the coast of Oman earlier this week. Oman's Maritime Security Centre said one crewmember was found dead. The Comorian-flagged MV Prestige Falcon overturned and sank in the Arabian Sea late on Monday night with 13 Indian and three Sri Lankan nationals aboard. — Agencies

UAE considers second nuclear power plant

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates is considering building a second nuclear power plant to meet growing demand for electricity in the oil-rich Gulf state, a government official told Reuters. The country of some 10 million people has become a proponent of nuclear power, a low-carbon energy source, as it seeks to diversify its economy and attract foreign investment. Its first plant started

commercial operations in 2021.

Any contract for a new nuclear power plant would be worth tens of billions of dollars and could attract tender bids from China, Russia and the United States, among others. As the final reactor of the UAE's only nuclear plant is set to start commercial operations this year, Hamad Alkaabi said the government was evaluating whether to build a second plant. "The government is looking at this option. No final decision has been made in terms of the tender process but I can tell you that the government is actively exploring this option," he said.

The government is projecting there will be a substantial increase in electricity use over the next decade that will

be driven by population growth and an expanding industrial sector. The government has yet to budget for a second power plant or decide on the size or the location, but Alkaabi said it was possible a tender could be issued this year.

Sources told Reuters in April the UAE planned a second nuclear power plant and that it could seek bids to build a four-reactor facility within a few months. Any new power plant would likely consist of two or four reactors, said Alkaabi, who is the UAE's Ambassador to Austria and the Permanent Representative to the UN's nuclear agency.

The size of a new power plant would depend on the build and technology, he said, adding that South Korea, which

built the existing plant, would not be treated as a favored bidder for any tender. "It's a policy decision to give opportunity for all potential bidders," he said in an interview in Abu Dhabi. Alkaabi also serves as the deputy chairman of the board of management of the UAE nuclear regulator known as FANR.

The UAE awarded Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO) a \$20 billion contract in 2009 to design, build and operate four reactors in Abu Dhabi towards the border with Saudi Arabia. KEPCO operates the plant in a joint venture with the power plant's state owner, Emirates Nuclear Energy Company.

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Cyanide killed 6 at Bangkok hotel, including perp

BANGKOK: All six foreign nationals found dead in a luxury Bangkok hotel are presumed to have died after ingesting cyanide from teacups, a forensic doctor who performed autopsies on the deceased said on Wednesday, with the suspected killer among the dead. The bodies of six people of Vietnamese origin — two who held American citizenship — were discovered in a suite at the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel in the tourist center of Bangkok on Tuesday afternoon.

Photos released by police of the bloodless crime scene showed bodies scattered around the room among plates of untouched Thai food, and two thermos flasks and cups. Initial examinations revealed the presence of cyanide in six cups, according to police. "The mouths and nails on all the bodies turned purple, showing a lack of air could be a joint reason of the cause of the death," forensic doctor Kornkiat Vongpaisarnsin, told a press conference at the Chulalongkorn University. "We presume they all died from cyanide which causes a lack of air in some organs," he added.

Earlier Thai police said one of the six foreigners found dead likely also carried out the poisonings, thought

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BANGKOK: Members of the media look at images of drinks left in the room where six people were found dead the day before, allegedly due to poisoning, during a press conference at Lumpini Police Station on July 17, 2024. — AFP

Paris mayor takes dip in Seine to prove river clean

PARIS: The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, took a long-awaited swim in the murky waters of the Seine on Wednesday amid joy and relief that the river is finally clean enough for outdoor Olympic swimming events later this month. Wearing goggles and a wet suit, the 65-year-old city leader swam breaststroke under bright sunshine before immersing her face and beginning a front crawl, covering around 100 m downstream.

"It's wonderful, very, very pleasant," Hidalgo told reporters of the greenish water. "It's fresh but not cold." She was joined by senior local officials and chief organizer of the Paris Games, Tony Estanguet, a gold medal-winning canoeist who has been sweating on the state of the Seine ahead of the opening of the Paris Games next week. "Today is a confirmation that we are exactly where we meant to be," Estanguet said. "We are now ready to organize the Games in the Seine."

The swimming leg of the Olympics triathlon is set to take place in its waters on July 30-31 and Aug 5, followed by the open-water swimming on Aug 8-9. Despite an investment of €1.4 billion (\$1.5 billion) to prevent sewage leaks into the waterway, the river had been continually failing water quality tests until the start of this month.

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PARIS: Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo swims in the Seine River on July 17, 2024 to demonstrate that the river is clean enough to host the outdoor swimming events at the Paris Olympics later this month. — AFP



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Oriental Phoenix drilling rig to drill first exploratory well in Jazza Strip

KOC developing a plan for Noukhatha offshore field

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) announced Wednesday the moving of the Oriental Phoenix drilling rig to Jazza Strip in preparation to begin digging a new exploratory well (Jazza 1) after success in discovering the Noukhatha offshore field. In a press statement, KOC explained that Jazza Strip, which is located in Kuwait's economic waters, is a promising location as it contains large hydrocarbon resources, indicating that the new exploratory well (Jazza 1) targets the depths of the Cretaceous period.

Jazza Strip is one of the four sectors targeted by the current exploratory phase, during which layers of the Cretaceous and Jurassic periods in the Kuwaiti maritime region will be explored. During the current phase, six exploratory wells will be drilled, and based on the promising results of the current phase, the company will conduct a three-dimensional seismic survey of the various marine sectors in Kuwaiti waters in order to obtain more accurate data so that a better, more comprehensive picture is provided prior to commencement of the second phase.

The company is currently developing a plan for the Noukhatha offshore field so that it enters production as quickly as possible and in order to benefit from its huge hydrocarbon resources, read the statement. This will contribute to strengthen-

ing the country's development plan and stimulating economic growth through the added value prompted by the addition of the maritime region to economic plans, as well as providing new job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth.

Exploration of the Noukhatha offshore field is a cornerstone to achieving KOC's 2040 strategy, indicated the statement, as it reflects the company's commitment to discovering hydrocarbon resources hidden in Kuwaiti waters. This contributes to endorsing the country's position among the largest producers and holders of proven hydrocarbon resources in the world. These discoveries will be an opportunity to open new markets for exportation and bolster trade relations with oil-importing countries.

KOC further explained that the process of moving the offshore drilling platform, Oriental Phoenix, to its new location was done smoothly and without any injuries or delays thanks to the plan in place and the close cooperation between the teams working in the company and various sectors of the country. The statement took note of the vital role of the Ministry of Defense, represented by Kuwait's Naval Force, in providing the necessary security protection and logistical support during transportation and operations, while the Ministry of Interior ensured the safety of all operations, as did the Fire Force. — KUNA



Oriental Phoenix

Youth Authority establishes career paths for the youths

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Youth affirmed its constant keenness and endeavor to empower Kuwaiti youth in various fields, especially providing distinguished career paths for fresh graduates. The Acting Deputy Director General of the Authority for the Youth Projects Sector, Dr Musaed Al-Karibani, said on Wednesday that the Authority has opened the door for registration in the training and qualification program for the management of engineering contracts. The program is scheduled to be launched in September at Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum and will last two months.

Al-Karibani added that the program, which comes within the "Work Makers" project, aims to develop the skills of young people who are about to work and enhance their knowledge in this important field. The program provides field training and theoretical lectures for its participants under the supervision of academics and specialists in this subject. It targets young men and women graduates of the Faculty of Engineering in mechanical, civil, chemical, industrial, and electrical disciplines, in addition to graduates of the faculties of law and business administration.

The program seeks to empower Kuwaiti youths and add important expertise to them in how to draft, review, and audit contracts, noting that those who pass this program will receive certificates accredited by Kuwait University. He pointed to the Authority's keenness to organize this program, which provides distinguished career paths for newly graduated Kuwaiti youth, indicating that the project includes a number of programs, including facilities management, lawyer assistants, digital programming, self-employment, and others.

Al-Karibani called on young people wishing to join the program by applying through the Authority's website (www.youth.gov.kw) before the registration closes scheduled for July 31. The organizers of the program will conduct personal interviews for applicants starting in August to determine the final list of those accepted into the program. He stated that the Authority, under the directives of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, is continuing to develop its programs in order to achieve the aspirations of young people and meet their aspirations. — KUNA

GCC condemns attack in Oman

RIYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jaseem Al-Budaiwi has deplored, in the strongest terms, the Al-Wadi Al-Kabir neighborhood shooting incident in the Omani capital of Muscat. He stressed that the GCC member states are fully standing by the Sultanate of Oman, lauding the efforts of the country's security personnel in dealing with the incident.

He expressed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, wishing a rapid recovery to those wounded. Al-Budaiwi prayed to Allah the Almighty to maintain security and stability in the Sultanate.

Meanwhile, Qatar praised the measures taken by the competent Omani leadership in the wake of the deadly shooting attack. Qatar affirmed in a statement on Wednesday that it unwaveringly supports the measures taken by the Omani authorities to preserve peace and security. Qatar expressed sincere condolences to the victims of the tragic incident and wished the injured a swift and speedy recovery. — KUNA

Why psychologists need therapy too

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Listening to people is their profession, and finding solutions to unresolved mental issues is their responsibility - a weight they carry on their shoulders daily. For once, they are not the ones listening to others, but they are the ones answering questions about how they deal with their emotions, mental stability, and relationships with their patients.

According to psychologist Abdullah Al-Manea, a deep bond is created between a psychologist and their client, inevitably revealing a darker side. "I am not superhuman: how could anyone listen to all the sadness, despair and betrayal endured by others without being affected?" he questioned.

In fact, he believes that anyone who isn't affected by their patients' suffering either doesn't take their job seriously or may have an antisocial personality. "It's important for every psychologist to see another psychologist," he stressed, reminding that psychotherapy isn't just for treating disorders but also for improving quality of life and providing emotional support. Notably, he added: "We'll always need the help of others."

Despite seeing hundreds of cases, sometimes psychologists find the issues people face to be extremely traumatic. "We come across problems that we thought only existed in movies," said psychotherapist Latifah Al-Hadhoud.

She also agreed that psychologists could be the

ones who need therapy the most. "As a person who should help people, I cannot do my job properly if I am facing any mental drop myself." At one point in her life, following the deaths of her husband and her 10-year-old daughter, she took a break from her job for three months and sought talk therapy during this time. "I was never ashamed of this step because we have nothing more valuable than ourselves to protect," she pointed out.

As much as she loves her job, Hadhoud couldn't bear feeling unable to support her patients as needed. "I never want to feel powerless in the face of their challenges, as I believe that I was particularly chosen by God to guide them through their tough and long healing journey," she said. "They come to me with pain, and it's my duty to meet them with a sense of responsibility."

For Manea, psychologists must realize that they are not machines. "We reach stages of exhaustion without even noticing, which in turn affects the quality of our work." He highlighted the need for taking rest and recharging, something that DBT therapist and clinical psychologist Dr Fajer Al-Halban found challenging to manage at the beginning of her career. "Apart from my sessions, some of my patients were calling me every day; some called more than once a day, on weekends and even at dawn," she recalled. "I suffered from severe burnout back then."

Over time, Dr Halban began to accept that she had the right to live her life normally, as long as it



Abdullah Al-Manea



Dr Fajer Al-Halban



Latifah Al-Hadhoud

didn't endanger her clients' well-being. She taught them how to become more independent from her when she couldn't be available, especially in non-urgent situations. "I started working with my patients on safety plans and negotiating emergency contacts for times when I'm unavailable," she said.

Despite the emotionally triggering nature of their job, they never seem to get tired of listening to people. "I always feel privileged that the patient can speak to me openly from the heart and trust me by sharing things they wouldn't even discuss with themselves," Dr Halban said. She is always pleased to discover that she can alleviate people's suffering "and give them a reason to live", which constantly reminds her of how noble her job is.

And surprisingly, it's a two-way benefit: Listening to others' suffering gives them experience and wisdom to handle their own life problems. Manea summed it up with a well-known saying, "When someone teaches another, they both learn. Likewise, in psychotherapy, both therapist and client experience change."

Municipality to develop Sulaibikhat, Jahra coasts

KUWAIT: Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi confirmed that Kuwait is experiencing a new wave of development, marked by the modernization and implementation of advanced projects along many coastal areas. These efforts aim to enhance and utilize these regions to present them in an aesthetic and contemporary manner, supporting Kuwait's vision for 2040. He revealed that the estimated cost of the two waterfront development projects for the Sulaibikhat and Jahra coasts amounts to approximately KD 2 billion, with KD 1.5 billion allocated for the Sulaibikhat coast project and KD 500 million for the Jahra coast project.

Manfouhi stated that after securing the necessary approvals from the relevant authorities, including the Fatwa and Legislation Department, the Municipal Council and others, the municipality will involve the private sector and market these projects internationally. He emphasized that the Council of Ministers' support in overseeing this significant project will positively impact its timely completion by all concerned authorities.

The Sulaibikhat Bay structural plan development project spans from the waterfront west of Kuwait City to the area overlooking the Sulaibikhat coast, from the borders of the Shuwaikh Free Zone to Um Al-Naml Island. It covers an area of 2,300 hectares with a 38 km long waterfront. The municipality's comprehensive sustainable plan aims to develop the waterfront and the area overlooking the Sulaibikhat coast from Kuwait Bay, rehabilitate the marine and land environment, increase commercial, service and recreational projects, and involve the private sector in these projects with an investment period of up to 35 years.

The plan includes developing five key areas: Ibtikar zone, Sulaibikhat coast region, Sulaibikhat sports area, Ras Ushairij area and its islands. The expected benefits to the state include: Significant improvement of the natural environment; Provision of 6,000 new housing units for Kuwaiti families; Creation of 64,000 new jobs in innovation sectors; Establishment of resorts with 5,400 rooms and coastal activities.

Sulaibikhat project areas

Al-Manfouhi described the Sulaibikhat coast development project as encompassing five areas: (1) Ibtikar Zone: This zone will serve as a hub for offices, creative



KUWAIT: In this file photo, gray herons fly along the Sulaibikhat beachfront north of Kuwait City. - Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ideas, and business, linking to centers in the free zone, Kuwait University and the medical zone. It aims to blend business and green spaces.

(2) Sulaibikhat Coast Area: Designed to promote a healthy, active lifestyle, this area will mix residential zones, shops, and businesses to encourage walking, with various amenities like shopping, restaurants, cafes and picnic spots overlooking the bay. (3) Sulaibikhat Sports Area: This area will provide recreational activities for families and training spaces for athletes, featuring a central swimming pool, playgrounds, gyms and sports facilities.

(4) Ras Ushairij Area: Located in the northern part of Sulaibikhat Bay, this area will be a destination for leisure activities, with marine parks and a link between Kuwait City and the Doha area. It will also feature a museum and lighthouse. (5) Ushairij Islands: These islands will offer sandy beaches, luxury resorts, and marinas with stunning views of Kuwait City, the heights of Mutlaa and the Gulf, including marinas for private boats.

Jahra seafront

Regarding the Jahra waterfront development project (corniche), Manfouhi explained that the facade will be developed through an integrated plan that balances en-

vironmental considerations with the development of services and support for tourism and commercial facilities. This project aims to improve tourism and recreational services for citizens and residents. The Jahra facade extends over 7.3 km from west of Doha West Station to the borders of the Jahra Nature Reserve, linking the residential development of Jaber Al-Ahmad City and Kuwait Bay. The development plan focuses on improving access to the waterfront, enhancing the quality of services, and supporting tourism and commercial facilities. The project is divided into three development areas, covering a total area of 3,438,385 sq m, including public and investment spaces.

Development vision

The Municipality's study identified the objectives of the Jahra waterfront project, which include: Providing public recreational facilities; Involving the private sector in developing comfortable activities; Building a positive image of the Jahra area; Establishing a tourist and entertainment area to attract tourists; Promoting employment opportunities and economic development; Conserving and utilizing natural resources; Creating a link between the sea and the city and establishing a high standard of living with ambient luxury.

Local



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya delivered a speech at the UN Security Council. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Both sides discussed the friendly relations in various areas as well as regional and international issues of common concern, including Ukraine crisis, the tragic situation in Gaza Strip and latest developments of the situation in the Middle East.

Kuwait reiterates call for reforming UN Security Council, entire system

FM draws attention to the formidable challenges

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya delivered a speech to the UN Security Council session on "multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order" on Tuesday. He highlighted the need of the international community recommitting itself to the principles and goals of the UN Charter, saying it is the cornerstone of multilateral cooperation in the face of mounting challenges.

Kuwait reiterates the call for reforming the UN Security Council and the entire UN system and backs the efforts aiming to make the UN more effective, impartial, transparent, representative and credible, he stressed. Al-Yahya drew attention to the formidable challenges facing the international community, including food insecurity, shortage of energy, climate change, poverty and conflicts which pose threats to international peace and security. He underscored the roles of major countries in creating fairer and more balanced partnerships with developing countries through technology transfer and development assistance in keeping with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Agenda. — KUNA



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Tuesday with Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal bin Al-Ibrahim on the fringes of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with Iran's Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani on the sidelines of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

PM receives Deputy PM, new deputy chief of staff



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. The minister of defense presented, during the session, the newly appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwait Army, Air Vice Marshal Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Education Ministry equips 19 schools

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Education affirmed on Wednesday its keenness to provide all necessary requirements in preparation for the upcoming academic year of 2024-2025.

In a statement, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Education's Financial Department, Matrouk Al-Mutairi, said after an inspection tour of the Ministry's supplies and stores department in Sabhan, that 19 schools were chosen in four educational zones to be furnished.

Al-Mutairi added that the plan to furnish the selected schools was set last April, the beginning of the new fiscal year, noting that the preparations will take approximately two weeks starting on Thursday. He also added that the provided educational facilities requirements include office furniture and desks for teachers, administrators and students. — KUNA



Officials take a group photo after the acting undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and deputy chairman of the National Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Tarek Al-Asfour signs a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the GCC region. — KUNA

Kuwait, UN ink MoU to tackle trafficking

KUWAIT: Acting undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and deputy chairman of the National Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Tarek Al-Asfour signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the GCC region. Al-Asfour said in a press statement after the signing on Wednesday that after coordinating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the memorandum was signed. The MoU is aimed at exchanging technical and advisory views on international experiences related to combating trafficking in persons.

He pointed out that Kuwait spares no efforts to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants through many mechanisms, explaining that this cooperation comes in implementation of Kuwait's vision to strengthen frameworks and partnerships with international and regional organizations, especially the United Nations and its various organs.

This cooperation will strengthen the frameworks of cooperation between the two parties and promote their common goals and objectives with regard to preventing, suppressing, and punishing traffickers and enhancing the protection of victims in accordance with international treaties. The National Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers on February 5, 2018 and is headed by the Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr Mohammed Al-Wasmi.

The objectives of the committee include identifying the victims and those affected, providing protection and support for them, providing specialized training and rehabilitation for workers in the bodies concerned with combating trafficking, as well as spreading awareness among all segments of society, employers, and workers, deriving this from religious and moral values, and strengthening regional and international cooperation frameworks in the field of combating trafficking. The committee urged citizens and residents to report human trafficking crimes via the hotline (25589696) and e-mail (ath@moi.gov.kw). — KUNA

Kuwait's army extols 'professional' tactics of Saudi-led coalition

RIYADH: The chief of the Kuwait army, Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain, on Wednesday praised the "professional" techniques employed by a Saudi-led Islamic alliance to fight terrorism, saying such methods are instrumental in keeping at bay the threats of extremist groups.

Amid his visit to the headquarters of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, the Kuwaiti army chief was briefed on the latest endeavors the military body has taken, which include research and studies that aim to push forward the fight against terrorism.

Acknowledging Kuwait's contributions towards counterterrorism efforts, the pan-Islamic coalition's secretary general, Major General Mohammad Al-Moghedi, said these Kuwaiti initiatives have given impetus to global anti-terrorism operations. — KUNA





Al-Najat charity assists 22,000

KUWAIT: Al-Najat charity declared on Wednesday that 22,000 people have benefited from the philanthropic program "Absherou Belkhair" since it kicked off in 2017. Mohammad Al-Khaldi, the director of aid at the society, said in remarks to KUNA that citizens, illegal residents, and people of various foreign communities have benefited from the program, noting the cost of the charities for low-income families has reached KD 6 million (\$19.6 million). He indicated that families in very much need, widows, orphans, limited-income people, patients, the divorced, and the neglected were the priorities, adding that the number of families that benefited from the project reached 3,717. — KUNA



Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A vendor displays fish at a fish market in Sharq. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

WFP representative affirms Kuwait's humanitarian role

KUWAIT: The World Food Program (WFP) representative to the GCC, Abdel-Mageed Yahia on Wednesday confirmed Kuwait's pioneering role in the field of humanitarian work with its national, regional and global dimensions. Yahya said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after his meeting with the Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Anwar Al-Hasawi that Kuwait is making massive efforts in the areas of supporting the WFP's activities.

Kuwait's major role in this field is attested by various individuals, bodies and organizations, he said, praising the influential role of humanitarian contributions and the efforts of the KRCS at all international levels, especially those affected by natural or man-made disasters. For his part, Al-Hasawi stressed in a similar statement to KUNA the importance of strengthening cooperation and relations with the WFP.

He stated that the relationship establishes a framework to determine the necessary mechanisms to advance the process of bilateral work with the WFP in a step towards serving humanity in many countries and regions that need assistance. During the meeting, both sides discussed joint work in the future and how to coordinate humanitarian projects for the benefit of local communities in need, especially in the Gaza Strip and countries affected by natural or man-made disasters. He pointed out that KRCS seeks to expand and strengthen humanitarian cooperation and partnership with regional and international bodies and organizations in order to achieve its goals. — KUNA



Officials pose for a group photo. World Food Program representative to the GCC Abdel-Mageed Yahia on Wednesday confirmed Kuwait's pioneering role in the field of humanitarian work. — KUNA

Depression a serious mental health condition

By Hessa Al-Humaidi

KUWAIT: Depression is more than just feeling down or having a bad day. It is a pervasive and serious mental health condition that affects millions worldwide. Often described as a silent epidemic, depression quietly disrupts lives, sapping energy, motivation and joy. It can cloud a lot of thoughts and distort one's perception, creating a sense of hopelessness.

Despite its profound impact, it remains shrouded in stigma and misunderstanding, making it essential to foster awareness and compassion. Understanding depression is the first step toward breaking the silence and supporting those who struggle with this challenging and often invisible illness. Battling with her mental health, 20-year old Gahlia Abdullah went into the dark during her childhood due to the death of her close friend. When she was 16, her life flipped from being so great to facing the death of my close friend. COVID-19 took the one person who meant the world to her.

Although Gahlia went through a horrific time, it did not stop her from turning into a mentally healthy person later. "I later became stronger and happy. I treated myself by providing a space to explore my feelings and behaviors. My friends and family were great supporters and offered amazing help," she explained as she shared her feelings and coping mechanisms so as to assist other people who are facing similar challenges. She noted that seeking help from a professional psychologist, therapist or counselor is a must.

19-year-old Sarah Salem has noticed significant changes in her mood and behavior in the past six months. Sarah feels a deep sense of sadness almost every day, which she cannot seem to shake off. She lost interest in activities she once enjoyed, like going out with her friends, reading and exercising. She even has lost her appetite and has unintentionally lost weight.

To treat herself, Sarah attended therapy sessions weekly while forcing herself to do some exercises and go out with her friends. She tried



to focus on the things that she liked, engaging in activities that provide a sense of accomplishment. By combining these approaches, Sarah was able to manage her depression and she continues to use these strategies to maintain her well-being.

Farah Abdulaziz (32 years old) did not realize she has a sleep disorder. She was unaware of what was happening to her. She has trouble sleeping and was persistently sad and exhausted. Her appetite has changed and she lost interest in her favorite hobbies, avoiding friends and social gatherings. Farah preferred spending time alone and her behavior changed. "When I went into depression, I rarely smiled. My performance at work declined, and I was getting sick frequently," she said. Farah sought professional help and engaged in self-care strategies.

"My therapist worked with me to identify negative thought patterns and develop healthier ways of thinking and coping with stress. The psychiatrist prescribed antidepressants," Farah told Kuwait Times, adding that she was monitored for side effects and had regular check-ins to adjust the dosage if necessary. On the other hand, Farah practiced good sleep habits - like going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, creating a restful environment, and avoiding screens before bedtime. "I kept a journal to track my mood, noting down any triggers or patterns. This helped me and my therapist to identify what strategies were working," she added.



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Families await justice for flight MH17 a decade on

Trump watches ex-rivals fall in line

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BATTIR, Palestine: A railway line built during the British mandate crosses the valley next to Battir. — AFP photos

Zionist settlement threatens Palestinian UNESCO village

Zionist entity aims to fragment Palestinian territories, prevent future state

BATTIR, Palestine: On a hillside near Palestinian landowner Olayan Olayan's olive groves, young Zionist settlers are hammering out a new, illegal outpost in a UNESCO-protected zone. Olayan and his neighbors have long battled attempts to settle the land in Battir, a heritage site in the Zionist-occupied West Bank famed for its ancient stone terraces.

Zionist construction in the West Bank has boomed since the war began in the Gaza Strip, even though all settlements in the territory are considered illegal under international law. The new outpost on a Battir hilltop was served an eviction notice that Olayan's cousin Ghassan Olayan said has not been enforced because of the Gaza war.

The outpost already has a flagpole, living quarters and a barn for sheep that roam a rocky hill covered by olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers. "I ploughed the land and planted it until it bore fruit trees," said Olayan, who at 83 is older than the Zionist entity itself. "Some trees were 50 years old, or even more, and suddenly the settlers came and wanted to devour the land and take it from us," he added, his voice shaky.

Zionist-approved settlement

Even more concerning to the Olayans than the encroaching outpost is the adjacent, future settlement of Heletz. Yonatan Mizrahi of settlement watchdog Peace Now said Heletz was among five settlements "deep in Palestinian territory" approved by the Zionist government on June 27. "It is a settlement that is going to block Battir and in many ways create tension between the neighbors," he said.

Heletz and the outpost sit inside the UNESCO protection zone for Battir, one of four listed heritage sites in the West Bank. The UNESCO classification means the village can get technical, legal, and monetary assistance to preserve sites deemed in danger.

In Battir, children splash in the Roman-era fountain that waters the terraces where tomatoes, corn, eggplants and olive trees grow. The 2,000-year-old dry stone walls supporting the landscape earned the village its cultural inscription in 2014. But the classification has done little to prevent seizures of the surrounding farmland.



BATTIR, Palestine: Olayan Olayan, who was born in the village of Battir in 1941, overlooks a valley in which a new Zionist settler outpost is built, as pictured from Battir, a UNESCO heritage village in the occupied West Bank south of Jerusalem, on July 8, 2024. (Right) Palestinian children play in a Roman-era fountain in Battir.



Battir's inhabitants have beaten in court at least three previous Zionist settlement outpost attempts. But Ghassan Olayan fears the war in Gaza will make the new, government-approved Heletz more likely to become reality.

Preventing statehood

According to Olayan, Heletz is intended to link Jerusalem to Gush Etzion, a cluster of settlements deeper in the West Bank. If that is achieved, Battir and the nearby Palestinian villages would be cut off from Bethlehem and the rest of the West Bank, a process they fear will fragment a future Palestinian state.

"There will be no (territorial) continuity," said Olayan, leaving only what some observers describe as an archipelago of Palestinian sovereignty. Zionist far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a settler himself, openly states that preventing Palestinian statehood is the objective.

"We will continue to develop the settlements in order to maintain (the Zionist entity's) security and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state," he wrote on the X social media platform after the five latest settlements were approved in June. In recent months, Zionist forces have blocked a road to Battir, nearly doubling the time it takes to reach Jerusalem just 10 kilometers (six miles) north.

When asked about the new outpost in Battir, a Zionist security official acknowledged that "a (Zionist) farm had been established without proper authori-

zation". The official told AFP "the possibility of authorizing the farm will be weighed" as the development of Heletz gets under way.

Battir residents "raised several claims that the land belongs to them" but have "not presented documentation to support their position", according to the official. Olayan said documents from Ottoman times prove Battir inhabitants' ownership of the land.

A UNESCO spokesperson said the UN cultural agency's world heritage committee had been told about "reports of illegal constructions" and that Battir would be discussed at a session in late July. Olayan fears that sleepy Battir, with its collective life centered around the Roman fountain's irrigation system allotting each family a specific time slot to irrigate their crops, faces a difficult future. "Battir is a peaceful village and the settlement will only bring trouble," he said. — AFP

Zionist entity squeezes Palestinian Authority, diminishing its role

JENIN: Roads torn up months ago by Zionist army bulldozers in Jenin refugee camp remain impassable because the Palestinian Authority can't afford to fix them. Government employees are being paid a fraction of their salaries, and health services are collapsing.

These are all signs of a deep financial crisis that has crippled the administration led by President Mahmoud Abbas in the Zionist-occupied West Bank, prompting questions over its future even as the United States and other countries are pressing for a "revitalized" PA to run the Gaza Strip when fighting there ends.

The PA's finances have been in disarray for years as donor states have cut back funding that once covered nearly a third of its \$6 billion annual budget, demanding reforms to tackle corruption and waste. But Palestinian officials say they worsened sharply after Hamas attacked southern communities in the Zionist entity on October 7, leading the entity to withhold a chunk of tax revenues it collects on the PA's behalf that are now its main source of financing.

The strains are particularly evident in Jenin, where the Zionist entity has long targeted Palestinian militants and has stepped up operations since October. Nidal Obeidi, the city mayor, said Zionist raids since October have inflicted more damage than in the past on essential infrastructure. "The

water and sewage pipes are hit. Power transformers are shot at, and even water storage tanks on roofs," Obeidi told Reuters. He estimated the repairs would cost \$15 million in the refugee camp alone. But with the PA "under siege", he said, resources are scarce.

Palestinian officials say the PA is facing one of its gravest crises since it was created under interim peace deals with the Zionist entity 30 years ago.

Ghassan Khatib, a lecturer at Birzeit University in the West Bank who once served as a Palestinian minister, said Zionist policies risked further marginalizing the PA "and at a certain point in time might cause its collapse". "They have the effect of reducing the political weight of factions that support a peaceful settlement with (the Zionist entity) - namely Fatah - in favor of the opposition groups, mainly Hamas," he said. Hussein Al-Sheikh, a senior Palestinian official, told Al Arabiya TV in June that the shortfall in funding meant the PA could not "do its duties towards the Palestinian people", which could lead to the "collapse of the Palestinian Authority".

Withholding taxes

The West Bank and East Jerusalem are home to more than 3 million Palestinians and, according to the UN, some 700,000 illegal Zionist settlers. The Zionist military controls the West Bank, although the PA exercises limited governance of areas where most of the Palestinian population lives. Under a longstanding arrangement between the sides, the entity collects taxes on goods that pass through the Zionist entity into the West Bank and makes monthly transfers to authorities in Ramallah.

Following the October 7 attack, the entity's far-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, began withholding

a portion of those revenues equal to the amount transferred by the PA to Gaza, where the Abbas-led administration has continued financing services, salaries and pensions since Hamas took over. Smotrich argues the funds would end up in Hamas' hands.

The amount withheld - approximately 300 million shekels (\$80 million) a month - added to previous deductions imposed by the Zionist entity equivalent to amounts paid by the PA to the families of militants and civilians jailed or killed by Zionist authorities.

In May, Smotrich suspended transfers altogether, accusing the PA of working against the Zionist entity after the International Criminal Court prosecutor sought arrest warrants against its prime minister and defense minister, and three European countries recognized a Palestinian state.

Abbas has condemned violence against civilians and criticized Hamas' raid, saying it gave the Zionist entity an excuse to attack Gaza.

The entity transferred 435 million shekels (\$116 million) to the PA in early July, but Palestinian officials say the entity is still holding 6 billion shekels of its funds.

"What was transferred was not enough to pay 60 percent of the salaries, and therefore the financial crisis is ongoing," Mohammad Abu Al-Rub, a PA spokesperson, told Reuters. "(The Zionist entity) deducts around two-thirds of the revenue, and this puts all the government plans on hold and increases public debt."

The PA pays salaries or pensions to 150,000 people in Palestinian territories. The last time it paid them in full was in 2022. Adding to the economic hardship in the West Bank, the entity has locked out some 200,000 Palestinians who used to commute daily to work in the Zionist entity, citing security concerns.

Kathem Harb, a 53-year-old father of four who works in the PA's national economy ministry, said he could only afford basics like rice, flour and cooking gas. "We live on the bare minimum," he said, adding there was no money sometimes for water and electricity bills.

Cuts to PA salaries mean staff at government clinics only show up to work a couple of days each week, according to health worker unions. Around 45 percent of essential medications are out of stock, the World Health Organization said last month.

Hayat Hamdan, a woman in her fifties, had travelled 10 km (six miles) from the town of Arraba to a government clinic in Jenin in hopes of finding subsidized medication for her wheelchair-bound husband. But inside, many of the pharmacy shelves were empty. "We have health insurance, but it is of no use," Hamdan said. "Since the start of the Gaza war until today, we are buying most medicines at our own expense."

In Jenin refugee camp - where some 14,000 people live packed into an area of less than half a square kilometer - young men carrying assault rifles patrol streets in open defiance of the PA, underlining the sway militant groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad still have despite Zionist raids.

Bullet marks on the facade of the nearby PA headquarters offer a reminder of past clashes between PA security forces and militants. A man in his 20s, who asked to be identified only as Mohammed for safety reasons, said conditions in the camp were bad before October 7 due to Zionist raids and had gotten a lot worse since. "There are no roads; the infrastructure is destroyed; homes are destroyed; shops are destroyed," he said. "There is no work; the authority isn't paying salaries; the prices are going up. Nobody is helping the people of the camp." — Reuters

International

Trump watches ex-rivals fall in line

Haley, DeSantis give full-throated endorsement to Trump at Republican convention

MILWAUKEE: Donald Trump returned to the Republican National Convention Tuesday for a night intended to unify the party, as his defeated rivals for the nomination lined up to heap praise on the official US presidential candidate. Three of his former foes took the stage separately during prime time to publicly throw their support behind the former president, including one-time UN ambassador Nikki Haley who told delegates that "a unified Republican Party is essential for saving" the nation.

Trump, again wearing a white bandage on his ear that was injured in Saturday's assassination attempt, waved, shook hands and said "thank you very much" as delegates burst into an ovation. While he made no formal remarks, the 78-year-old backslapped and chatted with his new running mate JD Vance and others, pumping his fist and looking more relaxed than during his emotional entrance the previous night.

The Republican leader has been widely feted at the four-day convention, where on Thursday he is set to formally accept his party's nomination as the flagbearer to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden in November. Tuesday was an exercise in presenting a unified front, but the smattering of boos that echoed with cheers across the convention floor when Haley took the stage — with Trump looking on — suggested the party had work to do to gather the base's four corners for the final four months of a bruising presidential campaign. Haley had antagonized Trump during the primary battle but on Tuesday she was clear: "Donald Trump has my strong endorsement, period."

'Unite this country'

Her fellow former Trump challengers — Florida governor Ron DeSantis and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy — also kissed the ring, with the latter tell-



MILWAUKEE: US former ambassador to the United Nations and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley walks off stage after speaking as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis steps on, on the second day of the 2024 Republican National Convention on July 16, 2024. (Right) US former President and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump looks on at the conclusion of the second day of the 2024 Republican Convention. — AFP photos

ing the 2,400 Republican delegates: "Donald Trump is the president who will actually unite this country — not through empty words, but through action." Haley, who this year said the United States can't "go through four more years of chaos" under Trump, had not been expected to appear.

But Saturday's shooting at a Pennsylvania campaign rally reshuffled the deck, and Haley joined the speaking schedule along with Ramaswamy and DeSantis. "Take it from me: I haven't always agreed with President Trump," Haley said, "but we agree more often than we disagree."

As Trump builds a coalition of rivals that he hopes will help him topple Biden, Haley's comprehensive endorsement may well give cover to her supporters to vote for the brash billionaire in November. Seek-

ing to reassure voters that he remains robust despite the traumatic attack, Trump's team announced he and Vance will address a campaign rally on Saturday afternoon — just one week on from the incident.

Amid calls to lower the temperature of America's heated political rhetoric, US House Speaker Mike Johnson told the convention Tuesday that "we're not just uniting as Republicans, we're uniting today as Americans in the wake of the assassination attempt on the life of President Trump."

Meanwhile, Biden called for a ban on the type of semi-automatic rifle that was used in the attempted assassination. "An AR-15 was used in the shooting of Donald Trump ... It's time to outlaw them," the Democrat said during a campaign event in Las Vegas, adding: "Join me in getting these weapons of war off

the streets of America." Trump on Monday had solidified the Republican ticket by announcing Vance, a 39-year-old US senator from Ohio and a one-time harsh critic turned uncompromising supporter, as his running mate. Vance, who says his modest Rust Belt upbringing makes him a voice for working-class voters in left-behind America, is set to address the convention Wednesday evening.

With Vance and Trump in the VIP box, and delegates giving off a joyous vibe, several speakers touched on the notion pervading the convention that divine intervention helped Trump escape assassination in Pennsylvania. "God spared president Trump from that assassin, because God is not finished with him yet," Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders told the crowd. — AFP

US right takes aim at women agents who protected Trump

WASHINGTON: As questions swirl over how a would-be assassin managed to get anywhere near Donald Trump, some conservatives are blaming the Secret Service for hiring the women agents who threw themselves into the line of fire to protect the former president. Women are too short, too weak — and in some cases, too overweight — to protect someone like Trump, according to people on the US political right who accused the Secret Service of "woke" hiring practices they say nearly got the former president killed.

Several women can be seen among the black-suited, sunglass-clad agents racing to shield Trump with their bodies as the gunman opened fire at a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, before hustling him from the stage and into a waiting car and safety. But they, along with their boss Kimberly Cheatle — only the second-ever woman director of the federal agency tasked with protecting presidents current, former and would-be — are now caught in the intense scrutiny over the nearly catastrophic attack.

"There should not be any women in the Secret Service. These are supposed to be the very best, and none of the very best at this job are women," right-wing activist Matt Walsh wrote on X, in one typical post. "I can't imagine that a DEI hire from @pepsi would be a bad choice as the head of the Secret Service. #sarcasm," tweeted Republican congressman Tim Burchett.

Burchett was referring to Cheatle's previous job as director of global security for Pepsi — a post she held for several years before returning to the Secret Service, where she had previously spent nearly three decades. With the phrase DEI — di-

versity, equity and inclusion — he was invoking one of the most popular conservative fronts in the culture wars: the so-called "wokefication" of the workplace as employers strive to diversify their hiring practices beyond white men.

The first women were sworn in as Secret Service agents in 1971. CBS News reported last year that the agency aims to have 30 percent women recruits by 2030. "I'm very conscious ... of making sure that we need to attract diverse candidates and ensure that we are developing and giving opportunities to everybody in our workforce, and particularly women," Cheatle told CBS at the time.

The wildly popular conservative Libs of TikTok account cited that interview in a post also blaming hiring practices for the Trump shooting that has received more than 10 million views on X. "The results of DEI, DEI got someone killed," it read.

'Secret Service A-team'

Diverse hiring practices accelerated in 2020 after the George Floyd killing forced America into a new reckoning over racism and inclusivity. But they have seen a growing backlash from conservatives in recent months who complain they unfairly disadvantage white workers in general, and white men in particular.

None other than Ohio Senator JD Vance — Trump's newly-announced running mate — has spearheaded a recent bill to do away with such efforts. "DEI is racism, plain and simple. It's time to outlaw it nationwide, starting with the federal government," he tweeted last month as the bill was introduced.

Such practices at the Secret Service faced scrutiny as recently as May, when Congress launched an investigation after a female agent in Vice President Kamala Harris's detail reportedly got into an altercation with colleagues. The incident raised concerns about this agent's hiring. Kentucky Republican James Comer said in a letter to Cheatle — specifically, whether staff shortages "had led the agency to



BUTLER: Secret service agents, including a woman, surround Republican candidate Donald Trump as he is taken off stage after the shooting in this file photo. — AFP

lower once stricter standards as a part of a diversity, equity and inclusion effort."

The Secret Service did not immediately respond to questions from AFP. But in response to the Comer letter, spokesman Anthony Guglielmi told US media that Secret Service employees "are held to the highest professional standards ... at no time has the agency lowered these standards."

Cheatle has shrugged off calls for her resignation since the shooting, and the agency has agreed to cooperate with an independent review ordered by President Joe Biden. Comer has also announced that Cheatle will appear before a congressional panel on

July 22 for a hearing on the assassination attempt.

Biden — in whose detail Cheatle served when he was vice president — told NBC News on Monday that he feels "safe with the Secret Service," though he agreed it was an "open question" whether they should have anticipated the shooting. When Trump made his first public appearance after the shooting, at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee on Monday, he appeared to be surrounded by an all-male Secret Service detail. "Now THIS is how you protect a President," posted conservative commentator Rogan O'Handley on X. "Trump gets the Secret Service A-team now." — AFP

Gazans braving Zionist brutality...

Continued from Page 1

of the West Bank, Guterres said in a statement read by his chief of staff, Courtenay Rattray, during a meeting of the Security Council.

Settlement expansion is expected to speed up due to big land seizures in strategic areas and changes to planning, land management and governance, Guterres added. "Recent developments are driving a stake through the heart of any prospect for a two-state solution," said the UN chief. He said the Zionist entity is taking steps to extend sovereignty over the West Bank.

Guterres said the Zionist entity has taken punitive steps against the Palestinian Authority and legalized five Zionist outposts in the West Bank. "We must change course. All settlement activity must cease immediately," Guterres said. He said Zionist settlements are a flagrant violation of international law and an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned Wednesday that his Iran-backed group would hit new targets in the Zionist entity if more civilians are killed in Zionist strikes on Lebanon. "If the enemy continues to target civilians as it has done in recent days, then this will push us to target localities that we have not targeted until now," Nasrallah said. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said Zionist strikes in the south killed five people, including three Syrian children, on Tuesday. In

response, Hezbollah said it launched rounds of Katyusha rockets at the Zionist entity. The United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, described as "horrific" the killing of the children, who were reportedly playing in front of their home at the time of the strike.

Nasrallah warned the Zionist entity of the consequences of any invasion of Lebanon, saying the Zionist entity would be left without any tanks if a full-blown conflict erupted. Nasrallah, speaking during Ashura commemorations, also pledged to assist thousands of Lebanese whose homes have been destroyed by cross-border fire. "We assure residents whose homes have been completely or partially demolished that we will work with you, hand in hand... we will rebuild our homes," he said.

When Shaheen Jarkas fled Syria's war for Lebanon, he hoped his family would be safe. Instead, the Zionist strike killed his two young children. "Like every day... the children were spending their day playing," said Jarkas, 55, a farm worker originally from north Syria's Afrin area but now living in the southern border village of Umm Toot. "I heard the sound of a strike" and ran towards it, he said. Jarkas said he found his children, Jan, 10, and Mohammed, seven, "drowning in blood".

On Wednesday, the children's bodies, wrapped in what appeared to be bed coverings, were laid out on stretchers as mourners gathered and a sheikh led funeral prayers. Another Syrian agricultural worker in Umm Toot, Mohammed Khalil, 58, said at first he didn't know where exactly the strike had hit. "We ran to check on the children who had been playing," he said, his face gaunt and his hair grey. "We found them dead," with his 12-year-old son Khalil Khalil among them, he said. — Agencies

cooperation agreement with Washington. It says its nuclear program is peaceful and solely for energy purposes to decrease its reliance on oil, and buys the fuel it needs for its reactors from the international market to avoid enriching uranium. Enriched uranium, the fuel for nuclear power plants, can be used to make nuclear bombs.

Removing enrichment from nuclear programs decreases the potential for weapons development. The UAE sits across the Gulf from Iran, which the US accuses of trying to develop weapons with its nuclear program, while Tehran says it needs atomic power. The UAE also neighbors Saudi Arabia, which is in talks with the United States over ambitions to develop its own civil nuclear power industry. — Reuters

Paris mayor takes dip in Seine to...

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Wednesday's dip in front of more than 150 journalists was intended to demonstrate that the river was ready, but also to underline what is meant to be one of the key legacy achievements of Paris 2024. Hidalgo plans to create three public bathing areas in the Seine for the city's residents next year — a century after swimming was banned — while fish and other organisms are also returning to the waterway in greater numbers.

Hidalgo had originally planned to swim last month, but had to delay because water tests showed that E. coli bacteria — a key indicator of fecal matter — were sometimes up to 10 times higher than authorized limits. Her swim had sparked jokes and memes on social media, with one viral AI-generated image showing her looking like the wrinkled Gollum character from the Lord of the Rings movies after her amphibious exploit.

A short-lived protest group posting under the

hashtag #jechiedanslaSeine (#Ish*intheSeine) had also encouraged people to empty their bowels in the river upstream to protest against the socialist mayor. President Emmanuel Macron, who had promised to join the Seine bathers, was a notable absentee on Wednesday as he is occupied by a political crisis caused by his decision to call snap parliamentary elections last month.

The locations chosen for outdoor swimming at the Olympics have caused difficulties in the past, notably ahead of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and those in Tokyo in 2021. "It's been raining all over France. Summer has been very late to arrive and so have the good results," said Marc Valmassoni from clean-water campaign group Surftrider which has been conducting weekly tests on the Seine since last year. "They're not excellent, they're not terrible, they're average. But at this time the water is swimmable."

French authorities have invested in new water treatment and storage facilities in and around Paris, as well as ensuring that thousands of homes and canal boats without wastewater connections are linked up to the sewerage system. "If it hadn't been for the Games and Tony Estanguet, we wouldn't have been able to do all this work, because the Games were an accelerator," Hidalgo explained. — AFP

Cyanide killed 6 at Bangkok hotel...

Continued from Page 1

to be related to debts worth millions of baht. "We are convinced that one of the six people found dead committed this crime," said Noppasil Poonsawas, a deputy commander of Bangkok police. Trirong Phipwan, commander of the Thai police evidence office, said the investigation indicated drinks in the hotel room were spiked with cyanide by one of those who died. "After staff brought teacups and two hot water bottles, milk and teapots... one of the six introduced cyanide."

The mysterious circumstances surrounding the deaths of the three men and three women, aged between 37 and 56, have fueled wild rumors, with several local media outlets initially reporting a mass shooting incident. Investigators also revealed that no movement had been observed around from Monday afternoon,

suggesting the deaths could have occurred the day before the bodies were discovered. Speculation a seventh person may have been part of the group was also dispelled by the police.

The Vietnamese foreign ministry said four of the dead were Vietnamese, while the other two were US citizens. Tran Dinh Dung, the father of one of the victims, said his 37-year-old son was due to return to Vietnam last Sunday. "I kept calling him but couldn't get through so I was very worried, but I didn't expect him to die in Thailand," Dung said in an interview with Vietnam's Thanh Nien newspaper. "Phu's mother has fainted countless times, she could not bear this shock," he said.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said Wednesday the crime was "a private matter", unrelated to national security, and should not affect the lucrative tourist sector. Thai authorities are keen to improve the image of the kingdom, whose reputation as a safe tourist destination sometimes takes a hit when grisly crimes are reported. The kingdom welcomed 28 million foreign visitors in 2023, and hopes for even more this year, to get closer to the record level of around 40 million in 2019. — Agencies

UAE considers second nuclear...

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Each of the Barakah power plant's reactors has a capacity of 1,400 megawatts and a total combined capacity of 5,600 megawatts. Alkaabi said the UAE has had discussions with major developers of nuclear energy technology but did not name them. The UAE is a close security partner of the United States and in 2009 signed nuclear energy

International

Families await justice for flight MH17 a decade on

Dutch PM vows to hold to account those responsible for downing the jet, killing 298 people



In this file photo, trial judges and lawyers inspect the reconstructed wreckage of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, at the Gilze-Rijen military airbase, southern Netherlands, on May 26, 2021. (Right) Armed pro-Russian separatists stand guard in front of the crash site of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, near the village of Grabove, in the region of Donetsk on July 20, 2014. — AFP photos

VIJFHUIZEN, Netherlands: Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof vowed Wednesday to bring to justice those behind the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, as relatives of those killed gathered to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the disaster.

Russia has refused to extradite three men convicted by a Dutch court over their role in shooting down the plane. Last year international investigators suspended their work, saying there was not enough evidence to prosecute more suspects.

But Schoof told hundreds of mourners and government dignitaries: "We remain united in our fight for justice. That's what's driving us." He was speaking at a ceremony — broadcast live on national television — in the memorial park near Schiphol airport.

It was from there that the doomed flight took off on a bright summer's day on July 17, 2014. Hours later the Boeing 777 jet was shot down by a Russian-made BUK surface-to-air missile over eastern Ukraine, as it passed on a flight line toward Kuala Lumpur. All 298 people on board were killed.

"You all know that a conviction is not the same as somebody being behind bars," Schoof said. "Justice

requires us to be prepared for the long haul — and we are," he added. "We've got the time, the patience and the perseverance. That's my message to the guilty, and my promise to the relatives."

'Not fully free'

A Dutch court in November 2022 sentenced three men in absentia to life imprisonment for their roles in bringing down the plane over separatist-held pro-Russian territory. It happened during the early stages of the conflict during which Russia seized the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine.

The judges said Russians Igor Girkin and Sergei Dubinsky and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko were responsible for transporting the BUK missile from a military base in Russia and deploying it to the launch site — even if they did not launch the missile themselves. None of the suspects took any part in the legal proceedings or acknowledged their roles in the incident. A fourth man, Oleg Pulatov, was acquitted.

But before international investigators suspended their work, they concluded there were "strong indications" Russian President Vladimir Putin had

approved the supply of the missile that downed the plane. Among the mourners was Evert van Zijtveld who lost his daughter Frederique, 19, and his son Robert-Jan, 18, and his parents-in-law. Van Zijtveld told AFP he did not think "those responsible will serve their sentences". Driekske Bakker, 71, who lost her brother and sister-in-law, told AFP: "I was happy that at least there was a trial and they can't leave Russia ... so they are not fully free." Bakker displayed a painting she made, entitled "MH-17". It depicts bodies falling from the sky into a sunflower field, a symbol she said of the loss felt by relatives.

The victims came from at least 10 countries, with 196 of them Dutch, 43 Malaysian and 38 Australian. Relatives read out their names at the ceremony. Schiphol Airport shut down a nearby runway as a mark of respect and elsewhere in the Netherlands, flags were flying at half-mast.

'Ten years of fighting'

Other countries held their own memorials. The Australian parliament in Canberra hosted one ceremony, where family members placed flowers on a

wreath, many pausing for a moment to wipe away tears. Australia will "not be deterred in our commitment to hold Russia to account," Foreign Minister Penny Wong told relatives and dignitaries.

The European Union on Tuesday called upon Moscow to "accept its responsibility in this tragedy and cooperate fully in serving justice". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on X: "Russia's responsibility for this atrocity is inevitable."

Moscow has refused to extradite any of the suspects, saying it is illegal under Russian law. In a statement, the Russian embassy in The Hague again denied Moscow's involvement, pointing the finger instead at Kyiv. "We were not involved in the investigation and our attitude to these findings is therefore well known," added Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Piet Ploeg, who lost his brother, sister-in-law and nephew on the doomed flight and now heads a foundation for MH17 victims said relatives endured "ten years of endless (court) procedures which were only obstructed by the state responsible." "Ten years of fighting against Russia's denials and its total indifference to the suffering caused," he said. — AFP

Bangladesh PM vows punishment as students mourn dead classmates

DHAKA: Bangladeshi Prime Minister vowed Wednesday to punish those responsible for killing six people in ongoing student protests over civil service hiring rules, hours after police forcibly dispersed a funeral ceremony to mourn the dead. Six people were killed Tuesday in clashes around the country as rival student groups attacked each other with hurled bricks and bamboo rods, and police dispersed rallies with tear gas and rubber bullets. The worst day of violence since demonstrations against public sector job quotas began this month prompted Hasina's government to order the closure of schools and universities nationwide until further notice.

Hasina, whose administration is accused by protesters of misusing the quota scheme to stack coveted government jobs with loyalists, condemned the killings and insisted that perpetrators would be brought to justice. "I condemn every murder," she said in a televised address to the nation on Wednesday evening, after a day of clashes between police forces and demonstrators. "I firmly declare that those who carried out murders, looting and violence — whoever they are — I will make sure they will be given the appropriate punishment."

Her speech did not assign responsibility for Tuesday's deaths, but descriptions from hospital authorities and students given to AFP earlier suggest at least some of the victims died when police fired non-lethal weapons to quell demonstrations. Earlier around 500 protesters staged a public funeral ceremony at the capital's prestigious Dhaka University, carrying six coffins draped with the red and green national flag to symbolize those killed the previous day. But riot police had already cordoned off roads leading to the campus with barbed wire and stopped the procession with tear gas volleys and stun grenades soon after it began.

'Domino effect'

Students at the university had spent Tuesday night scouring dormitories and expelling pro-government classmates in what they said was a bid to end the violence. Members of the student wing of Hasina's ruling Awami League party had clashed with demonstrators over the previous two days, resulting in at least 400 injuries on Monday. "When students were killed yes-



DHAKA: Students protesting against quotas in government jobs offer prayers over symbolic coffins of victims, a day after they died in a clash with police personnel, during an absentee funeral prayer ceremony at Dhaka University in the capital on July 17, 2024. — AFP

terday, it caused massive anger," Dhaka University masters student Abdullah Mohammad Ruhel told AFP. "It was like a domino effect. The female students started kicking out the Awami League students first, then the male dormitories followed."

Others on campus told AFP that all members of the governing party's youth wing had been ordered to leave their dorms, and those who refused were dragged out. The government told every school and university in the country to shut indefinitely late Tuesday, soon after deploying paramilitary forces in several big cities to restore order.

Police later raided the headquarters of the country's main opposition party in central Dhaka, arresting seven members of its student wing. Detective branch chief Harun-or-Rashid told reporters that officers had found a cache of Molotov cocktails and other weapons at the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) offices.

Internet users around Bangladesh reported widespread outages of Facebook, the main platform used to organize the protests. Online freedom watchdog NetBlocks said "multiple internet providers" in Bangladesh had completely restricted access to the social media platform in the wake of Tuesday's crackdown.

Protests nonetheless continued around the country on Wednesday, with police firing tear gas to disperse another demonstration blocking a highway outside

ry advocated ROK policy positions ... disclosed non-public US Government information to ROK intelligence officers, and facilitated access for ROK Government officials to US Government officials," according to the indictment, which referred to South Korea by its official acronym. In return for her services, Terry's South Korean handlers gifted her a \$3,450 Louis Vuitton handbag, a \$2,950 Bottega Veneta handbag, and a \$2,845 Dolce & Gabbana coat, as well as other goods, according to the indictment.

She was also taken to "multiple" Michelin-starred restaurants and provided with \$37,000 in covert payments to a think tank where she worked. The indictment includes security camera images showing Terry meeting her South Korean handlers in Washington stores to be gifted luxury handbags.

Besides the CIA, Terry, who is a senior fellow for Korea studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, also

Barisal, the southern city's police commissioner Jehadul Kabir told AFP. "Our protests will also continue no matter how much violence they can unleash on us," Dhaka University student Chamon Fariya Islam told AFP.

'Can't get work'

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 Hasina, 76, who has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition.

"If you are a university student in today's Bangladesh, you would know how dangerously uncertain your future is," Asif Saleh, the director of one of Bangladesh's largest charity BRAC, wrote on Facebook in response to the unrest. "My inbox is flooded with requests seeking jobs. If I go to a village, fathers will tell me, 'I spent so much to educate my son, but he can't get work.'" Rights watchdog Amnesty International and the US State Department have both condemned this week's clashes and urged Hasina's government not to crack down on peaceful demonstrators. — AFP

worked on the White House National Security Council. Terry, who was employed by the US government from 2001 to around 2011, allegedly began her work for South Korea in 2013 and continued it for a decade despite being warned in 2014 by FBI agents that South Korean intelligence might try to approach her.

Her lawyer, Lee Wolosky, denied the allegations. "These allegations are unfounded and distort the work of a scholar and news analyst known for her independence and years of service to the United States," Wolosky said in a statement quoted by US media.

South Korea's spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, told AFP it was in contact with its US counterpart regarding the indictment. "The intelligence authorities of South Korea and the US are in close communication with each other regarding the report on the indictment (involving) the Foreign Agents Registration Act," it said. — AFP

Philippines, China to set up new channels to handle sea rows

MANILA: The Philippines and China have agreed to set up new lines of communication to improve their handling of maritime disputes, according to a document and a Philippine diplomatic source, as ties sour over clashes about territory in the South China Sea.

The two countries have traded barbs repeatedly over jurisdiction in the contested South China Sea as the Philippines, emboldened by support of defense ally the United States, challenges China's permanent presence around strategic features inside Manila's exclusive economic zone. Three communication channels would be established specifically for maritime issues, according to the source, who provided a document with highlights of an "Arrangement on Improving Philippines-China Maritime Communication Mechanisms", which was signed on July 2.

"China has always been committed to working with the Philippines to properly address maritime issues through dialogue and consultation," Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a briefing when asked about the agreement. "The two countries have agreed to further strengthen the dialogue on sea-related communication between diplomacy and the maritime police, so as to jointly safeguard the stability of the maritime situation and the overall situation of China-Philippines relations," Lin added. The foreign ministries of China and the Philippines and the Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond on Wednesday to separate requests for comment on the matter.

The first channel would be used by "representatives to be designated by their leaders," with the other for respective foreign ministries at ministerial or vice-ministerial level, or their designated representatives, according to the document. The third would involve their respective coast guards "which will be set up once the corresponding MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the coast guards is concluded," the document said.

The source, who declined to be identified because they were not authorized to speak on the issue, said the Philippine foreign ministry was discussing with its Chinese counterpart guidelines to govern the implementation of the arrangement, which follows a June 17 clash between rival vessels near the Second Thomas Shoal, the site of frequent standoffs.

The agreement on communications channels is not the first, with the two sides establishing a line between respective maritime offices. Antonio Carpio, a former Philippine Supreme Court justice, and a prominent advocate of Manila's maritime claims, expressed skepticism over the communication lines "because that will not resolve the dispute." "We don't know if they will answer when we call, so we will have to wait," Carpio said. "It is good to have that but we should not expect miracles out of that."

The Philippines and China agreed during the recent meeting on the need to "restore trust" and "rebuild confidence" to better manage disputes. The Philippine resupply missions, often accompanied by media, have riled China, which sees the Second Thomas Shoal as part of its territory, despite being 1,300 km (808 miles) off its mainland and within Manila's EEZ. — Reuters

Ex-CIA analyst accused of working for S Korea for luxury handbags

NEW YORK: US prosecutors have indicted a former CIA analyst and White House official on charges she worked as an agent of the South Korean government in exchange for designer handbags, high-priced dinners and other luxury goods. Sue Mi Terry failed to register as a foreign agent and disclosed US government information to South Korean intelligence, according to the 31-page indictment filed Monday at a federal court in New York.

"At the direction of ROK Government officials, Ter-

THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2024



Al-Marzouq and Boshehry with Zain and Global Markets teams.

Zain extends its strategic partnership with GCC market research firm Global Markets

Collaboration to enhance business intelligence systems with advanced market analytics

KUWAIT: Zain has announced the extension of its strategic partnership with Global Markets, a leading market research and business intelligence firm in the GCC. This collaboration aims to enhance Zain's business intelligence systems with advanced market analytics, providing comprehensive consultancy services focused on local market trends and research. The enhanced insights will empower Zain to make more informed decisions, thereby strengthening its portfolio of advanced solutions for the local enterprise market.

Commenting on the partnership, Hamad Al-Marzouq, Chief Enterprise Business Officer at Zain Kuwait, stated: "We're delighted to extend our successful strategic collaboration with Global Markets to leverage their expertise in market analytics and insights. This will add value to our business intelligence practices, allowing us to gain deeper insights into local market dynamics, customer preferences, and emerging trends. This enables more informed strategic decisions when serving our SME and enterprise customers."



Hamad Al-Marzouq and Ali Boshehry announce the partnership.

Ali Boshehry, CEO of Global Markets, added: "We're proud of Zain's renewed trust in our services, and we look forward to continuing our development of innovative solutions that meet the growing needs of Zain's customers in Kuwait and across the region. We believe the smart analytics tools we've developed will support Zain's efforts to make sound strategic decisions based on our highly accurate and comprehensive database on the local market, contributing to solidifying its leadership position in the telecom sector."

Global Markets has successfully developed analytics tools tailored to Zain's specific needs. With over a decade of expertise in market research and business intelligence, the company leverages partnerships with numerous firms across the GCC region to deliver exceptional insights.

Through strategic partnerships with key tech players from local, regional, and international markets, Zain continues to pioneer digital transformation within the public and private sectors. The company offers an extensive portfolio of solutions, including cloud computing, cybersecurity, AI-powered drones, 5G, and other revolutionary technologies, to serve the needs of public and private sector institutions alike. This fosters economic growth and contributes to the nation's developmental goals.

HSBC promotes Elhedery to CEO

HONG KONG: HSBC on Wednesday said its chief financial officer Georges Elhedery would step up to the role of chief executive as the Asia-focused banking giant looks to drive growth. Keeping with HSBC tradition of promoting from within for the top job, the new boss will take the helm on September 2 as the lender looks to push on with a transformation undertaken by current CEO Noel Quinn, who in April announced his surprise retirement. "I am delighted to confirm Georges as the next HSBC Group chief executive," group chairman Mark Tucker said in a filing to Hong Kong's stock exchange. "The Board concluded that Georges was the outstanding candidate and we look forward to working together as he leads HSBC through the next phase of development and growth."

Elhedery, 50, joined HSBC in 2005, rising to the role of chief financial officer (CFO) around 18 months ago. The Lebanon-born, French-educated banker has also led the bank's Middle Eastern, North Africa and Turkey region. Before assuming the role of CFO, Elhedery had a six-month sabbatical that reportedly included spending time learning Mandarin.

Elhedery has a "track record of leading through change, driving growth, delivering simplification, containing costs and brings a strong focus on execution", Tucker said.

The new CEO said he was "deeply honored by the trust placed" in him. "Working together with our talented team, I look forward to delivering exceptional value to our clients and investors by driving strong performance on a sustainable growth trajectory," Elhedery said in the statement. HSBC has yet to appoint a new CFO, while Quinn will work with Elhedery to ensure a "smooth and orderly" handover, the bank added. Quinn, 62, has overseen a transformation of the London-headquartered lender during almost five years in charge, helping to drive profits thanks to cost-cutting and soaring interest rates and despite some massively turbulent times. He took over as COVID erupted, an event that saw the bank's share price tank.

Quinn also carried out a massive restructuring program in the wake of the pandemic, slashing thousands of jobs to refocus on its most profitable areas in Asia and the Middle East. Profits later fell heavily, however, owing to bad debts linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, before rebounding as global lenders hiked interest rates following similar moves by central banks to combat soaring inflation. — AFP



Georges Elhedery

Tech firms slam job quota plan in India's Silicon Valley

BENGALURU, India: Indian tech companies on Wednesday slammed a proposal to reserve more than half of all private jobs for local hires in Bengaluru, a city that has powered the country's growth into an IT powerhouse. Known as India's Silicon Valley, Bengaluru is home to Google's national headquarters and those of local tech behemoths Tata Consulting Services and Infosys. Its information technology sector draws top engineering talent from across the country and accounts for roughly a quarter of Karnataka state's estimated \$336 billion annual output, according to industry figures.

On Wednesday, the state's chief minister Siddaramaiah said his government was finalizing a new law that would compel companies to ensure more than half of their workforce was made up of applicants who speak Karnataka's dominant language. Siddaramaiah, who goes by one name, said in a post on X that the move was to make sure locals were not "deprived" of jobs and could "build a comfortable life in the motherland". Indian tech industry body Nasscom said it was "seriously concerned" by the proposal, warning the move risked upending the industry and driving out established players.

"It is deeply disturbing to see this kind of bill which will... hamper the growth of the industry, impact jobs and the global brand for the state," it said in a statement. Other leading figures from the industry also spoke out against the bill, including Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder of pharmaceutical giant Biocon, who warned it could

Maersk says Red Sea shipping disruption having global effects

STOCKHOLM: Denmark's AP Moller-Maersk said on Wednesday that disruption to its container shipping via the Red Sea had extended beyond trade routes between the Far East and Europe to its entire global network. Shipping groups have diverted vessels around Africa's Cape of Good Hope since December to avoid attacks by Houthi militants in the Red Sea, with the longer voyage times pushing freight rates higher. Maersk warned on July 1 the coming months would be challenging as disruptions to shipping via the Red Sea continue.

"The cascading impact of these disruptions extends beyond the primary affected routes, causing congestion at alternative routes and transshipment hubs essential for trade with Far East

Asia, West Central Asia, and Europe," it said on Wednesday. "Ports across Asia, including Singapore, Australia, and Shanghai, are experiencing delays as ships reroute and schedules are disrupted, caused by ripple effects from the Red Sea," it said in a statement.

As an example, Maersk said its Oceania network was hit by congestion in Southeast Asian hubs caused by equipment shortages and capacity constraints due to the Red Sea disruption. "The delays in Southeast Asian hubs pose a risk of disruption at Australian ports due to vessel bunching on arrival, resulting in longer waiting times and other delays," it added. "The congestion and disruption have extended beyond the hubs and into Northeast Asia and



BENGALURU, India: Women take shelter under the umbrellas during heavy rainfall in Bengaluru in this file photo. — AFP

jeopardize Bengaluru's "leading position in technology". Former Infosys chief financial officer Mohandas Pai said the bill was "discriminatory" and "regressive".

Nearly 5.5 million people work in information technology across India, with many of the most sought-after jobs in Bengaluru. But the influx of Indians from elsewhere in the country has become a growing source of resentment in the city, particularly around the locally dominant Kannada language. Around two-thirds of Karnataka residents speak Kannada but the language is

barely used outside the state, while Hindi and English are the lingua franca of the city's IT sector.

Regionalist activists in the state have in the past protested over the use of English on signboards, and Siddaramaiah's government this year mandated that any public signage must be predominantly written in Kannada. Tensions over linguistic identities are common in India, which is home to hundreds of regional languages. Hindi, the most widely used of them all, is spoken as a first language only by 40 percent of the population. — AFP



Cars are stacked ready to be loaded onto a ship for export at the port in Tai-cang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

Greater China ports, causing delays." Maersk said ocean cargo demand remained robust globally, and the group was working to limit disruptions to customers partly by securing additional containers. "We are preparing for

continued disruptions by adjusting our network and supply strategies accordingly," it added. Shares in the company, which was not immediately available for further comment, were down 1.5 percent at 0904 GMT. — Reuters

Business

Boubyan Bank's net profits grow 20% to KD 50 million for H1 2024

'Boubyan 2028' strategy is aligned with the bank's mission and its ESG focus



Adel Al-Majed:

- We maintain our profitability and continue capturing growth opportunities and expanding our business locally and internationally
- Group wealth management plan activated to attract and manage more investments to offer solutions to investment customers

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has announced KD 61 million in operating profits for the first half of this year as the bank recorded KD 50 million in net profits at a growth rate of 20 percent compared with last year, while the earnings per share amount to 11.1 fils.

Adel Al-Majed, Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer, commented on the financial results: "All financial indicators of Boubyan during H1, 2024 highlight the strength and robustness of our profitability, assets, liquidity ratios, and operational performance, which led to maintaining a solid financial foundation, coupled with a flexible business model that gives room for growth and for aligning with the requirements of business sectors."

Al-Majed highlighted the most significant financial indicators during H1, where the bank's assets grew to KD 8.9 billion at a growth rate of 11 percent compared with last year, while the bank's financing portfolio grew by 10 percent to reach KD 6.7 billion, and operating income grew by 11 percent to KD 121.4 million, whereas the bank's market share of local financing increased to 11.7 percent.

He added: "Results of this period are attributed to our strategy of focusing on new markets with promising growth opportunities and positive financing investments with profitability for the bank's investing customers and its shareholders. This is added to focusing on digital innovation and growth of the bank's operational performance, efficient liquidity, and the bank's good reputation, along with the great improvement of our state-of-the-art banking solutions and excelling in innovative offerings that meet the needs of various customer segments."

Group wealth management

"With 'Boubyan 2028' strategy, we have activated our group-wide investment management plan to expand our investment solutions and opportunities, and to discover new markets in order to accelerate the attraction of more wealth and manage the same in order to offer the best to our

customers with an investment appetite. The 2028 strategy is well-aligned with the bank's mission and its ESG focus", Al-Majed added. Al-Majed went on to add: "Boubyan's wealth management is not merely about offering investment advice; rather, it is a holistic process and approach that integrates strategic and investment partnerships that ensure full understanding of the investor's financial position as well as the most significant goals, proper planning and management of risks in order to safeguard and grow the wealth."

Subsidiaries

Boubyan Group's subsidiaries continued making significant achievements by diversifying and improving their offerings, and targeting all companies in various sectors in order to offer innovative and cutting-edge banking services, while Boubyan continued pursuing its strategy that focuses on local and international expansion. Furthermore, and as a part of its regional expansion, a subsidiary of BLME was established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to BLME's headquarters in London and Dubai, in order to increase its customer base and to offer innovative investment solutions.

As an investment arm of Boubyan Group, Boubyan capital continued to strike a balance between long-term goals and short-term needs through offering a group of various financial solutions, and succeeded in increasing its managed assets and customer base, in addition to successfully launching three investment funds, thus placing Boubyan Local and GCC Equity Fund in the lead of top investment funds in Kuwait.

Moreover, Boubyan Capital launched its own digital roadmap due to be completed by the end of 2024 with the aim of digitalizing the processes and improving the investment customer experience in order to make Boubyan Capital's App the cornerstone of the company's digital and investment roadmap that enables them to manage and monitor their investments anywhere and at any time.



Boubyan Bank HQ building

As for Boubyan Takaful Insurance Company, it continued its progress towards sustainable improvement and growth of its business to achieve quality service by innovating and introducing new competitive insurance solutions, and developing a complete group of insurance policies such as the launch of Boubyan Drive Auto Insurance Policy for the first time in Kuwait. The company completed its digital transformation process through Boubyan App, restructured its digital platform features, and updated its applications as per latest programming standards to cope with the digital plan recently introduced by the insurance control unit.

Awards and international ratings

During H1 of this year, the bank received two awards, namely the "Most Innovative Bank of the Year" and "Best Digital Banking Initiative" by MEED, the internationally renowned publica-

• Boubyan Bank's CEO - Private, Consumer & Digital Banking Abdullah Al-Tuwajri attended the FinTech Summit in Dubai to speak about the recent transformations and developments in fintech and the promising growth opportunities. He further attended the Gulf Creatives Conference 2024, held at the prestigious Harvard Graduate School of Education to discuss the proactive vision and well-studied plans for investment in digital transformation at Boubyan.

• Boubyan Bank released its 4th Sustainability Report for the year 2023, titled: "Integration into Corporate Strategy" to reflect the bank's initiatives towards adopting proactive practices that effectively contribute to our sustainable ESG approach to build a more inclusive and sustainable future for everybody.



Towards perfection

بوبيان
Boubyan

tion. This came as a part of its MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024. This new achievement highlights the success of the bank's comprehensive program, which is aligned with business approaches and strategies to upgrade the infrastructure for digital transformation, and to boost the performance and the competitiveness, especially after launching several innovative solutions and services guided by an outstanding banking vision, which led to a leap in digital banking.

Furthermore, and in a testimony to its prestigious status in the financial and banking sector locally and internationally, Boubyan Bank has been included in Forbes' annual list for Middle East Top 100 Listed Companies 2024. The bank ranked 64th regionally and 3rd among local banks on the same list, with a market value of \$8 billion and \$27.3 billion in total assets.

The bank was further ranked 3rd lo-

cally and 49th regionally in MEED's List for the 100 Largest Listed Companies in MENA for 2024. Furthermore, the bank's ratings from Moody's, Fitch, and S&P remain stable at "A2", "A", and "A" respectively. As for the ex-government support (or xgs) rating assigned by Fitch, it stood at "BBB". The introduction of such new criteria communicates Fitch's view of the creditworthiness of Boubyan excluding assumptions of extraordinary government support. Boubyan was assigned the second highest rating in Kuwait as per such criteria.

Human capital development

Boubyan continued supporting its human resources and recruiting national cadres, and was able to reach the highest percentage of national manpower across the private sector, which now exceeds 81 percent, and continued its enablement approach for women, who now account for 30 percent of the bank's employees, with many of them occupying leadership positions. The bank's human resources proved themselves to be one of the key pillars of the bank's ongoing success, as they embrace and adopt Boubyan's future vision, which greatly contributes to the introduction of innovative and creative ideas and deliverables, while reiterating the bank's commitment to providing all that is necessary to support our human resources' leadership role in a real and sustained manner to have a positive effect on the future job market and achieve the desired results in terms of increasing our productivity and the profitability rates of the bank.

Cooling prices chill drive to add wheat acres in US Corn Belt

CHICAGO: A Biden administration drive to increase US wheat plantings after the Ukraine war is faltering as wheat prices hover around four-year lows and exportable supplies continue to flow from the Black Sea region, curbing demand for American grain.

Wheat acreage expanded last year as prices soared to a near record high after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. But US plantings dropped nearly 5 percent this year, resuming a decades-long trend that has coincided with a more recent slide in the US share of the global wheat export market.

Farmers planting less wheat in the world's No 4 wheat exporter could be a concern for global markets as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasts world wheat supplies will tighten to a nine-year low, and increasingly extreme weather creates more uncertainty for global production of the staple grain.

In 2022, US President Joe Biden visited Illinois and praised farmers for trying to avert a wheat supply shortage triggered by war in Ukraine, a major grain producer. His administration also saw increasing wheat planting as a way to help lower food inflation. To encourage plantings in the central United States, the administration turned to crop insurance - not for wheat, but for crops such as soybeans that could be planted immediately after wheat and harvested in the same year. In parts of the US Farm Belt, it is the income from a second crop, grown later in the season, that makes winter wheat economically viable.

Insurance coverage on a second crop had been limited to farmers in the southern Midwest, but the USDA took steps to make policies more widely available. While the expansion in crop insurance initially helped to make wheat more attractive, the initiative was overshadowed by a plunge in wheat prices between September 2022, when winter wheat planting decisions were finalized for 2023, and the following year, when farmers planted the 2024 wheat crop.

Jeff O'Connor, who hosted Biden in 2022 on his farm near Kankakee, Illinois, said crop insurance for double cropping reduces risks for farmers who want to add wheat to their rotations. But the measures had little impact on his planting decisions. "My wheat acres are determined by rotation and occasionally market conditions," O'Connor said.



Traders signal offers in the Wheat Options pit at the Chicago Board of Trade in Chicago, Illinois. - AFP

"Crop insurance availability for double crop doesn't play into the decision, with the way that the rules for coverage works," O'Connor said.

Double cropping can be highly profitable, but also risky, especially in the northern half of the country where autumn frosts might kill the second crop before it is ready for harvest. Crop insurance mitigates the risk. Planting two crops a year is common in the milder climate of the southern Midwest, including the southern third of Illinois. The Biden administration's goal was to expand the practice northward, into the heart of prime Midwest corn and soy farmland.

Farmer response has been muted, however. "We've found American farmers in the central Corn Belt to be very, very reluctant to alter crop rotation patterns unless there is a massive profitability signal," said Matt Herrington, director of commodity research for World Perspectives Inc, a research and analytical firm.

In April 2022, USDA estimated that double cropping, as well as a two-year increase in loan rates for food crops, would help US farmers make up for up to 50 percent of the wheat typically exported by Ukrainian farmers and lower costs to consumers. In fact, Ukraine's wheat exports increased to 18.1 million metric tons in the 2023/24 marketing year, matching the country's pre-war five-year average. USDA data showed, US exports dwindled to 19.2

million tons, a 52-year low as Plains drought drove up US wheat prices to uncompetitive levels. In the current marketing year, the USDA forecasts a decline in Ukraine's wheat exports to 13 million tons as the war drags on, while US wheat exports are expected to recover slightly to 22.5 million tons as better yields help offset the smaller planted acreage. A USDA spokesman said farmers had responded strongly to expanding double-crop insurance in more than 1,500 counties, with a significant increase in winter wheat acres in 2023.

For the 2024 harvest, the USDA estimated a 4.7 percent reduction in total US wheat plantings to 47.24 million acres (19.12 million hectares), due to a 7.9 percent drop in winter wheat acres led by declines in top producing state Kansas, as well as Illinois. Double-cropping can boost soil health by keeping the ground covered for more months of the year. The practice could become more feasible farther north as the climate warms, and as seed technology improves.

Eric Miller, a central Illinois farmer, signed up for the expanded insurance for double-cropping. However, he did not change his wheat or double-crop soybean acres as a result, and instead stuck to his regular crop rotation this year. "Obviously price and fall weather matters. (If) price per bushel is up, (wheat) acres will probably be up," Miller said. — Reuters

Wirecard accountant admits 'mistakes' in fraud trial

MUNICH: Wirecard's former top accountant spoke Wednesday for the first time in the ongoing trial into the \$2 billion fraud scandal that brought down the German payments firm and acknowledged making mistakes.

Stephan von Erffa said he sometimes felt overwhelmed in the job but rebuffed the accusations made against him by prosecutors. "I had a lot on my plate and at times I felt like a juggler," von Erffa said at a court in Munich.

"I see that unfortunately I made mistakes that I regret," he said. But the 49-year-old insisted that he had never used his position to enrich himself and sought to play down his role at the scandal-hit firm.

"I never took part in board meetings," von Erffa said. Wirecard imploded spectacularly in June 2020 after it was forced to admit that 1.9 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) in cash, meant to be sitting in trustee accounts in Asia, did not actually exist. The firm's Austrian-born former CEO Markus Braun has been in the dock since December alongside von Erffa and Oliver Bellenhaus, the former head of Wirecard's Dubai subsidiary.

Prosecutors allege the trio invented revenue streams with third-party companies to inflate Wirecard's accounts and make the loss-making company appear profitable. In his testimony, von Erffa distanced himself from Braun, saying the former Wirecard chief was "unapproachable".

He also said his previous silence in the trial was down to his mistrust of the public prosecutor on the case. "I got the impression that exculpatory evidence was not wanted," he said. Bellenhaus, his co-defendant, had admitted to fraud and turned chief witness for the prosecution, telling judges in December that Wirecard was "a scam" from the start with Braun "at the core of everything". Wirecard's collapse sent shock waves through Germany, drawing parallels with the accounting scandal at US energy giant Enron in the early 2000s. It prompted an overhaul of Germany's finance watchdog BaFin, heavily criticized for ignoring early warnings about Wirecard. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who was finance minister at the time of Wirecard's implosion, described the scandal as "unparalleled" in Germany's post-World War II history. — AFP

Business

New British government proposes planning overhaul to boost growth

UK to bolster budget watchdog after 'mini-budget' crisis

LONDON: The new British government on Wednesday said that the delivery process for critical infrastructure would be streamlined and more power given to local leaders under a proposed planning overhaul aimed at unlocking growth. New Prime Minister Keir Starmer has made boosting Britain's anemic growth one of the government's core aims since winning a July 4 election, and has pledged to build, rather than block, new housing and infrastructure.

The government said that the proposed new planning law would support economic growth and that local consent would only be able to shape how, not if, new projects are built. "My ministers will get Britain building, including through planning reform, as they seek to accelerate the delivery of high quality infrastructure and housing," King Charles said as he read out the government's legislative agenda.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill will accelerate upgrades to the national grid, simplify processes around major new infrastructure projects and reform compulsory purchase compensation rules to block "excessive" payouts, the government said. It also plans to increase the capacity of local planning authorities.

In a separate proposed law, the government plans to establish a new framework for devolution in England, giving more powers to the mayors of metropolitan areas and to local combined authorities.

Local leaders will be given powers over planning, transport networks and jobs, as well as establishing a quicker process for more regions to be able to make use of such powers. "My government believes that greater devolution of decision making is at the heart of a modern dynamic economy and is a key driver of economic growth," Charles said.

"Legislation will be introduced to give new powers to metro mayors and combined authorities. This will support local growth plans that bring economic benefit to communities."

The new government will also strengthen the role of the country's official budget watchdog under new laws that Starmer hopes will boost Britain's attractiveness to investors. Under the planned new legislation - announced in parliament by King Charles - all fiscal events making "significant and permanent tax and public spending changes" will be assessed by the Office of Budget Responsibility, the government said.

Former Prime Minister Liz Truss and

her finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng triggered a crash in British government bond prices in 2022 when they announced big tax cuts in a "mini-budget" plan that they did not allow the OBR to assess. The watchdog's forecasts on growth and government borrowing typically accompany budgets and other big fiscal statements.

Some analysts say the new legislation is unlikely to make much practical difference as the Labour Party has made it clear it intends to involve the OBR in assessing its fiscal plans.

"The litmus test of success for Labour will be whether they can get UK growth going again, which is going to require difficult reform of the planning system, green industrial policy, and a potentially closer relationship with the EU," Paul Diggle, chief economist at investment firm abrdn, said.

Starmer and his finance minister Rachel Reeves have said they want to turn Britain into the Group of Seven economy with the fastest sustainable growth rate through a combination of reforms to the planning system and more investment. They have committed to fiscal rules similar to those of the Conservative government led by Rishi Sunak with a bit more room for borrowing to fund investment.



LONDON: British Prime Minister (then opposition Labour Party leader) Keir Starmer speaks at the Resolution Foundation Economy 2030 conference in London in this Dec 4, 2023 file photo. — AFP

Their plan to require OBR scrutiny of budgets and other fiscal events had previously been announced as part of the Labour Party's pre-election policy program. The government also confirmed in the King's Speech its plan to create a National Wealth Fund to help drive in-

vestment into key industrial sectors including renewable energy. The National Wealth Fund will build on an existing UK Infrastructure Bank, and will receive 7.3 billion pounds (\$9.5 billion) of capital to attract 20 billion pounds of private investment. — Reuters

J&J beats Wall St estimates on strong drug sales

WASHINGTON: Johnson & Johnson beat estimates for second-quarter profit and revenue on Wednesday, driven by strong sales of its drugs, including cancer treatment Darzalex and blockbuster psoriasis drug Stelara. Shares of the drug and device maker rose 1.4 percent to \$153.15 in choppy premarket trading.

Revenue of \$22.4 billion surpassed the consensus estimate of \$22.3 billion, according to LSEG data. Adjusted earnings of \$2.82 per share beat analysts' expectations of \$2.70 per share. Stelara sales rose 3.1 percent to \$2.89 billion, topping analysts' estimate of \$2.77 billion according to LSEG data. Darzalex sales rose 18.4 percent to \$2.88 billion, in line with analysts' average estimate of \$2.86 billion.

The New Jersey-based drugmaker said it now expected total 2024 sales of \$89.2 billion to \$89.6 billion, compared with its prior forecast of \$88.7 billion to \$89.1 billion. J&J also lowered its annual per-share forecast to a range of \$10 to \$10.10 from \$10.60 to \$10.75, to account for a 5-cent increase from improved performance and a decrease of 68 cents related to costs from mergers and acquisitions including its \$13 billion purchase of cardiac medical device company Shockwave.

That was among J&J's several deals this year, including its May purchase of experimental skin disorder drugs in two acquisitions worth \$2.1 billion. Sales for its medical technology business rose 2.2 percent to \$7.96 billion from \$7.79 billion a year earlier, but fell short of analysts' estimate of \$8.17 billion.

Analysts expect Stelara sales of more than \$10 billion this year, but this could fall to about \$7 billion in 2025 when as many as six close copies of the drug are due to launch in the US. J&J Chief Financial Officer Joe Wolk said he expected to finalize contracts within the next three months that would determine favorable US insurance coverage for Stelara in 2025. "I'll remind you that we are still calling for growth in our pharmaceutical business despite the biosimilar competition that we intend to encounter next year," he said. — Reuters

China's industrial support plans lack transparency: WTO

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization said on Wednesday that it was unable to get a clear picture of China's financial support for key industrial sectors, such as electric vehicles or aluminum and steel production due to an "overall lack of transparency".

The WTO noted that the world's second-largest economy gave financial support and other incentives to industries over the 2021-2024 review period but said that Beijing did not provide enough information for the WTO to have a clear picture of the programs.

"The overall lack of transparency on China's government support may also contribute to debates on what is perceived by some as overcapacity in certain sectors," the WTO report said, naming a range of sectors from semiconductors to shipbuilding. The WTO noted in particular that it could not determine the size of Chinese government funds that it said were using public resources to make equity investments in key industries. "The incentives provided by these funds have generally not been notified to the WTO," it said.

The WTO assessment was published as part of China's trade policy review - a process that all of the organization's 166 members undergo every few years. China's last review was in 2021. Other countries are set to respond to the 173-page assessment which analyses China's trade policies in depth, noting that its importance in the global economy and in trade has been further accentuated over the review period.

China says it operates according to market principles and Beijing has previously said it never makes use of prohibited subsidies for electric vehicles. — Reuters

China's slump spins out new meme of economic despair

BEIJING: China's sputtering economy has prompted a dire, new shorthand online for pessimism about the prospects for any turnaround for jobs, incomes and opportunity: "the garbage time of history."

The apparently made-in-China phrase injects a term from basketball - the ragged final minutes of a game when the outcome is no longer in doubt - into what started as a discussion of history and has since become a heavily censored online discussion about whether China's workers and investors should give up. China's recent economic data have shaken confidence. Growth in the past quarter fell short of forecasts at 4.7 percent, highlighting the drag from a protracted property crisis and stalled consumer spending.

China's Communist Party leadership concludes a closed-door meeting on Thursday expected to detail Beijing's economic strategy for the next several years, including steps to promote technology. China Daily, in a front-page story on Wednesday, described one aim of the meeting as reviving confidence in the country's "long-term economic trajectory."

The fatalistic tag "garbage time" began popping up on social media platforms over the past month. It was given a more recent boost when state media and commentators lined up to denounce the phrase and any suggestion that decline would follow downturn for China. "This is a catchphrase insinuating that there's no help and no hope, denying and downplaying everything in China," Beijing Daily said in a commentary last week.

It follows another buzzword China's censors have targeted as a threat to stability since it broke into the mainstream three years ago: "lying flat," a call to a slacker life of limited ambition and quiet protest.

Wang Wen, a finance professor at Renmin University and former columnist for the state-controlled Global Times, said earlier this month the idea of an era of garbage time was "more dangerous" because of its implicit message of hopelessness. "It completely

Boeing door blowout crisis hitting suppliers, airlines and passengers

NEW YORK: After a door panel on an Alaska Airlines-operated Boeing 737 MAX 9 jet blew off mid-air in January, Anneke Palmerton learned the carrier had canceled her flight to Orlando as well. It did not surprise her as Alaska had decided to ground its fleet of MAX 9 aircraft after the Jan 5 accident. Little did she know the incident would snowball, impacting air service in her city of Bellingham, Washington and upending her winter plans to fly Southwest Airlines.

The door blowout happened aboard only one flight. But fallout from the ensuing safety crisis has inflated costs for those reliant on Boeing. Interviews with airline executives, union leaders, pilots, suppliers, passengers and government officials, show how the incident is rippling through the trillion-dollar global aviation industry.

Boeing's resulting slump in MAX deliveries has hit earnings at airlines like Southwest and some suppliers who planned to equip new planes. It has inconvenienced and stranded passengers as airlines fly fewer routes, and has led to a slowdown in pilot hiring, interviews show. "We thought...there would be a little bit of bumps," said Palmerton, a notary and marriage officiant in Bellingham. "Never in a million years (did we think) it would lead to Southwest," Palmerton said about the airline's decision to cut service to her local airport. Boeing is the largest US exporter and employs nearly 150,000 people domestically. It supports millions more through a supply chain that includes thousands of businesses big and small around the world. Economist Joseph Brusuelas estimates it cumulatively contributes \$1 trillion a year to the US economy and supports over 5 million jobs.



BEIJING: People look at buildings on the skyline from a viewing platform in a mall in Beijing's central business district. — AFP

denies China's current development situation and attempts to create public expectation that the country will eventually fail."

The first apparent mention of the term on China's internet came last September from Hu Wenhui, an editor at a small publication in Guangzhou. In an article that has been since censored, Hu argued that the history of the Soviet Union after 1979 and some Chinese dynasties suggest that some historical failures are inevitable, a comment some read as an implicit comment on current events.

"When the overall situation is set and defeat is inevitable no matter how hard you try, it's just a futile struggle," Hu said. "How should those unfortunate enough to encounter the garbage time of history conduct themselves?"

Hu could not be reached for comment. In June, the topic appeared to get a boost in online discussions.

Boeing referred to executive comments made earlier that described the situation as difficult, but noted company efforts to improve quality are paying off with improved factory operations. Boeing expects to get back to a MAX production rate of 38 per month in the back half of the year.

Under pressure from regulators, Boeing has pledged to prioritize safety over speed, which has slowed down its jet production. It delivered 175 jets in the first half of 2024, down 34 percent from a year ago and 46 percent fewer than its European rival Airbus handed over to customers.

Ramp-up delays have some suppliers waiting to benefit from their investments. Montreal-area component supplier Meloche Group invested C\$10 million (\$7.34 million) this year to support higher demand, including that of the LEAP engines that power MAX planes.

But GE Aerospace and its partner France's Safran have previously said they are slowing down LEAP production this year, citing Boeing's crisis. Meloche now expects to miss its C\$150 million revenue target this year by 5 percent, although CEO Hugue Meloche said sales should rise 25 percent in 2025. The Jan 5 incident adds headaches for airlines already battling engine delays on some Airbus A320 jets and industry-wide supply chain bottlenecks. Airlines prepare months in advance before putting a new aircraft in service. They hire and train pilots, and plan their network, incurring significant preparation and infrastructure costs. The aircraft delivery delays mean they can't recover those costs.

While the full financial impact of Boeing's crisis is difficult to quantify, it is taking a toll on airline earnings and jobs. US budget carrier Allegiant, a Boeing customer, has said that delays in aircraft deliveries are costing it about \$30 million a year. United Airlines, another customer, has slashed its hiring plans for the year by almost 30 percent, citing fewer aircraft deliveries. Rival American Airlines has also dialed down its hiring plans.



RENTON, US: Boeing 737 MAX aircraft are assembled at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. — AFP

"We have seen some Boeing delivery delays," American's CFO Devon May told Reuters in April. "So, we're probably not going to be hiring as many people as we would have expected back in January." The situation is more dire at Southwest - which operates an all-Boeing fleet and is now facing the prospect of a proxy fight, in part due to jet delivery delays. The company had been hiring staff on an assumption it would receive 85 jets this year, but it now expects only 20 planes. A lack of aircraft has hit its revenue and worsened cost pressures as the carrier spends millions of dollars to keep flying older planes. It is also estimated to have left the airline with about 800 excess pilots.

With its earnings under pressure, Southwest has decided to concentrate on more profitable markets and exit Bellingham and three other airports. It has already stopped hiring pilots and suspended training for new hires and drawn up plans to offer its pilots reduced hours and effectively lower pay.

That's a dramatic reversal in fortune for its pilots, who barely six months back were so much in demand at rival carriers that the company was struggling to stabilize the attrition rate. — Reuters

THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2024



A stack of python skin is seen after drying.



A python is seen inside an enclosure.

Snakes on a plate

Pythons touted as protein alternative



Snake farmer Emilio Malucchi handles a python.

In a warehouse in the lush humid farmlands of central Thailand, thousands of pythons lie coiled in containers, rearing and striking at the glass as people pass by. They are being raised for their robust, diamond-patterned skins, which are sold to high-end European fashion houses for belts, bags and handbags, but some scientists and industry insiders believe the snakes' true value could lie in their meat.

Demand for meat is growing globally, despite the carbon footprint associated with traditional livestock, and while a plant-based diet is often touted as the best alternative, some feel reptiles have been overlooked as an option. Snakes can tolerate high temperatures and drought, reproduce quickly, and grow far faster than traditional sources of animal protein, while consuming a lot less food.

Researchers estimate that China and Vietnam alone have at least 4,000 python farms, producing several million snakes, mostly for the fashion industry. "Python farming may offer a flexible and efficient response to global food insecurity," concluded a study published earlier this year in the journal Nature.

The researchers spent a year studying nearly 5,000 reticulated and Burmese pythons at two commercial farms in Vietnam and Thailand. "They can survive for months on end with no food at all and no water, and literally they won't lose condition at all," said Patrick Aust, director of the African Institute of Applied Herpetology and one of the scientists involved in the study.

The pythons were fed waste chicken and wild-caught rodents and offered a more efficient feed-to-meat ratio than poultry, beef and even crickets.

They also reproduce rapidly, Aust said, with female pythons laying between 50 and 100 eggs annually.

'Complete waste'

That is music to the ears of Emilio Malucchi, whose farm in central Thailand's Uttaradit houses around 9,000 pythons. Malucchi, who moved to Thailand from Italy with his family more than four decades ago, has had little success convincing people to take up snake meat, and most of what he produces is either discarded or goes to fish farms.



A python is seen inside an enclosure.

"It's a complete waste," he told AFP.

"I eat my snakes because I know what they eat and how I raise them," he said. Wild python has long been eaten throughout Southeast Asia, but the meat has yet to attract widespread international interest despite offering a chicken-like texture low in saturated fats.

"The problem is that there is no market for python flesh. We need to educate people about its possibilities," said Malucchi. The climate impact of meat has been extensively documented, with the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noting that meat from grazing animals - mainly beef - has been "consistently identified as the single food with the greatest impact on the environment."

That effect is both in terms of greenhouse emissions and land use change.

While the UN and climate activists advocate moving to a more plant-based diet, the OECD estimates demand for meat will increase 14 percent by 2032, driven by population growth in low-income regions and rising living standards in Asian countries.

Meanwhile, drought and extreme weather are making traditional farming increasingly difficult in many parts of the world where the need for protein is urgent. Protein-energy malnutrition, sometimes called protein-energy under-

nutrition, caused nearly 190,000 deaths globally in 2021, according to the Global Burden of Disease study.

'Nice and crispy'

That paradox has spurred a push to explore meat alternatives, from edible insects to lab-grown meats.

But uptake of these alternatives has not yet been significant and commercial python farmers face strict processing standards that the industry complains are outdated. Despite these challenges, Aust believes python farming has "huge potential" and is enthusiastic about its merits. "You can barbecue it or eat it in curries and stews. I like to fry it in garlic butter until it's nice and crispy," he said. "It's a very versatile meat."

Animal welfare organizations are less impressed. Earlier this year, animal rights group PETA accused Malucchi's farm of cruelty after secretly documenting his pythons being killed with hammers before being skinned.

Malucchi has placed large posters on his walls on how to kill pythons "humanely" and said his industry is no different from other types of livestock farming. "Farm animals are slaughtered all over the world," he said. — AFP



Snake farmer Emilio Malucchi inspects a snake skin.



A worker holds a bucket of gall bladders removed from pythons.



Python skin is seen placed in a bucket.



Python skin is seen hung after drying.



Workers set python skins to dry.



A worker cleans leftover python meat after it was skinned.



A worker cleans leftover python meat after it was skinned.



Snake farmer Emilio Malucchi (left) inspects a snake skin at Closed Cycle Breeding International, a snake breeding farm that provides snake skins for the fashion market in Nam Phi in Thailand's northern Uttaradit province. — AFP photos



Workers set python skins to dry.



A worker cleans leftover python meat after it was skinned.



Workers set python skins to dry.

Lifestyle



Brokpa ethnic community's women sit near their houses in Garkon village.



One of the oldest Brokpa men, Tsering Gangphel speaks with AFP at his house in Garkon village.



Divided land, disputed origins

India's Brokpa people



Tsering Rumskit, second wife of one of the oldest Brokpa men, Tsering Gangphel at Garkon village.



One of the oldest Brokpa men, Tsering Gangphel speaks with AFP at his house in Garkon village.

High in the icy Indian Himalayas, a long-isolated people recall origin myths of millennia-old migrations from afar -- an identity in disputed lands twisted today by politics. The Brokpa people of Ladakh have no written language, practice a culture of polygamy, and have their own calendar. The most cherished ballad of the Brokpa, some 6,000 of whom live in a rugged mountain valley of the Indus river, is the "song of history". A new verse is added every 12 years, a cycle which counts as just one "year" in their calendar. Tsering Gangphel, 85, said it details Brokpa legends that they came from ancient Rome.

Other Brokpa people recount myths of ancestral links to Alexander the Great's army, who invaded in the fourth century BC. Scientists are skeptical, with one study of Brokpa DNA suggesting their roots lay in southern India. But Gangphel -- who said he can sing a thousand songs in the Brokpa language detailing their culture -- is adamant about his people's past. "We still celebrate our arrival here by dancing and singing in each village, once every three years," Gangphel told AFP, at his home overlooking the roaring river. "We are Aryans," he added. The



Brokpa ethnic community's women gather at a house in Garkon village.

deeply contested term refers to opaque pre-history -- which critics say is today more about gritty realpolitik than foundation fables.

'Validate their hold'

In South Asia's ancient Sanskrit language, "aryan" means "noble" or "distinguished", not a separate ethnicity. It was once a loose term suggesting that

people from Europe to Asia had linked ancestors in Central Asia, reflected in common linguistic roots. That is a far cry from the genocidal Nazi fantasies of a blond-haired and blue-eyed master race. Some right-wing Hindus use the term to claim "Aryan" ancestors originated in India, linking it to a Hindu and national identity. For the Brokpa, the term "Aryan" has been used as a

tool to promote both tourism and India's geopolitical ambitions.

Ladakh, part of Kashmir, is divided between India and Pakistan by a highly militarized frontier. Each country claims the region as their own. In 1999, Brokpa yak herder Tashi Namgyal sighted "Pakistani intruders" in Indian-controlled territory and told Indian troops. That triggered a 10-week conflict between the nuclear-armed rivals which cost 1,000 lives on both sides. "I saved the nation's honor," 60-year-old Namgyal told AFP, proudly showing army letters praising his service.

After the fighting stopped, Indian authorities pushed tourism in Brokpa areas calling their lands the "Aryan Valley". The tourism ministry promotes them as the "Last Aryan Villages of India". Mona Bhan, a Brokpa expert at Syracuse University in New York, says the community uses "Aryan" to highlight its socio-cultural practices and history.

But Indian Hindu nationalists have used the term to "validate their hold on India's disputed territory", according to the anthropologist.



A woman of Brokpa ethnic community sits at her house in Garkon village.



Brokpa ethnic people gather at a house in Garkon village.



A woman of Brokpa ethnic community sits near her house in Garkon village.



Brokpa lama Sangay Phunchok reads a Buddhist text, at Garkon village in Ladakh.



An aerial view of Garkon village in Ladakh. — AFP photos



Brokpa ethnic community's women sit near their houses in Garkon village.



Lifestyle



Brokpa ethnic community's women gather at a house in Garkon village.



Brokpa ethnic community's women walk in Garkon village.



Tsering Jozum, wife of one of the oldest Brokpa men, Tsering Gangphel at Garkon village.



One of the oldest Brokpa men, Tsering Gangphel speaks with AFP at his house in Garkon village.

'It's a sin'
The Brokpa calendar means a child's first birthday is marked when they turn 12. Using that calculation, a laughing and grey-haired Gangphel remarked that he is "just seven years old". Gangphel, a father of six who has two wives, said marrying outsiders was frowned upon. "Being Brokpa means being unique in language, dress and dance," said 14-year-old schoolgirl Etzes Dolma.

But an influx of tourists and government development policies are bringing increasing modernity. Earth and wood homes are being replaced with concrete and glass construction. The Brokpa worship their traditional gods, but those now are often amalgamated into other beliefs.

Most Brokpas in India are Buddhists, while in Pakistan many have become Muslim. Sangay Phunchok, 43, a lama, or Buddhist spiritual lead-

er, said he shifted faith after hearing that "our ways will not grant us heaven". A monastery is being built in the village, but the Brokpa also honor their ancestral gods at a shrine of piled ibex horns. "We still pray to our own gods," Gangphel said. "But goat sacrifice has stopped, because our lama said it's a sin."—AFP



Brokpa ethnic community's women work at a vegetable garden in Garkon village.

Cyprus pioneers coral conservation project in the Med



Senior associate researcher at the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI) Louis Hadjioannou pins 'Cladocora caespitosa' corals to a floating nursery off the coast of Capo Greko in the eastern part of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.



Marine biologists prepare to pin fragments of 'Cladocora caespitosa' corals on a floating nursery they set up off the coast of Capo Greko.



Louis Hadjioannou (left) and fellow marine biologists install floating coral nurseries off the coast of Capo Greko.



Louis Hadjioannou, films 'Cladocora caespitosa' corals after pinning them to a floating nursery.

It's a Thursday morning in the tourism hub of Ayia Napa on the southeast coast of Cyprus, and three divers in wetsuits are gluing coral fragments onto numbered pins. They are preparing to enter the crystal-clear waters and attach the samples to a floating nursery, in a pioneering effort in the Mediterranean to help restore a coral population hit by climate change and unsustainable human activity. The small fragments of coral have been kept for several weeks at the east Mediterranean island's Department of Fisheries and Marine Research station.

Now they are about to be attached to a net on the underwater nursery some five meters (16 feet) down near Cape Greco. Louis Hadjioannou, senior associate researcher at the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute, is in charge of research into "Cladocora caespitosa". This species -- also known as cushion coral -- has been declining in the Mediterranean Sea over several years, mainly because of climate change, he said. And now, he wants to revive it.

The 41-year-old told AFP that in order to do so, the first step is to try to grow the coral in a different underwater habitat "so that we can test whether it is working". He said a Zionist expert had the idea of using floating nurseries to keep the corals away from potential threats, such as predators. Cladocora caespitosa is found in shallow waters in Cyprus, generally rocky areas at a depth of up to four meters "where tourists potentially can trample on them", Hadjioannou said.

'Good results'

By having them floating, you can exclude certain stress factors, including predators and extreme weather conditions. "It's a pilot study so we will continue monitoring them on a systematic basis," he said. "And in a year's time we will know basically if the corals are doing well on the nurseries or not."

This type of floating structure was first created in 2000 at the northern tip of the Red Sea near Zionist entity's border with Jordan, said Buki Rinkevich, the Zionist expert behind the idea. It has been tested worldwide, including in Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Zanzibar, Colombia and Jamaica. Floating nurseries have produced "good results" with around 100 different species of coral, said Rinkevich, of the National Institute of Oceanography in Haifa. Hadjioannou said two floating nurseries have been deployed in separate marine protected areas off Cyprus, near Cape Greco and Ayia Napa. The



Louis Hadjioannou (right) checks 'Cladocora caespitosa' corals after pinning them to a floating coral nursery.

blocks to which they are moored are at depths of 11 and 17 meters respectively. At the end of June, 10 coral fragments were installed on each floating nursery, and are being analyzed every month or two to check on their condition. "The plan is to install at least a hundred coral fragments on each floating nursery for this case study," Hadjioannou said.

EU-funded project

If the samples are doing well after a year has passed, "we will collect the coral fragments and transplant them

on natural reefs". Manos Moraitis, 36, a biologist and associate researcher at the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute, said the operation is part of the EU-funded EFFECTIVE project for advancing marine monitoring, restoration, and observation efforts.

Coral reefs are among the planet's richest and most diverse ecosystems, and home to innumerable aquatic species. They provide balance and support biodiversity by allowing many species to co-exist, but they are also very sensitive to changes in the environment. Cypriot marine ecosystems are as much threatened by climate change as they are by

mass tourism, coastal development and agricultural pollution.

Hadjioannou said that after a heat-wave in 2015, up to 40 percent of the corals they were studying were affected by mortality. "With the increase of the climatic crisis... it's forecasted that an even higher percentage of the live tissue of the coral will die," he said. "If we are successful, the ultimate goal is to scale up, to try to replicate these coral nurseries in other regions" of the Mediterranean and to deploy more in Cyprus.—AFP



Marine biologists enter the water as they prepare to install a floating coral nursery.



Marine biologists install floating coral nurseries.—AFP photos



Actor/recording artist Kyle Gass of Tenacious D performs at The Theater at Virgin Hotels Las Vegas on Dec 30, 2022 in Las Vegas, Nevada.—AFP

Tenacious D cancels Australian tour after Trump joke outrage

Tenacious D frontman Jack Black has cancelled the comedy-rock group's tour of Australia and New Zealand, after his bandmate stoked outrage with a quip about the attempted assassination of Donald Trump. Guitarist Kyle Gass said "don't miss Trump next time" when asked to make a birthday wish while playing a packed gig in Sydney over the weekend, part of the band's "Spicy Meatball" tour.

While the jibe drew laughter and applause from the crowd, it swiftly sparked controversy when posted online. "I was blindsided by what was said at the show on Sunday," said Black, the Hollywood funnyman who starred in films such as "School of Rock", "High Fidelity" and "Kung Fu Panda".

"After much reflection, I no longer feel it is appropriate to continue the Tenacious D tour, and all future creative plans are on hold," he said on Instagram late Tuesday night. Australia's Ambassador to the United States, former prime minister Kevin Rudd, said the comment made him "feel sick". "People might think it's a bit of 'funny haha' at a concert. But it's not.

"These people should just grow up and find a decent job." Four remaining shows in Australia have been cancelled along with two dates in New Zealand, management company Frontier Touring said Wednesday in a statement.

"Frontier Touring regret to advise that the remaining dates of Tenacious D's tour of Australia and New Zealand have been cancelled. "All purchased tickets will receive a full refund." The band's biggest hit came in 2002 with the track "Tribute", which fans commonly refer to as the "greatest song in the world", a reference to its tongue-in-cheek lyrics. Gunman Thomas Matthew Crooks opened fire at a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday -- a near-miss assassination attempt that left Trump bleeding from his right ear.—AFP

Sports

Japan's Daiki Hashimoto aiming to match gymnastics legend Uchimura

Olympics have the power to transform athletes

TOKYO: Japan's Daiki Hashimoto is the good-natured farm boy from the Tokyo suburbs who is aiming to emulate gymnastics legend and countryman Kohei Uchimura by retaining his all-around Olympic title in Paris. Hashimoto became the youngest men's all-around champion in Olympic history when he took gold aged 19 at the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Games three years ago.

He also triumphed in the horizontal bar event. Hashimoto's success represented a changing of the guard after the long and imperious reign of Uchimura, who is widely regarded as one of the sport's all-time greats.

"King Kohei", who retired in 2022, won successive all-around Olympic titles in 2012 and 2016 and was part of the Japan team that took gold at the Rio Games. Now Hashimoto has the chance to follow in his illustrious countryman's footsteps despite struggling with a finger injury in the build-up to Paris.

"I think it's looking good, but my finger still isn't 100 percent so I can't let my guard down," Hashimoto told reporters after practicing with his Japan teammates in late June. Hashimoto damaged a ligament in the middle finger of his right hand in May while practicing for his final competition before the Games.

He has said he expects to be up to speed when the gymnastics start in Paris on July 27. Hashimoto is the two-time all-around world champion and will start among the title favorites even if his preparations have been far from ideal.

He has the backing of Uchimura, who is also tipping Japan for the team title. "I believe Hashimoto, who does the world's best training, is the strongest in the world," Uchimura told Japanese media. "But the Olympics have the power to transform athletes. It's about whether Hashimoto can remain his overwhelmingly strong self and whether his rivals transform."

Tokyo breakthrough

Growing up in a family of part-time farmers in Japan's Chiba Prefecture, Hashimoto took up gym-



ANTWERP: (FILES) Japan's Daiki Hashimoto reacts after competing in the Men's Horizontal Bar Final during the 52nd FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, in Antwerp, northern Belgium, on October 8, 2023. — AFP

nastics at the age of six after watching his two older brothers do the same. He competed at the world championships in Stuttgart in 2019 while still a high school student, and he had an extra year to hone his craft when the Tokyo Games were delayed by a year. Uchimura decided not to compete in the all-around event on home soil because of wear and tear on his aging body, and Hashimoto took centre stage as the final reached its climax.

Placed third going into the last rotation, the horizontal bar, he put in a near-flawless routine, dismounting with a clap of his hands that sent a cloud of white chalk into the air. His performance lifted him into first, giving him the title ahead of China's Xiao Ruoteng and Russia's world cham-

pion Nikita Nagornyy. Hashimoto stayed dry-eyed on the podium afterwards, explaining that he felt "the champion must not cry but only look forward". He has since gone from strength to strength, finishing second at the world championships later in 2021 behind China's Zhang Boheng but winning the title at the next two editions.

He still has some way to go before he can catch Uchimura, who won six all-around world titles. He can match his Olympic tally if he wins gold in Paris, but the 22-year-old has other things on his mind than just winning medals. "I want to work hard so that when people ask which sports have made a splash this year, the answer they give is gymnastics," he told reporters. — AFP

perienced player and a phenomenal performer, particularly in England. "It's great for him to be able to lead the attack and 50 caps is a huge honor."

'Exciting' Atkinson

Stokes will also be able to call on express pace in both rising star Gus Atkinson and Mark Wood. Atkinson took 12 wickets on his debut in Anderson's farewell Test and hit speeds of 90mph (145kph). Wood has proved himself capable of even faster bowling and he is now set to be recalled as a replacement for Anderson in the only change to the England team from the first Test.

With England rebuilding ahead of the 2025/26 Ashes in Australia, Stokes is looking forward to having Atkinson and Wood at his disposal for the foreseeable future. "It's very exciting, the prospect of seeing Gus Atkinson bowl at one end and Mark Wood at the other," said Stokes.

"Look at the way Gus bowled last week, it's not only the 12 wickets, it's finding another bowler who can bowl between 87-90mph. "Woody is someone who had an unbelievable summer last year in the Ashes," added Stokes, with his Durham team-mate taking 14 wickets in three matches as England fought back to draw the five-Test series 2-2.

"He was a massive player for us with a huge impact and everyone knows why - because of his pace." England could be forced into a late change if the partner of opening batsman Ben Duckett gives birth before Thursday's toss, with Dan Lawrence on standby. "There's a plan in place for Ben and his partner," said Stokes. "We'll just have to make a decision if it was to happen before the game started." — AFP

Ben Stokes backs Woakes to help fill Anderson void

NOTTINGHAM: England captain Ben Stokes believes "phenomenal" Chris Woakes can lead his team's bowling attack as they start life without James Anderson as the new-ball spearhead. Anderson retired from international duty following an innings and 114-run rout of the West Indies in the first Test at Lord's last week. The 41-year-old took 704 Test wickets - the most by any fast bowler in the format's history - during an England record 188 matches.

With Stuart Broad having retired after last year's Ashes series against Australia, it means England are now without the pair's combined 1,308 Test wickets as they head into the second Test at Trent Bridge on Thursday. The match will also be the first time since 2012 that England have played a home Test without either Anderson or Broad. But England still have seam-bowling experience in Woakes, who will be playing his 50th Test this week. The 35-year-old Warwickshire all-rounder averages an impressive 22.04 per wicket in red-ball internationals on home soil. "I see it as an opportunity for someone like Woakes to take on more of a leadership role in the bowling unit," Stokes told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

"We've been so used to Jimmy and Broady doing that, so it's a great opportunity for him. He's a very ex-



LONDON: England's captain Ben Stokes makes an unsuccessful appeal for a leg before wicket (LBW) decision against West Indies' Jason Holder during play on the second day of the first Test cricket match between England and West Indies. — AFP

NSW break hoodoo to win State of Origin rugby series

BRISBANE: New South Wales defied history at a febrile Suncorp Stadium to overcome Queensland 14-4 in an engrossing State of Origin decider on Wednesday. The Blues clinched the best-of-three series after Bradman Best and Mitchell Moses scored the only two tries in the latter stages of a brutal contest.

It was the 17th time the Blues lifted the shield as they thwarted the Maroons' bid for a hat-trick. History was against the Blues, who had only won deciders in Brisbane twice before - in 1994 and 2005. They had also lost six straight deciders at Queensland's fortress.

But the Blues were invigorated under new coach Michael Maguire in his first series at the helm after replac-

ing Brad Fittler. "One of the toughest games I've played. I'm so glad we won," the 22-year-old Best said. "Stoked and very special to win in Brisbane." Queensland had taken control of the rivalry since the arrival of coach Billy Slater, who is regarded as one of the greatest players ever. But the Maroons were unable to penetrate an inspired Blues and did not score a try for the match. "I think we had a few opportunities, but they defended well," said Queensland star Harry Grant.

The series had major momentum shifts with Queensland dominating the first game in Sydney before the Blues forced a decider after a scintillating 38-18 victory at the Melbourne Cricket Ground last month. A fiery contest had been flagged and the early stages were marked by bone-crunching tackles in an arm-wrestle. Both teams defended with ferocity and tempers flared on the half-hour when a melee broke out in front of the Queensland dugout on the sidelines. The Blues played with the type of physicality implored by no-nonsense Maguire as they attacked in waves only to be repeatedly repelled by a steely Maroons defence. — AFP

News in Brief

Modric extends Real deal

MADRID: Real Madrid captain Luka Modric has signed a new one-year deal to keep him at the Santiago Bernabeu for the upcoming season, the European champions announced on Wednesday. The 38-year-old midfielder extended his contract until June 30, 2025. Modric has won six Champions League titles, La Liga four times and lifted the Copa del Rey twice with Real Madrid. He has only started 37 times across the last two league seasons, but remains a key player for coach Carlo Ancelotti, having helped Los Blancos to a Champions League-La Liga double last term. Modric became the oldest goalscorer in European Championship history last month when he netted for Croatia against Italy at Euro 2024, although he could not prevent the 2018 World Cup runners-up from suffering a group-stage exit. "I'd like to keep playing forever but there will probably be a time I'll have to hang up my boots," Modric said after the agonizing 1-1 draw with Italy which put Croatia out. "I'll keep playing on, I don't know for how much longer." — AFP

Japan footballer arrested

TOKYO: Japan footballer Kaishu Sano has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a woman, local media reported on Wednesday. The 23-year-old defensive midfielder and two friends, also in their 20s, allegedly sexually assaulted the woman at a hotel in Tokyo on Sunday. Japan public broadcaster NHK and other media reported, citing unnamed police sources. After responding to a call immediately after the alleged assault from the woman, reported to be in her 30s, police arrested the three near the hotel, the reports said. Contacted by AFP, Japanese police were not immediately available for comment. Sano, who has made four appearances for Japan and was part of the squad at this year's Asian Cup in Qatar, signed for German Bundesliga club Mainz earlier this month from Kashima Antlers. Mainz said in a statement on X that they were "surprised" by reports of Sano's arrest. "We are not able to evaluate or comment on these reports due to a lack of information," the club said. — AFP

Lozano out as Mexico coach

MEXICO CITY: Jaime Lozano was dropped as manager of Mexico's national football team after rejecting a plan that included a demotion for the upcoming World Cup cycle, the Mexican Football Federation said Tuesday. The federation announced Lozano's departure in a statement, adding, "The Mexican Soccer Federation thanks and recognizes the commitment and dedication of Jaime Lozano. Today his time as Technical Director of the Senior National Team ends." The federation said it offered a new contract to Lozano through 2030 that included him working under a "more experienced" coach from 2024 to 2026 for the upcoming World Cup to be co-hosted by Mexico, Canada and the United States. Lozano, under the deal, would have returned at some stage between 2026 and 2030 as the head coach. The federation said that after Lozano examined the proposal, he "doesn't wish to continue. We respect his decision." A new national team coach is expected to be named next month. — AFP

Aubameyang leaving Marseille

MARSEILLE: Ex-Arsenal striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang said on Wednesday he is leaving Marseille after just one season with Manchester United's Mason Greenwood reportedly replacing him at the French club. Gabon attacker Aubameyang, 35, joined the southern club from Chelsea last July and scored 30 goals during the campaign. According to multiple media reports, English attacker Greenwood, who had charges including rape and assault against him dropped in February 2023, is being lined up by Marseille. "It's time for me to start a new chapter," Aubameyang said on Instagram. "I have always followed the advice of my father, who has allowed me to become the player I am and we have made this decision for the next part of my career." — AFP

Grace to start in Wales debut

BRISBANE: Former rugby league star Regan Grace will make his Wales debut against the Queensland Reds after being named by coach Warren Gatland in the starting side Wednesday. The ex-St Helens winger represented Wales six times in the 13-man game before switching codes in 2022, but serious injuries have hampered him since. Prop Kemsley Mathias, hooker Evan Lloyd, No.8 Mackenzie Martin and centre Eddie James will also start in the red jersey for the first time in Brisbane on Friday against the Super Rugby outfit. Replacement hooker Efan Daniel is another in line for a debut, off the bench, in a new-look team after consecutive defeats against the Wallabies. Lock Cory Hill will captain the side with Dewi Lake, who skipped the side against Australia, not in the 23. "We said that we want the players that have come out here on tour to have an involvement, whether that is starting or in the 23," said Gatland. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: (FILES) Suni Lee celebrates after competing on the balance beam on Day Two of the 2024 US Olympic Team Gymnastics Trials at Target Center on June 28, 2024 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

Suni Lee on Olympics redemption mission after illness

LOS ANGELES: A little more than a year after her doctors told her she might never compete again, reigning Olympic all-around champion Suni Lee will be chasing redemption in Paris. While the pre-Olympic hype has focused on Simone Biles' successful return to elite gymnastics, Lee's road back to the pinnacle of her sport has been every bit as challenging as her team-mate's. The 21-year-old - who took all-around gold in Tokyo three years ago after Biles' sudden withdrawal due to mental health issues - was diagnosed with two undisclosed kidney conditions in early 2023.

"My doctor was telling me he didn't think I'd be able to do gymnastics ever again," Lee told reporters earlier this year. "So to even be here is an accomplishment in itself and I'm super proud of myself." Lee punched her ticket to the Olympics at last month's US trials in her home town of Minneapolis, finishing second overall - behind Biles - with 111.675 points. "I'm so, so glad that I never gave up," Lee said after that performance.

"There were so many times where I thought about just quitting and just kind of walking away from the sport because I didn't think that I would ever get to this point." Lee has pointedly declined to elaborate on the precise nature of her illness, indicating she will do so on her own terms. However she said in April that her condition was "in remission" and revealed that she considers herself to be a stronger gymnast now than she was at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021.

"It was a lot to process at the time," Lee said. "But I feel so much better because I'm way better already than I was at the last Olympics. And I didn't even think that I could get better than that. So that gives me a little more comfort. And knowing that anything that I put my mind to I can accomplish." Lee however acknowledges that retaining that level of confidence is an ongoing struggle. "Whenever I'm talking to my coaches, I get really sad because I'm never going to be the same. I'm not the same Suni. I'm not the same athlete," Lee said in April at a US Olympic team media event in New York. — AFP

Sports

Southgate's exit leaves England with difficult successor search

Eddie Howe, Mauricio Pochettino, Graham Potter, Thomas Tuchel are leading contenders

LONDON: Gareth Southgate's exit as England manager in the aftermath of their painful Euro 2024 final defeat to Spain has left the Football Association facing a difficult task to find a suitable successor. Southgate admitted it was "time for change and for a new chapter" for the national team when he resigned on Tuesday after eight years in charge.

Selecting the right man to author the next pages of England's torturous bid to win a first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup won't be easy for the FA's headhunters. The governing body had been keen for Southgate to stay on beyond his existing contract, which was due to expire in December.

But the 53-year-old's decision to quit has put in motion a tricky succession search that will ideally be resolved by the time England travel to the Republic of Ireland for a Nations League tie on September 7. When FA chief executive Mark Bullingham and his advisors ponder the potential candidates, they will find a list filled with question marks about their ability to handle the unique pressures of a role Graham Taylor once dubbed "the impossible job" during his time in the England hot-seat. Newcastle boss Eddie Howe and a trio of former Chelsea managers in Mauricio Pochettino, Graham Potter and Thomas Tuchel are said to be the leading contenders. Potter was installed as the early bookmakers' favorite, but the 49-year-old's reputation was tarnished by a dismal spell in charge at Stamford Bridge.

After earning plaudits for his impressive work with Brighton, Potter was axed by Chelsea after less than seven months as struggled to handle the squad's big personalities. Potter had been brought in to replace Tuchel, who was sacked despite winning the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021.

Although Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola and former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp are likely out of reach, the FA are said to be willing to consider a foreign coach. Yet as a German, Tuchel might find it hard to find approval from sections of England's fanbase. Tuchel's reputation lost a little of its lustre after his troubled Bayern Munich reign, which ended last season with his team finishing 18 points behind Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen.

Great expectations

Pochettino lasted just one turbulent season at Chelsea before leaving by mutual consent in May. His fine work at Tottenham still makes him an attractive candidate, as does his strong relationship with England captain Harry Kane, who rose to prominence during their time together in north London.

But Pochettino hails from Argentina - another of England's long-standing rivals - and his failure to lead Paris Saint-Germain to the Champions League crown despite their wealth of talent is a blemish on his CV.

Howe's success in leading Newcastle from relegation strugglers to Champions League qualification



BERLIN: (FILES) England's head coach Gareth Southgate reacts after the UEFA Euro 2024 final football match between Spain and England at the Olympiastadion in Berlin on July 14, 2024. - AFP

for the first time in 20 years led some to rank him as an England boss in waiting. Yet the 46-year-old fared less well last term, when Newcastle finished a disappointing seventh in the Premier League, and was also in charge when Bournemouth were relegated from the top-flight in 2020.

Newcastle chief executive Darren Eales also insisted on Tuesday he would fight to keep Howe if the FA expressed interest in him. Adding to the pressure on the FA is England's potentially treacherous qualifying campaign for the 2026 World Cup.

Relegated to Nations League B, England cannot be top seeded in the World Cup qualifying stage as that privilege goes to the 12 best performing sides in League A. Spain, Germany, France or Portugal could all lie in wait for England in groups where only the winner is certain to reach the World Cup.

Bullingham wants to make an appointment "as soon as possible" but conceded on Tuesday there was "an interim solution in place if needed". Former Everton midfielder Lee Carsley, England's current under-21 coach, is understood to be the interim solution.

The 50-year-old has little managerial experience but could be considered on a permanent basis after Southgate made a successful transition from the England Under-21 role. The Three Lions' limp performances on route to the Euro 2024 final and their cautious approach in that match ensured Southgate will be remembered as England's nearly man.

Despite having a hugely talented squad, he failed to end England's wait for a first major trophy in 58 years, losing successive Euro finals and the 2018 World Cup semi-final. Whoever is given the job of replacing Southgate will be expected to deliver where he ultimately came up short. - AFP

England qualify for Euro 2025 with Sweden draw

PARIS: Reigning champions England held on for a goalless draw against Sweden in their final women's Euro 2025 qualifier on Tuesday to book their place at next year's finals, as Italy and the Netherlands also qualified. Sarina Wiegman's Lionesses knew they would secure a top-two finish in Group A3 and qualify automatically for the tournament next July in Switzerland if they avoided defeat. England created few chances in Gothenburg but clung on despite late pressure from 1984 winners Sweden, who would have qualified themselves with a victory.

"I'm happy, I'm very relieved because it was a tough game," coach Wiegman told ITV. "The first half I think we dominated. When you are so dominant we have to create more chances and score goals. In the second half we couldn't keep up that level."

"We did fight for it. I think we can do a little bit better, but keeping the 0-0, qualifying in this group, I am relieved." The Scandinavians finished third in the group and will have to settle for a place in the play-offs to be played later this year. Elsewhere, Italy and the Netherlands progressed from Group A1, in which all four teams still had a chance of going through ahead of Tuesday's fixtures. Italy romped to a 4-0 victory over Finland to finish top, while the Dutch secured second place with a 1-1 draw against Norway. - AFP



GOTHENBURG: England's midfielder #06 Leah Williamson and Sweden's forward #09 Kosovare Asllani vie for the ball during the UEFA women's Euro 2025 qualifying soccer match league A, group 3 between Sweden and England at Gamla Ullevi in Gothenburg, Sweden. - AFP

and her US team, it showed the Americans what they need to do before they start to play for gold next week in France. "That was a big message from Emma at the end of the game - don't be frustrated," Smith said. "We wanted a result from this but these games are preparation for something bigger. We need to peak when we need to peak and that's at the start of the Olympics. We're calm about it. We're not frustrated. We trust the process. We know things will go our way when we need them to." The American women begin Olympic Group B play on July 25 against Zambia at Nice and also face Germany and Australia in group matches at Marseille. "I think it's going to be amazing," Smith said. "I'm so excited to be going with this group. I'm excited to get the ball rolling in France. This group has a lot of potential and good things in store."

The United States have won four Olympic women's football titles - in 1996 on home soil and three in a row in 2004, 2008 and 2012. US midfielder Rose Lavelle, who helped win the 2019 Women's World Cup in France, was a late scratch from the match due to leg tightness. Korbin Albert replaced her in the US starting lineup.

The Americans have three wins and a draw without surrendering a goal under England's Hayes. "I think we've made good, nice progress," Hayes said. "When you take over a team and you've got to implement quite a lot, they have adapted to those ideas really well."

"We're going into the Olympics with an idea of what we look to do most of our moments but now we're starting to add some adaptations." Smith and Mallory Swanson were each denied on early chances by Bermudez while Trinity Rodman was offside on another US opportunity. - AFP

Costa Rica keeps USA to a draw in Olympic sendoff game

WASHINGTON: Costa Rica played the United States women's national team to a goal-less draw on Tuesday in the Americans' sendoff match before departing for the Paris Olympics. US captain Lindsey Horan told a crowd of nearly 19,000 spectators they were undaunted about their chances in France despite the draw. "We wish we would have gotten the win," she said. "But we're going to go out and do our thing at the Olympics. This team is amazing. We're going to represent this country so well and we'll do everything possible to being back a gold medal." Costa Rica goalkeeper Noelia Bermudez and a swarming defensive effort frustrated a patient US squad to earn the Ticas a draw after losses in their first 17 matches against the Americans. The US women outshot Costa Rica 26-2, forcing 12 saves from Bermudez and taking all 16 corners in the match.

"It takes a lot of patience to play against a low block. Costa Rica did it really well," US midfielder Sophia Smith said. "It was definitely challenging for us but it was a good test because we're going to face that in the Olympics. I know we can create chances. We created I don't know how many chances tonight. It's getting one in the back of the net, no matter how that looks. That will come." While it was a disappointment against a defensive-minded squad for new coach Emma Hayes

FIFA to probe into Argentina players' racist chants

PARIS: FIFA said on Wednesday it was opening an investigation into racist chants by Argentina players after they won the Copa America. "FIFA is aware of a video circulating on social media and the incident is being looked into," a spokesperson for world football's governing body said. They added: "FIFA strongly condemns any form of discrimination by anyone including players, fans and officials." 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 23-year-old Fernandez, sing a chant dating back to the 2022 World Cup final in which Argentina beat France. The song targets France's star striker Kylian Mbappe among others and includes racist and homophobic insults. Chelsea had earlier announced they had launched an internal disciplinary procedure against Fernandez over the incident. Fernandez has apologized and the club said in a statement it had launched an "internal disciplinary procedure." "Chelsea Football Club finds all forms of discriminatory behavior completely unacceptable," it added. "We acknowledge and appreciate our player's public apology and will use this as an opportunity to educate." - AFP

McIlroy aims to end decade-long drought

TROON: Rory McIlroy is aiming to bounce back from his heartbreak at the US Open, while world number one Scottie Scheffler looks to round off a stunning season when the British Open begins in Troon on Thursday. The final major of the year gives McIlroy the chance to quickly forget blowing two short putts at Pinehurst last month which cost him the chance to end a decade-long major drought as Bryson DeChambeau won by one shot.

McIlroy has avoided the spotlight since, returning to play for the first time at last week's Scottish Open, where he finished tied for fourth when defending his title. The world number two has finished in the top 10 in five of the last seven British Opens, part of his 21 top-10 finishes since last winning a major. McIlroy conceded he had let a "huge opportunity" pass him by at the US Open as he missed twice from inside four feet at the 16th and the 18th. But the Northern Irishman remains confident he can harness the hurt of his major heartbreak to add to the sole British Open he won in 2014.

"I'll only know the impact (of the US Open) if I get myself in a similar position on Sunday," McIlroy said of his chances in Troon. "Hopefully I get myself in that position again, and if I do, I know I'll handle it a little bit better." Scheffler looks the man to beat despite so far failing to take his world leading form on the PGA circuit in America across the Atlantic to the challenge of links golf. The American's best previous showing at the British Open was a tie for eighth in 2021. Scheffler has won six times in 14 starts this year but added just one major by winning his second Masters in April. His challenge at the USPGA Championship was distracted after being arrested in bizarre circumstances on the morning of his second round before all charges were dropped.

DeChambeau's US Open win was a rare major success for players who have defected to the breakaway LIV tour, but continued his fine form this season. The American finished sixth at the Masters and runner-up in the USPGA Championship behind a record-breaking tally of 21 under par set by Xander Schauffele before claiming his second US Open. - AFP



TROON: Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy on the 18th green during a practice round ahead of the 152nd British Open Golf Championship at Royal Troon on the south west coast of Scotland on July 17, 2024. - 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)

Philipsen ignites green jersey race as Girmay falls at Tour de France

Evenepoel holds a comfortable lead in the white jersey standings



NIMES: Alpecin-Deceuninck team's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen cycles to the finish line to win the 16th stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 188.6 km between Gruissan and Nîmes, southern France. — AFP

NIMES: Belgian Jasper Philipsen won a bunch sprint on stage 16 of the Tour de France in Nîmes on Tuesday while his green sprint points jersey rival Biniam Girmay fell in the final dash. In the struggle for the overall leader's yellow jersey, Tadej Pogacar has a 3 minute 09 second advantage over defending champion Jonas Vingegaard, while Remco Evenepoel remains third at 5min 19sec with several potential game-changing stages still ahead.

The 24-year-old Evenepoel, on his first Tour de France, also holds a comfortable lead in the white jersey standings—for the outstanding young rider. But on this flat run in the south of France, last year's green jersey winner Philipsen emerged victorious and now has 344pts to the Eritrean Girmay's 376 in the sprint ranking.

Both men have three stage wins, but Philipsen lost crucial points in the

green jersey tussle after being relegated from second to bottom spot for deviating from his line during the sixth stage in Dijon. Leader Girmay fell at a roundabout less than 2 kilometres out in Nîmes, with two Education First riders, and was unable to compete in the sprint for the line.

His elbow was bleeding but the usually smiling 24-year-old managed to remount and cruise home with a couple of team-mates, albeit ashen-faced. "It's close, so we'll be playing it day by day now... You don't like to see anyone fall, I hope he can carry on," said Philipsen, who topped 70kph (43mph) as he raced over the line.

"Victories are hard to come by on the Tour de France so a third one is amazing," added the Belgian, who was led out by world champion Mathieu van der Poel. Van der Poel is one of the favourites for the Olymp-

pic Games road race in Paris in two weeks' time. Because of the Olympics, this year's Tour de France will finish in Nice on Sunday—meaning there will be no final day dash down the iconic Champs Elysees.

Pogacar mentioned this after Tuesday's race. "It's a shame for the sprinters not to have the final day sprint, they don't have that much motivation to finish the race but I hope they come all the way with us," said the yellow jersey holder.

The Tour de France race organisers extended the feared time cut on Sunday to allow Mark Cavendish and other haggard stragglers to remain on the race and compete in Tuesday's flat stage, where 152 survivors of the first 15 stages departed.

Cavendish won a record 35th stage win earlier in the Tour, but the veteran came 17th Tuesday. Germany's Phil

Bauhaus was second and Norway's Alexander Kristoff finished third. Kristoff rides for Norwegian outfit Uno-X, two of whose team cars narrowly avoided a crash at a roundabout late in the race.

One of those cars had Johannes Kulseth right behind it riding at 60kph. This 16th day flat run was the last of the sprint stages with mountains galore on the menu from now on. The race left the Gruissan salt basin with the mercury tipping 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) as the peloton rolled through the vineyards of the Aude region at speeds that fluctuated with the direction of the wind.

However, Wednesday's 17th stage takes the peloton back into the mountains with the finish line at a ski resort called SuperDevoluy. The two killer climb stages then come on Friday and Saturday in the back country around Nice. — AFP

Only Olympian training in Taleban's Afghanistan to fulfil judo dream

KABUL: Flipping his flailing judo sparring partner to the mat, Afghanistan's Mohammad Samim Faizad is the only Olympic athlete training for the Games inside his Taleban-controlled homeland.

Six Afghans—including three women who are not acknowledged by the Taleban government—will compete at the Paris Olympics this month in cycling, athletics, swimming and judo.

Faizad is the only member of the team still living in Afghanistan and follows a rigorous regime whilst competing with the challenges of living in a country mired in poverty, recovering from war and governed by the Taleban.

"Physical fatigue subsides after 10 to 20 minutes, but mental and psychological exhaustion is much harder to overcome," the 22 year-old, who works odd jobs to fund four hours of training in the Japanese martial art each day, told AFP.

"Judo means a lot to me," he said while other fighters sparred at the run-down gym of the Afghanistan Judo Federation in Kabul. "One of my biggest dreams has been to someday participate in the Olympic Games."

'Gender apartheid'

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned Afghanistan from the Games in 1999, during the first period of Taleban rule from 1996 and 2001 when women were barred from sport. The country was reinstated after the Taleban were ousted by the post-9/11 invasion, but the Paris Games mark the first summer Olympics since they took back power in 2021.

Taleban government curbs have once again squeezed women out of sport, as well as secondary schools and universities, in strictures the United Nations describes as "gender apartheid". But this time the IOC has invited a squad without consulting Taleban officials—who have not been invited to attend—instead working with the largely exiled national Olympic committee.

The team of three women and three men were chosen under a system ensuring all 206 nations are represented at the Games, in cases where athletes wouldn't otherwise qualify.

Faizad won his spot in a Kabul tournament of more than a hundred competitors. "I will give my hundred percent to get the gold medal for my country," said Faizad, who has practised judo for 14 years and is 446th in the men's world rankings.

The Taleban government have campaigned to be the country's only representatives at diplomatic forums but in sport have been less dogmatic, praising teams that play under the old flag.

"We don't want to mix politics and sports," Atal Mashwani, the spokesman of the Taleban government's sports directorate, told AFP.

However he insisted that "only three athletes are representing Afghanistan" at the Olympics, refusing to acknowledge the women competitors.

He added that with time "the flag issues will be solved". "The flag of the ruling government will be waved in international sports events," he said.

'We give our best'

Afghanistan first appeared at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin and have won only two bronze medals, both in Taekwondo. "In Afghanistan, there aren't many opportunities for sport," said Faizad.

"We don't have standard clubs to train properly, but we do our best."

The word judo means "gentle way" in Japan and



KABUL: In this photograph taken on June 27, 2024, Afghan judo fighter Mohammad Samim Faizad (top) takes part in a training session with fellow judoka Shamsuddin Payenda Zadah at the Afghanistan Judo Federation in Kabul, ahead of Faizad's participation in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP

Faizad tries to cultivate the zen-like calmness his sport requires of champions by putting all other things out of his mind. "An athlete should be able to focus only on sport," he said.

The young fighter is trained by his uncle, 36 year-old Ajmal Faizada—who competed in the 2012 London Olympics and will accompany him to Paris.

"We have both given our best in training," said Ajmal. "We are really aiming to return with the best achievement possible."

The Paris Olympics will be Faizad's first international competition—but with the Taleban government unrecognised by any other nation, the trip is difficult and complicated.

Most embassies in Afghanistan were evacuated during the Taleban takeover and Faizad must travel to neighbouring Iran to apply for his visa.

"Whether I win or not, and if I return to Afghanistan empty-handed, I will train to be ready for the 2028 Olympic Games," he promised. — AFP



ARLINGTON: Jarren Duran #16 of the Boston Red Sox hits a two-run home run in the fifth inning against the National League during the 94th MLB All-Star Game presented by Mastercard at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

Duran homer lifts American League to MLB Game victory

LOS ANGELES: Boston Red Sox outfielder Jarren Duran belted a two-run home run in the fifth inning to lift the American League to a 5-3 victory over the National League in Major League Baseball's All-Star Game on Tuesday.

Shohei Ohtani, the Los Angeles Dodgers' Japanese superstar, had staked the National League to a 3-0 lead with a three-run blast in the top of the third. But the AL scored five unanswered runs to win the Midsummer Classic for the 10th time in 11 years, rebounding at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, after dropping last year's edition 3-2 in Seattle.

Duran earned All-Star Most Valuable Player honors as the AL denied the NL's bid to win a second straight for the first time since they won three in a row from 2010-2012. It was tied at 3-3 with one runner on base and two out when Duran crushed the second pitch he saw from Cincinnati starter Hunter Green to right center field.

"I know he throws really hard so I was like, alright, I hope he throws me a fastball first pitch so I can see how hard it is. And then he just gave me a pitch to put a good swing on," Duran said. The 27-year-old was playing in his first All-Star Game after the first half of the season saw him set career highs with 10 home runs and 41 runs-batted-in to go with 22 stolen bases.

"I can't really put into words right now," Duran said as he accepted the MVP trophy named for legendary hitter Ted Williams. "I'm kind of overwhelmed with emotions, but I'm just very thankful to be here and to represent the Red Sox is big honor." — AFP