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Palestinians to form unity govt

Zionists slam Beijing deal, keep up massacres in Gaza and West Bank



(Left) Mahmoud Al-Aloul, Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of Fatah, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Musa Abu Marzouk, senior member of Hamas, attend an event at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on July 23, 2024. (Right) People carry children injured during Zionist bombardment as they flee the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on July 23, 2024. — AFP photos

BEIJING/GAZA: Hamas announced Tuesday it had signed an agreement in Beijing with other Palestinian organizations including rivals Fatah to work together for "national unity", with China describing it as a deal to rule Gaza together once the war ends. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who hosted senior Hamas official Musa Abu Marzouk, Fatah envoy Mahmoud Al-Aloul and emissaries from 12 other Palestinian groups, said they had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern post-war Gaza.

"Today we sign an agreement for national unity and we say that the path to completing this journey is national unity. We are committed to national unity and we call for it," Abu Marzouk said after meeting Wang and the other envoys. The relentless fighting has plunged Gaza into a severe humanitarian crisis. China has sought to play a mediator role in the conflict, which has been rendered even more complex due to the intense rivalry between Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, and Fatah, which partially governs the occupied West Bank.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

CITRA launches caller ID service

KUWAIT: The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has launched the "Kashef" service to display the name and number of callers from both mobile and fixed phone lines to combat anonymous calls. Acting Chairman Abdullah Al-Ajmi announced this service, developed in cooperation with local telecom companies and government agencies, is available only to legal entities. — KUNA

Oil slicks off Julaiya, Bnaider

KUWAIT: Oil slicks have been discovered off the Julaiya and Bnaider beaches, Kuwait Oil Company announced on Tuesday, noting that its teams are assisting local authorities to contain the area. The slicks have not resulted from KOC oil exploration activities in the area, the company added.

July 21 hottest day ever

LONDON: Sunday, July 21 was the hottest day ever recorded globally, according to preliminary data published on Tuesday by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. The global average surface air temperature on Sunday reached 17.09 degrees Celsius — slightly higher than the previous record set last July of 17.08 C. — Reuters

Iraq hangs 10 'terror' convicts

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraq hanged 10 "terror" convicts on Monday, officials said, in the fourth such execution in three months. A health official said 10 Iraqis "convicted of terrorism crimes and of being members of the Islamic State group were executed by hanging" at Al-Hut prison in the southern city of Nasiriyah. — AFP

Iraq and Kuwait urge continued talks, meetings

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani and Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah met on Monday to discuss ways of promoting bilateral ties and broadening cooperation in various domains.

During the meeting, both sides also looked into fruitful economic partnerships that could contribute to serving mutual interests and strengthening regional security and stability, the Iraqi

Prime Minister's Media Office said in a press release. They also underlined that it is essential to keep holding Iraqi-Kuwaiti committee dialogue and meetings that look into an array of joint issues and dossiers, it said. Furthermore, both sides considered Kuwait's participation in the 2nd Baghdad International Drug Control Conference, held in the Iraqi capital on Monday.

Sheikh Fahad told the conference that establishing communication channels and international coordination between security agencies to combat drug trafficking will have a great impact. He also outlined the initiatives taken by Kuwait's interior ministry in the fight against drug abuse and trafficking and presented the ministry's comprehensive strategy aimed at fighting drug trafficking. — KUNA (See Page 3)

229 killed in Ethiopia landslide

ADDIS ABABA: Using shovels or their bare hands, local residents on Tuesday searched desperately for survivors after a landslide in a remote area of southern Ethiopia killed at least 229 people, the deadliest such disaster recorded in the Horn of Africa nation. Crowds gathered at the site of the tragedy in an isolated and mountainous area of South Ethiopia regional state as some people clawed through mounds of red dirt, according to images posted on social media by the local authority.

So far, 148 men and 81 women are confirmed to have lost their lives after the disaster struck in the Kencho-Shacha locality in the Gofa Zone on Monday, the local Communications Affairs Department said in a statement. Five people had been pulled alive from the mud and were receiving treatment at medical facilities, the government-owned Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation reported earlier.

"Initially, four households were affected by the landslide, and later households in the area were mobilized to save lives," Firaol Bekele, early warning director at the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), told AFP. "But they too perished when the landslide engulfed them," he said.

Continued on Page 6

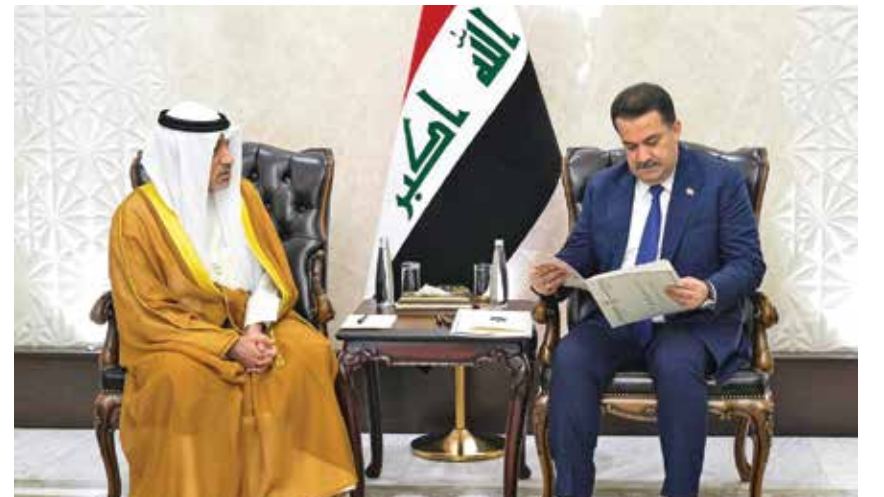
Harris hits trail with Democratic support locked in

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris hit the US campaign trail Tuesday after effectively clinching the Democratic presidential nomination, heading to the battleground state of Wisconsin to renew her attacks on Republican candidate Donald Trump. The vice president took just 36 hours to secure enough delegates to be nominated, moving with lightning speed after President Joe Biden's exit from the race triggered one of the largest election upheavals in modern US history.

Hollywood star George Clooney — one of the first high-profile Democratic activists to urge Biden to drop his reelection bid — on Tuesday joined a series of heavyweights in backing 59-year-old Harris to face Trump in November. On her trip to Milwaukee, Harris is expected to launch another attack on convicted felon Trump as she leans into her past role as a California prosecutor and state attorney general.

"She is prepared to prosecute the case against Donald Trump," said Wisconsin campaign spokeswoman Brianna Johnson. The theme is set to resonate throughout Harris's campaign, as she lashed out at Trump in similar terms in a speech to staff on Monday in which she said that, as a prosecutor she knew "Donald Trump's type".

Backed with the endorsement of Biden and other key party figures, US media reported that Harris had on Monday sailed past the number of delegates



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani meets Kuwaiti Deputy PM and Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah. — KUNA



GOFA, Ethiopia: This grab made from handout footage on July 22, 2024 shows people standing at the bottom of a landslide. — AFP



MILWAUKEE: US Vice President Kamala Harris waves as she steps off Air Force Two upon arrival at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport on July 23, 2024. — AFP



Local

Burgan Bank supports the honoring ceremony for top-scoring graduates

Under the umbrella of bank's dedicated social responsibility and strategy



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in a group photo with Burgan Bank and Ahmadi Governorate representatives and the high school graduates during the honoring ceremony.

KUWAIT: In line with its comprehensive social responsibility strategy, its commitment to the best Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices, and unwavering efforts to support the education sector and encourage Kuwait's most aspiring students, Burgan Bank recently supported the ceremony held under the patronage of Ahmadi Governorate to honor the top-scoring General Secondary Education graduates across the governorate's districts.

The event, hosted at the Ahmadi Guest House, was attended by Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, representatives from the Ahmadi Governorate and Burgan Bank, in addition to the 12 honorees and their families. The sponsorship comes as part of the ongoing partnership between Burgan Bank and the Ahmadi Governorate, which aims to develop Ahmadi's community and support its members' growth and success through multiple campaigns and events.

Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulated the outstanding students, confirming that, "This honoring ceremony is part of the Governorate's commitment to supporting our sons and daughters of Ahmadi across all stages of education. We must all continue to encourage students to spare no effort to achieve academic excellence and realize their dreams and aspirations within their fields of study and work."

The Governor of Ahmadi urged the honorees to uphold their commitment to academic achievement and continue down this path of success throughout their graduation studies, praising their perseverance and their families' unwavering support. He also expressed confidence in the students' abilities to achieve more success in the future, where they realize more dreams and contribute effectively to their community and the development of Kuwait. The Governor extended his thanks to Burgan Bank, noting the Bank's valuable efforts in supporting and sponsoring outstanding students, which isn't new to Kuwait's banking sector or Burgan Bank, which continues to contribute proactively to the different events and activities as part of its comprehensive so-



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah and Khaled Al-Mulla.

cial responsibility strategy.

On this occasion, Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "I would like to begin by congratulating the high school graduates on their outstanding academic achievement and extend my regards to their dedicated parents whose support and ongoing encouragement are indispensable to this achievement. Today, we stand before 12 bright, motivated talents who have proved that they have what it takes to excel and make a positive impact that benefits them, first and foremost, their families, and their entire community."

"At Burgan Bank, we consider the youth one of the most vital and influential segments in our community; that's why we spare no effort to be a force of motivation along their journeys, beginning with moral and financial support and ending with celebrating their triumphs and achievements," added Al-Najadah. "We are very proud to be partners with

Ahmadi Governorate in celebrating our outstanding graduates' success, and we are certain that we will celebrate more successes in the future."

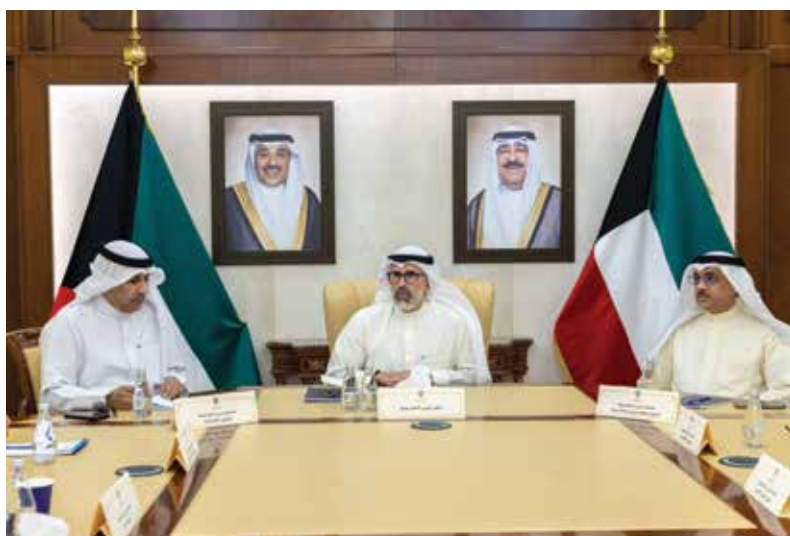
During the ceremony, the Ahmadi Governor and Burgan Bank representatives honored the 12 outstanding graduates who completed different streams of study - arts, science, or religious studies - awarding them cash gift cards. The honorees were led by Mariam Erhamah, with an impressive 99.78 percent score, followed by Hassan Al-Enezi (99.77 percent), Doha Al-Hajeri (99.75 percent), and Ghadir Al-Otaibi (99.70 percent) - holders of the science major. In the arts stream, the top students include Ghazlan Al-Azemi (98.36 percent), Maha Al-Zoubi (97.79 percent), Reem Al-Azemi (97.78 percent), Noha Al-Hajeri (97.71 percent), Ragahad Al-Mutairi (97.67 percent), and Nawwaf Al-Azemi (97.57 percent). Lastly, in the stream of religious studies, the ceremony awarded Fawwaz Al-Azemi (97.16 percent) and Rashed Mishaal (95.91 percent).



It serves to note that Burgan Bank's dedication to empowering its youth extends to the development of youth-centered banking products and services, which aim to set them up for a future of accomplishment and innovation. The most prominent among these products is Burgan's interest-bearing Youth account, available for customers aged 15-25, which requires no minimum account opening deposit and no minimum amount to earn interest.

It also offers customers who transfer their educational allowance to their Youth account a number of benefits that include a KD 100 cash gift, a chance to enter a car draw, a free prepaid VIP Mastercard for the first year, and more. Burgan Bank also continues to support its aspiring youth in the fields of sports, literature, art, and more through sponsorships and orchestrating high-impact, high-value social and community events that guarantee to inspire the future leaders of Kuwait to develop holistically and aspire for success.

Deputy FM presides over council members meeting



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Council of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps at the Ministry's General Office with the participation of the Assistant Foreign Minister and members of the Council. — KUNA

Inner seasons of a woman

By Jouri Al-Houti

KUWAIT: Similar to how seasons in nature last for approximately three months each, with trees losing their leaves in winter and re-growing them in spring, birds migrating and certain mammals hibernating, women experience cyclical changes in their bodies. These changes, akin to the inner rhythms of their menstrual cycle, mean that women ride a different wave each month.

Despite being fundamental to women's health and daily functions, the four phases (seasons) of a woman's cycle and their effects are not widely discussed, known about, or implemented in daily life. To explore this in more detail, Kuwait Times spoke with Menstruality Mentor and Women's Mindset Coach, Alyah Al-Jasser. "What we learn about a woman's menstrual cycle in school is so quick and glossed over; we learn about the phases of the menstrual cycle as they pertain to reproduction, but we don't really learn what it does to a woman or how her cycle changes and matures with her as she grows," she noted.

"When a girl enters puberty, her capacity to interact with both her internal and external worlds changes due to her hormones now entering a monthly ebb and flow, which will forever impact how she interacts with herself and her environment. These changes affect her mental, physical, and professional well-being," Jasser said. "Our hormones are portals to our emotions and our moods. If we have the baseline, which is our hormones, fluctuating naturally as they do during the month, then ultimately, our capacity to deal with the outside world (which is how we interpret things) changes constantly. The more a woman knows about her cycle, the greater support she can be to herself," Jasser added.

The four seasons

Before explaining the four phases, Jasser



Alyah Al-Jasser

gave a brief explanation of the two main female reproductive hormones, saying: "The first is estrogen, a hormone that's produced when a woman is ovulating, meaning when the ovaries are preparing to release an egg. The other is progesterone, which helps prepare a woman's body for pregnancy and rises specifically during the luteal phase."

Summer/ovulation

"Characterized by a peak in estrogen, a woman during this phase is usually more energetic, with a greater capacity to deal with conflict. She's also more diplomatic, has more space to handle big conversations and projects, and is more patient. Usually with higher verbal skills, a woman is more social and is able to handle a bit more than in the other phases of her cycle. This large outward surge of energy coincides with the inward readiness to create life, having just released an egg," she explained.

Fall/Luteal

After a woman's body releases an egg, estrogen dips while progesterone rises, which brings her energy levels back down again, often kickstarting a few days of inward focus. On the inside, her body is creating the lining of the uterus and is busy preparing for a potential pregnancy. Outwardly, this may look like feeling tired or irritable. This part of the cycle is an important

time to slow down, prioritize self-care, and focus on oneself instead of others.

Winter/menstruation

Towards the end of the luteal phase, a woman's body understands that it's not going to get pregnant, leading to both estrogen and progesterone dipping completely as the body prepares for a period. As soon as a woman has the first day of her bleed, she feels like she's back to "normal". No more mood swings and no more high peaks of energy. The reason is that estrogen and progesterone are at their lowest, meaning there aren't any distractions on the outside (estrogen) or on the inside (progesterone), so a woman may feel calmer, more balanced, and more at peace with herself.

Our inner voice (or intuition) may be easier to tap into during this time due to our hormonal levels being more stable. We may feel like we are able to take our own advice better, as intuition shows up when a person really listens to themselves. It's about being without distractions and going inwards.

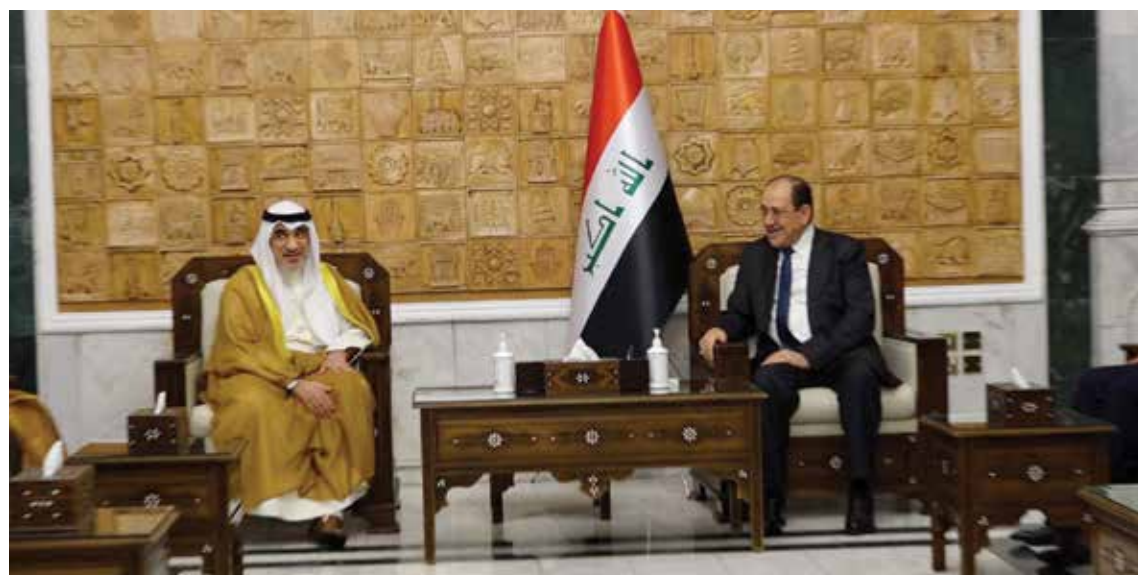
Spring/Follicular

As a woman comes out of rest and introspection, she starts to feel the need to connect outside of herself again. On the inside, her body is starting to produce more estrogen, which means she feels a spike in her energy. This part of the cycle can do two things: one, it can feel invigorating, like a return, a time to feel renewed again. Or, two, a woman can feel more sensitive; especially if she's someone who really enjoys the rest period of menstruation, all the energy coming back may feel overstimulating and overwhelming. Both feelings are completely normal and are part of each woman's unique cycle journey.

Along with the shame that surrounds speaking about a woman's menstrual cycle, it can be hard for women to create healthy, informed relationships with their bodies. With the help of modern science, practicing menstrual cycle awareness and finding community with other women, a better, healthier relationship can be created, inwardly and outwardly, with our natural cyclical rhythms.

Kuwait affirms coordination to combat drug trafficking

Minister outlines initiatives, comprehensive strategy



BAGHDAD: First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah met with former Iraqi prime minister Nouri Al-Maliki, and leader of the Iraqi National Wisdom Movement Ammar Al-Hakim on Monday. Following his participation in the International Drug Control Conference, Sheikh Fahad had friendly discussions with Al-Maliki and Al-Hakim which reflected the deep-rooted brotherly relations between the two nations. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

The 2nd Baghdad International Drug Control Conference.

BAGHDAD: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah on Monday stressed that establishing communication channels and international coordination between security agencies to combat drug trafficking will have a great impact. Establishing communication channels would allow information exchange and reviewing legal frameworks to tackle criminal networks effectively, he told the 2nd Baghdad International Drug Control Conference.

Sheikh Fahad Yousef highlighted the importance of sustained efforts and collaborative measures to thwart drug smuggling and distribution. He also outlined the initiatives taken by Kuwait's Interior Ministry in the fight against drug abuse and trafficking and presented the ministry's comprehensive strategy aimed at fighting drug trafficking, warning of relevant severe security and social implications.

The Kuwaiti minister expressed his gratitude towards Iraq's Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief



Kuwait's Ambassador to Iraq Tareq Al-Faraj

of the Armed Forces, Mohammad Al-Sudani, for sponsoring the conference and thanked Iraq's Interior Minister Abdulmir Al-Shammari for inviting Kuwait to the gathering. The Iraq-hosted conference saw the

participation of interior ministers of nine countries, including Kuwait, as well as representatives from the United Nations and the Secretary General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Iraq Tareq Al-Faraj said that the participation of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah in the Baghdad International Drug Control Conference reflects Kuwait's seriousness in combating drug trafficking. In his remarks to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Faraj hailed the First Deputy PM, stressing that his speech at the Iraq-hosted conference signifies Kuwait's unwavering determination to eliminate the scourge and coordinate and cooperate with international security agencies towards that goal.

Anti-drug efforts

The 2nd Baghdad International Drug Control Conference called for unifying joint regional and international efforts to promote global security

and protect societies from illegal drugs. This came in the final communiqué adopted by the conferees at the wrapping-up of the gathering that brought together ministerial delegations from nine Arab and foreign countries, including Kuwait, represented by its First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

The conferees underlined that the region's countries should work at both security and intelligence levels in the context of responding to the current circumstances and similar challenges and problems. They also recommended that it is essential to bolster joint action mechanisms and prop up security integration in order to cut off the way for drug trafficking and to track, dismantle, and eliminate trafficking gangs. They called for using scientific methods and modern technology to intensively monitor and control websites and social media platforms that are active in marketing and trafficking in drugs and psychoactive substances. — KUNA



Defense praises Arifjan, Beuhring military chief

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah on Tuesday witnessed the change of leadership of the Area Support Group in Arifjan and Beuhring between Colonel Daniel Enslin and Colonel Pily Restrepo at Camp Arifjan, at the invitation of the Commander of

the Land Forces of the US Central Command, Lieutenant General Frank Patrick.

The Ministry of Defense stated in a press statement that the Undersecretary of the Ministry Sheikh Dr Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed his thanks to Colonel Daniel Enslin for his efforts during his tenure as the leader of the Area Support Group, wishing him success in his next position. The ceremony was attended by a representative of the Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Operations and Plans Authority, Brigadier General Mubarak Ali, and a number of representatives of diplomatic and military missions to Kuwait. —KUNA

Kuwait and Pakistan promote trade ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kuwait on Monday agreed to further promote friendly and bilateral trade relations between the two countries by moving forward in a more integrated manner, besides enhancing business-to-business and government cooperation. This came during a meeting between Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization, and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nassar Abdul Rehman J. Al-Mutiari, held in Islamabad on Monday, according to a press release by the ministry.

During the meeting, it was agreed to further promote friendly and bilateral trade relations between the two countries by moving forward in a more inte-

grated manner, it said. The minister discussed various proposals regarding the promotion of trade activities from Kuwait and expressed his willingness to cooperate for various projects on the basis of "business to business" and "government to government." The minister added that he wants progress for investment from Kuwait to Pakistan for which substantial results can be obtained, especially from the private sector.

The Kuwaiti ambassador to Pakistan assured the minister that his government will provide all possible support in strengthening the Pakistan's economy and projects of mutual cooperation. He added that relations with Pakistan are more important for Kuwait, and in the coming days they will bring all the bilateral agreements to completion, adding that he is keen to further strengthen the brotherly relations with Pakistan. In the meeting, various matters of mutual interest were discussed between the Federal Minister and the Ambassador of Kuwait. — KUNA



Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization, and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nassar Abdul Rehman J Al-Mutiari meet in Islamabad. — KUNA

Kids camp promotes environmental and scientific awareness

KUWAIT: The Scientific Center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences announced the hosting of a sustainability camp for children entitled "Towards a Sustainable Community Partnership" in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait and the Arab Gulf countries. The program will continue until August 31.

The Director General of the Center, Musaed Al-Yassin, said that the camp is an important opportunity to enhance environmental and scientific awareness among the rising generation and to prepare them to be future leaders in the field of sustainability. Al-Yassin expressed his hope in creating more awareness programs on the environment and natural resources and to affirm the center's position as a distinguished educational destination that contributes to the dissemination of knowledge to all segments of society.

He explained that organizing such programs contributes to developing children's understanding of sustainability and the use of natural resources in a responsible manner, developing their skills in the fields of engineering, medicine, and innovation, in addition to promoting the values of teamwork and social responsibility. For her part, the Head of Mission of Habitat to Kuwait and the GCC, Dr. Amira Al-Hassan, stressed the importance of partnership to support local efforts in spreading the culture of sustainability and promoting environmental awareness among young generations, which contributes to achieving the sustainable development goals and 'New Kuwait 2035' vision.

Al-Hassan pointed to Habitat's model of permanent and fruitful cooperation through partnership with the Scientific Center and encouraging volunteer teams to actively participate in such initiatives—to promote environmental and community health. She pointed to the importance of engineering and medicine majors in society and sustainable development plans, pointing to their vital role in developing innovative solutions. The camp aims to enable children and youth to develop their skills so as to enhance their abilities to face future environmental and social challenges.

For her part, the head of the Sustainability Camp for Children and founder of the Enviro Volunteer Team of Habitat, Fatima Ashkanani, said that participation in this camp with the support of the Kuwait Healthy Cities Office comes to promote the health of the individual and society and the application of sustainability standards and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Ashkanani added that the aim is to employ the creative energies of the ambitious Kuwaiti youth. — KUNA



5 Kuwaitis participate in physics Olympics

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education announced the participation of five Kuwaiti students in the International Physics Olympiad competition being held in the Iranian city of Isfahan, with the support of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity and the supervision of the general technical guidance for science in the Ministry. The Ministry of Education said in a press statement on Tuesday that its participation in the Olympics comes in light of its keenness to refine the talents of distinguished students and encourage them to participate in local, regional and international competitions.

The participating students are Ahmed Badr from Duaij Al-Salman (Al-Sabah High School); Hussein Al-Awadi (Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah High School); Salem Al-Ajmi (Talha bin Obaidullah High School); Salman Mohamed (Salah Al-Din High School); and Jassim Mohamed (Al-Shuja Bin Al-Aslam High School). The students are accompanied and supervised by the technical mentors of science, Anoud Al-Kandari and Fatima Ashkanani. — KUNA

Technology City covers 140,000 square meters

KUWAIT: The Acting President of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), Abdullah Al-Ajmi, announced the first stages of establishing the Technology City in Jaber Al-Ahmad City, adding that the Authority signed a consultancy contract to develop the land allocated for the project, which covers an area of 140,000 square meters. He added that this contract is an important step towards the sustainable development of the zone designated for the establishment of the Technology City in Jaber Al-Ahmad City. This is to make it an advanced center for innovation and investment in information technology.

Al-Ajmi explained that the development of this zone will contribute to enhancing the Authority's capabilities to provide advanced technological services to create a fruitful environment for technology companies and service providers. The city will be an oasis of knowledge, the headquarters of international technology companies, data centers, and training centers in everything related to technology.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A bird perches on a fence along the Arabian Gulf sea in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NBK 'calls to verify IDs before sharing sensitive info or making transactions'

Part of bank's ongoing efforts to promote the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to promote financial awareness and inclusion among all sectors of society. In this context, the bank continues to intensify its engagement in the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). As NBK is fully committed to protecting its customers and raising financial awareness among all the public, it actively seeks to monitor and combat emerging electronic fraud threats, as well as educate customers on required precautions.

In this context, NBK always calls to verify individual and corporate identities before sharing sensitive information or making transactions using personal or banking information. This is particularly crucial in view of the rapidly evolving fraud schemes, like impersonating relatives or friends on WhatsApp or e-mail to obtain money, or impersonating well-known companies through clone websites using the same logo to trick victims into believing they are credible. The bank also affirms that it will

never ask customers for personal information through phone calls, warning them of responding to these calls which are scams to obtain their banking information to steal their money or information.

The bank also calls customers to follow the security tips posted on all its social media platforms and other digital channels including cautious dealing with links and not saving any confidential information such as: debit/credit card number/PIN on the mobile phone, as well as not to write down the PIN on the card or share it or OTP with any person. It also advises them to log out of the mobile banking app or website once the transaction is completed.

NBK intensifies awareness campaigns by sharing educational and awareness content including video clips, text messages and tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, in addition to reposting CBK's related communications to raise awareness among all segments of society on the various fraud techniques and required precautions. NBK employs its strong customer communication

الحملة التوعوية المصرفية



capabilities as well as all its sector-leading digital channels to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As the leading financial institution in Kuwait, the bank frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as many training courses for its employees to enhance their knowledge and expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.



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KU forum reflects its achievements

KUWAIT: The Deanship of Student Affairs at Kuwait University organized the final forum for its activities for the academic year 2023/2024 on Tuesday, July 23, 2024, in the auditorium of the administrative building in Sabah Al-Salem University City, in the presence of the Secretary-General of Kuwait University, Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri.

The forum included a visual presentation of the activities of the Deanship in its various departments during the academic year, which reflects the volume of achievements. The event is aimed at developing students' skills and enhancing the spirit of cooperation and creativity among them. The ceremony began with the speech of Prof Dr Jassim Al-Hamdan, Dean of Student Affairs, who expressed his thanks and gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the activities of the deanship.

The Secretary-General of Kuwait University, Prof Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri, and many personalities and bodies were honored for contributing to the success of the Deanship's activities, most notably, former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Anwar Abdul Latif Al-Barjas; Assistant Secretary General for Facilities Man-



agement Mohamed Saud Al-Sulaiman; Dr Intisar Al-Mudahka (faculty member); Dr Uhood Al-Hajri (faculty member); Dr Najah Al-Thaidi (faculty member); and Makiya Mohamed Sayegh.

The retired employees of the Deanship of Student Affairs were also honored. They include Jamal Nasser Bouarki, Jaber Ahmed Dashti, Kholoud Ahmed Al-Yaqoub, Talal Nazzal Al-Maasab, Wael Khaled Al-Wazzan, and Rabou Mohamed Al-Fahad. The forum concluded with a speech from the Dean of Student Affairs, in which he praised the dedication and efforts made by all participants. — KUNA



The coconut tree presidency? Harris memes go viral

India's 'NEET' medical exam scandal drives students abroad

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HEBRON/TULKAREM: (Left) Layla, the mother of Palestinian Ramez al-Halayqa, 22, hugs her son's body at the Al-Ahli hospital morgue in Hebron city in the occupied West Bank, on July 23, 2024, after he was killed during a Zionist raid. (Right) A Palestinian woman sits inside her destroyed living room following a raid by Zionist forces in the Tulkarem camp for Palestinian refugees. — AFP photos

7 Palestinians killed by Zionist army in West Bank

Zionist army believed to have confiscated bodies; Qassam commander among dead

TULKAREM: Seven Palestinians were killed Tuesday during attacks by Zionist forces on towns in the occupied West Bank. Zionist vehicles and bulldozers stormed the city and camp of Tulkarem overnight on Monday and into Tuesday for a large-scale ten-hour raid, which saw fighting break out between local armed groups and the Zionist army. Five people were killed by a Zionist drone strike on Tuesday, including a 50-year-old woman and her daughter, as well as three senior commanders from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Al-Qassam Brigades. Two Palestinian men were killed by Zionist gunfire in the town of Sa'ir near Hebron during a separate raid. Ashraf Nafi, the commander of Hamas' military wing the Al-Qassam Brigades, Muhammad Awad, the commander of Fatah's military wing Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and militant Muhammad Badie were killed by the drone strike in Tulkarem, Palestinian media reported. The Zionist army said it

carried out the strike as part of an "anti-terrorist" operation. "Ashraf was responsible for manufacturing and embedding explosives intended to attack IDF soldiers," it said. Hamas confirmed the "cowardly assassination" of commander Ashraf Nafi and his companions. The Zionist military confiscated the bodies of the three commanders, according to local reports. A Zionist bulldozer was filmed carrying bodies through the Tulkarem refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. A correspondent from Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the bulldozer "abused the martyrs and carried them to a place outside the camp". Qassam said it engaged in 'fierce clashes' during the hours long raid. Zionist forces used bulldozers to destroy roads and buildings in the camp. The Palestinian Red Crescent said it had treated a 30-year-old man for bullet wounds to the abdomen, thigh and hand, and three women for shrapnel

wounds, one of them to the eye. It said Zionist forces were obstructing access for their ambulances to reach the wounded. **Destroyed infrastructure** More than 25 military vehicles, including bulldozers, stormed the camp, scooping up rubble to block its alleys, according to Wafa. A woman in the camp told AFP that "streets, shops and houses" were all destroyed in the raid. "They (the Zionist army) aim at destroying the infrastructure in the camps so they can eventually push people to leave," said the woman, who asked not to be identified for security reasons. More than 150,000 Palestinian refugees live in the Tulkarem refugee camp, which is the second largest in the West Bank and was established in the wake of the 1948 Nakba. In a separate incident near the southern West Bank city of Hebron, Zionist troops killed two people in the town of Sa'ir, the Palestinian health min-

istry said. Responding to AFP queries, the Zionist military said its forces carried out an "anti-terrorist operation in the Sa'ir area". "During the operation, a violent riot broke out in which terrorists hurled stones and blocks toward the soldiers, who responded with fire to remove the threat. Hits were identified," it said. Between 7 October, when the Gaza war began, and 15 July, 554 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by Zionist military or settler attacks, according to figures from the UN's OCHA agency. A total of 143 Palestinian children have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since October last year, according to UN children's agency UNICEF. Over 1,000 Palestinians have been displaced by Zionist policies in the West Bank, whether through the destruction of property or after being pushed out by violent settler assaults. — Agencies

WHO 'extremely worried' at prospect of outbreaks in Gaza

GENEVA: A top WHO official said Tuesday he was "extremely worried" over possible outbreaks in war-torn Gaza after poliovirus was detected in the sewage, warning that communicable diseases could cause more deaths than injuries. United Nations agencies said last week that the Global Polio Laboratory Network found vaccine-derived type-2 poliovirus in six environmental samples collected from the sewage in the Gaza Strip on June 23. Ayadil Saparbekov, the World Health Organization's head of health emergencies in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressed that "we have not yet collected human samples" so it remains unclear if anyone has actually been infected with the virus. But he acknowledged to reporters in Geneva via video-link from Jerusalem, "I am very much worried". While epidemiological studies and risk assessments are continuing, Saparbekov said he was deeply concerned at the prospect of any diseases spreading in Gaza, which is facing a towering humanitarian crisis after more than nine months of Zionist bombardment. "I'm extremely worried about outbreaks happening in Gaza," he said, pointing to the confirmation late last year that hepatitis A was spreading,



DEIR EL-BALAH: Palestinians cross a street flooded with sewage water in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on July 23, 2024, as municipal infrastructures fail due to Zionist bombardment of the besieged territory. — AFP

"and now we may have polio". "With the crippled health system, lack of water and sanitation, as well as lack of access of the population to health services ... this is going to be a very bad situation," he warned. "We may have more people dying of different communicable diseases than from the injury-related diseases." That says something in Gaza where more than 39,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the Zionist military assault on the besieged territory, according to data

bring the war to an end, the analysts told AFP. Netanyahu was invited by both Republican and Democratic congressional leaders. Chuck Freilich, a former national security adviser to the Zionist entity, told AFP that the idea came from Republicans, and "Biden and the Democrats had to go along with it". Michael Horowitz, a geopolitical analyst for Le Beck International, a Middle East-based security consultancy, said the visit will force Democrats "to find a complicated balance" between opposition to war casualties and historic support for the Zionist entity. Mairav Zonzsein, an International Crisis Group analyst, said Netanyahu's invitation despite popular protests "shows that there's a lot of gaps and contradictions in the American positioning on the war in Gaza right now." US-Zionist relations have been strained since the war. "There's a lot of rhetoric, there's been a lot of pushback throughout this war on the humanitarian issue," said Zonzsein, citing the stalling of arms shipments and sanctions on Zionist settlers, which the academic says are unprecedented. But, she added, it would take more to change the diplomatic status quo between the two countries. "I don't think you can say there's a crisis in the US-(Zionist) relationship because that's something that is

Burnt by Zionist strike, boy suffers agonizing pain

NUSEIRAT: Four-year-old Mahmoud Abdel Athim Al-Saafin wakes up screaming from pain caused by burns suffered in a Zionist strike on a school where his family had been sheltering in the Gaza Strip, his father Abdel Athim Al-Saafin said. His two-year-old sister, Maysar, was killed in the July 14 strike in Nuseirat refugee camp, Saafin said. Her body was so badly burned it resembled "a lump of coal", he said. Both sides of Mahmoud's face were burnt, the skin raw and pink from his scalp down to his neck. Both of legs and one of his arms were entirely bandaged, as he lay in a bed in a crowded hospital ward, where Reuters saw him fitfully sleeping. The boy later sat up in bed against a pink pillow, visibly in pain as his father fanned air across his wounds with a piece of a cardboard box. Saafin said the pain-killers being given to Mahmoud lasted a few hours before wearing off. "Then we beg to get an injection, a sedative or painkiller or sleeping (medication) so the child can sleep," he said. Describing the July 14 attack, Saafin said he had been helping children who had been burnt by a first missile strike when a second strike caused "massive destruction". "When we began to pull our children out from under the rubble, we found them all burnt," he said. Little Mahmoud saw the body of his sister. "My sister is burnt, father" Saafin recalled the boy saying. Gaza health officials say 17 people were killed and 80 wounded in the July 14 Zionist airstrike on the Abu Oreiban school, sheltering displaced people in Nuseirat in central Gaza. The school is run by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. The Zionist military declined to comment on the father's remarks. It has said it launched the strike to target militants who were operating in the area of the school and took precautions including using precise munitions to reduce civilian casualties. The Zionist entity says Hamas fighters are to blame for harm to civilians for operating among them, which the militants deny. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said in a July 17 statement on X that at least eight schools had been hit in the Gaza Strip in the preceding 10 days, six of them UNRWA schools. Schools must never be used for fighting or military purposes by any party to the conflict, he added. "All rules of war have been broken" in Gaza, he wrote. — Reuters

Netanyahu's US visit reminder of 'ingrained' US support of Zionists

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is visiting Washington to speak at the United States Congress this week in a context of tense relations between the two countries over the Gaza war. His visit comes just after President Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race. US officials have criticized the toll that the Zionist entity's war in Gaza has had on Palestinian civilians. But experts interviewed by AFP said American support for the Zionist entity remains steadfast, as suggested by words of the US invitation for Netanyahu to "highlight America's solidarity with (the Zionist entity)". **Invited despite the war** Across United States campuses and on the Democrats' left wing, calls to pressure the entity to end the war in Gaza have reached unprecedented levels. Such appeals have not, however, convinced establishment Democrats to apply significant pressure to

from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. Saparbekov on Tuesday described a dire situation in Gaza, with only 16 of the territory's 36 hospitals even partially functional. WHO has long stressed the urgent need for medical evacuations from Gaza for the seriously sick and wounded. While the WHO in recent months has said around 10,000 people were waiting to leave, Saparbekov suggested the number had surged to "up to 14,000 people who may need to seek medical treatment outside of the Gaza Strip". — AFP so ingrained in both American and (Zionist) politics". Freilich had a similar view. "I wouldn't say at the moment there's a crisis, but there's a lot of tension there, and the next few months will have an important impact on where it goes." **Withholding weapons** After initial delay the US eventually approved a 500-pound bomb shipment to the Zionist entity, but the Biden government is still withholding a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs, over concerns for civilian casualties. The mere mention of arms supply restrictions is unprecedented. "In the past, no one ever raised the issue of arms supply. It was self-evident, the arms relationship, and almost sacred, so to speak," said Freilich. He said though the embargo on 2,000-pound bombs could have been lifted during Netanyahu's visit, "it's harder for the US now after the attack on (Mohammed) Deif, where I think it was four 2,000-pound bombs used". On July 13, a Zionist bombing operation in Gaza aimed at Deif, the Hamas military commander, in the southern area of Al-Mawasi killed more than 90 people, according to the health ministry in Gaza. "I don't think the Biden administration will change its mind during Netanyahu's visit", said Horowitz of the 2,000 pound bombs. — AFP

International

US Secret Service director resigns

Cheatle steps down after acknowledging Trump assassination 'most significant' failure in decades

WASHINGTON: US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle resigned on Tuesday, a day after acknowledging that the agency failed in its mission to prevent an assassination attempt against Donald Trump. Cheatle was facing bipartisan calls to step down after a 20-year-old gunman wounded the former Republican president and current White House candidate at a July 13 campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. "It is overdue, she should have done this at least a week ago," Mike Johnson, the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, told reporters. "I'm happy to see that she has heeded the call of both Republicans and Democrats."

President Joe Biden thanked Cheatle for her nearly three decades in the Secret Service and said she had "selflessly dedicated and risked her life to protect our nation throughout her career." "We all know what happened that day can never happen again," Biden said in a statement. "As we move forward, I wish Kim all the best, and I will plan to appoint a new director soon."

Cheatle appeared before a congressional oversight committee on Monday and said the attack on Trump, who was slightly wounded in his right ear, represented



CAPITOL HILL: US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle testifies during a House Oversight Committee hearing examining potential security failures surrounding the attempted assassination on Donald Trump. — AFP

a failure by the Secret Service. She called it "the most significant operational failure of the Secret Service in decades." Both Republicans and Democrats called on Cheatle to resign during a tense hearing. She drew the ire of lawmakers from both parties by refusing to provide

specific details about the attack, citing the existence of multiple active investigations.

The gunman opened fire on Trump with an AR-style assault rifle just minutes after he began speaking at the campaign event. Perched on the roof of a nearby building, he was shot dead by a Secret Service sniper less than 30 seconds after firing the first of eight shots.

Investigators have concluded the young man, who lived in a town about 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Butler, acted alone, and have not been able to identify any strong ideological or political leanings. Two rally attendees were seriously wounded in the attack and a 50-year-old Pennsylvania firefighter, Corey Comperatore, was shot dead. Trump's former physician said over the weekend that the Republican candidate sustained a two-centimeter (almost one inch) gunshot wound on his right ear. "The bullet passed, coming less than a quarter of an inch from entering his head, and struck the top of his right ear," said ex-White House physician Ronny Jackson. Cheatle served as a Secret Service agent for 27 years before leaving in 2021 to become the head of security in North America for PepsiCo. She was named to head the agency by President Joe Biden in 2022. — AFP

The coconut tree presidency? Harris memes go viral

WASHINGTON: Last-minute US presidential candidate Kamala Harris is racing to craft her image - and social media users are moving even more swiftly to signal support, flooding the Internet with jokes about coconuts and "brat summers." Harris memes have been surging for weeks as the so-called "KHive" - her on-line fandom - pushed her as an alternative to her boss, President Joe Biden, to face Donald Trump at the polls in November. And with Biden's momentous decision Sunday to step aside and throw his support behind her, many have rallied to the vice president with a tsunami of jokes and unburdened enthusiasm. It began, as most good summer things do, with coconuts.

Last year Harris was speaking at the White House on education when she quoted a comment her mother often made during her childhood. "She would give us a hard time sometimes, and she would say to us: 'I don't know what's wrong with you young people. You think you just fell out of a coconut tree? You exist in the context of all in which you live and what came before you,'" Harris said. The oddball quote, along with clips of her dancing, her at-times awkward laughter, and some of her other slightly baffling anecdotes, became an instant data point in the - at best, bemused - way the internet understood Harris. But after Biden's disastrous debate against Trump on June 27 inflamed fears about his age, prompting calls for him to step aside, the KHive asserted itself, with social media users admitting they were "coconut-pilled."

Content creators made "fancam" edits of her speeches and dancing on TikTok, and palm tree emojis were suddenly everywhere. Bars in Washington - always quick to capitalize on political moments - began offering coconut-themed drinks, with pina colodas threatening a comeback.

Another of Harris's offbeat but philosophically inclined sayings - talking about "what can be, unburdened by what has been" - also went stratospheric as Americans, weary of the long slog between Trump and

Biden, began to hope a change might really come. By the time Biden announced he was dropping out and endorsing Harris, the memes were no longer ironic.

"Madam Vice President, we are ready to help," posted Hawaii Senator Brian Schatz above a photo of a man climbing a coconut palm, as top Democrats swiftly lined up behind Harris. "You think I just fell out of a coconut tree?" posted Illinois Governor JB Pritzker shortly after ruling himself out as a Harris rival and endorsing her.

'kamala IS brat'

The Harris meme fever riffs on what Biden's campaign attempted to do with "Dark Brandon" - take something that had been derogatory (Republican jokes about Biden) and flip the script. But Biden had long struggled to win over younger voters, and some Americans saw the Dark Brandon posts as a forced, cringe-worthy attempt to connect with Generation Z. "Harris' efforts are likely to appear more authentic, maybe even fun," wrote Charlie Warzel in *The Atlantic*.

Still, the internet is fickle, and the Harris campaign will walk a thin line as it attempts to lock down the

youth vote. Its first deliberate attempt to do so appears to have been a success: her campaign's account rebranded itself on X with a lime green logo inspired by the album cover from singer Charli XCX's "Brat."

The album, released in June, has been a hit, with "brat" - defined by Charli XCX as "that girl who is a little messy and likes to party and maybe say some dumb things sometimes" - inspiring fans to declare a "brat summer." Encapsulating Harris's memeability, Charli XCX posted "kamala IS brat" in the hours after Biden's announcement. "This tweet will reach more young people than a million dollar cable ad," posted one user on X. "Brat vote secured," agreed Florida Congressman Maxwell Frost, 27. The election remains in uncharted waters, but it all signals a broader generational shift as Biden passes the torch - and Trump, 78, becomes the oldest presidential nominee in US history. As *Slate* writer Mark Stern put it on X, "Republicans who gleefully watched Biden get destroyed on TikTok for the past year are now realizing with horror that they can't stop the Zoomer meme machine from turning Kamala into a brat summer icon." — AFP



WASHINGTON: US Vice President Kamala Harris stops for ice cream at SMIZE and DREAM ice cream shop, owned by US model Tyra Banks, in Washington, DC, on July 19, 2024. — AFP

Palestinians to form unity...

Continued from Page 1

While it is unclear whether the deal announced in Beijing on Tuesday can hold, it does indicate that the only world power that can engineer a rapprochement between the Palestinian rivals is China. As Tuesday's meeting wrapped up in Beijing, Wang said the groups had committed to "reconciliation." "The most prominent highlight is the agreement to form an interim national reconciliation government around the governance of post-war Gaza," Wang said after the factions signed the "Beijing Declaration" in the Chinese capital. "Reconciliation is an internal matter for the Palestinian factions, but at the same time, it cannot be achieved without the support of the international community," Wang said.

Fatah official Aloul thanked China for its "unending support" for the Palestinian cause. "To China, you have our love, you have all our friendship, from all the Palestinian people," he said. Notably, he did not mention whether any agreement had been reached with Hamas and the other factions. Also present at Tuesday's meeting were envoys from Egypt, Algeria and Russia, according to Wang.

But the Zionist entity swiftly condemned the agreement. The diplomatic spat came as the Zionist entity hampered Gaza, including the southern city of Khan Yunis, where it had ordered a partial evacuation of civilians. Foreign Minister Israel Katz insisted that "Hamas rule will be crushed" and accused Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose Fatah faction signed the deal, of embracing Hamas.

Any involvement by the Islamist militant group in the post-war governance of Gaza is anathema to the United States as well as the Zionist entity. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in Washington to address a joint session of Congress and has vowed to continue the

Gaza war until Hamas is destroyed.

Meanwhile, Hossam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau, framed China's involvement as a way to counter US influence. He said Washington "opposes any internal Palestinian national consensus and is completely biased (and) even partners with the occupation in its crimes against our people". Katz also rejected any role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, saying "Abbas will be watching Gaza from afar".

On the ground, the Zionist entity pressed on with the war in Gaza. Hours after it ordered civilians to evacuate parts of Khan Yunis, including areas that had been declared part of a humanitarian safe zone, its jets pounded the city. The Gaza health ministry said 73 people had been killed and more than 200 wounded in the area.

Hassan Qudayh, a resident forced to evacuate, said: "Gaza is over, Gaza is dead. Gaza has gone. There is nothing left, nothing". AFP correspondents reported air strikes in Gaza City and Jabalia in the north of the territory, as well as Khan Yunis. More than nine months of war have obliterated much of the territory's healthcare capacity, with what remains under immense pressure.

Mohammed Zaqout, the director of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, told AFP: "There is no space for more patients. There's no space in the operating theatres. There is a lack of medical supplies, so we cannot save our patients." The World Health Organization said up to 14,000 people needed medical evacuation from Gaza and that it was "extremely worried" about disease outbreaks in the territory.

Palestinian officials said a Zionist raid in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday killed five people, including a woman and her daughter. During the pre-dawn operation in Tulkarem refugee camp, Zionist drones struck and killed the head of Hamas' military wing in Tulkarem, Ashraf Nafea, the military said in a statement. Hamas confirmed the "cowardly assassination" of commander Nafea and his companions. — Agencies

Harris hits trail with ...

Continued from Page 1

needed - 1,976 out of nearly 4,000. The first female, black and South Asian vice president in US history said in a statement that she was proud and "I look forward to formally accepting the nomination soon."

Harris should now be able to secure the nomination on August 7 - nearly two weeks before the Democratic convention in Chicago. The party plans to hold an online vote of convention delegates. She will also welcome the support of Clooney, a major fundraiser and longtime Biden booster who turned against the 81-year-old due to concerns about his age and mental fitness. "President Biden has shown what true leadership is," Clooney said in a statement to CNN. "We're all so excited to do whatever we can to support Vice President Harris."

Support continued to pour in with the United Steelworkers Union and philanthro-

229 killed in Ethiopia...

Continued from Page 1

adding that the disaster was caused by heavy rains that had battered the area on Sunday night. EBC quoted local administrator Dagemawi Ayele as saying that among the victims were the locality's administrator as well as teachers, health professionals and agricultural professionals who had rushed to help. Images posted on social media by the Gofa authority showed residents carrying bodies of the dead on makeshift stretchers, some wrapped in plastic sheeting.

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa with around 120 million people, is highly vulnerable to climate disasters including flooding and drought. "I am deeply saddened by this terrible loss," Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said

on X. "Following the accident, the Federal Disaster Prevention Task Force has been deployed to the area and is working to reduce the impact of the disaster."

African Union Commission chief Mousa Faki Mahamat said "our hearts and prayers" were with the families of the victims. "We stand in strong solidarity with the people and Government of Ethiopia as rescue efforts continue to find the missing and assist the displaced," he said on X. Gofa is located in the South Ethiopia regional state, roughly 450 km from the capital Addis Ababa, though the distance takes around 10 hours to drive.

"The area of the disaster is rural, remote and very mountainous," said an Ethiopian refugee living in Kenya who is from a district located near the site of the disaster. "The soil in that area isn't strong, so when heavy rains and landslides happen, the soil immediately runs down to the ground below," he told AFP in Nairobi. "This isn't the first time this type of disaster has happened.

Trump's age, fitness arguments backfire with Biden exit

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump constantly attacked his Democratic opponent Joe Biden over his age and fitness, but the 78-year-old Republican could find those same arguments coming back to haunt him after the president ended his reelection bid. With Vice President Kamala Harris, 59, on course to become the Democratic nominee, Trump will be a much older candidate and face an even brighter spotlight on any hint of decline. "The dynamics have drastically changed," Matthew Foster, a political scientist at American University, told AFP. Trump continued to attack Biden's mental acuity even after he dropped out, taunting on social media that he is "going to wake up and forget that he dropped out of the race." The barbs are almost enough to make one forget the real estate mogul is not all that young either. If Trump wins the November election, he will be the oldest American president to be sworn in. But the Republican nominee is fallible, with his own repeated gaffes and strings of disjointed tirades.

"When I go bad"

The question of whether they illustrate his own cognitive decline or are simply one-offs is hard to say. His hour-and-a-half long nomination acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee - just five days after surviving an assassination attempt - has been touted by his supporters as an illustration of his endurance.

Some viewers, however, watched the speech and saw a candidate who was much more tired than usual, sweating through a weak speech delivery. According to an ABC poll conducted in mid-July, 60 percent of Americans said Trump was too old to run for a second term. As soon as Biden withdrew from the race, Trump's age also came under fire - but he has consistently dismissed the concerns. In January, he told supporters that he had completed a cognitive test given by his doctor and he "aced" the results. "I'll let you know when I go bad; I really think I'll be able to tell you," Trump said at the time.

However, the former president is not subject to the same demands of medical transparency as he was when he was in the White House. Over the past few years, little information about Trump's health has come out. Last November, the former reality television host simply published a brief letter from his doctor stating he was in good health and that he had lost weight - without specifying how much.

Harris's campaign team became fully operational Sunday, and though it is still fine-tuning its strategy, there is little doubt Trump's age will be one of the 59-year-old candidate's lines of attack. Harris campaign spokesman James Singer said in a statement to AFP "the Republican party has nominated Donald Trump, a 78-year-old convicted criminal who has spent decades screwing over working people."

Foster said Harris "brings an absolutely different kind of energy" to her campaign, describing her style as "younger" and "aggressive." Harris, a former senator from California whose first presidential campaign in 2020 fizzled out, made her mark by standing out during the televised debates. — AFP

and climate." In his call, Biden promised "to keep working for an end to the war in Gaza." "I'll be working very closely with the (Zionists) and with the Palestinians to try to work out how we can get the Gaza war to end, and Middle East peace, and get all those hostages home," Biden said.

Former president Trump - who survived an assassination attempt on July 13 that added to the sense of chaos surrounding the election - has relentlessly slammed both Harris and Biden. Trump late Monday branded her "Lyn' Kamala Harris" and said she had "terrible" poll numbers against a "fine and brilliant young man named DONALD J. TRUMP! Be careful what you wish for Democrats???"

But recent polls have shown Harris roughly neck and neck with the 78-year-old Trump, whose campaign has been forced into a drastic rethink now that Biden's departure has made him the oldest nominee in US political history. Harris' selection of Milwaukee for Tuesday's rally is no accident - last week, the city played host to the Republican National Convention, where Trump was nominated as the party's official candidate for president. — Agencies

Last year in a similar disaster more than 20 people were killed and before that almost every rainy season people die because of landslides and heavy rains in that area." The South Ethiopia state had already been battered by the seasonal rains between April and early May, causing flooding and mass displacement, according to the UN's humanitarian response agency OCHA. It said in May that floods affected more than 19,000 people in several zones, displacing over 1,000 and causing damage to livelihoods and infrastructure.

In 2016, 41 people were killed in a landslide following heavy rains in Wolaita, also in South Ethiopia. In 2017 at least 113 people died when a mountain of garbage collapsed in a dump in the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The deadliest landslide in Africa was in Sierra Leone's capital in Freetown in August 2017 when 1,141 people perished. Mudslides in the Mount Elgon region of eastern Uganda killed more than 350 people in February 2010. — AFP

International

Bangladesh arrest total passes 2,500

Government restores broadband Internet but curfew, mobile data restrictions persist

DHAKA: The number of arrests in days of violence in Bangladesh passed the 2,500 mark in an AFP tally on Tuesday, after protests over employment quotas sparked widespread unrest. At least 174 people have died, including several police officers, according to a separate AFP count of victims reported by police and hospitals.

What began as demonstrations against politicized admission quotas for sought-after government jobs snowballed last week into some of the worst unrest of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's tenure. A curfew was imposed and soldiers deployed across the South Asian country. A nationwide Internet blackout drastically restricted the flow of information.

The student group leading the demonstrations suspended its protests Monday for 48 hours, with its leader saying they had not wanted reform "at the expense of so much blood". Nahid Islam - who has told AFP he fears for his life - extended the halt on Tuesday evening by another 48 hours, taking it to Friday.

Restrictions remained in place after the army chief said the situation had been brought "under control". Broadband Internet was being gradually restored on Tuesday evening, although mobile Internet - a key communication method for protest organizers - remained inoperative.

Officials said an afternoon break in the curfew would be extended to five hours on Wednesday to help citizens obtain daily necessities, with banks re-opening for the first time. There was a heavy military presence

in Dhaka, with bunkers set up at some intersections and key roads blocked with barbed wire.

But more people were on the streets, as were hundreds of rickshaws. "I did not drive rickshaws the first few days of curfew. But today I didn't have any choice," rickshaw driver Hanif told AFP. "If I don't do it, my family will go hungry."

Nahid, the head of Students Against Discrimination, the main group organizing the protests, said there would be no protests during the 48-hour extension. "Our demand is the government restore the Internet, withdraw the curfew, reopen campuses and protect the students protesters", he said, including "returning" four missing coordinators from his organization.

While order has largely been restored across Bangladesh, Mubashar Hasan, a Sydney-based expert on Bangladeshi politics, told AFP the crackdown would further taint the government's global image. It would be "perceived further as a government that not only criminalizes politics, it uses its own security forces to shoot down protesters, its own citizens".

Government officials have repeatedly blamed the protesters and opposition for the unrest. More than 1,200 people detained over the course of the violence - nearly half the 2,580 total - were held in Dhaka and its rural and industrial areas, according to police officials who spoke to AFP. Almost 600 were arrested in Chittagong and its rural areas, with hundreds more detentions tallied in districts across the country. — AFP



DHAKA: A police van transports protesters to the court, after their arrest in Dhaka on July 23, 2024. — AFP

India's 'NEET' medical exam scandal drives students abroad

NEW DELHI: For more than four years, Sanna had the same daily routine - wake up at dawn, study up to 14 hours a day, eat and sleep - all in an effort to crack a tough exam to get into one of India's premier public medical colleges. But after two unsuccessful attempts, she has lost hope she can win a highly sought-after spot, especially after the national entrance exam was hit last month by allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks.

"I have zero confidence in this system. What is the point of sloggling when others can get ahead by unfair means?" Sanna, 20, who asked to be identified only by her nickname, said by phone from the western state of Rajasthan. "I don't have the patience, time or money to pursue (a medical education) in India."

Instead, Sanna wants to study abroad in China, Russia or Kazakhstan, increasingly popular destinations for Indian students struggling with the high costs of prepping for exams and tuitions. Exam leaks are common in India, where millions scramble to get into top government colleges to secure degrees that can line them up for well-paying, stable jobs in a country grappling with an employment crisis.

Sanna was one of the 2.4 million people who took the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG - the only gateway for admissions into undergraduate medical courses in India - in May, competing for more than 100,000 spots in government and private colleges. An unusually high number of students scored a perfect 720 score in the exam, sparking concerns of possible cheating, and irregularities in conducting and grading the NEET-UG.

Student groups have staged countrywide protests, launched social media campaigns and have gone to courts to demand investigations and a re-test. The National Testing Agency (NTA) which administers the test said in a statement that there were isolated cases of cheating, but has denied paper leaks and said "the integrity of the examination was not compromised". The increase in top scorers reflected a rise in the overall number of test candidates, it said. Neither the NTA nor the federal education ministry responded to requests for comment.

'Flawed system'

Despite decades of rapid economic growth, India has been slow to reform its higher education system in which aspiring medical and engineering students spend months, or even years, cramming for highly competitive entrance exams that often leave them burnt out and in debt, academic experts said. "This system is completely flawed. It is not fair, just or meaningful," said Anita Rampal, a former dean at Delhi University, who is also a member of the New Delhi-based India Academic Freedom Network. "It takes so much out of you in terms of your motivation, effort, money, family resources, your sense of being."

Body cam: US officer shoots black woman dead after she calls 911

WASHINGTON: New body camera footage released by the Illinois State Police shows officers shooting dead an unarmed black woman in her home after she called for help over a possible intruder. In the United States, where police shootings of minorities have become painfully common and polarizing events, the killing has attracted national attention, with President Joe Biden saying Sonya Massey "should be alive today." So far one of the police officers involved in this case has been charged with murder.

Massey, 36, called 911 to report a possible intruder at her home, with police arriving after midnight July 6, according to the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office. In video footage released Monday, Massey is seen talking to two officers in her home, while they ask for ID and she searches through paperwork. The sheriff's deputies then ask her to check on a pot of boiling water on her stove, saying "we don't need a fire while we're here." When one of the deputies steps back, Massey asks why, and he responds with a laugh: "away from your hot steaming water."

Holding the pot, Massey calmly responds "Oh,

Students can shell out large sums of money to attend test-prep centers and pay for course material. But only a fraction get into public colleges. Of the total seats for medical students, about 60,000 are at state-run institutes, with the rest at private ones. Students race to government colleges for their affordable fees. Top scorers in the NEET-UG win placement at public colleges, where a five-year medical course can cost between 200,000 and 1 million rupees (\$11,955). Private college tuition can cost more than 10 times that.

Sanna said she scored below 500 on two entrance exams, meaning government colleges were not an option. For middle-class students like Sanna who cannot afford private tuition, programs in nearby countries offer a cheaper option. "At least that will get me some return on my investments," said Sanna, whose parents spent more than 500,000 rupees (\$5,985) for her exam preparation. In 2022, more than 750,000 Indians went abroad to study - almost double the number in 2018, according to federal foreign ministry data. There is no publicly available data on the number of Indians studying in foreign medical programs. But academic counselling websites estimate about 25,000 students leave every year to study medicine in places like Russia, China, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

'No real value'

Gagan Arora, a 23-year-old from Rajasthan studying at Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University in Almaty, said his five-year course cost less than 5 million rupees (\$59,780), including lodging and meals. "It is budget-friendly, the place is beautiful and the people are great," said Arora, who has seen a surge of Indians come to Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, over the past four years.

But drawbacks include language barriers in classes and a lack of hands-on learning, which is a major focus in Indian medical training. "Without practical exposure (in hospitals), this degree is just a piece of paper, it has no real value," said Arora. He would have preferred to study in India.

Arora worries that gaps in his education will make it difficult to clear India's mandatory screening test - the Foreign Medical Graduates' Exam (FMGE) - that allows them to practice in the country. Similar issues were echoed by at least four other Indian medical students - one in Kazakhstan, one in Georgia and two in Kyrgyzstan - who spoke to the Thomson Reuters Foundation on the condition of anonymity over fears that it could hurt their future job prospects.

About 80 percent who take the FMGE fail, according to government data. Students, teachers and health experts called on the government to open more medical colleges. Making medical seats more accessible, including to rural and low-income Indians, would break barriers that hinder equal access to medical education. Oommen C Kurian, a senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation think tank, wrote in a research article in January.

Others, including Rampal, urged an overhaul of the NEET-UG to prevent malpractice, and regulation of the fees charged by private colleges and coaching centers. "We cannot push these issues under the carpet anymore," said Rampal. "This really needs to be the point of no return. We must start afresh." — Reuters



SPRINGFIELD: Sonya Massey reacts after a Sangamon County sheriff's officer draws his weapon before being shot and killed on July 6, 2024 in this still image taken from a police bodycam video. — AFP

I rebuke you in the name of God" - prompting a deputy to respond "You better not. I swear to God I'll shoot you at your face," drawing his weapon. Apologizing, Massey crouches behind a counter as officers scream "drop the pot." They then round the corner of the counter and open fire.

Afterward, one of the officers said they were afraid of "taking boiling water to the head." Officer Sean Grayson, who is white, has been charged with murder. Biden on Monday called Massey "a beloved mother, friend, daughter, and young black woman." "When we call for help, all of us as Americans - regardless of who we are or where we live - should be able to do so without fearing for our lives," he said in a statement. — AFP

Sri Lanka apologizes for cremating Muslim COVID victims

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's government Tuesday formally apologized to the island's Muslim minority for forcing cremations on Covid victims, disregarding WHO assurances that burials in line with Islamic rites were safe. The cabinet issued an "apology regarding the compulsory cremation policy during the COVID-19 pandemic", the government said in a statement.

It said a new law would guarantee the right to burial or cremation to ensure the funeral customs of Muslims or any other community were not violated in future. Traditionally, Muslims bury their dead facing Mecca. Sri Lanka's majority Buddhists are typically cremated, as are Hindus.

Muslim representatives in Sri Lanka welcomed the apology, but said their entire community, accounting for about 10 percent of the island's 22 million population, was still traumatized. "We will now sue two academics - Meththika Vithanage and

Channa Jayasumana - who were behind the forced cremation policy of the government," Hilmy Ahamed, spokesman for the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, told AFP. "We will also seek compensation."

Ahamed said a young Muslim couple suffered untold anguish when their 40-day-old infant was cremated by the state against their wishes. Then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa banned burials despite his administration facing international condemnation at the UN Human Rights Council and other forums for violating Muslim funeral norms.

In a book published earlier this month, he defended his action saying he was only carrying out "expert advice" from Vithanage, a professor of natural resources, not to let COVID victims be interred. She has no medical background.

Rajapaksa halted his forced cremations policy in February 2021 following an appeal from then Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan during a visit to Sri Lanka. The government then allowed burials at the remote Oddamavadi area in the island's east under strict military supervision - but without the participation of the bereaved family. Rajapaksa was forced out of office two years ago following months of protests over an unprecedented economic crisis, which had led to shortages of food, fuel and medicines. — AFP



The American University of Kuwait
AUK Videos @AUK_official
AUKtweets

admissions@auk.edu.kw
Tel: 1802040/(+965) 2224-8399
Ext: 3148 www.auk.edu.kw

The American University of Kuwait received its Institutional Accreditation from the Private Universities Council (PUC), Ministry of Higher Education in the State of Kuwait, and has a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with Dartmouth College (Hanover, N Hampshire - USA).



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Business

WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 2024

KFH achieves net profit of KD 341.2m in H1

Earnings per share reached 20.73 fils • Net financing income reached KD 558.8m

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq announced that KFH achieved a net profit of KD 341.2 million for the first half of 2024 for the bank's shareholders, representing an increase of 2.3 percent compared to the same period last year. The comparative period included non-recurring revenues and profits from investments amounting to nearly KD 70.0 million. Earnings per share for the first half of 2024 reached 20.73 fils; an increase of 2.6 percent compared to the same period last year. Net financing income for the first half of the year reached KD 558.8 million; an increase of 21.9 percent compared to the same period last year.

Total operating income for the first half of the year increased, supported by the increase in all core activities to reach KD 823.4 million; an increase of 12.1 percent compared to the same period last year. Financing receivables for the first half of 2024 reached KD 19.0 billion, affected by the sale of Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain, as well as the impact of foreign currency fluctuations during the current period. Total assets as at the end of the first half of the year amounted to KD 36.4 billion, shareholders' equity amounted to about KD 5.3 billion as at the end of the first half of 2024. Depositors' accounts as at the end of the first half of 2024 amounted to KD 19.5 billion. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.15 percent which is above the limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid capital base of KFH. The Board of Directors has agreed to distribute a semi-annual cash dividend of 10 percent to KFH shareholders.

Exceptional financial performance

Al-Marzouq said that the profits reflect KFH's effective strategy, resulting in exceptional financial performance, noting that KFH has implemented various qualitative initiatives and accomplishments, strengthening KFH's leadership both locally and globally, while reinforcing its reputation as a benchmark in the banking sector. He stated that the financial statements demonstrated a solid capital base, high liquidity ratios and robust operating performance which drove growth in all key financial indicators.

Largest market cap

Al-Marzouq added that KFH succeeded in attaining the key goals of its strate-

gy, overcoming the challenges of the operational environment. He noted that KFH maintained its long-term credit rating at (A) by Fitch with stable outlook and at A2 by Moody's with stable outlook. He pointed out that KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies and banks on Boursa Kuwait in terms of a market capitalization which currently exceeded KD 12 billion. Additionally, KFH claimed third place among the top 20 Middle East and Africa Banks by market cap according to the latest S&P Global Intelligence analysis.

Strategic plans

Al-Marzouq explained that KFH currently operates in 12 countries around the world, notably Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Egypt, UK and Germany through a large international network of 618 branches. He noted that KFH holds the distinction of being the first Islamic bank in Germany and the first licensed under Malaysia's Banking Act. Furthermore, KFH is the second largest Islamic financier in Turkey. Today, KFH demonstrates a stronger local, regional and global footprint.

He went on to say that KFH implemented strategic steps to strengthen its expansion and solvency, develop its operations, and keep pace with technology and digital banking updates. He mentioned that the most significant initiatives include KFH's acquisition of Ahli United Bank Group - Bahrain, its conversion to a Sharia-compliant bank along with its subsidiaries, and the completion of the merger with Ahli United Bank-Kuwait (AUBK). Additionally, KFH Group completed the agreement with Al-Salam Bank to acquire, in return for cash consolidation, the entire share of KFH Group in KFH - Bahrain. Furthermore, the launch of TAM Digital Bank marks another key milestone as the first Sharia-compliant digital bank in Kuwait.

Financing development projects

Al-Marzouq said that KFH is the first strategic partner for major development plans. KFH is also one of the most preferred and trusted institutions in the Kuwaiti banking sector for corporate finance thanks to its innovative, flexible and efficient Sharia-compliant financing solutions. The bank also offers comprehensive financing solutions across various project sectors, with a particular focus on petrochemicals, oil and gas, water and



Hamad Al-Marzouq



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood

energy, renewable energy, and infrastructure as well as SMEs.

Strategic social initiatives

Al-Marzouq highlighted KFH's prominent role in strategic social initiatives with significant added value. These initiatives include contributing KD 8 million to the reconstruction of Al-Mubarakiya. KFH further demonstrated its commitment by participating in the national campaign to help defaulting debtors. The contribution consisted of additional funds amounting to KD 7 million, bringing the total amount aimed to debtors to nearly KD 38 million since 2019. Additionally, KFH partnered with the Kuwait Food Bank, pledging KD 1 million to support underprivileged families in Kuwait, in addition to the many strategic social initiatives.

Strong financial position

KFH's Acting Group Chief Executive Officer Abdulwahab Iesa Al-Rushood, highlighted KFH's strong H1 2024 profits as a confirmation of the bank's continued leadership in the Kuwaiti banking sector. He further emphasized that all financial indicators for the first half point to the success of KFH's strategy. This strategy prioritizes achieving sustainable profits, solidifying the bank's financial position, maintaining high asset quality, achieving a favorable cost-to-income ratio, maintaining a healthy coverage ratio for non-performing debts, growing operating income, and strengthening both liquidity and capital adequacy ratios.

Digital financial solutions

Al-Rushood stated that KFH is committed to providing top-notch digital financial ser-

VICES and solutions in addition to investing in technological infrastructure and expanding its capabilities in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, Data Engineering, FinTech, Digital Product Design, and cybersecurity controls. Additionally, KFH has successfully transitioned numerous processes and functions from manual systems to automated systems through the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA). This has led to improved production efficiency, reduced service times for customers and increased their satisfaction levels.

FTSE Index

Al-Rushood emphasized KFH's exceptional dedication towards investing in green finance products and integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ESG principles across all its operations. He expressed his pleasure in KFH's recent inclusion in the FTSE4Good Index Series. Created by the global index and data provider FTSE Russell, the FTSE4Good Index Series is designed to measure the performance of companies demonstrating strong Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices. Al-Rushood indicated that FTSE4Good index includes prestigious companies such as Google and Microsoft.

He highlighted KFH's release of the carbon footprint report and sustainability report, the first-of-its-kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector, as well as the ongoing (Keep it Green) campaign, which encompasses numerous sustainability initiatives. He also added that KFH signed the Global Takaful Alliance agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This alliance aims to provide Takaful insurance to

100 million farmers worldwide. Al-Rushood noted that KFH's efforts and outstanding performance in the field have earned the bank several awards, including Kuwait's Best Bank for Sustainable Finance by Global Finance magazine and Kuwait's Best Bank for ESG by Euromoney.

Investing in human capital

Al-Rushood pointed out that KFH remains committed to investing in its human capital and supporting employees in honing their skills and enriching their experiences. He highlighted the launch of Business Leadership Excellence program in partnership with IE Business School, Forsah program, in addition to many programs with Harvard University and other esteemed international universities. These programs focus on empowering KFH's talents and leaders to qualify them as well-rounded professionals and sustain KFH's successful journey.

Global recognition

Al-Rushood underlined the many local and global awards KFH has scooped. The awards confirm its reputation, diverse capabilities in the Islamic finance sector, brand excellence, and robust operating performance. These include winning Kuwait's Best Bank, Best Digital Bank in Kuwait for Tam Digital Bank and Kuwait's Best Bank for ESG awards by Euromoney, in addition to Kuwait's Best Bank for Sustainable Finance by Global Finance magazine. KFH also received the His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award under the patronage and presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the category of excellence in digital transformation in technical financial solutions, in addition to winning several awards in different areas.

Appreciation

Al-Rushood thanked shareholders, customers, and the Board of Directors for their trust and support. He acknowledged the role of the Central Bank of Kuwait and regulatory authorities, and praised the efforts of the Executive Management, employees, partners, and all stakeholders. Al-Rushood emphasized KFH's commitment in exerting the efforts to strengthen and maintain its position as a leading Islamic bank globally.

Highest in Kuwait Banking Sector

Praise be to Allah

Net Profit for Shareholders H1 of 2024

341.2

"KD Million"

Metric	30/06/2024	30/06/2023	%
Net Profit for Shareholders "KD Million"	341.2	333.4	2.3
Earnings per Share "Fils"	20.73	20.21	2.6
Net Financing Income "KD Million"	558.8	458.5	21.9
Total Operating Income "KD Million"	823.4	734.4	12.1
Net Operating Income "KD Million"	525.5	489.1	7.4

Metric	30/06/2024	31/12/2023	%
Total Assets "KD Million"	36,425	38,010	(4.2)
Financing Receivables* "KD Million"	19,002	19,425	(2.2)
Depositors' Accounts* "KD Million"	19,539	21,813	(10.4)
Shareholders' equity "KD Million"	5,346	5,316	0.6

* Financing receivable and depositors accounts decreased due to the effect of Sale "Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain", as well as the impact of foreign currency fluctuations during the current period.

The Board of Directors approved distribution of an interim cash dividend of 10% to the Shareholders.

Business

Boursa Kuwait receives 6 awards from prestigious international publications

Awards recognize exchange's efforts in CS and ESG reporting and implementation

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait continued its impressive record of awards and recognition for its exceptional achievements in corporate sustainability and environmental, social and governance (ESG) implementation and reporting, receiving six awards from several prestigious international publications.

The awards included the 'Best in Sustainability Transparency' award from Global Finance magazine as well as the 'Best Sustainable Corporate Governance' and 'Best ESG Development Strategy' awards from The European magazine. Additionally, the exchange received the 'Outstanding Contribution to Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa 2023' award, the 'Best Capital Market ESG Strategy - GCC' award, and the 'Outstanding Contribution to Financial Inclusion - GCC 2023' award from Capital Finance International (CFI) magazine.

These awards demonstrate Boursa Kuwait's commitment to adopting initiatives in the field of corporate sustainability and raising awareness about their disclosure and reporting as it strives to embed ESG concepts in its operations, within the wider Kuwaiti capital market as well as other markets in the region, as it recognizes the importance of being a role model for other listed companies and companies in Kuwait's private sector.

These awards also signify that the Kuwaiti stock exchange is cognizant of its responsibilities on the social and environmental levels, the two pillars of its Corporate Sustainability (CS) strategy, and its strategic mandate to make a long-lasting, positive impact in the community in which it operates.

Best in Sustainability Transparency

Boursa Kuwait strives to adopt the highest standards of credibility and transparency by disseminating accurate and timely information and disclosures about the company, which has a significant impact on enhancing investor confidence. As one of the model issuers in the Kuwaiti capital market, the company is committed to adopting the best-in-class practices of this field, recognizing the essential role that ESG metrics as well as their implementation and disclosure play in the financial landscape. Since 2021, the company has issued a corporate sustainability report and adopted a globally recognized mechanism for ESG reporting."

Best ESG Development Strategy

As a result of its commitment and ongoing efforts to develop its ESG implementation and reporting mechanisms, Boursa Kuwait has been recognized in 2023 as the company with the "Best ESG Development Strategy". Since its establishment, the bourse has been keen on adopting the best-in-class standards and practices in ESG, which are aligned with its progressive CS strategy designed to ensure a solid foundation for its myriad programs and initiatives in this nascent field. This strategy has enabled Boursa Kuwait to become one of the earliest adopters of ESG in the Kuwaiti financial scene in general and among listed companies in particular. The exchange has been formally committed to promoting the concepts of corporate sustainability within capital markets since it joined the United Nations-led Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative as a supporting partner in 2017.

Best Sustainable Corporate Governance

Boursa Kuwait received the award for "Best Sustainable Corporate Governance" in recognition of



its achievements in corporate governance that are aligned with the company's overarching mission, vision and strategic objectives. This stems from the Kuwaiti stock exchange's stern belief that adhering to the best-in-class standards and practices of governance is essential to ensuring the sustainability of its operations. Boursa Kuwait has been keen, since its establishment, to develop a capital market apparatus built on fairness, objectivity and transparency as it aims to protect the interests of its various stakeholders, including shareholders, investors, listed companies and licensed firms.

Corporate governance forms the foundation of the company's sustainable economic growth, building stakeholder trust and strengthening the capital market by being accountable and responsible. The company's organizational structure is designed flexibly to align with its long-term strategy, effectively supporting the board of directors and executive management in achieving the company's vision and strategy. Furthermore, Boursa Kuwait has adopted the highest standards of disclosure and transparency, enhancing and improving operational performance, social responsibility, protecting shareholders and their rights, promoting professional conduct and ethics, managing transactions with related parties as well as implementing policies and procedures for effective whistleblowing and reporting conflicts of interest.

Outstanding contribution to Female Empowerment MENA 2023

Boursa Kuwait was recognized for its exceptional

contribution to female empowerment, reflecting its commitment to gender diversity and inclusion within capital markets. Over the past few years, the company has implemented various initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting the role of women in the financial sector, including targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, and policies that encourage female participation at all levels of the organization. Its efforts are part of a broader strategy to foster a more inclusive workplace and empower women to take on leadership roles, advocating for gender equality, providing platforms for women to excel and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

Best Capital Market ESG Strategy GCC 2023

Boursa Kuwait is dedicated to advancing sustainable practices within the local capital market, fostering an investment climate that attracts and nurtures sustainable investments. Central to its Corporate Sustainability strategy are the two pillars of Community and Environment.

The community pillar highlights the company's commitment to social responsibility and ensures that all stakeholders are equipped with the essential knowledge and skills to make sound investment decisions while the Environment pillar focuses on minimizing the adverse impact of operations and promoting best practices for environmental preservation.

Additionally, Boursa Kuwait obtained the LEED Gold certification for its building in 2023, a distinguished award that makes the iconic structure one

of only a few buildings in Kuwait to achieve this honor. The certification is a testament to Boursa Kuwait's commitment to operational excellence and its leadership in driving positive change within the financial industry and contributing to a more sustainable world.

Boursa Kuwait attracts a diverse range of participants and investments to the Kuwaiti capital market by fostering an investment environment that prioritizes sustainability, with education programs and community initiatives that ensure that its stakeholders are well-informed and engaged in sustainable practices.

Outstanding contribution to financial inclusion GCC 2023

Boursa Kuwait has significantly contributed to enhancing financial inclusion within the GCC region through its strategic initiatives that contribute to the development of a robust and inclusive capital market. By providing access to a wide range of investment opportunities and promoting financial literacy, Boursa Kuwait ensures that a variety of participants can engage effectively in the Kuwaiti capital market. The company's focus on transparency and regulatory enhancements further supports investor confidence and market integrity and its workshops and educational programs play a crucial role in empowering local and regional investors with the knowledge necessary for informed decision-making.

Boursa Kuwait's proactive approach to financial inclusion demonstrates its commitment to building a more inclusive financial ecosystem, facilitating access to financial markets and enhancing market participation to bridge the gap between different economic segments. This comprehensive approach to financial inclusion has set a benchmark in the region, highlighting Boursa Kuwait's leadership in driving financial inclusion and exemplifying its dedication to fostering an inclusive financial environment through continuous efforts to raise the awareness and skills of its market participants as well as increase the transparency and accessibility of the Kuwaiti capital market.

Boursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, as well as environmental protection.

As a trusted and respected entity within the global financial community, Boursa Kuwait continues to pave the way for sustainable growth and exemplify the power of responsible business practices. Through its unwavering dedication, Boursa Kuwait plays a crucial role in shaping a brighter and more sustainable future for Kuwait and beyond.

BBC to axe 500 more jobs in bid to be 'more agile'

LONDON: The BBC is to axe 500 jobs over the next 20 months in a bid to save £200 million (\$258 million) and become a "leaner, more agile organization," the British public service broadcaster announced Tuesday. The redundancies, to be achieved by closing and transferring some roles and creating others in "growth areas", are the latest layoffs as the BBC copes with squeezed funding and inflationary pressures.

The broadcaster, which relies heavily on an annual £169.50 license fee paid by every UK household watching live channels on a television, is also grappling with wider changes in media consumption such as streaming and on-demand services. It will shed the 500 jobs by March 2026, after already reducing its headcount by 10 percent in the last five years—a reduction of almost 2,000 roles.

Detailing the changes in its annual report pub-

GM puts self-driving vehicle without steering wheel on hold

DETROIT: General Motors' Cruise self-driving unit will focus its development efforts on a next-generation Chevrolet Bolt rather than its planned futuristic Origin vehicle that would not have a steering wheel or other human controls, the automaker said. In 2022, GM filed a petition with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration seeking permission to deploy up to 2,500 self-driving Origin vehicles annually without human controls like brake pedals or mirrors. The agency still has not acted on the request.

"GM and Cruise are optimizing resources to focus development of our next autonomous vehicle on the next generation Bolt instead of the Origin," a GM spokesperson said on Tuesday.

"This shift creates a more cost-effective and scalable option for pursuing an autonomous future faster,

while avoiding the uncertain path to regulatory compliance in the US that could impede scaling of the Origin." GM in November said it had temporarily halted production of its fully autonomous Cruise Origin. Cruise told employees in November the company has produced hundreds of Origin vehicles already, and that it is "more than enough for the near-term when we are ready to ramp things back up." Cruise faces a number of investigations - including by NHTSA, the Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission - after an October accident in which one of its robotaxis struck a pedestrian and dragged her 20 feet. Cruise and GM came under heavy criticism after the accident, and the California Department of Motor Vehicles revoked its permit to operate driverless vehicles.

In 2018, GM petitioned the NHTSA to allow the use of a car built on a Chevrolet Bolt without steering wheels or brake pedals on US roads. In 2020, GM withdrew the petition after the agency took no action. GM CEO Mary Barra noted Tuesday that Cruise in recent months had resumed testing of its robotaxis with human safety drivers in Phoenix, Houston and Dallas and in June hired a new CEO. — Agencies

lished Tuesday, the BBC said the move was part of "accelerating our digital-first approach to reach audiences where they are". "Over the course of the next two years, we will look to further move the money we have into the priority areas that provide real value for audiences," it said. In his review of the past year, director-general Tim Davie said years of below-inflation license fee settlements had "chipped away" at its income and put "serious pressure on our finances". Although inflation-linked rises have been reinstated, he noted the broadcaster had experienced a 30-percent real terms cut from 2010 to 2020 and "a tough couple of years of flat funding". The BBC collected £80 million less in license fee income in the last year, driven by a two percent decline in sales volumes and flat license fee pricing. The number of active licenses dropped from 24.4 million in 2022-23 to 23.9 million by the end of last year, according to the annual report. "We need to create a leaner, more agile organization, and make the most of the digital-first opportunity to redesign our processes, cut costs and serve audiences better," Davie said. "We also need to consider how best to fund the BBC in the long term to secure all the benefits of universal public service broadcasting in the future." — AFP



ATLANTA: Delta passengers try to find their bags after canceled and delayed flights at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport on July 22, 2024 in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

US opens probe into Delta after flight cancellations

WASHINGTON: The US Transportation Department said on Tuesday that it is opening an investigation into Delta Air Lines after the carrier canceled more than 5,000 flights since Friday as it struggles to recover from a global cyber outage that snarled airlines worldwide. While other carriers have been able to resume normal operations, Delta has continued to cancel hundreds of flights daily of a crew scheduling system.

Since Friday Delta has been canceling 30 percent or more of its flights daily through Monday, axing 418 flights on Tuesday, or 12 percent of its schedule as of 9:00 am and delaying another 356, or 10 percent, according to FlightAware, after canceling 1,150 on Monday. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on Tuesday the investigation is to "ensure the airline is following the law and taking care of its passengers during continued wide-

spread disruptions... Our department will leverage the full extent of our investigative and enforcement power to ensure the rights of Delta's passengers are upheld."

Delta did not immediately comment. Delta CEO Ed Bastian said Monday it would take the US carrier another couple of days before its operations recover. Since Friday, the carrier had canceled 4,000 flights as of Monday morning. A software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike triggered system problems for Microsoft customers, including many airlines, on Friday. Delta is widely respected for running a reliable operation.

Analysts say its on-time performance in terms of arrivals and departures has helped the airline cement its position as a premium airline. The issue has left customers fuming. Many complained they waited hours for assistance as the airline's helplines were overwhelmed. Some were forced to rent cars, driving hundreds of miles to get to destinations, while others said they would have to wait days for new flights. In December, Southwest Airlines agreed to a record-setting \$140 million civil penalty over the 2022 holiday meltdown that led to 16,900 flight cancellations and stranded 2 million passengers, resolving a USDOT investigation. — Reuters

Business

Air travel demand 'normalizing' after COVID boom, say execs

Boeing-owned Wisk expects to begin carrying passengers 'later in the decade'

FARNBOROUGH, England: Demand for air travel has normalized after a years-long boom following the COVID-19 pandemic as holidaymakers and travelers balk at higher fares, executives at major airlines said at the Farnborough Airshow on Monday.

Guliz Ozturk, CEO of Turkey's low-cost Pegasus Airlines said the airline expected yields - a measure of average fare paid per mile by each passenger - to be flat as customers go "back to basics". Travellers are looking for the most cost effective way to travel, she said.

"We have started seeing the normalization of demand. What does it mean? I mean, the demand is there, but now the travelers are looking for, as before the pandemic, for the most affordable, the lowest, the best price for their travel," she said.

Air India CEO Campbell Wilson said he expected the international market to moderate for the next six months, while the CEO of BA-owner IAG, Luis Gallego, said business travel was still recovering from the COVID crisis when travel almost ground to a halt with borders shut and planes grounded. The comments come after Ryanair reported earlier on Monday a bigger than expected drop in quarterly profit as fares plunged 15 percent, with management saying that ticket prices were continuing to deteriorate.

Some European airlines reported weaker than expected first quarter results, with their cost struggles set to carry over into second quarter results too. Lufthansa cut its profit target for the second time this year earlier this month. Gallego said demand was still strong for flights within Europe, but yields were under pressure, which was reflected in the Ryanair results.

The executives lamented ongoing delivery delays from planemakers Airbus and Boeing, as well as supply chain constraints. Production slots at the two

dominant planemakers are sold out for many years, resulting in long wait times for airlines wishing to replace and grow their fleets.

For Pegasus, which has laid out an ambitious growth trajectory but said it would not sign any plane orders at the air show this week, Ozturk said better coordination and communication with Airbus on delays would help with planning. "Even a two, three week (delay) for a July aircraft is so critical for an airline, and they (Airbus) have to overcome this in a way, optimize the processes," Ozturk said.

In India, there's so much appetite for growth that Air India is robbing its own aircrafts for parts to keep other planes flying. "We have 30 aircraft on the ground for want of spare parts," Wilson said, adding that he expected plane delivery delays to last a "good couple of years."

Darren Hulst, Boeing's vice president of commercial marketing, acknowledged that the manufacturer must do better by its customers. "There's no doubt we've disappointed our customers, and we've disappointed them, you know, over and over again, in many cases," Hulst said, referring to delivery delays. "We need to create that stability so that we can provide not just a quality airplane, but a quality airplane when we tell our customers that it's going to be delivered," he added.

Meanwhile, Boeing-owned Wisk Aero expects its pilotless air-taxi to begin carrying passengers "later in the decade" as it works with the US regulator to secure approvals, its CEO said on Monday, amid skepticism among industry analysts about certification timelines. Wisk is one of several electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft makers that have emerged over the last few years with a promise to provide an environmentally-friendly mode of



A visitor walks from the The Embraer E2 Profit Hunter E195-E2 on the second day of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, south west of London, on July 23, 2024. — AFP

transport in congested cities. But the industry faces technological hurdles such as making batteries powerful enough for companies to make more trips on a single charge. They also need to convince regulators and the public that the aircraft are safe, a barrier that is higher when the aircraft is autonomous.

Wisk is developing a four-seater autonomous aircraft that will have a range of 90 miles (145 km).

"We are right now testing and producing the elements of this aircraft that we will hope to fly around

the end of this year," CEO Brian Yutko told reporters at the Farnborough Airshow.

Wisk's strategy is a departure from other major air-taxi makers, which are developing models that will require a pilot to fly the aircraft. The company has said operators of its aircraft will save on pilot costs. But industry experts at Bain say a full autonomous passenger flight is not expected before the late 2030s and pilotless aircraft will face competition from autonomous vehicles on the road. — Reuters

Kalyan Jewellers launches '25 Gold Bars' giveaway campaign

KUWAIT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewelry brands has recently announced the launch of its '25 Gold Bars' Giveaway offer, where in patrons stand a chance to take home a 10 gm gold bar every other day for 50 days, on their jewelry purchases from Kalyan Jewellers. With this unique offer, Kalyan Jewellers aims to celebrate the season in a distinctive manner. The offer can be availed till August 30, 2024 across all their showrooms in Kuwait.



As part of this campaign, customers are entitled to receive 1 raffle coupon on purchase of gold jewelry worth KD 50 and above, whereas patrons will receive two raffle coupons on purchase of diamond jewelry worth KD 50 and above. Speaking on the campaign, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director - Kalyan Jewellers said, "At Kalyan Jewellers, we have been taking consistent steps towards creating a holistic ecosystem while catering to the distinct needs of our customers, enhancing their shopping experience. Through this special offer, we aim to provide our patrons with exceptional benefits on their jewelry purchases. We are confident that our customers in the region will continue to show their love and support for the Kalyan Jewellers brand."

All their showrooms stock Kalyan's popular house brands, including Muhurat (Wedding Jewellery Line), Mudhra (Handcrafted Antique Jewelry), Nimah (Temple Jewelry), Glo (Dancing Diamonds), Ziah (Solitaire-like Diamond Jewelry), Anokhi (Uncut Diamonds), Hera (Daily Wear Diamonds), Rang (Precious Stones Jewelry), and the recently launched Lila (Colored Stones and Diamond Jewelry).

UK moots carbon footprint details for all flights

LONDON: Airlines flying to and from the UK could be required to clearly state the environmental impact of their flights, under proposals outlined on Tuesday by the country's aviation regulator. If adopted, the move would help passengers make "informed travel choices" when booking, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said, as it launched a consultation on the proposals.

"Providing consumers with accessible, transparent and accurate environmental information is essential to making more informed travel choices," said CAA director of policy Tim Johnson.

"Our new proposals aim to standardize this information across all platforms, enabling passengers to more easily compare the environmental impact of their flights.

"This initiative is a significant step towards greater transparency and improved sustainability in the aviation industry." The European Union Aviation Safety Agency announced in January that passengers booking flights online will be able to see standardized details on the carbon footprint and efficiency of flights. Airlines would take part in the "environmental labeling scheme" from next year on a voluntary basis, it added. The aviation sector is responsible for around three percent of global CO2 emissions but it is one of the most complicated to decarbonize. — AFP

Virgin Atlantic orders more Airbus A330s at airshow

LONDON: British airline Virgin Atlantic on Tuesday ordered seven long-haul Airbus A330s, as the European planemaker sought to catch up with US rival Boeing on orders won at the Farnborough Airshow. The purchase, for an unspecified amount, comes after Boeing won the orders battle on Monday, the start of the biennial aviation event, southwest of London.

The latest purchase will "complete the fleet transformation" of the carrier's greener fuel-efficient aircraft, Airbus and Virgin said in a statement. The jets - which will be delivered from 2027 - are worth

Venezuela inflation has cooled, but voters can't make ends meet

CARACAS: The government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who is seeking reelection on Sunday, has had some success in curbing formerly sky-high inflation, but workers say their salaries have not caught up with high prices for food and other goods. That, combined with general frustration after years of economic malaise, could chill support for Maduro and help bring out the vote for opposition coalition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez, said voters and analysts. Venezuela had suffered six-digit hyperinflation for about four years, with the indicator reaching a heady 130,000 percent, eroding savings and making basic supplies scarce.

But annual inflation fell to around 50 percent over the last year as the government restricted credit, held the exchange rate steady and curbed public spending. "We have decelerated (inflation) with the correct policies," Maduro - who has been in power since 2013 - said this month when figures were published showing month-on-month inflation in June was 1 percent.

The last time an inflation rise was that low was July 2012. But many in the country are still struggling to make ends meet and some lamented that there had not been the usual boost in public sector pay seen in past election years. "With the election, buying power isn't changed at all. Prices go up," said Oscar Reyes, a retired public sector worker whose pension is about \$100 per month, as he shopped at a Caracas market. Increases to his income had been minimal, he said. "We buy very little, because we also have to pay utilities."

Gonzalez has promised to broker deals between businesses, workers and the government to improve salaries and continue efforts to curb inflation. "A few months ago I was spending \$75 a week on average on

Volkswagen reeling in China: Can EVs help it grow in US?

BERLIN: When Volkswagen Group last month invested \$5 billion in US electric truck-and-SUV maker Rivian, the startup's shares soared on the cash infusion. And Volkswagen's stock dropped 1.6 percent.

Some analysts praised the creation of a Volkswagen-Rivian joint venture to help the German giant with software. But the investment raised cost concerns and reinforced how Volkswagen's problems in critical areas undermined its EV transition globally. The world's second-largest automaker faces a vexing landscape of challenges in Europe, the US and espe-

a combined total of just over \$2 billion, according to the most recent catalogue prices, though airlines typically negotiate big discounts. The latest order brings to 19 the total number of A330 aircraft ordered by Virgin Atlantic, which was founded by British billionaire Richard Branson four decades ago.

"We are proud to operate one of the youngest and most fuel and carbon efficient fleets across the Atlantic," Virgin Atlantic CEO Shai Weiss said.

The A330s are certified to fly with 50-percent sustainable aviation fuel - while Airbus expects them to switch to 100 percent by 2050. As of June, Airbus had a total of 185 A330 jets on its order book.

"We are grateful to Virgin Atlantic for its decision to expand its A330neo fleet as part of its strategy to have the youngest fleet across the Atlantic," said Christian Scherer, CEO of the commercial aircraft business at Airbus. "The A330neo... greatly enhances Virgin Atlantic's fleet efficiency and contributes to their sustainability journey." — AFP



An Airbus A330-900 is displayed on the second day of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, south west of London, on July 23, 2024. — AFP



CARACAS: A man buys bananas at the municipal market of Chacao in Caracas as inflation increases in Venezuela. — AFP

food, now it's double," said Carmen Morales, a 52-year-old administrator in the central city of Valencia, who earns \$250 per month and helps support her parents.

Morales said she wants a change in government and will vote for the opposition on Sunday. Given previous rises, current inflation reductions sometimes are not visible to the average consumer, analysts say. "Inflation could go down to zero, but if you earn \$200 and basic food for a month is \$500, there is a gap," said economist Asdrubal Oliveros, director of Caracas-based consulting firm Econanalitica. "People don't see (lower) inflation as something positive."

The communications ministry and the central bank did not respond to requests for comment. Analysts say government spending has increased mildly during the election campaign. But salaries for public employees have not risen since 2022, though the government has increased bonuses, which have less fiscal effect. Private sector salaries tend to be higher than in the public sector and average \$231 per month, according to

the Venezuela Finance Observatory. For private workers, too, raises have been less frequent than they were during hyperinflation, said consultancy Mercer Venezuela.

The government's inflation effort has required it to artificially hold the exchange rate for the local bolivar currency steady by injecting some \$2.24 billion into the economy so far this year, about 30 percent more than last year, according to calculations by analyst firm Sintesis Financiera.

Analysts say there will eventually have to be a price-stoking correction to the exchange rate, which has been held at 36.5 bolivars to the dollar for seven months. The government's limiting of bank credit has forced producers of rice and corn, major crops for local consumption, to adopt forward-selling schemes with their buyers. And business owners have frequently requested during meetings aired on state television that the government revise its fiscal and tax decisions, to help increase production and allow them to pay better salaries, to no avail. — Reuters

cially China, where domestic EV makers led by BYD are swiping its market share. It has lost more stock value than any major competitor over the past two years. By 2030, Volkswagen plans more than 30 new electric or hybrid models in China and hopes to boost sales to about 4 million, from about 3 million today, lifting its market share to 15 percent.

But in the near term, Volkswagen CFO Arno Antlitz told Reuters the company expects to continue losing China market share and hopes to merely maintain its position in Europe. Volkswagen's troubles in China underscore bleak prospects for foreign automakers in the country, where homegrown EV-makers are dominating the world's fastest electric-vehicle transition with high-tech, low-cost models. Volkswagen is particularly vulnerable because China accounts for about a third of its sales.

That leaves Volkswagen's much-smaller US operation shouldering its biggest growth ambitions: the carmaker plans to more than double its US market share to 10 percent by 2030. About a dozen investors and

analysts interviewed by Reuters expressed skepticism that the automaker has found the formula to achieve a sales boom. Volkswagen, they said, lacks a distinctive US brand identity or breakthrough product plans in a crowded market that favors larger vehicles and has proven resistant to EVs.

One upside: VW won't have to compete with Chinese EVs in the US, which in May levied 100 percent tariffs on them. Speaking with Reuters in February, Antlitz said Volkswagen has launched initiatives to boost its competitiveness in China over the next two years. "Until then," he said, "we do not expect rising market share - rather the opposite." In a written response to questions last week, a Volkswagen spokesperson added that the automaker expects to achieve cost parity with local competitors for compact cars by 2026, and aims to remain the largest international carmaker in China and third-largest overall. "Profitability is our top priority," the spokesperson said. "We will not grow at any price." — Reuters

Business

India's Modi spends billions on jobs, key allies in first budget after polls

Fiscal deficit target at 4.9 percent of GDP • Lower tax on foreign firms

NEW DELHI: India unveiled spending of billions of dollars to create new jobs and satisfy key coalition partners in the first budget by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government after an election setback, aiming to win back voters and retain political support. Among a host of tax changes was an increased levy on equity investments to allay concerns of an overheating market, but also lower taxes for foreign companies, in a bid to lure investment.

The outlays included \$32 billion for rural programs, spending of \$24 billion over five years to create jobs, and more than \$5 billion for two states ruled by coalition partners, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday. "In this budget, we particularly focus on employment, skilling, small businesses, and the middle class," she said, adding that subsequent budgets would build on these focus areas. Despite the new spending, India cut its fiscal deficit target to 4.9 percent of gross domestic product in 2024-25, from 5.1 percent in February's interim budget, helped by a large surplus of \$25 billion from the central bank. The government marginally reduced gross market borrowing to 14.01 trillion rupees.

Analysts had blamed distress in rural areas and a weak job market for a poor poll showing that cost Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) its absolute majority. "The budget successfully engineered a fine balance between supporting job creation and skilling, rural development and agriculture ... without compromising on fiscal consolidation," said Sakshi Gupta, principal economist at HDFC Bank.

The government will also push reforms across factors of production, including land and labor, said Sitharaman, presenting her seventh consecutive budget. An economic policy framework to "set the scope of the next generation of reforms" will pave the way for job opportunities and sustain high growth, she said.

Economists have said land and labor reforms are essential to make sure India maintains its fast growth rate. In the last fiscal year, India grew by 8.2 percent. The government expects it to grow between 6.5 percent-7 percent this fiscal year, a report showed on Monday. The budget showed a nominal growth rate, which includes inflation, of 10.5 percent, which it said was "slightly conservative".

However, pushing through bigger reforms will be



NEW DELHI: India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (5L) poses for photos before presenting the union budget in the Parliament in New Delhi on July 23, 2024. — AFP

"challenging" for a coalition government, Gene Fang, associate managing director for sovereign risk at Moody's Ratings, told Reuters. Other measures on employment include incentives for companies, such as those in manufacturing, and programs to improve skills and hand out cheaper loans for higher education, Sitharaman said. India's official unemployment rate in urban areas is 6.7 percent, but private agency the Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy pegs it higher, at 8.4 percent. The government will also maintain spending on long-term infrastructure projects at 11.11 trillion rupees, offering long-term loans of 1.5 trillion rupees to states to fund such expenditure.

Some of these loans will be linked to reform milestones in areas such as land and labor, which Sitharaman said the government intended to push in its

third term. In a concession to the government's allies, Sitharaman said it would hasten loans from multilateral agencies for the eastern state of Bihar and the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Tax changes

India raised to 20 percent from 15 percent its tax rate for equity investments held for less than a year, while the rate for those held longer than 12 months rose to 12.5 percent from 10 percent. The government also increased the tax on equity derivative transactions that have drawn retail investors, which will be implemented from Oct 1.

The tax changes are a short-term negative for the market, said Trideep Bhattacharya, the chief investment officer of Edelweiss Mutual Fund. "The tax increase is marginal but will help bring in ra-

tionality on options trading exuberance and will better investment behavior," said Bhattacharya, adding it would drive a push to longer-term investing. The budget shaved the corporate tax rate on foreign companies to 35 percent from 40 percent in order to lure foreign capital for development needs, Sitharaman said. A lower tax burden for lower income consumers will encourage them to spend. Shares and the rupee declined after the news but recovered.

The benchmark NSE Nifty 50 and S&P BSE Sensex fell about 1.6 percent on Sitharaman's announcements, but clawed back most losses to end the day down about 0.13 percent. Consumer stocks rose to record highs. The rupee closed at a record low of 83.6875 to the US dollar. The 10-year benchmark bond yield was largely unchanged at 6.967 percent. — Reuters

India cuts import tax on smartphones in boost for Apple

NEW DELHI: India announced it will cut import duty on mobile phones and some key parts to 15 percent from 20 percent, a move that will directly benefit Apple, which still imports its high-end smartphones into the country despite increasing local production.

Presenting the annual budget for 2024/25 in parliament on Tuesday, India's finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said import tax on mobile phones, printed circuit board assembly (PCBA) and mobile chargers is in the "interest of consumers." Almost 10-12 percent of the Apple iPhones are imported each year into India and a 5 percent reduction in tax on the devices will result in a \$35-50 million annual benefit to Apple, said Neil Shah, a co-founder at Hong Kong-based Counterpoint Research.

IMF to consider Kenya's economic plan at Aug-end

NAIROBI: Kenya has submitted an economic repair plan to the International Monetary Fund and it expects the fund's board to review it for approval at the end of August, the country's chief minister told a parliamentary panel. Kenya had to rapidly draw up new spending cuts after widespread youth-led protests against tax hikes previously put forward by President William Ruto's government left at least 50 people dead.

Kenya's chief minister Musalia Mudavadi said that the Treasury "has had a very robust engagement with the International Monetary Fund" despite the tax-hike setback. "It is our desire and hope that Kenya's proposition will receive favorable consideration so that we can move beyond the challenges that we



MUMBAI: Chief Executive Officer of Apple Tim Cook (center) poses for a selfie with a woman during the opening of Apple's first retail store in India, in Mumbai on April 18, 2023. — AFP

Although Apple has boosted its local production in India through contract manufacturers such as Foxconn and India's Tata Group, it still imports some of its high-end Pro and Pro Max iPhone models into the country.

are facing," Mudavadi told the parliamentary budget committee in remarks seen by Reuters on Tuesday. The IMF did not immediately comment. The East African nation has a \$3.6 billion IMF program, and the Fund had reached a staff level agreement on the seventh review of Kenya's program in early June.

But its board had not signed off on the review when Ruto scrapped the tax hikes that were a core part of its plan to meet IMF targets, and investors said the political turmoil would make getting IMF cash trickier. Even at the review, Kenya had sought IMF waivers after failing to meet two targets on balancing the budget and tax collection.

Mudavadi said that under the revised spending plan for the 2024/25 financial year, the budget deficit is projected to rise to 4.2 percent of gross domestic product, up from 3.3 percent before the withdrawal of the finance bill. "The revision to the deficit barely a week after the initial plan underlines the Herculean task faced by the authorities to achieve their fiscal consolidation goals," Ayodeji Dawodu, head of Africa research and strategy with boutique investment banking group BancTrust & Co said in a note. — Reuters

Apple "will directly benefit ... they (also) have some models for which PCBAs are still being imported," said Shah. The move will also "alleviate import duties for new players entering the market. It's a gamechanger for them," he added.

Other manufacturers such as Samsung would also benefit, but to a lesser degree as the majority of their smartphones are locally made, said a source with direct knowledge of the matter. Apple and Samsung did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Apple has a 6 percent share of India's smartphone market, according to Counterpoint. India's deputy IT ministry in January privately argued for a reduction on import taxes on mobile phones, saying the country risks losing out to China and Vietnam in the race to become a major smartphone export hub and must "act fast" to lure global companies with lower tariffs, Reuters has reported. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in recent years promoted India as a smartphone manufacturing hub and the nation's \$24-billion local production scheme covers mobile phones, prompting companies such as Apple, Xiaomi, Samsung and Vivo to expand local operations. — Reuters

India slashes import tax on gold, silver to tackle smuggling

MUMBAI: India slashed import duties on gold and silver on Tuesday in a move industry officials said could lift retail demand and help cut smuggling in the world's second-biggest bullion consumer. Higher demand for gold from India could boost global prices, which hit a record high this year, although that could widen India's trade deficit and put pressure on its ailing rupee. "It's a massive step in (the) right direction, as it will reduce the incentives for smuggling of gold. It will create a level playing field for honest industry stakeholders," said Sachin Jain, CEO of World Gold Council's Indian operations.

The government said it will charge 5 percent basic customs duty and 1 percent in Agriculture Infrastructure & Development Cess (AIDC) on gold and silver imports, lowering import duties to 6 percent from 15 percent. "To enhance domestic value addition in gold and precious metal jewelry, I propose to reduce customs duties of gold and silver to 6 percent," India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a budget speech.

Local gold prices fell 6 percent to 68,500 rupees per 10 grams, their lowest level in more than three months after the announcement. Indian prices hit a record high of 74,777 rupees earlier this month, which squeezed demand. Overseas gold prices erased losses and rose 0.4 percent.

Indian jewelry demand was hit by record-high gold prices, but the duty cut will bring down prices and boost consumption, said Saurabh Gadgil, chairman of PNG Jewellers. Gold was trading at a premium in India for the first time in eleven weeks on Tuesday, with dealers charging a premium of up to \$20 an ounce over official domestic prices, inclusive of 15 percent import and 3 percent sales levies, versus last week's discount of \$65. Shares of jewelry makers such as Titan Company, Tribhovanand Bhimji Zaveri, Senco Gold and Kalyan Jewellers jumped by up to 10 percent. Finance Minister Sitharaman also announced an import duty exemption for 25 critical minerals, including lithium. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen testifies before a House Committee on Financial Services hearing entitled, "The Annual Testimony of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the International Financial System," at Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

Digital tax talks in G20 spotlight as US tariff threat looms

RIO DE JANEIRO: Talks over a global tax deal are continuing well past a June 30 deadline and governments are now looking to a Group of 20 finance leaders meeting this week for progress on a stalled plan to reallocate taxing rights on large multinational companies.

The so-called "Pillar 1" arrangement, part of a 2021 global two-part tax deal, aims to replace unilateral digital services taxes (DSTs) on US tech giants including Alphabet's Google, Amazon and Apple through a new mechanism to share taxing rights on a broader, global group of companies.

The stakes in the negotiations are high. A failure to reach agreement on final terms could prompt several countries to reinstate their taxes on US tech giants and risk punitive duties on billions of dollars in exports to the US.

Standstill agreements under which Washington has suspended threatened trade retaliation against seven countries—Austria, Britain, France, India, Italy, Spain and Turkey—expired on June 30, but the US has not taken steps to impose tariffs. Discussions on the matter are continuing. An Italian government source said that European countries were seeking assurances that the US tariffs on some \$2 billion worth of annual imports from French Champagne to Italian handbags and optical lenses remained frozen while the talks continue, including at the G20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

A European Union document prepared for the G20 meeting lists finalizing the international tax deal as a "top priority." It said the G20 should urge countries and jurisdictions participating in the tax deal "to finalize discussions on all aspects of Pillar 1, with a view to signing the Multilateral Convention (MLC) by summer end and ratifying it as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, Canada in July became the eighth country to impose a unilateral digital services tax, with Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland saying it was "simply not reasonable, not fair for Canada to indefinitely put our own measures on hold" after the June 30 deadline passed without a Pillar 1 agreement. The US maintains that such taxes are discriminatory because they specifically target the local revenues of US technology firms that dominate the sector. — Reuters



ASUNCION, Paraguay: IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva talks during a press conference as Inter-American Development Bank President Ilan Goldfajn (left) and Paraguayan Economy Minister Carlos Valdovinos listen at the Presidential Palace in Asuncion on July 22, 2024. -- AFP

Lifestyle



Members of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) pull ropes as they try to control the movement of a giraffe.



A Police officer caresses a baby giraffe while monitoring the community celebrations.



A herd of giraffes moves together during a translocation exercise for wild giraffes in a farm near Eldoret.

Giraffes bring peace to Kenyan communities once at odds

On a vast farm in Kenya's Rift Valley, a veterinarian carefully takes aim before shooting a tranquillizer dart and sending another giraffe sinking slowly to the ground before it is roped and blindfolded. It is the first stage of a delicate operation by the Kenya Wildlife

The rival Pokot and Ilchamus communities in Baringo had been at odds for decades, their feuds sometimes escalating into armed clashes. In the mid-2000s, Pokot and Ilchamus elders took matters into their own hands, launching an initiative to resettle the Rothschild's, or Nubian, giraffes into the Ruko conservancy around 280 kilometers north

would attract tourists and income, quelling tensions in the neglected region by providing employment in an area where many young people—like elsewhere in Kenya—struggle to find jobs. And, said 34-year-old reserve manager Rebbi Sebei, it seems to have worked. "Back 20 years before, Pokot and Ilchamus had a conflict that erupted because of

she said, the gentle creatures are helping to "ensure that there is peace between the two communities".

'One community'

Giraffes have seen a dramatic decline in numbers in Kenya in recent decades, as a result of poaching and human encroachment on their habitats. As



People gather to caress a baby giraffe roaming at the community celebrations to honor the arrival of several wild giraffes.

Service to move a group of the endangered animals to a conservancy around 140 kilometers (90 miles) to the east.

The subdued giraffe is kept at the farm in Sergoit along with seven others for an acclimatization period of about 10 days, before being transported to their new home. The Rothschild's giraffes, a distinct subspecies, are being resettled in the Ruko Conservancy in Baringo County as part of a long-running initiative to ease communal tensions there. While the East African nation is renowned for its spectacular wildlife, its northern counties such as Baringo are more often in the news for banditry and ethnic clashes.



Members of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) drive a tractor attached to a trailer containing a giraffe.

of the capital Nairobi.

The goal was twofold: reintroduce an endangered species to a region it had previously deserted, and restore peace to the two communities. The elders hoped the world's tallest mammals

livestock theft and resulted in loss of life, loss of livestock and pushing people to move away from their homeland," she told AFP. "This place became deserted, where we are now today was a battleground for the bandits." But now,

the Sergoit giraffes—securely trussed in the back of trucks—made their way slowly towards the reserve, people from the Pokot and Ilchamus communities held welcome celebrations.



Members of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) gather several giraffes inside an enclosure.



Women wear traditional attires as they queue to take part in the community celebrations.



Young men wear football jerseys as they gather to take part in the community celebrations.



Women wear traditional attires and colorful clothes as they attend the community celebrations.



Veterinaries of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) check on the temperature of a giraffe.

Sixteen hours after their departure from Sergoit, having navigated hazardous bridges and low-hanging electrical wires, the giraffes finally arrived at their new home. The group was to be acclimatized in a small pen before being released into the Ruko reserve, now home to nearly 20 giraffes, both

Rothschild's and Masai. As people sang and danced in celebration while awaiting the new arrivals, Douglas Longomo, a 27-year-old farmer, said he believed that his Pokot community had changed.

"It took time to understand that the conservancy is important to bring peo-

ple together," Longomo said. Many could not see the point of ending the clashes that have scarred the Rift Valley area for decades, he added. "Now we are seeing we are living as one community; we can move freely without any fear." Longomo's views were echoed by 28-year-old James Park-

itore from the Ilchamus community. "I think (the conflict) is over now because we are interacting," he said. "I hope those giraffes will (create) great jobs for the communities," said Parkitore, a view shared by Longomo.

Sebei added a note of caution, however, saying that while an increase

in tourism had helped, there were still some lingering disputes between the two ethnic groups. But, she said, "there is peace, and we need to bring more giraffes". —AFP



ALBANIA TOURISM BOOM SPARKS FIGHT OVER RIVER'S FUTURE

The Shushica River's sparkling emerald waters wind a spectacular course through southern Albania that activists say is now at risk from a project that would divert a portion of its flow. A tourism-fed construction boom is underway along the nation's hundreds of miles of pristine coastline, and the new developments need water -- lots of it. This has sparked a fight that echoes others over intensive development in Albania, which has welcomed investment after decades of deep poverty caused by communist rule and its chaotic collapse.

Locals are pushing back, saying plans to divert water to developing areas threaten their own economic survival. In southern Albania's Shushica valley, a string of villages have rallied against a new project to pipe water from the area's river to a nearby development on the coast. "The battle for water is the battle for our children, for our future," said Lulezim Bardhi, a former resident of Brataj, one of the villages, after taking a gulp of the Shushica's water. "This water is our life and we will continue the battle to defend the river," Bardhi told AFP.

War of words

Nearby, hundreds of blue pipes are stacked at a construction site where



Local residents and environmentalists take part in a protest against the construction of a water pipeline, at Brataj old bridge over the Shushica river, in the village of Brataj, near Albanian city of Vlore.--AFP photos

work has been halted until an environmental impact assessment over the disputed project is completed. If the project restarts, the pipes will be used to build a 17-kilometre (10.5-mile) line to transfer water from one of the river's springs to the Ionian coast, where tourism is booming. Local residents are calling on the authorities to scrap the plan, first started in 2019

and financed by a 9.5-million-euro (\$10.3-million) loan from the German state-owned bank KfW.

Brataj resident Sotir Zaho Aliaj said that similar projects had been mulled in the past but never implemented. "None were constructed because of the social, economic and environmental consequences," Aliaj said as he unfurled a large banner over Brataj's

stone bridge reading "Save our Shushica". The 80-kilometre Shushica is one of several tributaries of the larger Vjosa River -- one of Europe's last undammed waterways, which the Albanian government bestowed with national park status last year.

The classification guarantees the highest level of protection to the river and its tributaries. "In a national park it is forbidden to divert river waters. Such a project... would impact not only biodiversity and the ecosystem, but also the local economy, which depends on the river," said Besjana Guri of the conservation group EcoAlbania.

Albania's Environment Minister Mirrela Kumbaro rejected the claims, saying the project did not encroach on a protected area. "The source that will be used for the aqueduct in question is not inside the national park," Kumbaro told AFP, defending the government's plans to boost investment in the country. "The Albanian government has not hidden its ambition to develop sustainable, elite tourism in harmony with the environment," she said.

'Blue gold'

Despite the pledge, pressure from conservation groups has been mounting for the government to act. This month, activists from across Al-

bania and neighboring Bosnia rallied near Brataj's stone bridge against the project. The demonstrators included "the brave women of Krusica", a group of activists from Bosnia that protested for 500 days starting in 2017 to prevent the construction of small hydroelectric power stations on a river in their country.

"Taking water from us would ruin our future. It would be a disaster, the end of agriculture, the end for our livestock," said Ilia Bombaj, one of the protesters. "This is our battle for survival." Most protesters who spoke to AFP said they supported the country's economic development but called for the government to seek more sustainable solutions. To add to the area's woes, others say the Shushica is being battered by climate change, restricting its flow to a trickle in some parts.

With more than 150 rivers and streams, Albania is rich in water, but poor management of the resource results in frequent shortages. "Due to climate change one has to prepare for all the scenarios," Ferdinand Bego, a natural sciences professor at Tirana University, told AFP. "The battle for 'blue gold' is the main challenge of the new millennium," he said. —AFP



This aerial photograph shows the Shushica river flow, near the village of Brataj.



An Albanian man leans to wash his face near one of several springs of the Shushica river.



An Albanian man cools off in a hammock, suspended in the shade, over the surface of the Shushica river.

Sports

Paris prepares warm Olympics welcome - except for rats

Many historic buildings given a makeover

PARIS: While the Paris Olympics is set to be a festival of socializing and intermingling, city authorities are keen for visitors not to encounter any of the capital's notorious furry inhabitants. Humorously portrayed in the hit animated film "Ratatouille", the French capital's abundant rat population is no joke for the city's residents - and could be an embarrassment as the Olympics spotlight falls on Paris.

"All of the Olympic sites and celebration areas were analyzed (for rats) before the Games," deputy mayor Anne-Claire Boux, who has responsibility for public health, told AFP in an interview. As well as ordering a deep clean to remove any food residues that might tempt the scurriers from their underground lairs, the mayor's rodent specialists also worked to close up exit points from the sewers around the sites.

"Where there were areas with lots of rats we put traps in place ahead of the Games," Boux continued, adding that both mechanical rat-traps and chemical solutions were used to reduce troublesome populations. The park behind the Eiffel Tower, where the beach volleyball is set to take place, and the Louvre gardens, where the Olympic cauldron is set to burn, are popular picnic spots - and previously rat infested.

"Ultimately, no-one should aim to exterminate Paris's rats, and they're useful in maintaining the sewers," she added. "The point is that they should stay in the sewers."

Spruced up

Paris vermin, a feature in French literature from "Les Misérables" to "the Phantom of the Opera", are frequently drawn into a contemporary debate about

cleanliness in the French capital. Current mayor Anne Hidalgo, a Socialist who relies on support from the Greens, is regularly accused by her conservative critics of failing to keep the capital free from the scourges of rubbish, rodents and dog excrement.

A viral social media campaign in 2021 called #SaccageParis (#TrashedParis) led to residents posting pictures of overflowing bins, badly maintained street furniture or overgrown green spaces that hurt the city's cultivated reputation for elegance.

The city unveiled a "manifesto for beauty" afterwards in response to the criticism. Ahead of the Olympics, its boulevards and squares have been thoroughly spruced up, with many historic buildings given a makeover. Boux stressed that rat problems were first and foremost caused by food being left out on the ground, or from overflowing waste bins, many of which are being changed around Paris to new rat-proof versions. "The most important thing is that the bins are sealed and closed," she said.

Caricature?

The city's rodent exterminators - known as the "Smash" team - have also had an advisory role to the Paris organizing committee, suggesting ways to design their sites to keep them clean and orderly. Responsibility for waste removal and street-cleaning will fall to the city's 7,500-strong cleaning and collection teams, whose three-week strike last year led to an estimated 10,000 tonnes of garbage pile up in the streets.

They are set to earn bonuses of up to 1,900 euros for working through the Olympic period, while private contractors are also set to reinforce efforts to



PARIS: Tourists and visitors pose for photos by the Arc de Triomphe monument, four days ahead of the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. — AFP

keep the city clean. "I'm not at all worried (about rats)," deputy mayor in charge of waste, Antoine Guillou, told AFP. "On the contrary, the Games will help us show definitively that this idea that you run

into lots of rats in Paris is false. "There are some, we deal with them, but they're not an issue specific to Paris nor on the scale that is sometimes suggested in a caricatural way," he said. — AFP

Dupont guarantees spotlight firmly on rugby sevens: Clerc

PARIS: French star Antoine Dupont has the capability of drawing in a new generation of fans while also putting rugby sevens firmly in the spotlight, according to ex-France winger Vincent Clerc. Dupont took a gamble of missing the Six Nations to make the French Olympic team, a move many traditionalists criticized.

But the scrum-half went on to help France to two wins on the World Rugby Sevens Series, including victory in the Madrid finals. In between, he skipped his club Toulouse to Top 14 and Champions Cup glory in the 15-a-side code.

"Antoine is an exceptional player and there's currently no equivalent in terms of putting in performances," Clerc said Tuesday, a day ahead of the start of the men's Olympic rugby sevens tournament at the Stade de France.

"He will attract a new, different audience. Sevens has long suffered from the 15-a-side calendar, where it has been very tricky for players to play both codes," Clerc, capped 67 times by France, added: "Rugby sevens has

improved some of Antoine's skills, even though they were already at a very high level.

"And rugby sevens will benefit from Antoine's image, his desire to highlight rugby sevens and to show that winning an Olympic medal in rugby is worth the same as the Top 14 title or Champions Cup crown."

Transition between sevens and 15s

World Rugby Chief Executive Alan Gilpin said Dupont's apparent ease at transitioning between 15-a-side rugby and the abbreviated game was unmatched, but should also be encouraged. "It should be possible in the big global-stage moments in sevens and 15s that the players can try and play in both," Gilpin said.

"What Antoine Dupont is doing is utterly incredible. To make that transition not just once in a season, but to do it back and forth, from being player of the match in the Champions Cup one weekend to then leading France to victory in the sevens grand finale in Madrid, was incredible.



Antoine Dupont with the ball.

"And again, I think it inspires more players to want to do that." Clerc agreed that Dupont's transition had shown the way. "You can see that it is possible for 15s players to play sevens," he said. "It was considered a sport that was too specific, too tough to transition, but with precise management and intelligent coaching, it's possible."

Fanny Horta, who captained the

French women's team to silver in Tokyo, said Dupont "has an aura on the pitch, he's someone who gives the impression of being calm".

"He gives confidence to the France team. His teammates have raised their own game since he joined the squad." Dupont's presence has certainly boosted the rugby competition, with a 69,000 sell-out crowd for each of the three days of action. — AFP

Kolisi back to captain WCup winners South Africa in Australia

JOHANNESBURG: Recalled Siya Kolisi will captain a 33-man South Africa squad for two Rugby Championship matches in Australia next month, SA Rugby announced on Tuesday. The double Rugby World Cup-winning flanker was among many regulars rested by the title-holders for a 64-21 victory over second-tier Portugal in Bloemfontein last Saturday.

South Africa face Australia in the opening round of the southern hemisphere competition on August 10 in Brisbane and they meet again in Perth seven days later. Kolisi is among 22 World Cup winners chosen by coach Rassie Erasmus, with the biggest surprise being the inclusion of Bulls lock Ruan Nortje.

Nortje was not selected for several pre-season training camps and could not be considered for the opening Test of this season, a win over Wales in London last month, due to club commitments. "The injury to Franco Mostert opened the door for Ruan Nortje to make his comeback to the national team," said Erasmus.

Nortje joins Eben Etzebeth, RG Snyman and Salmaan Moerat, who skipped South Africa against Portugal in only his seventh Test appearance, as the lock options. Injuries ruled out a number of high-profile Springboks, including scrum-half Faf de Klerk, loose-head prop Steven Kitshoff and lock Mostert, while No. 8 Jasper Wiese is suspended.

Wiese is serving a six-match ban after being red-carded playing for Leicester Tigers in the English Premiership. He will be available for a home Test against New Zealand on August 31. Hooker Malcolm Marx and flanker Pieter-Steph du Toit have been chosen after recovering from injuries sustained in a drawn home series with Six Nations champions Ireland this month.

Five newcomers retained

Five Springboks capped for the first time this season utility back Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, scrum-half Morne van den Berg, prop Jean-Hendrik Wessels, hooker Johan Grobbelaar and flanker Ben-Jason Dixon will travel to Australia. We have included a few younger players who made strong statements in the Tests so far this season, said Erasmus.

Feinberg-Mngomezulu, who can operate at fly-half, centre and full-back, and Dixon have been the stand-out debutants this year. "This is a quality group of players, which includes a mixture of youth and experience, and we believe this is the best group we could select for this tough assignment," added Erasmus.

"Australia are a quality team, and we have seen historically that they are a force to be reckoned with at home. We rested some players for the match against Portugal to recharge for this competition and are excited to see the energy they will bring back to the squad.

"While this may be a very different challenge to facing Wales, Ireland and Portugal, we have full faith in the players to make another big step up against southern hemisphere teams."

Team

Ben-Jason Dixon, Pieter-Steph du Toit, Thomas du Toit, Eben Etzebeth, Johan Grobbelaar, Vincent Koch, Siya Kolisi (capt), Elrigh Louw, Frans Malherbe, Malcolm Marx, Bongani Mbonambi, Salmaan Moerat, Ox Nche, Ruan Nortje, Kwagga Smith, RG Snyman, Gerhard Steenekamp, Marco van Staden, Jan-Hendrik Wessels.

Backs

Lukhanyo Am, Kurt-Lee Arendse, Damian de Allende, Aphelele Fassi, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, Cheslin Kolbe, Jesse Kriel, Willie le Roux, Makazole Mapimpi, Manie Libbok, Handre Pollard, Cobus Reinach, Morne van den Berg, Grant Williams.

Coach: Rassie Erasmus (RSA). — AFP

Paris Olympics have 'unique significance' for Ukraine: Dobrynska

PARIS: Ukraine's 2008 heptathlon Olympic champion Nataliia Dobrynska told AFP the Paris Games can serve as a platform to raise awareness about the war in her country "that is destroying the lives of our athletes, coaches, and all Ukrainians."

The 42-year-old, who is a member of World Athletics' ruling Council, said that while the 2008 Beijing Olympics remain "one of the brightest moments" of her life, the Paris edition "holds a unique significance" for Ukraine "because we are at war."

Almost 500 coaches and athletes have been killed since the Russians invaded in February 2022 and a country that as recently as 2012 co-hosted the European football championship has had large parts of

its sporting infrastructure destroyed.

Dobrynska, who is also vice-president of the Ukrainian athletics federation, said medals in track and field would be welcome - and the new women's high jump world record holder Yaroslava Mahuchikh is their biggest hope for gold - but just by being in Paris it sent powerful message in itself.

"Right now, every Ukrainian athlete embodies the pain and horror that our country and our people are experiencing," she said. "Every athlete representing Ukraine does so not only for themselves but to let the world know that we are unbroken, to make sure the world hears what is happening in the heart of Europe, and responds."

'Flag fly high'

Dobrynska, who left Ukraine following the Russian invasion as she is the mother of three young children - "I need to take care of them" - said preparing for an Olympics was tough enough without the extra stress the present generation had to con-



Nataliia Dobrynska

tend with. "I feel all the pain and strength of our athletes," she said.

"I know how much emotion, stress, and tension they endure, yet they continue to train and achieve high results. "They all think about their families, loved ones, and friends who are constantly under threat in Ukraine." — AFP

A century on, Paris cherishes a few golden Olympic venues

PARIS: After a gap of 100 years, the Olympics return to Paris, but, with two exceptions, not to the arenas used in 1924 - even though several still exist, usually disguised by the names of later French sports heroes.

From athletics to hockey

A century ago, just as this summer, the main Olympic stadium was in the suburbs to the north of the city. Then, Colombes hosted a string of sports and was also the site of the Olympic village. The remodelled stadium will now host the hockey. The site was a horse race-track from 1883. By 1924, one of the elite private Paris sports clubs, Racing Club de France, had leased the land. They offered to "build a 60,000-seat Olympic stadium on the site and be reimbursed afterwards from the proceeds of the Olympics," said historian Michael Delepine, who has written a book about the stadium.

All that remains of that stadium, the

scene of the epic duel between British sprinters Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell - immortalized in the film "Chariots of Fire" - and the long jump victory of DeHart Hubbard, the first black American athlete to win an Olympic medal, is the 6,000-seat grandstand.

The stadium, later renamed after Racing rugby player Yves du Manoir, who died in 1928 at the controls of his plane, hosted a World Cup final, became the home of the French cup final and the national football and rugby teams. Brazil legend Pele scored a hat-trick there against France in 1963. It was supplanted by the new Parc des Princes, nearer the centre of Paris, in 1972, although the unrenovated stadium remained home to the Racing and Racing 92 rugby teams until 2017.

The stadium, which had a record attendance of 63,638 for a 1969 European Cup quarter-final replay between Ajax and Benfica, will hold 15,000 for the Olympic hockey.



PARIS: A pedestrian walks past a mural ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, along a street in Paris on July 23, 2024. — AFP

Tarzan's swimming pool

On the other side of Paris in the Piscine des Tourelles, at the Porte des Lilas, Johnny Weissmuller, later the lead in a dozen Tarzan movies, won three swimming golds and a water polo bronze in 1924. The pool, still adorned with Olympic rings on the facade, has since been renamed for swimmer Georges Vallerey, who med-

alled for France in the 1948 Games. The pool was for a long time the headquarters of the French Swimming Federation and hosted numerous national and international competitions. Now a municipal pool, with a retractable roof and small stands down either side, it is being refurbished to act as a training pool for swimming and triathlon this summer. — AFP

Sports

Leagues and unions take legal action against FIFA over international calendar

FIFA has been accused of failure to consult over recent changes to the calendar

PARIS: Two major bodies representing footballers and football clubs in Europe are filing a complaint to the European Commission accusing FIFA of abusing its position. Football's world governing body has taken "unilateral decisions" and its conduct "infringes EU competition law and notably constitutes an abuse of dominance", FIFPRO Europe and the European Leagues body said in a statement on Tuesday.

FIFPRO is the global players' union while European Leagues brings together more than one thousand clubs from 33 countries around Europe. Its member leagues include the English Premier League, as well as the leagues in Italy, Germany and France.

They say FIFA's conduct with regards to the international match calendar has "harmed the economic interests of national leagues and the welfare of players" and argue FIFA's role as a regulator and competition organizer is a conflict of interest.

FIFA has been accused of a failure to consult over recent changes to the calendar, such as the introduction of a 32-team Club World Cup. The first edition of the expanded Club World Cup is set to take place in the United States in June and July next year and 12 European clubs are due to feature.

Many of the continent's leading players will therefore be obliged to participate at a time when they would otherwise have been afforded a long close-season break, a year ahead of the expanded 48-team World Cup in North America.

'Unanimously approved'

"The international match calendar is now beyond saturation and has become unsustainable for national leagues and a risk for the health of players," FIFPRO and European Leagues said. "FIFA's decisions over the last years have repeatedly favored

its own competitions and commercial interests, neglected its responsibilities as a governing body, and harmed the economic interests of national leagues and the welfare of players.

"National leagues and player unions, which represent the interests of all clubs and all players at the national level, and regulate labor relations through collectively agreed solutions, cannot accept that global regulations are decided unilaterally.

"Legal action is now the only responsible step for European leagues and player unions to protect football, its ecosystem and its workforce from FIFA's unilateral decisions." The statement refers to the Super League judgement from the European Court of Justice last December, which required FIFA and other governing bodies to exercise their regulatory functions in a way that is transparent, objective, non-discriminatory and proportionate.

FIFA's conduct over the calendar, they allege, "falls well short of these requirements". FIFA responded via a statement published on X, in which it said "the current calendar was unanimously approved by the FIFA Council, which is composed of representatives from all continents, including Europe, following a comprehensive and inclusive consultation, which included FIFPRO and league bodies".

"Some leagues in Europe... are acting with commercial self-interest, hypocrisy, and without consideration to everyone else in the world," the body added. "Those leagues apparently prefer a calendar filled with friendlies and summer tours, often involving extensive global travel."

Last week FIFA published a study undertaken by the Swiss-based International Centre for Sports Studies which claimed that "teams are not playing more matches per season, countering the



FIFA headquarters in Zurich.

popular belief of an ever more crowded match calendar". It said that between 2012 and 2024, "the average number of fixtures per club and season is stable at just over 40. Only about 5 percent of clubs play 60 or more games per season (not including friendlies)."

Spain's La Liga, which is not a member of Eu-

ropean Leagues, has also joined the complaint. It comes after England's Professional Footballers' Association and their French counterparts, the UNFP, launched an action in the Belgian courts in June to ultimately determine whether FIFA's actions had breached players' rights under European Union law. — AFP

De Bruyne won't be leaving Man City, says Guardiola

LONDON: Pep Guardiola insists Kevin De Bruyne will not leave Manchester City this season after reports the Belgium star could move to Saudi Arabia. De Bruyne has just one year left on his current City contract and the midfielder revealed recently he has spoken with his wife Michele about his future plans.

"For Michele an exotic adventure is OK," De Bruyne said in a hint that he could end his successful spell at Premier League champions City. Saudi Pro League club Al-Itihad were believed to be interested in De Bruyne. But UK press reports on Tuesday said City manager Guardiola had rejected any thought of the 33-year-old being allowed to walk away this season.

Speaking ahead of Manchester City's friendly against Celtic in North Carolina, Guardiola told reporters "Kevin isn't leaving". De Bruyne returned af-

ter missing the first half of last season due to injury and helped City make history with a fourth successive Premier League title.

He has been with City since joining from Wolfsburg in 2015, winning 15 major trophies including six Premier League titles and one Champions League crown. While Guardiola is adamant, his influential playmaker will stay at the Etihad Stadium this term, it remains to be seen if he can persuade the Belgian to remain in Manchester longer than that.

"My eldest (child) is now eight years old and knows nothing but England. He also asks how long I will play at City. Once the time comes, we will have to deal with it in a certain way," De Bruyne said in a recent interview.

"At my age, you have to be open to everything. You talk about unbelievable amounts in what may be the end of my career. Sometimes you have to think about that. "If I play there for two years, I will be able to earn an incredible amount of money."

Meanwhile, Guardiola claimed City would not make major changes to his squad before their Premier League season kicks off against Chelsea on August 18. Crystal Palace winger Eberechi Eze has been linked with the champions, while City goalkeeper Ederson has potential offers from Saudi Arabia.



Kevin De Bruyne

"Of course, until the last day, we have chances (to make transfers), I don't rule it out the option to have new players but I think there is an 85.90 percent chance we will have the same squad," Guardiola said.

"I feel comfortable, because the quality of human beings we have in the squad is difficult to be replaced, and the quality is there. "But we'll see, I don't know in the last moment if someone comes for some players and they leave, we're going to decide. "If someone leaves, we're going to talk about that." — AFP

Keating charged with possession of 'hippy crack'

LONDON: England and Manchester City goalkeeper Khiara Keating appeared in court on Tuesday after being charged with possession of "hippy crack". Keating, 20, and her mother, Nicola Keating, 48, pleaded not guilty to the joint charge at Manchester Magistrates' Court.

The pair were accused of possessing canisters of Class C drug nitrous oxide, also known as hippy crack or laughing gas, in Manchester on June 18 last month. City star Keating, who was called up to the England squad last season, spoke only to confirm her name and address and make her not guilty plea.

Jonathan Potter, prosecuting, said the women are accused of the possession of nitrous oxide canisters for wrongful inhalation, an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Keating became the youngest player to win the Women's Super League Golden Glove award in May after keeping nine clean sheets in 22 games for second-placed City.

Keating is still waiting for her England debut after being an unused substitute during the recent Women's European Championship qualifiers against Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. Nitrous oxide was made a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act last November, as part of the Government's anti-social behavior action plan.

Possession of nitrous oxide, where a person intends to wrongfully inhale it for a psychoactive effect, is now an offence. It is still possible to use the gas for legitimate reasons, such as in catering or pain relief during labor.

Magistrates granted Keating and her mother un-



Khiara Keating

conditional bail and adjourned the case until September 10 back at the same court for a district judge to fix a date for trial. — AFP

Bordeaux relegated to French third-tier

BORDEAUX: Former French Ligue 1 champions Bordeaux said on Tuesday they will play in the third-tier next season after withdrawing their appeal against relegation for financial failings. Bordeaux, who won the last of their six first division titles in 2009, were sanctioned on July 9 by French football's financial watchdog, the DNCG, as they needed to find 40 million euros (\$43.6 million) to

balance their books.

They had been in talks with the owners of Liverpool, Fenway Sports Group (FSG), before the American investors pulled out of negotiations earlier this month. "Even if discussions had restarted in recent days, representatives of FSG told Bordeaux and their majority shareholder yesterday, Monday July 22, it no longer wanted to pursue talks despite guarantees brought by the different interested parties," Les Girondins said in a statement.

"Due to the lack of new information, Bordeaux have withdrawn their appeal against the DNCG's decision of July 9, 2024. "In result, Bordeaux accept the punishment of an administrative relegation to Na-

tional 1 for the 2024/2025 season and will once again have to present its financial budget to the DNCG.

"The club and its shareholders assure supporters, and all interested parties, their desire to protect the club's interests," they added. Bordeaux, whose former players included Zinedine Zidane and Bixente Lizarazu, were relegated to Ligue 2 in 2022 after finishing 20th in the top-flight.

They have not played in the third division since becoming professional in the 1930s. The new National season begins on August 16 with Bordeaux expected to play at their 42,000-capacity Matmut Atlantique home, France's sixth biggest stadium, for the campaign. — AFP

Star names in short supply in men's Olympic football

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe wanted to take part in this year's Olympics in his home city, while there were hopes that Lionel Messi would feature for Argentina, but instead the men's football tournament at the Paris Games will be largely devoid of star attractions.

As captain of France and the most famous athlete in the country hosting this year's Games, Mbappe's presence in coach Thierry Henry's Olympic squad would have been an enormous boost for organizers as well as for the team's chances of winning gold.

But Mbappe, 25, had to accept that his new club Real Madrid would not allow him to participate immediately after he played in the French side that reached the semi-finals of Euro 2024 in Germany. That is the problem for the men's football competition, which begins on Wednesday and runs until August 9.

Clubs are not obliged to release players for a tournament held outside an official FIFA window for international football, following straight on from the European Championship and Copa America. Messi, now 37 and part of the Argentina team that claimed Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008, ruled himself out of Javier Mascherano's squad for Paris shortly before the Copa America in the United States, which his country won.

"I spoke with Mascherano, and we immediately agreed on the situation," Messi told ESPN. "At my age, I don't want to play everything and I need to make the right choices." Henry, a French footballing great, also missed out on several other players he had hoped to call up.

"The last time I had so many rejections was when I was at high school," he joked when announcing a team in which the most recognizable names are Alexandre Lacazette, the 33-year-old Lyon striker, and new Bayern Munich signing Michael Olise.

The competition is restricted to players aged under 23, apart from a maximum of three overage players per squad. As well as the superstar names, the tournament is also missing Brazil, who won gold in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and retained the title in Tokyo three years ago, beating Spain in the final.

They failed to qualify, but Argentina must fancy their chances of ensuring a sixth straight Latin American winner of the men's football gold medal. "Obviously our objective is to try to compete and go all the way, and I think we will have a team that can do that," coach Mascherano, who won as a player in 2004 and 2008, said in an interview with South American confederation CONMEBOL. — AFP

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, Moin Khan, holder of Indian Aadhar card no. 368209366721, Sataya beldan pos, Aadaam pur satawa Nalanda, Bihar - 803109, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Moin Khan to Mohammed Moiz Khan (given name) and Khan (surname).
(#5637, 24/7/2024)

I, Farhad Moin Khan, holder of Indian passport no. W0774163, H.NO. 244/02, Sharmik Nagar, Khairane midc near Yedekar Masala Company, Mahape, Navi Mumbai - pin: 400710 Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Farhad Moin Khan to Mohammed Farhad Khan (given name) and Khan (surname).
(#5638, 24/7/2024)

I, Raju Upputuru, holder of Indian Passport No. P1095315 having permanent address 9 34 A Rajampet Kadapa Andhra Pradesh 516115, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Subbarayudu and (surname) Upputuru.
(#5636, 23/07/2024)

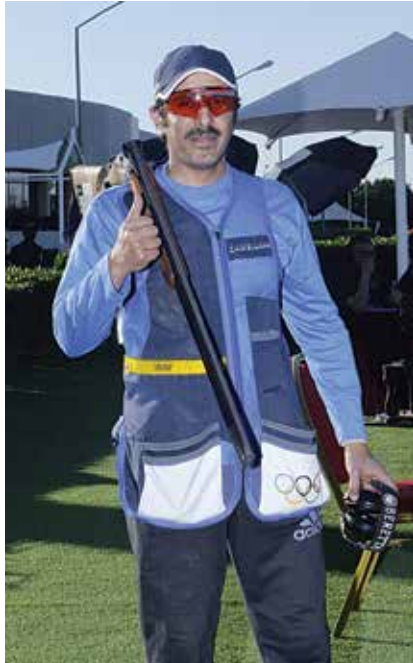
I, Murtaza (current name in passport) holder of Indian Passport No. M7068737 having permanent address - Mohammadiyah Colony, Post - Galiyakot, Dungarpur, Rajasthan, Pincode No. 314026 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth in future my name will be read as (given name) Murtaza and (surname) Tapiya.
(#5635, 23/07/2024)

Lost Certificate

I, Umakanth K.P (Salmiya, Block 10, phone: 99432922) lost my duplicate mark lists of Pre Degree second year regular examination with Registration No. 13591 of April 1984 and second year supplementary examination with Registration No. 81787 of April, 1985 issued by University of Calicut. If you find the documents, please contact me or the University.

Kuwaiti athletes fine tune preparations ahead of Olympics

Kuwait fielding a contingent of nine athletes to Paris Games



Shooter Mohammad Al-Daihani



Swimmer Lara Dashti



Shooter Khaled Al-Mudhaf



Mohammad Al-Zubaid pictured with other swimmers.— KUNA photos

PARIS: Kuwaiti athletes participating in the Paris Olympic Games are putting the final touches to their preparations for the sporting spectacle that will officially get underway on July 26, the Kuwaiti National Olympic Committee said on Tuesday.

Shooter Khaled Al-Mudhaf booked his ticket for the Olympics by way of his third place finish in the men's singles trap contest at an Azerbaijan-hosted

world championship, while his compatriot Mohammad Al-Daihani's bronze medal in the Asian skeet contest secured his berth at the Olympic Games.

Kuwait's national swimming team is also set to contest the Olympics, with head coach Ayman Al-Enezi confident that his athletes Lara Dashti and Mohammad Al-Zubaid are well prepared for the event after the pair had gone through an extensive training program,

with Dashti singled out for her "seriousness and concentration." The swimming head coach heaped praise on Dashti's "determination" to propel her homeland to the upper echelons of sports at the grandest stage of them all, pointing out that she is set to make her second appearance at the Olympics, having made her debut at the previous edition in Tokyo.

On Al-Zubaid's preparations, the head coach re-

vealed that the swimmer was put through a rigorous 45-day training regimen in Turkey's Mediterranean coastal province of Antalya, in which he displayed similar "seriousness and focus" as his compatriot Dashti. Kuwait is fielding a contingent of nine athletes to the Paris Olympic Games, all of whom will be contesting a number of sports running the gamut from swimming and shooting to rowing and fencing. — KUNA

IOC mulls Palestinian call for Zionist Olympics ban

PARIS: The International Olympic Committee was on Tuesday weighing a Palestinian call for Zionist athletes to be barred from the Games over the war in Gaza, three days before the Opening Ceremony in Paris.

As the Zionist Olympic team settled into the Athletes' Village, the IOC was studying a letter sent by the Palestine Olympic Committee to President Thomas Bach asking him to ban the Zionists, citing the bombings of the besieged Gaza Strip as a breach of the Olympic truce.

The letter sent on Monday "emphasized that Palestinian athletes, particularly those in Gaza, are denied safe passage and have suffered significantly due to the ongoing conflict".

It said "approximately 400 Palestinian athletes have been killed, and the destruction of sports facilities exacerbates the plight of athletes who are already under severe restrictions".

The IOC is likely to reject the Palestinian call but it highlights how the rising death toll and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza is impacting the Paris Games.

The war broke out after the October 7 attack on southern Zionist entity that resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Zionist official figures.

Zionist entity's retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 37,124 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry.

France's foreign minister has already had to intervene to stress that Zionist athletes are welcome at the Games after a far-left French politician called for them to be barred over the Gaza offensive.

'Best Athletes' Village'

Competitors were flooding into the Olympic Village to take up residence in the compound in northern Paris, with national flags hanging from many windows.

Some of the biggest names set to perform at the Olympics—gymnast Simone Biles and Spanish tennis pair Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz—have been spotted at the village.

Reviews of the food and accommodation were broadly positive but some people reported issues with the transport to and from sports venues.

"Usually at Olympics, the transport takes a bit of time to work out," Tom Craig, a player in the Australian hockey team, told AFP.

"We've heard about some teams getting taken to the wrong venue, but it hasn't happened to us. One day we got a bit lost but it was fine."

American gymnastics coach Sam Mikulak, a veteran of four Olympics, praised the village as the best he had seen.

"Ten out of 10. It's the best set up, the best conditioning space (gym), very organized," he told AFP. Craig also praised the cardboard beds, which were chosen for environmental reasons.

Some reports have wrongly described them as being intended to deter athletes from jumping under the sheets together. "They're very comfortable. You don't know you're sleeping on cardboard," he said.

Meanwhile, Britain's joint most decorated woman Olympian, dressage specialist Charlotte Dujardin, withdrew from the Games after a video emerged showing her making "an error of judgement" during a coaching session.

It was not immediately clear what three-time Olympic champion Dujardin had done but Olympic and equestrian authorities have taken an increasingly strict line against alleged improprieties relating to the treatment of animals in recent years.

During the delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021, a German modern pentathlon coach was thrown out the Games for striking a horse. In other developments, as organizers put the final touches to the plans for Friday's Olympics opening ceremony on the Seine, videos posted online showing US pop star Lady Gaga in Paris sparked rumors that she will be among the performers.

The line-up for the ceremony, which marks the first time a Summer Olympics has opened outside of the main stadium, is yet to be fully announced. — AFP



Kuwait ShinKyokushin Karate team

Kuwait ShinKyokushin team win Japan Dream Festival tournament

KUWAIT: Kuwait ShinKyokushin Karate team won the first and second place in the Karate Dream Festival 2024 International Championship in Japan. Karateka Abdulwahab Al-Saleh won the first place after finishing three bouts, while Eyad Al-Saleh won the second place after four bouts in the tournament that took place from 20 to 21 July in Tokyo.

In a statement to KUNA on Tuesday, Karateka Abdulwahab Al-Saleh said that he was proud of representing Kuwait in the event and achieving the first place, adding that taking part in this tournament was a dream of his. On his part, branch chief of ShinKyokushin in Kuwait Sensei Abdullah Al-Banwan hailed the performance of the winners and their efforts to represent Kuwait in international events. — KUNA

Al-Awadhi wins first place in Diamond League competitions

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Rider of Al-Masayel and Kuwait National Showjumping team Abdullah Mushari Al-Awadhi continues his outstanding performance in the championships being held in Belgium and Holland.

Al-Awadhi won first place during the Diamond League competitions in Belgium during the 140cm course in two rounds while riding his horse "Dee Dee", and was able to get the fastest time during the second round. This run was held in two rounds with 100 riders, as 20 qualified during the second round, where Kuwaiti Rider Abdullah Al-Awadhi succeeded in getting the fastest time without faults.

Al-Awadhi ended in sixth place in the 120 cm course with the horse "Mega Star". Al-Awadhi said "I am currently in a training camp in Europe to prepare for the upcoming season. Competition was strong and there will be another championship in Belgium at the start of August."



Abdullah Mushari Al-Awadhi

Murray confirms retirement after Olympics

PARIS: Andy Murray confirmed on Tuesday that he will retire after the Paris Olympics, closing another chapter in tennis's golden age. The 37-year-old, a two-time Olympic champion, is planning to play in the singles and doubles at his fifth Games.

"Arrived in Paris for my last-ever tennis tournament @Olympics," the three-time Grand Slam champion and former world number one posted on social media. "Competing for Great Britain has been by far the most memorable weeks of my career and I'm extremely proud to get to do it one final time."

Murray has been ravaged by injuries in recent years, slumping to 121st in the world. The Scot has played with a metal hip since 2019 and suffered ankle damage earlier this year before undergoing surgery to remove a spinal cyst, which ruled him out of singles at Wimbledon. Instead, he played doubles with brother Jamie and was defeated in the first round before an emotional tribute arranged by tournament chiefs. "It's hard because I would love to keep playing but I can't," admitted Murray at the All England Club.

"Physically it is too tough now, all of the injuries, they have added up and they haven't been insignifi-

cant." Murray famously ended Britain's 77-year wait for a men's champion at Wimbledon when he triumphed in 2013, defeating career-long rival Novak Djokovic in the final.

He added a second title in 2016, taking his career majors total to three after breaking his duck at the 2012 US Open. Murray won gold at the 2012 Olympics on an emotional day at the All England Club when he defeated Roger Federer just weeks after he had lost the Wimbledon final to the Swiss on the same Centre Court. Four years later, he defeated Juan Martin del Potro to become the first player, male or female, to win two Olympic singles golds. Murray also led Britain to the Davis Cup title in 2015, the country's first in 79 years.

'Big Three'

He has won 46 titles in all and banked around \$65 million in prize money. International Tennis Federation president Dave Haggerty said Murray had "lived and breathed the values of tennis throughout his long career, championing equality and helping to send the message that our sport is for everyone".

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney hailed Murray as "our greatest-ever sportsman". "Heartfelt thanks to @andy_murray for an outstanding and inspiring career which has made a profound impact on so many," he posted on X.

Murray's mother, Judy, commented in a post on X: "5th Olympics. Final tournament," followed by a symbol representing an explosion. The British star's success came in an era dominated by Federer, Djokovic and Rafael Nadal. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: German International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach gives a thumbs up while taking a photo with IOC staff members during a tour of the Olympic Village, on July 22, 2024, in Saint-Denis, near Paris, ahead of the 2024 Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP