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Mideast seethes amid carnage

Zionists strike Hezb targets after rocket kills 12 youths in Golan

Kuwait launches new news channel

KUWAIT: The ministry of information launched on Sunday Al-Akhbar (The News) channel, as an emblem of Kuwaiti media and a source of reliable news and accurate information. Assistant undersecretary for news and political programs Dr Bader Al-Enezi told KUNA the channel sets out to engage actively with local, regional and international affairs issues in a manner corresponding to the state's policies.

The news channel, explained Dr Enezi, is an official source for local news including state decisions and its positions, and also serves as a connection point between nationals and officials. Enezi commented that this is responsible media that does not seek controversy but aims for objectivity and credibility. The channel is currently transmitting three main news programs on political, economic, cultural and sports topics, as well as some 15 programs, documentaries and talk shows. — KUNA



MAJDAL SHAMS: Druze elders and mourners surround the coffins of 10 of the 12 people killed in a rocket strike from Lebanon a day earlier, during a mass funeral in this Druze town in the Zionist-annexed Golan Heights on July 28, 2024. — AFP (See Page 5)

MAJDAL SHAMS: Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Sunday vowed to "hit the enemy hard" after rocket fire from Lebanon killed 12 young people in the Zionist-annexed Golan Heights and again raised fears that the war in Gaza will spread. Iran warned the Zionist entity any new military "adventures" in Lebanon could lead to "unforeseen consequences". Western powers, including France, Germany and Britain, condemned the attack and appealed for calm. The European Union called for an independent probe into what happened.

The Zionist army called it "the deadliest attack on (Zionist) civilians" since the Oct 7 attack that began the war in Gaza and triggered regular exchanges of fire across the Lebanese border. The Zionist entity blamed Lebanon's Hezbollah movement for firing a Falaq-1 Iranian rocket but the Iran-backed group - which has regularly targeted Zionist military positions - said it had "no connection" to the incident. It said, however, that it had fired one such rocket on Saturday toward a Zionist military target in the Golan.

The rocket fire in Majdal Shams, whose population are Arabic-speaking Druze, prompted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to return early from the United States. Upon arrival he went immediately into a security cabinet meeting, his office said. He said "Hezbollah will pay a heavy price" for the attack, "a price it

Continued on Page 6



Kuwaiti athletes make a splash



PARIS: Kuwaiti swimmer Lara Dashti set a new personal record on Sunday in the 100-m breast-stroke, finishing fifth in the race at the Paris 2024 Olympics. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti rower Suad Al-Faqaan was unable to reach the decisive rounds of the Olympics rowing competition, finishing fourth in the preliminary qualifiers in the women's solo race. The rower will now compete for a position in the final rankings, but not for the medals. (See Page 16)

Zain Summer Program honors new graduates

KUWAIT: Zain celebrated the successful conclusion of the fifth edition of its Summer Program with a special ceremony at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event was attended by the program's graduates and success partners from Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf; Kuwait News, a leading local media institution; and INJAZ Kuwait, a local non-profit organization.

The ceremony honored all the program participants who demonstrated enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to developing their skills throughout the month-long program. The company also recognized distinguished students who achieved the highest sales among their peers while working at Zain's branches, as well as those who created the most unique media



KUWAIT: Officials from Zain and partners with the graduates.

content at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News. Zain also acknowledged its partners for their significant contributions to the success of the program's fifth edition. Kuwait Times and Kuwait News provided

participants with valuable opportunities to learn from their leading media experience, allowing them to work closely with their teams to create impactful content. (See Page 3)

Khamenei grants Pezeshkian powers; Aref named as VP

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave Sunday his official endorsement of Masoud Pezeshkian as the Islamic republic's ninth president, following snap elections won by the reformist camp's candidate. In a message read by the director of Khamenei's office, he said: "I endorse the vote (for) the wise, honest, popular and scholarly Mr Pezeshkian, and I am appointing him as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran".

The new reformist president is due to be sworn in before parliament on Tuesday. The endorsement ceremony was held in the capital Tehran in the presence of senior Iranian officials and foreign diplomats, and broadcast on state TV. It took place as banks and most government offices were ordered shut nationwide on Sunday to tackle an extreme heatwave.

Following the event, acting president Mohammad Mokhber handed over official responsibilities to 69-year-old Pezeshkian. Later Sunday, Pezeshkian appointed reformist Mohammad Reza Aref, 72, as his first vice president, according to an announcement carried by state TV. Aref has represented Tehran in parliament and served as first vice president and communications minister under Iran's last reformist president Mohammad Khatami, who held office from 1997 to 2005.



TEHRAN: Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivers an official endorsement letter to President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian on July 28, 2024. — AFP

Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon and parliament member for the northwestern city of Tabriz since 2008, was Khatami's health minister. On July 5 the reformist candidate won a runoff race against the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili to replace president Ebrahim Raisi who died in a helicopter crash in May.

Pezeshkian secured more than 16 million votes, or about 54 percent of the roughly 30 million ballots cast. Turnout in the runoff election stood at 49.8 percent, up from a record low of about 40 percent in the first round, according to Iran's electoral authority. Jalili attended Sunday's ceremony, as did former moderate president Hassan Rouhani who had backed

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100 days: US election enters homestretch

WASHINGTON: The 100-day sprint to the US election began Sunday, the final act in a campaign transformed by an assassination attempt and the stunning exit of President Joe Biden. After weeks of infighting and despondency over Biden's candidacy, Democrats have largely consolidated behind Vice President Kamala Harris, radically reshaping a race that was fast becoming Republican nominee Donald Trump's to lose.

Harris cast herself as the "underdog" in the presidential race and called Trump "just plain weird", while Trump painted Harris as "evil," "sick" and "unhinged" as the rivals exchanged barbs from afar on Saturday. Republican strategist Matt Terrill said Harris' uniting of the Democrats had ensured a photo finish on Nov 5 - a ballot that will largely be decided by around 100,000 swing voters in a handful of battleground states.

"It comes down to those independent, undecided voters. Inflation, immigration, the economy and crime - those are the issues they care about," he told BBC News. "Right now, I think, former president Trump is doing quite well on those issues. This election will be a referendum on the incumbents in office - that's still Biden and Harris. We'll see how that takes shape," Terrill said.

Continued on Page 6



Local

MoH underlines importance of compact imaging device

First of its kind in nuclear medicine departments

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has stressed the importance of providing a compact positron imaging device with magnetic resonance—the first of its kind in the nuclear medicine departments of Jahra and Farwaniya hospitals—as it gives a more accurate diagnosis. This came during a training course launched on Sunday at the Institute of Medical Specializations under the title “Radiation Safety of the Combined Positron Imaging Device with Magnetic Resonance.” The program was organized by the Radiation Protection Department at the Ministry of Health.

The head of the organizing committee of the course, Dr Hanan Al-Dosari, said that this event comes under the patronage of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs, Dr Al-Munther Al-Hassawi, and is the fifth session in a series of training courses that began last March. Al-Dosari added that the positron imaging device combines the use of positron emission and magnetic resonance to evaluate and diagnose cases. This integration will provide accurate images of tissues using magnetic resonance imaging, and the activity of the metabolism of cells can be determined, thus providing a more accurate diagnosis than the work of either of the two examinations separately.

She pointed out that the Ministry provided this device, the first of its kind in the nuclear medicine departments in Jahra and Farwaniya hospitals, at a time when the Ministry and the radiation protec-



tion department are keen to provide such training courses for workers in the field of ionizing and non-ionizing radiation to develop their skills and apply the highest standards of radiation safety.

She pointed out that the number of participants in the course from the departments of nuclear medicine, diagnostic radiology, Kuwait University, and the Emergency Center for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries has reached 99. The two-day course is presented by the Director of the Research Facilities Department at Saudi Arabia, the consultant of medical physics, Dr Adnan Al-Watban, and a group of specialists from the Department of Radiation Protection. — KUNA

PM receives top officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the presence of Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, received Secretary General of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ambassador Nasser Al-Mutairi, Head of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Mission to the European Union Ambassador Fahad Saqr Al-Jimaz, and Head of the GCC Intellectual Property Training Center Musaed Abdulrahman Al-Kulaib on the occasion of their appointment to their new posts. The meeting was attended by Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil. — KUNA

Kuwaiti, Turkish army chiefs discuss relations



KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain discussed on Sunday with the Military Attache of Turkey to Kuwait, Colonel Gokhan Tekin on issues of mutual interest. The army said in a press statement that Lieutenant General Al-Muzain received the Turkish Military Attache in his office on Sunday morning. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Army Major General Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

‘Protect yourself against skin cancer,’ CAN warns

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Chairman of Cancer Aware Nation Campaign (CAN), Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh, spoke about the importance of partnership in social services, saying that CAN's cooperation with the Dermatology Department (Jahra Hospital) is an example of a successful partnership for years in promoting awareness of skin cancer. CAN and the Dermatology Department organized a health day themed “Protect yourself against skin cancer.” Due to record temperatures, people who are active during the day and those exposed to direct sunlight were informed about the risk factors and the dan-

gers that may lead to skin cancer.

Based on the cancer record at Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC), the rate of skin cancer cases from 2010 to 2019 was 55 among Kuwaiti men (at 1.1 percent), while the standard world rate is 1.6 percent per 100,000 people. As for Kuwaiti women, the number of cases was 58 (at 0.7 percent), while the world standard rate was 1.2 percent per 100,000. As for non-Kuwaiti men, the number of cases is 124 (at 1.9 percent). The number of cases among non-Kuwaiti women is 60 (at 0.9 percent).

Dr Al-Saleh said the most important means of prevention is to cover the head or use an umbrella and remain in the shade between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm, wearing sunglasses, wearing clothes that protect one against the sun, in addition to drinking enough water during the day, and using a sunscreen with (Sun Protection Factor) SPF 30 and above, as it helps prevention against cancer skin by 97 percent. Dr Al-Saleh thanked all entities who participated in the event that was held at Kuwait Magic Mall.

Kuwait weather to remain unstable

KUWAIT: The Meteorological Department declared on Sunday that the country is currently under the grip of the seasonal Indian low depression coupled with unsteady northern and northwesterly winds triggering dust. Yasser Al-Bloushi, the head of the maritime forecast division, said in a statement to KUNA that the gales would persist in the coming hours until Monday. The wind speed is forecasted to reach 55 km per hour and peak at 60-65 km/h, coupled with low visibility, particularly as of Monday, Al-Bloushi said.

Visibility has reached a record level in the northwestern region, recording 400 meters, and ranged between 1,500 and 2,000m in residential regions and some coastal areas, he added. The persistent northerly and northwesterly winds, along with the hot, dry conditions, and drop in horizontal visibility are expected to continue to prevail, Al-Bloushi forecasted, warning sea-



Kuwait under unsteady northern and northwesterly winds triggering dust. — KUNA

goers to abstain from venturing into the choppy waters amid the high waves reaching 5-6 feet. He also advised motorists and people suffering from

Kuwait attends OIC's 46th cultural session

JEDDAH: The meeting of the 46th session of the Islamic Committee for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with the participation of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance was launched at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Sunday.

The Secretary-General of the OIC, Hussein Taha, said in his opening speech that the meeting is being held amid the escalation of global conflicts and economic downturn, stressing the importance of concerted efforts in the fields of innovation and cooperation within the organization to face various challenges, including climate change, energy scarcity and the constant threat of diseases and epidemics.

Taha stressed the need to address the pressing issues facing the OIC member states, especially in the fields of science, technology, innovation, higher education, health and environment. He praised the relevant OIC institutions working in the social, economic and cultural fields, science and technology, education, health and environment for their continuous cooperation with the General Secretariat through the annual coordination meeting. The three-day committee will discuss issues related to education, health, water, climate change, environment, agriculture, labor and employment, transport, technology, innovation and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions.

It also discusses the activities of relevant OIC institutions working in the economic field and topics related to cultural and social affairs, sports and youth. The meeting of the committee comes ahead of the preparation for the 50th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC, which is scheduled to be held in the Cameroonian capital Yaounde next August. Kuwait's Ministry of Finance participates with a delegation in the meeting which will continue until next Tuesday. Kuwaiti delegation includes both the observer of international organizations Manal Al-Haidari and the head of the OIC department Fatima Al-Kandari. — KUNA

Awqaf signs agreement with Islamic Heritage

KUWAIT: The general secretariat of Awqaf announced on Sunday the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage on the project of the global technical learning system and useful science. Acting Secretary-General Nasser Al-Hamad told KUNA that “the agreement aims to spend the budget allocated for the project by the general secretariat of Awqaf to establish a technical learning system.”

“The agreement includes a set of programs and applications that facilitate the delivery of Islamic science, the Holy Quran, and its sciences to science students in Kuwait and around the world in a modern way,” he said. Al-Hamad explained that the project aims to provide specialized platforms that provide free courses and curricula in the fields of Sharia sciences, teaching and memorizing the Holy Quran, promoting moderate Sharia education, and achieving wide access to religious knowledge for all groups around the world. — KUNA



Nasser Al-Hamad



Spain's envoy praised for 'outstanding role'

KUWAIT: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah has lauded the efforts of Spain's Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Moro Aguilar and his outstanding role in strengthening Kuwaiti-Spanish relations and fostering friendship between the two countries during his tenure. In appreciation of his diligent diplomatic work and contributions in the field of sports, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber presented the Ambassador with a memento on the occasion of the end of his tenure as Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait.

He thanked Ambassador Aguilar for his keenness on strengthening cooperation between the two friendly countries, adding that the ambassador spent a highly remarkable period that witnessed a notable improvement in Kuwaiti-Spanish relations in various sectors, including sports as he paid special attention to the game of tennis. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber concluded by expressing his pride in his friendly relations with Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar and wished him success in his future endeavors.

allergies to refrain from venturing outdoors, also noting that the strong winds brought sand showers to the land roads. — KUNA

Local

Zain Summer Program celebrates new graduates

Company concludes 5th edition, recognizes students and success partners



Officials from Zain and partners with the graduates.

KUWAIT: Zain celebrated the successful conclusion of the fifth edition of its Summer Program with a special ceremony at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event was attended by the program's graduates and success partners from Kuwait Times, the first English daily in Kuwait; Kuwait News, the leading local media institution; and INJAZ Kuwait, the local non-profit organization.

The ceremony honored all the program participants who demonstrated enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to developing their skills throughout the month-long program. The company also recognized distinguished students who achieved the highest sales among their peers while working at Zain's branches, as well as those who created the most unique media content at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News.

Zain also acknowledged its partners for their significant contributions to the success of the program's fifth edition. Kuwait Times and Kuwait News provided participants with valuable opportunities to learn from their leading media experience, allowing them to work closely with their teams to create impactful content. INJAZ Kuwait's extensive expertise in youth development programs greatly contributed to enhancing the students' leadership and management skills, adding substantial value to their overall experience.

The Summer Program's journey started with an orientation session where details and daily tasks were outlined. Students also toured Zain's 107 Contact Center to gain insights into the company's leading customer service processes. Before starting their new roles, students attended a workshop titled "Steer Your Career," held in partnership with INJAZ Kuwait. This session focused on key career preparation topics, such as leadership in a changing environment, time management, communication, public speaking, and leveraging technology to enhance these skills.

The workshop also covered verbal and written communication, business and creative writing, CV drafting, and job search strategies. Students learned about problem-solving, decision-making,



Recognizing top-performing students.

- Students spent 90+ hours in customer service, sales, marketing, and media content creation
- Partners Kuwait Times, Kuwait News, and INJAZ significantly contributed to program's success

and developing innovative solutions to overcome challenges. Afterwards, a group of students began their internships at some of Zain's largest branches across Kuwait, including Bibi Tower branch in Salmiya, the Warehouse Mall branch, Al Asima Mall branch, the Avenues Mall branch, Hawally branch,

and Mishref branch.

During their time at these branches, the students gained essential business skills in customer service, product marketing, sales of electronics and smart devices, promoting offers, as well as personal skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, time man-

agement, and teamwork. Another group of students interned at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, where they learned about media operations, including creating news reports, editorial pieces, digital content creation, and using cameras and audio equipment. The participants directly contributed to creating content that was published across Kuwait Times and Kuwait News' print and digital channels.

Throughout the month, Zain organized special training sessions, workshops, fun days, and sports competitions for the students. These activities aimed to foster teamwork and a sense of unity, as well as to promote healthy competition among the students. One of the workshops was presented by Rihab Al Tawari, a customer service expert, who shared tips and strategies on best practices for serving customers, enriching their experience, meeting their needs, and addressing related challenges.

The students gained invaluable insights on how to best serve Zain's customers while working at the company's branches. Zain's team also monitored the participants' performance on a weekly basis through reflection sessions. These sessions explored each student's strengths and challenges to help them improve and excel. Additionally, team leaders and supervisors from Zain's branches, as well as from Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, directly supervised the students to guide them through their journey.

The fifth season of the Zain Summer Program continued the company's mission to invest in young people's capabilities by offering interactive internship experiences. The program aimed to prepare graduates for the job market by developing a variety of skills. The previous seasons have been highly successful, with many ambitious students participating. The program offered a paid part-time system with dedicated weekly work hours for a month. The Summer Program is part of Zain's Future University Network (FUN) initiative, one of the company's most engaging sustainable programs since its launch in 2008. Over the years, FUN has provided hundreds of students with paid part-time experiences at Zain, helping them launch their careers.

The impact of oil discoveries

KUWAIT: The discovery of new oil reservoirs in Kuwait is good and so is operating stalled oil fields. The positives come from two angles. First, the production from new reservoirs will support and relieve pressure on aging reservoirs. All previous oil strategies failed to achieve their production capacity targets. Secondly and more importantly, is the return of the oil sector to its genuine activities in the successful investment in local exploration activity and then in developing the infrastructure for the production, manufacturing or exporting of oil.

The Noukhatha field is an example because it is a nucleus that other discoveries may accompany. Its importance does not primarily lie in its oil quantity, even if its quality is better; its quantity does not exceed 3 percent of the declared oil reserves if they are true. But it will probably cover a major shortfall in the country's gas needs in the future. More discoveries or production will naturally increase the state's resources and will have a better impact if it is turned into a blessing and not a curse.

The difference in economic sciences is between the prudent employment of its proceeds and the deviation and bad employment. Two examples in our contemporary world explain what the "blessing and curse of resources" means. The blessing was achieved in Norway, which has the lowest oil reserves. The curse influenced Venezuela, which has the conventional huge oil reserves.

Norway's oil reserves currently stand at about 7.6 billion barrels according to OPEC+; its oil production began in June 1971. Before distributing oil reservoir sites to a number of areas that will be offered for auction to exploit them, the government and the parliament decided to neutralize the negative impact of using oil revenues on competitiveness. Its economy benefited from the failed experience of its neighbor,

the Netherlands.

Norway does not invest or employ oil revenues internally, and do not finance public financial revenues except in extreme necessity cases and by no more than 4 percent of its total public expenditures. It thus achieved all the blessings of oil, and its financial reserves- its sovereign fund comprise about US\$ 1.6 trillion as of last June.

Revenues from those reserves far exceeded those from oil. The financing of public finance continued to come from the proceeds of taxes on a sustainable and competitive economic activity. Venezuela's reserves are estimated at 303 billion barrels of conventional oil, the highest in the world. Despite its vast area of 916,400 square kilometers and a population of 29.4 million people, the country committed all sins in dealing with it. It is also rich in water resources and is located directly on a coast extending 2,800 kilometers.

Its economy can flourish without oil, but its economy has lost all its competitiveness. The country used the oil sector for random employment; the competencies in the oil sector were replaced, or the quality was replaced by the quantity of a large number of regime loyalists. Venezuela has no savings to meet any of its obligations, and its currency has become barely worth the paper it is printed on. Half of the work force has become unemployed, about 90 percent of its people are poor, and its people yearn to emigrate. In brief, it adopted the full recipe that achieved all the consequences of the "resource curse."

Between the "blessing" and the "curse", other oil-producing countries occupy a position on the ladder, some of them are at the top, closer to Norway, and some are lower and closer to Venezuela. Kuwait's announcement of its discoveries and the value of its sovereign fund (about a trillion US dollars), the real challenge facing it continues. It is not the abundance of resources, but rather is rising to the top of the ladder by making optimal use of them after it.

It remains within the limits of what is possible. But only prudent management makes the difference, and its prudence indicators are weak. The Central Statisti-



KUWAIT: Photo provided by the Al-Zour Refinery shows a view of the facility, in Al-Zour, south of Kuwait City. — AFP

cal Bureau issued its report on GDP figures at current and constant prices for Q1 2024. The report, thanks to the administration, was issued three months and 20 days after the end of Q1 2024, but there is still plenty of room to shorten its issuance time.

The report mentions the continued contraction of the Kuwaiti economy at current prices for Q1 2024 versus Q1 2023 by 1.6 percent (2.7 percent) in constant prices. In both cases, the contraction is due to the largest component of output, or the oil sector, in its crude part, which contracted in current prices by 9.1 percent and in constant prices by 9.8 percent.

However, the non-oil sector grew by 4.9 percent in current prices and by 4.7 percent in constant prices. GDP volume for the Q1 2024 at current prices was KD 12.369 billion, down from KD 12.574 for Q1 2023, and at KD 10.082 billion in constant prices, down from KD 10.360 billion. With the decline in the added value of the oil sector, its contribution to the GDP composition

fell from 46.7 percent for Q1 2023 to 43.2 percent for Q1 2024, without taking into account the contribution of other post extraction oil activities.

The other engines of the economy are still primitive despite their high relative contribution. This increase was mostly a result of the decrease in the oil sector's contribution, and most of the other components depend mainly on public spending financed by 90 percent from oil revenues.

The contribution of the public administration, defense, and social security to the GDP structure was about 11.3 percent, financial intermediation and insurance at 9.1 percent, basic industries at 8.9 percent, transportation, storage and communications at 6.6 percent, education at 5.9 percent, wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants at 5.1 percent, and all others at 9.7 percent. It is clear how much these sectors depend on the public spending level. — Al-Shall Report

News in Brief

Kuwaiti leaders send
cables of condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a cable of condolence to Philippine President Bongbong Marcos over the victims of Typhoon Gaemi, which hit the capital Manila and other areas. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere condolences over fatalities and wished speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to Philippine President Bongbong Marcos over the victims of Typhoon Gaemi. Meanwhile, authorities evacuated nearly 300,000 people and suspended public transport across eastern China, as Typhoon Gaemi brought torrential rains already responsible for five deaths in nearby Taiwan. Gaemi was the strongest typhoon to hit Taiwan in eight years when it made landfall on Thursday, flooding parts of the island's second-biggest city. It also exacerbated seasonal rains in the Philippines on its path to Taiwan, triggering flooding and landslides that killed 20 people. — Agencies

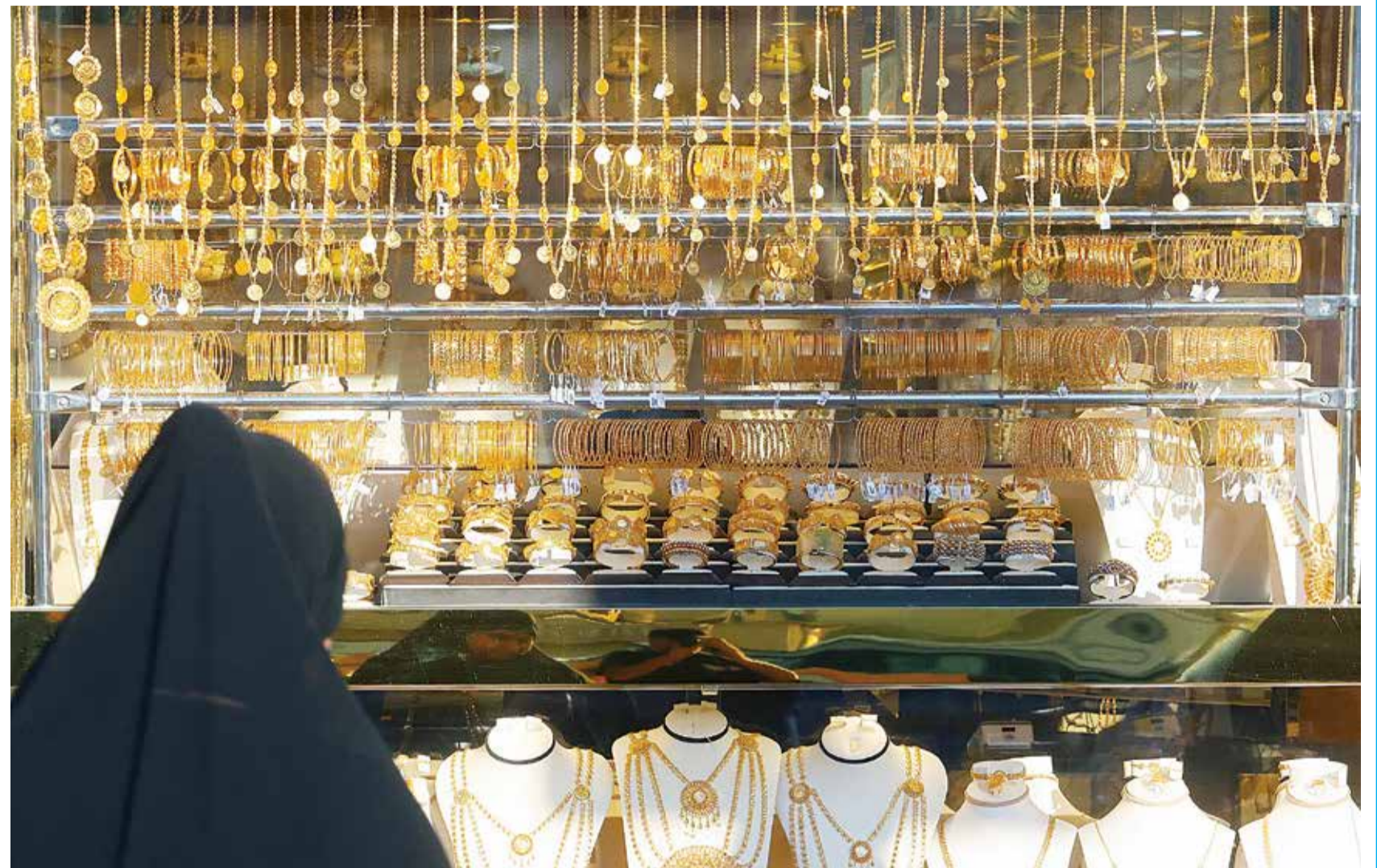
Kuwait Falconers
Assoc joins IFFSR

KUWAIT: The President of the Kuwait Falconers Association, Saif Al-Shalahi, said that the association's accession to the membership of the International Federation of Falcon Sports and Racing (IFFSR) is a qualitative leap in the march of this heritage sport. Al-Shalahi added that the Federation, headed by Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, agreed to the membership, which deals with competitions for this heritage hobby in Kuwait, bringing the number of members of the International Federation to 25 countries from different continents. This accession comes after the association completes the necessary procedures from the federation to acquire membership, looking forward to the participation of Kuwaiti participants. He congratulated the Kuwaiti owners. The IFFSR works to preserve this sport, which is an integral part of the authentic Gulf and Arab heritage. — KUNA

KFF rescues child
stuck in elevator

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Force rescued a child in Farwaniya whose hand was stuck in an elevator. The child was freed and was transferred to medical emergency department for check up.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A woman looks at gold jewelry displayed at a shop in downtown Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MoH raises hepatitis awareness

Ministry celebrates World Day for the prevention of hepatitis C



KUWAIT: Ministry of Health marks World Hepatitis Prevention Day on July 28 at the Yarmouk Health Center with the participation of 40 preventive health centers. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health celebrated World Hepatitis Prevention Day, which falls on July 28 every year, at the Yarmouk Health Center with the participation of 40 preventive health centers. The assistant undersecretary for Public Health Affairs at the Ministry, Dr Al-Munther Al-Hasawi, told the Kuwaiti news agency (KUNA) on Sunday that this day

is considered an opportunity to raise awareness of hepatitis C disease and celebrate the great achievements achieved in combating it, especially what has been discovered in the field of prevention.

Al-Hasawi stressed the importance of awareness messages and the need for early detection of infection through screening, especially for people who have previously been exposed to risk factors such as sexual contact or abuse of transdermal drugs. He explained that the types of hepatitis C virus (A, E) that are transmitted through food can be prevented by making sure one eats clean, non-contaminated food and washing hands regularly, adding that the types (B, C) that are transmitted through needles can be prevented by staying away from forbidden relationships and avoiding drug use.

For her part, the director of the public health de-

partment, Dr Sarah Al-Qabandi, said that Kuwait is celebrating this International Day in order to keep abreast of the latest developments, spread awareness of this disease, and reduce its spread and prevention. Al-Qabandi pointed out that the vaccination against Type B is within the schedule. Basic vaccination of a child after birth can reduce the spread of the disease in Kuwait, pointing out that the state aspires to achieve a reduction of 90 percent by 2030.

She added that the Ministry of Health, represented by its laboratories, has a lot of modern devices for early detection of this infection to limit its spread and identify ways to prevent it. The Ministry conducts many tests, such as pre-marriage examinations, pre-job examinations of employees, and examinations of students, in addition to the examination of expatriate workers. — KUNA

AHRC to discuss Zionist crimes

CAIRO: The 54th session of the Arab Permanent Human Rights Committee (AHRC), the main committee within the human rights system, will be held on Monday. The meeting will be chaired by Kuwait, with participation from relevant government entities of member states and other concerned parties within the Arab joint action framework. The Arab League's Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, underlined Sunday that confronting severe violations by the Zionist forces in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the brutal aggression on the Gaza Strip and the detention of martyrs' bodies, remains a top priority for the committee.

Abu Ghazaleh mentioned that the committee is committed to protecting fundamental human values by countering alien concepts introduced into Arab society, including addressing the UN Human Rights Council's resolution on intersex people from its 55th session based on a proposal from Qatar. Additionally, she noted that AHRC will follow up on the outcomes of the Arab Summit in Bahrain regarding the right to health and education during armed conflicts, based on a proposal from Bahrain.

The three-day session will also decide on the theme for Arab Human Rights Day 2025 and will explore "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Rights," focusing on the ethical guidelines for AI and ways to tackle the challenges this modern technology poses to the optimal enjoyment of human rights. The recommendations from the 54th session will be submitted to the next 162 session of the Council of the Arab League at the ministerial level for approval in September 2024.

Iraq fumes Zionist flag

Meanwhile, the head of Iraq's delegation said Olympic chiefs had rejected their request not to display Zionist flag next to Iraq's during the Paris Games. Iraq's men's football team beat Ukraine 2-1 on Wednesday in Lyon and lost 3-1 to Argentina on Saturday. "When we arrived



GAZA: A Palestinian boy sits playing on the sand and rubble of a building destroyed by Zionists in the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on July 28, 2024. — AFP

at Lyon Stadium (Wednesday), we found the Iraqi flag displayed next to the Zionist flag," despite Zionist team not having any matches in Lyon, Herda Raouf told AFP.

Raouf, whose country does not recognize the Zionist state and supports the Palestinian cause, added that his delegation had asked a representative of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) "to relocate or remove the Zionist flag," but their wish was denied. The committee's representative argued, according to Raouf, that the "flags of all participating countries in the men's and women's football games needed to be displayed in alphabetical order."

Raouf added that his delegation sent a formal protest by email to the IOC with the same demand before the game with Argentina, but the request was once again rejected. French security forces identified the Ukraine-Iraq and (Zionist entity)-Mali football matches on Wednesday as high-risk events. Around 1,000 French police officers were on duty to provide security at game against Mali, at which fans flew Palestinian and Zionist flags. The Palestine Olympic Committee wrote to the IOC last week asking for a ban on Zionist athletes at the Paris Olympics over the war in Gaza, which was rejected. Following a 1-1 draw with Mali, Zionist team are in action against Paraguay on Saturday in Paris. — AFP



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MAJDAL SHAMS: Druze elders and mourners surround the coffins of 10 of the 12 people killed in a rocket strike a day earlier, during a mass funeral in the Zionist-annexed Golan Heights, on July 28, 2024. — AFP

Druze mourn youths killed in Golan rocket attack

Zionist entity calls strike 'deadliest attack on (Zionist) civilians' but many Druze don't recognize entity

MAJDAL SHAMS: Weeping men carried small coffins at a funeral ceremony attended by thousands from the Druze community on Sunday for many of the 12 youths killed in a rocket attack on the Zionist-occupied Golan Heights. The Zionist military said they were struck on Saturday by an Iranian-made rocket carrying a 50-kilogram warhead that Lebanon's Hezbollah group fired at a football field in the Druze Arab town of Majdal Shams. Hezbollah has denied responsibility for the strike. Local authorities said the dead were aged between 10 and 16.

The Zionist army called Saturday's rocket strike "the deadliest attack on (Zionist) civilians" since the October 7 attack by Hamas Palestinian militants on southern communities in the entity.

In Majdal Shams, many residents have not accepted Zionist nationality. The Zionist entity seized the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967 after the Arab-Zionist war. The entity formally annexed the territory in 1981, prompting the UN Security Council to unanimously pass a resolution condemning the move and reasserting the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

"The (Zionist) decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without interna-

tional legal effect," the resolution said. Until Donald Trump's 2019 decision to recognize the territory as the entity's, no other country in the world had accepted Zionist claims to the Golan Heights.

'Leave children out'

Hundreds of men dressed in traditional attire, including white caps topped with red, attended the ceremonies which saw coffins borne through the crowded narrow streets of the town, which came to a standstill. Others lined balconies to look down on the procession of white-covered caskets with white roses and baby's breath flowers resting on top. "Leave our children out of these wars," sobbed one woman in the procession.

Under a scorching sun, some mourners carried large photos of the dead children, including one boy wearing a suit. Earlier, several women dressed in black abaya robes cried as they laid flowers on the caskets, an AFP correspondent reported. "Every night, every day, every minute we are worried. It's been like this for 10 months," Laith, a 42-year-old nurse who gave only his first name, told AFP.

This is the first time Majdal Shams has experienced such a loss during the Zionist assault on Gaza and it has hit hard, said Fadi Mahmud, 48, who works

in construction. "Our community is very close-knit. These children are like the children of everybody in the village," he said.

'We have nothing'

The Zionist entity vowed to strike back "hard" after the rocket attack, and Iran warned the Zionist entity against any new military "adventures" in Lebanon. But Ziyad, 63, who gave only a first name, said Majdal Shams doesn't want to see an escalation. "Most people want to be in their house and deal with their grief. This is what is needed as opposed to overreacting," he said.

On the funeral's sidelines, discussions within the Druze community got heated, reflecting the divisions within the community spread across three countries. "I feel it's not in our hands. I am just so scared of what will happen," said Amani Safadi, a 22-year-old student, noting that residents of Majdal Shams have been within earshot of the cross-border exchanges for nearly 10 months.

"If we had 10 percent hope, now we have nothing," said Salina Kablan, 22, who came to support her cousin, who was near the football field the day of the strike. "I feel trapped, I feel targeted. What will happen tomorrow?" she asked. — AFP

that China was exploiting the pandemic to negotiate important geopolitical deals and undermine US alliances internationally by sending aid to the Philippines and other nations.

The clandestine psychological operation uncovered by Reuters wasn't limited to the Philippines. It also targeted developing countries across Central Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia in 2020 and 2021. The Philippines and those other nations were, at the time, heavily reliant on China's Sinovac to inoculate their populations against the deadly virus. Among Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines was among those hit hardest by the coronavirus. By 2024, COVID had killed almost 67,000 Filipinos, and the number of infections there had reached more than 4 million, according to World Health Organization data. Working with a group of defense contractors and other non-military partners, the US used networks of online bots and other phony social media accounts to influence foreign audiences, Reuters found. The news agency identified a network of hundreds of fake accounts on X, formerly Twitter, that closely matched descriptions shared by former US military officials familiar with the Philippines operation. When Reuters asked X about the accounts, the social media company removed the profiles after independently determining they were part of a coordinated bot campaign. The Reuters article showcased a handful of these posts as examples of the messaging. — Reuters

US admits to secret anti-vax propaganda in Philippines

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department admitted that it spread propaganda in the Philippines aimed at disparaging China's Sinovac vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a June 25 document cited by a former top government official earlier this month.

The US response to the Philippines was recounted in a podcast by Harry Roque, who served as spokesman for former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. Reuters subsequently reviewed the document, which hasn't been publicly released by either government. The news agency was able to verify its contents with a source familiar with the US response. "It is true that the (Department of Defense) did message Philippines audiences questioning the safety and efficacy of Sinovac," according to the document, which references information sent from the U.S. Defense Department to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of National Defense. According to the document, the Pentagon also conceded it had "made some missteps in our COVID related mes-

saging" but assured the Philippines that the military "has vastly improved oversight and accountability of information operations" since 2022.

The US admission followed a June 14 Reuters investigation that revealed how the Pentagon launched a secret psychological operation to discredit Chinese vaccines and other COVID aid in 2020 and 2021, at the height of the pandemic. As a result of the Reuters investigation, the Philippine Senate Foreign Relations Committee launched a hearing into the matter and sought a response from the US.

According to the June 25 document, Pentagon officials concluded its anti-vax campaign was "misaligned with our priorities." It says the U.S. military told Filipino officials that operatives "ceased COVID-related messaging related to COVID-19 origins and COVID-19 vaccines in August 2021." The Philippines' defense and foreign affairs departments did not respond to requests for comment about the US military's admission that it ran the propaganda program. A spokesperson for the US State Department referred Reuters to the Defense Department for comment. Pentagon spokesman Pete Nguyen declined to confirm the U.S. response cited in the document. But he acknowledged the Pentagon did distribute "social media content about the safety and efficacy of Sinovac."

At the time the Pentagon launched its campaign, national security officials in Washington worried

Two Japanese climbers fall from Pakistan's K2

KHAPLU, Pakistan: Two elite Japanese mountain climbers fell from Pakistan's K2, officials said Sunday following an attempt at a helicopter rescue that spotted the motionless pair but was forced to turn back. Veteran mountaineers Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima were attempting an ascent of the jagged western face of the world's second highest mountain, using an expert climbing style prioritizing speed and relying on minimal fixed ropes.

But on Saturday "they fell from a height of 7,500 meters (24,600 feet)", Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) Secretary Karrar Haidri said in a statement. "A helicopter rescue was attempted, however the heli could not land," said Wali Ullah Falahi, the deputy commissioner for Shigar district, which encompasses the 8,611-meter K2. "Upon close inspection, the bodies of the two climbers were spotted, and it was determined that there was no movement. The heli then turned back," he told AFP.

No organization has yet confirmed the pair are dead. Ishii Sports - a Japanese outdoor goods brand sponsoring the pair - said the high altitude and steep slope forced the helicopter to abort its landing. "The pilot said the two men can be seen, but their status was unclear," the firm said in a statement. "We are currently reviewing how we will rescue them."

Rescue attempts are extremely risky on K2, even on the southeastern ridge, which is the most common route climbers take to the top. The western face is a more vertical and exposed rock face, and has only been successfully scaled once before by a Russian team in 2007.

The ACP said Hiraide and Nakajima had both won multiple Piolet's d'Or awards - described as "the Oscars of climbing" - for their feats of sportsmanship. They "meticulously planned and trained for their K2 expedition, underscoring their dedication to pushing the boundaries of high-altitude mountaineering", the ACP said.

During this summer climbing season three other Japanese climbers have died in Pakistan - all on the 7,027-metre Spantik mountain, which is also in the Gilgit Baltistan region. Pakistan is home to five of the world's 14 mountains above 8,000 meters, including K2 which is considered a more difficult ascent than Everest, earning it the nickname "Savage Mountain". — AFP

International

In 'historic' move, US upgrades military command in Japan

Allies say China 'greatest challenge' facing region, pledge 'unshakable partnership' with S Korea

TOKYO: The United States on Sunday announced plans for a major revamp of its military command in Japan to deepen coordination with its ally's forces, as the two countries labelled China the "greatest strategic challenge" facing the region. The announcement followed security talks in Tokyo between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and their respective Japanese counterparts, Yoko Kamikawa and Minoru Kihara. "The United States will upgrade the US Forces Japan to a joint force headquarters with expanded missions and operational responsibilities," Austin told reporters after the so-called "2+2" talks. "This will be the most significant change to US Forces Japan since its creation and one of the strongest improvements in our military ties with Japan in 70 years." The ministers said in a joint statement that the new command structure would be implemented in parallel with Tokyo's own plans to establish a joint command for its forces by March 2025.

The overhaul is among several measures taken to address what the countries said was an "evolving security environment", noting various threats from superpower China.

The statement criticized what it called Beijing's "provocative" behavior in the South and East China Seas, joint military exercises with Russia and the rapid expansion of its nuclear weapons arsenal. Beijing's "foreign policy seeks to reshape the international order for its own benefit at the expense of others," the ministers said in their statement. "Such behavior is a serious concern to the Alliance and the entire international community and represents the greatest strategic challenge in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond".

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters. Austin told reporters the command upgrade was "not based on any threat from China" but reflected the allies' desire to work more closely and effectively.

Japan provides a base for the US to project military power in Asia, hosting 54,000 American troops, hundreds of US aircraft and Washington's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier strike group.

Prompted by China's growing military might and regular missile tests by nuclear-armed North Korea, Japan has in recent years shifted dramatically from decades of postwar pacifism. In 2022 it unveiled a plan to double defense spending to 2 percent of gross domestic product. The new US command in Japan will be headed by a three-star general, a US official said, however Austin said the US would not rule out appointing a four-star commander to Japan in the future as it has in neighboring South Korea.

Nuclear umbrella

For the first time, the ministers also discussed "extended deterrence", a term used to describe the US commitment to use its nuclear forces to deter attacks on allies. It is sensitive subject in Japan, which



TOKYO: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) shakes hands with Japan's Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa during their meeting at the Iikura Guest House in Tokyo on July 28, 2024. — AFP

has pushed for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and is the only country to have suffered atomic bomb attacks. The countries discussed reinforcing extended deterrence to promote regional stability and deter the outbreak of conflict, according to an official readout that was scant on detail. "Amidst increasingly severe nuclear threats in the vicinity of Japan, it is important to further strengthen extended deterrence. I welcome the continuously deepening discussion on this matter," Japan's Kamikawa told reporters at the outset of the talks. The allies also expressed deep concern about Russia's procurement of ballistic missiles from North Korea to aid its war in Ukraine and the potential for Moscow to transfer weapons of mass destruction or missile-related technology to Pyongyang. North Korea has vowed to "totally destroy" its enemies in case of war, North Korean state media KCNA reported on Sunday.

Austin and Kihara also met South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik, signing an agreement to "institutionalize" trilateral cooperation through efforts like real-time sharing of North Korean missile warning data and joint military exercises. The Biden administration has been pushing for deeper cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul, whose strained relations date

back to Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of Korea. "This memorandum strengthens the cooperation between Japan, the United States and South Korea, making our partnership unshakable, no matter how the international situation changes," Japan's Kihara told reporters after the trilateral meeting. Washington also wants to tap Japanese industry to help ease pressure on US weapons makers stretched by demand generated by conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Tokyo and Washington are pursuing various collaborations in this field, including advancing missile co-production efforts as well as building supply chain resilience and facilitating ship and aircraft repair. However, one flagship project - a plan to use Japanese factories to boost production of Patriot air defense missiles - is being delayed by a shortage of a critical component manufactured by Boeing. Reuters reported this month. After leaving Tokyo, Blinken and Austin will hold security talks with another Asian ally, the Philippines, as the Biden administration seeks to counter an increasingly bold China. Blinken met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Laos on Saturday and repeated that Washington and its partners want to maintain a "free and open Indo-Pacific", according to a US readout of the meeting. — Reuters

sions between the clans who live side-by-side in the district of Kurram on the border with Afghanistan. "Initially a land dispute, the issue has now escalated into sectarian violence," Hussain told AFP, confirming the conflict "claimed 35 lives" so far. "The government and local leaders are attempting to halt the fighting through jirgas (tribal councils), but have not yet succeeded," he said.

Inter-family feuds are common in Pakistan. However, they can be particularly protracted and violent in the mountainous northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where communities abide by traditional tribal honor codes. A senior government official from Kurram district, who asked to remain anonymous, also gave a death toll of 35 but said 151 more people had been wounded. "The conflict, now in its fifth day, has escalated into a Shiite-Sunni dispute," he said. "All attempts to resolve the conflict have failed."

party's new standard-bearer Harris, who is enjoying record fundraising, growing grassroots support and an early boost in polling.

It all looked so different just a month ago. Dogged by voters' concerns about his age and mental acuity, the 81-year-old Biden was an outside bet at best, trailing his predecessor in the first presidential rematch since Dwight Eisenhower trounced Adlai Stevenson in 1956. Biden's dismal June 27 debate showing ignited a five-alarm fire within his party.

The flames were fanned by a flawless show of unity behind 78-year-old Trump at the Republican national convention - an event galvanized by the failed bid, just days earlier, to assassinate the former president at a rally in Pennsylvania. After an initial show of defiance, Biden bowed to the inevitable and dropped out last weekend. Harris, a generation younger at 59, threw her hat in the ring - turning what had been a stale contest between two unpopular, ageing, white male candidates into a dynamic and unpredictable showdown. — Agencies

Gaza's southern city of Khan Yunis on Sunday, the civil defense agency reported five killed in a Zionist strike that hit several tents housing displaced Palestinians at a humanitarian zone.

Meanwhile, in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, Zionist forces advanced deeper into northern parts of the city, where they have yet to take full control. In Central Gaza, the Zionist military on Sunday called upon Gazans to evacuate parts of the Bureij and Shuhada areas. Residents were told to leave "immediately for their safety" and go to a "humanitarian zone" in Al-Mawasi.

The rocket strike on Majdal Shams hit a football pitch and killed young people who local authorities said were aged 10 to 16. Zionist police said an 11-year-old boy was still missing. Thousands of residents crowded the town's streets in a tearful funeral ceremony for many of the dead. Early on Sunday, Gallant visited the scene, where a building was pockmarked by shrapnel.

According to Riad Kahwaji, head of the Institute

Pakistan is a Sunni-majority country where Shiites frequently face discrimination and violence. The government official said the Shiite tribe had "suffered most" in the conflict, with 30 of those killed from the minority sect.

A police source, who asked not to be identified, said both sides were using automatic weapons and mortars in fighting focused around the town of Parachinar, which had been blockaded by law enforcement. "The area is still witnessing clashes involving the use of both small and large weapons," the senior Kurram district official said. Kurram is part of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas, a semi-autonomous area that was merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2018. The move brought the region into the legal and administrative mainstream, although police and security forces frequently struggle to enforce the rule of law there. — AFP

Philippines delays recovery of sunken tanker's oil

MANILA: The Philippines postponed on Sunday the removal of fuel from a tanker that sank in Manila Bay, with fears of an environmental catastrophe growing as leaking oil reached shore for the first time. The siphoning of the 1.4 million liters of industrial fuel oil from the vessel's hold was pushed back to Tuesday at the earliest so divers could seal nine leaking valves first, Philippine Coast Guard spokesman Rear Admiral Armando Balilo told reporters.

The tanker sank in bad weather off Manila early Thursday, killing one crew member and leaving the Philippines facing the possibility of its worst oil spill ever. "An order was given to seal the valves first before the start of the siphoning operations in order to prevent further leakages," Balilo said Sunday. "The weather remains bad out there but they have a target to finish this (sealing the valves) by tomorrow." Balilo later told AFP the coast guard had found "small patches" of oil on the coast of the municipality of Bulakan, on the bay's north shore near Manila. The contaminated shoreline was on the edge of a reclamation project for a future international airport, he said.

Balilo said the coast guard was also investigating a report by the environmental group Greenpeace that a "thick layer of oil" was coating the sea Sunday about four kilometers (2.5 miles) off the coast of Hagonoy municipality, near Bulakan. The coast guard has warned that it would be an "environmental catastrophe" if the entire cargo were to leak. It has also called for the suspension of fishing in Manila Bay to prevent people "eating contaminated fish". The Philippines has struggled to contain serious oil spills in the past. It took months to clean up after a tanker carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil sank off the central island of Mindoro last year, contaminating its waters and beaches and devastating the fishing and tourism industries.

Another tanker sank off the central island of Guimaras in 2006, spilling tens of thousands of gallons of oil that destroyed a marine reserve, ruined local fishing grounds and covered stretches of coastline in black sludge. The coast guard and a private salvage operator are also working to offload an unspecified amount of diesel from another tanker that sank at the mouth of Manila Bay, a coast guard statement said. — AFP



LIMAY: Crew of a private company loads a barrel of oil spill dispersant to be used in the oil spill response, at a port in Limay, Bataan on July 26, 2024. — AFP

35 killed as Pakistan tribal feud sparks sectarian fighting

PESHAWAR: A land feud between tribes in northwestern Pakistan has spilled over into days of sectarian fighting with machine guns and mortars, killing 35 people so far, officials said Sunday. The Sunni Muslim Madagi and Shiite Mali Khel tribes have been fighting since Wednesday, when a gunman opened fire at a council negotiating a decades-long dispute over farmland, local police official Murtaza Hussain said.

While no one was wounded in that attack, Hussain said it reignited longstanding religious ten-

100 days: US election enters...

Continued from Page 1

The former Biden-Harris ticket - now just the Harris campaign - held its biggest-ever rally Tuesday in Wisconsin and has raised more than \$200 million in recent days, with disenchanted donors returning to the fold. "In the week since we got started, @KamalaHarris has raised 200 million dollars. 66% of that is from new donors. We've signed up 170,000 new volunteers," Harris' deputy campaign manager, Rob Flaherty, posted on X.

While American election campaigns typically last almost two years, the 2024 edition has effectively been reset, making it unofficially the shortest in modern history. The Democratic convention in mid-August is expected to be a jubilant celebration of the

Mideast seethes amid carnage...

Continued from Page 1

it has not paid before". The Zionist foreign ministry said Hezbollah had "crossed all red lines". The Zionist military said later on Sunday it had hit Hezbollah targets "both deep inside Lebanese territory and in southern Lebanon". A Zionist drone fired two missiles at Taraiyya village in eastern Lebanon destroying a hangar and a home without causing casualties, a Lebanese security source told AFP. Hezbollah has said its cross-border fire is an act of support for Palestinian Islamists from Hamas who have been fighting the Zionist military in Gaza since Oct 7.

The Zionist military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 39,324 people, according to the health ministry in the territory, mostly women and children. In

Khamenei grants Pezeshkian...

Continued from Page 1

Pezeshkian's presidential bid along with Iran's main reformist coalition. Pezeshkian was the only candidate representing Iran's reformist camp allowed to stand in the election, for which all contenders were approved by the conservative-dominated Guardian Council. Iran's president is not head of state, and the ultimate authority rests with the supreme leader - a post held by Khamenei for the last 35 years. Following Khamenei's official endorsement, Pezeshkian thanked the leader and the Iranian people, vowing to carry the "heavy burden" of the presidency.

The election came against a backdrop of heightened regional tensions since the Gaza war began in early October, disputes with Western powers

for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, the position Hezbollah said it targeted is about 2.4 km from the town, putting it "within margin of error" of the inaccurate rockets. But he said "the possibility of a misfire" from a Zionist air defense missile could not be ruled out and there should be an independent investigation into what happened.

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday said there was "every indication" Hezbollah was behind the rocket strike. The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell condemned the "bloodbath" and also said there should be "an independent international investigation into this unacceptable incident". The United Nations urged "maximum restraint", in a joint statement from their special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) chief Aroldo Lazaro. Intensifying exchanges of fire "could ignite a wider conflagration that would engulf the entire region in a catastrophe beyond belief," they said.

over Iran's nuclear program and domestic discontent over the state of the sanctions-hit economy. During the ceremony, Khamenei urged the upcoming administration to form an "active and effective" response to regional developments, adding that diplomacy must prioritize neighboring nations. "We have no intention to oppose some European countries. The reason I didn't mention European countries as a priority is that they have not treated us well for many years," he added. "If they don't have this bad attitude, then (ties with Europe) would be one of our priorities."

On the campaign trail, Pezeshkian had pledged to try to revive a 2015 nuclear deal with the United States and other world powers, which imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear activity in return for sanctions relief. The deal collapsed in 2018 after Washington withdrew from it. Pezeshkian has in a recent article called for "constructive relations" with European countries, even though he accused them of renegeing on commitments to mitigate the impact of US sanctions. — AFP

The rocket fire on Majdal Shams came after a Zionist strike killed four Hezbollah fighters in south Lebanon, prompting the militant group to announce a flurry of retaliatory rocket attacks against the Golan and the Zionist entity. Lebanon urged "an immediate cessation of hostilities on all fronts", later calling for an "international investigation" into the strike on Majdal Shams. Egypt, which has been seeking to broker a Gaza ceasefire deal alongside Qatar, warned against "the dangers of a new war front opening in Lebanon".

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani meanwhile warned that "any ignorant action of the Zionist regime can lead to the broadening of the scope of instability, insecurity and war in the region". The Zionist foreign ministry called the incident in Majdal Shams a "massacre" and accused Hezbollah of deliberately targeting civilians. Many residents of the Druze town have not accepted Zionist nationality since the Zionist entity seized the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967. — Agencies

International

California fire rapidly becomes among largest in state's history

Blaze just 10% controlled despite efforts of more than 3,700 personnel, a dozen helicopters



CHICO: Firefighters watch as flames and smoke move through a valley in the Forest Ranch area of Butte County as the Park Fire continues to burn near Chico, California, on July 26, 2024. — AFP photos



A property is seen in flames as the huge, rapidly growing wildfire has forced more than 4,000 people in northern California to evacuate.

CHICO: A fire raging out of control in northern California has rapidly become among the biggest ever in the western US state, authorities said Saturday. The so-called Park Fire burned more than 350,000 acres (142,000 hectares) as of Saturday evening, making it the seventh-largest ever recorded in California history, the state agency Cal Fire said.

The fire, which prompted orders for more than 4,000 people to flee their homes, was burning through a largely rural, mountainous area near the city of Chi-

co, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) north of state capital Sacramento. "Extreme fire conditions continue to challenge firefighters," Cal Fire said in a post on X. The fire was just 10 percent controlled, despite the efforts of more than 3,700 personnel with over a dozen helicopters and several planes, according to an agency update. "Numerous firefighting air tankers from throughout the State are flying fire suppression missions as conditions allow," it said. "Lower temperatures and higher humidity have reduced fire activi-

ty," the agency said, while adding that fire was still spreading.

The Park Fire started Wednesday near Chico, in Butte County, and within hours had devastated a wide area there and in neighboring Tehama County. Cal Fire's latest update said 20 structures were confirmed destroyed by the fire, lowering an earlier estimate of 134. The agency said the numbers were expected to fluctuate as officials assess the damage on the ground.

The blaze has generated an enormous column of dense gray smoke which has

also been blown over nearby states. On Thursday, police detained a 42-year-old man on suspicion of having started the fire by pushing a burning car into a ravine. Chico is only about 15 miles from Paradise, a city devastated by a 2018 fire that ranked as California's most deadly ever, claiming 85 lives.

The explosive growth of the Park Fire has again placed Paradise under evacuation warning, unleashing painful memories for its residents. Ava Elsner, who lived through the 2018 fire, told CNN she worries about her

neighbors as the Park Fire blazes. "I don't want anyone else to experience this. It's the most traumatizing, terrifying, and saddening thing to have a whole community go up in flames," she told the broadcaster.

Experts say climate change, accelerated by human action, is leading to more extreme weather events. In Oregon, the Durkee Fire, which started earlier this month, has consumed nearly 290,000 acres and was about 50 percent contained, the state's wildfire response and recovery agency said. — AFP

Bangladesh students vow to resume protests unless leaders freed

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi student group has vowed to resume protests that sparked a lethal police crackdown and nationwide unrest unless several of their leaders are released from custody on Sunday. Last week's violence killed at least 205 people, including several police officers, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data, in one of the biggest upheavals of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure.

Army patrols and a nationwide curfew remain in place more than a week after they were imposed, and a police dragnet has scooped up thousands of protesters including at least half a dozen student leaders. Members of Students Against Discrimination, whose campaign against civil service job quotas precipitated the unrest, said they would end their weeklong protest moratorium. The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn," Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters in an online briefing late Saturday.

Masud, who did not disclose his location because he was hiding from authorities, also demanded "visible actions" be taken against government ministers and police officers responsible for the deaths of protesters. "Otherwise, Students Against Discrimination will be forced to launch tough protests" from Monday, he said.

Islam and two other senior members of the protest group were forcibly discharged from hospital in the capital Dhaka on Friday and taken away by a group of plainclothes detectives. He told AFP last week he was being treated at the hospital for injuries police inflicted on him during an earlier round of detention and said he was in fear for his life.

"I haven't seen him since he was picked up," Islam's mother Momotaz Nahar told reporters outside the national detective agency after unsuccessfully asking officers to allow a visit with him. "We are worried about his life," she said. "I want my son back." Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan has said the trio were taken into custody for their own safety but did not confirm if they had been formally arrested.

In Morocco, cannabis growers come 'out of the shadows'

MANSOURA: Only two years ago, Abdesselam Ichou began growing cannabis legally as part of Morocco's legalization of the plant for medicinal and industrial uses in an impoverished part of the country. Now, he is among thousands of legal farmers whose area of cultivation has reached new highs and cut into the still-dominant illegal trade in Morocco, the world's biggest cannabis resin producer, according to the United Nations.

The North African country passed a law in 2021 allowing the cultivation of medical and industrial-use cannabis in areas of Rif, a mountainous region that has long been a major source of illicit hashish — a stronger derivative of cannabis — smuggled to Europe. "I never imagined that one day I would be able to grow cannabis without the fear and anxiety of being arrested, robbed, or not being able to sell my harvest," said Ichou, 48.

"Today, we work in broad daylight, in a free and dignified manner," he added, proudly showing his leafy crops in the commune of Mansoura, in the Chefchaouen region southeast of Tangiers. Chefchaouen is one of the three provinces where cannabis cultivation is permitted under the 2021 law for non-recreational use.



DHAKA: People take part in a protest march against the mass arrest and killing of protesters during last week's violence amid anti-quota protests, in Dhaka on July 28, 2024. — AFP

'Forced to open fire'

At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the unrest began, according to Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's largest daily newspaper. Khan said 147 people had been killed in clashes so far in the government's first toll, published a day after Students Against Discrimination gave its own preliminary count of 266.

Khan told reporters on Sunday that police had operated with restraint and only fired on demonstrators to protect government buildings. "Despite the killing of their fellow officers, they showed extreme levels of patience," he said. "But when they saw that the properties could not be protected, then police were forced to open fire."

A curfew imposed last weekend remains in force but it has been progressively eased through the week, a sign of the Hasina government's confidence that order was gradually being restored.

One small street rally held in Dhaka on Sunday to demand Hasina's resignation was quickly dispersed by police. Bangladesh's mobile internet network was restored on Sunday afternoon, 11 days after a nationwide blackout imposed at the height of the unrest. Fixed line broadband connections were restored on Tuesday but

the vast majority of Bangladesh internet users rely on mobile devices to connect with the world.

Jobs crisis

Protests began this month over the reintroduction of a quota scheme reserving more than half of all government jobs for certain groups. With around 18 million young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move deeply upset graduates facing an acute employment crisis.

Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League. The Supreme Court cut the number of reserved jobs last week but fell short of protesters' demands to scrap the quotas entirely. Hasina has ruled Bangladesh since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition.

Her government is accused by rights groups of misusing state institutions to entrench its hold on power and stamp out dissent, including the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists. Protests had remained largely peaceful until attacks on demonstrators by police and pro-government student groups last week. — AFP



BAB BERRED: Aziz Makhlof, the founder of Biocannat, a cannabis processing factory in Bab Berred southeast of Chefchaouen, inspects cannabis oil on July 18, 2024. — AFP

revenues from illegal cannabis trafficking decrease from around \$540 million in the early 2000s to almost \$350 million in 2020, according to official figures. "At first, there was a lot of apprehension," said Said El Gueddar, 47, another legal cannabis grower, who is expecting his next harvest in October.

"But little by little it waned, because ultimately legalization is the right path to follow," El Gueddar, who belongs to a cooperative, added that he has "a lot of hope, because it can only be better than living in the precariousness of illegality." — AFP

How El Chapo's son helped US arrest fabled narco chief "El Mayo"

WASHINGTON: As a propeller plane on Thursday whirred towards the US-Mexico border to cross illegally, US agents raced to meet it at a small municipal airport near El Paso, Texas, and arrest two men who were part of Mexican drug trafficking royalty.

The son of jailed former Sinaloa Cartel kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman planned to give himself up upon landing. The other passenger — legendary septuagenarian trafficker Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada — did not and was duped into getting on the plane by the younger man, according to two current and two former US officials familiar with the situation.

Zambada's arrest followed lengthy surrender talks between US authorities and El Chapo's son, Joaquin Guzman Lopez, the sources said. But many American officials had given up hope on Joaquin turning himself in, and were caught unaware when he sent a last-minute message that he would arrive with a kingpin US authorities had been chasing for four decades.

"El Mayo was the cherry on top," said one US official, who declined to be identified because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the arrests. "It wasn't expected at all." Guzman Lopez had convinced Zambada to board the plane by telling him that they were flying to see real estate in northern Mexico, according to the two current and one former US officials. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the two agencies who carried out the operation, scrambled agents from their local El Paso offices and barely reached the airport by the time the private plane was landing, according to a fifth source, a US official.

The unexpected arrest of El Mayo, in his late 70s, and the way he appears to have been betrayed by Guzman Lopez, who is about 38 years old, has jolted the Mexican drug trafficking world, triggering fears of a bloody fissure in the Sinaloa Cartel between the two families that control the group's biggest power bases.

Zambada is accused of being one of the most consequential traffickers in Mexico's history, having co-founded the Sinaloa Cartel with "El Chapo" Guzman, who was extradited to the US in 2017 and is serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison in Colorado.

Reuters could not determine why Guzman Lopez betrayed his father's long-time partner, though the four current and former sources said it was likely due to his desire to obtain a more favorable plea bargain deal from US authorities and help his brother, Ovidio, who was arrested and extradited to the United States in 2023.

US authorities have made drug bosses key targets, frequently striking plea bargain deals with them in exchange for information that leads to the capture of other high-ranking cartel figures. The back-channel communication between American officials and Guzman Lopez was carried out through lawyers, the first official said.

Zambada, who was in a wheelchair, pleaded not guilty on Friday in a Texas courtroom to drug charges, including continuing criminal enterprise, narcotics importation conspiracy and money laundering. His lawyer, Frank Perez, said on Friday that Zambada did not come to the US voluntarily. — Reuters

MONDAY, JULY 29, 2024

Trump courts crypto vote with 'pro-bitcoin president' vow

Ex-president offers tech sector policy flips ahead of election

WASHINGTON/SAN FRANCISCO: Donald Trump, once a cryptocurrency skeptic, vowed Saturday to be a "pro-bitcoin president" if elected in November, as the Republican nominee sought backing from an industry irked by US regulations. "The Biden-Harris administration's repression of crypto and bitcoin is wrong, and it's very bad for our country," Trump said to cheers at a conference in Tennessee.

The ex-president likened cryptocurrencies to the growth of the "steel industry of 100 years ago", and said "Bitcoin stands for freedom, sovereignty and independence from government coercion and control." Trump said if he was in the White House, he would not allow the US government to sell its bitcoin holdings.

"This will serve in effect as the core of the strategic national bitcoin stockpile," Trump said. The proposal was more limited than one offered the day before by longshot third-party candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr, who said he would seek to build a stockpile of 4 million bitcoin.

"If we don't embrace crypto and bitcoin technology, China will, other countries will, they'll dominate, and we cannot let China dominate," Trump said Saturday. "If crypto is going to define the future, I want it to be mined, minted and made in the USA."

Acknowledging the price of electricity as a key factor in where cryptocurrency mining operations are located, Trump vowed to make US energy the cheapest "of any nation on Earth" by increasing fossil fuel production and through nuclear energy.

"We'll be doing it in an environmentally friendly way, but we will be creating so much electricity that you'll be saying, 'please, please, Mr. President, we don't want any more electricity.'"

He said on his first day in office, he would fire Gary Gensler, the chairman of the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), a frequent target of cryptocurrency industry outrage over his cautiously slow approach to implementing regulations.

The crowd roared with approval at the proposal, prompting Trump to joke: "I didn't know he was that unpopular." "Let me say it again. On day one, I will fire Gary Gensler!" he said, with the crowd erupting again. He also targeted Vice President Kamala Harris, who is set to replace Biden atop the Democratic ticket following the 81-year-old president's shock exit from the campaign.

"We have to fight and we have to win, and I pledge to the bitcoin community that the day I take the oath of office, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris's anti-crypto crusade will be over, it will end, it'll be done," Trump told the crowd. "You're going to be very happy with me."

Fiercely against social media platform TikTok, cryptocurrency bitcoin and electric cars during his presidency, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has recently flip-flopped on several issues that are dear to Silicon Valley. The presidential hopeful has, however, remained steadfast in some areas that are likely to be of concern to major US tech companies. Here is a rundown of Trump's

latest policy stance on five major tech sector issues.

"I love Elon Musk, I love him," Trump shouted Saturday during a campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a state that is home to many US automakers. That statement came after reports that Musk had pledged to donate \$45 million monthly to the Republican after he narrowly survived an assassination attempt—reports Musk later denied.

Trump has, however, spent years ridiculing electric cars, bashing them as too expensive and impractical, and denying climate change concerns that have driven demand for them. "I'm constantly talking about electric vehicles, but I don't mean I'm against them; I'm all for them," he said, adding that the cars are not for everyone. If elected, however, Trump has said he wants to end federal subsidies that encourage buying electric cars. The move is not likely to hurt Tesla, some of whose models are not eligible for the rebates, but would hit its US competitors.

TikTok

Trump tried in vain to ban Chinese-owned video app TikTok on national security grounds during his presidency, and spoke out against China routinely during his failed bid for reelection in 2020. Trump expressed concerns—echoed by political rivals—that the Chinese government might tap into US TikTok users' data or manipulate what they see on the platform. He even called for a US company to buy TikTok, with the government sharing in the sale price.



NASHVILLE: Former US president and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures while giving a keynote speech on the third day of the Bitcoin 2024 conference at Music City Center on July 27, 2024. — AFP

Now that US President Joe Biden's administration has signed a law to ban the app for the same reasons, unless it is sold, Trump has reversed course. "Now (that) I'm thinking about it, I'm for TikTok, because you need competition," he recently told Bloomberg. "If you don't have TikTok, you have Facebook and Instagram—

and that's, you know, that's Zuckerberg."

Facebook, founded by Mark Zuckerberg and part of his Meta tech empire, was among the social media networks that banned Trump after attacks on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, driven by concerns that he would use the platform to promote more violence. — AFP

AI startups swap independence for Big Tech's deep pockets

WASHINGTON: It's the case of the vanishing startup: some of Silicon Valley's most promising names in the fast-developing generative AI space are being gobbled up by or tied to the hip of US tech giants. Short on funds, in the past few months promising companies like Inflection AI or Adept have seen founders and key executives quietly exit the stage to join the world's dominant tech companies through discrete transactions.

Critics believe these deals are acquisitions in all but name and have been especially designed by Microsoft or Amazon to avoid the attention of competition regulators, which the companies strenuously deny. Meanwhile, firms like Character AI are reported to be struggling to raise the cash needed to remain independent, and some, like French startup Mistral, are thought to be especially vulnerable to being bought out by a tech giant.

Even ChatGPT's creator OpenAI is locked in a relationship with Microsoft, the world's biggest company by market capitalization. Microsoft helps guarantee OpenAI's future with \$13 billion in investment in return for exclusive access to the startup's industry-leading models. Amazon has its own deal with Anthropic, which makes its own high-performing models.

Joining the revolution brought by the era-defining release of ChatGPT requires a supply of cash that only tech behemoths like Microsoft, Amazon or Google can afford. "The ones with the big money define the rules and design the outcomes that play in their favor," said Sriram Sundararajan, a tech investor and adjunct faculty member at the Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University.

Breaking from typical Silicon Valley legend, generative AI won't be developed out of some founder's garage. That type of artificial intelligence, which creates human-like content in just seconds, is a special



PARIS: People react on the EDF Impact Bridge stand which welcomes its collaborating start-ups in the social and environmental fields, during the 8th edition of the Vivattech technology startups and innovation fair, at the Porte de Versailles exhibition centre in Paris in this May 23, 2024 file photo. — AFP

breed of technology that requires colossal levels of computing from specialized servers.

"Startups have been founded by former research leaders at big tech companies, and they require the resources that only large cloud providers can make available," said Brendan Burke, AI analyst at Pitchbook, which tracks the venture capital world. "They're not following the traditional entrepreneurial journey of doing more with less, they're really looking to recreate the conditions that they experienced working in a highly funded research lab."

Many of these founders, including those at Inflection or Adept, came from Google or OpenAI.

Mustafa Suleyman, the former boss of Inflection, was a leader at Google DeepMind—and has now left his startup, with key employees in tow, to head up the consumer AI division at Microsoft. Inflection still exists on paper but has been stripped of the very assets that gave it value. Lining up with the big tech companies "makes a lot of sense," said Abdullah

Snobar, executive director at DMZ, a startup incubator in Toronto. Their deep pockets help keep "the wheels greased and things moving forward."

But aligning with established tech behemoths also risks "killing competition," potentially creating a situation where "these three big tech companies (are) sucking up all the juice" of creativity and innovation, he added. The burning question in Silicon Valley is whether government regulators will do anything about it. Big tech companies are increasingly in the spotlight for their appetite to eat up smaller firms.

Zionist cybersecurity company Wiz this week scrapped plans to sell to Google in what would have been the giant's biggest deal ever—reportedly because the buyout would not have survived competition regulators. For Inflection, antitrust regulators in the United States, European Union and Britain said they would look closely at its ties with Microsoft. Amazon's deal with Adept has raised questions with the Federal Trade Commission in Washington. — AFP

Pakistan holds talks to reprofile power sector debt to China

KARACHI: Pakistan has initiated talks on reprofiling its power sector debt to China, alongside talks on structural reforms suggested by the International Monetary Fund, Pakistan's finance minister told a press conference on Sunday. He said that Pakistan will address the reprofiling of Chinese credit to the power sector on a project-by-project basis and that Islamabad is looking to appoint a local advisor in China for the purpose.

The finance minister stressed that it is reprofiling and not restructuring of debt because there is no question of cutting the amount it owes. Reprofiling is generally understood to involve an agreed lengthening of the time needed to repay. The countries, which share a border, have been longtime allies, and rollovers or disbursements on loans from China have helped Pakistan meet its external financing needs in the past. Pakistan is in talks with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and China in order to meet gross financing needs under the IMF program for which Islamabad needs a board level approval.

The IMF this month agreed on a \$7 billion bailout for the heavily indebted South Asian economy, while raising concerns over high rates of power theft and distribution losses that result in debt accumulating across the production chain. — Reuters

Mitsubishi to join Honda-Nissan auto alliance

TOKYO: Japan's Mitsubishi Motors is set to join an alliance between Honda Motor and Nissan Motor, creating a tie-up between automakers with combined sales of more than 8 million vehicles, the Nikkei newspaper said on Sunday.

Mitsubishi Motors, which is 34 percent owned by Nissan, will work with Honda and Nissan to finalize the details of their strategic partnership. Nikkei said, adding the three firms intend to standardize in-vehicle software that controls cars. Mitsubishi Motors declined to comment on the report, while a Nissan spokesperson would only say the report was not based on something either of the companies had announced. Spokespeople for Honda did not respond to a request for comment.

The push comes as Nissan, Japan's third biggest automaker, has been steadily losing market share in its two largest markets, the United States and China, which together accounted for half of its global sales in the year to March. On Thursday, the company slashed its annual outlook after heavy discounting in the US almost completely wiped out its first-quarter profit. Nissan and Honda said in March they were considering a strategic partnership to collaborate on producing electric vehicle components and artificial intelligence in automotive software platforms. Mitsubishi Motors is already part of a long-standing alliance with Nissan and France's Renault that the three automakers last year agreed to restructure, aiming for a downsized but more pragmatic and agile partnership. — Reuters

Yellen says \$3tn needed annually for climate financing

BELEM, Brazil: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Saturday that the global transition to a low-carbon economy requires \$3 trillion in new capital each year through 2050, far above current annual financing, but that filling the gap is the biggest economic opportunity of the 21st century. Yellen said in Belem, Brazil's Amazon gateway city, that reaching net-zero emissions goals remained a top priority for the Biden-Harris administration and this would require leadership far beyond US borders.

"Neglecting to address climate change and the loss of nature and biodiversity is not just bad environmental policy. It is bad economic policy," Yellen said in a speech after attending a G20 finance leaders meeting on Thursday and Friday in Rio de Janeiro.

Wealthy economies provided and mobilized a record \$116 billion for climate finance for developing countries in 2022, 40 percent of which came from

multilateral development banks (MDBs). Yellen said the banks, including the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) were setting new targets. The financing need is "the single-greatest economic opportunity of the 21st century" and can be leveraged to support sustainable and more inclusive growth, including for investment-starved countries, she said.

While in Belem, Yellen met with finance ministers from Amazon basin countries and IDB President Ilan Goldfajn. She reaffirmed the US commitment to the bank's Amazonia Forever platform, which provides a holistic approach to sustainable development in the region through financing, project preparation and collaboration. "We are hopeful that this program will incentivize greater private-sector investment in the region that supports nature," she added.

Yellen called on MDBs nearly two years ago to expand their missions and lending capacity to include fighting climate change. She said this was "now in their DNA," but massive private investment was needed, and the Treasury, Brazil's finance ministry and other stakeholders were working to boost engagement with the private sector.

She said the banks should also catalyze new business models to mobilize investments that support nature and biodiversity while strengthening economies



RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's Economy Minister Fernando Haddad (left) and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sign an agreement during the G20 economic ministers' meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 26, 2024. — AFP

and advancing climate transitions. Earlier on Saturday, Yellen launched a new initiative with Amazon basin countries Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname to combat nature crimes, such as illegal logging and harvesting of wildlife and minerals, that are threatening biodiversity and the Amazon ecosystem. — Reuters



A group photo taken on the sidelines of a partnership agreement signing ceremony between NBK and Safat Home at the NBK headquarters.

NBK ties up with Safat Home as new partner of NBK Rewards Program

Program is Kuwait's largest loyalty program with 1,000+ partner outlets across country



Mohammed Al-Othman (right) and Abdullah Al-Omar during the signing ceremony.

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to elevate customer banking experience by providing exclusive offers and rewards to complement its market-leading products and services. In this context, the Bank has signed a partnership agreement with Safat Home, a subsidiary of Alghanim Industries to be part of the bank's loyalty program 'NBK Rewards Program'.

The signing ceremony took place on July 17 at NBK headquarters and was attended by Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking at National Bank of Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Omar, Senior General Manager at Safat Home, and Mussab Ahmed, Vice President Finance and Group Controller and Treasurer at Alghanim Industries.

According to the offer presented by the NBK Rewards Program, NBK customers will accumulate 5 percent in NBK Rewards on all their purchases from Safat Home when using any NBK Credit or Prepaid Card. The earned

Mohammed Al-Othman

- This partnership underscores our constant endeavors to elevate customer banking experience by enhancing rewards and benefits
- We always seek to expand our partner network, leveraging our solid relationships with leading corporations across different sectors

are happy with this partnership with Safat Home, which underscores our constant endeavors to elevate customer banking experience by expanding the rewards and benefits provided to them, especially when using NBK Credit or Prepaid Cards for shopping at their favorite stores." "We always seek to expand our NBK Rewards partner network, leveraging its solid relationships with leading corporations across different sectors to offer customers exclusive discounts and a unique shopping experience," he noted. It is worth mentioning that the NBK Rewards Program is Kuwait's largest loyalty program with more than 1,000+ partner outlets across Kuwait. The program offers NBK Credit and Prepaid Cardholders guaranteed rewards at a variety of the best brands across several categories including food and beverages, fashion and beauty, health and wellness, home and auto, travel and hotels, kids and education, entertainment and others.

NBK Rewards can be used to pay for all or part of customers' shopping at all participating outlets, instantly at the point-of-sale (POS) terminals, with a minimum balance of KD 5 in NBK Rewards for redemption. Commenting on this, Al-Othman said, "We



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 25 JULY 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,835	7,800.84	0.5%	3.0%	4.3%	461,962,559	142,921,033	36,492	17.5	1.3	82.3%
Main Market	7,714	6,021.77	1.7%	1.4%	8.1%	315,663,592	43,936,501	21,588	11.8	0.8	17.7%
All Share	43,549	7,154.88	0.7%	2.7%	5.0%	777,626,151	186,857,534	58,080	13.7	1.0	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,562	1,765.73	0.6%	2.4%	7.2%	157,497,475	69,669,214	13,735	16.6	1.3	60.99%
Basic Materials	424	747.31	-0.7%	-1.7%	0.2%	3,345,520	1,936,532	785	9.4	1.9	0.97%
Consumer Discretionary	1,167	1,691.49	4.2%	8.0%	5.5%	37,812,032	11,494,846	4,720	11.9	1.4	2.68%
Consumer Staples	350	1,145.97	27.9%	39.8%	74.0%	5,019,618	3,514,796	941	29.4	1.8	0.80%
Energy	215	1,050.98	-1.7%	0.8%	10.7%	6,545,646	795,026	503	10.4	0.9	0.49%
Financial Services	4,832	1,361.41	0.9%	4.0%	12.3%	370,095,329	57,040,659	16,993	11.9	0.9	11.10%
Health Care	225	468.00	0.0%	6.0%	-2.9%	0	0	0	14.3	1.6	0.52%
Industrials	2,694	792.53	0.2%	3.9%	-12.7%	29,516,144	11,766,247	5,817	13.5	1.0	6.19%
Insurance	949	2,303.43	6.1%	-10.5%	0.5%	4,389,961	377,621	711	9.4	1.2	2.18%
Real Estate	2,867	1,343.04	-2.0%	3.7%	10.7%	152,049,137	25,335,931	11,481	13.8	0.7	6.58%
Technology	22	1,615.05	-3.1%	-15.3%	179.2%	410,078	89,717.65	74	267.5	1.9	0.05%
Telecommunications	3,061	997.17	0.3%	1.6%	-9.8%	9,199,142	4,548,447	2,089	15.4	1.3	7.03%
Utilities	181	431.58	-2.4%	3.1%	-5.2%	1,746,069	288,497	231	14.0	1.4	0.42%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MEZZAN	1,040	30.82%	3,773,843	3,377,707.650	844
MARAKEZ	56.0	30.23%	11,141,940	618,274	1,069
BAYANINV	72	17.46%	42,204,270	2,827,164	1,256
GIH	510	15.12%	5,907,141	2,711,986	673
GINS	1,586	14.93%	1,541	2,505	6

Top Losers

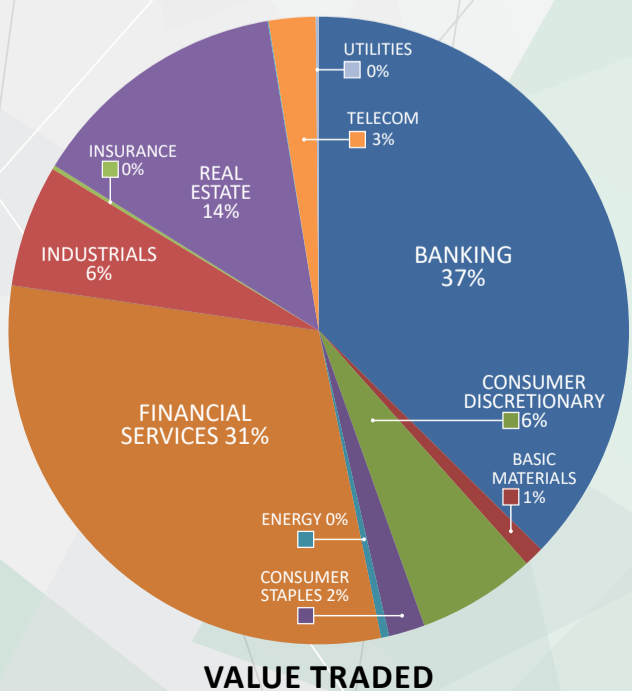
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFC	86.2	-10.21%	3,584	311	5
MASAKEN	29.4	-7.26%	7,134,337	213,387	395
ARKAN	108	-6.09%	853,520	90,776	65
MRC	89.7	-5.97%	287,818	25,971	71
MADAR	92.5	-5.52%	15,144	1,350	7

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	99.2	4.42%	69,513,617	6,831,388	2,153
KRE	245	4.70%	55,623,050	13,310,685	4,142
IFA	261	6.99%	53,438,450	13,723,534	3,241
ARZAN	185	0.54%	46,482,900	8,656,401	882
GBK	275	0.36%	44,464,615	12,180,212	1,481

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	733	1.10%	34,449,533	25,116,338	4,753
NBK	873	0.23%	18,949,856	16,551,450	1,992
IFA	261	6.99%	53,438,450	13,723,534	3,241
KRE	245	4.70%	55,623,050	13,310,685	4,142
GBK	275	0.36%	44,464,615	12,180,212	1,481



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Markets volume and value dropped 5%, 16%, and 22%, 14%, respectively.
- Both the Premier and Main indexes showed strength and overcame critical resistance levels.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7154, with support levels at 7105, 7085, and 7041 and resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7800, with support levels at 7767, 7716, and 7685 and resistance at 7811. The Main index closed at 6021, with support levels at 5990, 5970, and 5959, and resistance at 6023.

MONDAY, JULY 29, 2024



Takeo Suzuki from the product planning department of Pentax Division, part of Ricoh Imaging Co. Ltd., demonstrating the newly-released Pentax 17 half-frame film camera at the Pentax Club House in Tokyo.--AFP photos



Japanese film camera fans showing each other their cameras on a film photography tour in Kamakura, Kanagawa prefecture.



Participants of a film photography tour taking photos in Kamakura, Kanagawa prefecture.

NEW JAPAN FILM CAMERA AIMED AT 'NOSTALGIC' YOUNG FANS

Keita Suzuki leads a group of young analogue photography fans around a coastal city in Japan, stopping to snap pastel hydrangea blooms with bulky vintage film cameras. The participants later share their lush retro-looking snaps online—a trend a top Japanese camera brand wants to capture with its first new film model in two decades. Instead of pressing a smartphone button, more and more young people “want to experience the original act of taking a photograph: winding the film up, looking through the viewfinder and releasing the shutter”, Suzuki told AFP.

Another “beauty” of film photography is that with limited physical film, you must think carefully about which memories to “lock in” to each photograph, he said. Suzuki advertises his tours on social media and has seen a growing interest from teens and 20-somethings loading 35mm film and taking it to be developed for the first time. Yuriko Yamada was one of around 20 people who joined a recent gathering in Kamakura near Tokyo. “Digital photos are clear and clean, but film ones have faint, soft colors, which I prefer,” the 34-year-old said.

“It takes time to see the final product, but I really enjoy the process,” she added. “It feels nostalgic.” Japan’s big-



Takeo Suzuki loading a roll of film into the newly-released Pentax 17 half-frame camera at the Pentax Club House.

gest camera brands stopped making analogue film models in the 2000s as digital ones became dominant. Countless camera sellers in Japan’s big cities have since stepped up to fill the void, refurbishing old models for a new generation of analogue enthusiasts. Despite the surge in popularity, many of those on the photo tour said they still find it difficult to repair their old cameras because the parts are no longer being produced.

‘Many hurdles’

To meet rising demand from new film



Yoshinobu Ishikawa, representative director of Popeye Camera, checking a used film camera for sale at his special film photography shop.

fans, the \$500 Pentax 17 -- the brand’s first analogue model in 21 years—was launched in Europe and the United States in June, and Japan this month. The camera has a classic black appearance but takes half-frame photos, meaning a 24-exposure film yields 48 shots, which are portrait-orientated like phone photos. It has been so popular in Japan that pre-orders sold out, according to manufacturer Ricoh Imaging Company.

Product planner and designer Takeo Suzuki, nicknamed TKO—a revered figure among photography fans—said Ricoh

had been “surprised” by the “huge” global response. Plans to release a new analogue camera were hatched around 2020, but weren’t easy to realize. “This was a completely new project, so it was like groping in the dark,” Suzuki said. “There were so many hurdles, but we received a lot of support from many people.”

Pentax engineers used archive drawings of past cameras, some on paper, to try and make manual winders and other analogue technology. But they struggled, so the company asked retired colleagues to come back to help.

“They taught us tips and tricks that were not on the blueprints, but were really recipes in the engineer’s head,” Suzuki said. By doing so, they “revived the old technology little by little”.

‘Spark conversations’

Instant and disposable film cameras made by Ricoh’s rival Fujifilm have also become popular as the trend for sharing old-fashioned photos on social media grows. Sales of the palm-sized Instax, launched in 1998 as a competitor to Polaroid, stagnated for several years in the 2000s due to the shift to digital cameras. But they are rising again in part thanks to an expanded range including sleek, classic designs made to appeal to men

and older customers, the company says.

“People enjoy prints as a communication tool, because they spark conversations,” said senior Fujifilm manager Ryuichiro Takai, who is responsible for the Instax business. Young customers at Popeye Camera, a specialist film photography shop in Tokyo’s Jiyugaoka district, seem to agree. Yoshinobu Ishikawa took over the family business in 2000, when the rise of digital cameras had nearly forced the shop’s closure.

Back then, “young people found it difficult to enter” as mostly older male customers would be having “intimidating, technical conversations” with staff, he said. But now Ishikawa actively courts them with fun items such as stickers to decorate photos and leather camera straps, as well as a custom developing service—speaking to customers beforehand about the style they want. “Young people see film photography shared on social media, and they want to try it themselves,” he said. Yamada, the photo tour participant, says she feels “more and more into film photography”. “It’s inconvenient, but I feel it’s something new.”—AFP

‘Path of Love’ on Italy’s famed Cinque Terre reopens

Offering extraordinary views along Italy’s Cinque Terre coast, the celebrated “Via dell’Amore” or “Path of Love” trail reopens this weekend, first for locals and then visitors—but only with a paid reservation. The path, which runs more than 900 meters between the colorful coastal villages of Riomaggiore and Manarola on Italy’s northwestern coast, was closed in 2012 after a landslide. It has been rendered safe and remade as part of a 23-million-euro (\$25 million) restoration project, which required a helicopter to transport materials and saw workers suspended by ropes and cables off the cliff.

It will be opened to residents of the surrounding areas and holiday home owners from Saturday, with tourists allowed in from August 9 -- but only by reservation. Visitors must buy a five-euro ticket in advance, which includes a guided walk and entry to the Castle of Riomaggiore, with access limited to 400 people per hour.

Tourists will only be able to walk in one direction, from Riomaggiore to Manarola, although locals can move freely, as they have since the path was built in the 1930s. A daily ticket has long been required to hike the trails in the Cinque Terre, a UNESCO World Heritage site made up of a network of five villages on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. But ticketing the “Via dell’Amore” is a new idea, which comes amid a surge in visitor numbers to the region. Last year four million visitors were recorded by the municipality of Riomaggiore. “We want to ensure a more sustainable experience with a guided path,” Fabrizia Pecunia, mayor of Riomaggiore, told AFP. “The goal is to manage tourist flow, not to reduce the number of tourists, because we need to find a balance between tourism, the territory, and agriculture. “We are not opposed to tourism, rather, we have come to understand that it needs to be managed.”—AFP



Dutch artist Peet Wessels (right) adjusts the sails of De Heimolen.



Dutch artist Peet Wessels adjusts the sails of De Heimolen.

‘Windmill love’ sees Dutch artist become mill operator

Dutch artist Peet Wessels might not call it an obsession, but with over 100 images of windmills in her home, it’s clear she’s a big fan—her walls practically whirl with admiration. Now Wessels, who rose to fame by painting windmills on the mill’s used canvas sails, is taking it one step further. She is training to become a real-life miller—someone who operates and maintains a windmill—joining a growing number of women in what was once seen as a man’s world. It was a blustery afternoon at De Heimolen, an ancient wheat mill in Rucphen-Boschenhoofd near the southern Dutch city of Breda. Perched some 10 meters (about 32 feet) on one of the four wings of the mill, built in 1866, Wessels tied canvas over the wooden slats.

She then scarpers down and ran around the structure to release a brake to set the creaking blades in motion. “You cannot have a fear of heights if you want to be a miller,” Wessels told AFP, dressed in sturdy boots, jeans and a hoodie bearing the insignia of the Dutch Guild of Millers. For almost two years now, Wessels, 59, has been following the ancient course on how to become a miller, joining some 2,000 others in the Netherlands, famous for its clogs, cheese and... windmills. Wessels believes she is the only

woman miller in the North Brabant province, a short hop from one of the country’s most iconic windmill locations at the nearby Kinderdijk. In all, there are some 200 woman millers around the Netherlands, she added, mostly based around the central city of Utrecht. Trainee millers learn mill mechanics—how to steer the massive blades without damaging them,

safety around the rapidly moving parts and how to read the weather. “It’s a bit like being the captain of a sailing ship,” said Wessels.

‘Rather in a mill’

Asked about woman millers making waves in a role seen for centuries as traditionally male, Wessels did not think of herself as a pioneer. “But I’d rather be in a mill than attending a fashion show,” she laughed. A chemical engineer by profession, Wessels said she was always interested in windmills and how they worked. After stints as an engineer in the United States and Britain, she decided to start a new career as a painter in the late 1990s.

But sales dropped and after the credit crunch in 2008, Wessels knew she had to innovate “and do something different”. One day she was cycling past a windmill when she hit upon an idea. “I told the miller I want to do something with mills and paint them, do you have something I could use?” That’s when the miller showed her the used canvas cloth used in the mill’s wings—and so an idea was born. “It was stinky and full of insects, so I had to scrub it clean first,” she said.

Her chemical engineering background came in handy, helping her to find the right way to treat the can-

vas to show both the painting and the cloths’ natural ageing process. “The cloth and the painting had to work together. It has to show the history of the cloth that’s been on the mill sometimes for 20 years or longer,” she said. Wessels’ painting of the mill also exactly matches the actual mill on which the canvas was used.

‘Not a fanatic’

Two of her favorites now hang in her kitchen: one her work called “Dutch Skies” and another called “Dutch Landscape.” Both were painted on the canvas from the 1740 Overwaard 7 mill at Kinderdijk—which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its 19 iconic mills. Wessels has painted almost all of the Netherlands’ famous windmills—including a mill called De Kat north of Amsterdam—the world’s last remaining windmill using wind power to make paint pigment.

“Almost all the millers know me. I used to ask for old canvas, but now they phone me when they have some available,” Wessels laughed. Asked if she ever dreams of windmills, she quipped: “I’m not a fanatic. But training to become a miller is perhaps a step closer!”—AFP



Dutch artist Peet Wessels, who is famous for painting windmills on the mill’s used canvas sails, shows her artworks at her studio in the southern Dutch city of Breda.--AFP photos

Lifestyle



(From left) Colin Farrell, via video, Josh Horowitz, Lauren LeFranc, Dylan Clark, Rhenzy Feliz, Cristin Milioti, Mike Marino and Matt Reeves speak onstage at "The Penguin" Panel.



(From left) Shawn Levy, Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman attend Marvel Studios: The Ultimate Deadpool & Wolverine Celebration of Life in Hall H at SDCC in San Diego, California.



(From left) Keegan-Michael Key, Brian Tyree Henry and Chris Hemsworth speak during the "Paramount Animation and Hasbro Entertainment: 'Transformers One'" panel during 2024 Comic-Con International at San Diego Convention Center.

REYNOLDS AND JACKMAN BRING SMUTTY SUPERHEROES TO COMIC-CON



Cosplayers walk outside the convention center during Comic Con International in San Diego, California. - AFP photos



A Deadpool on a Unicorn cosplayer walks outside the convention center.

Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman kicked off celebrations at the giant Comic-Con pop culture gathering Thursday with a special screening of "Deadpool & Wolverine," their smutty superhero mash-up movie expected to break box office records this weekend. The Hollywood A-listers took the stage before 6,000 screaming fans - many dressed as spandex-clad heroes and villains - who had won a lottery to attend the hot-ticket opening night event in San Diego, California.

The film brings together two wildly popular characters from the Marvel superhero movies. Reynolds's potty-mouthed Deadpool teams up with Jackman's grizzled Wolverine, from the "X-Men" movies. It is widely expected to be one of the year's highest-grossing films. "A 'Deadpool and Wolverine' movie is quite literally something that I feel like I've waited my whole life for," said Reynolds, before introducing a surprise screening of the entire movie. "We've been around the world with this movie, but the icing on the cake is right here, right now," added Jackman.

Out in theaters globally this weekend, "Deadpool & Wolverine" is expected to shatter the box office record for



Australian actor Chris Hemsworth arrives to attend Paramount's animation panel for "Transformers One" during Comic Con International.

Marvel franchise and its studio Disney. The film could gross as much as \$200 million in North American theaters on its opening weekend alone, trade magazine Variety suggested.

The current record for R-rated films is held by the original "Deadpool," which made \$132 million in its first weekend in 2016, after also getting a Comic-Con preview. "I remember making that movie for you," Reynolds told the die-hard superhero fans who make the pilgrimage each year to San Diego. "And I remember how gratifying it was that everyone else liked it too."

Marvel reboot

One of the world's largest pop culture events, Comic-Con began five decades ago as a humble comic book-themed gathering in a hotel basement. Today it draws A-list stars. Also on Thursday, Chris Hemsworth attended a panel for animated prequel "Transformers One," while director Roland Emmerich promoted his racy new Ancient Rome-set drama "Those About To Die." It is a contrast to last year's edition, where Hollywood strikes prevented actors from attending, and quelled fan interest.



Cosplayers walk outside the convention center.



Deadpool cosplayers pose outside the convention center.



A Deadpool cosplayer walks outside the convention center.



A Mask cosplayer walks outside the convention center.

This time around, Comic-Con is expected to draw 135,000 attendees back to the southern Californian city. Disney on Saturday will also host a hugely anticipated Marvel presentation that is expected to unveil wider plans to reboot its mega-grossing superhero films, after recent high-profile missteps.

The Marvel movies dominated Hollywood and global box offices for years, with 2019's "Avengers: Endgame" briefly becoming the highest-grossing film of all time at more than \$2.79 billion. But the past few years have brought more flops

than hits, as fans complained about over-complicated plotlines and mourned the departure of favorite characters like Robert Downey Jr's "Iron Man."

Aliens and elves

The franchise has been rocked by domestic violence revelations about actor Jonathan Majors, who had been set to become the major new supervillain across multiple films. Majors, who was convicted for assaulting his then-girlfriend, has been dropped by Marvel, but plans to replace him are yet to be revealed. Also this week, crowds

will get a look at "Alien: Romulus," the latest in the long-running sci-fi saga launched by Ridley Scott with 1979's "Alien." Disney's rival studio Warner will offer a glimpse at its Batman spinoff TV series "The Penguin," starring Colin Farrell. Amazon's Prime Video will lift the lid on the second season of its "Lord of the Rings" television series, which aims to improve on the mixed reviews for its hugely expensive debut season two years ago. — AFP

Robert Downey Jr announces shock Marvel return at Comic-Con

Oscar-winner Robert Downey Jr. announced his return to the Marvel superhero films during a blockbuster Disney presentation at Comic-Con Saturday, as the company attempts to reinvigorate its all-time record-grossing movie franchise. Harrison Ford and Pedro Pascal were also officially unveiled among a batch of new stars joining the movie franchise, which has grossed an unprecedented \$30 billion at the box office, but in recent years has suffered a number of high-profile flops.

Marvel film president Kevin Feige unveiled new details about multiple upcoming superhero movies in front of a crowd of screaming devotees at the San Diego, California gathering on Saturday - but nobody drew a louder reaction than the returning Downey Jr. The actor, who launched the entire Marvel movie universe with 2008's "Iron Man," will return as a totally different character - Doctor Doom, a prominent villain in the Marvel comic books - it was revealed.

He appeared anonymously on stage among a group of hooded and masked figures, before stepping forward and revealing his much-rumored return. "New mask. Same task. What'd I tell you? I like playing complicated



Robert Downey Jr. attends the Marvel Studios Panel in Hall H at SDCC in San Diego, California on July 27, 2024. - AFP photos

characters," said Downey Jr., to the delight of the assembled Marvel obsessives. Downey Jr. won an Oscar this year for his role in Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer," and had seemingly retired from the Marvel films in 2019.

'Doomsday'

The presentation was the hottest ticket of the four-day pop culture extravaganza, with fans lining up for hours to get a coveted seat. Marvel

fans have complained in recent years about over-complicated plotlines and the departure of beloved characters, including Downey Jr's Iron Man, with some calling for a wholesale reboot of the movies. The franchise was also rocked by domestic violence revelations about actor Jonathan Majors, who had been set to become the major new supervillain across multiple films.

Majors, who was convicted for assaulting and harassing his then-girl-

friend, was dropped by Marvel. The answer to who will fill that role was seemingly answered by Downey Jr.'s return as a villain. Joe and Anthony Russo - the brothers who previously oversaw 2019's "Avengers: Endgame," which briefly became the highest-grossing film of all time at more than \$2.79 billion - will also return. They will direct "Avengers: Doomsday," in May 2026, and "Avengers: Secret Wars" in May 2027.

'Piece of the action'

The Marvel event opened with dozens of singers and dancers dressed in the red and yellow of "Deadpool & Wolverine," the new R-rated superhero movie that is enjoying a record breaking opening this weekend. "But Hall H doesn't just look back... Hall H looks forward," said Feige, referring to the Comic-Con event's famous venue, before setting out Marvel's plans for the next three years. Next year will see three films including February's "Captain America: Brave New World," with Harrison Ford as Thaddeus Ross, a US president who turns into a Red Hulk. "I wanted a piece of the action," said Ford, on joining the Marvel franchise.

Also due in 2025 are "Thunderbolts" in May starring Florence Pugh, and July's "The Fantastic 4: First Steps," starring Pedro Pascal and set in 1960s New York. Earlier on Saturday at Comic-Con, Disney's rival studio Warner, which runs the DC superhero movies, offered a glimpse at "The Penguin," starring Colin Farrell. Spun off from the 2022 film "The Batman," which starred Robert Pattinson as a grungy, noirish incarnation of the beloved superhero, "The Penguin" will hit HBO on September 19. — AFP



(From left) Rob Delaney, Kevin Feige, President, Marvel Studios, Jake Schreier, Geraldine Viswanathan, Lewis Pullman, Hannah John-Kamen, Wyatt Russell, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Florence Pugh and Sebastian Stan speak onstage during the Marvel Studios Panel in Hall H.



Anthony Mackie (left) and Harrison Ford speak onstage during the Marvel Studios Panel in



Julia Louis-Dreyfus (left) and Florence Pugh speak onstage.

PARIS 2024 

Spain, Japan in quarters, Argentina bounce back in Olympic football

Argentina face Ukraine while Morocco meet Iraq



BORDEAUX: Dominican Republic's defender #12 Joao Urbaez fights for the ball with Spain's defender #05 Pau Cubarsi in the men's group C football match between the Dominican Republic and Spain during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Bordeaux Stadium in Bordeaux. — AFP

PARIS: Argentina bounced back from the chaos of their opening defeat in the Olympic men's football to beat Iraq 3-1 on Saturday, while Spain and Japan became the first teams through to the quarter-finals.

Two-time gold medallists Argentina began their campaign at the Games with a 2-1 defeat by Morocco on Wednesday in Saint-Etienne in a match marred by crowd trouble. The South Americans had a late equalizer disallowed and the final minutes took place in an empty stadium following the disruption.

However, Javier Mascherano's side registered their first win in Group B on Saturday and the result, coupled with Ukraine's last-gasp 2-1 victory over Morocco in Saint-Etienne, means all four teams in the section are now level on three points.

Argentina went ahead on 14 minutes in Lyon when Manchester City's Julian Alvarez laid the ball off for Thiago Almada to fire in. Iraq drew level in first-half stoppage time as captain Aymen Hussein rose to head home. But Argentina went back ahead just after the hour mark. Luciano Gondou had been on the pitch barely two minutes when he appeared unmarked at the back post to head in an inviting cross.

The third goal came five minutes from time as Kevin Zenon laid the ball back for Ezequiel Fernandez, of Boca Juniors, to curl in from range. "We need to look forward and focus on what we can control, which is playing football. That is what I suggested we

do, play the better football," said Mascherano as he refused to revisit the Morocco debacle.

France on verge of quarters

Morocco were caught by a 98th-minute sucker punch against Ukraine, who grabbed the victory when Oleh Fedor set up Ihor Krasnopir to score from close range. Ukraine had gone ahead midway through the first half through Dmytro Kryskiv but appeared in trouble when Volodymyr Saliuk pulled back Soufiane Rahimi in the box on the hour.

Saliuk's yellow card was upgraded to red on review, and Rahimi converted the penalty, his third goal of the tournament making it 1-1.

Morocco were then pushing for the winner with the extra man when Ukraine snatched the points. In the last round of group games on Tuesday, Argentina face Ukraine while Morocco meet Iraq.

Spain are through to the last eight already after claiming a second win from as many games in Group C as the Tokyo silver medallists beat the Dominican Republic 3-1 in Bordeaux. Fermin Lopez gave them the lead, but debutants the Dominican Republic surprisingly equalized on 38 minutes when Angel Montes de Oca headed in at a corner.

However, they were reduced to 10 men in first-half stoppage time when captain Edison Azcona received his marching orders for kicking out at Pau Cubarsi.

Spain made the extra player count after the break, with Alex Baena's deflected strike restoring their lead before substitute Miguel Gutierrez tapped in on 70 minutes. Spain's passage to the last eight was secured after Egypt beat Uzbekistan 1-0 in Nantes, Ahmed Koka scoring the only goal early on.

Thierry Henry's France team made it two wins from two in Group A as they edged Guinea 1-0 in Nice, with Freiburg full-back Kiliann Sildillia heading in a 75th-minute winner from Michael Olise's cross.

France are not yet through from Group A, in which the United States thrashed New Zealand 4-1 in Marseille in the other game.

The host nation still require a point against New Zealand on Tuesday to guarantee progress. Japan, winners of this year's Under-23 Asian Cup, secured a quarter-final berth with a dramatic 1-0 victory against Mali in Bordeaux.

Rihito Yamamoto scrambled in the only goal in the 82nd minute, although Mali had a chance to equalize from a penalty deep in injury time.

The spot-kick was given for a handball after a VAR review, but Cheickna Doumbia contrived to put it wide. Also in Group D, Paraguay scored twice in stoppage time to beat Israel 4-2 in an entertaining game in Paris, with Marcelo Fernandez's brace bookending the victory for the 2004 silver medallists. — AFP

All eyes will be on the battle for gold in the swimming pool at La Defense Arena, where Britain's Adam Peaty faces a duel with China's world champion Qin Haiyang in the 100m breaststroke. World record-holder Peaty is trying to match swimming legend Michael Phelps and win a third straight gold medal in the same event in a clash with Qin that is laced with intrigue.

Qin, the 200m world record-holder, was reportedly among the 23 Chinese swimmers who tested positive for a banned drug in late 2020 to early 2021. Chinese swimming chiefs have denied wrongdoing, saying the swimmers tested positive after inadvertently consuming tainted food during domestic competition. Peaty's tussle with Qin is one of three swimming golds to be decided on Sunday. France's great swimming hope Leon Marchand will chase glory in the men's 400m individual medley, while the women's 100m butterfly title will also be on offer.

In other action on Sunday, the United States' star-studded basketball squad spearheaded by LeBron James and Stephen Curry will launch their quest for a fifth straight gold medal against Serbia, who are led by three-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic.

Rafael Nadal was meanwhile poised to play in the tennis singles, according to Spanish team captain David Ferrer, despite earlier fears about his fitness. Nadal, who partnered Carlos Alcaraz in doubles on Saturday, is due to face Hungary's Marton Fucsovics on Sunday, with Novak Djokovic lying in wait for the winner. — AFP

Dashti sets new personal record

PARIS: Kuwaiti swimming champion Lara Dashti scored a new record on Sunday in the 100-meter breaststroke, ranking fifth at the Paris 2024 Olympics. Dashti recorded a time of 1:15:67 minutes in the preliminary heats of 100-meter breaststroke, setting a new record with this result. The swimming event was held at the Olympic pool "La Defense Arena" in Paris, France.

This marks Dashti's second participation in the Olympics, following her debut at the Tokyo 2020 Games. Kuwait's National Team coach Ayman Al-Enezi confirmed that Dashti and swimmer Mohammad Al-Zubair's preparations were carried out according to pre-determined plans through training camps and intensive sessions. He further stated that competing in the Olympics is a great honor and dream for athletes from around the world, praising both Dashti and Al-Zubair's efforts and dedication. Kuwait is participating for the 14th time in the Summer Olympic Games, with a delegation of 9 athletes competing in six sports: Shooting, fencing, swimming, athletics, rowing and sailing.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti rower Suad Al-Faqaan failed to reach the decisive rounds of 2024 Paris Olympics rowing competition, placing in fourth in the preliminary qualifiers in the women's solo race. Al-Faqaan recorded a time of 8:28.89 minutes in the play-off qualifiers, which were topped by Paraguayan rower Alejandra Alonso Alderete, who recorded a time of 7:57.14 minutes. The rower will now compete for a position in the final rankings, but not for the medals. The rowing competitions were held at the (Vayres-sur-Marne) sea course. — KUNA



Suad Al-Faqaan



Lara Dashti

Biles dazzles on Olympic return

PARIS: Gymnastics icon Simone Biles dazzled in her long-awaited return to the Olympic stage on Sunday as Paris braced for a blockbuster swimming duel on an action-packed day two at the Games. A galaxy of A-listers, from Hollywood star Tom Cruise to Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, crowded into a packed Bercy Arena to watch as Biles began her quest for Olympic redemption.

The 27-year-old four-time Olympic champion opened her qualifying with a flawless performance on the beam, drawing loud applause from a star-studded crowd that also included actress Jessica Chastain, "Barbie" director Greta Gerwig and pop singer Ariana Grande.

Biles, a 23-time world champion widely regarded as the greatest gymnast in history, entered the arena to a standing ovation and a deafening roar greeted her introduction. The American star, who also impressed with her floor routine, acknowledged the support with a wave and she blew a kiss to the crowd after her image was flashed up on a giant scoreboard.

Biles is competing in Paris three years after her campaign at the Tokyo Olympics unravelled due to a disorientating condition gymnasts call "twisties". She still went home with a silver and bronze and was



PARIS: US' Simone Biles competes in the uneven bars event of the artistic gymnastics women's qualification during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Bercy Arena in Paris, on July 28, 2024. — AFP

lauded for speaking openly about her mental health struggles. Biles could become the oldest all-around women's all-around Olympic champion in 72 years and just the third woman to capture more than one Olympic all-around title.

Swimming duel

Biles' return was one of the highlights of a day two schedule which will see 13 gold medals up for grabs in sports including shooting, mountain biking, skateboarding, archery, canoeing, fencing and swimming.