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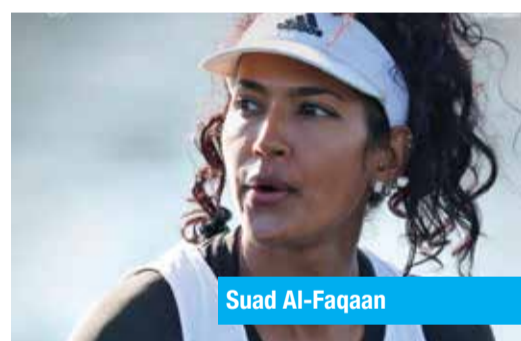


Overstayers, sponsors to be deported

Interior ministry warns against flouting visit visa rules, arrests violators



Kuwaiti athletes make strides



PARIS: Kuwaiti shooter Khaled Al-Mudhaf opened his Paris 2024 Olympics campaign on Monday, finishing day one of the men's trap shooting competition in 16th place with a cumulative total of 72 points. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Suad Al-Faqaan finished third in the women's single sculls semifinals (E) on Monday, recording a time of 9:01.78. With this score, Faqaan qualifies for the final of Category E. (See Page 16)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The interior ministry said on Monday it has decided to deport a number of expats who overstayed their visit visas along with their sponsors and has already arrested a number of them. The ministry said in a statement that it has arrested a number of violators and their sponsors and was taking necessary measures to deport them in accordance with instructions from the interior minister.

It said that a number of expat women working in Kuwait had issued "family visit visas" for their husbands and children, but the visitors exceeded the duration stipulated in the visas. "Because the sponsors have not complied with the pledge they signed when they applied for the visas and violated the conditions, they will all (wives, husbands and children) be deported," said the ministry statement. The deci-

sion was taken although the residences of the wives were still valid.

The ministry warned that it will deport visitors and sponsors if the conditions of the visit visas are violated, especially for overstaying. The ministry did not give the number of those to be deported and if the process involved any fines. Local media said the expats to be deported were Syrian. In early February, Kuwait resumed the issuance of visit visas for relatives of expats working in Kuwait, but under stricter conditions.

Residents applying for their parents, wives and children must draw a monthly salary of KD 400 and a salary of at least KD 800 for other relatives. Applicants for family visit visas must provide a return air ticket for visitors issued on Kuwaiti national carriers — Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways. They must sign a written commitment pledging they will not attempt to transfer the visit visas to dependent residency. They must also

pledge to comply with the duration of the visit visa.

If visitors overstay, they and their sponsors will be listed under a special security tracking system run by the detectives of the residency affairs department and legal measures will be taken against those violators, the ministry had warned. Medical treatment must be strictly in the private sector and visitors will not be allowed to seek treatment at public health facilities.

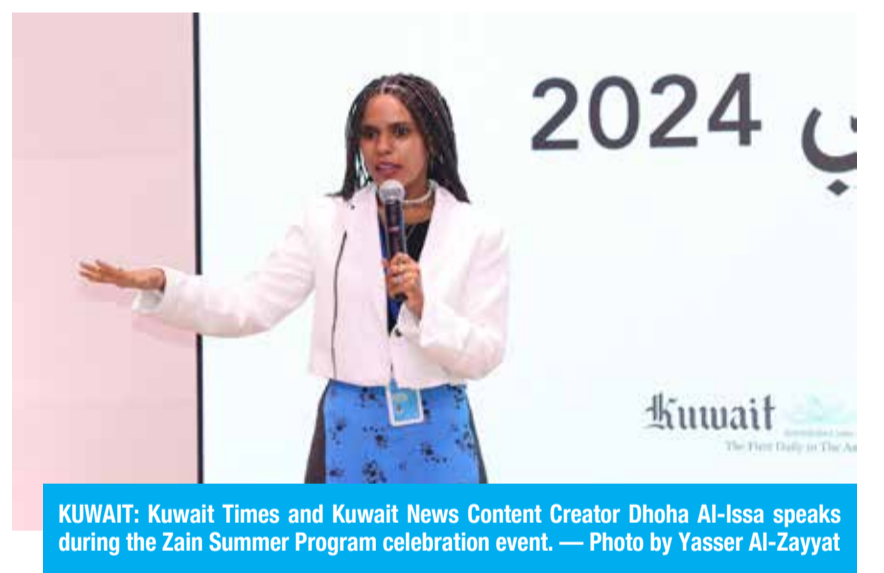
The ministry is now allowing expatriates without university degrees to sponsor their families provided they earn at least KD 800 per month. The revised policy specifically facilitates the sponsorship of wives and children for expatriates already residing or born in Kuwait, as well as for children born abroad who are under five years old. Moreover, the director general of the residency affairs general department at the interior ministry has the authority to waive the salary requirement under certain conditions.

Zain interns hone media skills at Kuwait Times, Kuwait News

By Shakir Reshamwala

KUWAIT: In the fifth edition of Zain's Summer Program, nine students gained invaluable media experience through internships at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News. They engaged in diverse activities, including creating news reports, editorial pieces and digital media content. The interns learned essential skills such as story research, interview techniques and media equipment handling, receiving guidance from mentors including content creator Dhoha Al-Issa. Students appreciated the open en-

vironment and the chance to work on impactful projects. Zain recognized Kuwait Times and Kuwait News for their significant contributions and honored the interns who excelled in creating unique media content. The program, part of Zain's Future University Network (FUN) initiative, also included career skills workshops in partnership with INJAZ Kuwait. The interns included Tala Bin Hussain, Monai Kraidees, Jouri Al-Houti, Hessa Al-Humaidi, Ghaila Al-Qaoud, Esraa Mansour, Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Rayan Al-Ruwayeh and Rashed Meshal. (See Page 3)



Prince Mohammed endorses Saudi FIFA World Cup 2034 bid

JEDDAH: Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman endorsed Saudi Arabia's bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2034. The endorsement comes following the conclusion of the bid's detailed requirements ahead of the bid book submission to FIFA in Paris, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). The Saudi delegation is led by Minister of Sport and President of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Faisal Al-Saud, and President of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) Yasser Al-Misehal.

Marking this significant milestone, Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki expressed his sincere appreciation

Continued on Page 6



Opposition cries foul over Maduro election victory

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition declared it was the rightful victor of a presidential election as global concern poured in Monday over alleged irregularities in the re-election of strongman Nicolas Maduro. After a turbulent decade in power, Maduro, 61, was declared the winner of Sunday's presidential election which capped a campaign tainted by accusations of political intimidation.

Pollsters had predicted a resounding victory for the opposition, even after its popular leader Maria Corina Machado was blocked from running and appointed a proxy. The CNE electoral council, largely loyal to Maduro, declared he had won re-election with 51.2 percent of votes, while opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia received 44.2 percent. The result sparked concern over irregularities from the United States, European Union, and several countries in Latin America.

Maduro, 61, addressed celebrating supporters at the presidential palace minutes after the announcement, vowing "peace, stability and justice". But the opposition coalition insisted it had garnered 70 percent of the vote, rejecting the CNE figures. "We want to say to all of Venezuela and the world that Venezuela has a new president-elect and it is (candidate) Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia," opposition leader Maria Corina Machado told journalists, calling the official result "another fraud".

Gonzalez Urrutia, a 74-year-old former diplomat, said "our fight continues, and we will not rest until the will of the Venezuelan people is reflected".

Continued on Page 6



NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-MP Fiker jailed for 3 years

KUWAIT: The criminal court on Monday sentenced former MP Anwar Al-Fiker to three years in jail for challenging the authority of HH the Amir. This was the second such case against Fiker. In the first one, the criminal court had released him on bail and set the next hearing on September 3.

Iran seizes oil tanker in Gulf

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards have seized a Togo-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf and arrested its nine-person Indian crew over alleged fuel smuggling, the military force said Monday on its Sepahnews website. "On Friday morning, an oil tanker named Pearl G, carrying the flag of the African country of Togo... was seized by judicial order," said the Guards' statement. The vessel is "owned by an Iraqi resident of Dubai, United Arab Emirates", and it was carrying 700,000 liters of fuel, the statement added. — AFP

Lebanon on alert over Zionist threats amid Gaza exodus

MAJDAL SHAMS: Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday vowed a "severe" response to a deadly strike that killed youths in the annexed Golan Heights, as diplomats raced to contain escalation between the Zionist entity and Hezbollah. On a visit to the site of the rocket strike which killed 12 youths in the town of Majdal Shams, Netanyahu said: "(The Zionist entity) will not, and cannot, let this pass. Our response will come and it will be severe."

He was greeted by protests during his visit, which came after mourners gathered in the Druze Arab town for the burial of the last victim, 11-year-old Guevara Ibrahim. The Zionist entity and the United States have blamed the strike on Lebanon's Iran-backed

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Local

Kuwait's support for Palestinians unshakable

International community urged to shoulder its responsibility, end devastating war



One of the aid flights for Palestine. — KUNA



AL-ARISH: A soldier patrols next to ambulances, donated by Kuwait, as humanitarian aid is unloaded at Egypt's Al-Arish Airport, ahead of being transported to the Rafah border area with the Gaza Strip. — AFP

KUWAIT: Kuwait has been and continues to be a firm backer of the Palestinian people and their rights on the international stage, out of deep belief in the fairness of their cause and its importance for both the Arab and Muslim worlds. This Kuwaiti stance has been renewed by His Highness the Amir, the then Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during his participation in the Cairo Peace Summit in October 2023. His Highness Sheikh Mishal stressed Kuwait's unequivocal rejection of Zionist officials call for forcibly evicting Palestinians out of their lands.

He also urged the international community to shoulder its responsibility, provide protection for Palestinian civilians, and stop the occupation's devastating war on the Gaza Strip. Kuwait also uses every regional and international platform to defend the Palestinian rights and call for ending the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the pre-June 5, 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital.

Situation in Middle East

Delivering Kuwait's speech before a UN Security Council session on the situation in the Middle East on July 17, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya renewed Kuwait's firm solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people and support for their legitimate rights, topped with establishing their independent state and achieving a comprehensive and fair peace. "This will lead to achieving security, stability, and development in the region," Al-Yahya said.

Kuwait's top diplomat also condemned the massacres against Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. "Gaza has turned into a bleak landscape of destruction, with 40,000 deaths, mostly women and children. The total number of victims under the rubble is unknown," he regretted. "Zionist entities have turned schools into battlefields and hospitals into landscapes of pain and powerlessness." Despite the efforts to end these attacks, Zionists continue to cut lives short without any distinction, he noted.

He went on to say that the Zionist authorities are committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Calling for unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance across Gaza, Al-Yahya underlined the essential role of UNRWA in supporting the Palestinian people in their darkest hour. Al-Yahya further warned against double standards and expressed support for all initiatives to reach a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

Criminal practices, violations

He highlighted Zionist continued criminal practices and violations of international law, referring to its unilateral decisions aiming to change the current legal and historic status of the occupied territories amid the failure of the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities. On the sidelines of his participation in the Jordan-hosted international conference for the urgent humanitarian response for Gaza as a Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya affirmed that Kuwait will remain a strong supporter of the Palestinian people and ready to do all in power to end their suffering.

"Kuwait will not hesitate to extend a helping hand to the brotherly Palestinian people and will continue to support them as they face injustice and aggression," Minister Al-Yahya said. Kuwait Amir's Representative highlighted Kuwait's governmental and popular campaigns to collect and provide aid to Palestinian people. He pointed out that Kuwait, since the start of the offensive on Gaza, has

launched an airbridge through which 50 aircraft loaded with 1.3 million tons of humanitarian and relief aid were dispatched to the Gaza Strip.

Relief supplies

Moreover, Kuwait has also organized a 100-land and sea aid convoy loaded with relief supplies and shelter materials for Palestinian people during the same period, the minister said. He added that Kuwait has also sent medical teams to the Gaza Strip to help support the collapsing healthcare sector there. "Kuwait acts out of a principled and firm position supporting the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights," the minister said.

He stated that Kuwait will always be among the main defenders of the Palestinian cause and the leading advocates for a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is the establishment of their independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967. Minister Al-Yahya emphasized that the international community needs to realize that stability could not be reached

at Labor Organization. As per the "instructions" of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait-based charities were quick to shore up urgent aid for the Palestinians, the diplomat said amid a gathering of international donors for the Palestinians, co-organized by Kuwait and Belgium.

Kuwait has already channeled out some \$112 million worth of urgent aid for the Palestinians since the war against the Gaza Strip began, he said, underscoring that such assistance will continue unimpeded given the scope of their misery. Speaking to the 112nd International Labor Organization's (ILO) conference on June 6, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen told a special session on labor in occupied Arab lands that the current disastrous situation in the Gaza Strip should be addressed promptly to avoid further bloodshed.

Forced displacement

The forced displacement of millions of Palestinians is a heinous crime, which the Zionist occupation was solely

The Kuwaiti diplomat welcomed Article 177 of the ILO report that called for an immediate halt of the unjust war in the Gaza Strip and the end of occupation. On May 26, the State of Kuwait stressed its commitment to continue aid and humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine and also praised UNRWA's vital role to serve and help the Palestinians.

"I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Kuwait's commitment to humanitarian and relief aid to the Palestinian people," Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium and head of its missions to the European Union and NATO, Nawaf Al-Enezi, told an international meeting on Palestine in Brussels today. He stressed that "UNRWA represents the backbone of the humanitarian response to Gaza and plays a vital and indispensable role," and noted that Kuwait recently made a voluntary contribution in the amount of \$30 million to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

Al-Enezi welcomed the recent decision by Norway, Spain, and Ireland to recognize the State of Palestine and hoped that other countries will view similar decisions more favorably. He "strongly welcomed" the International Court of Justice's latest decision ordering Zionists to immediately stop its military operation in Rafah. The Kuwaiti ambassador underlined the necessity to implement Security Council Resolution 2720 and allow the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid in a safe and unhindered manner and to create the necessary conditions for a ceasefire in Gaza.

'Humanitarian catastrophe'

"And this happens against the verdict of the highest United Nations court—the International Court of Justice (ICJ)—that ordered Zionists to halt the military operation in Rafah and to open the border crossing for humanitarian aid," said the EU foreign policy chief. He stressed that "we must do everything in our powers: to reach an immediate end of the hostilities; to achieve the immediate release of all hostages; and to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza."

Referring to the West Bank, Borrell said, "There, we see an intensified spiral of violence and indiscriminate attacks by extremist settlers, who are more and more targeting humanitarian aid heading to Gaza." Kuwait's Ambassador Al-Enezi expressed his appreciation "for the detailed presentation made by the Prime Minister Mustafa of his government's plans and substantial reform agenda in light of the economic, financial, and security challenges facing the new Palestinian government."

Further, Norwegian foreign minister Espen Eide, in his remarks to the press, called for a ceasefire in Gaza and underlined that "there is no alternative in the long run to the two-state solution." "We need to make sure that the Palestinian Authority will be able to survive and improve its service and plan for future return to Gaza," he said. He called on the Zionist regime to transfer the Palestinian money that it collected on behalf of the PA and urged all donors to step up their financial support for Palestine.

At the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in Beijing on May 30, Kuwait Ambassador to China Jassef Al-Najem said the forum adopted three documents after discussion, including "the Joint Statement on the Palestinian Issue." Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi said during his participation in the 96th session of the Liaison Officers of Arab Regional Offices on Boycott of (Zionist) Occupation Conference that Kuwait called for boycotting Zionist entities and hosted a conference on this issue in 1958. He added that Kuwait also opened an office for the Palestinian Liberation Organization on its land in 1964. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Cars drive past a billboard bearing a picture of a Palestinian boy, Mohammed, who's image with a shell-shocked face following Zionist strikes on the Gaza Strip was widely shared on the social media, and an inscription in Arabic that reads "Have you killed a Palestinian today? #boycott" in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

in the Middle East region before a just, lasting, and final solution to the Palestinian cause.

He regretted that the people of Gaza have experienced unbearable suffering and reiterated Kuwait's condemnation of the Zionist occupation's insistence on obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and on imposing a blockade and arbitrary measures at Gaza border crossings, which prevented the flow of sufficient vital supplies to the needy residents of the Gaza Strip and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis there. He stressed the need for international efforts to formulate clear visions for ensuring unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and to end the Zionist occupation's blatant violations of international laws and guarantee the right of peoples to obtain humanitarian aid during conflicts.

On June 10, Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN, Nasser Al-Hayen, affirmed that Kuwait will continue to ratchet up aid for the Palestinians, which includes an annual sum worth \$500,000 it provides the International

responsible for, affirmed the Kuwaiti diplomat, who did not fail to mention the apocalyptic scenes of destroyed infrastructure throughout Gaza. The ILO's impact of the war in Gaza on the labor market and livelihoods in the occupied Palestinian territory clearly showed the catastrophic humanitarian situation, which touched all Palestinians, specifically laborers there, he added. He revealed that the report suggested that over 200,000 Palestinians have lost their jobs, adding to the unending crimes committed by the Zionist occupiers.

Ambassador Al-Hayen insisted that the Zionist occupation had crossed all redlines and also violated all international laws and norms, including the ILO's constitution. He pointed out that preventing laborers from across occupied territories to move freely and seek work was another criminal act carried out by the Zionist aggressors. While the world celebrated International Workers' Day back on May 1, the occasion was marred by Zionist brutalization of Palestinian laborers, causing them to lose job security, stability, and peace, affirmed Ambassador Al-Hayen.

Palestinian cause is 'Arab's first cause'

CAIRO: Chairman of Arab Permanent Human Rights Committee (AHC) Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi confirmed Monday that the Palestinian cause is "Arab's first cause" and that it has been at the forefront of the agenda items of the Permanent Committee since its establishment in 1968.

During his presidency of the 54th session of the Arab Permanent Committee, Al-Mutairi said that efforts must be continued to boost human rights in a framework that takes into account concerns, meets hopes and aspirations, and achieves strategic goals to move forward the joint Arab human rights work. He pointed out the International Court of Justice ruling in The Hague on July 19 regarding the illegality of the ongoing Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza for 57 years.

Al-Mutairi noted the agenda of this session includes items such as choosing the slogan "Arab Human Rights Day" for the year 2025 and discussing three proposals presented by the Arab League, which are the right to adequate food, privacy, and other human rights in the digital age, in addition

to a proposal entitled "Human rights have no age". Over the three-day session, the committee will discuss ways to confront Zionist violations and racist practices in the occupied Arab territories, Arab prisoners in Zionist detention centers, and the bodies of Palestinian and Arab martyrs detained by the occupation authorities.

AHRC will discuss the executive plan of Arab strategy for human rights and 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 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.

Kuwait's delegation is headed by the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs, Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah, along with representatives from departments concerned with human rights in Arab countries, the Chairman of the Arab Charter Committee on Human Rights, the Director of the Human Rights Department of the Arab League, and the concerned parties in the joint Arab action organization. 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. — KUNA



Arab League Permanent Human Rights Committee holds meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Group photo of Zain interns at the Zain Summer Program celebration event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain interns sharpen media chops at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

With expert guidance, Zain Summer Program students gain hands-on experience

By Shakir Reshamwala

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News played pivotal roles in the fifth edition of Zain's Summer Program, providing invaluable media training and experience to the participants. During the program, interns at Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf, and Kuwait News, a leading local media institution, engaged in a wide range of activities, from creating news reports and editorial pieces to digital media production.

The nine students collaborated closely with editorial teams, learning about story research, interview techniques and content editing. Additionally, they gained hands-on experience with media equipment, including cameras and audio tools, enhancing their technical skills. "I learned a lot of skills, and lessons and made a lot of friends. This program was one of the most memorable experiences so far. Working with Zain and Kuwait Times/Kuwait News was amazing," said Esraa Al-Harran, one of the interns.

Throughout the program, Zain monitored the students' progress through weekly reflection sessions, providing guidance and support to help them excel. Team leaders and supervisors from Zain, Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, including Content Creator Dhoja Al-Issa, were actively involved in mentoring the students, ensuring they gained the most from their internship experience.

"My time at Kuwait Times/Kuwait News has been rewarding and fun. My favorite part was how open the environment was as a whole and all the fun times I had with my fellow interns. I was able to learn new skills and work on projects I'm passionate about," Jouri Al-Houti said.

The contributions of experts at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News went beyond training; they actively involved the interns in producing content that was

published across their print and digital platforms. This exposure allowed students to see their work reach a broad audience, providing them with real-world experience and a deeper understanding of the media industry.

"Participating in Zain's Summer Program has been a transformative experience. The opportunity to work with an incredible team and publish impactful work has been immensely rewarding. I am grateful for the support and guidance from Faten, Dhoha, Faisal, Hamad and the entire (fun) team, which made this journey truly special," said Abdullah Al-Mutawa.

In recognition of these efforts, Zain honored Kuwait Times and Kuwait News during a ceremony marking the conclusion of the program at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh. The company acknowledged the media outlets for their significant contributions to the program's success. This partnership was instrumental in equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed in modern journalism and media production. Zain also honored the interns who created the most unique media content at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News.

The Zain Summer Program, part of the company's Future University Network (FUN) initiative, is designed to develop a variety of skills among young people. Key elements of the program included a 'Steer Your Career' workshop in partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, covering essential career skills such as leadership, communication, time management and public speaking.

"Working at Kuwait Times/Kuwait News was such an amazing experience. I was able to gain so many skills and had an amazing opportunity to meet amazing people who felt like family. The past month was so much fun. It was filled with so much joy that I didn't want it to end, but great things will always



Kuwait Times/Kuwait News Content Creator Dhoja Al-Issa speaks at the event.



Ghalia Al-Qaoud and Monai Kraidess



Abdullah Al-Mutawa reports at the event.



Tala Bin Hussain reports at the event.

come to an end," said Monai Kraidees. The nine interns were Tala Bin Hussain, Monai Kraidess, Jouri Al-Houti, Hessa Al-Humaidi, Ghalia Al-Qaoud, Esraa Al-Harran, Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Rayan Al-Ruwayeh and Rashed Meshal.



Kuwait Times/Kuwait News interns take a selfie with Dhoja Al-Issa.



Dhoja Al-Issa, Tala Bin Hussain and Hamad Al-Musaibeeh.



Kuwait News Content Creator Ahmad Hadi interviews the interns.



Kuwait Times/Kuwait News Content Creator Dhoja Al-Issa is awarded by Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh.



Ghalia Al-Qaoud is awarded.



Abdullah Al-Mutawa is awarded.



Hessa Al-Humaidi is awarded.



Tala Bin Hussain is awarded.



Jouri Al-Houti is awarded.



Monai Kraidess is awarded.



Esraa Al-Harran is awarded.

Deputy PM, US envoy discuss defense ties

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah deliberated Monday with American Ambassador to Kuwait, Karen Sasahara, mechanisms of bolstering defense cooperation. In a press release, the Ministry of Defense explained that Minister Al-Sabah received the American diplomat in his office, where the two exchanged perspective on issues of common interest. Latest developments on regional and international fronts were also touched upon during the meeting. — KUNA

Kuwait leaders support and empower youths

PARIS: Kuwait's political leadership dedicates special concern to the youth for their crucial and effective role in building a promising future for the country, said the visiting Minister of State for Youth, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, on Sunday. Dr Al-Huwailah, who heads the Kuwaiti expedition to the Paris Olympics event, was speaking to Kuwait News Agency in the Kuwaiti group's residence at the Olympic Village in the French capital.

"We shoulder a great responsibility toward the youngsters, and it is our duty to support and empower them so they can attain their aspirations and raise the Kuwait Flag aloft at international quarters under the sagacious leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah," said Minister Al-Huwailah, also the Minister of Social, Family, and Childhood Affairs.

Minister Al-Huwailah affirmed that her department's personnel devote special care to the junior citizens and seek to meet their needs and hopes in coordination with the other apparatuses of the state. Al-Huwailah added that her visit to the expedition's headquarters was intended to encourage the Kuwaiti athletes and praised the efforts by the managers to accommodate the Kuwaiti champions. She also boasted of the Kuwaiti women athletes' participation in the Olympics, hoping to see more Kuwaitis able to partake in such an international sports event. — KUNA

Burgan Bank celebrates 18 young women from 'Empower Her' internship program

Part of bank's comprehensive social responsibility program

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently hosted a ceremony celebrating 18 young women who completed "Empower Her", the Bank's summer internship program for undergraduate students. The event took place at the Bank's head office in the presence of Burgan's Executive Management, female leaders, and the graduates' families, featuring the interns' graduation project "My Female Role Model", and highlighting their numerous achievements throughout the three-week program.

The internship program stems from Burgan Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program, human capital development strategy, and dedicated efforts to empower women, aiming to pave a path toward a brighter future by supporting and developing the rising professional calibers and preparing them for leadership positions that will help shape the community.

"We are immensely proud to celebrate the graduation of 18 talented female students from the 'Empower Her' summer internship program. Their dedication, hard work, passion and impressive achievements throughout the program are a testament to their potential and drive," said Bashar Al-Qattan, Acting Executive Manager - Learning and Talent Development at Burgan Bank. "We are committed to nurturing such talent and providing opportunities for professional growth and excellence."

These young women have demonstrated exceptional skills as well as embodied the spirit of inno-



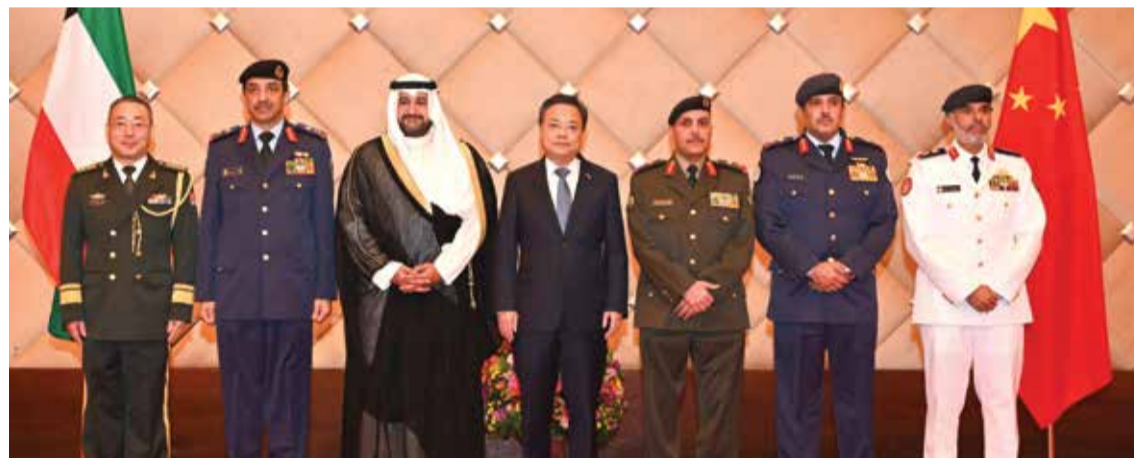
Bashar Al-Qattan

vation and leadership that we value highly. We look forward to witnessing their continued success and contributions to the society and industry." Designed to enrich their skills after the academic knowledge by on-ground professional experience, "Empower Her" offered its participants the opportunity to experience different layers of the banking industry through one-week rotations.

In addition to visiting different branches and gaining exposure to various departments, the interns were matched with female mentors from Burgan's suite of female leaders based on their personalities and interests, guaranteeing that empowered female

leaders continue to empower future generations of aspiring women. The summer internship program also focused on introducing and honing vital soft skills necessary for succeeding in today's workplace, such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and social skills.

It serves to note that Burgan is among the most achieved banks in Kuwait on the gender equality front, with women forming 45 percent of its staff. "Empower Her" is among many programs that Burgan Bank develops to guarantee the continuous growth and development of its female calibers within its workforce and across the Kuwaiti talent pool.



Chinese and Kuwaiti military personnel with Chinese ambassador and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense.



Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishaal Al-Sabah.

Official commends Kuwait and China military cooperation

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishaal Al-Sabah praised the unwavering commitment of Kuwait and China to strengthening cooperation across all levels, with a

particular focus on the military sector. His remarks were made during the Chinese Embassy's celebration on Sunday marking the 97th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The event, hosted by Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei and Military Attaché Xu Chulai, was attended by representatives from allied and friendly nations.

Sheikh Al-Sabah noted that Kuwait and China have achieved significant milestones in military education and training, including their joint venture on the weapons and ammunition factory at the Supply Authority. He stated that his participation in the Republic of China's national celebration underscores the political leadership's dedication to deepening and strengthening the bilateral relationship.

Military Attaché Xu Chulai highlighted that the ammunition factory, Kuwait's first defense industry project, holds special meaning for both countries. The project is making positive progress and has potential to usher in a new era of bilateral defense cooperation, he said. Xu expressed a commitment to collaborating closely with Kuwaiti counterparts to implement the agreements reached by the leaders of both nations. The plan includes enhancing high-level exchanges, expanding joint training and exercises, and increasing officer exchanges between military academies.

Additionally, there is a focus on advancing cooperation in military industry and trade, while also strengthening international and regional security cooperation to elevate the defense and military relationship to a new level. He reflected on the notable successes achieved through joint efforts in military exchanges, defense industries, and military trade. Key achievements include Major General Fahad Al-Turajji's visit to China last year, the visit of the 44th Chinese naval escort task force to Kuwait, and the long-standing service of Chinese 155mm cannons with Kuwaiti artillery, renowned for their exceptional performance and after-sales maintenance.

Major General Khaled Zayed, Commander of the Ground Forces, described the military cooperation between China and Kuwait as part of a deep-rooted and robust relationship. He noted that the political



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishaal Al-Sabah



Military Attaché Xu Chulai

ties between the two countries are longstanding and strong, with growing and evolving economic relations. The military relationship, which has spanned over 25 years, is also expanding and expected to continue developing. He praised China as a very friendly nation with clear positions on various issues, including support for Islamic and Arab causes as well as Kuwaiti stances.



Chinese and Kuwaiti military officers.



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Biden calls for major US Supreme Court reforms

S Africa's ruling ANC expels ex-leader Zuma

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DEIR EL-BALAH: Displaced Palestinians sit by tents across from a garbage dump in Deir El-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on July 22, 2024. — AFP

Ailing Deir El-Balah last refuge for many Gazans

Hundreds of thousands in Deir struggle with disease, lack of shelter after Zionists evacuate 80% of Gaza

CAIRO/DEIR EL-BALAH: Thousands of Palestinians fled a community in the central Gaza Strip on Monday in the face of new Zionist evacuation orders, worsening the humanitarian plight in an area already inundated with displaced people fleeing an assault in the south.

Zionist forces, which have now captured nearly the entire Gaza Strip in nearly 10 months of assault, have spent the last several weeks launching major operations in areas where they had previously claimed to have uprooted Hamas fighters.

Hundreds of thousands of people have converged on Deir El-Balah, a small city in the center of the enclave that is the only major area yet to be stormed, many forced there by fighting in the ruins of Khan Younis further south since last week. In its latest assault, the Zionist entity ordered residents on Sunday to flee Al-Bureij, just northeast of Deir. "What is left? Deir? Deir is full of people. Everyone is in Deir. All of Gaza. Where should people go?" Aya Mansour told Reuters in Deir after fleeing from Bureij.

The Zionist military said fighter jets hit 35 targets

across the Gaza Strip over the past day as troops battled fighters in Khan Younis and Rafah, close to the border with Egypt. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fierce gun battles have been ongoing in those two areas as well as in the suburb of Tel Al-Hawa in Gaza City further north.

Palestinian medical officials said at least eight Palestinians were killed in a Zionist air strike earlier in Khan Younis. On Sunday, the military issued new evacuation orders to some districts in Bureij, forcing thousands to leave before the army blew up several houses. Some families used donkey carts and rickshaws to carry whatever belongings remained. Many walked for several kilometers on foot to reach Deir or Al-Zawayda town to the west.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of UNRWA, the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, said only 14 percent of the Gaza Strip had not been placed under evacuation orders by the Zionist military. People have been forced to evacuate repeatedly, often with only a few hours notice.

Aid worker Tamer Al-Burai in Deir said water in

Deir was becoming more difficult to get as more and more displaced people arrived, both from Khan Younis to the south and Bureij to the north. "The situation is catastrophic, people are sleeping in the streets," he said.

Ceasefire talks

Although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced weekly demonstrations from people in the Zionist entity demanding a ceasefire to bring back more than 100 hostages still held in Gaza, there has been little visible progress in talks brokered by Qatar and Egypt.

Negotiations are set to continue after Zionist officials returned from the latest round in Rome on Sunday, Washington, which sponsors the talks, has repeatedly said a deal is close; the latest talks are over a proposal President Joe Biden unveiled back in May. "People here live on the hope there will be a ceasefire, but it is all lies. I think I will die here. No one knows who is going to die first here," said Aya Mohammad, 30, a Gaza City resident sheltering in Deir.

The limited access to water has worsened health complications from poor sanitation. Many displaced people were suffering from skin diseases, and children are afflicted by fevers, continuous weeping, and declining to eat or be breastfed, said Hussam Abu Safiyah, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza.

The war began with an assault on communities in the south of the Zionist entity by Hamas-led fighters who killed 1,200 people and captured around 250 hostages, according to Zionist tallies. Since then Zionist forces have killed more than 39,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to health authorities there who do not distinguish between combatants and civilians but say more than half of the dead are women or children.

The Zionist entity, which has lost around 330 soldiers in Gaza, says a third of those it has killed are fighters. Hamas has demanded a path to an end to the war in Gaza as a condition for its agreement to a ceasefire Netanyahu has said repeatedly the conflict will stop only once Hamas is defeated. — Reuters

France probes ultra-left link to rail sabotage

PARIS: France was on Monday probing the possible involvement of ultra-left movements in attacks that paralyzed the rail network at the start of the Olympic Games, as new sabotage acts affected fiber optic cables in several areas. With the government vigilant over the risk of more such attacks during the Games, French authorities on Sunday arrested an activist from an ultra-left movement at a site belonging to national rail operator SNCF. Police said the cables of several telecoms operators had been sabotaged in six areas of France overnight from Sunday into Monday but Paris was not affected.

AFP confirmed with major carriers including Free and SFR that they had been affected, although no major disruptions had yet been reported. "It's vandalism," said Nicolas Chatin, spokesman for SFR, one of France's four biggest operators. "Large sections of cables were cut. You would have to use an axe or a grinder," he told AFP. But the group minimized the impact of any disruption, saying that in the end only 10,000 fixed line customers had been affected.

Possible manipulation

The man was detained at Oissel in northern France on Sunday and had access keys to SNCF technical premises, tools and literature linked to the "ultra-left", said a police source, asking not to be named. He was placed in police custody for questioning in Rouen, the main city of France's Normandy region.

Unknown individuals had in the early hours of Friday attacked three different railway installations in different parts of France, causing days of chaos on the high-speed network as Paris hosts the 2024 Olympic Games. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told France 2 television that the authorities were



CROISELLES: SNCF employees and French gendarmes inspect the scene of a suspected attack on the high speed railway network in Croiselles, northern France on July 26, 2024. — AFP

looking into the theory that "ultra-left" movements were behind the attacks.

French services have "identified a certain number of profiles that could have committed" the sabotage acts, he said. He said the "attacks were very intentional and well targeted". Darmanin added that this was "the traditional mode of operation of the ultra-left". "The question is whether they were manipulated by other people or is it for their own account," he added. "We are progressing well and we will find them."

He said the saboteurs clearly had "information" about the installations but declined to comment when asked if he believed they had come from within the SNCF. An email purporting to claim the attacks was received at the weekend by several French media outlets, using rhetoric typical of mil-

itant groups and slamming the Olympics as a "celebration of nationalism".

However, it contained no detail as to how the attacks were carried out and police sources who spoke to AFP cautioned against seeing the email as a claim of responsibility. Darmanin said that the message could have been "opportunistic". There was no link between the man detained on Sunday in northern France and the investigation into the attacks early Friday, a police source said.

By Monday morning all high-speed trains in France were running normally again after railway engineers worked round the clock to repair the damage, said Transport Minister Patrice Vergriete. The cost of the sabotage will "very probably" amount to millions of euros, including "commercial losses" and "repair costs", the minister said. — AFP

Turkey approves controversial stray dog cull

ANKARA: Turkey's parliament approved on Monday a move to euthanize some of the country's four million stray dogs, a measure opponents say could lead to a vast animal cull. The controversial article, part of a draft law on the fate of the animals, says those who are sick or deemed aggressive must be put down. The rest of the bill is being debated and expected to be adopted in the next few days.

The government says the euthanasia clause is needed to prevent dog attacks and the spread of rabies. It says the other homeless dogs should be captured en masse, placed in animal shelters and put up for adoption. Critics say relying on animal sanctuaries and adoption is ultimately unworkable because of the numbers involved. Animal rights campaigners, who fear the draft law is a cover for a huge cull despite government denials, instead advocate a mass sterilization campaign.

MIPs began examining the 17-clause bill on Sunday, when deputies opposed to the measure protested by putting on white gloves stained with fake blood. The emotional debate has revived memories of a 1910 tragedy when the Ottoman authorities rounded up around 60,000 stray dogs in Istanbul and sent them to a deserted rock in the Sea of Marmara. With nothing else to eat, the dogs tore each other to pieces.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said ahead of the debate that Turkey faced a problem "like no other civilized country" and which was "growing exponentially". The president, whose conservative AKP party and its allies hold an absolute majority in parliament, said on Wednesday people wanted "safe streets".

The opposition Republican People's Party, which controls Istanbul and other major cities, has said its mayors will not apply the law if it is passed. Demonstrations have taken place in recent weeks, including inside parliament. — AFP

International

South Africa's ruling ANC expels ex-leader Zuma

Veteran politician campaigned to dislodge ANC from power by backing rival party, ANC says

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling ANC on Monday expelled its former leader ex-president Jacob Zuma for leading a rival party into elections following disciplinary proceedings. The African National Congress, which lost its absolute parliamentary majority for the first time in May largely due to Zuma's defection, said the veteran politician's conduct was "irreconcilable" with its constitution.

"Former President Jacob Zuma has actively impugned the integrity of the ANC and campaigned to dislodge the ANC from power while claiming that he had not yet severed his membership," ANC Secretary General Fikile Mbalula told a press conference. He was thus "expelled" from the party, Mbalula said.

The ANC first suspended the scandal-tainted ex-leader in January, after he endorsed the newly formed uMkhonto weSizwe (MK). MK cut into the ANC's share of votes in the May 29 elections, taking third place with 14.5 percent.

The ANC managed 40 percent in the May vote — its weakest score since it came to power three decades ago to replace the apartheid government. The result forced it to form a coalition government with nine other parties. MK was left out and is leading the opposition, with 58 lawmakers in the 400-seat National Assembly. MK, a populist, radical leftist party, initially disputed the election result. "His platform is



JOHANNESBURG: uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party leader and South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma (center) gives a press conference in this file photo. — AFP

dangerous, appeals to extremist instincts in our body politic and riles up a political base that may foment social unrest," Mbalula said of Zuma's MK.

Zuma has been barred from serving as an MP because of a 2021 conviction for contempt of court. After news of his upcoming expulsion was leaked,

the party lashed out at the "grave injustices against its leader". "An examination of the leaked document reveals that the disciplinary process was not only profoundly flawed but also conducted in a manner akin to a kangaroo court," said MK spokesman Nhlamulo Ndhlela.

Zuma will engage legal counsel to determine the course of action, he said. The former president has 21 days to appeal the decision. Zuma joined the ANC via its youth league as a teenager in 1959. Elected South African president in 2009, he was forced from office in 2018 under the cloud of corruption allegations and was replaced by long-term rival, President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The charismatic and outspoken 82-year-old still carries considerable political clout in South Africa, even enjoying support within some factions of the ANC. Many believed his political career would end when he was sentenced to 15 months in jail in June 2021 after refusing to testify to a panel probing financial corruption and cronyism under his presidency.

His imprisonment triggered riots that sparked South Africa's worst episode of violence since the fall of apartheid, leaving more than 350 dead. He spent only two months behind bars and was released for health reasons, after which Ramaphosa commuted his sentence. — AFP



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping (right) walks with Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (left) for a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on July 29, 2024. — AFP

China 'important interlocutor' in global conflicts: Meloni

BEIJING: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni hailed China as an "important interlocutor" in managing global tensions Monday as she met President Xi Jinping. Meloni is in Beijing on her first visit to China since she took office nearly two years ago, pledging to "relaunch" ties strained by her country's departure from Beijing's vast Belt and Road Initiative late last year. She sat down with Xi for talks on Monday at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. "There is growing insecurity at an international level and I think that China is inevitably a very important interlocutor to address all these dynamics," she told Xi. The two countries must "think together on how to guarantee stability, how to guarantee peace," she said. "Above all we need the system of rules in which we operate to remain stable," she told Xi.

The Chinese president, in turn, hailed "long-established friendly" ties between Beijing and Rome. Both sides uphold tolerance, mutual trust and mutual respect, with each choosing its own development path," he said. Meeting Chinese Premier Li Qiang Sunday, Meloni said her visit would "relaunch our bilateral cooperation". The pair then signed a bilateral action plan that emphasized the importance of "ensuring that commercial relationships are balanced and mutually beneficial".

According to the document, that meant "companies can operate on equal terms in a spirit of fair competition and free trade". During the talks, Li said Beijing was keen to push relations with Italy in a "more mature and stable direction", according to a readout by Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Meloni's administration withdrew from China's Belt and Road Initiative in December, having been the only G7 nation to sign up. Before taking office, Meloni said joining the initiative — a central pillar of Xi's bid to expand China's clout overseas — had been a "mistake".

Italy's non-binding memorandum of understanding with China upon joining Belt and Road had contained broad undertakings for cooperation in logistics, infrastructure, finance and the environment. But details were scarce and the lack of transparency fueled distrust among Italy's allies. Meloni's administration has since sought to mend ties with China, Italy's second-largest non-EU trading partner after the United States. — AFP



NUSANTARA: This handout picture taken and released on July 29, 2024, by the Indonesian Presidential Palace shows Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (left) speaking to the media as he visits the new Presidential Palace in the future capital city of Nusantara. — AFP

Indonesian president tries out palace in proposed new capital

NUSANTARA, Indonesia: Indonesian President Joko Widodo spent his first night in the eagle-shaped palace of the country's proposed new capital Nusantara ahead of official meetings on Monday, as the outgoing leader works to allay fears about the beleaguered infrastructure project. Jokowi, as the president is known, has been rushing to complete as much of the new capital as possible before he steps down in October, despite Nusantara facing multiple construction delays, a lack of foreign investment, and managerial and land issues. "This is a big job. It can take 10, 15, 20 years," Jokowi

told reporters outside the new Garuda Palace on Monday. "This is not a job that takes one or two years."

The dramatic bird-shaped palace, comprised of 4,650 blades that make up the eagle's wings, is the centerpiece of the new capital. On Monday, the president admitted he didn't sleep well on his first night, but said that water, electricity and the internet, which had delayed his initial planned move this month, were now available. He did not specify how long he planned to work there.

Carved out of jungle on the tropical island of Borneo, the \$32 billion infrastructure project is located about 1,200 km (750 miles) from the current capital, Jakarta. Preparing to hold Independence Day celebrations in Nusantara on Aug 17, Jokowi has in recent weeks been more pragmatic in his remarks about the new capital. "Lots of people think we are rushing ... No, we're not rushing the job. It's in accordance with procedures," he said.

The government aims to have 1.9 million people liv-

ing in Nusantara by 2045, importing a wave of human and industrial activity into the heart of Borneo. Environmentalists have warned that the planned city will speed up deforestation in one of the world's largest stretches of tropical rainforest.

On Sunday, the president donned a black touring jacket and rode Nusantara's new toll road on a motorcycle, flanked by several government officials and social media influencers. In recent months Jokowi has broken ground on schools, office complexes in Nusantara and promised foreign investment. But years after announcing his signature project, intended to ease the burden on the traffic-ridden, polluted, sinking and over-populated Jakarta, zero foreign funding has been committed. Doubts deepened last month after the top two officials overseeing the project resigned without explanation. President-elect Prabowo Subianto has promised to continue developing Nusantara after it is inaugurated but analysts say he will prioritize funding his own signature "nutritious food" program. — Agencies

Lebanon on alert over Zionist...

Continued from Page 1

Hezbollah, which has traded near-daily fire with Zionist forces since the start of the Gaza war in early October. Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said a flurry of diplomatic activity has sought to contain the anticipated Zionist response. "(The Zionist entity) will escalate in a limited way and Hezbollah will respond in a limited way... These are the assurances we've received," Bou Habib said in an interview with local broadcaster Al-Jadeed.

The United States, France and others were trying to contain the escalation, he added, while Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that "talks are ongoing with international, European and Arab sides to protect Lebanon and ward off dangers". On Monday White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said he was "confident" a broader war can be avoided.

Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said he had spoken to Habib and Zionist Foreign Minister Israel Katz and told them it was "possible to interrupt the spiral of violence and it must be done now". Several airlines including Lufthansa, Air France and Royal Jordanian announced on Monday they had suspended all flights to Beirut. But in the center of the city, shop owner Muhammad Saad, 53, said life was going on as usual. "We're already at war, what more could happen?" he told AFP.

Hezbollah has denied responsibility for the Majdal Shams rocket attack, though the group claimed multiple strikes on Zionist military positions that day. The Zionist entity said Hezbollah fired a Falaq-1 Iranian rocket. This type of projectile is unguided and an analyst called them inaccurate weapons. On Sunday, the Zionist entity's security cabinet "authorized the prime minister and the defense minister to decide on the manner and timing of the response", Netanyahu's office said.

Hezbollah has evacuated some positions in south and east Lebanon, a source close to the group told AFP. On Monday, Hezbollah said it had launched "dozens of Katyusha rockets" at a Zionist military site following the killing of two of its fighters. A source close to the group told AFP the pair were killed in an air raid on Lebanon's southern village of Mais al-Jabal.

The Lebanese group has said its attacks are in support of Hamas, and they would stop if a ceasefire is reached in Gaza. Months of effort have failed to secure a ceasefire and hostage release deal, though mediators and Zionist negotiators met on Sunday in Rome to discuss the latest proposal. "The negotiations on the main issues will continue in the coming days," a Zionist statement said.

Hamas, however, again accused Netanyahu of hindering negotiations. In a statement, the group said he has set new conditions in "a retreat" from an earlier draft. On the ground in Gaza, the Zionist military said its forces were continuing "precise" operations in the Rafah area and in nearby Khan Yunis. In the territory's north, Hamas' armed wing said its fighters were "engaging" a Zionist force in Gaza City's Tal al-Hawa district, where witnesses reported shelling.

The Zionist military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 39,363 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the territory. Since the war began, rights activists, UN agencies and others have alleged abuses of Palestinians during Zionist detention. On Monday, the Zionist military said nine soldiers are being held for questioning in a case of abuse of a detainee at a facility known to be holding Palestinians arrested from Gaza.

Late on Sunday, the military announced its latest evacuation order for parts of central Gaza, asking Palestinians to head to a declared safe zone near Khan Yunis. It said Zionist forces would "operate forcefully" against militants in the area of Al-Bureij refugee camp after rocket fire from there. Hundreds were fleeing the area on Monday, witnesses said. Philippe Lazzarini, head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said "only 14 percent" of areas in Gaza are not under Zionist evacuation orders. — AFP

Opposition cries foul over Maduro...

Continued from Page 1

"The results are undeniable. The country chose a peaceful change," he wrote on X ahead of the official result. Brazil's foreign ministry called for an "impartial verification" of the results while Colombia urged an "independent audit" of ballots. Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves denounced the CNE result as "fraudulent," while Chile's president called it "hard to believe". Peru announced it recalled its ambassador over the results.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed "serious concerns" that the result did not reflect the will of Venezuelans. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called for "full transparency in the electoral process." Britain also voiced concerns about allegations of vote count "irregularities". Venezuela's allies, including China, Russia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras and Bolivia,

Prince Mohammed endorses...

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and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Crown Prince for their support and guidance offered to the vital sport sector. "The kingdom has become a global home of sport during a time when the country is experiencing unprecedented growth and transformation due to the King's support", he said.

"We are committed to hosting an exceptional edition of the FIFA World Cup set to feature 48 teams in a single country for the first time in the history of the competition. The Crown Prince's direct

however, congratulated Maduro. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said he spoke with "brother" Maduro to convey congratulations "for the historic electoral triumph achieved."

Independent polls had predicted Sunday's vote would end 25 years of "Chavismo", the populist movement founded by Maduro's socialist predecessor and mentor, the late Hugo Chavez. Since 2013, Maduro has been helming the once-wealthy petro-state, where GDP dropped by 80 percent in a decade, pushing more than seven million of its 30 million citizens to emigrate. He is accused of locking up critics and harassing the opposition in a climate of rising authoritarianism.

In the run-up to the election, he warned of a "bloodbath" if he lost. Gonzalez Urrutia had replaced popular Machado on the ticket after authorities loyal to Maduro excluded her from the race. Machado had urged voters Sunday to keep "vigil" at their polling stations in the "decisive hours" of counting amid widespread fears of fraud. Ballots were cast on machines that print paper receipts placed into a container. The electronic votes went directly to a centralized CNE database. — AFP

supervision of Saudi Arabia's ambitions of hosting this iconic global football event showcases his commitment to elevating the future of Saudi sport, in line with Vision 2030, and help nurture a generation of athletes capable of competing at the highest global stage," he added.

The official bid book submission will take place in a ceremony held by FIFA in Paris as part of the FIFA World Cup 2034 bid journey, which commenced on October 4, 2023 when Saudi Arabia, via the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, announced its intention to bid. Later, the Saudi Arabian Football Federation submitted its official letter of intent to FIFA, before the bid brand identity was revealed under the slogan "Growing Together." The bid period is set to conclude in December later this year when FIFA officially announces the host nation of the FIFA World Cup 2034 during a General Assembly meeting. — KUNA

International

Biden calls for major US Supreme Court reforms

Proposal includes term limits for top US court's nine justices and a stricter ethics code

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden unveiled plans Monday to reform the conservative-dominated Supreme Court, in a bold but long-shot move as he seeks to make a mark in his last six months in power.

In proposals backed by Vice President Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic election nominee, Biden is calling for 18-year term limits for the top court's justices and an enforceable ethics code.

The 81-year-old also wants a constitutional amendment to reverse the court's recent ruling backing Republican nominee and former president Donald Trump's claims of presidential immunity. Biden's move comes after a series of shock Supreme Court rulings such as the repeal of the nationwide right to abortion, and following a host of scandals involving the top court's lifetime-appointed justices.

The plans have almost no hope of getting through a deeply divided US Congress but could motivate Democratic voters in the November 2024 election, from which Biden dropped out just over a week ago. "What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public's confidence in the court's decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms," Biden said in an opinion piece in the Washington Post. "We

now stand in a breach."

Biden said the proposals also reflected the principle that "no one is above the law. Not the president of the United States. Not a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. No one." Harris said in a separate statement that "President Biden and I are calling on Congress to pass important reforms" to the court. "These popular reforms will help to restore confidence in the Court, strengthen our democracy, and ensure no one is above the law," she said.

'Close to zero'

Legal expert Steven Schwinn warned that Biden had a "close to zero" chance of getting the plan through. But Biden was probably trying to "raise public consciousness" and "introduce the Supreme Court as an election issue," Schwinn, a law professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, told AFP.

The Supreme Court, with a 6-3 conservative majority of justices who currently serve for life, plays an outsized role in determining the lives of ordinary Americans from everything from reproductive health to the environment. It is packed with three judges appointed while Trump was president from 2017 to



US President Joe Biden

2021 and Democrats have warned that with a second term he would be able to name even more.

Biden had previously resisted calls to overhaul the court but has changed his mind after it dealt several blows to his policies in recent years. The court stunned the world in 2022 when it overturned the

1973 Roe v Wade ruling that had underpinned the federal right to abortion. At least 20 states have now brought in full or partial abortion bans.

It has rolled back the power of federal agencies, blocked Biden's signature student debt forgiveness plan, and partially ruled in early July in favor of Trump's immunity claims. Trump is now using that ruling to challenge his recent criminal conviction in a porn star-hush money case and a series of other prosecutions.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has been rocked by ethics scandals involving arch-conservative justices. Justice Clarence Thomas recently admitted that two luxury vacations he took in 2019 were paid for by a billionaire Republican political donor.

Thomas, the longest-service justice on the court, has also ignored calls to recuse himself from cases related to the 2020 election, after his wife took part in the drive to keep Trump in power despite his electoral loss. And Justice Samuel Alito has rejected calls to recuse himself from some Trump-related cases after flags linked to the former president's false election fraud claims were discovered to have been flown outside his home and vacation property. — AFP

Bangladesh protests resume after Dhaka ignores ultimatum

DHAKA: Bangladeshi students held scattered street protests on Monday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government ignored an ultimatum to release their leaders and apologize for those killed in deadly unrest. Student rallies against civil service job quotas this month sparked days of violence that killed at least 205 people including several police officers, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data.

The clashes were some of the worst of Hasina's 15-year tenure but her government has since largely restored order by deploying troops, imposing a curfew and shutting down the internet nationwide. At least half a dozen leaders of Students Against Discrimination, the group that organized the initial protests, are among thousands since taken into police custody. "The government is continuing to show complete and utter insensitivity to our movement," Abdul Kader, one of the group's coordinators, said in a statement. "We are requesting all citizens of Bangladesh to show solidarity with our demands and join in our movement."

Several protests were staged in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh on Monday, but they were only a fraction of the size of those seen earlier in the month. Police charged with batons to break up one protest on Dhaka's outskirts, arresting at least 20 people, newspaper Prothom Alo reported.

Security forces were deployed widely elsewhere in the teeming megacity of 20 million to deter other demonstrations. Students Against Discrimination leaders had vowed to end a week-long moratorium on new demonstrations if police failed to release their leaders by Sunday evening.

The group's demands also include a public apology from Hasina for the violence, the dismissal of several of her ministers, and the reopening of schools and universities around the country that were shuttered at the height of the unrest. At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the un-



DHAKA: A Bangladesh police personnel detains a student during a rally against quotas in government jobs, along a street in Dhaka on July 29, 2024. — AFP

rest began, according to Prothom Alo.

Troops are still patrolling urban areas and a nationwide curfew remains in force but it has been progressively eased since the start of last week. Bangladesh's mobile internet network was restored on Sunday, 11 days after a nationwide blackout imposed at the height of the unrest, in another sign of the government's confidence that it was in control of the situation.

'Back to normalcy'

"The situation is turning back to normalcy thanks to the timely and appropriate measures taken by the government and the people," the foreign ministry said in a Sunday statement. Hasina's government also declared a day of national mourning on Tuesday for those who were killed during the unrest.

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 jobs 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, 76, 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. The government has accused opposition parties of hijacking the protests to cause unrest. Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters Sunday that security forces had operated with restraint but were "forced to open fire" to defend government buildings. — AFP



NICOSIA: A migrant woman sweeps outside a UN refugee agency (UNHCR) tent, erected in the UN buffer zone in Nicosia on 27 July, 2024. — AFP photos



A migrant sits fanning himself inside a UN refugee agency (UNHCR) tent.

Migrants in UN buffer zone limbo on divided Cyprus

NICOSIA: Dozens of migrants are languishing in the searing heat of Cyprus' buffer zone, saying they were pushed into the no-man's land by police on the divided island's south. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on Friday said a total of 59 asylum seekers were living in the UN-patrolled buffer zone between the areas controlled by the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), having attempted to cross southwards.

Sitting on a plastic chair under the shade of trees and surrounded by UNHCR-branded tents, Hussein Zare said he fled his home country of Iran for Cyprus in the hope of gaining entry to the European Union and starting a new life in France. In May, he fled from Iran to Istanbul with his wife and daughter and from there to the TRNC, which covers the northern third of the Mediterranean island and where EU law does not apply.

When Zare tried to cross the UN buffer zone into southern Cyprus, "the police arrested us and brought us here", he said. "The government ... has

blocked us in this area," he added, gesturing to the camp next to a UN post and a gate leading out of the buffer zone, also known as the Green Line. The Cypriot ministry of migration and asylum said that "decision not to accept these individuals is dictated by the need to ensure that the Green Line does not become a passage for migrants".

'Urgent solution'

Since a 1974 invasion by Turkey triggered by an Athens-backed coup, the island has been divided between the Greek-speaking south and the Turkish Cypriot north, which unilaterally declared independence in 1983 but is only recognized by Ankara. The buffer zone, which is guarded by UN peacekeepers, slices across the island from northwest to southeast, separating the two sides. Cyprus, the EU's easternmost member, says it is a "frontline country" on the Mediterranean migrant route, with asylum seekers comprising more than five percent of the republic's 915,000 population.

The Cypriot government has accused Turkey of turning a blind eye and allowing irregular migrants to cross the Green Line, and has tightened security along the divide. Zare said that he and the other migrants in the camp had hired a lawyer with the help of the UNHCR to file asylum applications with Cypriot authorities. But, he said, so far "we have not been able to get an answer from them and our requests are rejected."

In a statement, the Republic of Cyprus's migration ministry said: "Since these people travelled through Turkey to the occupied areas (TRNC), it is Turkey's responsibility to provide them access to asylum procedures." After visiting the buffer zone camp, British High Commissioner Irfan Siddiq posted on social media platform X on Friday: "Despite (UN) efforts, these people - including children - are living in dire conditions." "An urgent solution is needed to relocate these people to more humane conditions and to allow for the processing of their asylum claims," Siddiq said.

'Hopeless'

Mudassir, a 34-year-old Afghan asylum seeker in the camp, fled Taliban rule in Kabul, fearing for his life because his father had worked for the US embassy. "I was only thinking about how to leave Afghanistan," he said. Mudassir said he thought going to the TRNC would get him into the EU and to safety, but it was only when he arrived that he found out about its unrecognized status.

When Mudassir, who declined to give his last name, crossed the buffer zone at night with other Afghans to claim asylum with Cypriot police, he said police refused to register their cases, instead bringing them to the buffer zone. "We feel hopeless in these extremely harsh conditions," he said. "There are a lot of snakes. There are children and women and it's very difficult for them." — AFP

US announces new \$1.7 bn military aid package for Ukraine

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday announced new military aid for Ukraine valued at around \$1.7 billion that features air defense munitions and artillery rounds that Kyiv's forces say they desperately need. The aid includes \$200 million in equipment that will be drawn from existing US military stocks and will reach the battlefield quickly, as well as about \$1.5 billion in new orders that will take longer to arrive, the Defense Department said in a statement.

The assistance will provide Ukraine with several kinds of air defense munitions to protect against Russian strikes, 155-mm and 105-mm artillery rounds, ammunition for HIMARS precision rocket launchers, and multiple kinds of anti-tank weapons, among other capabilities.

The United States has been a key military backer of Ukraine, committing more than \$55 billion in weapons, ammunition and other security assistance since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Prior to late April, Washington had announced only limited new aid for Ukraine this year - a \$300 million package made possible by using money that the Pentagon had saved on other purchases.

Congress had not approved large-scale funding for Kyiv for nearly a year and a half but finally took action in April after months of acrimonious debate, passing legislation authorizing \$95 billion in aid, including \$61 billion for Ukraine.

Washington has since provided multiple new packages, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said Russia was able to take the initiative on the battlefield while his country waited for the approval of new aid. On Monday, Russia said its forces had captured the village of Vovche in eastern Ukraine - the latest in a string of recent front-line advances claimed by Moscow. The Ukrainian military said Monday that it had repelled six Russian attacks on the Kharkiv front line over the past day, including at Vovchansk.

Russian forces have been trying to capture the small town close to its border since launching the offensive in Kharkiv in May. Now grinding through a third year of fighting, neither Kyiv nor Moscow have managed to swing the conflict decisively in their favor, even though Moscow's forces have gained ground in recent months. — AFP



KYIV: Emergency and rescue personnel clear items from apartments of a building destroyed by a missile strike in Kyiv on July 10, 2024, amid the Russian invasion in Ukraine. — AFP

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2024

UK govt sets out \$17.3bn spending cuts to plug hole in public finances

Scores of British pensioners to lose winter fuel payments

LONDON: Britain's Finance Minister Rachel Reeves on Monday announced spending cuts worth 13.5 billion pounds (\$17.3 billion) over the next two years to help plug what she said was a 22 billion pound overspend caused by the previous government. Reeves also said she had accepted independent recommendations for public sector pay increases.

In a statement seen by critics as an attempt to pave the way for future tax rises, Reeves accused the former Conservative government of covering up the true state of government spending and said she needed to make difficult decisions to prevent the budget deficit ballooning by 25 percent this year.

"The scale of this overspend is not sustainable. Not to act is simply not an option," Reeves told parliament. Elected to run the world's sixth-largest economy in a landslide victory on July 4, Labour has spent much of its first three weeks in power telling voters that things are worse than expected in almost every area of public policy.

Reeves commissioned the review of the public finances upon taking office and the headline finding of a funding shortfall had been widely reported in the days preceding her speech. The Conservatives dismissed her accusations as a pretext for Labour to raise taxes. Some economists have also expressed scepticism, saying Labour could have foreseen most big pressures on spending before taking office.

Labour has stressed that it intends to stick to its election campaign commitments not to raise the rates of income tax, value-added tax and other main taxes. Any tax changes would come in the formal budget statement later this year.

British public sector workers such as teachers and doctors are set to receive inflation-busting pay rises worth 9 billion pounds (\$11.54 billion) that will pressure the public purse but help avoid disruptive industrial action, the government said on Monday.

The new Labour government said it would make cuts to public spending in other areas, finance minister Rachel Reeves said as she blamed the previous Conservative administration for covering up the scale of the black hole in the public finances.

"I have today set out our decision to meet the recommendation of the pay review bodies, because the previous government failed to prepare for these recommendations in their departmental budgets," Reeves told parliament as she announced the pay rises. "They come at an additional cost of 9 billion pounds this year.



LONDON: Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves making a statement on government finances in the House of Commons in London on July 29, 2024. — AFP

But the pay rises, based on the advice of independent pay review bodies, also seek to balance the pressure on public finances with the need to curb industrial unrest and address staff retention. Governments are not bound by the review bodies' recommendations although they have usually accepted them.

Strikes by doctors, nurses, teachers and civil servants over pay in the last two years have heaped pressure on vital public services including the state-funded NHS. The Trades Union Congress, Britain's umbrella union body, warned in the run-up to this month's election of public sector strikes if the new government did not sufficiently raise workers' pay.

Reeves said she would axe universal winter fuel payments for pensioners, saying they will now only go to those who receive welfare support. Reeves said this would better target support for heating costs at those who need it, while all pensioners will still benefit from the government's commitment to pension support. The rule change will apply to those in England and Wales, as the policy is handled separately by the governments in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Reeves also said on Monday the government was scrapping plans to build a tunnel at Stonehenge as part of efforts to cut costs. The 1.7 billion pound

(\$2.2 billion) scheme, which included a new dual road with a two-mile tunnel beside Stonehenge, was aimed at hiding a nearby main road that has long blighted the mysterious prehistoric circle of stones in southern England. Stonehenge, one of the world's most famous prehistoric monuments, includes a 5,000-year-old ditch and a Neolithic stone circle with early Bronze Age burial mounds nearby. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Some archaeologists and local residents opposed the project, saying the tunnel was too short and would damage the archaeological surroundings of Stonehenge. — Reuters

India says no to EU carbon tax proposal

NEW DELHI: India has declined to accept a European Union proposal to levy higher taxes on its carbon-producing industries, which the 27-nation bloc said it was willing to offset when those products enter its borders, a top official told Reuters. The latest suggestion was made by an EU delegation led by Gerassimos Thomas, director general for taxation and customs union within the European Commission, who defended the proposed carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) in its meetings with Indian officials. Ajay Seth, India's economic affairs secretary, told Reuters in an interview: "Their suggestion is not practical. Their team had come and met us ... the solution they are offering doesn't work for a developing economy like India."

New Delhi has conveyed its stance to the EU delegation, labeling the proposed CBAM as unfair and detrimental to domestic market costs, Seth said. The EU last year approved the world's first plan to impose tariffs on imports of high-carbon goods, including steel, aluminum and cement, aiming to reach net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050.

Negotiations between the EU and India continue at a "technical level," an EU statement said after the delegation's visit earlier this month. EU officials are trying to win over countries like China, South Africa and India that have opposed the CBAM. The European Commission delegation had told India that the



MEDAK, India: Engineers from China Petroleum Pipeline (CPP) Material and Equipment Corporation weld carbon steel pipes as part of a gas pipeline for India's Reliance Industries Ltd at Medak some 175kms from Hyderabad. — AFP

carbon tax's primary intent was not to raise revenue but to ensure the supply of greener goods to the EU market. The EU delegation suggested India could implement its own carbon tax to fund advancements in supply chains and cut carbon emissions, while maintaining its share of the EU market.

Seth said the greening of the steel industry would entail higher costs for the economy, and "with income levels which are one-twentieth of the income levels in Europe, can we afford a higher price? No,

we can't." Assuming there is no domestic Indian plan to tax high-carbon production - and incentivize a move to lower-carbon methods - the EU plans to collect the carbon tax on each consignment of steel and aluminum from Jan 1, 2026, potentially imposing tariffs of between 20 percent and 35 percent, according to industry estimates. Analysts warn that the deadlock over carbon emissions could strain bilateral trade and affect discussions on a free trade agreement (FTA). — Reuters

Global economic prospects at odds with rate cut hopes

BENGALURU: Optimism about global growth prospects this year and next is building among hundreds of economists polled by Reuters, with risks still tilted toward higher inflation even as they cling on to their forecasts for interest rate cuts. While most major central banks were successful last year in taming sky-rocketing inflation rates with rapid rate hikes, a resilient global economy with strong employment and wage growth has kept alive risks of price pressures surging again.

In all, a 56 percent majority of economists - 114 of 202 who responded to a question about inflation in the global poll covering nearly 50 top economies taken July 8-25 - said it was more likely to be higher than they forecast for the remainder of the year than lower. So too with rates.

The global economy was forecast to grow 3.1 percent this year and next, an upgrade from the 2.9 percent and 3.0 percent forecast in an April poll and roughly in line with the International Monetary Fund's latest prediction. But even with that upgrade, many central banks are still expected to cut rates at least twice by year-end.

"I think the big story here is that growth globally has managed to keep grinding ahead ... the global economy has managed to hang in there in the face of a lot of stresses and strains and of course the major tightening cycle of the past two years," Douglas Porter, chief economist at BMO Capital Markets, said. "It's still growing a little faster than three percent despite a wide variety of challenges ... Our call is for growth to hang in there in the neighborhood of three percent through the second half."

That optimism stands in contrast to worries earlier this year whether the US economy would be able to absorb such an aggressive season of monetary tightening without a downturn, even though concerns about the No. 2 economy, China, remain. Growth rates for 24 of the 48 top economies surveyed were upgraded from three months ago, with 13 of those from developed economies, where there had been concerns about flagging demand, and the remaining 11 in emerging ones.

Eighteen economies saw a downgrade and six were left unchanged. Still, among major central banks, economists expect the Federal Reserve and the Bank of England to cut rates twice this year, and the European Central Bank three, the survey showed. Forecasters have held to a more consistent view than financial traders and investors. Aggressive market pricing for rate cuts at the start of the year retreated from six Fed cuts, down to one or two recently, and is now back to three. — Reuters

Global stocks rise as focus turns to rates

NEW YORK/LONDON: Major stock markets mostly advanced Monday as investors looked ahead to key interest-rate decisions this week in the United States and elsewhere. The coming days, including Wednesday's Fed decision and Friday's employment report promise to be "market moving and likely exhausting from analytical standpoint," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. "The news cycle, of course, is full of uncertainty, so the unknown news is always hanging out there as a market-moving catalyst as well."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.1 percent at 40,561.42. The broad-based S&P 500 gained 0.4 percent to 5,479.85, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index jumped 0.9 percent to 17,505.04. Among individual companies, McDonald's gained 2.7 percent despite missing analyst esti-



TOKYO: A man looks at an electronic board displaying the exchange rate for the Japanese yen against the US dollar in Tokyo. — AFP

mates as the company vowed to redouble efforts to win over value-focused consumers.

This week's earnings calendar includes reports from Apple, Microsoft, Boeing and ExxonMobil.

Leading Asian indices largely gained, Europe was mixed and Wall Street's top stock indices rose fol-

lowing last week's volatility caused by mixed earnings and big selling of technology stocks. "This week is a crucial one for the markets, with significant data releases, central bank meetings, and major company earnings reports set to impact indices, metals, and currencies," said market analyst Fawad Razaqada at City Index and FOREX.com.

The US Federal Reserve, Bank of England and Japan's central bank are due this week to update on their monetary policies, with US jobs data and more results from multinationals also set to come out. "While no change is expected at the Federal Reserve meeting this week, the odds are now strongly in favor of a cut in September," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

Razaqada said "the Fed adopting a more dovish tone is what we expect to witness", adding that in addition to the 0.25-percentage-point cut in September the market has priced in nearly two more quarter-point rate cuts. On Thursday, a day after the Fed's latest decision, the Bank of England may cut borrowing costs for the first time since the COVID pandemic after a sizeable fall to British inflation this year, analysts said. — AFP

Business

Ethiopia eases forex curbs as it awaits crucial bailout

Central Bank measure sends birr sliding by around 30% against dollar

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia said Monday it is easing foreign exchange curbs as part of a broader economic reform package, as the deeply-indebted nation awaits a multi-billion dollar bailout from international lenders. The value of the local currency, the birr, slid by around 30 percent against the dollar after the announcement of the measures by the central bank.

"The reform introduces a competitive market-based determination of the exchange rate and addresses a long-standing distortion within the Ethiopian economy," the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) said in a statement. Africa's second most populous country is pinning its hopes on a rescue package of around \$10.5 billion from external lenders including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but negotiations have been long and fraught.

Analysts say the IMF has been calling for numerous reforms of Ethiopia's tightly state-controlled economy, including floating the currency, in order to unlock the funding. The Horn of Africa nation, battered in recent years by several armed conflicts, the COVID pandemic, and climate shocks, has about \$28 billion of external debt and is also grappling with sky-high inflation and a shortage of foreign currency reserves. Under the shift to a market-based exchange rate regime, the NBE said "banks are henceforth allowed to buy and sell foreign currencies from/to their clients and among themselves at freely negotiated rates".

The central bank would, it said, make "only limited interventions to support the market in its early days and if justified by disorderly market conditions".

After the announcement, the leading Commercial

Bank of Ethiopia said in a statement that the US dollar was buying 74.73 birr and selling at 76.23. This compares to a buying rate on Friday of 57.48 and a selling rate of 58.64. Ethiopia has a highly active black market for currency trading, with the value of the birr at about 50 percent of the previous official rate.

Until now, the rate for the birr, a non-convertible and non-exportable currency, was set daily by the NBE. "The FX reforms... represent a comprehensive set of measures that will support Ethiopia's current stage of development and its increasing integration with the rest of the world," the central bank said.

The NBE also foreshadowed the opening of Ethiopia's securities market to foreign investors, saying terms and conditions would be disclosed in the near future. Among other measures, it said it would allow foreign exchange to be retained by exporters and commercial banks "thus substantially boosting FX supplies to the private sector". It also announced the introduction of non-bank foreign exchange bureaus that would be allowed to buy and sell foreign currency in cash at market rates.

When he took office in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pledged to embark on reforms of Ethiopia's closed and state-dominated economy, but progress has been slow. In a statement on Sunday, Abiy said Ethiopia's reform agenda "will lay the foundation for strong, private sector-led inclusive economic growth and job creation". He said the economy had registered "robust" economic growth over the past six years, with an average GDP growth rate of 7.1 percent from fiscal year 2019 to 2023.



ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia: A shop owner counts Ethiopian birr in his stall at the Shola Market in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia said Monday it is easing foreign exchange curbs as part of a broader economic reform package. — AFP

But more than 21 million people, or about 18 percent of Ethiopia's population, rely on humanitarian aid as a result of conflict, and climate disasters such as flooding or drought, according to UN figures.

The landlocked country's credit rating was downgraded to a partial default in December by international agency Fitch after it missed a \$33 million coupon payment on a Eurobond. The two-year conflict in the northern Tigray region which ended in November

2022 led to the suspension of numerous development aid programs and budget assistance. Reacting to Monday's news, the US embassy said in a statement that a market-based foreign exchange was a "difficult but necessary step for Ethiopia to address macro-economic distortions". "We encourage the government, with the help of development partners, to implement reforms to support the Ethiopian people and progress towards a more free and robust economy." — AFP



CHICAGO: A customer shops at a grocery store in Chicago, Illinois. Local government is getting into the US grocery business - but can city officials ever hope to run a corner store the way Mom and Pop used to do? — AFP

Return of Mom & Pop stores - only this time run by government

WASHINGTON: Local government is getting into the US grocery business - but can city officials ever hope to run a corner store the way Mom and Pop used to do?

With the demise of thousands of grocery shops - victims of hostile market forces that were hastened by the pandemic - "food deserts" have opened up and left many rural and urban neighborhoods without good options. Once upon a time in America, many street corners could boast a family-run store peddling everything from food to pharma. Their rise through the 19th century peaked when bigger stores - promising choice, glitz, one-stop shopping and value - muscled in on their patch. By about 1960, supermarket chains were selling 70 percent of groceries, upending the independent model. But the chains also had to close outlets in the pandemic, deciding it no longer made financial sense to keep operating in some of the country's poorest neighborhoods. Their exit came just as many Americans struggled to afford the fast-rising cost of food, with inflation helping boost grocery prices by 11 percent from 2021 to 2022. All of which has now led city officials to think the unthinkable in a nation where government shies from meddling with a free market, whatever its effect on ordinary Americans.

Across the country, municipalities are asking if they should buy up grocery stores at risk of closing, or even open their own in food deserts that lack other options. "In Chicago, half a million people are living in food deserts ... the markets have said, 'We're not serving them,'" said Ameva Pawar, a former Chicago City Council member and now a senior adviser with the non-profit Economic Security Project. "So in places where the markets won't open a store, this is where a public option is an elegant solution," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

From 2021 to last year, at least six major grocery stores closed on Chicago's poorer south and west sides, the city said. The Economic Security Project is working with the city of Chicago on a feasibility study, due for completion in coming months, on a municipally-owned grocery store.

Such a store "could break even or even lose money and get a subsidy," Pawar said. "The goal is to increase life expectancy, reduce poverty - that's a return. Make workers more productive because they have access to fresh food." Critics call such a project wasteful, with one libertarian think tank saying it amounts to "subsidized dysfunction".

The National Grocers Association declined to comment. FMI, the Food Industry Association, did not respond to a request for comment. But Chicago's communities "deserve affordable, healthy groceries, especially in historically disinvested areas," Mayor Brandon Johnson told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a statement. "We are utilizing every tool in our

toolbox to address food equity." The work in Chicago follows a unique state law passed last year to address concerns over access to fresh food. It aims to open new stores, upgrade or expand existing ones, and creates funding to help municipalities or non-profits open groceries in what backers say could be a national model.

About 76 counties now lack a grocery store, according to Department of Agriculture statistics, while major chains have rapidly merged over the past half decade. Independent stores are juggling other threats - be it aging owners or depopulated communities, said Rial Carver, program leader with the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University. "In rural communities it's especially critical because the options for those grocers or communities are limited. If one store closes, that means it's likely the only option," she said.

In Kansas alone, one in five rural grocery stores closed in the decade to 2018, she said, matching the national ratio. Beyond locals losing their access to food, store closures deal a blow to tax revenues, job options and community fabric. "The rural grocery store plays a role in attracting and retaining residents," Carver said.

"We've heard examples of grocery stores closing, and the schools have a hard time staying open, or other critical infrastructure being impacted. They go hand in hand." The initiative helps communities figure out options for keeping or opening a store - be it city-run or some sort of hybrid that could see a private operator use municipal property. Carver expects such options to see a wave of new attention.

In Sanger, Texas, Principal Anthony Love's high school has run a student-run grocery store since 2020, after the city's sole grocery store made way for a highway expansion. While the school had offered donated food for students to take home, Love said some refused out of embarrassment. Hence the grocery store concept, which cuts any shame. "It was my first year as principal. It definitely wasn't something that was on my mind at that moment, but I knew there was a need," Love said. The program was created with support from Texas Health Resources, a faith-based health provider that has helped build five such school projects and plans five more, said Marsha Ingle, a senior director with the non-profit system.

"Nationally, there has been tremendous interest," she said. "It's a larger conversation around making sure students have what they need in order to learn, and hungry kids do not learn very well."

Publicly supported grocery stores are also being used to revitalize poor communities. Aaron "AJ" Johnson sees the new Oasis Fresh Market as a hub to rebuild a disinvested, mostly Black part of Tulsa, Oklahoma. When the market was created in 2021 through support from the city and federal government, it was the first full-service grocery store in North Tulsa in 14 years, and the first Black-owned store in a half century, Johnson said. "Imagine 14 years," he said. "This was a public health crisis in our community." Now the store is hiring from within the community, helping connect locals to food assistance and other services - and sparking interest countrywide, Johnson said. Back in Illinois, a poor, mostly Black community in the state's far south is likewise hoping to create a city-owned grocery store as the centerpiece of a wider revitalization. — Reuters

COSCO Shipping, Fortescue to build green fuel supply chain

BEIJING: China's COSCO Shipping Corporation has signed a preliminary agreement with Australia's Fortescue to jointly build a green fuel supply chain to help reduce pollution from the shipping industry, the Chinese company said on Monday. The memorandum of understanding includes exploring construction and deployment of green ammonia-fuelled vessels owned either by COSCO or jointly owned by both companies to transport iron ore and other minerals to reduce carbon emissions in the China-Australia iron ore green

shipping corridor. "We are committed to increasing cooperation with global partners to actively promote the green and sustainable development in the shipping industry throughout its life cycle," COSCO Shipping, headquartered in Shanghai, said in a statement on its WeChat account.

"The cooperation marks another big step in decarbonizing the shipping industry ... These solutions will be integral to achieving our net zero Scope 3 emission target by 2040," Fortescue, an integrated green technology, energy, and metals company and also known as the world's No 4 iron ore supplier, was cited as saying in the statement. Fortescue's executives had been in China in recent weeks talking with potential partners for joint projects, CEO Dino Otranto said on July 25. Fortescue conducted the world's first trial using ammonia as shipping fuel in the port of Singapore, Reuters reported in March. — Reuters

SAMSUNG

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Business

Trump effect in clean tech sector deepens angst in EU's boardrooms

Incentives for e-vehicles, EV charging and solar power may be jeopardized

FRANKFURT/GDANSK: European companies focused on clean energy are abandoning expansion plans, bracing for lower sales or see funding of US projects in doubt because of fears over what a potential election victory for Donald Trump could mean for their sector.

Trump has dismissed President Joe Biden's policies to fight climate change as a "green new scam" and is expected to try to undo much of his administration's work, including the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that offers tax breaks and subsidies to US and foreign companies investing in sustainable energy. The law passed in 2022 has acted as a powerful incentive for European companies from the sector to expand or establish their US presence, but a specter of a second Trump presidency is giving them a pause.

"With a Donald Trump who A) is very opportunistic, B) is also very polemic and C) is also fairly unpredictable, you have to ask yourself whether it makes sense to make such a bet," Peter Roessner, chief executive of Luxembourg-based hydrogen firm H2Apex, told Reuters. Under the IRA, the company could have built a hydrogen tank production plant in the United States for around a third of the \$15 million in costs. In February, however, Roessner decided to cancel the plan over concerns that Trump could be reelected even though the company already had held initial talks with potential customers. Market bets that Trump would win back the White House in November have intensified this month after he was shot at during an election rally and days later secured the Republican Party nomination.

Recent polls show a narrowing gap between Trump and Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic candidate with similar views on climate to Biden's. Yet Roessner's comments reflect anxiety among Europe's clean tech firms over what a Trump presidency could mean and how they are trying to prepare for such a scenario. Wood Mackenzie energy data and analytics company reckons it would put a

projected \$1 trillion in low-carbon energy investments at risk by 2050. Consultancy Roland Berger said that while a full repeal of the IRA was improbable, a Trump administration could still jeopardize incentives for electric vehicles, EV charging, solar power and energy efficiency.

German solar firm SMA Solar issued a profit warning last month, citing a possible government change in the United States, the world's second-largest solar market after China, as one of the risk factors. The world's largest maker of solar inverters initially aimed to choose a location for a planned factory in the United States by the end of June, but is yet to find one, saying it is still evaluating possible sites in a number of states.

While SMA is not abandoning its expansion plans for now, the company told Reuters on July 4 that it "is observing that the unclear outcome of the presidential elections in the USA is currently leading to a certain reluctance to invest in renewable energies locally." That hesitation is reflected in the performance of clean tech shares, with the REXXX index, which tracks the world's 30 biggest renewable firms, underperforming global stocks since the assassination attempt.

Orsted, the world's largest offshore wind farm developer, has been hit particularly hard after Trump said in May he would target the sector on his first day in office if he got reelected. Orsted declined to comment. Some renewable energy companies appear undeterred by the uncertainty.

German wind turbine maker Nordex, for example, last month said it would resume production at a mothballed plant in Iowa, saying the US would remain an important and sufficiently big market in the future "regardless of political developments".

Several others, however, report delays as prospective partners expected to co-fund projects hold off with their commitments. Hydrogen firm Thyssenkrupp Nucera has spoken of delays to final investment decisions concerning US projects, a factor that



BEDMINSTER, New Jersey: Former US President Donald Trump speaks during a press conference announcing a class action lawsuit against big tech companies at the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster on July 07, 2021. — AFP

drove an outlook cut at its alkaline water electrolysis unit earlier this year. The company said while it continued to focus on the US, it was vital how the IRA program would look like after the election. It said strategic investors with a long-term focus on the cleantech sector were likely to resume projects earlier in the face of continuing uncertainty than those who are more opportunistic.

Norwegian rival Nel said it was yet to make a final investment decision for a planned production facility in Michigan, which was contingent on the demand for

its products in the US market. The uncertainty over the US election outcome and its impact is starting to affect industries beyond the clean tech sector. For example, German machinery firm Trumpf reported earlier this month a 12 percent drop in US sales for its 2023/24 fiscal year, blaming "geopolitical uncertainties" that made industrial customers cautious. This growing complexity companies have to navigate globally can create "analysis paralysis" when it comes to investment decisions, said Marcus Berret, global managing director at Roland Berger. — Reuters



SUPPORTERS OF FORMER US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP attend a watch party of Republican National Convention at a local restaurant in Coral Springs, Florida. — AFP

Latinos' economic fears narrow Dems' edge against Trump

MILWAUKEE, US: A naturalized US citizen, Nicaraguan-born Linda Fornos believes uncontrolled immigration is harming her family's ability to care for itself, and says she will be casting her ballot for Donald Trump in November—having voted Democrat in 2020. Latino voters represent the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group of eligible US voters, and one that traditionally has favored the Democratic ticket in presidential elections.

But polls show an increasing number of Latinos like Fornos switching allegiance—a trend that poses an enormous challenge for Vice President Kamala Harris in the 100 days she has left to counter the lure of Trump and his hard-line border policies. Fornos, who has lived in the United States for 16 years, addressed the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee in mid-July, making the case that the "Biden economy" had made life nearly impossible for her and her family.

"One of my sons works three jobs, and the other holds down two. That makes six jobs for three people just to survive in Biden's economy," she said. "Our open borders are making this problem worse."

She added: "It's upsetting to see million of dollars being spent to help immigrants who came here illegally while hard-working families who did it the right way are left struggling."

Nearly 64 million people of Hispanic descent live in the United States, roughly 20 percent of the population, according to 2022 figures. Thirty-six million of them are eligible to vote, according to the Pew Research Center. And of the estimated 16.5 million who voted in 2020, 59 percent supported the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden.

But if some Democrats expected Trump's campaign vow of mass deportations of undocumented immigrants—or his denunciations of those migrants as rapists and criminals—to offend Latino voters, people like Fornos support him. "The fact is that illegal immigration hurts legal immigrants the most," she said.

Democrats have seen their dominance among Latino voters steadily ebb, from a three-to-one edge in the 1970s to roughly two-to-one today, said Benjamin Marquez, a University of Wisconsin political scientist. The Republican strategy now, he said, is not to win the Latino vote outright but to "shave off enough Latino votes" to prevail.

Jorge Martinez, a strategist with the conservative America First Policy Institute, expects the Republicans will do that—easily. He predicted that Trump and running mate J.D. Vance will win "the vast majority of the Hispanic vote," especially in battleground states.

Martinez told AFP that the policies of the first Trump administration brought prosperity and security to Latino voters. Vanessa Faura, a naturalized Peruvian who also addressed the Republican convention, said Biden's policies had done the opposite.

In today's economy, she said, Latinos merely "survive," sometimes feeling no better off than in the countries they left. — AFP

Fed may hold rates steady again as inflation fight unfolds

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve is expected to hold interest rates steady at a two-day policy meeting this week but open the door to interest rate cuts as soon as September by acknowledging inflation has edged nearer to the US central bank's two percent target.

Polymakers in advance of the July 30-31 meeting were reluctant to commit to the timing of a first rate cut, but audibly cheered recent data showing price pressures were easing broadly, with headline inflation moving closer to the Fed's target and evidence from job, housing and other markets suggesting that trend would continue. Data on Friday showed the Fed's preferred personal consumption expenditures price index, which was accelerating by as much as 7.1 percent on a year-over-year basis in 2022, rose by 2.5 percent in June after a 2.6 percent gain in May. Since March, in fact, the annualized month-to-month changes in the PCE price index show it rising at just 1.5 percent — half a percentage point below the Fed's target. A companion measure stripping out volatile food and energy prices is trending at 2.3 percent over that same window — within sight of the 2 percent goal.

Combined with a broader sense that price pressures are easing, that data may be enough for Fed officials to change their description of inflation as "elevated" in next week's policy statement, and note rising confidence that the pace of price increases will return to 2 percent. Policymakers have said they should start cutting interest rates before inflation fully returns to their target, and if upcoming data stays in line with recent months they may be running out of time.

The Fed "is only 50 basis points from the target ... so it seems that is not very far," said Jim Bullard, the former president of the St. Louis Fed and now dean of Purdue University's Mitchell E. Daniels Jr. School of Business. "Is it still elevated? Sure. But it is not as elevated as it was," Bullard said. A slight change in the statement, perhaps describing it as "moderately elevated," would "send a major signal to markets that you are taking on board all that disinflation that has occurred over the last year and you think it is for real and you don't think it is going to turn around."

The Fed lifted its benchmark interest rate to slow the economy after inflation surged, and has held it steady in the current 5.25 percent-to-5.50 percent range since last July, making the current run of tight monetary policy among the longest in recent decades.

Despite warnings last year that such strict financial

Indonesia's big coal firms overlooking methane emissions

JAKARTA: Coal firms in major CO2 emitter Indonesia are overlooking planet-warming methane emissions, obscuring the full environmental impact of their operations, according to a report published Monday. Methane—which is responsible for about one-third of warming from greenhouse gases—is a key focus for countries wanting to slash emissions quickly and slow climate change.

London-based energy think tank Ember analyzed the emission profiles of 10 major coal-mining companies in Indonesia, collectively responsible for half of the archipelago's coal production.

It found that only four of the 10 firms included coal mine methane (CMM) emissions in their emissions inventory, indicating that the environmental impact of coal mining in the country was not being wholly accounted for. "Failing to understand or report on these emissions appropriately undermines a company's overall sustainability reporting. It also overlooks a potentially significant missed opportunity



NEW YORK: Traders work in the New York Stock Exchange during afternoon trading on July 26, 2024. New consumer data showed easing inflation, possibly leading to upcoming interest-rate cuts. — AFP

conditions could trigger a recession, the Fed at least for now appears to have hit a sweet spot. Inflation has fallen, and while the unemployment rate has risen gradually it remains, at 4.1 percent, around what many Fed officials see as representing full employment. Some data, including disappointing recent home sales and rising loan delinquencies, may point to weakness. But the most recent report on overall economic output was surprisingly strong, with growth at a 2.8 percent annualized rate in the second quarter. The Fed regards the economy's underlying potential growth, consistent with stable inflation, at about 1.8 percent.

"They have had encouraging inflation data ... Clearly the economy is slowing. The balance of risks is different than it was four months ago. Full stop," said Nathan Sheets, global chief economist at Citi. "It feels like they want to be a little more certain, so signal in July and cut in September."

Political vibes

The US central bank will release its latest policy statement at 2 pm EDT (1800 GMT) on Wednesday, and Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a press conference half an hour later. Acknowledging that rate reductions are imminent would put the Fed in line with investors who

ty for emissions reduction," the report said.

The companies' CMM emissions "could exceed 8 million tons of CO2 equivalent, more than a third of the companies' potential total emissions", Ember said in a press release. The CMM emissions of most major Indonesian coal firms may be "on par or greater than" their total emissions from fossil fuel combustion and purchased electricity, according to the report. CMM, categorized as fugitive emissions or unintentional releases, refers to the methane released when coal is extracted or topsoil is removed.

Methane remains in the atmosphere for only about a decade, but it has a warming effect 28 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year timescale. Over a 20-year timescale, it has a warming impact around 80 times greater than CO2. Analysts urged Indonesia's coal firms to start taking the impact of methane emissions seriously to meet sustainability standards.

"Measuring and reporting methane emissions will be crucial in coal mining decarbonization efforts and ensuring compliance with national and international standards," Ember analyst Dody Setiawan said.

Indonesia is one of the signatories of the voluntary Global Methane Pledge and Jakarta says it has committed to "take comprehensive domestic actions to achieve the global reduction of methane emissions by 2030. — AFP

consider it a near certainty that it will deliver at least a quarter-percentage-point cut at the Sept 17-18 meeting, the first step in reversing the most rapid series of rate increases in four decades.

It would also put the Fed in the spotlight of a tumultuous US presidential race. Inflation may be less of a centerpiece issue in an election that has included an assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, and the withdrawal from the race of President Joe Biden, who was replaced by Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democrats' presidential nominee. But Republican lawmakers earlier this month told Powell in a hearing that a rate cut in September could seem like an effort to tilt the playing field against Trump, who installed him as Fed chief early in 2018 only to turn deeply critical of his leadership of the central bank.

Among Fed officials, however, sentiment is broadly shared that inflation is easing, including among some of the central bank's more hawkish voices. Fed Governor Christopher Waller, another Trump appointee, in particular said that inflation data was close to the point where rate cuts would be warranted and the labor market close to the point where the unemployment rate might be at risk of rising fast. Prices and inflation, meanwhile, may still figure into the election. — Reuters

TotalEnergies pulls out from two South African gas fields

PARIS: French energy giant TotalEnergies said on Monday it was withdrawing from two offshore gas fields in South Africa as they did not appear economically viable. A subsidiary of TotalEnergies owns a 45 percent stake in a block off the country's southern coast where the fields, Brulpadda and Luiperd, were discovered. TotalEnergies said they could "not be turned into a commercial development as it appeared to be too challenging to economically develop and monetize these gas discoveries for the South African market".

The block, spanning 19,000 square kilometers (7,335 square miles), is located 175 kilometers (109 miles) off the South African south coast. Qatar Petroleum, which holds a 25-percent interest in the block, also announced its intention to withdraw from the project, said Africa Energy Corp, a Canadian oil and gas exploration company that holds a 10-percent stake through a subsidiary. — AFP

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2024



This handout image made available by the Jordan Tourism Board shows the house XVIII's double windows at Umm al-Jimal archaeological site, some 86 kms (53 miles) north of the Jordanian capital Amman, which was added to World Heritage list by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). — AFP photos



Umm al-Jimal archaeological site.

JORDAN'S UMM AL-JIMAL ADDED TO UNESCO HERITAGE LIST

Jordan's Umm al-Jimal village has been added to UNESCO's World Heritage List, in a move hailed on Sunday by the country's tourism and antiquities minister as a "great achievement". UNESCO, which is hosting a meeting of its World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, said on X on Friday that the earliest structures uncovered at Umm al-Jimal date back to the first century AD, "when the area formed part of the Nabataean Kingdom." It added

that inscriptions in "Greek, Nabataean, Saffaitic, Latin and Arabic uncovered on the site... sheds light on the changes in its inhabitants' religious beliefs".

The village is near the Jordanian-Syrian border, 86 kilometers (53 miles) north of the capital Amman, and is known as "the black oasis" due to the prevalence of black volcanic rock in the area. Jordan's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Makram al-Qaisi said in a press conference Sunday that

the inclusion of Umm al-Jimal on the World Heritage List is a "great achievement we should be proud of". He said the ministry hoped to invite local and international investors to the site and "present Umm al-Jimal as an attractive tourist destination".

The name Umm al-Jimal comes from the use of camels as part of trade caravans in the village. The village was first settled by the Nabataean peoples in the first century AD and later occu-

pled by the Romans, becoming an important agricultural and commercial village. Umm al-Jimal is the seventh historical site in Jordan to be added to UNESCO's World Heritage List, along with Petra, Quseir Amra, Umm al-Rasas, Wadi Rum, Mughatas and Salt. Tourism contributes between 12 and 14 percent of GDP in the kingdom, whose 10 million inhabitants rely heavily on the sector. Qaisi said that Jordan welcomed more than six million tour-

ists in 2023, bringing in \$7 billion. But tourism has started to feel the effects of the war raging in nearby Gaza. Qaisi said the kingdom saw a 4.9 percent drop in tourism revenue so far in 2024, and a 7.9 percent drop in visitors. Most tourists come from Europe, the United States and Canada, followed by Asian Pacific countries. — AFP



West Church arches and west wall at Umm al-Jimal archaeological site.



House XVIII's gate entrance and courtyard at Umm al-Jimal archaeological site.



House XVIII at the Umm al-Jimal archaeological site.

Defying downturn, auction houses bid high on Hong Kong



Nicolas Chow, Chairman of Sotheby's Asia, speaks during a media tour of the new two-storey, 24,000 square foot (2,230 square meter) Sotheby's space at Landmark Chater in the Central district of Hong Kong. — AFP photos

Three of the world's top auction houses are racing to expand in Hong Kong, eager to woo young Asian buyers even as the global art market retreats from pandemic-era highs. In the span of two months, Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonhams will each see the culmination of years-long efforts to upgrade their regional headquarters in the southern Chinese city. Sotheby's on Thursday unveiled showrooms at an upscale mall in Hong Kong's finance district, a two-storey space previously occupied by fashion label Giorgio Armani.

"We envision for this state-of-the-art space in Hong Kong to be the epicenter of culture for global visitors," managing director of Asia Nathan Drahi said at the opening. "We are very confident in the prospect of Hong Kong because it possesses some strong fundamentals for our industry," he told AFP, pointing to the favorable tax framework. Nearby, Christie's is gearing up for a September opening at a new skyscraper designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, with its total floor space doubling to 50,000 square feet.

"Asia has been the pillar of the company," said Francis Belin, president of Christie's Asia Pacific. "But we didn't have the physical tool, the infrastructure... to actually be at the level of our ambitions." The firms are "putting their bets down and saying Hong Kong is the center for Asia", according to art adviser Patti Wong - but she said the expansions come with risk.

'An ideal base'

Hong Kong's biggest auctions of the year are held every spring and autumn at the city's convention and exhibition center - an intense four months that build hype and draw visitors. With new in-house venues, events will be more spread out. "This is a big test for Hong Kong and whether we can develop into a more mature auction market (with) visitors throughout the year," Wong said.

Global art sales have slowed since Christie's and Sotheby's first announced



Exhibits are seen on display during a media tour of the new two-storey Sotheby's space at Landmark Chater.

their Hong Kong expansion plans in the heady days of 2021 and 2022. This year, Christie's reported \$2.1 billion in sales in the first six months - the second consecutive year of decline - down from its 2022 peak of \$4.1 billion.

Wendy Goldsmith, a London-based art adviser and former Christie's auctioneer, cited China's real estate crisis as a major factor. "(Asian collectors) are currently taking a bit of a breath buying-wise but the interest and appetite to collect is still there," Goldsmith told AFP. "Auction houses know that they'll be back... and probably stronger than ever."

Bonhams, which will move to a 19,000-square-foot location at a new of-

ice building in September, said it found success targeting transactions under HK\$10 million (US\$1.3 million). "This segment has proven resilient despite broader economic uncertainties and represents a huge opportunity in Asia," said Julia Hu, Bonhams' managing director for Asia. Hong Kong remained "an ideal base for tapping into other major Asian cities", Hu added, citing its strategic location, efficient logistics, collector base, and tax and legal frameworks.

Young buyers

New York-based Phillips, another auction house, opened its regional headquarters next to Hong Kong's



museum of visual culture in 2023. The companies are unfazed by Hong Kong's political environment, even as critics say a crackdown by Beijing has chilled artistic freedoms, said cultural policy scholar Patrick Mok. "The companies that operate in Hong Kong's art market are rather apolitical... they know those (political) works can't fetch good prices here," Mok said. Auction houses are now competing for younger buyers and embracing online bidding—a shift accelerated by the pandemic.

Christie's said 29 percent of buyers in the first half of 2024 were millennials or Gen Z. "Auction houses turned on a dime during Covid... (They) are marketing machines now," said Goldsmith, adding that auctions have been spiced up to resemble Hollywood productions. "(They) are more than willing to provide these events, lectures, dinners, viewings... all to conjure up the next bid." The opportunity - and challenge - of the Hong Kong venues will be to bring Internet-native buyers into the real world. But Hu from Bonhams was confident, saying that showroom auctions are irreplaceable. "Our clients still crave the sheer thrill and excitement of being physically present," she said. — AFP





Orchids are photographed at Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection in La Ceja, Antioquia province, Colombia.— AFP photos



Daniel Piedrahita shows his collection of orchids.

Colombia orchid sanctuary collects and clones endangered species



Deep in Colombia's north-western forests, an orchid enthusiast has gathered a colorful collection of nearly 25,000 specimens, some of which he is cloning to protect them from extinction. Colombia, which will host the COP16 UN biodiversity summit later this year, has the world's largest number of orchid species, and new varieties are regularly discovered. Around the world, the unique flowering plants are increasingly threatened by the slashing down of forests, where most orchids are found.

Agricultural technologist Daniel Piedrahita, 62, has made it his life's mission to preserve the flowers at his sanctuary dubbed "The Soul of the Forest" in La Ceja, a town in the department of Antioquia. "An orchid? I'll define it for you in one word: perfection," Piedrahita told AFP. He describes his collection of over 5,000 species as a "genetic bank that I am responsible for... to ensure that each one reproduces perfectly."

The reserve is home to about twenty species that are endangered worldwide and that Piedrahita dreams of returning to their original habitats. It is also a laboratory for the propagation of orchids unique to Colombia, such as the *Anguloa Brevilabris* or the *Dracula Nosferatu*.

A 'pure clone'
In nature, most orchids rely on a specific species of insect, bee or bird for pollination. In the laboratory, Piedrahita pollinates them to get what he calls a "pure clone," a seed capsule, the fruit

flower of Guatemala, the *Lycaste Skinneri*, known as the "white nun."

The orchid is considered extinct in the wild in Guatemala, and is barely hanging on in southern Mexico. "The seeds are already developing in the lab-



Daniel Piedrahita shows his collection of orchids.



of the orchid flower which can contain millions of seeds. Getting an orchid to flower from the seeds can take years. He describes his mission to return the orchards to nature as his "moral, personal duty." The first orchard Piedrahita cloned two years ago was the national

laboratory so that in a few years we can reintroduce this species so that it does not get lost again," said Piedrahita. His next goal is to clone Colombian varieties of endangered orchids.



Orchids are photographed at Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection.



Tourists visit Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection.



A woman carries a pot of orchids in Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection.



Lifestyle



Daniel Piedrahita shows a *Lycaste Skinneri* orchid from his collection.



A *Lycaste Skinneri* orchid is photographed.

'A backup'
At "The Soul of the Forest," Piedrahita also gives cultivation classes, has an educational YouTube channel and an online school, which help fund operations. "This is my Zen center," he said of the sanctuary where foreign and local tourists gape at the variety of orchids. Among his collection is a flower especially dear to Piedrahita, the *Sobralia Piedrahita*, which was named after him following his presentation of the previously unknown species at an orchid exhibition.
In a spot in Antioquia that he is keeping a secret, he remembers first spotting the small white flower on a

stone in a river more than seven years ago. Piedrahita said he had given about seven people "a little piece" of his discovery. It is "the guarantee that this plant will never become extinct."
Every year new species appear on the radar in Colombia, including nine this year so far. Garrett Chung, an 18-year-old American tourist visiting with his family, said the sanctuary was important to preserve nature. "Some species are becoming extinct, so it is good to have a backup in case that happens."—AFP



A tourist visits Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection.



Daniel Piedrahita shows his collection of orchids.



Daniel Piedrahita shows his collection of orchids.



A tourist takes a photo of Daniel Piedrahita's orchid collection.

Endangered gazelles find Libyan 'safe haven'

Coocooned in white bags and nestled in the arms of volunteers, eight young rhim gazelles—an endangered species native to North Africa—have been transferred to an uninhabited Libyan island. Environmentalist hope their new home on Farwa Island, near Tunisia, will be a haven for the vulnerable animal. Also known as *Gazella leptoceros*, or simply rhim, the slender-horned gazelle lives in desert areas in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. But its population has declined significantly as it is a prized target for hunters. According to an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessment in 2016, there were only between 300 to 600 mature rhims in the North

African wild.
Environmentalists "wanted to relocate the wild animals in Farwa", a 13-kilometre-long (eight-mile) sandbar, as part of the gazelles' conservation efforts, Mohamed Al-Rabti, one of the volunteers, told AFP. A first group of rhims was released a few weeks ago, "followed by eight individuals, including

landscapes. The coloring is less effective against hunters, which for a while have been the gazelles' major predator. Equipped with binoculars, automatic rifles and powerful four-wheel drive vehicles, some go after the animals merely as a hobby. Others hunt them for a price going as high as 5,000 Libyan dinars (\$1,000) per carcass. *Gazella leptoc-*

er activists, that could be set to change. Farwa, though not their natural habitat, seems to have suited the first group of gazelles released on the island, Youssef Gandouz, an environmental activist, told AFP. They have been "monitored with binoculars and drones and are doing very well," said Gandouz. The island is also home to the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), which has become its symbol, and is a staging post for flamingos and other migratory birds travelling over Africa to rest before flying across the Mediterranean to Europe.



Two of the eight Rhim gazelles wrapped in protective blankets.



Local NGO activists from Bessida, pose for a photograph as they hold eight Rhim gazelles wrapped in protective blankets before a short boat trip to Farwa Island.

leptoceros, or simply rhim, the slender-horned gazelle lives in desert areas in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. But its population has declined significantly as it is a prized target for hunters. According to an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessment in 2016, there were only between 300 to 600 mature rhims in the North

one male and seven females" on July 18, Rabti added. As soon as they were released, the young gazelles took off frolicking before promptly disappearing behind the island's wild bushes.
The animal with long slender horns is small, nimble, and well adapted to desert life with a pale coat that enables better survival by blending into sandy

eros has been classified in the IUCN's "Red List of Threatened Species" since 2016.
With no official census from Libya, a country plagued by chaos and instability since the fall of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, little has been done to preserve their lives. But with the work of numerous NGOs and

Climate threats
While it remains uninhabited today, Farwa was once home to Amazigh tribes before they left for neighboring areas inland. The island appears picture-postcard idyllic, with scattered date palms on white sandy beaches and ringed by the sparkling Mediterranean. Kadhafi dreamed of building a luxury seaside resort there, complete with "floating" villas and a golf course.
Once famed for its exceptional wildlife, today it faces a long list of threats including illegal fishing and pollution. "Many associations and universities... are making significant efforts to protect the biodiversity and plant cover" of Farwa, said Jamal Ftess, a reserve manager for the island. Besides wildlife, environmentalists have also been working to preserve the island's scarce flora. Local associations like Bessida have been planting vegetation that is resistant to wind and sea sprays and requires little

water. This can help provide food for the animals, and protect against erosion, they say.
Gandouz, helping volunteers to move some of the plants, said it was the second transplantation effort of its kind on Farwa. "The vegetation on Farwa is sufficient" for the survival of rhim gazelles, said Ftess, and Gandouz added the narrow island "is now a safe haven where turtles and migratory birds can nest and feed". But activists have long warned that coastal erosion and rising water levels are among climate-driven threats the island faces. Ftess said a study conducted by a Libyan university found that "between 1961 and 2006, Farwa's coastline lost 1.6 meters (5.2 feet) per year, and between 2006 and 2020 erosion reached two meters per year." "We need the help of the authorities to preserve it," he said. —AFP



Local NGO activists from Bessida, hold four of the eight Rhim gazelles just before their release on Farwa Island. — AFP photos



Local NGO activists from Bessida, carry eight Rhim gazelles wrapped in protective blankets, as they walk along a pier to a waiting boat for a short boat ride to Farwa Island.

Sports

Nishioka downs Thompson for title in rain-hit Atlanta

Nishioka captured his third career ATP title

WASHINGTON: Yoshihito Nishioka captured his third career ATP title early Monday morning, outlasting Australia's Jordan Thompson and a rain delay of nearly six hours to win the Atlanta Open final. The 28-year-old Japanese left-hander rallied after the showers to defeat Thompson 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 in the first US hardcourt tuneup event for the US Open.

"This is a wonderful week for me," Nishioka said. "I got a little bit of luck after raining." World number 86 Nishioka improved to 5-0 in career ATP matches with 41st-ranked Thompson, each win coming on hardcourts.

Nishioka, playing in his sixth career ATP final, added to a trophy haul that included the 2018 Shenzhen Open and

2022 Korea Open in Seoul.

"This is amazing feeling," Nishioka said. "Third title, I couldn't believe that from the beginning of the year."

Thompson, 30, was foiled in a bid for his second title of the year. He won his first ATP crown in February at Los Cabos, defeating Norway's Casper Ruud in the final.

"It's not the result we wanted," Thompson said. "We made the final. Not a bad week." Nishioka will be the final winner of the Atlanta title, with the event folding after this year.

Thompson broke Nishioka for a 5-4 lead then held serve to close out the first set. Nishioka led Thompson 5-4 with the Aussie serving at 30-15 in the 10th game of the second set when rain arrived.

Showers halted the match for nearly six hours before they resumed, both players holding serve into a tie-breaker that Nishioka dominated, jumping ahead 5-0 on the way to forcing a third set.

The final set, which began just after midnight, began with Nishioka breaking for a 1-0 lead when Thompson swatted a forehand wide.

Nishioka saved a break point in the second game and three more in the fourth game, two off Thompson errors and the other off a forehand smash.

Nishioka then broke again for a 4-1 advantage by blasting a backhand cross-court winner and held twice more to claim victory after two hours and 40 minutes when Thompson sent a backhand service return long. — AFP



ATLANTA: Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan holds up the trophy after defeating Jordan Thompson during the Atlanta Open finals at Atlantic Station on July 29, 2024 in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

News in Brief

China's Sheng wins second gold

CHATEAUX: China's Sheng Lihao gunned down his second gold of the Paris Olympics by winning the men's 10-metre air rifle event with a nerveless display at the Chateaux Shooting Centre on Monday. Compatriot Huang Yuting, however, was denied the same feat by South Korean Ban Hyo-jin, who won the women's competition by beating the Chinese via a shoot-off. Ban also became the youngest female Olympic shooting champion at 16 and the teenaged trio's sparkling form in Paris offered a glimpse into the future of rifle shooting. World record holder Sheng has been in sensational form of late and an early indication came when the 19-year-old combined with Huang to win the mixed team gold for China on Saturday. Sheng, 19, topped qualification for the individual event on Sunday and won the gold with an Olympic record tally of 252.2 ahead of world champion Victor Lindgren (251.4) of Sweden. — Reuters

Top-seeded Edwards eliminated

PARIS: American super heavyweight Joshua Edwards was eliminated from the Paris Olympics after losing to Italy's Diego Lenzi, while Australia's Harry Garside and Tyla McDonald also suffered defeats on Monday. Top seed Edwards, one of the favorites to win a medal in the super heavyweight competition, tried to use his range and keep Lenzi at bay with his jab, but the Italian connected with a couple of powerful right hands in the first two rounds. The American, who was given a point deduction in the second round, just about edged the third, but it was too little too late. Australia, who have the largest boxing contingent at the Games with 12 boxers, got off to a difficult start on Monday. Garside, a Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist, fell short against Richard Kovacs after the Hungarian took charge of the lightweight bout in the second round and showed great flair to down the Australian by unanimous decision. — Reuters

Britain win eventing team gold

VERSAILLES: British eventing riders Ros Canter, Laura Collett and Tom McEwen won team gold on Monday after solid rides in the show-jumping final as France had to settle for silver in front of a euphoric home crowd due to too many glitches. The team gold medal, Britain's fifth, makes them the most-winning eventing nation in Olympic history, ahead of Germany and Australia with four medals. The British team ended the three-day competition with a combined score of 91.3 penalty points ahead of France with 103.6 and Japan with 115.8. Britain were the clear favorite for gold after Germany dropped out of the race when one of their riders fell. But the team's nerves were tested when Canter was handed additional penalty points for missing an obstacle during her cross-country ride on Sunday, putting France within reach of the sensation of winning gold at their own Games. "We would have liked a little bit more leeway, but we are very good jumpers and we're such a team that we just knew if we stayed calm, bent to the process and rode every stride, we'd be alright," Collett said after sealing the victory for her team on London 52. — Reuters

China suffers badminton defeat

PARIS: China suffered its first badminton defeat of the Paris Olympics on Monday, when mixed doubles favorites Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping were upset by Malaysian duo Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei in the opening session of group play. The country has long dominated Olympic badminton, winning 47 medals, or more than double the combined tally of Indonesia and South Korea, the second- and third-most successful teams. In 17 group stage matches in three days in Paris so far, it has now been defeated once, while in Tokyo, China lasted four days before losing a match. Chen and Toh won 21-17 15-21 16-21 against Huang and Feng. "I am happy we overcame them and gave them a good fight," Toh said. "They played a very good game and they really pushed us to the maximum." Huang Dongping, the reigning mixed doubles Olympic champion who played in Tokyo with former partner Wang Yilyu, said she wasn't too upset because they are still at the group stage. — Reuters

INTERSPORT equips Kuwaiti champions for 2024 Paris Olympics

KUWAIT: As the 33rd Olympic Games kicks off in Paris, Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) through INTERSPORT, one of its leading sports brands, announced on Monday its support for Kuwait's qualified Olympians by equipping them with gear and equipment for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

INTERSPORT opened its doors to Kuwait's swimming Olympians Lara Dashti and Mohammad Al-Zubaid, as well as athletics Olympians Yaqoub Al-Youha, to select the sportswear and equipment they need in preparation for their competitions. Through this initiative, INTERSPORT is one of the first supporters of Kuwait's 2024 Olympians.

Lara Dashti, Kuwait's first female Olympic flag-bearer in Tokyo 2020 opening ceremony, returned to compete in the women's 100m breaststroke on Sunday, July 28, 2024 and set a new personal record, finishing fifth in the race.

Mohammad Al-Zubaid, the youngest swimmer in Kuwait's Olympic history, will compete in the men's 100m freestyle on Tuesday, July 30, 2024, at 12:21 pm local time. As for the runners, Amal Al-Roumi, selected after achieving a personal record in the 800m indoor event in Spain last February, will compete in her first Olympic race, the women's 800m, on Friday, August 2, 2024. Yaqoub Al-Youha, also making his second

Coughlin wins Canadian Women's Open LPGA title

MONTREAL: Lauren Coughlin birdied two of the last four holes on Sunday to win the Canadian Women's Open and capture her first career LPGA title. The 31-year-old American fired a one-under par 71 in the final round to finish 72 holes on 13-under 275 at the Earl Grey Golf Club in Calgary.

That was good enough for a two-stroke victory over Japan's Mao Saigo with South Korea's Ryu Hae-ran and Jenny Shin sharing fourth on 278. World number 38 Coughlin managed her breakthrough triumph in her 101st LPGA start.

"It's kind of indescribable. Never really thought it would happen but it did," Coughlin said. "I've had people believe in me for a really long time and I wouldn't be here without their push and their love." Coughlin's best career finishes so far this year had come at majors, a share of third at the Chevron Championship and fourth at the Evian Championship two weeks ago.

Japan's Yoshizawa, 14, makes a big leap to land Olympic skateboard gold

PARIS: Japan's 14-year-old Coco Yoshizawa grabbed gold in the all-teenage women's street skateboarding final at the Paris Olympics on Sunday, after nailing a high-risk ride down the hand-rail. Yoshizawa went into her penultimate trick with two big scores but needing a third to complete her total, before finishing in style.

"I knew that if I wanted to win, I had to go for the most difficult tricks. I didn't aim for second or third place; I aimed for the top spot with my highest difficulty moves," she said. Even though all her rivals had one more run, she raised her board above her head in celebration after the move.

"After making it I was not so much happy as relieved," she said. "Completing the big spin flip felt fantastic because I hadn't managed it in practice, so to nail it here meant a lot." Fellow Japanese Liz Akama took silver, with Brazilian Rayssa Leal collecting bronze at the Place de La Concorde.

After the deluge that forced the postponement of the men's event the previous day, skies cleared Sunday and the temporary arena became a humid cauldron. The women's street final opened with the evening sun shining off the golden point of the ancient obelisk of Luxor at the centre of the Place de La Concorde and glinting off the glass dome of the Grand Palais.

Yoshizawa, who forms part of a younger generation of Japanese skaters, racked up 272.75 points from her three best runs. Akama, aged 15, collected 265.95 for second and Leal finished on 253.37 - comfortably ahead of fourth-placed Cui Chenxi of China. Leal was the oldest of the three medalists in the French capital at 16. Momiji Nishiya - who took



Lara Dashti and Mohammad Al-Zubaid



Yaqoub Al-Youha

Olympic appearance after Tokyo 2020, will compete in the men's 110m hurdles on Sunday, August 4, 2024.

The 33rd Olympic Games, taking place in Paris from July 26 to August 11, will feature approximately 10,500 athletes from over 200 countries participating in 32 different sports. Kuwait is proudly represented by nine athletes competing across six sports: Lara Dashti and Mohammad Al-Zubaid in swimming; Yaqoub Al-Youha and Amal Al-Roumi in athletics; Khaled Al-Mudhaf and Mohammed Al-Dihani in archery; Youssef Al-Shamlan in fencing; Souad Al-Faqah

"I felt like I hung in there all day. I didn't really make anything, played super patient and stuck with it and they eventually went in." "I don't give up and I think I showed that perfectly today." Coughlin birdied the par-5 15th but Ryu matched her moments later to keep a one-stroke lead over her and Saigo.

But Ryu made three-putt bogeys at 16 and the par-3 17th and Saigo made a bogey at 17. Coughlin meanwhile sank an eight-foot birdie putt at 17 to grab a two-stroke lead over Ryu and Saigo as she reached the 18th tee. Ryu suffered another bogey while Coughlin's routine par at 18 produced her long-sought title.

Saigo, 22, is a six-time Japan Tour winner who produced her best LPGA finish and fourth top-10 showing of the year. World number 20 Ryu, whose only LPGA title came in last October's Northwest Arkansas Championship, was a runner-up at last week's Dana Open, her seventh top-10 effort of the season, and fifth at the Evian.

Ryu, who began the day with a one-stroke lead over Coughlin, stretched her edge with a birdie at the par-5 fourth and answered a bogey at seven with a birdie at the eighth.

Coughlin birdied the par-3 fifth but stumbled back with bogeys at the sixth and 10th holes, falling three adrift with eight holes remaining. But Ryu sent



PARIS: Japan's Coco Yoshizawa competes in the women's street skateboarding final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at La Concorde in Paris on July 28, 2024, as the Luxor Obelisk is seen in the background. — AFP

the first-ever gold in the event in Tokyo aged 13 - this time failed to make the team.

'Ramen and Disneyland'

"I could perform with the Eiffel Tower as a background," said Yoshizawa. "But I was focused on skateboarding and didn't see anything until I was on the podium and then I could take in the scenery and say 'right, I'm in Paris.'"

She said to celebrate her gold win she wanted to "have some ramen and visit Disneyland". The crowd was dappled with yellow-shirted Brazilian fans, who rose from their seats waving flags and chanting when Leal wrapped up bronze. "It felt like it was 100 percent Brazilians in the crowd," said Leal, who won silver aged 13 at the Covid-hit Tokyo Games. "Now I know what the real Olympics are." She said her next plans were to sightsee around the French capital with her skateboard. "I will do some tricks on the Paris streets," she said. — AFP

an in rowing; and Amina Shah in sailing.

INTERSPORT has a strong commitment of supporting sports initiatives in Kuwait, such as the Gulf Bank 642 Marathons, the charity race RunKuwait organized by the FSHN, among others. INTERSPORT offers a wide range of sports gear, accessories, and apparel for sports such as running, training, football, swimming, tennis, padel, squash, and badminton, from global brands such as Speedo, Nike, adidas, Reebok, On Running, New Balance, Under Armour, Babolat, and more.



CALGARY: Lauren Coughlin of the United States speaks to the media after winning the final round of the CPKC Women's Open at Earl Grey Golf Club on July 28, 2024 in Calgary, Alberta. — AFP

her second shot into the water at the par-4 11th on her way to a double bogey and suddenly Coughlin was back within one. — AFP

Hamilton is back as Red Bull face title scrap

BELGIUM: Mercedes and Lewis Hamilton are back as a race-winning force, Max Verstappen and Red Bull face a fight to keep their titles and Fernando Alonso may be ageing, but he is not finished yet.

Even as George Russell was disqualified for a technical breach after winning, there was no hiding the obvious outcomes of a tense, intriguing and ultimately thrilling Belgian Grand Prix. AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from Sunday's drama at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit:

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton emerged from a two and a half years hiatus when he won the British Grand Prix and has since added a podium in Hungary and Sunday's gifted win. It confirms he is back and close to his best - he made a superb start, stormed into the lead and controlled the race before Russell's ill-fated one-stop strategy put him ahead - and in a car that is better than he ever believed possible when he decided to leave Mercedes and join Ferrari next year.

The team may have lost an emphatic one-two triumph when Russell's car was found to be 1.5 kg under-weight in post-race scrutiny but for Hamilton it brought a 105th career win exactly 11 years after he recorded the first of his Mercedes victories in 2013.

As investigations began into the reason for Mercedes' rare error, it was clear that Russell will be involved too in a titles scrap likely to include up to seven drivers. His 'heartbreaking' loss of Sunday's win with a one-stop strategy from sixth on the grid was most likely due to his bold 'gut instinct' decision to switch from a two-stop on lap 26, thus finishing the race on very worn tyres that weighed significantly less than fresher ones. — AFP

Sports

PARIS 2024

Martinenghi denies Peaty to win 100m breaststroke gold

Race was billed as a showdown between Peaty and Qin

Olympic Photos Gallery



MARSEILLE: Britain's Emma Wilson trains between races of the women's IQFoil windsurfing event during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games sailing competition at the Roucas-Blanc Marina in Marseille. — AFP



VAIRES-SUR-MARNE: Czech Republic's Lukas Rohan competes in the men's canoe single semifinal of the canoe slalom competition at Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium in Vaires-sur-Marne during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP



PARIS: China's #06 Gong Xiangyu (L) and US' #23 Kelsey Robinson vie for the ball during the women's preliminary round volleyball match between USA and China during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the South Paris Arena 1 in Paris. — AFP



PARIS: (From R) Turkey's Abdullah Yildirim, Mete Gazoz and Berkim Tumer celebrate at the end of the bronze archery men's team during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Esplanade des Invalides in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: Nicolo Martinenghi stunned Adam Peaty to win the Olympic 100m breaststroke gold medal on Sunday, denying the British great a third straight title. The Italian came home strongly, in the seventh lane, to win by a fingertip in 59.03secs, with Peaty and American Nic Fink both clocking 59.05 to share second place.

Chinese world champion Qin Haiyang led at the turn but faded to seventh. The shock win shattered Peaty's hopes of matching American legend Michael Phelps as the only men to win three consecutive Olympic titles in the same event.

An emotional Peaty had tears in his eyes after the race but said they weren't in any way a sign of sadness. "It's not sad at all. I think anyone that's done sport, I think if you're willing to put yourself on the line every single time, I think there's no such thing as a loss. I'm so happy that the right man won it," he said. "It could have gone either way but honestly, this is my sixth Olympic medal. "And I think the 14-year-old that started out on this crusade... six Olympic medals, three of them gold, still the world record holder in two events.

"You know, you can't beat that. I think it's broken me, this sport, but it's also given me life. It's given me everything I am." The race was billed as a showdown between Peaty and Qin, the 200m world record holder.

When Peaty took time out to address mental health issues, Qin swept all the breaststroke gold medals at last year's world championships. But he came to Paris under a cloud, reportedly among the 23 Chinese swimmers who tested positive for a banned drug ahead of the Tokyo Games in a scandal that rocked the sport this year when it came to light.

Instead, Martinenghi, who won a bronze in Tokyo, stole their glory. "That's amazing, that's amazing, it was a dream come true," the beaming Italian told reporters. "I grew up with that goal in my mind so to be-

Wiffen has eyes on historic swimming gold

PARIS: Ireland's Daniel Wiffen posted the fastest time in the heats for the 800m freestyle on Monday, and the world champion now has his sights set on making history in Tuesday's final. Wiffen could become the first Irishman, and just the second Irish athlete ever, to claim Olympic swimming gold—and his hopes were boosted with challenger Sam Short of Australia, considered the favorite by some analysts, failing to qualify.

The 23-year-old Wiffen topped qualifying in 7:41.53, ahead of Tunisia's Ahmed Jaouadi. But he will also need to hold off defending Olympic champion Bobby Finke of the United States, in-form Australian Elijah Winnington and experienced Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, Tokyo silver medalist, in an open field.

"Any lane has a chance, I'll be looking at every-

Canada keep Olympic football hopes alive

MARSEILLE: Scandal-hit Canada kept alive their hopes of reaching the Olympic women's football quarter-finals with a last-gasp 2-1 win over France on Sunday as the United States joined Spain in the last eight.

Reigning champions Canada came into the match against the hosts with their hopes hanging by a thread after they were docked six points over a spying scandal. A drone was used over a New Zealand training session ahead of Canada's first match, which they went on to win 2-1.

Coach Bev Priestman has been suspended for a year by FIFA. France took the lead through Marie-Antoinette Katoto just before half-time only for Jessie Fleming to equalize after the break in



NANTERRE: Silver medalists Britain's Adam Peaty (L) and US' Nic Fink (R) and gold medalist Italy's Nicolo Martinenghi celebrate after the men's 100m breaststroke swimming event during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Paris La Defense Arena in Nanterre. — AFP

come Olympic champion today is a dream come true, next to Adam, one of my idols. I grew up with Adam so in front of my family, my girlfriend, my friends, my teammates, that's insane," he added.

"When I touched the wall and I saw the red light on the block, just one red light, I said 'I did it, it's incredible.'" The 24-year-old, with bleached blond hair and a sparkling earring, said he has a long his-

story with the seventh lane.

"That lane was good. It was wonderful, my favorite lane, my coach said to me this morning. I've got a seven on my (neck) chain, maybe it's a sign?," he added, before revealing the reason for that choice of number. "When I was younger I was training every day in the seventh lane so that's why I have it," he said. — AFP

body, I'll be doing my homework tonight, seeing how everybody swims it, and I'll be making sure that I'll be one of the best there tomorrow night," Wiffen told reporters.

Michelle Smith's three golds and a bronze from the Atlanta Games in 1996 remains Ireland's only Olympic medals in swimming. But Wiffen, was born in Yorkshire, England, before moving to County Down in Northern Ireland at the age of two, says he isn't fixated on the gold.

"Any medal's good, it's my first race here, and it's my first time actually being in contention for an Olympic medal, so I'll take any medal, whatever color," he said. Wiffen is in his second Olympics, having entered the 800 and 1,500 meter races in Tokyo, but after his rapid rise in the sport he says there is little comparison.

"It is completely different. In Tokyo, I was just really qualifying and trying to keep progressing. The past three years have been a blast for me—I've been dropping 16 seconds every time I've swam in the water in the 1,500, and I've been PB-ing every single international. I just want to keep that streak up here," he said. — AFP

Saint-Etienne. Canada were staring at the Olympic exit door until Vanessa Gilles struck in the 12th minute of injury time. The result, coupled with Colombia's 2-0 win over New Zealand, means all four teams in Group A can still progress.

In Group B, Sophia Smith scored twice as the United States thumped Germany 4-1 to stay on track for a record-extending fifth gold medal. Mal-lory Swanson and Lynn Williams were also on the scoresheet. The opener came in the 10th minute on a sweltering evening in Marseille as Trinity Rodman played a one-two on the right before delivering a low cross that was turned in by Smith.

Giulia Gwinn's fine low strike brought Germany level midway through the first half, but the USA were quickly back in front as Swanson netted after a Smith shot was parried. Smith got her second and the USA's third a minute before the interval with a shot from the edge of the box that took a deflection to loop up over the goalkeeper and in off a post. Swanson set up substitute Williams to seal the win and the United States top the group with six points. — AFP

MEDALS TALLY

Country	G	S	B	Total
China:	5	2	2	9
Japan:	4	2	2	8
S Korea:	4	2	1	7
Australia:	4	2	0	6
USA:	3	6	3	12
France:	3	4	2	9
Britain:	1	3	2	6
Italy:	1	2	3	6
Kazakhstan:	1	0	2	3
Belgium:	1	0	1	2
Germany:	1	0	0	1
Hong Kong:	1	0	0	1
Uzbekistan:	1	0	0	1
Brazil:	0	1	2	3
Canada:	0	1	2	3
Fiji:	0	1	0	1
Kosovo:	0	1	0	1
Mongolia:	0	1	0	1
Poland:	0	1	0	1
Tunisia:	0	1	0	1
Sweden:	0	0	2	2
S Africa:	0	0	1	1
Egypt:	0	0	1	1
Spain:	0	0	1	1
Hungary:	0	0	1	1
India:	0	0	1	1
Mexico:	0	0	1	1
Moldova:	0	0	1	1

—AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I Sera Maria, holder of Passport No U0201174 do hereby change my name to Sera Maria (as given name) Bosco (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Sera Maria Bosco and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5910, 29/07/2024)

I, Raviraj, holder of Indian Passport No. Y6403728, having permanent

address - House No. VI 139, Pedamale House, Bakrabail, Pathoor PO, Manjeshwar, Kasargod, Kerala, India Pin: 671329, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name to RAVIRAJ (given name) & SHETTY BAKRABAIL (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name RAVIRAJ SHETTY BAKRABAIL. (#5639, 28/07/2024)

PARIS 2024 

Djokovic downs Nadal in blockbuster

Two titans met for the 60th and possibly final time



PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Spain's Rafael Nadal pose ahead of their men's singles second round tennis match on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Stadium at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on July 29, 2024. — AFP

PARIS: Novak Djokovic crushed Rafael Nadal 6-1, 6-4 in their blockbuster Olympics clash on Monday as the two titans met for the 60th and possibly final time. The showdown between the two most successful men's tennis players in history appeared to be fizzling out before a late fightback from Nadal enabled him to avoid his heaviest-ever defeat by Djokovic.

"I'm very relieved," said Djokovic. "Everything was going my way, I was 6-1, 4-0 up but I played a sloppy service game and gave him chances."

It was 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic's 31st win in a rivalry that began on the same Roland Garros clay courts in 2006.

The Serb added: "I never thought back in 2006 that we'd still be playing each other almost 20 years later."

Nadal admitted Djokovic was the "clear favorite" ahead of their first clash in more than two years, with the Spaniard a shadow of the player who reigned for the best part of two

decades at Roland Garros.

While 14 of Nadal's 22 Grand Slams have come in Paris, the 38-year-old has been plagued by injuries in recent years and he has slumped to 161st in the world. His participation in the singles in Paris had been in doubt until the last minute.

Djokovic has not had a good season by his stratospherically high standards but the 37-year-old Serbian rose to the occasion in his pursuit of an elusive Olympic gold.

The top seed raced into a 5-0 lead before Nadal finally got on the board but Djokovic closed out the set and surged 4-0 ahead in the second before Nadal offered some belated resistance.

Nadal clawed his way back to 4-4 only for Djokovic to break once more, this time making no mistake as he put away his old foe and perhaps brought down the curtain on one of the greatest rivalries in the history of the sport.

Djokovic, a bronze medalist on his Olympic debut in 2008, goes on to

face Matteo Arnaldi or Dominik Koepfer for a spot in the quarter-finals.

Nadal will turn his focus to the doubles where he is in a dream-team pairing with compatriot Carlos Alcaraz.

Alcaraz, the reigning men's French Open and Wimbledon champion, takes on Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor later Monday in the singles.

Unstoppable Swiatek

Women's world number one Iga Swiatek stepped up her quest for gold by powering into the third round. The four-time French Open champion underlined her status as the heavy favorite in Paris, swatting home hope Diane Parry aside 6-1, 6-1 and will meet China's Wang Xiyu for a place in the quarter-finals. The Pole has won her past 23 matches at Roland Garros, with three clay titles already under her belt this season.

Swiatek, tested in her opening match under the roof on Court Philippe Chatrier, enjoyed a far more

straightforward outing in bright sunshine on Monday.

"I think it was a pretty solid performance, better than the first round, so I'm happy that I could play a little bit more of my game and, of course, the conditions were also nice," she said.

US second seed Coco Gauff dispatched Argentina's Maria Lourdes Carle 6-1, 6-1.

Next up for her is Wimbledon semi-finalist Donna Vekic, who put out former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu. Italy's Jasmine Paolini, this year's French Open runner-up to Swiatek, eased into the third round with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over Magda Linette.

Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova coasted past China's Wang Xinyu while Maria Sakkari of Greece also advanced. Scorching heat posed a considerable problem for players at the Tokyo Olympics, and the issue could resurface this week with highs of 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) expected on Tuesday. — AFP

Al-Mudhaf starts Olympic campaign in shooting trap

PARIS: Kuwaiti shooter Khaled Al-Mudhaf opened his 2024 Paris Olympics campaign on Monday, finishing day one of the men's shooting trap competition in 16th place with a cumulative total of 72 points.

Ahead of the second day of competition, with some 50 points up for grabs over two rounds, in which the top six shooters out of 30 will qualify for the knockout stages, with Al-Mudhaf striving to be among them, the Kuwaiti National Olympic Committee said in a statement. Kuwaiti shooters are no strangers to success on such a grand stage, having made some notable accomplishments in recent international competitions, the statement highlighted, while the sport of shooting has seen the lion's share of Kuwaiti Olympic accomplishments.

Being the first Kuwaiti athlete to secure his berth at the Paris Olympics, Al-Mudhaf is making his fourth appearance at the Olympics this year, with his best performance being his fourth place finish at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, it added.



Khaled Al-Mudhaf

Kuwait rower qualifies for category E final

PARIS: Kuwaiti rower Suad Al-Faqaan qualified for final of Category E after coming third in the Women's Single Sculls Semi-finals on Monday at the 2024 Paris Olympics, however she would not qualify for a medal, only rankings.

Al-Faqaan recorded a time of 9:01.78 minutes and came third, while first place went to Cuban rower Yariulvis Cobas Garcia at 8:36.16 minutes, and second place to Singaporean rower Saiyidah Aisyah Raffae at 8:47.41 minutes. Al-Faqaan got fourth place on Sunday during the Women's Single Sculls Repechage recording a time of 8:28.89 minutes, losing her opportunity to go to the quarterfinals and competing for one of the medals. — KUNA



Suad Al-Faqaan



Group photo of the jet ski team and administrative members.

Kuwaiti jet skiers win third place in Europe championship

WARSAW: Kuwait National Jet Ski team members Mohammad Burbayea and Salem Al-Mutawa secured third place in two different categories at the European Jet Ski Cham-

ampionship held in Poland, at the first round of the World Series.

Burbayea achieved third place in the Pro GP category for senior professionals, while his teammate Al-Mutawa earned the same place in the Expert Ski category.

In a press statement Monday, Secretary General of the Kuwait Sea Sports Club Khaled Al-Foudari commended the team's achievements and the efforts of all players, as well as the administrative and technical staff.

He noted the great support from the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) and ProRider, expressing confidence in the team's potential and readiness to claim more titles in the next round of the championship, slated for October in Arizona, US.

The European Jet Ski Championship kicked off in Poland on July 21 and concluded on Monday, supervised by the International Jet Sports Boating Association (IJSBA) with the participation of 30 countries and 200 competitors.