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3 Students of LOYAC KON program explore the world of journalism



7 India landslide toll hits 160 as rain hampers rescue work



8 Boeing names new CEO as it reports hefty loss



16 North-South Korea Olympic podium selfie goes viral



HANIYEH ASSASSINATED

Hamas chief martyred in Zionist strike in Tehran • Kuwait slams criminal act

Amir receives new KPA director



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan, who presented to him the newly-appointed Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority Sheikh Khaled Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, at Bayan Palace on July 31, 2024. — KUNA

MoI: No one above the law



KUWAIT: First Deputy PM and Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah receives Dr Emad Yousef on July 31, 2024. — KUNA

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday that no one is above the law and the police's top priority is Kuwait's security. The interior ministry's general directorate of security relations and media said in a press release that Sheikh Fahad received Dr Emad Yousef, who was falsely accused of drug possession.

He was acquitted after the General Administration for Drug Control revealed that he was innocent, adding that six people were charged, including military personnel working at the ministry, who planted drugs on him with the aim of removing him from the country. Dr Yousef expressed his appreciation to the minister for the good reception and the efforts of the security men in revealing the truth. — KUNA

Gulf Bank sponsors Kuwait Times youth summer program



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is sponsoring the third annual summer training program by Kuwait Times, starting on Aug 4, 2024. The program aims to equip youth aged 15-25 with journalism skills. It includes workshops, field trips and practical experience, culminating in participants creating a special edition of the newspaper.

Gulf Bank Chief Marketing Officer Najla Al-Eisa highlighted the bank's support for youth and alignment with Kuwait's 2035 vision. Head of CSR, PR and Media at Kuwait News and Kuwait Times Jana Alnaqeb emphasized the program's role in empowering youth for the evolving labor market. (See Page 3)

TEHRAN: Hamas said Wednesday its political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in a Zionist strike in Iran, where he was attending the swearing-in of the new president, and vowed the act "will not go unanswered". Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei too threatened "harsh punishment" for Haniyeh's killing, saying: "We consider it our duty to seek revenge for his blood as he was martyred in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a statement later Wednesday: "The Zionists will soon see the consequences of their cowardly and terrorist act. Such measures are a sign that the policies of the Zionist regime have reached a dead end." Haniyeh was killed by a missile that hit him "directly" in a state guesthouse where he was staying, Khalil Al-Hayya, a senior Hamas official, told a news conference in Tehran, quoting witnesses who were with Haniyeh. "Now we are waiting for the full investigation from the (Iranian) brothers," Al-Hayya said.

Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs, in strong terms on Wednesday, expressed condemnation by Kuwait of the attack that targeted the Islamic Republic of Iran and assassinated Haniyeh.

The ministry, in a statement, expressed deep concern at the criminal and irresponsible act by the Zionist entity, affirming that such hostile action is a dangerous development and flagrant breach of international laws and norms, namely respect for independent states' sovereignty.

The ministry noted Kuwait's call upon the United Nations and other entities of the international community to take an immediate and firm stance to avert military escalation that will embroil the region and the world in the mayhem of chaos and violence and undermine peace prospects.

Continued on Page 6



TEHRAN: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh (center) flashes the victory sign during a swearing-in ceremony of the new Iranian president at the parliament on July 30 2024. — AFP (See Pages 5 & 6)

Gulf Bank, Boubyan Bank mull merger into Islamic bank

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank and Boubyan Bank reached a preliminary agreement to explore growth opportunities by merging to create a single bank compliant with Islamic sharia, the two banks announced Wednesday. The step follows Gulf Bank's announcement of obtaining Central Bank of Kuwait approval to convert to an Islamic bank, drawing interest from Boubyan Bank for the merger to create a competitive Islamic bank.

In a listing on Boursa Kuwait, Gulf Bank said it shares a vision with Boubyan Bank to seize a strategic opportunity for growth and expansion through a merger. Creating a single bank compliant with Islamic sharia goes in line with Gulf Bank's efforts to "adopt new visions for prosperity through analysis of all cooperation opportunities to



Gulf Bank Chairman Bader Al-Kharafi



Boubyan Bank Vice Chairman and Group CEO Adel Al-Majed

help the bank achieve its goals of sustainable growth and create added value to its clients and investors," it said.

The boards of Boubyan Bank and Gulf Bank have approved the proposal, and the Central Bank of Kuwait was notified of their plans, the banks said in separate regulatory filings on Wednesday. Bouby-

an Bank and Gulf Bank said they plan to sign a memorandum of understanding and a non-disclosure agreement to proceed with due diligence and valuation discovery, in addition to studying the feasibility of the proposal. Any transaction will be subject to approval from regulators, including the Central Bank, the filings said.

Sudan army chief survives drone strike

PORT SUDAN: Sudan's de facto ruler General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan ruled out negotiation with paramilitaries after he survived a drone attack on Wednesday in the war-torn country's east. The army said five people were killed in a drone attack on a ceremony at the Gibet base, where Burhan was overseeing a graduation ceremony.

"We will not retreat, we will not surrender, and we will not negotiate," Burhan, who appeared unharmed, told troops at the Gibet base after the attack. "We do not fear drones, we only die when God has planned," said Burhan, dressed in combat attire, at the Gibet base, about 100 km from Port Sudan

Continued on Page 6



GIBET, Sudan: Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan gestures as he attends a graduation ceremony near Port Sudan on July 31, 2024. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince receives minister, KPA director



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the newly-appointed Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Sheikh Khaled Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah in the presence of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. — KUNA

Minister orders removal of illegal constructions

KUWAIT: The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, ordered on Wednesday to form a panel to pinpoint illegal construction of various dwellings in desert regions. The assigned commission will coordinate with Kuwait Municipality

and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to remove the infringing dwellings and call in helicopters if needed. The minister's decision was publicized in a statement issued by the MoI's media department after Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef headed a meeting of security officers. He conveyed greetings and appreciation of the political leadership to them. Minister Fahad Al-Yousef instructed the officers to intensify deployment in all regions of the country and apply the law to everyone. He also advised a speedy transfer to the new department build-

MoH launches blood donation campaign

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health's (MoH) Blood Transfusion Services Department will launch its annual blood donation campaign "Together forever, wall of the homeland 9" on Thursday in remembrance of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The medical director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department, Dr Reem Al-Radhwan, said that the campaign would be launched at the Kuwait Central Blood Bank in Jabriya from 8 am until 8 pm. Donors would be welcomed at any blood donation center.

The campaign, in its ninth year, would be under the care of the Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, in honor of the martyrs that lost their lives during the invasion 33 years ago. The campaign is in cooperation with the MoH, represented by the Central Blood Bank, and the participation of the military, the police, the National Guard, and firefighters, out of their humanitarian duty.

Al-Radhwan added that a number of civil society institutions, the government, and the private sector are also participating in the campaign to increase social solidarity and spread the culture of donation. Al-Radhwan encouraged all citizens and residents to participate in the campaign to show their love for Kuwait and to increase the number of donors this year to help all patients in need. — KUNA



Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf takes a photo with Ali bin Issa.

Kuwait's investments in Morocco reach \$1.5bn

By Ghadeer Ghloom, KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's investments in Morocco amount to at least \$1.5 billion, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf said Tuesday. Speaking to reporters in remarks following attending the Moroccan Embassy in Kuwait's festival marking the 25th anniversary of King Mohammed XI's assumption of power, the minister conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the occasion.

Al-Mudhaf affirmed that Kuwait-Morocco sisterly relations are well-established, adding that Kuwait has a positive outlook towards investment in Mo-

rocco. Kuwait and Morocco cooperate on several economic issues, he said, referring to the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development's financing of a number of infrastructure projects in Morocco. Meanwhile, Morocco's Ambassador to Kuwait, Ali bin Issa, extolled Kuwait's firm position for the unity and territorial integrity of Morocco. He stressed that he would work on enhancing bilateral ties to reach advanced levels of cooperation and integration.

'Throne Day of King'

On July 30, 2024, the Moroccan Embassy in Kuwait celebrated the Throne Day of King Mohammed VI's succession, marking the silver jubilee. The celebration underscored the enduring bond between the Moroccan people and the monarchy, highlighting the King's pivotal role in upholding Morocco's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national identity. Over the past 25 years, King Mohammed VI has played a crucial role in safeguarding Morocco's core values and national unity.

The occasion provided an opportunity to review Morocco's notable achievements under King Mo-

ammed VI's leadership. Under his vision, Morocco has experienced significant transformation, emerging as a symbol of peace and stability at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. During the occasion, Moroccan Ambassador Ali bin Issa, highlighted key accomplishments during this period, which include the introduction of the Mudawana (new family code) in 2004, which marked a significant advancement in gender equality by granting women additional rights.

That same year saw the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, addressing past injustices. In 2011, Morocco adopted a new constitution, reinforcing participatory democracy by emphasizing the separation of powers, transparency, and adherence to international standards. Additionally, Morocco's autonomy plan for the southern provinces, submitted in 2007, has gained considerable international support, further strengthening the country's diplomatic position on the issue of the Moroccan Sahara.

He also said that Morocco has actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote peace, playing a role

in mediating conflicts across Africa and the Middle East. The country has supported constructive initiatives to aid Palestinian people, particularly in response to the challenges faced in Gaza. The Kingdom has also focused on diversifying its international partnerships.

Since its return to the African Union in 2017, Morocco has been committed to continental development and solidarity. Recent notable efforts include strengthening relations with traditional allies and forging new connections. The Moroccan-Kuwaiti trade and cultural events held in May 2024 exemplify this commitment, showcasing Moroccan cultural heritage and bolstering cooperation in investment, trade, and cultural exchange.

The Ambassador concluded, with emphasizing that the Throne Day celebration not only honored King Mohammed VI's 25-year reign but also highlighted Morocco's remarkable progress and international outreach. The ongoing collaboration with Kuwaiti partners and other global allies reflects Morocco's dedication to mutual growth and shared prosperity.

Cabinet reviews property laws, infringement, targets violators

Minister briefed on 18 projects for highways and roads

KUWAIT: The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah offered a presentation to the Cabinet on the violation of the law by a private sector company that acquired a plot of land amounting to two million sqm and used it for a purpose other than the originally stated one. Sheikh Fahad briefed the Cabinet on the legal measures being taken against the company and any civil officer who proved to be an accomplice in this violation.

The Cabinet saw a visual presentation from Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, on the outcomes of surveying unused plots of land and buildings and rented sites. The presentation in-

cluded the measures taken by the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with concerned bodies, to regulate measures of exploiting these plots of land and buildings from the private sector. Out of the government's keenness on protecting the state's land legally and financially with the aim of using it optimally, the Cabinet decided to form a ministerial committee to offer required concepts regarding these plots of land to achieve the desired goals.

Following the latest developments of projects on the maintenance of roads and streets in the country, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Nour Al-Mashaan told the Cabinet about the Central Agency for Public Tenders' report regarding 18 projects for highways and roads in all governorates. She

said local, Gulf, and international companies applied for these projects. Moreover, the ministers were briefed on the recommendations of the ministerial affairs committee on the Kuwait International Air Cargo-KIAC project.

In this regard, the Cabinet tasked the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, in coordination with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects and some bodies, with taking the required measures to implement the project. The Cabinet approved the meeting minutes of the Supreme Committee for Nationality Investigation, which include some cases of loss and withdrawal of Kuwaiti nationality from some people who got it by fraud and forgery. The move was taken in line with the provisions of Decree No 15 of 1959. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over the Cabinet meeting. — KUNA

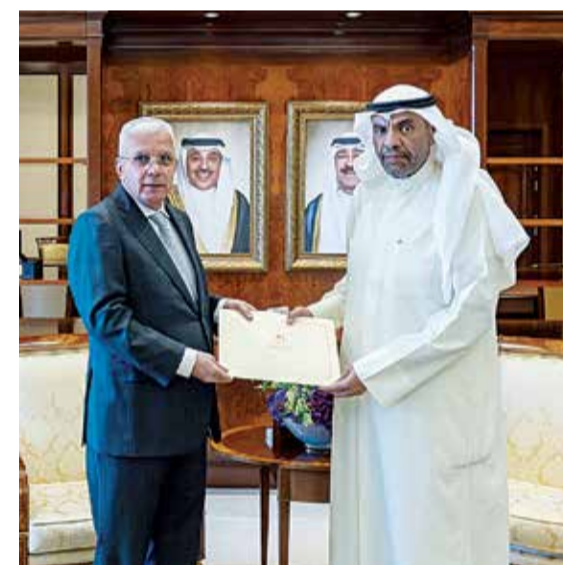


FM receives ambassadors

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Wednesday credentials of the new Ambassador of Soma-



lia to the country, Dr Abdullah Mohammad Sheikh Abdullah. Also, Foreign Affairs Minister received a copy of the credentials of the ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Manuel Hernandez Gamayo during the meeting at the Ministry. During the meeting, the Kuwaiti minister wished the new ambassadors success in their tasks and hoped to see boost in relations. In another development, Minister



of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya also received a written letter from Palestinian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr Mohammad Mustafa on the current situation in Palestine and Zionist occupation's continuous violations. Minister Al-Yahya received the letter during a meeting with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub on Wednesday. — KUNA



Attendees are pictured during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf with Morocco's Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Issa. — KUNA

Gulf Bank sponsors 3rd Kuwait Times summer program to empower youth

Part of bank's efforts to support the youth and their future careers

- Najla Al-Eisa: We continue to support youth and the labor market to achieve Kuwait Vision 2035.
- Jana Alnaqeeb: We thank the main sponsor, Gulf Bank, for its ongoing support throughout the program.

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced its sponsorship of the third annual summer training program by Kuwait Times. This initiative, starting on August 4, 2024, is part of the bank's efforts to support youth and their future careers by providing them with field journalism skills and preparing them to become effective leaders. The age categories for participants will be from 15 to 25 years old.

Najla Al-Eisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, stated: "We at Gulf Bank are delighted to sponsor the annual summer training program by Kuwait Times. This program aims to introduce young participants to the processes and professional cycle of journalism, as well as its various fields." She emphasized Gulf Bank's commitment to supporting Kuwaiti youth by collaborating with both public and private sector institutions and supporting the labor market. This initiative aligns with the bank's strategic goals and the New Kuwait vision 2035, which heavily relies on the youth.

Al-Eisa highlighted the importance of sponsoring and supporting such training programs because of their positive impact on participants and the development of their creativity, which contributes to their professional future. She noted that the four-week annual training program by Kuwait Times will include workshops for sponsors, including Gulf Bank, in its third week.

Jana Alnaqeeb, Head of CSR, PR, and Media at Kuwait News and Kuwait Times, commented: "This year marks the third edition of the annual summer program by Kuwait Times, where we provide intensive workshops in media and journalism. This is

part of our community duty to support exceptional programs that empower youth." Alnaqeeb explained that the Kuwaiti labor market is continuously evolving, and Kuwait Times is well-equipped to provide the necessary resources and tools in the expansive fields of journalism and various media channels, offering a pioneering experience for Kuwaiti youth.

She added: "We have developed a program that empowers young people by providing them with a creative space to learn and apply their knowledge, ultimately helping them achieve a successful career path. We thank Gulf Bank for being the main sponsor of this initiative and for its ongoing support throughout the summer program." Gulf Bank is dedicated to supporting the New Kuwait 2035 vision by contributing to the professional development of Kuwaiti youth and creating positive impacts on all economic and social levels in Kuwait.

Kuwait Times Summer Training Program

The Kuwait Times summer training program, starting on August 4, 2024, and lasting for four weeks, will guide participants through the workflows of the newspaper's various departments. It will introduce them to journalism in social media, digital platforms and news writing.

The program includes field trips for participants under the guidance of reporters and photographers, as well as opportunities to participate in various workshops conducted by Kuwait Times' partners and sponsors. In the fourth week, participants will put their new skills into practice by creating a special edition of the newspaper, featuring their own jour-



Gulf Bank and Kuwait Times teams pose for a group photo.

nalistic and field contributions, which will be distributed at the end of the program.

Over the past two years, the Kuwait Times summer training program has involved dozens of young participants aged 18 to 25. They have engaged in fieldwork and published articles in a special edition of the newspaper. Prominent journalists from Al Jazeera, AFP, Reuters, and various Kuwaiti media outlets have conducted in-depth workshops on journalism for the program's participants.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of

every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports New Kuwait vision 2035 and works with various parties to achieve it.



LOYAC's students pose for a group photo with Kuwait Times' team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Students take a selfie with Content Creator Dhoha Al-Issa.

Students of LOYAC's KON Program delve into the world of journalism



Students speak with Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times Abdullah Boftain



Content Creator Zainab Dashti engages with the students.



Digital Creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh with the students in the archive room.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed 50 students of LOYAC's KON Program, in collaboration with Babson College, the world's leading institute for entrepreneurship education on Wednesday. The students aged 12 to 16-year-old were invited to delve into the world of journalism. Content Creator Dhoha Al-Issa guided the visitors through an insightful tour of the Kuwait Times building. During the visit, students had the unique

opportunity to gain firsthand experience and insight into the intricate process of publishing a newspaper, from news gathering to final printing.

The tour provided an invaluable educational experience for the students, allowing them to interact with professionals in the field and gain a deeper understanding of the inner workings of journalism. As part of the tour, Reporter Passant Hisham presented the students with the first edition of the Kuwait Times, established in 1961. She guided them through the essential sections of a newspaper, explaining the im-

portance of checking the sources of news stories that are featured. Hisham introduced them to the editorial section, where opinions and editorials provide commentary on current events and in-depth articles on various topics, teaching the students how every part of a newspaper plays a role in informing and engaging the public. On his part, Digital Creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh took the students to the Kuwait Times' archive room, where he offered a glimpse into the historical context and evolution of journalism in Kuwait, enriching the students' understanding of Kuwait's

cultural and journalistic heritage.

Students were engaged in an interactive video facilitated by Content Creator Zainab Dashti at Kuwait Times' studio. Students were invited to watch the "Kuwait Times Asks 100 People" to learn how the content creators team work on their projects. At the end, Head of the Printing Department Al-Watheq Bellah Darwish took the students on a tour of the printing press, where he showed them the process of printing and how Kuwait Times' staff run and maintain the presses, image scanners and other printing machines.



Head of the Printing Department Al-Watheq Bellah Darwish addresses the students.



Students play basketball at the warehouse.



Kuwait partakes in global efforts to preserve the environment

'Sustainable living environment' in New Kuwait vision



KUWAIT: Photos show greenery in Kuwait City. — KUNA photos

Kuwait crude oil exports to Japan down 24.5%

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in June fell 24.5 percent from a year earlier to 5.21 million barrels, or 174,000 barrels per day (bpd), down for the ninth consecutive month, government data showed Wednesday. As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 8.3 percent of the Asian nation's total crude imports, compared with 10.1 percent in the same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil in June declined 8.7 percent year-on-year to 2.08 million bpd, down for the seventh month in a row. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 96.4 percent of the total, down 0.9 percentage points from the year before. The United Arab Emirates remained in the top spot, with imports from the country edging up 0.8 percent from a year earlier to 860,000 bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 859,000 bpd, down 9.0 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 81,000 bpd and Ecuador fifth with 33,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's third-biggest oil consumer after China and the US. — KUNA

Cooperative Societies' ex-officials referred to public prosecution

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Amthal Al-Huwailah has referred some expatriates and former members of Abdullah Al-Mubarak and Jahra Cooperative Societies' boards of directors to public prosecution. The step came within the framework of measures taken to combat corruption, Al-Huwailah, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, wrote on her X account on Tuesday. It also aimed at protecting public funds and shareholders' rights in the implementation of the political leadership's directives to combat corruption, she added. The minister affirmed the continuation of applying the law, elaborating that joint action to combat corruption is a key basis for transparency and integrity. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Environmental awakening can largely be dated back to the middle of the past century, when the Greek capital Athens hosted the fourth conference of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), proclaiming the Athens Charter for cohabitation between cities and nature. The charter, published by the French architect Le Corbusier in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution and the two great wars, set the fundamentals for harmony between basic human needs and urban planning - the latest of which is based on greenery.

Since then, there has been a chain of initiatives to cope with the unprecedented environmental challenges and salvage humanity from the impact of the deteriorating nature. States around the globe have been holding annual conferences since 1995 to draw up plans for saving the environment from deterioration, soaring heat and pollution. In this respect, Kuwait is among the top advocates of sustainable urban development friendly to the environment, expanding greenery, stemming desertification, and tapering off repercussions of climatic change resulting from the planet's overheating.

Kuwait has repeatedly affirmed its unwavering commitment to international, regional, and Gulf res-

olutions and initiatives, cooperating with the United Nations and its agencies regarding diverse initiatives to protect the environment. The "sustainable living environment," in New Kuwait vision 2035, is a priority to secure the sustainability of the Kuwaiti climate - through which it also seeks to honor its international obligations at this level. For sake of a sustainable "green future," Kuwait has executed several projects and plans to beautify plots of land, boost planting, and set up natural reserves.

It believes "carbon neutrality," to be attained during the middle of the current century, will be quite helpful in the efforts to preserve the environment and create opportunities to launch mega economic projects. Kuwait declared, during the second edition of the Green Middle East Initiative Summit, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, its full commitment to the initiative as a watershed for the region at the climatic level and a basis for regional cooperation in fighting the ramifications of the climate change.

Kuwaiti governments have put the environment among their priorities, seeking to limit pollution on the land, in the air, and at sea. The 2024-2025 annual development plan on rationalizing natural resources and setting up harmony between urban regions

and nature aims at cutting contamination, improving citizens' quality of life, and building green cities equipped with smart technology. The strategy's fourth structural scheme (2040) also aims at constructing green buildings. Kuwait Council of Green Buildings, launched in 2009, seeks to secure a sustainable environment.

The Environment Public Authority (EPA) has embarked on various tasks in this regard, importing new beautifying plants and expanding the public green patches. Its plans also aim to stem sand movement and desertification and beautify the country with plants that can withstand severe weather conditions. Public parks are a major component of the greening tasks.

According to statistics declared by the EPA last year, the number of gardens reached 179 with a space of 2,695,993 square meters and 462,142 trees. EPA had planted 2,120,200 trees, and patches covered with flowers are estimated at 285,109 sq m. The number of planted palm trees amounted to 125,942. Moreover, it has begun since 2018 to plant mangroves that can absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide. Authorities have allotted huge budgets for beautifying the country, and private associations have been taking part in these efforts too. — KUNA



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Kuwaiti captain honored



KUWAIT: UK Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis and UK Defense Attache, Cpt Neil Marriott, were delighted to host Cpt Ali Ashour, FRINA, FIES, FIMarEST, from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, to recognize his award of the prestigious title of 'Fellow by the Royal Institute of Naval Architects' under the patronage of His Majesty King Charles III. This accolade marks a historic milestone for RINA, as Kuwait became the first Gulf Cooperation Council country to have a citizen receive this honor.



KUWAIT: The Chief of the General Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Mazin, chaired a meeting of the Supreme Committee for Officers' Affairs on Wednesday in the presence of his deputy Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Important issues related to manpower, planning, and qualification of officers were discussed. The decorated team also discussed ways to overcome obstacles that may hinder the implementation of military plans and strategies. — KUNA



Mob attacks UK community where children were killed

Haniyeh death won't affect how Hamas runs war: Analysts



HEBRON: Palestinians carry a placard bearing the image of Haniyeh during a protest in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron on July 31, 2024, denouncing his killing. — AFP photos

Haniyeh's assassination stuns Palestinians

'The Palestinian people have no protector ... the Arab and Islamic nation sold us out'

GAZA/WEST BANK: The killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an air strike in Tehran Wednesday came as a "thunderbolt" to war-weary Gazans, with some expressing disappointment Iran was unable to "protect him". "This news is like a thunderbolt, something unbelievable," said Wael Qudayh, 35, a resident of the central city of Deir El-Balah.

Haniyeh was in the Iranian capital to attend the swearing-in on Tuesday of President Masoud Pezeshkian. "Qatar was able to protect Haniyeh for 10 months, but Iran was unable to protect him even for a few hours," said Youssef Saeed, 40, also a resident of Deir El-Balah.

In the Zionist-occupied West Bank, Hossam Abdel Razek, 45, an employee in a private institution in Ramallah, said Haniyeh's killing showed that the "blood of Palestinians is cheap". "The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Iran proves that we, the Palestinian people, have no protector, that our blood is cheap, and that the Arab and Islamic nation sold us out to America and (the Zionist entity)," he said.

A framed photo of Haniyeh amidst the ruins of his Gaza home reminded Palestinians of the death and destruction brought on by a war now in its tenth month. "The world should now understand that (the Zionist entity) doesn't want a ceasefire or an end to the war," said Gaza resident Salah Abu Rezik.

'Martyrdom'

Palestinian factions called for a general strike and marches across the West Bank on Wednesday to protest the killing of Haniyeh. AFP journalists in Ramallah witnessed employees leaving government buildings in response to the strike call, as well as hundreds of people marching with flags through the city's streets.

Several Palestinians in the Gaza Strip said Haniyeh had achieved "martyrdom" because of the way he was killed. "This is



RAMALLAH: Palestinian men follow the news of the assassination of Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh outside closed shops in central Ramallah in the Zionist-occupied West Bank during a general strike on July 31, 2024.

what every Palestinian hopes for ... to obtain martyrdom while defending his land, his people and its sanctities," said Muhammad Farwana, 38, from the southern city of Khan Yunis, where Zionist troops ended a major ground assault this week that displaced tens of thousands of people. "Haniyeh was someone who gave away his children and grandchildren on the same path."

For two of Haniyeh's former neighbors in Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, his death is also a personal loss. Fatima Al-Saati was sleeping when the news of Haniyeh's demise broke and has not stopped crying since. "What a loss. We lost one

of our very own," Al-Saati said of Haniyeh. Another neighbor, Hachem Al-Saati, said, "This news is scary. We feel that he was like a father to us."

In June, 10 family members of Haniyeh were killed in a Zionist air strike in the Al-Shati refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. In April, Haniyeh lost three sons and four grandchildren in a Zionist strike in central Gaza, with the Zionist military accusing them of "terrorist activities". Haniyeh said at the time that about 60 members of his family had been killed since the war broke out on October 7. His daughter Sara Ismail Haniyeh mourned his death in a post on X, praising a man "loved by everyone". — Agencies

Zionist strike kills two Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza

DOHA: Two Al Jazeera journalists were killed on Wednesday in a Zionist strike in Gaza, the Qatar-based channel reported. "Al Jazeera Arabic journalist Ismail al-Ghoul and his cameraman Rami al-Refee have been killed in a (Zionist) attack on the Gaza Strip," the network reported adding the strike "targeted a car near the Aidia area, west of Gaza City". Al Jazeera has aired continuous on-the-ground reporting on the effects of the Zionist entity's assault on Gaza. The network's office in the territory has already been bombed in the conflict and two other correspondents killed.

In a statement, Hamas condemned the killings as a "heinous crime" which it said was "aimed at terrorizing and silencing" Palestinian journalists as they reported "the ongoing genocide against our people in the Gaza Strip for nearly ten months". Last month, a Zionist court confirmed it had extended a ban on the network, which broadcasts in Arabic and English, initially placed on Al Jazeera in early May. In January, the entity said an Al Jazeera staff journalist and a freelancer killed in an air strike in Gaza were "terror operatives".

The following month, it accused another journalist with the channel who was wounded in a separate strike of being a "deputy company commander" with Hamas. Al Jazeera has fiercely denied the entity's allegations and accused it of systematically targeting Al Jazeera employees in the Gaza Strip.

Its bureau chief in Gaza, Wael Al-Dahdouh, was wounded in a Zionist strike in December that killed the network's cameraman. His wife, two of their children and a grandson were killed in the October bombardment of central Gaza's Nuseirat refugee camp. His eldest son was the Al Jazeera staff journalist killed in January when a strike targeted a car he was riding in Rafah. — AFP

Haniyeh assassination exposes Zionist reach inside Iran: Analysts

PARIS: The killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh has exposed the depth of Zionist penetration inside the Islamic republic, analysts told AFP. Doha-based Haniyeh, who the day earlier had attended the inauguration of new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, was killed in the early hours of Wednesday morning at a residence in northern Tehran, according to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The Zionist entity declined to comment.

Details on how Haniyeh was killed remain sketchy, with Iran's Fars News Agency saying he was "martyred by a projectile from the air". Reuters reported that a missile struck him "directly", Hamas deputy chief in Gaza Khalil Al-Hayya said on Wednesday, citing witnesses who had been with Haniyeh in Iran. As a result of the missile strike, windows, doors and walls in his room were destroyed. Al-Hayya told a press conference in Tehran.

Analysts see the strike as a major intelligence failure by the Iranian services and a deeply disturbing development for the Iranian leadership, especially at a time when security would have been heightened due to the influx of guests for the inauguration. Hours before he was killed, Haniyeh had held a face-to-face meeting with Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "That the Iranians were not able to stop this assassination is very embarrassing for Iran," said Agnes Levallois, deputy president of the Paris-based Institute of Research and Studies for the Mediterranean and Middle East (IREMMO).

'Spies in Iran'

But the killing of Haniyeh is just the latest in a line of attacks believed to have been carried out by the Zionist entity inside Iran. The entity is long believed to have carried out sabotage operations through its Mossad espionage agency inside Iran, raising questions over how it appears able to obtain such detailed intelligence. "This is a confirmation of something we have all long known: The deep extent of penetration of Iranian security services by (the Zionist entity)," said Arash Azizi, senior lecturer at Clemson University in the United States.

In contrast to Hamas's military leadership, Haniyeh was a figure relatively visible in public, making trips abroad including to Turkey where he held talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, including a meeting most recently in April. "We know the (Zionists) have spies and therefore intelligence in Iran," said Levallois. "This assassination shows the entire (Zionist) intelligence system is very well developed to have all the information, and therefore allow the launching of this type of operation," she said.

Most famously, according to The New York Times, Iran's top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated in 2020 by Mossad using a machine gun that had been assembled close to his home by its agents and then fired remotely after they left. According to the same newspaper, the number two of Al-Qaeda Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, known as Abu Muhammad Al-Masri, was shot dead in Tehran by two assassins on a motorcycle in August 2020, in an attack by Zionist operatives at the behest of the United States.

Iran unleashed a barrage of missiles and drones in April, targeting the Zionist entity in retaliation for a suspected Zionist strike on its consulate in Damascus, which killed 13 people, including a general.

The entity responded to Iran's first direct attack on its territory by reportedly in April striking a radar



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (right) shows him meeting with leaders of the Palestinian Hamas movement Ismail Haniyeh (center) and the Islamic Jihad group Ziad Nakhleh in Tehran on July 30, 2024. — AFP

system of a Russian-supplied S-300 missile defense system in central Iran. The origin of that strike is not entirely clear, but it included at least one missile fired from a warplane outside Iran and small attack drones known as quadcopters that could have been launched from inside Iran itself and were aimed at confusing air defenses, the reports said.

'Extremely precise information'

According to some outlets, including television channel Iran International, Zionist agents have even captured and interrogated Revolutionary Guards inside Iran to obtain intelligence. There have also been suspicions, after mysterious explo-

sions around sensitive sites, that the Zionist entity has already carried out drone attacks inside Iran, but this has never been confirmed.

The killing of Haniyeh also came after the entity struck a Hezbollah stronghold in south Beirut on Tuesday, targeting a senior commander of the Lebanese militant group. "This operation shows that Iran was unable to secure the guests of the Supreme Leader and the president," said Hasni Abidi, director of the Geneva-based Centre of Studies and Research on the Arab World and Mediterranean (CERMAM). He said the nature of the attack showed that the entity must have had "extremely precise information" about Haniyeh's location and movements. — Agencies

International

Haniyeh's death won't affect how Hamas runs war: Analysts

Former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal seen as potential successor to Haniyeh



DAMASCUS: Ismail Haniyeh (left), former Palestinian prime minister and Khaled Meshaal, former Damascus-based political head of Hamas, shake hands at the start of a meeting on December 5, 2006. (Right) The spiritual leader of Hamas Sheikh Ahmed Yassin sits on his wheelchair while his top aide Ismail Haniyeh speaks on the phone at his home in Gaza City on June 24, 2002. — AFP photos



CAIRO: The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Iran strips Palestinian group Hamas of one of its sharpest political minds but will have no bearing on the leadership of the military wing that the Zionist entity says is trying to destroy in Gaza.

Hamas has several possible candidates to replace Haniyeh, notably Khaled Meshaal, the group's former leader who survived an assassination attempt in 1997 after Zionist agents injected him with poison on a street outside his office in the Jordanian capital Amman. He now splits his time between Cairo and Doha.

Whoever emerges, experts say it won't impact the way Hamas runs its war against the Zionist entity in the Gaza Strip, where leaders including Yahya Sinwar have been directing operations with a significant degree of autonomy during the conflict.

For Hamas leaders based outside the Palestinian territories, the assassination in Tehran indicates heightened risks. Haniyeh was the second Hamas leader killed in a Middle East capital this year, following a drone strike that took out the group's dep-

uty leader — Saleh Al-Aroui — in Beirut in January.

The Zionist entity has tried to kill several Gaza-based commanders who it says are responsible for planning and executing the cross-border October 7 attack. In March, the entity said it had killed Marwan Issa, the deputy military commander of the Hamas armed wing known as Al Qassam Brigades. The United States confirmed Issa's death in a Zionist operation. Hamas has neither confirmed nor denied his death. In July, a Zionist attempt in Gaza to kill Mohammed Deif — head of the Qassam Brigades and believed to be one of the masterminds of the attack on southern Zionist communities — resulted in scores of Palestinian dead but no confirmation he was among them. Qatar-based senior Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya has denied that Deif was killed.

Sinwar, still believed to be directing military operations, possibly from bunkers beneath Gaza, while playing a leading role in indirect negotiations with the Zionist entity for a prisoner swap deal. Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Sinwar and the

other Hamas leaders were "living on borrowed time" after October 7, which prompted the Zionist entity to launch the ongoing offensive that has laid waste to much of Gaza and killed almost 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities.

"Assassinations don't impact Hamas," a source close to the Islamist militant group told Reuters from Gaza, declining to be identified due to the sensitivity of the subject. "Fighters on the ground have their own orders, they are bound to fight until Sinwar and the leadership tell them there is a deal in place," the source said. Asked to confirm that the Zionist entity was behind the assassination of Haniyeh, a Zionist government spokesman said: "We are not commenting on that particular incident."

'A fake victory'

Haniyeh was appointed to the top leadership role in 2017. Sami Abu Zuhri, a senior Hamas official located outside the Palestinian territories, said the Zionist entity assassinated Haniyeh because they had failed to defeat

the Iran-backed group in Gaza, calling it an attempt to portray "a fake victory". He noted Hamas had weathered numerous assassinations over the years, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin — Hamas' co-founder and spiritual leader — who was killed in a helicopter missile strike in 2004 as he left a mosque in Gaza City. "Hamas is a movement of institutions, it doesn't die when its leaders die," Abu Zuhri told Reuters.

Ashraf Abouelhou, a specialist on Palestinian issues and managing editor of the Egyptian state-owned paper Al-Ahram, said Hamas had other veteran politicians such as Meshaal to fall back on. "He is set to have a big role," he said. Meshaal has lived most of his life outside the Palestinian territories. Born in Silwad near the West Bank city of Ramallah, Meshaal moved as a boy with his family to the Gulf Arab state of Kuwait, a hotbed of pro-Palestinian sentiment. But on the military front, nothing would change. "Haniyeh had no role when it comes to the military aspect. (That) is up to the military leaders in Gaza," he said. — Reuters

Zionist entity tortures Palestinian detainees, UN report finds

GENEVA: Palestinians detained by the Zionist entity during the Gaza war have largely been held in secret and in some cases subjected to treatment that may amount to torture, the United Nations said on Wednesday. Since the October 7 Hamas attack, thousands of Palestinians — including medics, patients, residents and captured fighters — have been taken from Gaza to (the Zionist entity), "usually shackled and blindfolded", the OHCHR UN human rights office said in a report.

Thousands more have been detained in the West Bank and the entity, it added. "They have generally been held in secret, without being given a reason for their detention, access to a lawyer or effective judicial review," OHCHR said. The Zionist entity did not immediately comment but has rejected previous critical reports saying its prisons are run according to international law. The report was released the day after the Zionist military police questioned soldiers arrested on suspicion of sexually abusing a Palestinian detainee.

At least 53 detainees from Gaza and the West Bank have died in Zionist detention since the Gaza war be-

gan on October 7, the report found. Testimonies from the report suggested that the Zionist entity had subjected prisoners to "a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees", UN rights chief Volker Turk said.

The report covers October 7 to June 30. It relies primarily on information gathered through interviews with released Palestinian detainees and other victims and witnesses of violations, OHCHR said. The report said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that since October 7, the Zionist entity and Palestinian armed groups had "committed gross violations and abuses ... of the rights to life, liberty and freedom from torture and other ill-treatment."

These included the use of "rape and other forms of sexual violence," warning the abuses may amount to war crimes. Besides calling for the abuses to cease, the OHCHR urged all parties to "immediately end all forms of arbitrary detention, including the holding of hostages".

'Incommunicado detention'

Turk called for the immediate release of all hostages who are held by Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, and said all Palestinians arbitrarily detained by the Zionist entity must also be set free. "Secret, prolonged incommunicado detention may also amount to a form of torture," Turk said. The report said most Palestinians held since October 7 have been detained "without charges or trial".

Many released Palestinians reported treatment "in-



KFAR YONA: Zionist soldiers and police clash with right wing protesters who broke into an army base where military reservists suspected of abuse of a Palestinian detainee were held for questioning on July 29, 2024. — AFP

cluding severe beatings, electrocution, being forced to remain in stress positions for prolonged periods, or waterboarding". The report said detainees had been subjected to blackmail, "being burnt with cigarettes, and given hallucinogenic pills".

The report also said the Palestinian Authority "continued to carry out arbitrary detention and torture or other ill-treatment in the West Bank, reportedly principally to suppress criticism and political opposition". A host of studies by rights groups and UN agencies have con-

demned conditions in Zionist prisons.

Amnesty International said this month it had documented 27 cases of Palestinians, including five women and a 14-year-old boy, who were detained by the Zionist entity "for up to four and a half months" without being able to contact their families. According to the Prisoners Club, a Palestinian rights watchdog, about 9,600 Palestinians are currently in Zionist jails, including hundreds under administrative detention where they can be held for long periods without charges. — AFP

Haniyeh assassinated...

Continued from Page 1

It renewed the call on the Zionist occupation government to stop the attacks and the genocides of the Palestinian people. The ministry offered condolences, on behalf of Kuwait, to the Palestinian people and leadership.

The Zionist entity declined to comment on the Tehran strike, which came after it struck a Hezbollah stronghold in south Beirut on Tuesday, targeting a senior commander of the Lebanese militant group it blamed for a deadly weekend rocket strike on the Zionist-annexed Golan Heights. A source close to Hezbollah group told AFP that the body of top commander Fuad Shukur had been recovered Wednesday, almost 24 hours after he was killed in the Zionist strike.

The source, who requested anonymity, said "Shukur's body has been found under the rubble of the targeted building". The raid on the Beirut suburb, an overcrowded residential area that is also a Hezbollah bastion, killed five civilians — three women and two children, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

The Zionist entity "delivered crushing blows to all our enemies", Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday, explicitly mentioning the killing of Shukur in south Beirut. "We've eliminated (Hezbollah chief Hassan) Nasrallah's right-hand man, who was directly responsible for the massacre of children," Netanyahu said in a televised statement.

Qatar, which has been spearheading efforts with Egypt and the United States to broker a ceasefire in Gaza, said the killing of Haniyeh, Hamas' lead negotiator, threw the whole process into doubt. "Brother leader, mujahid Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the movement, died in a Zionist strike on his residence in Tehran after he participated in the inauguration of the new (Iranian) president," the Palestinian group said in a statement.

Hamas political bureau member Musa Abu Marzouk vowed the group would retaliate. "The assassination of

leader Ismail Haniyeh is a cowardly act and will not go unanswered," he said. Iran's Revolutionary Guards also announced the death, saying Haniyeh's residence in Tehran was hit and he was killed along with a bodyguard. Iranian media said the 2:00 am (2230 GMT) strike targeted "the special residences for war veterans in north Tehran" where Haniyeh was staying.

Haniyeh had traveled to Tehran to attend Tuesday's swearing-in of Pezeshkian. The government, following the news of the killing, declared three days of national mourning. An "official and public" funeral ceremony for Haniyeh will be held in Tehran on Thursday before his body is flown to Qatar, his base in recent years, for burial on Friday, Hamas said.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas condemned Haniyeh's killing as a "cowardly act". Palestinian factions in the Zionist-occupied West Bank called for a general strike and protest marches across the territory. Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas in retaliation for its Oct 7 attacks on the Zionist entity. The Zionist retaliatory campaign against Hamas has killed at least 39,445 people in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry, mostly women and children. Regional tensions have soared during the war, drawing in Iran-backed militant groups in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

Qatar's prime minister, who has spearheaded efforts to broker a truce and hostage release deal between the Zionist entity and Hamas, said Haniyeh's killing threw the whole mediation process into doubt. "How can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on the other side?" Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani asked in a post on X. "Peace needs serious partners."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that a ceasefire in Gaza was still the "imperative". Speaking at a forum in Singapore, Blinken refused to comment directly on the killing of Haniyeh, but said reaching a ceasefire in Gaza "is the enduring imperative". Speaking in an interview with Channel News Asia,

Blinken said the United States was "not aware of or involved in" the strike that killed Haniyeh.

Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators had met Zionist negotiators in Rome on Sunday in their latest push for a deal as international pressure for a ceasefire mounts. Concern grew among Zionists over the fate of the dozens of captives still held captive in Gaza. Haniyeh's killing "was a mistake as it threatens the possibility of having a hostage deal," said Anat Noy, a resident of the coastal city of Haifa.

The Tehran strike which killed Haniyeh came hours after the Zionist said it had killed senior Hezbollah military commander Shukur in a strike on the group's stronghold in Beirut's southern suburbs. Chairing a cabinet meeting Wednesday, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati warned: "The strike on the southern suburbs is a strike on... efforts for calm."

Residents in besieged Gaza feared Haniyeh's death would prolong the fighting that has devastated the enclave. "What a loss. We lost one of our very own," said Gaza resident Fatima Al Saati. Another neighbor, Hachem Al-Saati, said: "This news is scary. We feel that he was like a father to us."

Haniyeh's most likely successor is Khaled Meshaal, his deputy-in-exile who lives in Qatar, analysts and Hamas officials said. Under Meshaal, Hamas emerged as an ever more important player in the Middle East conflict due to his charisma, popularity and regional standing, analysts said. Meshaal narrowly survived an attempt on his life in Jordan ordered by Netanyahu in 1997.

Appointed to the top Hamas job in 2017, Haniyeh moved between Turkey and Qatar's capital Doha, escaping the travel curbs of the blockaded Gaza Strip and enabling him to act as a negotiator in the truce talks or to talk to Hamas' ally Iran. Three of his sons were killed in a Zionist airstrike in April. His deputy Saleh Al-Aroui was killed in January by the Zionist entity, leaving Yehya Al-Sinwar, the Hamas chief in Gaza and the architect of the Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity, and Zuhair Jabarin, the head of the group in the West Bank, in place but in hiding. — Agencies

Sudan army chief...

Continued from Page 1

where the army-aligned government fled after war broke out with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April last year. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

The United States has invited both sides to negotiations next month in Geneva, which Sudan's foreign ministry on Tuesday said must be preceded by "more discussions". On Wednesday, Burhan ruled out talks with the RSF. Any peace initiative "must recognize, invite and consult the Sudanese state", he said, referring to his government. "We will not lay down our guns until we clean this country of every conspirator and every rebel," he vowed.

Already, the war — which Burhan says the army intends to win "with our head high" — has killed tens of thousands of people, with some estimates of up to 150,000, according to US envoy to Sudan Tom Perriello. It has also caused mass human rights violations and triggered the world's largest displacement crisis, according to the United Nations. Over 10 million people are currently displaced across Sudan, most in areas facing looming famine and worsening humanitarian conditions as fighting spreads.

A video shared on social media and verified by Reuters showed soldiers marching in a graduation ceremony before a whirring sound is heard followed by the sound of an explosion. Another shows a cloud of dust and scores of people running. "We heard sounds of explosions all of a sudden and everyone ran scared," said one eyewitness, noting that many families of graduating officers were present.

Wednesday's attack was the first on a military base in Sudan's eastern Red Sea state, where the army, government and the United Nations have all relocated their headquarters. — Agencies

International

Mob attacks UK community where children were killed

Rioters throw bricks at local mosque, injure police after agitators link stabbing to Muslims

SOUTHPORT: UK police mobilized on Wednesday to prevent a repeat of overnight violence in which dozens of officers were injured, following the mass stabbing at a "Taylor Swift yoga and dance workshop" that killed three children. Merseyside Police chief Serena Kennedy said her force was "absolutely planning" for further possible disturbances in Southport, northwestern England, after Monday's knife rampage targeting children prompted Tuesday evening's clashes.

Supporters of the far-right English Defence League (EDL) are suspected of having travelled from outside the area to the seaside town near Liverpool to orchestrate several hours of serious violent disorder. A 100-strong group attacked police and properties, throwing bricks at a mosque and setting vehicles and other things on fire. Police say 53 officers were wounded, at least eight of them seriously, and that they had arrested four suspects.

The scenes of violence have been widely condemned, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowing that those responsible would "face the full force of the law". During a visit there Wednesday, Kennedy said her officers were "well prepared" and had had "sufficient resources". But she added: "The people who turned up last night were bolstered very quickly and it very quickly escalated."

Acknowledging communities in Southport were "really worried" about further disturbances, she added that Merseyside Police would continue to be supported by other regional forces. That would ensure "that we don't see a repeat of last night", she added.

False information

Officers have been granted new temporary powers to disperse any crowds that attempt to gather in the area later Wednesday. The violence erupted shortly af-

ter a vigil was held in the town center, where hundreds fell silent in tribute to the victims of the stabbing attack that also critically injured five children and two adults.

Police have said they are not treating it as terror-related. Few details have emerged about the suspected attacker, other than that he is 17 years old and born in the Welsh capital Cardiff. His parents were from Rwanda, according to the BBC. Police have been granted more time to question him. He cannot be named because of his age.

Hours after the attack, unverified information about the suspect's background began spreading on social media. Far-right influencer Andrew Tate had posted a video on social media, viewed by nearly 15 million people, blaming the stabbing on an "illegal migrant".

The Muslim Council of Britain said the Islamophobic backlash started with a false online rumor stoked by misinformation from a Russian news site, wrongly associating the crime with Muslims. "At a time of great tragedy, loss, and mourning, we must stand firm against the cynical forces of hatred and division," MCB secretary-general Zara Mohammed said. Merseyside Police's assistant chief Alex Goss said there had been "much speculation and hypothesis" about the suspect while "many people who do not live in" the local area had participated in Tuesday night's violence.

'Grieving'

"What did we do to deserve this? We've already lost our children," 53-year-old Suzanne Jerram, owner of a store that was vandalized, told AFP. "Our community's grieving, how dare they come here to our town and do this? It's disgusting, it really is disgusting."

Shadow interior minister James Cleverly urged the government to respond "hard and fast" to the disturbances and online misinformation. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner suggested the gov-



SOUTHPORT: Volunteers help repair damage done to the Southport Islamic Society Mosque in Southport, northwest England, on July 31, 2024 following clashes after a deadly knife attack. — AFP

ernment may "be looking at" whether to proscribe the EDL under anti-terror laws.

The young victims of Monday's attack were named the following day. Nine-year-old Alice Dasilva Aguiar died in hospital early on Tuesday, police said, after Bebe King, six, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, died on Monday. Aguiar was the daughter of Portuguese parents from Madeira. Her family said in a tribute: "Keep

smiling and dancing like you love to do our princess."

Police said the two wounded adults had been trying to protect the children. Tributes have been paid to the bravery of dance and yoga teacher Leanne Lucas, who was one of those injured. US pop star Swift said she was "completely in shock" over "the loss of life and innocence, and the horrendous trauma inflicted on everyone". — AFP

India landslide toll hits 160 as rain hampers rescue work

WAYANAD, India: Relentless downpours and howling winds hampered Wednesday's search for survivors of landslides that struck Indian tea plantations and killed at least 160 people, most believed to be laborers and their families. Days of torrential monsoon rains have battered the southern coastal state of Kerala, with blocked roads into the Wayanad district disaster area complicating relief efforts.

The only bridge connecting the worst-hit villages of Chooralmala and Mundakkai was washed away, forcing rescue teams to carry bodies on stretchers out of the disaster zone using a makeshift zipline erected over raging flood waters.

Several people who managed to flee the initial impact of the landslides found themselves caught in a nearby river that had burst its banks, volunteer rescuer Arun Dev told AFP at a hospital treating survivors. "Those who escaped were swept away along with houses, temples and schools," he said.

Senior police officer MIR Ajith Kumar told AFP that around 500 people had been rescued since successive landslides struck before dawn on Tuesday. "Still large areas are to be explored and searched to find out whether live people are there or not," he said.

Wayanad is famed for the tea estates that crisscross its hilly countryside and which rely on a large pool of laborers for planting and harvest. A number of brick-walled row homes built to accommodate seasonal workers were inundated by a powerful wall of brown sludge as laborers and their families slept. Other buildings were caked with mud as the force of the landslide scattered cars, corrugated iron and other debris around the disaster site.

"Catastrophic debris flows are extremely violent, so survival is very difficult," Hull University earth scientist Dave Petley told AFP. "This will have been exacerbated by the timing - in the early hours when

people were asleep - and by flimsy structures that offered little protection."

A total of 160 bodies had been recovered so far, the office of state revenue minister K. Rajan told reporters. More than 3,000 people were sheltering in emergency relief camps around Wayanad district, the state government said. At least 572 millimeters (22.5 inches) of rain fell in the two days leading up to the landslides, according to state chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Kerala's disaster agency said more rain and strong winds were forecast for the week with the likelihood of "damage to unsafe structures" elsewhere in the state.

'Incessant rains'

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, who until recently represented Wayanad in parliament, said he had been unable to go through with a planned visit to the disaster. "Due to incessant rains and adverse weather conditions we have been informed by authorities that we will not be able to land," he said in a post on social media platform X. "Our thoughts are with the people of Wayanad at this difficult time," he said.

Monsoon rains across the region from June to September offer respite from the summer heat and are crucial to replenishing water supplies. They are vital for agriculture - and therefore the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security for South Asia's nearly two billion people - but also bring regular destruction.

The number of fatal floods and landslides has increased in recent years and experts say climate change is exacerbating the problem. "Events like landslides, they are part of these climate change-triggered heavy rainfall disasters," Kartiki Negi of the Indian environment think tank Climate Trends told AFP. "India will continue to see more and more of these kinds of impacts in the future," she said.

Damming, deforestation and development projects in India have also exacerbated the human toll. India's worst landslide in recent decades was in 1998, when rockfalls triggered by heavy monsoon rains killed at least 220 people and buried the tiny Himalayan village of Malpa. — AFP



WAYANAD: Relief personnel carry the body of a victim, during a search and rescue operation at a site following landslides in Wayanad on July 30, 2024. — AFP

US 'defensive' strike kills four in Iraq

BAGHDAD: US forces carried out a "defensive" air strike on combatants who were attempting to launch drones that were deemed a threat to American and allied troops, a US official said. Iraq condemned the air strike, describing it as a "heinous crime" that could have "dangerous" consequences amid ongoing talks on the future of the US-led anti-jihadist coalition in the country. The

strike - which Iraqi sources said left at least four people dead - was the first by American forces in Iraq since February, when the US military said it killed a pro-Iran commander who was involved in attacks on the country's troops. "Tonight, US forces in Iraq conducted a defensive air strike" in Babylon province "targeting combatants attempting to launch one-way attack uncrewed aerial systems", the US defense official said on condition of anonymity.

The official added that the Central Command assessed that the drones "posed a threat to US and coalition forces". "We maintain the inherent right to self-defense and will not hesitate to take appropriate action,"

the official added. The Hashed Al-Shaabi - an alliance of pro-Iran former paramilitary groups that have been integrated into Iraq's security forces - said apparent missile strikes fired from drones hit two Hashed patrols in Babylon province. An official from the alliance told AFP that "four people were killed and others were critically wounded". A security source confirmed the toll. General Yehia Rasool, the military spokesman for the Iraqi prime minister, described the strike as a "heinous crime and blatant aggression". He added in a statement that it came despite reaching "advanced stages" in talks on ending the US-led coalition's mission in Iraq and "transitioning to a bilateral security relationship". — AFP



ATLANTA: US Vice President and 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris speaks at a campaign rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 30, 2024. — AFP

'Weird' Trump hates being laughed at. So Harris is laughing

WASHINGTON: "Weird." Democrats want this to be the word of 2024 - their secret weapon to bring down Donald Trump. "Trump is old and quite weird?" as a Kamala Harris campaign statement put it. "Just plain weird," Harris said. Trump has built a political career on mocking everyone from opponents to his own staffers. But being the butt of the joke makes him furious. "I hate when people laugh at me," he told a rally earlier this month. That "weird" jibe is Harris's bid, in her come-from-behind campaign, to get the whole country laughing.

Where President Joe Biden used formal - often grandiose - speeches to frame Trump as an existential boogeyman, Harris's team is trying to shrink the Republican into something more like an unpleasant clown. Here are typical phrases from Harris campaign releases on Trump: "Bitter, unhinged." "Rambled about golf." "Generally sounded like someone you wouldn't want to sit near at a restaurant - let alone be president of the United States." And when it comes to Trump's vice-presidential pick, JD Vance, the mockery is anything more intense. Vance's past comments belittling "childless cat ladies" - women who, like Harris, have not given birth - raise him to the "super weird" category, according to two Democratic senators. And a viral piece of online trolling - a fake story claiming that Vance wrote about sex acts with a sofa - demonstrates the extent to which the anti-Trump camp is ready to weaponize humor.

The story may have been made up, but an industrial flow of memes involving Vance, couches and suggestions of what might be happening between them did the damage. "JD Vance didn't have sex with a couch. But he's still extremely weird," began an article on the online news site Vox. Or as Hillary Clinton put it: "If Republican leaders don't enjoy being called weird, creepy, and controlling, they could try not being weird, creepy, and controlling."

The Trump campaign was blindsided by Biden's abrupt decision to drop out, then Harris's warp-speed start, which in one week has seen her ignite the Democratic base and pull level with Trump - or even ahead - in the polls. "A sucker punch," Vance said in a recording of an address to supporters obtained by The Washington Post.

The shift in tone from Biden's policy-heavy sermons about democracy to the edgier Harris approach is no less startling. Now Republicans are looking to turn the joke back on their opponents. Trump is doing what he's always done - dishing out the insults and trying to find one that sticks. He's called her "dumb," "nuts" and a "bum." And Trump's combative son, Don Jr., is leading a drive to flip the "weird" jibe on its head. "What a ... weirdo," he posted on X, using a common vulgarity, over a video clip of Harris saying she supports access to gender reassignment surgery for prison inmates. "Talk about weird priorities," he wrote in another post about her transgender support. — AFP



LONDON: Former BBC news anchor Huw Edwards leaves after a hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London on July 31, 2024. — AFP

Ex-BBC news anchor pleads guilty to having indecent child pictures

LONDON: Former British TV presenter Huw Edwards, the long-time face of the BBC's flagship news program, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to three counts of making indecent pictures of children. Edwards was the BBC's highest paid journalist and top news anchor until he quit in April, following allegations he had paid a young person thousands of pounds for sexually explicit photos, something which is unconnected to the criminal charges. The 62-year-old was a household name in Britain for more than two decades, announcing the death of Queen Elizabeth to the nation in 2022 and leading coverage of elections, royal weddings and the 2012 Olympics.

But he has not been on TV screens for a year and Wednesday's court appearance, which caps a dramatic fall from grace, was his first in public since then. Edwards made his way through a throng of photographers and camera crews into London's Westminster Magistrates' Court, where he admitted having sent several indecent images of children between December 2020 and August 2021.

Asked if he wished to indicate a plea to the three charges, which related to three different categories of indecent images, Edwards said: "Guilty". Judge Paul Goldspring said Edwards would be sentenced on September 16 and that "all options", including an immediate prison sentence, would be considered.

During the 25-minute hearing, prosecutor Ian Hope said Edwards had been sent a total of 377 sexually explicit images by an adult male on WhatsApp, 41 of which were indecent, illegal images of children.

Hope said seven of the 41 images were of the most serious kind and that two of those seven were pornographic videos of a child possibly aged between seven and nine years old. The last indecent image was sent to Edwards in August 2021, when the man who sent it said "the male in the film was quite young-looking and that he has more images which are illegal", Hope said. He added that Edwards told the male "not to send him illegal images and no more are sent from this point", though the chat continues and further legal pornographic images were sent. — Reuters

Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2024

Slowing US private sector wage growth curbs labor costs in Q2

Wages and salaries gain 0.9%; up 4.2% on annual basis

WASHINGTON: US labor costs increased moderately in the second quarter as private sector wages grew at the slowest pace in 3-1/2 years, more evidence that inflation was firmly on a downward trend and could help facilitate an interest rate cut in September. The report from the Labor Department on Wednesday followed data last week showing inflation subsided considerably last quarter, with sub-3 percent readings in all the measures.

The modest rise in labor costs is likely to be welcomed by Federal Reserve officials who are wrapping up a two-day policy meeting on Wednesday. The US central bank is expected leave its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range, where it has been since last July.

"Wages and salary increases in private industry are more in line with where Fed officials would like it to be," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BOND in New York. "The economy is gradually returning to normal. Cooler wages give the green light to Fed rate cuts." The employment cost index (ECI), the broadest measure of labor costs, increased 0.9 percent last quarter after rising by an unrevised 1.2 percent in the first quarter, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the ECI would rise 1.0 percent. Labor costs advanced 4.1 percent in the 12 months through June, the smallest gain since the fourth quarter of 2021, after climbing

4.2 percent in the year through March. Annual labor cost growth has slowed from 4.5 percent in June 2023. The ECI is viewed by policymakers as one of the better measures of labor market slack and a predictor of core inflation because it adjusts for composition and job-quality changes.

Price pressures are ebbing following 525 basis points worth of rate hikes from the Fed since 2022. The government reported on Tuesday that job openings maintained their steady decline in June and hires dropped to the lowest level since 2020. Wages and salaries, which account for the bulk of labor costs, increased 0.9 percent last quarter. That was the smallest advance in three years and followed a 1.1 percent rise in the January-March quarter.

They increased 4.2 percent on an annual basis, slowing from 4.4 percent in the first quarter. When adjusted for inflation, overall wages gained 1.2 percent in the 12 months through June after rising 0.9 percent in the first quarter. That helped to boost consumer spending and overall economic growth last quarter. Private sector wages and salaries climbed 0.8 percent, the smallest advance since the fourth quarter of 2020, after rising 1.1 percent in the January-March quarter. They increased 4.1 percent in the 12 months through June after rising 4.3 percent in the first quarter. State and local government wage gains also slowed last quarter, rising 1.1 percent after shooting up 1.4 percent in the first three



LINCOLN, US: Employees work in the Kawasaki subway train factory in Lincoln, Nebraska. — AFP

months of the year. They, however, continued to run higher on an annual basis, advancing 5.1 percent after increasing 5.0 percent in the 12 months through March. Benefits for all workers rose 1.0 percent after increasing 1.1 percent in the January-March quarter.

They increased 3.8 percent in the 12 months through June after advancing 3.7 percent in the first quarter. Health benefits for private workers surged 3.6 percent on a year-on-year basis after rising 2.8 percent in the first quarter. — Reuters

Boeing appoints Ortberg CEO to steer turnaround

SEATTLE: Boeing on Wednesday named aerospace industry veteran Kelly Ortberg as its new President and CEO after a months-long search, tasking the former Rockwell Collins executive with the monumental job of turning around the struggling planemaker. Ortberg will start on Aug. 8 facing a multitude of issues, including reviving the company's jet production and rebuilding trust with regulators, the industry and the flying public.

Boeing, one of two global planemaking giants, has been mired in a reputational and safety crisis after a January 5 mid-air panel blowout on an Alaska Airlines-operated MAX 9 jet carrying 171 passengers. The company said Wednesday that it had also lost \$1.4 billion loss in the quarter as it continues to burn cash.

The Jan. 5 incident led to the eventual resignation of CEO Dave Calhoun and departure of the compa-



Robert Kelly Ortberg

ny's previous board president as regulators took aim at the safety culture that was already shaken by previous crashes in 2018 and 2019. Shortly after the incident on Jan. 5, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) barred Boeing from expanding production of its cash-cow 737 MAX family of jets without estimating how long the limitation will last. The US aviation regulator capped production of 737 MAX jets at 38 per month, though Reuters has reported that Boeing has been producing jets during some weeks at a much lower level.

The regulator on Feb 28 gave Boeing 90 days to develop a comprehensive plan to address "systemic quality-control issues," which the company submitted in May. However, the FAA's administrator has said Boeing would not be immediately allowed to increase 737 MAX production.

Shares rose 2.9 percent in premarket trading.

That has led to lower deliveries, frustrating customers. During the second quarter, Boeing delivered a total of 92 aircraft, down 32 percent from last year.

The company posted a loss of \$2.33 a share in the second quarter, as its troubled defense and space business exacerbated the financial strain on the US planemaker that has already scaled back commercial aircraft production. Boeing's Defense, Space and Security unit, one of its three main businesses, has lost billions of dollars in 2023 and 2022, which executives attributed to cost overruns on fixed-price contracts.

Such contracts have high margins but leave defense contractors vulnerable to inflationary pressures that have dented US corporate earnings in the last few years. The planemaker used to bid aggressively for fixed-price contracts before the pandemic, but has now said it would pivot away from such contracts to stem losses at the business, which amounted to \$1.76 billion last year. Ahead of last week's Farnborough Air Show, the unit's head had said it was "significantly challenged" during the quarter. Boeing CFO Brian West said in May the planemaker will burn rather than generate cash in 2024, hamstrung by low-jet deliveries compared to last year. — Reuters

Saudi budget deficit tops \$4bn in Q2

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's budget deficit rose to 15.3 billion riyals (\$4.09 billion) in the second quarter, almost three times the shortfall recorded a year ago, finance ministry data showed on Wednesday, reflecting the impact of rising spending on state finances. Overall revenue rose 12 percent to 353.6 billion riyals during the quarter, but that was outpaced by a 15 percent increase in spending to almost 369 billion riyals. The kingdom's sprawling Vision 2030 agenda calls for hundreds of billions of dollars in investments to develop new economic sectors and more sustainable revenue streams to reduce the dependence of the world's top oil exporter on fossil fuels.

Oil revenue was just under 213 billion riyals in April-June, up 18 percent year-on-year, while non-oil revenue rose 4 percent. Subsidies rose 68 percent during the quarter and capital expenditures rose almost 50 percent year on year. After the first six months of the year the budget deficit stood at 27.7 billion riyals, the ministry's budget performance report said. The government is forecasting a budget deficit of 79 billion riyals for the whole year.

The International Monetary Fund, which earlier this month cut Saudi Arabia's economic growth forecast by nearly a percentage point to 1.7 percent, has estimated the kingdom would require oil prices at \$96.2 to balance its 2024 budget. To cover its financing needs, Saudi Arabia has already raised \$17 billion from the public debt markets this year and its oil giant Aramco and sovereign wealth fund PIF, which is steering Vision 2030, have also raised billions from bonds. Saudi total public debt stood at 1.149 trillion riyals at the end of June, up from 1.05 trillion riyals at the end of last year. — Reuters

World Bank OKs \$1.5bn Ethiopia rescue package

ADDIS ABABA: The World Bank has approved a \$1.5 billion financial package to support cash-strapped Ethiopia's economic reform program after officials loosened curbs on the local currency. The decision comes after the Horn of Africa country broke with decades of managing the birr, a move that unlocked long-negotiated funding with international lenders including the International Monetary Fund.

The World Bank's financing is the first in a series and will include a \$1 billion grant and a \$500 million concessional loan, the Washington-based lender said on Tuesday. "This operation supports the government of Ethiopia at a critical time in its efforts to accelerate poverty reduction and shift to more inclusive, sustainable, and private sector led growth," World Bank Ethiopia director Maryam Salim said. "Importantly, there is a strong emphasis on protecting poor and vulnerable people from the cost of economic adjustment."

Africa's second most populous nation is in dire need of financial help as it weathers a severe economic crisis marked by rapid inflation. The World Bank said it expected to provide an additional \$6 billion in new commitments over the next three fiscal years. The IMF board on Monday approved a four-year loan program worth around \$3.4 billion to support the reforms, with around \$1 billion immediately disbursed. Analysts had said the IMF was demanding several reforms of Ethiopia's state-controlled economy, including floating the currency, in order to unlock the funding. — AFP

News in Brief

Adani Group planning to invest in Vietnam's airports

HANOI: India's Adani Group is considering investing in two airports in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government said on Wednesday, weeks after the company revealed it had permission to build a seaport in the country. The government statement comes after a meeting in Delhi on the same day between Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Gautam Adani, head of conglomerate Adani Group, during Chinh's official visit to India. "Adani is planning to strengthen cooperation with Vietnamese partners in the fields of aviation and logistics, via the construction of Long Thanh airport and Chu Lai airport," the statement said, referring to two major airports in the south and central regions. — Reuters

Liberia suspends central bank governor over audit

MONROVIA: Liberia suspended its central bank governor on Tuesday after an audit found irregular loans to the government and unauthorized spending, the information minister and a spokesperson for the central bank said. Liberia President Joseph Boakai commissioned an audit of three key government institutions, including the central bank, after taking office in January. Jolue Aloysius Turlue will be suspended indefinitely following the release last week of the General Auditing Commission's report, which focused on the period from 2018 to 2023. The report found "irregularities" within central bank lending to the government, including more than \$80 million in apparently unauthorized financing for salary payments. — Reuters

Drugmaker GSK sees shares slide on vaccines woes

LONDON: British pharmaceutical group GlaxoSmithKline on Wednesday posted falling net profit and rising sales, but its share price slid on concerns over its vaccines division. Profit after tax sank 29 percent to £2.2 billion (\$2.8 billion) in the six months to the end of June from a year earlier, largely due to adverse foreign exchange moves, GSK said in a statement. However, core operating profit excluding exceptional items jumped 18 percent to £2.5 billion. — AFP



TOKYO: A woman walks past electronic boards displaying the exchange rate for the Japanese yen against the US dollar (right) and the Nikkei index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (left) in Tokyo on July 31, 2024. — AFP

US Fed expected to pause again, hint at Sept cut

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is highly unlikely to waver from its position of holding interest rates at a two-decade high on Wednesday, but could drop hints about a September start to rate cuts. Policymakers began their second day of interest rate deliberations at 9 am local time (1300 GMT), as scheduled, the Fed said in a statement. Their decision will be published later on Wednesday.

The US central bank has held its key lending rate between 5.25 and 5.50 percent for the past year, with policymakers seeking to bring inflation back down toward the bank's long-term target of two percent.

After a small uptick in inflation earlier this year, the Fed's mission appears to be firmly back on track. Its favored measure of headline inflation eased to an annual rate of 2.5 percent last month, while economic growth has remained resilient, and the labor market has come into better balance. Despite the improved economic picture, the Fed is not expected to make its first rate cut on Wednesday, High Frequency Economics (HFE) chief US economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a recent invest-

ment note. Recent comments from Fed officials "suggest that they will remain on hold at their meeting," Goldman Sachs US chief economist David Mericle wrote in a note to clients published Friday, adding that they "have moved closer to a first interest rate cut."

Instead, the Fed's rate-setting committee "is likely to revise its statement to hint that a cut at the following meeting in September has become more likely," he said.

At the most recent rate decision in June, Fed officials responded to a small uptick in inflation by lowering the number of cuts they penciled in for this year from three down to just one. Since then, the data has painted a much better picture, and futures traders now assign a probability of around 65 percent that the US central bank will make at least 0.75 percentage-points of cuts this year, according to CME Group data. Those cuts are expected to come in the form of three separate quarter-point moves.

"The case for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates is strong and we anticipate that it will use the July meeting to plant the seed that the first move in the normalization cycle is on the table for September," Oxford Economics chief US economist Ryan Sweet wrote in a recent note to clients. Fed Chair Jerome Powell told lawmakers in Washington earlier this month that recent data "have shown some modest further progress" against inflation. "More good data would strengthen our confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward two percent," he added. — AFP

Business

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group holds H1 2024 analyst conference call

Conference reviews Group's H1 financial indicators, expectations and upcoming projects

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently hosted its H1 2024 analyst conference attended by Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer; Shiamak Soonawalla, Group Chief Finance Officer; Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer; and Yaqoub Almulla, Senior Manager of Investor Relations.

The conference entailed a review of the Group's H1 financial indicators, as well as the expectations and upcoming projects, with the aim of maintaining its leading position in the banking sector and improving customer service according to the highest standards in the industry.

Growing opportunities

During the call, Al-Sumait expressed his optimism, stating that ABK is prepared to capitalize on emerging growth opportunities and finance upcoming large infrastructure, oil, and energy projects in Kuwait. These initiatives aim to leverage its financial strength while continuing to adopt the highest standards of governance and transparency.



Al-Sumait continued, "We are hopeful and confident in the ability to enhance the partnership between the public and private sectors in implementing Kuwait Vision 2035 plans to advance economic activity and contribute to transforming Kuwait into a regional and global commercial and financial hub."

Moving to key financial highlights and performance for this period, Al-Sumait highlighted that the Group has achieved a 22 percent increase in Net Profit attributable to shareholders to KD 29.1 million during H1 2024, and a 20 percent increase in EPS to 12 fils, with a comfortable Capital Adequacy Ratio of 15.3 percent. He expressed, "All financial indicators reflect our success in implementing strategic plans and keeping pace with economic changes. During H1, we maintained positive momentum, reflected in our improved profitability and asset quality ratios, including a NPL Ratio of 1.31 percent."

In an initiative to reinforce its trust among global companies, Al-Sumait added that ABK has participated in several financing deals and has received numerous global awards, adding to its record of achievements. These were in recognition of the ABK's exceptional performance and its provision of the best services, products, and banking solutions in all the markets it operates in.

In addition, Al-Sumait disclosed that ABK continues to work on its digital transformation plan and adopts the high-



Abdulla Al-Sumait
Acting Group CEO

All financial indicators reflect our success in implementing strategic plans and keeping pace with economic changes.

est security standards across all businesses. He elaborated, "We have signed agreements for artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and live data dashboards across most functions. This is in addition to our consistent efforts in improving performance and services, and innovating our banking solutions that add more customer value simply and safely."

Moving forward

On his part, Soonawalla expressed that H1 2024 has been a period of significant enhancements in profitability, operational efficiency, asset quality, and a solid capital position. He disclosed that ABK remains positive about its performance for the remainder of the year.

He said, "Our operating income witnessed a 15 percent increase to KD 100.9 million with the composition as follows: 46 percent was from commercial banking, 40 percent from retail banking, and 14 percent from treasury operations. In terms of asset allocation, commercial banking accounted for 59 percent, retail banking for 13 percent, and treasury operations for 28 percent."

Furthermore, operating profit grew by 21 percent to KD 53.6 million. Soonawalla was also pleased to report that the non-performing loan ratio stands at 1.31 percent, while the Loan Loss Coverage Ratio is at an impressive 447 percent, underscoring ABK's prudent provisioning policies and strong credit metrics.

Soonawalla proceeded to highlight that, as at the half year end, ABK has KD 221 million worth of provisions, exceeding IFRS requirements and acting as substantial buffers against downside risks. He emphasized that operational efficiency remains a priority, which is evident in the Net Interest Margin standing at 2.3 percent, an 8 percent improvement over H1 2023, and the Operating Profit to average assets ratio of 1.67 percent.

He stated, "These figures reflect the Group's strong performance and continued focus on profitability. Additionally, our Return on Average Equity has reached 9.5 percent, marking a significant 15 percent increase compared to the same period last year."

The Group's Total Interest Income in

H1 2024 reached KD 72.4 million, a notable increase of KD 7.1 million or 11 percent over the same period in 2023. Soonawalla elaborated, "This growth is largely due to higher asset levels and a more favorable interest rate environment; however, our interest expense also rose by 21 percent to KD 157 million, as deposits were repriced in line with the interest rate hikes last year." The Group's Total Assets grew by 6 percent to reach KD 6.6 billion while its loan portfolio expanded by 5 percent to KD 4.5 billion. Additionally, Total deposits stand at KD 4 billion, representing 65.9 percent of our total liabilities. ABK maintains a strong liquidity position with a net stable funding ratio of 113 percent



Shiamak Soonawalla
Group CFO

H1 2024 has been a period of significant enhancements in profitability, operational efficiency, asset quality, and a solid capital position.

dates, Jawad indicated ABK's financial stability and strength as a trusted banking and financial partner in the Kuwaiti and regional markets, it maintained high credit ratings of 'A' and 'A2' from Fitch and Moody's respectively. In addition, he expressed ABK's pride in winning two prestigious MEEED awards, 'Best Retail Bank - Egypt' and 'Excellence in Customer Protection/ Fraud Control - Kuwait.'

He highlighted that digitization efforts remain on track with a wave 1 mobile app launch by Q3 2024. This is in line with upgrading the Bank's online banking platform to a best-in-class transaction banking digital framework, which includes standard non-lending service

Fund. Commenting on ABK's sustainability and ESG efforts, Jawad said, "We are currently gathering internal data to evaluate our progress for the year. This comprehensive data collection will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our initiatives and identify areas for improvement."

Kuwait and beyond

Jawad continued, "The July 2024 World Economic Outlook forecasted global growth to be at 3.2 percent in line with its previous outlook in April. The global economy also faces upside risks of inflation and raising the possibility of higher interest rates for an extended period, in the context of escalating trade tensions and increased policy uncertainty according to the IMF."

Shifting to the outlook in the GCC, economic growth is expected to rebound to 2.8 percent, according to the 2024 Gulf Economic Update. The positive outlook for the region's economy is expected as a result of the increases in oil production as OPEC+ eases production quotas in the second half of 2024 and the results of strong performance in the non-oil sector and capital expenditures.

Specifically in Kuwait, economic growth is expected to recover to 2.8 percent in 2024, supported by a higher oil production of 3.6 percent with increased output this year and highlighting the inauguration of Kuwait's first offshore drilling platform 'Nokhetha,' which now rests at its location in the northeast waters. Jawad added that the non-oil sector is projected to grow by 2.1 percent due to a stable political scene planning new reforms and the initiation of significant development projects. He claimed, "The aforementioned leads to Kuwait's construction sector expanding by 6.6 percent this year according to MEEED."

Jawad concluded by reaffirming ABK's successful first half of 2024. He highlighted that it is progressing at a faster pace compared to ABK2X strategic targets which continues to drive noticeable outcomes. He said, "As we navigate the remainder of 2024, our commitment to ABK's strategy execution will remain prudent and persistent to shaping a prosperous path forward."

Abdulaziz Jawad

As we navigate the remainder of 2024, our commitment to ABK's strategy execution will remain prudent and persistent to shaping a prosperous path forward.

and a liquidity coverage ratio of 279 percent, both comfortably above regulatory requirements.

Soonawalla continued, "Turning to the factors driving changes in income, margins, and costs, our total operating profit saw a notable 21 percent increase compared to the same period last year, arising from better margins and improved non-interest income streams."

Furthermore, fees and commissions made a significant contribution, growing by 31 percent compared to the same period last year and amounting to KD 21 million in H1 2024. Soonawalla explained that ABK's fees and commissions are diversified across various regions and business sectors, with the bulk stemming from core banking operations. As a final point, cost-to-income ratio for the current half improved to 46.9 percent, down from 49.5 percent in the same period last year.

Strong performance

Moving on to discussing strategic up-

offerings for different market segments through a digital medium. Jawad proceeded to discuss the Bank's launch of new offerings, including the 'Al Tajer Plus' account that supports SMEs into growing their businesses and increasing their profitability. This comes alongside the introduction of the first-of-its-kind 'Family Package' in Kuwait's banking sector, offering integrated banking services to all family members.

Across borders, Jawad disclosed that ABK-Egypt kicked off the core banking system upgrade project as a significant step forward for the Bank in providing customers with an elevated banking experience. ABK-Egypt also launched the 'ABK NEXT' segment for youth to enjoy a wide range of products and services with tailored benefits that match their lifestyle.

Shifting to ABK Capital, the Bank's investment arm, Jawad highlighted the introduction of two investment products, namely Ijara Fund (Equipment Leasing Fund) and International Private Credit

As state elections loom, Modi faces middle class ire

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, smarting from setbacks in the April-June general election, is now being berated for last week's budget by the country's swing voters, the middle class, putting his party on the defensive ahead of polls in three states and a federal territory.

The budget raised taxes on gains from retail investments in financial markets, left income tax rates untouched despite talk there would be relief and removed some real estate tax benefits, leading to outrage among the middle class, which makes up about 30 percent of India's 1.42 billion people.

Graphics artist Namdev Katkar said he would like the opposition to replace the alliance led by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in his state, Maharashtra, one of the four going to the polls. India's financial capital, Mumbai, is in Maharashtra. "I will have to pay more taxes for my income and this is like losing our hard-earned money," said Katkar, who said he invests his savings in the stock market. "I am not yet sure whom to vote for but this time it will not be the BJP."

While any possible losses in the regional polls will not affect Modi's position as prime minister, they would add to questions about his leadership and reputation of invincibility after the BJP failed to clinch a majority in the general election to the lower house of parliament. "If the BJP loses in the regional elections, it will impact his leadership quite adversely," said New Delhi-based political commentator Arati Jerath. "There is already a lot of restlessness within the party at the fact that in the last election ... they could not even get the majority."

Regional votes are also important because they determine a party or alliance's



Labourers aided by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), work at a reconstruction site on the outskirts of Amritsar on July 23, 2024.— AFP

strength in the upper house of parliament. The middle class - loosely defined in India as those earning between \$6,000 and \$36,000 a year - is generally not ideologically attached to any party but has favored the BJP because of its largely pro-business stance.

Reuters spoke with a dozen middle-class voters in the three states after the budget and all of them said they were disappointed because their tax expenditure would either largely remain the same or rise.

"This is hurting our pockets," said Kumud Ranjan, who runs a public relations firm in the eastern state of Jharkhand. "I will think twice before voting for the BJP in the coming elections." According to a poll by the CVoter survey agency, the budget was the most unpopular presented since Modi came to power in 2014, scoring 4 out of 10 from 2,000 respondents.

Political analysts say the middle class represents India's swing voters and along with local issues, rural distress and high unemployment, their anger could hurt the BJP's chances in the state elections. Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and the federal

territory of Jammu and Kashmir are due to go to the polls starting September. Economist Jayati Ghosh, who teaches at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said there was "justified resentment" among most of the middle class and that could affect the political narrative.

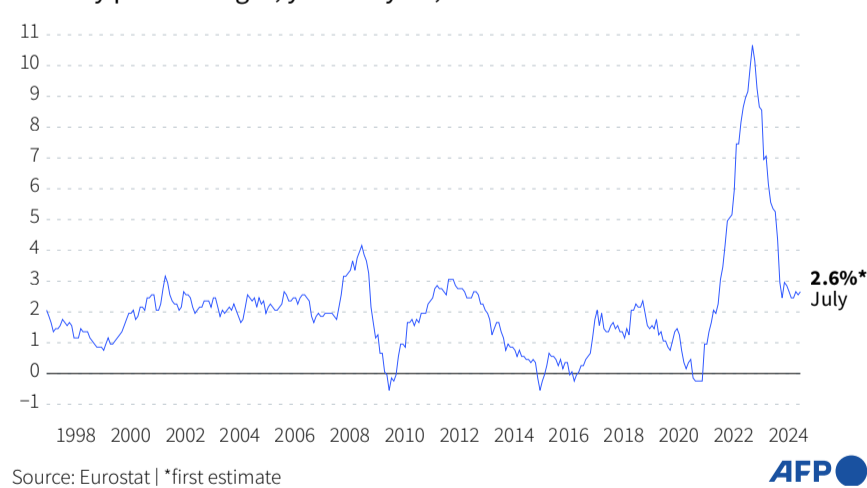
"They have a significant voice in regular media, and especially also in social media, they can change the discourse in different ways," she said.

The opposition has been quick to press the issue. "The middle class probably supported the prime minister before this budget," opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said in parliament. "But in this budget, you stabbed them in the back and chest. It's a sad thing but carries a hidden benefit ... the middle class is now leaving you and coming to our side."

India's finance minister has said she realizes the pain of the middle class but cannot do much. "I am also from the middle class ... and understand their problems," Nirmala Sitharaman told parliament after the budget. "I want to relieve the middle class but I have limitations too." — Reuters

Eurozone inflation

Monthly price changes, year-on-year, in %



Source: Eurostat | *first estimate

AFP

Eurozone inflation rises in 'difficult print' for ECB

FRANKFURT: Eurozone inflation unexpectedly edged up in July, data showed on Wednesday, although a widely watched gauge of price growth in the services sector eased. Wednesday's figures did not seem to derail market expectations for an interest rate cut by the European Central Bank in September, but they were likely to strengthen concerns about a difficult last mile in the ECB's efforts to bring down inflation. Price growth in the 20 countries that share the euro accelerated to 2.6 percent in July from 2.5 percent in June according to Eurostat's flash estimate.

A key measure of underlying growth in prices—which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco—failed to show the expected decline and came in unchanged at 2.9 percent. "It's a difficult print for the ECB," said Fabio Balboni, an economist at HSBC. "Disinflation on

the goods side is coming to an end and services inflation remains high."

Still, Balboni stuck to his call for ECB cuts in September and December, as did investors in euro zone money markets, on expectations that inflation would eventually ease. "I still expect a second rate cut to come in September," said Kyle Chapman, a foreign exchange markets analyst at Ballinger Group. "I don't think it matters too much if we get the odd data point that's slightly stronger than expected."

Euro zone inflation has fallen a long way since briefly hitting double digits in late 2022, when it had been boosted in large part by a brisker-than-expected reopening of the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic and more expensive fuel in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But that progress has stalled in recent months as prices in the services sector got a boost from higher salaries. In a small, positive sign for the ECB, services' price growth eased to 4.0 percent from 4.1 percent in June as an expected boost from the Olympics in Paris failed to materialize, with some consumers balking at what they saw as price-gouging. — Reuters

Business

BoJ raises interest rate for second time in 17 years

CB hints at more plans if economy performs well

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan further unwound its massive monetary easing program on Wednesday by hiking interest rates for only the second time in 17 years and indicating plans for more if the economy performs as officials expect.

Long-standing ultra-loose policies have made the BoJ an outlier among central banks in recent years and have driven down the value of the yen. Data released Wednesday evening revealed that the finance ministry spent nearly \$37 billion to prop up the Japanese currency over the past month, following its most expensive intervention in forex markets earlier this year.

After a two-day policy meeting, the BoJ set an interest rate of 0.25 percent, a notch up from the previous rate of zero to 0.1 percent. The move came after a hike in March that was the first since 2007 and brought an end to a maverick negative-rate policy aimed at boosting growth in the world's fourth largest economy.

Wednesday's decision, which also detailed plans to cut government bond purchases, helped push the yen to 150.41 to the dollar. "The bank will accordingly continue to raise the policy interest rate and adjust the degree of monetary accommodation" if the Japanese economy moves in line with predictions, the BoJ said.

Some analysts had predicted policymakers would wait until the autumn to hike rates because of sluggish consumption in Japan. While wages are rising - with unions securing their biggest increases in three decades - this has been tempered by inflation, which has been above the bank's target of two

percent since April 2022. Governor Kazuo Ueda sought to assure market-watchers that the latest move was not too risky.

"The hiked rate is still extremely low as a real interest rate. It won't have a huge, negative impact on the economy," he told reporters. Wage increases have been seen across Japan in a broad range of sectors, among small and large businesses, Ueda said, with prices and wages expected to continue rising. "Regarding personal consumption, while the impact of price increases is visible, our view is that it has remained very solid," he added.

The bank also said it will halve its monthly Japanese Government Bond purchases from six trillion yen (\$40 billion) over the next two years. The purchases have been used to help keep borrowing costs extra low for years. Eyes are now on an announcement by the Federal Reserve due later in the day.

Analysts and traders widely expect another pause by the US central bank while hoping for a nod to a September rate cut. The yen has plunged against the dollar over the past two and a half years as other central banks including the Fed aggressively hiked rates to tackle inflation.

Earlier in July the yen hit its weakest level against the dollar since 1986 but it has strengthened since then, including a rally in recent days as expectations of a BoJ rate hike grew. Japan's finance ministry said Wednesday it spent 5.5 trillion yen (\$36.6 billion at today's rates) to boost the yen's value by intervening in forex markets between June 27 and July 29.

A yen surge in mid-June, shortly after US inflation data came in lower than anticipated, had



Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda speaks during a press conference after a monetary policy meeting at the BOJ headquarters in Tokyo on July 31, 2024. — AFP

triggered speculation among analysts of an intervention by Japanese authorities. In the month to May 29 the ministry had spent a record 9.8 trillion yen on selling dollars and buying yen, it previously announced.

Saisuke Sakai, chief economist at Mizuho Research & Technologies, told AFP that the BoJ is "confident" prices are moving in the direction it wants to see. "Even though consumption is a tad weak, the rise in salaries is strong which will likely boost consumption sooner or later," Sakai said.

Hiking rates now may have prevented the yen from weakening further, and an interest rate of 0.25 "is still in the range of accommodative monetary policy" so is unlikely to trigger a recession, he added. — AFP

Reinstating bitcoin in Kuwait: Advocating acceptance of cryptos

By Dr Abdullah Ahmed Alkayat

Kuwait remains one of the few countries that launched a full ban on bitcoin usage. In 2017, the Central Bank of Kuwait issued a resolution banning all types of bitcoin trading locally mainly for money laundering fears, claiming that almost all transactions cannot be traced using cryptos, which may lead to a national security concern. Not surprisingly, this ban is still ongoing in Kuwait, as many people trade bitcoins using foreign platforms based outside the country. I confirm this ban for the same given reasons. Nevertheless, let's argue the opposite. If we were to address the issue from the other point of view, what arguments do we have? You do not have to be convinced or agree with what is written below. Try to think out of the box for a moment. What if you dissent from what you really believe?



The Contract of Sale in the Civil Code of Kuwait

The parties' choice of law trumps the contract of sale articles organized in the civil code of Kuwait as long as this choice of law does not specifically violate other Kuwait laws or broadly violate the public order. When the buyer and the seller agree to a rule of custom or new method of payment, like bitcoin, the agreement should not be prohibited as long as it is compatible with other laws in Kuwait and the public order. The announcement from the Central Bank of Kuwait, however, attempted to override the civil code of Kuwait, violating the supremacy clause, which ranks legal authorities. In Kuwait, administrative announcements possess less authority than statutes, and therefore cannot effectively invalidate the higher authority.

The law of choice in contract

"Pacta sunt servanda" is a prominent principle of civil law, as well as international law. It means that promises must be kept. As a civil law country, Kuwait, has written statutes organizing the choice of law provisions in the field of private international law. Specifically, Law no. 5 organized the relationship between Kuwaitis and foreigners in private international law. Article 14 of law no. 5 states that this law applies to contracts signed in Kuwait and enforced abroad. Because contracts could be from an international relationship, the court in Kuwait would have to consider which laws apply. Would it be the rules agreed to in the contract between the two parties, Kuwaiti law, or the local laws of the State of New York and the City of New York?

The result would be the same, regardless: choosing to buy the apartment in New York using cryptocurrency, in the form of bitcoin, for payment is not prohibited under any of these laws. If it is up to the parties' will, then the court in Kuwait would respect this will adhering to the choice of law and pacta sunt servanda. If the Kuwaiti law applied, then it would be the civil code of Kuwait, because this is a contract of sale. Based on the analysis above, the contract is still valid with bitcoin currency payment as long as there was no violation of the public order or other Kuwaiti laws. If the law of the State of New York is applicable, then the contract is still standing because the United States recognizes bitcoin payment. The US Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), has classified bitcoin as a commodity since September 2015.

Recommendations?

Multiple avenues exist to ensure that bitcoin is appropriately used in Kuwait. First, a local committee examining its current status, under the aegis of the Central Bank of Kuwait, should include lawyers and legal advisors to ensure the legality of any recommendations from the committee. While economists and financial advisors can offer important insight, a legal perspective is necessary. Furthermore, due to the increase in international transactions between Kuwait and the United States for example, the local committee should consider collaboration with an international legal firm to incorporate the American perspective on bitcoin and ensure that Kuwaiti processes for bitcoin will not unnecessarily harm foreign transactions.

In addition, again building on the importance of transactional relationships with the United States, the committee should incorporate research on recognition and authorization of bitcoin transactions in the United States. Combining forces with the United States on this front will also ensure that Kuwait is not implementing processes from scratch and is, instead, incorporating advice from the United States on the acceptance of bitcoin while restricting money laundering efforts. Any regulation of bitcoin must be compatible with the civil code of Kuwait, while respecting the choice of law provisions inherent in contracts as well as international law. In accordance with the 2035 vision, any future regulation of bitcoin should also be noted as "temporary", as further exploration is necessary to fully understand the ramifications of cryptocurrency.

If the committee is able to incorporate these recommendations into its evaluation of bitcoin, it should be able to develop guidance to prevent money laundering while promoting the global advancement of cryptocurrency, remaining a prominent financial center, and protecting the freedom of contract.

NOTE: Dr Abdullah Ahmed Alkayat is a Commercial and Capital Markets Law Professor at Kuwait University School of Law

HSBC records \$21.6bn pre-tax profit in H1 2024

HONG KONG: Banking giant HSBC said on Wednesday that pre-tax profits in the first half of 2024 came in at \$21.6 billion, slightly lower than last year's record performance.

"After delivering record profits in 2023, we had another strong profit performance in the first half of 2024, which is further evidence that our strategy is working," said Noel Quinn, the group's outgoing chief executive.

The bank also doubled down on its share buyback, announcing a further three-month repurchase of up to \$3 billion, following the completed \$3 billion buyback announced last quarter.

The buyback and approval of an interim dividend of \$0.1 per share would bring shareholders a total of \$4.8 billion, taking the total amount of capital distributed since 2023 to \$34.4 billion, Quinn said in the statement. "We remain confident that we can deliver attractive returns, even in a lower interest rate environment," he added.

"As a result, we are providing new guidance of a mid-teens return on average tangible equity, excluding the impact of notable items, in 2025."

The Asia-focused lender and its peers were buoyed by rising interest rates earlier this year. It achieved record profit in 2023, but was followed by an almost 2 percent dip in pre-tax profit to \$12.7 billion. The bank generates most of its revenue in Asia and has spent several years pivoting to the region, vowing to develop its wealth business and target fast-growing markets.

A \$400 million increase in revenue over the first half of 2024 was mainly driven by higher banking net interest income, as well as the disposal of the bank's businesses in Canada, Argentina and France and the acquisition of the Silicon Valley Bank's UK arm. "As we look ahead, the path of interest rates and the outcomes of elections are amongst the factors that will shape the global operating environment,"

Airbus faces British probe over potential export control breach

PARIS: Airbus is facing a criminal investigation in Britain into potential violations of export control rules involving several of its British entities, the aerospace group said on Tuesday. The investigation emerged in footnotes to the company's half-yearly earnings, which said Airbus was fully cooperating with the probe by Britain's Revenue and Customs agency (HMRC).

"Airbus is working with all relevant authorities to ensure full remediation of all identified deficiencies," a spokesperson said in response to a Reuters query about the filing, adding that it was not expected to have a material financial impact. A spokesperson for HMRC declined to comment, citing a policy of never discussing ongoing or specific investigations.

Airbus said the decision to launch the probe followed an audit carried out by British export control authorities in 2022. The British probe comes around nine months after the US State Department formally lifted the threat of charges over alleged violations of export rules in the United States.

Airbus said Tuesday that its net profit in the first half year fell 46 percent to 825 million euros (\$890 million), dragged down by a massive writedown in its space operations. Overall, revenue in



HONG KONG: Pedestrians walk past the logo for HSBC outside a local branch bank in Hong Kong on August 2, 2021. — AFP

Quinn noted. "Although we expect a cautious approach, we have reduced our sensitivity to interest rates." But the outgoing leader highlighted the group's boosted immunity to downside risks of interest rate cuts by diversifying revenue from businesses like wealth management - particularly in Asia - which has attracted \$32.4 billion of net new invested assets.

HSBC announced earlier this month that its chief financial officer, Georges Elhedery, will step into the chief executive role in September. Quinn, 62, in his last interim report, "place on record what an enormous privilege it has been to lead this great institution", where he had a 37-year career.

Quinn has overseen a transformation of the London-headquartered lender during almost five years in charge, helping to drive profits off the back of cost-cutting and soaring interest rates.

He carried out a massive restructuring pro-

gram in the wake of the pandemic, slashing thousands of jobs to refocus on HSBC's most profitable areas in Asia and the Middle East. Profits later fell heavily, however, owing to bad debts linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, before rebounding as global lenders hiked interest rates following similar moves by central banks to combat soaring inflation.

Last year, Quinn led the effort to repel a bid by major shareholder Ping An to spin off its Asia assets, with the proposal eventually voted down by shareholders. The break-up bid highlighted HSBC's precarious position amid US-China tensions, with some observers questioning whether Europe's largest lender can continue to straddle East and West. "My aim when I took this job was to deliver financial performance to match our standing. Working together, I believe we have done that and created a strong platform for growth," Quinn wrote in the report. — AFP

the first half of the year rose 4 percent to 28.8 billion euros as its commercial aircraft deliveries rose by seven planes to 323. Airbus announced in June that it had decided to make a roughly 900-million-euro charge against first-half earnings after an extensive review of its space business. On Tuesday it said the charge for the space business was in fact 989 million.

In January 2020, Airbus reached a trio of deferred prosecution agreements and agreed to pay record fines totaling 3.6 billion euros following broad investigations in Britain, France and the United States into allegations of corruption. As part of the settlements, Airbus agreed to pay 9 million euros and set up a three-year monitoring plan to resolve findings by the State Department that Airbus had violated US International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

Airbus also agreed to appoint an export control compliance officer.

ITAR is the official name for a 40-year-old set of rules governing the export of defense goods and data perceived to have implications for US national security. In 2017, Airbus said it had discovered and reported to US authorities inaccuracies in past declarations to the State Department over the sale of goods and services under ITAR.

The ending of the three-year monitoring period was delayed to October last year after Airbus asked for more time to complete the process after diverting internal resources to ensuring it complied with Western sanctions against Russia. Airbus also warned last year that the factual disclosures in the State Dept probe could spawn



BLAGNAC, France: The Airbus logo is seen during the Airbus annual press conference in Blagnac, southwestern France on February 16, 2023. — AFP

other international investigations, though a person familiar with the latest British investigation told Reuters the two cases were not related.

The British criminal probe puts Airbus back in the judicial spotlight, albeit on what so far appears to be a relatively limited scale, just as Boeing wrestles with the fallout from criminal probes into its handling of the safety of the 737 MAX.

The US planemaker initially won a prosecutor settlement over allegations that it misled US regulators over development of a software feature linked implicated in two fatal crashes. But the US Justice Department said in May that Boeing had breached its obligations in the agreement, and the US planemaker last week finalized a guilty plea to a criminal fraud conspiracy charge and agreed to pay at least \$243.6 million. — Reuters

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2024

Y2K Series

Y2K FASHION TREND: THE MILLENNIUM'S BOLD RETURN TO THE SPOTLIGHT



As we navigate through the ever-evolving landscape of fashion, a striking trend from the past has resurfaced with a fervor that's both nostalgic and refreshingly innovative. The Y2K fashion trend, with its hallmark bold colors, futuristic designs, and a unique blend of technology-inspired aesthetics, is making a triumphant return, captivating a new generation while stirring memories of the millennium's dawn. This resurgence is more than a mere revival; it's a celebration of an era that boldly imagined the future of fashion, blending elements of pop culture, technology, and avant-garde style to create a distinctive look that defined a generation.

At the turn of the millennium, the fashion world embraced a vision of the future that was optimistic, vibrant, and unapologetically bold. Y2K fashion was characterized by metallic fabrics, reflective surfaces, and a palette of neon and pastel hues that mirrored the era's fascination with digital culture and space exploration. These elements, combined with iconic silhouettes such as low-rise jeans, crop tops, and platform footwear, created a style that was as daring as it was playful.

Today, the Y2K fashion trend is experiencing a renaissance, fueled by a blend of nostalgia from those who lived through the original phenomenon and the curiosity of a younger generation drawn to its unique aesthetic. This revival sees the integration of classic Y2K el-



ements with contemporary fashion sensibilities, resulting in a fusion of past and present that is both familiar and novel. The trend's return is evident across social media platforms, where influencers and fashion enthusiasts are reinterpreting Y2K styles with modern twists, showcasing the trend's adaptability and enduring appeal.

The appeal of Y2K fashion lies not just in its distinctive look but in its underlying spirit of experimentation and self-expression. The era was marked by a sense of freedom and creativity in fashion, encouraging individuals to mix and match styles, play with proportions, and embrace a more is more philosophy



that challenged conventional norms. This spirit resonates with today's fashion landscape, where individuality and personal style are celebrated more than ever.

As we prepare to delve deeper into the Y2K fashion trend through a series of weekly articles exploring its influence on hair, nail, and makeup styles, it's clear that this resurgence is more than a trip down memory lane. It's an opportunity to explore the bold, imaginative, and sometimes whimsical elements that made Y2K fashion so memorable. From the futuristic to the flamboyant, the revival of Y2K fashion invites us to experiment with our looks, embrace our individuality, and, most importantly, have fun with fashion.



Join us on this sartorial journey back to the future, as we uncover the legacy of Y2K fashion and its impact on today's beauty and style trends. Whether you're a millennial looking to revisit the trends of your youth or a member of Gen Z eager to explore the fashion of a bygone era, the Y2K trend offers something for everyone, blending past and present in a dazzling display of creativity and innovation.

Join us at Dashe Beauty on this journey to discover the essence of the Y2K fashion trend. Get more inspiration by visiting our website <https://dashebeauty.com> or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dashe Beauty Kuwait

Who needs males? Female sharks make babies alone in Italy

Italian researchers have noted the first case of "virgin birth", or reproduction without fertilization, in an endangered shark species, a scientific journal reported this week. The findings published in Scientific Reports concern the first case of the phenomenon in the common smooth-hound shark, *Mustelus mustelus*, a species threatened by illegal fishing that inhabits the Mediterranean and other warm waters. Researchers from the Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institute of Piedmont, Liguria and the Aosta Valley found that two female *M. mustelus* sharks under observation in captivity had exhibited parthenogenesis - in which a female can reproduce asexually without the need of sperm to fertilize the egg - each year since 2020.

The two 18-year-old sharks have been at the Cala Gonone Aquarium in Sardinia since 2010. "Remarkably, this finding reveals that parthenogenesis can occur annually in these sharks, alternating between two females, and conclusively excludes long-term sperm storage as a cause," the study's authors wrote. Cycling parthenogenesis, in which progeny can be born either from fertilized eggs or asexually with unfertilized eggs, occurs in over 15,000 species, yet is not fully understood.

Parthenogenesis, which is more common in invertebrates than vertebrates, has not yet been seen in mammals. Reptiles and some sharks, rays and skates are able to "modify their

adaptive strategy according to the surrounding circumstances", the authors wrote. "Although the mechanisms driving parthenogenesis remain unclear, it is suggested that male population reduction could be a pivotal factor," they said. Sharks in the wild pose challenges to understanding the phenomenon, but conditions in captivity are ideal for long-term monitoring, they noted.

Aquariums in the United States, United Arab Emirates and Australia have documented the phenomenon in other shark species in the past two decades. *M. mustelus*, a midsize shark found in shallower waters that can potentially live up to 25 years, is classified as endangered, with estimates showing the population could decline by as much as a half in the next several decades, according to the study. The study tracked two 18-year-old female sharks in the aquarium for 13 years, without the presence of males.

"Nonetheless, a nearly annual production of young was observed in the absence of males," the authors wrote. The researchers studied the DNA of the offspring to exclude the possibility they were conceived because of long-term storage of sperm by the mothers. The authors also noted that only one of the sharks born from parthenogenesis at the aquarium is still alive today. The two adults "are in good health", sharing their large exhibition tank with other Mediterranean marine species. — AFP



In this still image NASA TV broadcast, volunteer crew commander Kelly Haston speaks alongside crewmates (from left to right) Ross Brockwell, Nathan Jones and Anca Selariu, as they exit the first simulated yearlong Mars habitat mission at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

One year on 'Mars': Inside NASA's ultra-realistic isolation study

Sealed inside a habitat in Texas and cut off from the outside world for over a year, Kelly Haston was the commander of a first-of-its-kind simulation for NASA to prepare for a future mission to Mars. From conducting mock "Marswalks" to tending to a vertical garden, and occasionally grappling with boredom - Haston expressed pride in advancing the cause of space exploration while admitting the experience made her reconsider the reality of life on the Red Planet. "Going to space would be an amazing opportunity," the 53-year-old biologist told AFP. "But I would say that it would be harder having experienced this, to know how it feels to leave your people." The overarching goal of the experiment, called CHAPEA (Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog) Mission 1, is to better understand the impacts of isolation on a crew's performance and health.

The project lasted 378 days and concluded in early July. After all, a round-trip to Mars could easily take more than two years, factoring in the transit time of six-to-nine months and the time NASA hopes to spend on the planet. For Haston, the hardest part was clear: "I could have been in that habitat for another year and survived with all of the other restrictions, but your people - you miss your people so much." Communications with the outside world were delayed by twenty minutes each way, simulating how long it takes a radio signal to travel between Earth and Mars. They were also some limits on sending and receiving videos, to account for bandwidth restrictions.

The worst feeling was when relatives or friends were experiencing rough times, said Haston. "You couldn't be there for them in real time." Her only direct human contacts were her three teammates and fellow Mars colonists - but she insists they never went stir-crazy. "Of course, there were times where you had crabby days, or something was bothering us, either as a crew or as an individual," she explained.

"But the communication was ex-

tremely good in this group," she said and besides, such problems were few and far between. "Up until the very end, we ate meals together." Their 1,700-square-foot (160-square-meter) home included crew quarters, common areas and even an area for crops like tomatoes and peppers. Called "Mars Dune Alpha" the 3D-printed habitat was installed inside a hangar at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Simulated "Marswalks" took place in an exterior area that recreated the Martian environment with red soil and cliffs painted along the walls. Crew members donned spacesuits and passed through an airlock to reach the "sandbox," as it was nicknamed, with tasks coordinated by their colleagues inside.

Boredom

"There were days where you did really wish you were outside, I can't lie," says the Canadian who now lives in California. But, to her surprise, these pangs only intensified towards the end. Periods of boredom are an inevitable part of long space expeditions, and it was precisely this extended isolation that set CHAPEA apart from most prior "analog" missions. Halston staved off ennui by embroidering mission symbols and images of Mars. Of course, "analogs can't address all problems or all issues of an eventual mission to Mars," she said, though the lessons learned will aid in planning.

Each team member's food intake was meticulously documented, their blood, saliva and urine samples were collected, and their sleep habits, physical and cognitive performance analyzed. "The food system is one of the greatest mass drivers on a human mission for human logistics, and we are going to be resource-constrained on these missions," NASA scientist Grace Douglas said on a podcast. This makes it critical to determine the minimum necessary provisions to maintain astronauts' health and ensure the mission's success. — AFP

Venice to limit tourist groups to maximum of 25 people

Venice will limit the size of tourist parties to 25 people from Thursday in the latest attempt to reduce the impact of crowds on the lagoon city. Local authorities will also ban the use of loudspeakers by tourist guides in measures aimed at "protecting the peace of residents" and ensuring pedestrians can move around more freely. There will be fines ranging from 25-500 euros (\$27-541) for those who do not comply with these new measures, which were originally planned to take effect from June but were held over until the start of August.

The restrictions cover the city center and also the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello. In April, Venice became the first city in the world to introduce a payment system for visitors in an experiment aimed at dissuading daytrippers from arriving during peak periods. — AFP

'Just little kids': Taylor Swift's message after shocking UK stabbings

US singer Taylor Swift spoke of her horror on Tuesday at the news two children had been stabbed to death and six others were critically wounded after a ferocious attack at a dance event in northern England for young fans of her music. A 17-year-old male is in police custody on suspicion of murder and attempted murder after the incident at the "Taylor Swift yoga and dance workshop" in Southport, north of Liverpool for children aged from six to 11 on Monday morning.

Two children were killed and nine others were injured, six critically, while two adults were also critically wounded, with police saying they believed had been trying to protect the young victims. Witnesses described what they saw as being like a scene from a horror film. "The horror of yesterday's attack in Southport is washing over me continuously and I'm just completely in shock," Swift wrote on Instagram. "These were just little kids at a dance class. I am at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families."

Her fans have raised more than 40,000 pounds (\$51,440) online to help families of the victims and for the hospital where some of the children are being treated. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the attack, which police are not treating as terrorism-related, "horrendous" while King Charles and his family expressed their shock at what had happened. — AFP



Lifestyle



A cruise ship arrives at the Greek island of Santorini while tourists on mules head to the village of Fira.



Tourists take pictures of the Three Bells of Fira, the Catholic Church of the Dormition.



The Three Bells of Fira, the Catholic Church of the Dormition.



Tourists wait for the sunset in the village of Oia on the Greek island of Santorini. — AFP photos



Donkeys for tourist stand on a street on the way to the village of Fira.



Tourists gather to see the sunset seen from the village of Oia.

GREECE'S 'INSTAGRAM ISLAND' SANTORINI NEARS SATURATION POINT



A tourist with her suitcase walks past a trash bin in a street of the village of Fira.



Tourists queue as they wait to take a picture from one of the balconies with a view of the sea and the sunset at Fira.

One of the most enduring images of Greece's summer travel brand is the world-famous sunset on Santorini Island, framed by sea-blue church domes on a jagged cliff high above a volcanic caldera. This scene has inspired millions of fridge magnets, posters, and souvenirs - and now the queue to reach the viewing spot in the clifftop village of Oia can take more than 20 minutes. Santorini is a key stopover of the Greek cruise experience. But with parts of the island nearing saturation, officials are considering restrictions. Of the record 32.7 million people who visited Greece last year, around 3.4 million, or one in 10, went to the island of just 15,500 residents.

"We need to set limits if we don't want to sink under overtourism," Santorini mayor Nikos Zorzos told AFP. "There must not be a single extra bed... whether in the large hotels or Airbnb rentals." As the sun set behind the horizon in Oia, thousands raised their phones to the sky to capture the moment, followed by scattered applause. For canny entrepreneurs, the Cycladic island's famous sunset can be a cash cow. One company advertised more than 50 "flying dresses", which have long flowing trains, for up to 370 euros (\$401), on posters around Oia for anyone who wishes to "feel like a Greek goddess" or spruce up selfies.

'Respect Oia'

But elsewhere in Oia's narrow streets, residents have put up signs urging visitors to respect their home. "RESPECT... It's your holiday... but it's our home," read a purple sign from the Save Oia group. Shaped by a volcanic eruption 3,600 years ago, Santorini's landscape is "unique", the mayor said, and "should not be harmed by new in-

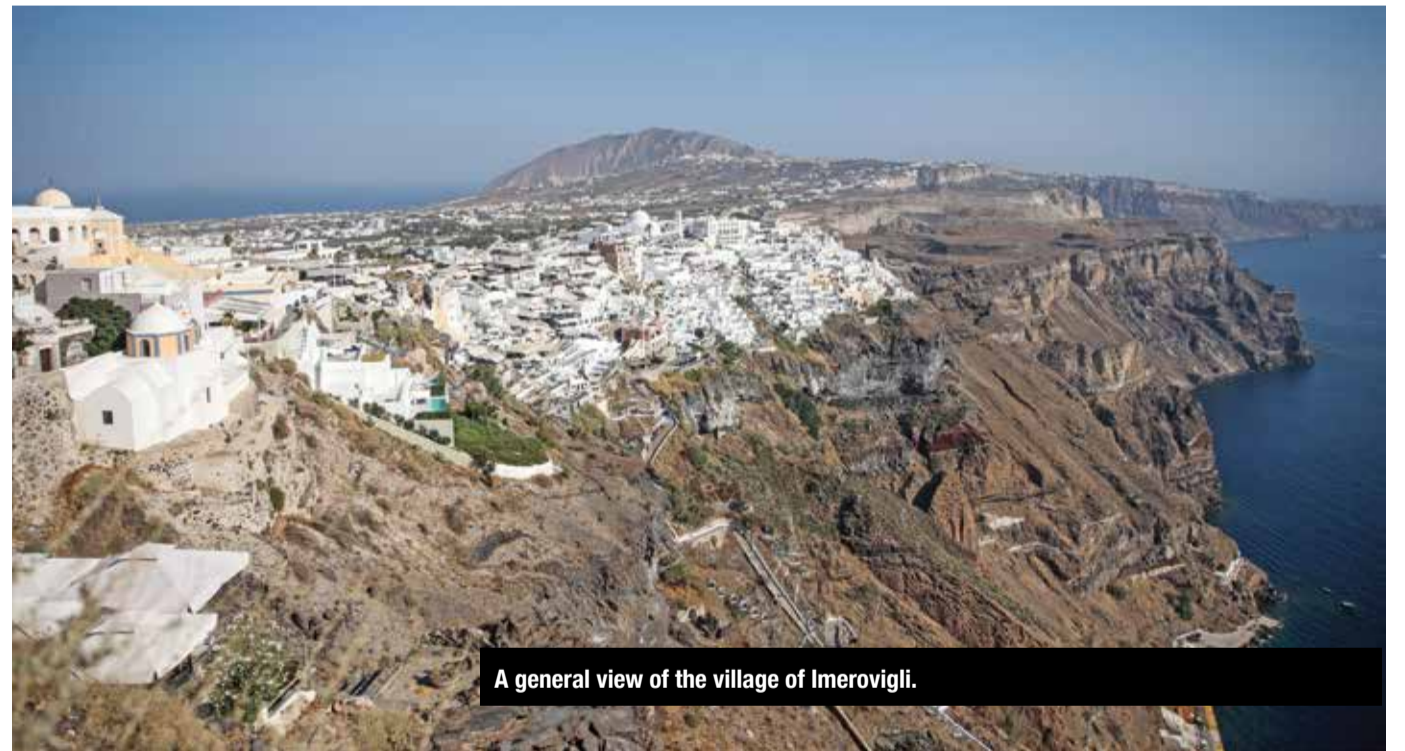
frastructure". Around a fifth of the island is currently occupied by buildings. At the edge of the cliff, a myriad of swimming pools and jacuzzis highlight Santorini is also a pricey destination.

In 2023, 800 cruise ships brought some 1.3 million passengers, according

Mitsotakis floated the possibility of capping cruise ship arrivals to Greece's most popular islands. "I think we'll do it next year," he told Bloomberg, noting that Santorini and tourist magnet Mykonos "are clearly suffering". "There are people spending a lot of money to

ships arriving at the same time." Local officials have set a limit of 8,000 cruise boat passengers per day from next year. But not all local operators agree.

Antonis Pagonis, head of Santorini's hoteliers association, believes better visitor flow management is part



A general view of the village of Imerovigli.

to the Hellenic Ports Association. Cruise ships "do a lot of harm to the island", said Chantal Metakides, a Belgian resident of Santorini for 26 years. "When there are eight or nine ships pumping out smoke, you can see the layer of pollution in the caldera," she said.

Cruise ship limits

In June, Prime Minister Kyriakos

be on Santorini and they don't want the island to be swamped," said the pro-business conservative leader, who was re-elected to a second four-year term last year.

In an AFP interview, Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni echoed this sentiment and said: "We must set quotas because it's impossible for an island such as Santorini... to have five cruise

of the solution. "It is not possible to have (on) a Monday, for example, 20 to 25,000 guests from the cruise ships, and the next day zero," he said. Pagonis also argued that most of the congestion only affects parts of the island like the capital, Fira. In the south of the island, the volcanic sand beaches are less crowded, even though it is high season in July.



Tourists wait for the sunset in the village of Oia on the Greek island of Santorini.



Tourists sit in a cafe in the village of Fira while a cruise ship arrives at the Greek island of Santorini.



Tourists walk through a street of the village of Fira on the Greek island of Santorini.



Tourists head to the village of Fira as a cruise ship arrives.



A cruise ship seen from the village of Fira.

'I'm in Turkey'

The modern tourism industry has also changed visitor behavior. "I listened (to) people making a FaceTime call with the family, saying 'I'm in Turkey'," smiled tourist guide Kostas Sakavaras. "They think that the church over there is a mosque because yesterday

they were in Turkey." The veteran guide said the average tourist coming to the island has changed. "Instagram has defined the way people choose the places to visit," he said, explaining everybody wants the perfect Instagram photo to confirm their expectations. — AFP



The cable cars go from the old port of Fira to the village of Fira.



Tourists queue as they wait to get in the cable car from the old port of Fira to the village of Fira.



Tourist wait for the sunset in the village of Oia.

Dolphin cruises help Istanbul treasure its Bosphorus bottlenoses



A participant watches dolphins from the top of the boat.



Cansu Ilkilinc, head of WWF Turkey's marine mammal program, gives information during a dolphin watching event in the Bosphorus strait.



Participants learn about dolphins and try out their binoculars during a dolphin watching event in the Bosphorus strait near Istanbul. - AFP photos

As the first dolphin fin surfaced from the Bosphorus, a ripple of excitement went round passengers on a free boat ride to see one of Istanbul's most graceful sights. Whether they live there or are just passing through, dolphins and porpoises feel very much at home in the busy strait that bisects the Turkish megapolis of some 16 million people. Istanbul city council organizes free summer dolphin spotting trips with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to raise awareness of the dangers facing the sea mammals.

The wildlife project's head Ahmet Yasar Yildiz said the city council was doing "everything they can" to keep them in the strait linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. "This is their home and dolphins must continue to live here," the 59-year-old said. Their presence in the Bosphorus was the sign of a "perfect ecosystem", he added. "The strait is clean, cleaner than most bays, and we want to keep it that way." Microphone in hand on the boat's top deck, WWF Turkey's marine mammals program leader Cansu Ilkilinc explained to the crowd below that the strait is home to two species of dolphin and one species of porpoise - an impressive number for an exceptionally busy urban waterway.

Climate change, habitat loss

As a key corridor for international maritime navigation, 39,000 ships

passed through the Bosphorus Strait last year, according to Turkey's ministry of transport - not including pleasure boats and the ferries that constantly ply from one side to the other. Despite the volume of shipping and straddling Turkey's largest city, dolphins seem to prefer the strait's waters to the Black Sea and Sea of Marmara on either side. This is because fish are abundant and the strong currents spirit away pollution, Yildiz said. Yet all is not pristine for the dolphins in the strait, the wildlife project lead warned, with threats from climate change, pollution, overfishing and habitat loss.

"Uncontrolled construction and industrialization are a problem everywhere, and it's a serious problem in Istanbul," he added. Yet since the first free educational outings began in 2022, their success has been remarkable. "Only once have we not seen a dolphin," Yildiz told AFP, adding that the hundred or so spaces on the trips are booked up "within three minutes" when they go online every fortnight.

Follow the seagulls

During these outings, the WWF attempts to keep a record of the strait's resident dolphins, hoping to identify them by a distinctive feature such as a mark or a scar. "One of them has been living here since 2012, you can recognize it from its dorsal fin," smiled Ayse Oruc, head of WWF Turkey's Marine



A baby calf soars towards a seagull in the Bosphorus strait.

Biodiversity program, marveling at the variety of life in the heart of "one of the biggest cities in the world".

Besides the harbor porpoise, the Bosphorus is home to both the common and bottlenose dolphin, Ilkilinc said. The 31-year-old offered up a few tips for spotting them: "When the seagulls dive and disturb the water, it means they've seen fish underneath, which the dolphins feed on."

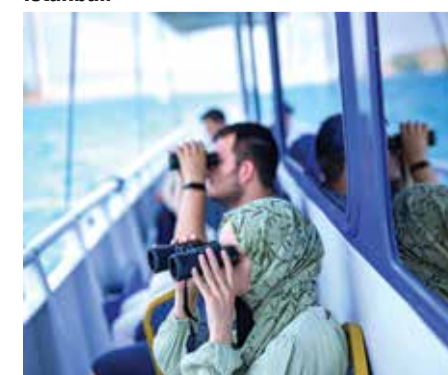
She also advised those hoping to catch a glimpse of a dolphin pod to follow in the wake of cargo ships, tankers and - above all - fishing boats. Twenty-four-year-old student Deniz Dincergok came back to shore delighted. "At one point, a baby dolphin came out of the water and turned around, showing its belly. It was a magnificent moment," he said. — AFP



Participants look out for dolphins from the top of a boat during a dolphin watching event.



Dolphins swim in the Bosphorus strait near Istanbul.



Participants use binoculars to watch dolphins from the top of the boat.

Sports

Azarenka happy with shoulder recovery in Washington win

Azarenka could meet Sabalenka in the quarter-finals

WASHINGTON: Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka outlasted Hailey Baptiste 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3) on Tuesday to reach the second round of the WTA and ATP Washington Open. The sixth seed from Belarus, coming off a shoulder injury, advanced past the hometown hero after two hours and 23 minutes into a last-16 match against China's Wang Yafan.

"I think my mindset was the key today for the victory," Azarenka said. "I knew it was going to be some ups and downs, I would have to adjust in some moments. I also know she's a very talented player. She didn't give me much of the rhythm."

Azarenka could meet compatriot and two-time reigning Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka in the quarter-finals if the world number three defeats Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova after a first-round bye. Azarenka, like Sabalenka, withdrew from Wimbledon due to a shoulder injury.

"It was good for me to test my shoulder today," she said. "It went well, so I'm pretty happy with that." Former world-number-one Azarenka, who beat Baptiste in their only prior meeting at Chicago in 2021, said she never felt comfortable during the match.

"It was hard for me to expect a high level of tennis after having a break and coming off from injury, not really having too much time on the practice court," Azarenka said. "But I feel like I fought really hard. In the tie-breaks, in the important moments, I really executed well and did what I wanted to do. I'm very happy with that aspect, that when it did count, I really was able to step up my level."

Just a week ago, 20th-ranked Azarenka was uncertain she would play in the US capital. "I've been trying to pace myself after the injury. I wasn't sure if I'm going to be ready at all," said Azarenka. "Middle of last week I was, 'How in the world am I going to play in Washington? I have no idea.'"

'Doubts'

"This was my first time actually playing two sets. Even in practice I still wasn't able to pick up that much tennis. Definitely it was kind of getting back into that match swing. I've practiced a lot, hours of fitness and stuff, but the matches are different."

Azarenka, the 2012 and 2013 Australian Open champion who turns 35 on Wednesday, was trying to recover confidence in her shotmaking after the lay off. "After a break, you have those hesitations, you have some of those doubts. Sometimes the quicker decision-making is not as natural after not playing for a while," she said.

"I felt like I knew what I wanted to do and execution was a little bit on and off. It's something I need to clean up a little bit." On the men's side, US fourth seed Sebastian Korda ousted Chile's Christian Garin 6-3, 6-2 to reach the third round and Canada's Denis Shapovalov advanced to the last 16 by defeating French sixth seed Adrian Mannarino 6-2, 6-1.

Another hometown favorite, fifth seed Frances Tiafoe, rallied to beat Colombia's Daniel Galan 6-7 (8/10), 6-3, 6-3. Tiafoe held at love in the final game, taking the last point on a service winner after two hours and 22 minutes. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Victoria Azarenka returns a shot against Hailey Baptiste during day 4 of the Mubadala Citi DC Open 2024 at William H.G. Fitzgerald Tennis Center in Washington. — AFP

McIlroy eyeing 'biggest' win in 10 years at Olympics

PARIS: Rory McIlroy is hoping to ease some of the heartbreak of his recent major troubles by winning "probably" his biggest title in 10 years this week at the Paris Olympics. The Northern Irishman fell agonizingly short of winning his first major title since 2014 at this year's US Open when he missed two short putts in the final three holes, losing by one shot to Bryson DeChambeau.

The world number three then missed the British Open cut at Troon. McIlroy opted not to play when golf made its return to the Olympics after a 112-year absence at the 2016 Rio Games, saying he would not even watch the competition. But he has changed his tune since and narrowly missed out on a medal three years ago in Tokyo when he was part of a seven-man play-off for bronze which was won by Chinese Taipei's Pan Cheng-tsung.

Flick opens his Barca tenure with win over Man City

MIAMI: New Barcelona manager Hansi Flick made a triumphant start to his tenure on Tuesday as the Spanish giants beat Manchester City on penalties after their pre-season friendly at Orlando finished 2-2 at full-time.

Toni Fernandez, who signed with Barca earlier this month after turning 16, flicked in a left-footed shot past reserve City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega to give the German manager's side a 4-1 win on penalties. Barcelona kicked off their US tour in the pre-season contest against the four-time reigning Premier League champions, guided by former Barcelona player and coach Pep Guardiola.

A sellout crowd of 63,237 spectators were unhappy early as a storm delayed the start by 80 minutes, but were delighted with a strong early pace, before both teams gave reserve players abundant time on the pitch.

Barcelona jumped ahead 3-0 on penalty kicks thanks to a left-footed shot by Alejandro Balde before Amar Ahmed kept City in by beating reserve Barca goalkeeper Ander Astralaga, setting the stage for the teen newcomer's heroics.

Pau Victor had opened the scoring in open play for Barcelona in the 24th minute, taking a quick through ball pass from Marc Casado and firing a right-footed blast from the right side into the goal. Nico O'Riley answered for Manchester City in the 39th minute, firing in a left-footed shot from the left side off a pass from Josko Gvardiol, the Croatian international making his first US tour start.

up for the second half to replace a starting XI that had been voted in by fans. Emerson Royal found the woodwork with a header and Stanislav Iljutcenko then put the K-League team on the board in the 52nd minute, slotting the ball home after Spurs keeper Brandon Austin was unable to hold an initial shot by Jeong Jae-hee. Iljutcenko got his second goal two minutes later with a diving header off a Jeong cross. After mass substitutions by Spurs, Will Lankshear put the Premier League side two goals in front in the 66th minute, volleying home a cross by Timo Werner.

The K-League team responded in the 81st minute, when Oberdan hit a first-time volley after Austin punched a corner right to the Brazilian midfielder. Spurs hung on for the narrow win, with James Maddison striking the left post during stoppage time.

Yang Min-hyeok, the South Korean teenager signed by Spurs on Sunday, started for the Korean side but did not make much of an impression. He is currently playing for Gangwon FC in the K-League and will join Spurs in January. Spurs face Bayern Munich in Seoul on Saturday. — AFP

McIlroy has won 17 PGA Tour titles since the last of his four major triumphs, including three Tour Championships and the Players Championship, but says Olympic gold would rank at least alongside those successes.

"It would be the achievement, certainly of the year, if not - I think for me, it's well documented that I haven't won one of the big four in 10 years," he told reporters on Tuesday. "It would probably be one of, if not the biggest in my career for the last 10 years..."

"I'd say my focus is pretty high. The last time you guys saw me, I didn't give a very good account of myself at Troon. I want to make sure I'm right where I need to be teeing off on Thursday." McIlroy will have plenty of competition when the first round gets under way on Thursday at Le Golf National, the venue for the 2018 Ryder Cup won comprehensively by Europe.

World number one Scottie Scheffler will make his Olympic debut, while reigning champion Xander Schauffele will also be among the favorites after his 2024 PGA Championship and British Open titles. Paris will see comfortably the strongest field for a men's Olympic golf event, with eight of the world's top 10 competing.

"(In) the Olympics, you want the best players

to be able to participate," said Spain's two-time major champion Jon Rahm. "Any tournament, you want the best players possible to be representing their country."

Team events 'would be great'

Organizers are reportedly considering adding a mixed team event to the golf schedule for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. The decision to only include 72-hole individual tournaments - the same format used by the majority of major tours week in, week out - was a controversial one when golf was first reintroduced to the programme.

"I think some people were surprised that it was only individual stroke play, and they didn't try to mix it up with some different formats," said McIlroy. "If that came to fruition in L.A. where there was a mixed team event, or even another team event that was not mixed and Shane (Lowry) and I could play in it if we qualify, yeah, I'd love that."

"I think that would be a great format to bring to this competition." McIlroy will start his bid for gold alongside Scheffler and Swedish sensation Ludvig Aberg on Thursday, while Schauffele partners Rahm and Norway's Viktor Hovland in another marquee group. — AFP



Kylian Mbappe

Mbappe buys Ligue 2 club Caen

PARIS: France captain Kylian Mbappe has taken over as majority shareholder of Ligue 2 club Caen, Mbappe's company Interconnected Ventures announced in a statement on Wednesday. The new Real Madrid player, who came close to signing for Caen when he was younger, has acquired 80 percent of the shares through Coalition Capital, the investment entity of Interconnected Ventures, replacing US investment fund Oaktree as majority shareholder.

No figure has been released officially but French media reports put the acquisition fee at 15-20 million euros (\$16-21.6 million). "This transaction marks a significant step in the club's strategic development and reinforces its natural ambition to remain one of the most successful clubs in French football," the club said in a statement.

"This acquisition will provide Caen with additional strategic resources to strengthen its sporting policy, modernize its infrastructure and develop innovative projects." Mbappe's close friend Ziad Hammoud will take over as chairman of the club.

"We are determined to create an environment where young talent can flourish and where the club can defend its identity with strength and ambition," Hammoud said in the press release. The 25-year-old World Cup winner, who now becomes one of the youngest owners of a professional club, was courted by Caen when he was just 13, before he joined Monaco and then Paris Saint-Germain.

"You'd have to think that the time he spent at Caen in his youth left its mark on him! How proud we are to see a champion like @KMBappe investing in @SMCaen," the mayor of Caen Aristide Olivier posted on social media.

Founded in 1913, Caen finished fifth in the top flight in 1992 and reached the League Cup final in 2005 but have played in France's second tier since 2019. — AFP

Son nets twice in Spurs' pre-season win in South Korea

SEOUL: Homecoming hero Son Heung-min scored a brace of goals as Tottenham Hotspur defeated a K-League All Stars team 4-3 in a pre-season match in Seoul on Wednesday. Dejan Kulusevski opened the scoring for Spurs in the 29th minute before Son, captain of both the Premier League side and the South Korean national team, went to work.

He cut in from the left wing and found the top right corner of the net with a curling effort from the edge of the box in the 38th minute. He then teamed up with Kulusevski in stoppage time before the break to calmly score again in the bottom corner to give Spurs a 3-0 lead.

The local team returned with an entirely new line-



ORLANDO: Manchester City's defender #24 Josko Gvardiol (C) stumbles as he runs with the ball during the 2024 FC Series pre-season friendly football match between FC Barcelona and Manchester City at Camping World Stadium in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Pablo Torre's goal in the second minute of first-half stoppage time gave Barcelona a 2-1 half-time lead. The 21-year-old Spanish midfielder took a centering pass from Gerard Martin at the left wing, nudged the ball to his right, then blasted a right-footed shot past Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson and inside the left post.

Jack Grealish equalized for City in the 60th minute off an impressive fast break. Croatian international Mateo Kovacic, making his first start on City's US tour, gathered a loose ball just be-

yond the City box, split two defenders and raced upfield with the ball before passing to English left winger Grealish, who outraced a defender and finished with an outstanding left-footed shot from a steep angle high into the goal.

Barcelona will continue their US tour with pre-season matches against Real Madrid and AC Milan. City, who lost earlier US matches to Celtic and AC Milan, will close the US tour by facing Chelsea on Saturday at Columbus, Ohio. — AFP



TOKYO: Tottenham's manager Ange Postecoglou (L) speaks with forward Son Heung-min during an international club friendly football match between Tottenham Hotspur FC and Vissel Kobe at the Japan National Stadium in Tokyo. — AFP

'That's it for me as a coach,' says Klopp

BERLIN: Jurgen Klopp has ruled out a return to coaching in the near future, including for the vacant England job, saying Wednesday "as of today, that's it for me as a coach". Speaking at a German Football Coaches Association meeting in Wuerzburg, the former Liverpool and Borussia Dortmund mentor said: "I didn't decide to stop on a whim, it was a general decision."

Klopp stood down as Liverpool boss at the end of the 2023-24 season citing exhaustion after 23 years in club management. The 57-year-old was almost immediately linked to several vacant jobs, including as England coach when manager Gareth Southgate stood down the Three Lions lost the Euro 2024 final in Berlin. — AFP

Sports

PARIS 2024



Danish table tennis star Lind nearly paralyzed eyes heroic Olympic medal

With help of a corset and zimmer frame, Lind began the long road to recovery

PARIS: For Danish table-tennis player Anders Lind, just making the Paris Olympics is a triumph over adversity: After breaking two vertebrae in a serious car crash, he feared he would never walk again. Now the 25-year-old is into an improbable Olympic last 16 and dreaming of a medal that would represent an extraordinary battle against the odds. When doctors x-rayed his spine after the crash in 2021, "they said maybe I'll never walk normally again," an emotional Lind told AFP after his win on Wednesday. "They said maybe I'll have some nerve damage, and that with the bones that broke, there was a 70-80 percent probability that I would be paralyzed," he added.

Even if he could walk again, none of the doctors he saw said he would be able to resume top-level sport - news he said sent him spiralling into depression. "I cried for a week straight. Table tennis was my life... I don't want to work in an office, I have too much energy, I need to be active," he said. But with the help of a corset and zimmer frame, Lind began the long road to recovery that has taken him to performing in front of a packed Olympic crowd in Paris. First walking 20 metres, then 40, then 50, he said he felt like an old man staggering along with his walking support. Progress was faster than doctors could have dreamed of, however, and three months later, he again picked up his beloved bat. "Then I knew, OK, I'm going to be back. I don't know how good I'm going to be, but I'll be back," he said.

'I'm so proud'

Despite having a metal rod inserted into his back, Lind said he suffers no major physical ill-effects from the accident, although he cannot bend as well as he used to. "I think my career as a limbo dancer is over," he quipped.

Mentally, the near-death experience has given him a sense of perspective. "If I have a bad match, I can look back and say, 'It's not as bad as it was then'," he said. His setback has also given him a fierce determination that pulled him through in his last-32 match against Poland's Miosz Redzinski. Leading 3-2, Lind looked to have the match sewn up, but the Pole fought back to force a deciding set. The seventh set also ebbed and flowed with some outstanding rallies firing up the packed and raucous crowd.

At three points all in the decider, Lind pulled away to take a four-point advantage but Redzinski again scrapped back after a series of errors from Lind's bat. A missed backhand drive from the Pole and a forehand into the net gave Lind four match points at 10-6 and he converted after a brilliant rally, slumping to the floor with emotion before hailing the cheering crowd.

"It means so much. I can't describe it. Emotions are coming into my mind in a way I can't explain. I'm so happy, I'm so proud," Lind told AFP. He said in previous matches, he had been guilty of losing focus in a tight situation and letting the match slip away.



PARIS: Denmark's Anders Lind plays a return to Portugal's Marcos Freitas during their men's table tennis singles round of 64 at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the South Paris Arena in Paris. - AFP

"But today I persevered, and I stood my ground, and I ended up winning, which I am extremely proud of." A medal after the agonies he has suffered would be sensational, but the shock defeat of world number one Wang Chuqin has blown the draw wide open, he said.

"With the top seed going out, I'm dreaming for a medal. It's still a long shot, and it's very unlikely, but there is a chance, and if the chance comes, I'm going to take it," Lind said. - AFP

Sedjati gunning for Rudisha's world record at Olympics

PARIS: Djamel Sedjati has two aims coming into the Paris Olympics: To medal for Algeria after the country drew a blank in Tokyo three years ago and to break David Rudisha's 800m world record.

Algeria's failure to medal at the COVID-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021 was seen as a massive disappointment. It had come in the wake of Taoufik Makhloufi winning 1500m gold in London in 2012 and double 800-1,500m silvers in Rio four years later.

But now the north African country has an athlete in the form of his life and gunning for what remains one of the toughest world records. Rudisha set the mark of 1min 40.91sec when winning gold in the London Olympics in 2012. It was a simply stunning run, but for the first time since that heady night in the British capital, there is a feeling Sedjati could be

the one to threaten the time. This year has been a real breakthrough season for the 25-year-old, born in the northern Algerian city of Tiaret. He broke Makhloufi's national record at the Paris Diamond League meeting this month, clocking an outstanding 1:41.56 to become the third fastest athlete in the history of the race after Rudisha and Denmark's Wilson Kipketer (1:41.11).

Algeria's Olympic legacy

Sedjati did not sit on his laurels after Paris, improving his time to 1:41.46, a Diamond League record and new world leading time, just five days later in Monaco. "I am now thinking of the world record, I hope to run it at the Olympic Games," said the Algerian, who claimed silver at the 2022 Eugene world championships.

"I will focus on that and put in the necessary work so that I can achieve my goal. "It's the fourth time I've run a world lead and the second time an Algerian record, I have worked really hard for that." Sedjati, who this year has also set a world lead of 2:13.97 over the 1,000m, in Johannesburg, added: "I will keep the preparation the same. "My mindset is that the hard work I have put in will pay off." - AFP



NANTERRE: South Africa's Tatjana Smith (L) and South Africa's Kaylene Corbett react after a heat of the women's 200m breaststroke swimming event during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. - AFP

McIntosh in cruise control as Tatjana eyes Olympic double

PARIS: Summer McIntosh cruised into the 200m butterfly semi-finals Wednesday as the Canadian sensation set her sights on adding a third Olympic medal to her Paris collection. Already the 400m medley champion and 400m freestyle runner-up, the 17-year-old came home sixth fastest in 2mins 07.70secs at La Defense Arena behind Chinese pacesetter and defending champion Zhang Yufei (2:06.55).

A back-to-back world champion in 2022-23, McIntosh has been getting progressively faster and is now tied for the fifth best time ever. But while in electric form, victory is by no means guaranteed in a bumper field spearheaded by veteran Zhang, who clocked the third fastest 200 fly in history to win Tokyo gold. American Regan Smith took silver in Japan behind Zhang and remains a serious threat, posting the second best heat time. "I was just trying to make semis and conserve as much energy as possible heading into tomorrow's final," said McIntosh, who had plenty left in the tank.

"For me really in race planning for 200 fly, I'm always really just trying to focus on myself and know that I can put down a good last 15m." South Africa's Tatjana Smith is also gunning for more glory as she bids to become the first woman to win the breaststroke double since compatriot Penny Heyns at Atlanta in 1996.

Smith won Tokyo 200m gold in a world record 2:18.95 and is in red-hot form after securing the 100m title on Monday. While her record was broken in 2022 by Evgeniia Chikunova, the Russian is not in Paris, leaving Smith top seed. - AFP

'Fresh' Axelsen, Shi cruise into Olympic badminton quarters

PARIS: Defending champion Viktor Axelsen will play with a "fresh body" in the Olympic badminton quarter-finals after dismantling Ireland's Nhat Nguyen to cruise into the knockout round Wednesday. Denmark's Axelsen made it three wins from three in Paris, overcoming a slow start to beat Nguyen 21-13, 21-10 and top his first-round group. Axelsen, who would have been eliminated if he had lost, said he "stepped up and managed to play at a pretty consistent high level". "Nhat couldn't really find the answers in the last part of the game," said the world number two, who lost the top ranking to China's Shi Yuqi in June.

"All in all, very positive and I go into the quarters with a fresh body. I'm very, very happy with my performance." Shi joined him with a 21-9, 21-10 stroll past Italy's Giovanni Toti. Both Shi and Axelsen skip the last 16 and jump straight into the quarter-finals because of their world rankings.

Shi, who has won four tournaments on badminton's world tour this year, said he was not feeling any extra pressure as the top-ranked player in the tournament. "I haven't thought about it much," said Shi, who is eyeing a first Olympic medal. Number three seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia was eliminated after losing his final group match to India's Lakshya Sen. Sen came through a tightly fought contest 21-18, 21-12 and said he was "really pumped up to fight in every match and every



PARIS: Denmark's Viktor Axelsen plays a shot against Ireland's Nhat Nguyen in their men's singles badminton group stage match during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Porte de la Chapelle Arena in Paris. - AFP

point". "The last few months the form has been really good," said Sen. "I've had ups and downs but overall I've been in good shape." Thailand's number eight seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn went through when his Finnish opponent Kalle Koljonen retired from the match. In women's singles, Japan's number five seed Akane Yamaguchi advanced after beating Canada's Michelle Li 22-24, 21-17, 21-12. India's PV Sindhu also went through with a 21-5, 21-10 win over Estonia's Kristin Kuuba. - AFP



PARIS: Colombia's Maria Carolina Velasquez Soto falls on the ground as she competes in the cycling race.



PARIS: France's Maxime Pianfetti (L), France's Jean-Philippe Patrice, France's Sebastien Patrice and France's Bolade Apithy celebrate after France won in the men's sabre team round of 8 bout between France and Egypt.



COLOMBES: USA's defender #21 Alexandra Hammel attempts a shot in the women's pool B field hockey match between Australia and the USA.



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ: An overview shows Serbia's #30 Aleksandra Katanic blocking China's #10 Zhang Ru in the women's preliminary round group A basketball match between China and Serbia.



PARIS: Spain's pivot #99 Javier Rodriguez (C) attempts to score against Japan's goalkeeper #21 Daisuke Okamoto during the Men's Preliminary Round Group A handball match between Spain and Japan. - AFP photos

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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|---------------------|----------|
| 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

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|--------------------|----------|
| 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, Jeegar Bharatkumar Karvat, holder of Indian Passport No. S5881899, Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Jeegar Bharatkumar to Jeegar Bharat (given name) and Karvat (surname). (#5640, 31/07/2024)

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

PARIS 2024 

Biles inspires USA to Olympic gold as Irish swimmer makes history

Kaylee McKeown retains her crown in women's 100m backstroke

PARIS: Simone Biles won the fifth Olympic gold of her legendary career as she led the United States to an emphatic victory in the women's gymnastics team final on Tuesday, as Daniel Wiffen made Irish history in swimming. On a sweltering day in Paris where temperatures reached 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit), the hottest ticket in town was at the Bercy Arena where Biles was attempting to lay the ghosts of Tokyo 2021 to rest.

The 27-year-old American - considered the greatest gymnast of all time - and her team did just that to add to her four gold medals at the 2016 Rio Games. Three years ago in Tokyo Biles battled a disorientating mental block that gymnasts call the "twisties", and without her the USA had to settle for silver.

But with Biles back to her brilliant best, she and teammates Jordan Chiles, Jade Carey and Sunisa Lee led wire-to-wire to reclaim gold ahead of Italy, with Brazil taking bronze. For Biles it marks a return to the Olympic summit after a two-year break as she focused on her mental health. Lee, the all-around champion in Tokyo, has since dealt with two career-threatening kidney ailments.

Biles said her second team gold - eight years after her first - felt different. "It was just like we were a little young and naive," she said of 2016. "So it didn't hit the way that it does now. "Now that I'm much older, we have so much more experience and we're out here really having fun and enjoying what we're doing." Once again the stars were out for Biles. Serena Williams, Nicole Kidman and Bill Gates were in attendance, as was Biles's husband, NFL player Jonathan Owens, in a T-shirt emblazoned with his wife's name and picture.

Irish history

Wiffen was in tears on the podium at La Defense Arena after becoming the first Irishman ever to win an Olympic swimming gold. "I don't normally cry, so I really hope that nobody's gonna see that," he said.

The 23-year-old powered home in the 800m freestyle in 7min 38.19sec, the fifth-fastest time ever, ahead of American defending champion Bobby Finke and Tokyo silver medalist Gregorio Paltrinieri of Italy. Wiffen, who was born in England and is the world champion, will also contest the 1,500m freestyle and 10km open water swim in Paris. Kaylee McKeown retained her crown in the women's 100m backstroke, producing a blistering second lap to beat world record-holder Regan Smith of the USA.

It was Australia's fourth gold in the pool in Paris. Britain triumphed in the men's 4x200m freestyle relay. In punishing heat at Roland Garros, Rafael Nadal kept alive his dream of a third Olympic gold



PARIS: USA team poses with the gold medal after the podium ceremony for the artistic gymnastics women's team final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Bercy Arena in Paris. — AFP

as he powered into the men's doubles quarter-finals alongside Carlos Alcaraz. Andy Murray, who has said he will quit tennis after the Games, delayed his retirement with another thrilling doubles win with Dan Evans, saving two match points. But women's world number two Coco Gauff crashed out of the singles in a stormy defeat to Croatian Donna Vekic. Vekic won 7-6 (9/7), 6-2 to reach the quarter-finals after Gauff claimed she was "getting cheated" in an argument with the chair umpire over a line call.

New Zealand's women defended their Olympic rugby sevens title after roaring back to beat Canada 19-12 in front of a near-capacity 69,000 crowd at the Stade de France. In men's football, Thierry Hen-

ry's France set up a potentially explosive quarter-final showdown with Argentina. And NBA star Victor Wembanyama scored 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to help France scrape past Japan 94-90 and into the quarter-finals in the men's basketball. Japan ended day four top of the overall medals table with seven golds, with China and Australia on six, and France and South Korea on five.

More Seine doubts

Earlier, in a massive blow to Olympic organizers who have repeatedly vowed that the River Seine would be safe to swim in, Tuesday's men's triathlon race was called off hours before the start af-

ter last-minute water-quality tests. A joint statement from Paris 2024 and World Triathlon blamed the spike in pollution levels on the heavy rain that drenched Paris on Friday and Saturday. The men's triathlon has been rescheduled to Wednesday, immediately after the women's event, leaving Games chiefs keeping their fingers crossed.

After the intense heat of the day, a major storm was forecast late on, raising fresh doubts over whether Wednesday's rescheduled events could go ahead. Heavy downpours still overwhelm the city's underground drains and sewage system, leading to untreated effluent being released into the waterway. — AFP

France, Britain win triathlon golds, LeBron eyes quarters

PARIS: France's Cassandre Beaugrand and Britain's Alex Yee won gold as the Paris Olympics triathlon went ahead Wednesday in a huge relief for organizers, and the star-studded USA chased a spot in the men's basketball quarter-finals. Hazardous pollution levels in the River Seine in recent days had threatened to cause chaos to the triathlon competition and embarrassment to Paris Games chiefs. Organizers were forced to cancel training this week in the river and postponed the men's race on Tuesday after the Seine was found to be too dirty for athletes following rainstorms last week. But despite heavy rain overnight, which can stir up pollution, organizers said early on Wednesday the water levels had been "assessed as compliant" for the women's event and the men's immediately afterwards to go ahead.

The women's field dived into the Seine at the historic Alexandre III bridge in the heart of the City of Light before a cycling stage and then a running stage, as big crowds lined the route. Beaugrand, a 27-year-old from the Parisian suburbs, only emerged from the leading pack on a thrilling final lap of the running stage before crossing the line and sinking to her knees in elation.

She said she had "never doubted" that the swimming would go ahead, despite the threat of cancellation, which would have turned the race into a duathlon of only cycling and running. "It would have been shameful for our sport... it would have been a disgrace," she told reporters after victory. In the delayed men's triathlon, Yee surged past New Zealand's Hayden Wilde in the final stretch in a dramatic finish to improve on his silver from the Tokyo Games.

Table tennis stunner

In other early action on day five, China's table tennis

world number one Wang Chuqin suffered a shock defeat, a day after having his bat broken. Wang won mixed doubles gold on Tuesday but his elation turned to anger after a photographer accidentally snapped his bat while jostling to take a picture.

Less than 24 hours later, Wang went out in the singles after a 4-2 defeat to Truls Moregard of Sweden. "I've almost never taken a set against Wang so it's crazy to win here at the Olympics," said Moregard, the world number 26.

China ramped up their bid for a clean sweep in diving, prevailing in the women's synchronized 10m platform ahead of North Korea and Britain. China have won all three golds in the sport in Paris so far.

US great Katie Ledecky, a seven-time gold medalist, is out to defend her 1500m freestyle title after being relegated to bronze in the 400m behind Ariarne Titmus and Summer McIntosh. Chinese world record-holder Pan Zhanle is favorite in the men's 100m freestyle final, while 200m freestyle champion Mollie O'Callaghan will be expected to triumph in the women's 100m free.

USA eye quarters

In men's basketball, LeBron James and his USA teammates have their sights set on the last eight as they face Olympic newcomers South Sudan. Kevin Durant's return from injury inspired the Americans to a rout of Nikola Jokic's Serbia in their opening game, an ideal start for the reigning champions who are eyeing a fifth straight Olympic crown.

Japanese gymnast Daiki Hashimoto bids for repeat gold in the men's all-around final, where he is expected to face a ferocious fight from China's Zhang Boheng. If Hashimoto delivers, he would emulate countryman Kohei Uchimura by retaining all-around gold, and keep it in Japanese hands for an unprecedented fourth consecutive Games.

Novak Djokovic, chasing an elusive Olympic tennis gold, meets Germany's Dominik Koepfer in the third round at Roland Garros, while Carlos Alcaraz plays Roman Safiullin. Alcaraz will then return to the court alongside Rafael Nadal in the quarter-finals of the doubles. — AFP

North-South Korea Olympic podium selfie goes viral

SEOUL: Images of Olympic table tennis players from North Korea and South Korea taking a selfie together on the medal podium in Paris went viral in South Korea Wednesday, hailed as a rare show of cross-border unity.

Nuclear-armed North Korea declared the South its principal enemy earlier this year and tensions between the two countries are at one of their highest points in years. But after South Korea won bronze and North Korea silver in the mixed doubles behind

China, South Korea's Lim Jong-hoon took a group photo after the medal ceremony.

North Korea's Ri Jong Sik and Kim Kum Yong, the South's Shin Yu-bin and the victorious Chinese team Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha all beamed into Lim's phone, a South Korean-made Samsung. "A selfie with both Koreas' national flags and a Samsung phone," said the widely read daily JongAng Ilbo. It was the first time North Korea had been on an Olympic podium since 2016, as they did not send athletes to the Tokyo Olympics because of the COVID pandemic.

"I congratulated them when they were introduced as Silver medalists," Lim told Korean media after the award ceremony. South Korean broadcasters have repeatedly run videos of the selfie, with many commentators reflecting on the significance of a rare moment of unity. "This is the true spirit of the Olympics," one commentator said. — AFP



PARIS: Bronze medalists South Korea's Lim Jonghoon (L) takes a selfie with his mobile as he celebrates on the podium with gold medalists China's Wang Chuqin (rear R) and China's Sun Yingsha (front L), silver medalists North Korea's Ri Jong Sik (2nd L), and North Korea's Kim Kum Yong (C) and bronze medalist and teammate South Korea's Shin Yubin (rear R) at the end of their mixed table tennis doubles competition. — AFP