



The next superstar? Boy wonder Yamal lights up world football

Sports+ Page 15



Your turn to play



How expatriates can renew Emirates ID

Nation+ Page 3



Unable to focus for long? You may be having 'popcorn brain'

Nation+ Page 4



Shell, Total and BP take stakes in UAE gas project

Business+ Page 13

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Life in jail, millions in fine for Brotherhood terrorists

Six companies involved in the case will be dissolved, their headquarters closed and assets confiscated

Staff Report

The Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court — State Security Department on Wednesday convicted 53 members of the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood organisation, and six companies involved in the 'Justice and Dignity Organisation' case. The court sentenced them to penalties ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment and tens of millions in fines. The verdict can be appealed before the Federal Supreme Court. The court sentenced 43 defendants to life imprisonment "for the crime of creating, establishing, and managing the terrorist 'Justice

and Dignity Committee' organisation for the purpose of committing terrorist acts in the country." Five of the accused were slapped with 15 years imprisonment "for cooperating with the 'Reform Call' organisation and advocating for it in articles and tweets posted on social media, with prior knowledge and purpose to take action against the country". The court also convicted five defendants with 10-year imprisonment and a fine of Dh10 million, "for the crime of laundering money for creating, establishing and financing a terrorist organisation. The court ruled to impose penalties on six companies by fining each of them Dh20 million, for

a total of Dh120 million. The companies will be dissolved; their headquarters closed and assets confiscated, including their tangible and intangible property rights, funds, and real estate, as well as materials, equipment, and belongings used in the commission of the crimes. The court said the defendants "are part of the 'Reform Call' organisation (Muslim Brotherhood, which is classified as a terrorist organisation), who have worked to create and replicate violent events in the country — similar to what occurred in other Arab states, including protests and clashes between the security forces and protesting crowds, that led to deaths and in-

juries and to the destruction of facilities, as well as the consequent spread of panic and terror among people, which created a crisis threatening overall security and stability, and the sovereignty of the State, while endangering individuals' lives and their property". The Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court said it examined the case and proceeded with the trial, over 10 hearings, "in which it ensured that the defendants' rights and guarantees were protected, as stipulated in law". The defendants were allowed to choose their attorneys, and the court appointed an attorney to defend those who did not appoint one themselves.

Testimonies of witnesses were heard during public sessions, which allowed the defendants and attorneys to cross-examine them. The Public Prosecution submitted its evidence during its pleadings in a public session, which included the confessions and acknowledgements of the defendants, the investigations and testimonies of officers of the State Security Department, as well as testimonies from technical experts. Meanwhile, the Abu Dhabi Federal Appeals Court dismissed the criminal cases against 24 defendants for crimes of cooperation and supplying the organisation with money, and has ruled to acquit one of the defendants.

The defendants are part of the 'Reform Call' organisation that worked to create and replicate violent events in the country — similar to what occurred in other Arab states — that led to deaths and injuries and to the spread of panic and terror among people, and created a crisis threatening the overall security, stability and sovereignty of the State.

Rain or shine, she paints the town with passion



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Known as 'art of h', this Emirati woman is making waves in the art world with her captivating mural designs that adorn public spaces across the UAE, including bus stations. Originally aspiring to study fine arts, Hind's early knack for drawing led her to specialise in graphic design at university, a field she believes complements her artistic talents. "I noticed my love for drawing at a young age, influenced by my mother's passion for art and coming from a family that appreciates the arts," Hind shared in an interview with *Khaleej Times*. Her journey into mural art began with significant recognition early on. "My first mural project was commissioned by the late Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan Al Nahyan, where I was selected among Emirati artists to beautify Al Samha city," Hind said. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Hind persevered. She refused requests to submit her work electronically and have others physically install them, instead personally executed five murals.

Turn To Page 5

Hundreds bid adieu to businessman Buxani

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Hundreds of prominent entrepreneurs and other personalities paid their respects to the late businessman Ram Buxani as he was laid to rest in Dubai on Wednesday. The veteran Indian businessman passed away in Dubai on July 8. He was 83. He died at his home at around 1am. The funeral of the illustrious entrepreneur was attended by people from all walks of life, including some of his oldest acquaintances and business associates, who got a glimpse of his mortal remains. Noted businessman MA Yusuff Ali and Indian Consul-General Satish Sivan were among the hundreds who arrived at the Jebel Ali crematorium on Wednesday afternoon for his service. The renowned personality's family was also present during the service, including his wife, children and nephew.

Turn To Page 4

Dad saves child's life in pioneering transplant

Ashwani Kumar
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Indian expat Imran Khan was ready to do anything for his four-year-old child who was suffering from a rare genetic condition. He donated a portion of his liver: a gift that would give his daughter Razia a normal childhood. A 12-hour surgery — considered the UAE's first living-donor paediatric liver transplant — was performed at Burjeel Medical City (BMC), Abu Dhabi, saving the life of Razia. The child was diagnosed with a rare genetic liver condition called progressive familial intrahepatic cholestasis type 3 (PFIC). Imran and his wife were familiar with the devastating effects of PFIC — having lost their first daughter to the same condition three years ago. "We had suffered the heartbreak of losing our first girl at our native place of Hyderabad. We didn't want to lose another. We were anxious but careful,

Turn To Page 5

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May his soul rest in peace forever.



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YOUR UAE GUIDE

LIFE AND LIVING IN THE EMIRATES, EXPLAINED

How expatriates can renew Emirates ID

The time limit to renew is 30 days from the date of expiry, after which late fines will apply

Web Desk
webteam@khaleejtimes.com

Is your first Emirates ID up for renewal? Or you have been here long enough and become something of a 'veteran' yet forgot the renewal process? Fret not. We have got you covered. The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Ports Security (ICP) has laid out simple steps to renew your Emirates ID. Here, we walk you through the process:

When should you renew your Emirates ID?

The time limit to renew is 30 days from the date of expiry, after which late fines will apply.

You can apply for the ID card renewal service at the website of ICP, or through ICP App on Google Play, App Store and Huawei, or through an accredited typing centre. You might need to visit one of ICP's service centres to provide your biometric details.

How early can the Emirates ID be renewed?

UAE residence visa holders can only apply for renewal when their residence visa is renewed or reissued.

What is the process to renew your Emirates ID?

Step 1: Documents

When you begin the renewal process, make sure you have the necessary documents.

Documents required:

- » Current Emirates ID
- » Passport (original and a copy)
- » Valid residency visa
- » Passport-sized photographs (4.5 x 3.5 cm) with a white background
- » Completed renewal application form (available online or at authorised typing centres in the UAE)

Step 2: Visit an authorised typing centre

Visit any of the authorised typing centres to begin the renewal process. These centres have well-trained personnel who will guide you through the process.

Biometric Data: Your fingerprints and a photograph will be taken for biometric verification.

Payment: Pay the required renewal fee of Dh370 for the two-year validity.

Step 3: Receive your new Emirates ID

After completing the above steps, the authorities will process your renewal request. You will receive an SMS or email notification when your new Emirates ID is ready for collection.

Follow these final steps:

Collection: Visit the same typing centre/Emirates Post office to collect your new Emirates ID or the delivery method you opted for.

Verification: Ensure all the information on the card is correct. If there are any discrepancies, report them immediately.



Didn't renew your ID? How to request exemption from fines

Failure to update the card within 30 days from date of expiry can result in late fees that can go up to a maximum of Dh1,000

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The Emirates ID card is mandatory for all residents of the UAE: it proves their identity and residency details and is also required for all documentation in the country. Failure to renew or update the card within 30 days from the date of expiry can result in late fines of Dh20 per day, which can go up to a maximum of Dh1,000.

Good news, though: Emiratis and residents can request exemptions from penalties under certain circumstances. The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security outlines specific eligibility criteria that individuals must meet to qualify for the fines to be waived.

Eligibility for exemption:

1. An individual who left the country and spent more than three months outside the country, and the validity of his identity card expired after the date of their departure from the country.
2. An individual whose identity card has expired after being deported by an order, an administrative decision, or a judicial ruling, or whose passport is seized pending cases, provided that this is proven by a letter or a receipt issued by the competent authorities that deported him or suspended him pending cases.
3. An individual who has not been issued an identity card for the period before obtaining the nationality of the country and before obtaining the family book.
4. A bed-ridden person or suffering from a contagious disease or partial or full disability. This

has to be proven with a medical certificate issued by relevant authorities in the country.

5. Staff of diplomatic or consular missions in the country and those under their care.
6. Elder people (70 years and older) who are unable to visit customer happiness centers in different emirates are exempted from delay fines, provided their age is proved by their family book, passport or any other document approved in the UAE and states the customer's age.
7. Emiratis under the social security system and those under their sponsorship need to prove their financial status with an official certificate issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs or other relevant authorities to be exempted from fines.
8. If the delay in updating or renewing the Emirates ID card is due to a computer error, fines can be waived.

How to apply:

Applying for the Emirates ID late penalty exemption is free of charge.

To initiate the exemption request process, individuals must start by submitting a request for ID card renewal through one of the approved printing offices, electronically through authority's website or via the smart application.

Following this, the system will display the fees associated with the Emirates ID card, including any late fees incurred. If the applicant qualifies for exemption, the request can be submitted through the smart services system, along with the required documents.

The progress of the application can be tracked, and the final result, whether approval or rejection, will be communicated. Residents will then receive an SMS with the application number and within 48 hours another text message stating whether the application has been accepted or not will be sent. If it has been rejected then the applicant is asked to pay the fine within the stipulated number of days. Subsequently, the application process for the ID card can be completed.



OUT TODAY

Building a Sustainable Legacy

In this issue:

The Wasl Tower is poised to redefine luxury living and enhance Dubai's iconic skyline. In the special edition read about how this architectural marvel, celebrated for its unique design and sustainability features, exemplifies Dubai's unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence in urban development.

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Prayer Timings

FAJR	SHURUQ	ZUHR	ASR	MAGHRIB	ISHA
04:07	05:33	12:27	15:49	19:16	20:41

Add four minutes for Abu Dhabi / Deduct four minutes for Ras Al Khaimah and six minutes for Fujairah.



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Unable to focus for long? You may be having 'popcorn brain'

Constant presence of smartphones, social media platforms providing continuous stream of information are main reasons for this phenomenon

Waad Barakat and SM Ayaz Zakir newsroom@khaleejtimes.com

Have you ever felt like your thoughts are jumping from one task to another, unable to focus on one thing for long? You might be experiencing a phenomenon known as 'popcorn brain'.

Experts are expressing their concern about this emerging issue as a result of our constant access to technology, which has become a necessary part of our everyday lives.

'Popcorn Brain' is a term used to describe the state of hyperactivity and constant craving for new stimuli that many individuals are experiencing.

Dr Barjis Sulthana, psychiatrist at NMC Specialty Hospital in Al Nahda, Dubai, said: "We are currently seeing a rise in what some call 'popcorn brain' - a colloquial term for a scattered attention style. It's characterised by rapid jumps between thoughts and tasks, much like popcorn kernels popping erratically".

Dr Sulthana further emphasised that the phenomenon can be associated with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). While both involve attention struggles, the two conditions are different. "ADHD often manifests in childhood, whereas popcorn brain seems more linked to the constant stimulation of modern life. Essentially, popcorn brain reflects a fragmented attention style likely due to information overload, rather than a core neuro-developmental



issue," she explained.

According to Dr Rajesh Chaudhary, neurology specialist at Aster Hospital in Sharjah, the primary drivers behind popcorn brain include the constant presence of smartphones, social media platforms and other digital devices that provide a continuous stream of information and notifications.

"The vast amount of data available online can overwhelm our cognitive capacities, leading to challenges in processing and retaining information," Dr Chaudhary said.

The fast-paced lifestyle and the pressure to stay constantly con-

nected can exacerbate the issue. "The expectation to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, often driven by professional and social pressures, contributes to this fragmented attention," he explained.

Dr Chaudhary also warned of the long-term implications of popcorn brain, both for individuals and society in general. "Reduced productivity, increased risk of mental health issues like anxiety and stress and potential declines in academic performance are among the individual-level impacts," he added.

However, on a societal level,

Dr Sulthana said that "a population with fragmented attention spans could struggle with critical thinking, deep learning and innovation. Educational systems that rely on focused learning might see a decrease in overall achievement". She also highlighted that the inability to truly connect with information or people due to constant mental flitting could lead to increased social isolation and a decline in empathy.

Addressing this phenomenon requires a variety of approaches. Experts recommend digital detox, mindfulness and meditation prac-

tices and cognitive-behavioural therapy to help individuals regain control over their attention spans. "Time management techniques such as the Pomodoro method, can also be effective in enhancing focus and productivity," suggested Dr Chaudhary.

Dr Sulthana added: "Try to train the brain to resist distractions and be present in the moment, enhancing focus. Tech management, such as limiting screen time, using distraction-blocking apps and creating tech-free zones are crucial for retraining the brain to concentrate".

Scammers send fake messages to travellers, pose as officials

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Scammers are trying their best to take advantage of the peak travel season as many residents plan to go for their summer holiday.

Last week, fraudsters were sending broadcast messages using the name of the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs-Dubai, warning: "We have suspended your use of your passport".

"You have been restricted from leaving the United Arab Emirates. Please declare your residential address, otherwise you shall be held liable. Those who fail to declare will be fined Dh 50,000 and restricted from leaving the country," added the bogus text message that also sent a malicious web link.

Numbers that were used in sending anomalous messages show originating from Nigeria (+234) and Ethiopia (+251).

The real GDRFA-Dubai immediately reacted with a strong advise to residents not to fall prey to the scammers.

In a statement sent to *Khaleej Times*, GDRFA-Dubai said: "(We) strongly advise all customers to exercise caution and refrain from responding to any potentially suspicious text messages. It is recommended to avoid interacting with anonymous messages or clicking on links from unknown sources."

"For any further inquiries or complaints, please do not hesitate to contact us at 8005111," GDRFA added.

Khaleej Times has been consistently reporting on UAE's crackdown on cybercrime. A report published on July 5 reveals the complex structure of international cybercrime syndicates dismantled by UAE authorities that resulted in the arrests of hundreds of individuals recently.

Injured turtles, abandoned dugongs being rescued and treated in Abu Dhabi

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Hundreds of sick or injured marine animals were being rescued and treated at the Yas SeaWorld Research and Rescue Centre in Abu Dhabi alongside turtles that were released into their natural habitat.

The 8,600sqm centre, which went operational in the first quarter of last year, is the largest dedicated marine research, rescue, rehabilitation, and return facility in the region.

Since its establishment, the centre has been providing critical care to a wide range of species from sea turtles to dolphins and endangered ones. It boasts the region's first marine wildlife rescue ambulances with specialised equipment and a cutting-edge fleet of rescue boats.

Subject-matter experts from the centre showed *Khaleej Times* the work behind-the-scenes as they respond to marine emergencies starting from receiving a call on 0565030060 - the shared hotline with Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD).

"If you spot an animal in distress alert us through the Abu Dhabi Government call centre at 800-555 or directly reach us on 0565030060. We're ready to help any marine animal that's sick or injured," said Jonathan Diaz, zoological manager.

When contacted for assistance, the team of marine wildlife rescue experts from both EAD and the centre typically assess the situation. They then come up with a rescue plan tailored for the type of

The centre boasts the region's first marine wildlife rescue ambulances with specialised equipment and a cutting-edge fleet of rescue boats.

animal in distress.

"Once the plan is communicated, the marine wildlife ambulance is equipped and dispatched immediately to the rescue location to further assess the animal's condition, so we know the initial steps of care. Once the course of care is determined, the experts will ascertain if the animal needs immediate attention or transportation to the centre," Diaz said.

The centre's marine wildlife rescue ambulances have a capacity of up to 6,000kgs, and each rescue is different based on the animal in distress.

"If it's a dugong, a rescue boat is used to transfer it to shore followed by a rescue van to make their way to the centre, where it is cared for using the latest technological equipment in addition to a highly specialised zoological team that monitors the marine animal's status constantly," Diaz said and noted that the team includes experienced veterinarians, animal care specialists, rescue operations team, nutritionists, behaviourists and more. The rescue ambulances have been specifically designed to ensure maximum interior space without excessive built-in equipment, which enables the rescue of various animal species without size constraints.

New university certificate recognition system slashes process time by 50%

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The process time for getting foreign Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) certificates has reduced by 50 per cent following the launch of the first phase of 'University Certificate Recognition' system, according to the Ministry of Education (MoE).

During the first phase of the system, it was revealed that the number of documents needed to recognise foreign HEIs certificates has also decreased by 85 per cent. Likewise, the first phase saw a 50 per cent reduction in the steps required for certificate recognition. More than 60,000 students in the UAE are set to benefit from the new updates as the Ministry of Education (MoE) has recently launched the second phase of the programme. The second phase of the system will focus on recognising certificates from foreign universities. This new phase also aims to align standards with international university rankings and promote greater flexibility.

Dr Hassan AlSayegh, advisor to the MoE and the head of the customer experience transformation committee at the MoE, said, "The amendments in the second phase aim to facilitate the recognition criteria for university certificates issued by foreign HEIs, allowing for more academic specialisations." He emphasised that the ministry has taken proactive steps to launch the second phase of the 'University Certificates Recognition' system for certificates issued by foreign higher education institutions (HEIs), based on user feedback, ongoing monitoring and development efforts over the past period. "This includes greater flexibility in standards, in line with international university rankings and the standards set by the Ministry. Typically, as the global ranking of the HEI granting the degree increases, the requirements for degree recognition decrease. This falls within the Ministry's efforts to improve the quality of higher education outcomes and encourage students to pursue education at top-tier universities," added AlSayegh.

Hundreds bid adieu to businessman Buxani



Yusuff Ali MA, chairman and managing director of Lulu Group International, and several prominent entrepreneurs and other personalities pay their respects to the late businessman Ram Buxani as he was laid to rest in Dubai on Wednesday. — SUPPLIED PHOTO

From page 1

Dr Buxani, who arrived in the UAE as an 18-year-old in 1959, proceeded to build a business empire worth over Dh1 billion. Apart from being a keen entrepreneur, he was also well known for being a philanthropist. He was also part of the India Club, chairman of the Indian High School, and founder of the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC).

Some of the attendees recalled Dr Buxani as a kind and generous man. Indian photographer Manikandan has known him for over 30 years and had met him just two weeks ago. "He had attended the last IBPC meeting in June," he said. "I have known him for a very long time and every time we meet, he would ask me 'kaisa hai beta' (how are you, my son). The last time we met also, he asked

how I was doing and about my family."

Manikandan said that in recent times, Dr Buxani had chosen to sit on the sidelines and observe the proceedings of the IBPC and not participate in it too much. "However, last month when he came, he requested to be seated in the front of the gathering. I was the one who helped him from the majlis to his seat. I never imagined that it would be the last time I would interact with him. There was so much that I would have told him, if I had known. He was the sort of person who spoke to everyone kindly, whether you were a cleaner or a millionaire. That is something I will always remember about him."

Starting as an employee in ITL Cosmos Group, Dr Buxani grew to become the chairman of the group. After taking the reins of the group, he expanded it to dif-

ferent sectors such as hospital-ity, IT, F&B and other emirates as well.

Another person who had a long relation with Dr Buxani was K V Shamsudheen, founder and director of Barjeel Geojit Financial Services LLC. "I had more than 50 years of close relation with him," he said. "He was always at the forefront to encourage me in whatever I did for the betterment of non-resident Indians."

Shamsudheen recalled the time when Dr Buxani invited him to be part of an organisation. "When he started the Overseas Indian Economic Forum (OIEF) he requested me to join in the forum, and then made me one of the executive committee members," he said. "I cannot forget his affection and the support he gave me throughout my term. His leadership and organising capacity were remarkable."

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
 Notification by publication
 Abu Dhabi Federal Court of First Instance
 Payment Notification in Case No. AD/FC/1/ADM/JR2024/0000138- Administrative (Plenary)

Issue Date: 08/07/2024
 To the convict: Sun Mushwana Nationality: South Africa
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 The court has issued a judgment as if in presence:
 First: the defendant shall pay to the plaintiff the amount of AED (47,742.99) Forty-Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Forty-Two Dirhams and Ninety-Nine Fils.
 Second: the defendant shall pay the fees and expenses.
 The above-mentioned judgment is subject to appeal within 30 days from the next date of notification by publication.
 Dr. Khalid Abdelkader Saleh
 The Judge at Abu Dhabi Federal Court of First Instance
 Civil Court of First Instance
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Enjoy snowfall all year round at this new resort

Dubai's 'rain street' to be extended by 1km for resort inspired by Spanish town Marbella



The resort, located on the World Islands, will be surrounded by half a million sqm of nine different types of coral reefs that house over 30 types of fishes. — SUPPLIED PHOTO

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The Dubai street where it rains all year around will be extended to a length of 1km to completely surround an upcoming resort. The Marbella Resort, which is expected to be completed in 2026, will also house a snow plaza and coral reefs.

Located on the World Islands, which is only accessible by a private yacht, the Dh1 billion five star hotel will draw inspiration from the Spanish resort town of Marbella. Once completed, it will be surrounded by half a million sqm of nine different types of coral reefs that house over 30 types of fishes. In addition to this, a snow plaza will see an area where guests can experience snowfall all year around.

The developers claim that the resort will be one of the first hotels in the world with private coral reefs for its guests.

Visitors will be able to experience snorkelling and diving among the reefs that are expected to attract diverse marine species, including angelfish, anemonefish, lionfish and green turtles, as part of the broader coral reef master plan for The Heart of Europe.

The Marbella Resort Hotel, Vignette Collection by IHG Hotels and Resorts is being developed by the Kleindienst Group, which is the master developer behind The Heart of Europe.

"We envisioned a destination that provides a unique cultural escape with experiences that are authentically Spanish, right here in Dubai," said Josef Kleindienst, Chairman of Kleindienst Group.

The beachside destination will also offer beach parties, water sports, open-air sea-breeze restaurants. According to the developers, there will be six restaurants serving up authentic European cuisine at the destination.

"We have been conscious of our commitment to making our projects environment friendly, with employment of solar power and adoption of policies aimed at zero discharge of microplastics."

The developer opened doors to its French theme resort Côte d'Azur last year. Divided into four parts representing four

cities — Monaco, Nice, Cannes and St Tropez — the hotel will be a neighbour to the upcoming Marbella Resort. In addition to this, the Heart of Europe also hosts the Honeymoon Island, where guests can enjoy a stay at floating sea-horse villas.

Visitors to the Marbella Resort Hotel will be able to choose from any of the suites, chalets or cabanas that will face the sea, the snow plaza or the raining street.

The beachside destination will also offer beach parties, water sports, open-air sea-breeze restaurants. According to the developers, there will be six restaurants serving up authentic European cuisine at the destination.

The 150-room luxury hotel will also have gardens, sunken courtyards, citrus and olive groves to add a touch of Andalusia.

Dad saves child's life in pioneering liver transplant

From page 1

too, and discovered the condition early," Imran, a UAE resident for 14 years and father to three boys and a girl, told *Khaleej Times*.

Razia, born in Abu Dhabi, started exhibiting symptoms like yellow eyes, gum bleeding, and extreme tiredness when she was just three months old. The parents immediately consulted doctors.

"Getting a transplant was the best available option. So, we were planning to do the transplant in India but lately came to know it is possible here in the UAE. BMC is near our home and offers an airlift service in case of an emergency," said Imran, who lives in Abu Dhabi's Mohamed Bin Zayed City.

Razia was given medication and advised regular check-ups till she was old enough for a liver transplant.

Three months ago, a check-up revealed that Razia's spleen and liver had enlarged, so doctors said it was time to consider a transplant.

Dr Rehan Saif, director of transplant surgery for Burjeel abdominal multi-organ transplant programme, said Razia's condition was caused by a genetic mutation, which leads to an abnormality in the formation and secretion of bile components and bile acids leading to damage to the liver.

"It presents in infancy and early childhood as signs of growth failure and complications of liver failure. The only definitive and curative treatment for these children is liver transplantation," said Dr Rehan, the clinical lead for the hepato-pancreato-biliary surgery and general surgery consultant.

Imran said that as a father and a husband, becoming a donor was an easy decision to make.

"We didn't want to lose our daughter. Also, I wanted to keep my wife safe. She is a mother to other children, too. It was an automatic decision. The evaluation tests showed me as a match," he said.

The donor operation and the transplant were performed simultaneously by a team of experts in

Before the transplant, Razia's condition prevented her from attending nursery and achieving growth milestones appropriate for her age. Now, the parents and the young fighter are preparing for the new school year.

surgeries lasting 12 hours, Dr Rehan said.

"This is the first paediatric liver transplant done in the UAE. In the past, children needing such a transplant had to travel abroad, but now it is available here in the country. It's a proud moment for all of us."

The transplant team, led by Dr Rehan, included Dr Johns Mathew, abdominal transplant and hepato-pancreato-biliary surgeon; Dr Gourab Sen, general surgery consultant; Dr Ramamurthy Baskaran, anaesthesiology and transplant anaesthesia consultant; Dr Kesava Ramakrishnan, paediatric intensive care unit consultant; and Dr Shyam Mohan, paediatric radiologist.

"Both of them made an excellent recovery, and the child has been discharged two weeks ago. We expect her to have a normal childhood," Dr Rehan said.

Before the transplant, Razia's condition prevented her from attending nursery and achieving growth milestones appropriate for her age. Now, the parents and the young fighter are preparing for the new school year.

"She has battled a lot of hardships. We are proud of her. She knows that I have donated my liver to her. I have explained to her what and why she has gone through such a situation," Imran said.

Razia is recovering well and has started playing with her siblings. "She is better. She walks, plays, and is happy. I am thankful to everyone. This surgery has come as a huge relief. We are proud of being part of the UAE's history," Imran said.

Charges dropped against Irish national Towey

Staff Reporter
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Authorities in Dubai have dropped charges of attempted suicide against Irish national Tori Towey. This came as the Dubai Public Prosecution closed an assault case involving Tori and her husband, a South African national.

The case dates back to May 2024 and saw the couple file cases of assault against each other. They have now reached a compromise and withdrew the complaints. The Dubai Public Prosecution dropped the charges of attempted suicide against Tori, "considering the circumstances of the case and to enable her to return to normal life".

According to British media reports, Tori, 28, was an airline cabin crew member. *Khaleej Times* has reached out to the airline that employed the Irish national for a comment.

Media reports quoted Irish premier Simon Harris as saying that Tori will be flying back to Ireland.

Ministry ramps up inspections of midday work ban

Angel Tesorero
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UAE authorities are actively monitoring the implementation of workers' midday break that started middle of last month and will run until September 15.

The break, which is being implemented for the 20th consecutive year, prohibits work under direct sunlight and in open-air areas across the UAE between 12.30pm and 3pm.

Recently, Dr Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, visited a construction site belonging to Binghatti Developers as part of the ministry's inspections among private companies.

Any company caught violating the rule will be fined Dh5,000 for each employee found working during the midday break. The penalty can reach up to Dh50,000 if several employees are involved.

Rain or shine, she paints the town with passion

From page 1

Her murals incorporate culturally significant symbols, images, and motifs that hold deep meaning in the UAE — from the undulating golden sand dunes to simple Bedouin life.

Reflecting on her favourite project, Hind expressed enthusiasm for her collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Municipality, where she painted bus station shelters. "The team's support and the thrill of working at such heights in public spaces were truly exhilarating," she commented.

However, Hind admits that mural art presents its own set of challenges. "The difficulty often lies in painting on extremely large surfaces using electric lifts and ensuring precise measurements are adhered to for perfect execution," she explained.

When asked about the duration it takes to complete a mural project, she explained that the time frame depends on the size, the amount of work, and the details in the painting. She mentioned that it also depends on the artist's mood. For instance, her large project in Al Samha took her a little less than a month, while the mural at the Dubai Police Rescue Centre took

Reflecting on her favourite project, Hind expressed enthusiasm for her collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Municipality, where she painted bus station shelters.

two weeks. Looking forward, Hind aims to become a certified mural artist for government entities, aspiring to establish her own company specialising in murals and fine arts.

Her resilience and dedication have earned her recognition, including commendations for her unwavering commitment during challenging projects. "I faced unforgettable challenges, like painting in the scorching summer heat while wearing a mask and constantly sanitising tools due to pandemic fears," Hind recalled.

Hind shared that her field is a passion, and she loves it a lot. She stated: "Sometimes, even the heat does not seem like a challenge because, thankfully, I really enjoy what I do." Hind tries to take breaks in air-conditioned places and usually opts to work in the evening, although she often needs daylight to see the details in her paintings.

Project Cancelled Upon Developer's Request

Dear clients,
If you have any claims on the developer Emaar Dubai South DWC LLC developer number 1155 on the following project/s:

SR	Project No.	Project Name	Location	Plot No.
1	2140	Expo Golf Apartments	Airport Land	1103

Or have any dealings in any form with them please contact:
The Real Estate Regulatory Agency (from 09:00 am to 01:00 pm)
REAL ESTATE PROJECTS LIQUIDATING SECTION
LANDS DEPARTMENT BUILDING
2ND FLOOR
Tel: 268/2030129-04
Fax: 2349219-04
Email: Trust.care@rera.gov.ae

Over two weeks from the date of this Declaration with all documents (Property Reservation Form, Original Property Agreement, Passport Copy, and Original Payment Receipts) alongside with copies relating to that.



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Gaza Conflict



Displaced Palestinian children receive food in Khan Younis on the southern Gaza Strip on June 23. — AFP

'No vegetables or meat' Pangs of hunger stalk Gazans

Yussef Jaber dreams of drinking a mint tea with a lot of sugar, but instead he is confronting hunger more than nine months into the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

There is barely any food left in the north of the besieged Palestinian territory, said the 24-year-old in Jabalia. And the price of what little reaches residents there is skyrocketing.

"There is nothing for us except some flour and tinned goods that make us sick," he said.

"We have no vegetables to cook or meat. We need everything."

Independent UN rights experts on Tuesday said Israel was conducting a "targeted starvation campaign" against Palestinians in Gaza.

Israel accused the expert panel of "spreading misinformation".

While the United Nations has not officially declared famine in Gaza, the experts noted 34 Palestinians have died from malnutrition since Hamas's October 7 attack that set off the war.

Israel imposed a siege on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, limiting the entry of aid and commercial goods.

Jaber and aid groups working in Gaza say the rare food and basic supplies available in the markets now cost a small fortune.

Sugar sells for about 100 Israeli shekels (\$27) per kilo, said Jaber, making it — and his beloved tea — an out-of-reach luxury.

Northern Gaza is suffering particu-

larly badly. The UN humanitarian office OCHA says commercial trucks have not been able to make deliveries there for months.

"We lead a life of shame and humiliation," said Jaber.

The shortages include a "near total lack of protein sources", with only a few, locally sourced vegetables for sale at unaffordable prices, OCHA said on Monday.

In Deir Al Balah, the exorbitant cost of fuel, at 120 shekels per litre, has prevented trucks from delivering drinking water, according to Maysa Saleh, a Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) worker in the central Gaza city.

The price of shampoo has soared to \$26, soap to \$8.

"Most of us resort to showering with homemade dishwashing liquid," Saleh said. "Any washing is in salt water from the sea."

She said there had been a significant increase in diseases such as Hepatitis C. "Unfortunately, with the lack of health care and sterilising and cleaning materials, people's health is at stake."

Thousands of aid-laden trucks meanwhile remain stuck in Egypt or the Kerem Shalom border crossing with Israel, according to NRC.

"Due to Israeli restrictions and breakdown of law and order, NRC has not received any aid at its sites since 3 May," the group said.

Israel has repeatedly denied blocking aid to Gaza, and blames the United Nations for not effectively delivering sup-



plies. Saleh, in Deir Al Balah, said families displaced by bombing campaigns elsewhere in Gaza have arrived in "deplorable conditions" after walking long distances while dodging attacks.

Almost all of Gaza's 2.4 million population has been uprooted by the war, many more than once, according to UN agencies.

And those converging on Deir Al Balah can expect little reprieve. On Tuesday, the Barood family had

only just finished surveying the damage to their home when they were woken by the thunder of bombing and children screaming.

"We were sleeping at one o'clock and suddenly we heard the sound of explosions," Eyad Barood said. The family went into the street and found his uncle's house destroyed and his aunt and cousin killed.

"We are innocent," Randa Barood said. — AFP

Gazans walk with pots on their way to a charity kitchen to collect food, northwest of Rafah in southern Gaza Strip on June 24, 2024. — AFP

Israel presses Gaza offensive hours after deadly airstrike on tent camp

The airstrike hit the tents of displaced families outside a school, killing at least 29 people, most of them women and children

Israeli forces pressed their offensive in north and central Gaza on Wednesday, hours after an airstrike on a tent encampment that Palestinian officials said killed more than two dozen people and as negotiations to end the fighting were set to resume.

Leaflets were dropped on Gaza City, this time with a map marking "safe routes" for the evacuation of the whole city, not just certain districts. The Israeli leaflets urge civilians to head south along two routes to the central Gaza Strip.

Hamas said the renewed Israeli campaign killed more than 60 Palestinians across the enclave on Tuesday and threatened to derail efforts to secure a ceasefire in the nine-month-old war with talks to resume in Doha on Wednesday.

The airstrike hit the tents of displaced families outside a school in the town of Abassan east of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, killing at

least 29 people, most of them women and children, Palestinian medical officials said.

The Israeli military said it was reviewing reports that civilians were harmed. It said the incident occurred when it struck with "precise munition" a Hamas fighter who took part in the Oct. 7 raid on Israel.

On Wednesday, Israeli forces deepened their incursion into two Gaza City districts. Soldiers carried out house-to-house searches in some areas and tanks shelled several homes, according to residents.

Israeli forces patrolled the main road to the coast, snipers commandeered rooftops of some high-rise buildings still standing and tanks were stationed inside the headquarters of the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, residents said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said it had received dozens of desperate calls from residents in Gaza City trapped in their homes but their

teams were unable to reach them because of the intensity of the bombing.

The information coming from Gaza City shows residents are living through tragic conditions. (Israeli) occupation forces continue to hit residential districts, and displace people from their homes and refugee shelters," it said in a statement.

In the central Gaza camp of Al Nuseirat, medics said six Palestinians, including children, were killed in an airstrike on a house early on Wednesday, while another airstrike killed two people and wounded several others in Khan Younis.

More than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war, health officials said.

The war erupted after a Hamas' attack on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli figures. — REUTERS



France Elections



Marine Le Pen, French far-right leader and member of parliament and members of parliament Laure Lavalette and Sebastien Chenu of the RN party applaud as they pose for a family photo with newly elected lawmakers of the French far-right Rassemblement National (National Rally - RN) party, as they arrive at the National Assembly in Paris after the second round of the early French parliamentary elections on Wednesday. — REUTERS

Increased far-right ranks prepare for parliament

A broad coalition of Greens, Socialists, Communists and the hard-left France Unbowed won most seats in Sunday's vote, dashing the far right's dreams of an absolute majority

Dozens of freshly-elected French far-right lawmakers visited parliament Wednesday, as the left-wing alliance who beat them in the polls scrambled for a viable candidate to lead the government.

A broad coalition of Greens, Socialists, Communists and the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) won most seats in Sunday's vote, dashing the far right's dreams of an absolute majority.

But Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally (RN) and allies still made undeniable progress in the National Assembly, growing from 89 seats in 2022 to 143 today.

Le Pen, a three-time presidential candidate re-elected to lead her party in parliament, accompanied RN parliamentarians to inspect their new workplace ahead of next week's opening session.

Victory "has only been postponed," she told reporters as she entered, complaining that what she dubbed "massive withdrawal manoeuvres" had "deprived us of the absolute majority".

Many left-wingers and centrists bowed out of the race ahead of the second round to give

the anti-RN vote a better chance. The party's 28-year-old leader Jordan Bardella urged his lawmakers to be "perfectly beyond reproach" in their posts, after a campaign in which several RN candidates were exposed as ignorant about policy or for former extremist behaviour.

"Your responsibility will be... to emphasise the credibility of our project," said Bardella, himself the leader of a far-right grouping in the European Parliament.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal is to remain in power as Paris makes final preparations for the Olympics starting in just over two weeks, but his centrist group in parliament lost ground and the hunt is on for a figure to replace him.

The left-wing alliance has been discussing its potential candidates, with many adverse to the firebrand leader of the LFI, Jean-Luc Melenchon.

Any candidate could face a confidence vote in the hung parliament.

Melenchon, a former presidential candidate, has floated several names from his hard-left party, and the more moderate Socialist leader Olivier Faure has also said he would be "willing" to lead a cabinet.

President Emmanuel Macron, who called the snap vote after the RN crushed his centrist allies in last month's EU Parliament elections, has kept a low profile since Sunday.

Among his camp, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who was re-elected in the election, said he would never back an LFI or Greens member in government.

"I'll never back a bill from that kind of left and I'll immediately object to people or government lineups hailing from that kind of left," he told CNews television.

He said he would prefer "some sincere Socialists... with whom we could work".

The left-wing alliance holds the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, with 193 of 577, but is well short of the 289-seat threshold for a majority.

The centrists hold 164.

Raphael Glucksmann, founder of progressive leftist movement Place Publique, said "parliamentary democracy" would be the only way forward for the left.

"We don't have a choice, we're going to have to talk to people we've fought against, without abandoning our convictions, and convince them," he told the *Nouvel Obs* magazine.

The results of Sunday's vote came as a relief to many who were worried about the rise of the RN, a party embarrassed during the campaign by the xenophobic attitudes of some of its candidates.

Many have accused right-wing round-the-clock television channels of fuelling the racist views of some voters.

France's media watchdog on Wednesday said it was fining CNews over a journalist who did not challenge a guest who said "immigration kills" during a discussion on the RN last December.

It also fined the broadcaster over not responding to a claim that reports of climate change were "lies". — AFP

Key dates as France seeks way out of political deadlock

France's inconclusive elections have plunged it into a period of political uncertainty, with no single grouping in the national parliament having enough seats to govern.

Here are some key dates to watch out for as the country and its leaders attempt to navigate the difficult weeks ahead:

July 10

Informal discussions on coalition options pick up pace as lawmakers return to Paris ahead of the official opening of parliament next week. Few expect any early breakthroughs.

July 14

Bastille Day. An opportunity for President Emmanuel Macron to communicate his view to the country and rival political factions about what should happen next - if he chooses to do so. So far, he has remained out of the fray.

July 18

Official opening of the new parliament session when lawmakers take their seats in the National Assembly within their own party formations. Some see this as a moment when the temporary alliances formed for the purpose of the election - notably the left-wing's New Popular Front - dissolve and the individual parties can look afresh at their options.

July 26

Olympic Games begin, running until Aug. 11 and diverting public and media attention from politics and occupying major administrative and security resources. Some lawmakers suggest this period be used as a cooling-off period in the political process.

Aug. 1 - end of parliamentary session. Politics as usual grinds to a halt as much of France goes on holiday until the political "return" (return) of early September.

Sept. 2

As parliamentarians return from the summer break, pressure will quickly build for an agreement on the 2025 budget, whether some kind of workable government or ad hoc coalition is in place by then or not.

Sept. 20

Deadline for EU member states to submit their medium-term fiscal plans to the European Commission. Along with six other countries with excess deficits, France must show how it will get its borrowing back to within EU limits.

— REUTERS

US Elections



US Vice-President Kamala Harris greets supporters during a campaign event at Resorts World Las Vegas on July 09, 2024, in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

'Get back up': Biden life story shapes political fight

From playground punch-ups to terrible tragedies and multiple White House bids, he has long seen his life as a series of comebacks against impossible odds

Anyone expecting Joe Biden to step aside from the US presidential race without a fight had not fully considered the life story of a proud but often stubborn man.

From playground punch-ups to terrible tragedies and multiple White House bids, Biden has long seen his life as a series of comebacks against impossible odds.

And as a Democratic revolt over his debate debacle against Donald Trump appears to sputter for now, the 81-year-old seems determined to win the fight of his political life.

Unless a major shift occurs, it will likely fall to US voters to decide whether Biden stages another turnup for the books — or whether hubris condemns him and his party to a historic defeat by Trump.

Biden has repeatedly returned to the image of himself as an underdog since the debate, repeating his family's mantra that "when you get knocked down, you get back up."

"What we've seen the last 10 to 12

days is certainly fundamental to the Joe Biden story," his spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said from the White House podium on Tuesday.

"He is someone that is certainly counted out many, many times in his career. People tend to knock him down, and you hear him say he gets back up.

"This is the story of him standing up for himself, standing up for millions of Americans."

That outlook was formed by a hard-scrabble childhood in the American rust-belt, as part of a close-knit Irish Catholic family known for its intense pride.

His mother Jean told the young Joey and his siblings every day that "nobody was better than a Biden," Ben Cramer wrote in his book "What It Takes," about the 1988 US election campaign.

He was also known for never backing down.

"Most guys who got into a fight, they'd square off... Joey didn't do that," Cramer wrote. "He decided to fight... BANGO -- he'd punch the guy in the face."

One affliction Biden famously had to battle was a childhood stutter.

Repeatedly humiliated at school, the young Biden ended up teaching himself how to speak smoothly by sheer determination, repeating phrases again and again into the mirror.

But Biden's biggest test was yet to come.

“

What we've seen the last 10 to 12 days is certainly fundamental to the Joe Biden story. He is someone that is certainly counted out many, many times in his career. This is the story of him standing up for himself, standing up for millions of Americans.

Karine Jean-Pierre, US President's spokeswoman

In 1972, he was only 29 and had just been elected senator for Delaware when his wife Neilia and their one-year-old daughter Naomi were killed in a car crash, while their young sons Beau and Hunter were left badly injured.

Tragedy struck again in 2015 when Beau died of brain cancer aged 46.

Biden also had to deal with the agony of Hunter's severe drug addiction and legal problems.

"Sometimes I marvel at Joe's strength. His life has been marked by cruel losses," First Lady Jill Biden, whom Biden married in 1977, said in her memoir "Where the Light Enters."

With his family close around him, Biden has also ridden out a series of political humiliations.

In 1988 he was forced to abandon his first presidential bid following a plagiarism scandal.

His next bid in 2008 ended in heavy defeat in the Democratic primaries, before Barack Obama picked him as his running mate.

Yet in the current crisis over Biden's age and health, the very things that have previously brought Biden strength could also bring about his downfall.

It's common knowledge that he will only really listen to family members and a few aides he's known for decades, but as he ages that bubble has become increasingly insular.

His long-standing belief that he's been underestimated and mocked by the media means he's even less likely to listen to outside voices.

Moreover, Biden's lifelong image as someone who always bounces back means he may not be able to envisage a graceful exit this time around.

Franklin Foer, author of a book on the early Biden presidency, wrote recently in *The Atlantic* magazine that "humiliation — and its transcendence — is Biden's origin story."

"Right now it is his psychological prison, a mental habit that might doom American democracy." — AFP

Who will be Trump's number 2? Decision expected on Monday

The billionaire appears to have zeroed in on US senators, J.D. Vance of Ohio and Marco Rubio of Florida and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum

With the pomp and pageantry of his official nomination just days away, Donald Trump's search for a running mate on the Republican presidential ticket is in the home stretch, with a trio of frontrunners jockeying to be first across the finish line.

The former US president is seeking a number two who can walk the delicate line between helping mobilize Trump's right-wing base and staying in lane as a sidekick who won't hog the limelight or, worse, prove more popular than the boss.

Trump is expected to make his choice public during next week's Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, with an announcement anticipated as early as the opening day on Monday.

The billionaire appears to have zeroed in on two US senators, J.D. Vance of Ohio and Marco Rubio of Florida, as well as North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, who initially ran against Trump for the nomination before falling in line.

The calculus might yet change, as Trump told Fox News on Monday that he was weighing a "great bench" of prospects and had not made a decision.

"It's going to be a great vice president, meaning a person that can do a fantastic job as president, because you always have to think of that first," he said.

"And then, second, somebody that helps you get elected. And there's nothing wrong with that."

Ever the consummate showman, Trump has been ramping up the intrigue, sending out a "long list" of contenders early on and offering conflicting accounts of how far along he was in the selection process.

There was speculation that he might use his first public appearance in 11 days to announce Rubio as he addressed supporters at his Doral golf club, on the outskirts of Miami.

He namechecked the senator, who was in the front row, several times but was silent on his thinking for the veeptakes.

Trump could have dropped his big reveal at any point in the days before Milwaukee, except that the news would have interrupted arguably one of the worst weeks in the career of his 81-year-old rival Joe Biden.

The veteran Democrat is facing calls to drop out of the race after a widely-panned debate performance against Trump raised questions about the mental capacity of America's oldest-ever president.

"The big danger right now is because all the attention is focused on Biden, that if you announce anything, it will get lost," Republican strategist Rob Burgess, who worked on the Trump 2016 and 2020 campaigns, told AFP.

One of the biggest factors for Trump will be his running mate's fund-raising prowess, and the contenders have all been under pressure to showcase their connections with wealthy mega-donors.

Meanwhile, the campaign has ensured that they are booked regularly for cable news interviews — a kind of casting call that allows Trump to assess how they look in front of the cameras, a priority for the former reality TV star.

Trump said before the June 27 debate that he

already knew who his running mate would be, noting that his pick would likely be attending that night.

The three frontrunners were all bused to the CNN studio in Atlanta along with some less-favored hopefuls to watch from a volleyball court before being sent in to pitch for Trump on the press line.

Political analyst Donald Nieman said he expected Vance to get the nod as an articulate messenger for Trumpism who is seen as a draw for working class white men in the crucial swing states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin. But he added that a less "thin-skinned" Trump might have been persuaded to go with Nikki Haley, a one-time UN ambassador who was his last-standing rival in the nominating contest.

"She would bring Republican defectors and suburban women to Trump — something he needs," Nieman, a history professor at Binghamton University in New York state, told AFP.

"But he won't because she hasn't signaled abject loyalty and a willingness to submerge her own identity."

Haley, who says she is supporting Trump, has not been invited to the convention, according to Politico.

It remains to be seen in any case whether the successful candidate has what it takes to succeed where Mike Pence failed, and use the job as a springboard to the presidency.

"I'm not at all convinced that whoever Trump's vice president is, that he or she will have as significant a role as many of their predecessors," said constitutional expert Joel Goldstein, of Saint Louis University in Missouri.

"Although the vice president's role has grown, ultimately it depends upon the president's personality and his or her leadership style." — REUTERS



Former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures as he speaks during a rally in Doral, Florida, on July 9, 2024. — AFP

Spotlight



Men from the Gurung ethnic community arrive to hunt honey at a cliff in Lamjung district of Nepal on June 7, 2024. — AFP

Sticky future: Climate change hits honey hunters in Nepal

The high-altitude honey comes from the world's largest honey bee species, *Apis laboriosa*, which favours inaccessible cliffs

Hanging from a rope-and-bamboo ladder off a Himalayan mountain cliff, skilled Nepali climbers gather highly prized hallucinogenic honey — an ancient tradition stung by environmental degradation and rapid climate change.

Wreathed in smoke to drive away defensive clouds of giant bees, 26-year-old Som Ram Gurung dangles dangerously 100 metres off the ground, slicing off dark and dripping hunks of delicious honeycomb.

For as long as anyone can remember in villages of Lamjung district, collecting the honey was worth the risk.

The combs are valued as "mad honey", sweetness with a sting in its tail that collectors say provides an intoxicating buzz with mild psychoactive properties derived from rhododendron nectar that the bees love.

It was never easy to harvest.

The high-altitude honey comes from the world's largest honey bee species, *Apis laboriosa*, which favours inaccessible cliffs.

But the skilled craft is now beset with extra challenges, many driven by the increasing effects of a heating planet.

Honey hunters say shifting weather patterns and environmental threats are impacting their remote forested valleys, 100km northwest of Kathmandu.

Doodh Bahadur Gurung, 65, who taught his son Som Ram his skills, said hunters had seen a rapid slump in the number of hives and amounts of honey harvested.

"When we were young, there used to be beehives on almost all cliffs because of the abundance of wildflowers and water sources," said Doodh Bahadur. "But with each passing year, it's becoming harder to find hives."

He blamed the decline in bees on increasingly irregular rainfall, wildfires, agricultural pesticides and the diversion of rivers due to a surge of hydropower dams and accompanying construction of roads. "Streams are drying up due to hydro-projects and irregular rainfall," he said, noting wild bees prefer to nest near water.

"Bees that fly to farms also face the problem of pesticides, which kill them."

Honey hunters say shifting weather patterns and environmental threats are impacting their remote forested valleys, 100km northwest of Kathmandu



Honey hunters of Gurung ethnic community harvest honeycomb at a cliff in Lamjung district of Nepal on June 9, 2024. — AFP

With erratic rain, drier winters and baking heat, bushfires have become more common.

Government data shows Nepal tackled over 4,500 wildfires this year, nearly double the year before. "Wildfires are more common now," Doodh Bahadur said. "There aren't enough young people to douse them in time".

A decade ago, his village of Taap could harvest 1,000 litres a season.

Today, Doodh Bahadur said they count themselves lucky to get 250 litres.

The hunters' observations are confirmed by scientists. They say rising temperatures due to fossil-fuel-driven climate change is a key factor.

"Bees... are highly susceptible to changing temperatures," said bee specialist Susma Giri, from the Kathmandu Institute of Applied Sciences.

"They are wild creatures and can't adjust to human movements or noise, which directly affects wild bees."

ICIMOD rang the alarm in May, noting at least 75 percent of Nepal's crops depend on pollinators such as bees.

Among the key factors for their decline... are climate change and loss in

“When we were young, there used to be beehives on almost all cliffs because of the abundance of wildflowers and water sources. But with each passing year, it's becoming harder to find hives.”

Doodh Bahadur Gurung
Honey hunter

habitats," ICIMOD said. "The reduced pollination that ensues has already had alarming economic consequences."

A 2022 study, in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, calculated annual losses from reduced pollination in Nepal amounted to as much as \$250 per capita — a massive sum in a country where annual average income is \$1,400.

Shrinking supplies means the rare honey commands high prices.

A litre that sold for \$3.5 per litre two decades ago now sells for \$15.

Traders say there is increasing demand from the United States, Europe, and Japan, fuelled by its reported health benefits on social media.

Honey traders in Kathmandu estimate annual exports to be around 10,000 litres, and internationally, a 250-gramme pot of "mad honey" can command prices of \$70 online.

"The demand for 'mad honey' increases yearly, but quality production has decreased," said Kathmandu-based honey exporter Rashmi Kandel.

With honey drying up, fewer young people want to join the traditional month-long mountain hunt.

Across Nepal, young people are leaving rural life, seeking better-paid jobs abroad.

Suk Bahadur Gurung, 56, a local politician and part of the honey hunting team, is gloomy the next generation will follow the trade.

"You need skills and strength," Suk Bahadur said. "There aren't many youths who want to do it."

Som Ram Gurung held out his swollen arms and legs after descending from the cliff.

"Stings cover my body," he said, adding he is due to take up a factory job in Dubai with a monthly salary of around \$320.

His father Doodh Bahadur laments both the dwindling bees and the departing youth. "We're losing everything," he said. "The future is uncertain for everyone." — AFP

Europe 'back in space' despite Ariane 6 debut glitch

Space bosses hailed Europe's return to space after the Ariane 6 rocket successfully carried out a series of trials in a debut flight on Tuesday, but the mission ended with the launcher coasting in orbit without releasing its final batch of payloads.

Watched by a Rafale fighter jet, Europe's newest uncrewed rocket blasted off from French Guiana around 4pm local time, restoring the continent's independent access to space after delays, political setbacks and debates over funding.

Although not a commercial mission, the flight deployed three sets of micro-satellites for research purposes, prompting European

space officials to declare the maiden trip a success.

"Europe is back in space," Philippe Baptiste, head of France's CNES space agency, said via video link to the Paris headquarters of the European Space Agency (ESA), where employees and politicians cheered the lift-off.

In a keenly awaited milestone, the Vinci engine powering the rocket's upper stage was restarted in space for the first time. It is designed to restart repeatedly, allowing operator Arianespace to place payloads into several different orbits.

However, a third firing had to be abandoned after a smaller power unit shut itself down for unspeci-

fied reasons, meaning the final batch of payloads — two small capsules designed to test the conditions for surviving re-entry — remained stuck onboard.

"We had an anomaly... We are probably not going to finish this part of the mission as we were hoping to," said Tina Buchner da Costa, an Ariane 6 launch system architect.

The affected auxiliary power unit is a system crucial for the rocket's ability to put payloads in their intended orbit.

Its failure, although late in the mission, is expected to spur an engineering investigation.

ESA Director-General Josef



We had an anomaly ... We are probably not going to finish this part of the mission as we were hoping to."

Tina Buchner da Costa
Ariane 6 launch system architect

Aschbacher said the agency was nonetheless on track to stage a second flight by year-end.

Ariane 6 was developed at an estimated cost of four billion euros (\$4.33 billion) by ArianeGroup, co-owned by Airbus and Safran. Its first launch, originally due in 2020, has been repeatedly delayed.

Since the agency retired its workhorse Ariane 5 rocket more than a year ago, Europe has had no independent means of sending

its satellites into space, while war in Ukraine has cut Western ties to Russian Soyuz rockets and Italy's Vega C is grounded.

"Ariane 6 is fundamental for Europe's space ambition," Toni Tolkner-Nielsen, ESA's acting director of space transportation, told Reuters from the control room at Europe's space port.

"It is about sovereign access to space for institutional and governmental missions ... and this need has been even more emphasised in view of the geopolitical situation."

Space competition

Europe's temporary isolation in an increasingly global market was exposed last year when its agencies were forced to switch some payloads to US rival SpaceX's Falcon 9.

Ariane 6 owes its existence to a decision by ESA's 22 nations in 2014 to develop a family of

rockets in the face of fierce competition from Elon Musk's private space venture.

The United States and dozens of other countries have come to rely heavily on Falcon 9 for reaching orbit as everyday life on Earth becomes increasingly reliant on satellite links and data.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, part of President Emmanuel Macron's outgoing centrist and pro-European government that came third in Sunday's elections, highlighted the Ariane programme's role as a symbol of European unity.

"There are sometimes worries and doubts about Europe's ability to play in the same league as China and the US — with Ariane we are proving that through determination and collective will, we can operate at the same level," he told ESA staff. — REUTERS

Pakistan extends Afghan refugee registration cards for a year

Pakistan will extend expired registration cards given to almost 1.5 million Afghans for a year, the prime minister said on Wednesday, after the UN refugee commissioner asked for a pause in the country's plan to repatriate refugees.

It was not immediately clear whether the extension of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards that expired in June would exempt holders from any future deportations, and the Pakistani foreign office said the repatriation plan would continue.

"The cabinet accepted (the proposal) of a one-year extension of the PoR cards of 1.45 million Afghan legal residents that expired on June 30, 2024," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office said in a statement.

The cards, which the UN describes as a "critical" identity document, would now be valid until June 30, 2025.

Islamabad began expelling undocumented foreigners, mostly Afghans, in November last year amid a row over accusations that Afghanistan harbours Pakistani radical militants, a charge its ruling Taliban deny.

Pakistan says it is also struggling to host millions of refugees as it grapples with an economic crisis.

Last year, Pakistan announced a huge drive to repatriate foreigners without visas, mostly the roughly four million Afghans who crossed the border during 40 years of armed conflict in their home country and after the Taliban seized power in 2021. More than 500,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since the campaign was announced, according to UN figures.

The first phase of the plan targeted those who were not formally registered, though advocates and some of the PoR card holders said that in some cases they were also pressured by local authorities to leave.

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, earlier this week wrapped up a three-day visit during which he called for the extension of the registration cards and said the international community should find more solutions for refugees and host countries such as Pakistan, a UNHCR statement said. — REUTERS

Man caught with 104 live snakes in his trousers

A man has been caught trying to smuggle over 100 live snakes into mainland China by cramming them into his trousers, according to the country's customs authority.

The unnamed traveller was stopped by customs officers as he sought to slip out of semi-autonomous Hong Kong and into the border city of Shenzhen, China Customs said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Upon inspection, customs officers discovered that the pockets of the trousers the passenger was wearing were packed with six canvas drawstring bags and sealed with tape," the statement said. "Once opened, each bag was found to contain living snakes in all kinds of shapes, sizes and colours," it added.

The statement said officers seized 104 of the scaly reptiles, including milk snakes and corn snakes, many of which were non-native species.

China is one of the world's biggest animal trafficking hubs but authorities have cracked down on the illicit trade in recent years. The country's biosecurity and disease control laws forbid people from bringing in non-native species without permission. — AFP

VIENNA, AUSTRIA: IT'S SELFIE TIME



Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer takes a selfie with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Heldenplatz on their way to an economic forum in Vienna, Austria, on Wednesday. — AFP

What is a 'multipolar' world? Experts aren't so sure

The leaders of Russia, India and China often wax poetic about establishing a "multipolar" world — though it is far from clear what such a system would entail.

The three countries along with Iran and North Korea regularly lead calls for a new world order that sees a reduced role for the United States and its Western allies.

But beyond their shared desire to see a reduction in Western domination in global affairs, proponents offer few strands that actually bind their vision of the future, according to experts. Regardless, the term — and the sentiment — is likely to be here to stay.

"We must jointly advocate for an equal and orderly multipolar world," China's President Xi Jinping said during a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) this month.

"All participants... are committed to the formation of a fair multipolar world order," Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the same summit.

And in late 2023, India's Narendra Modi declared: "The new world order is multipolar."

In speeches, Putin often frames

the attack on Ukraine as less a war of conquest and more a fight to beat back American hegemony in Europe.

The idea is likely to strike a chord with Beijing, which has been steadily expanding its footprint across the Asia-Pacific region where the US has long been dominant.

"There is the common vision of pushing for the end of the Western age," said French political analyst Jean-Marc Balencie. But how exactly that will be achieved remains largely undefined, and "this allows for several scenarios, because leaders often have contradictory interests", Balencie said.

"Many of the Brics and SCO countries say they wish to build a multipolar world and are taking significant actions to that end," Stephen Wertheim from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told AFP, referring to groupings of countries from the so-called Global South.

"I doubt that these countries know exactly what kind of order, especially what kind of institutional forms, they seek to realise in 20 years' time," Wertheim said.

Official doctrines published by the Kremlin, New Delhi and China



Many of the Brics and SCO countries say they wish to build a multipolar world and are taking significant actions to that end. I doubt that these countries know exactly what kind of order, especially what kind of institutional forms, they seek to realise in 20 years' time."

Stephen Wertheim
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

are often full of striking promises about shaking up geopolitics.

"We must build partnerships in which countries treat each other on an equal footing" reads one statement from China in 2023, framing its proposals "for a shared future".

Russia, meanwhile, says it wants to promote "the world majority" against the so-called "golden billion" of the West — a conspiracy theory, popular in Russia, that a secret global elite hoards the world's resources.

Russian political scientist Sergei Karaganov says developing more institutions like Brics and SCO for countries representing the majority of the global population is vital.

Increased cooperation across tech platforms and deepening ties in the education and scientific fields were also necessary, he adds.

But such simplistic formulas often ignore geopolitical fault lines across the globe.

In Southeast Asia, China's growing influence has worried its smaller neighbours, while the West has increasingly turned to India to act as a hedge against Beijing's growing boldness.

In the former Soviet states, Russia's influence is also a source of anxiety for many.

And while Russia has chosen a total break with Washington and Europe after attacking Ukraine, no other power has been as keen to follow its path.

The "Global South encompasses so many countries and blocs with their own interests", said Yun Sun, a co-director of the China and East Asia programme at the Stimson Center in Washington.

What a multipolar world looks

like in practice is fraught with unknowns.

On the economic front, the Kremlin and China remain keen to see a new currency replace the dollar as the primary vehicle for trade.

But will New Delhi be eager to exchange greenbacks for the yuan? And is there any country ready to build substantial reserves with the unstable Russian ruble?

For many countries, multipolarity offers "alternatives to going head-to-head with the West", Balencie said. "Small countries want to maintain their sovereignty while obtaining security and economic assistance from larger powers," Wertheim added.

Faced with joining competing Cold War-style alliances, they "may be able to play the blocs off each other, but they will also be vulnerable to falling under the control of their patron", he said.

Yun noted that "the word multipolarity suggests equality, but it is misleading".

China, India and Russia "might be unhappy with certain aspects of the US dominance, but it doesn't mean they share the exact same vision as for what the alternative should look like". — AFP

Turkish volunteer fights to save fire-scarred sheep

Lying on her back, the sheep struggled as the man approached to bandage her udders, which had been burned in a fire last month that killed hundreds of sheep in southeast Turkey.

Since the fire, Hasan Kizil has been driving on hilly roads in his van, treating traumatised animals and convincing farmers not to sell injured sheep to the slaughterhouse.

The blaze ripped through the southeastern cities of Diyarbakir and Mardin on June 22, claiming 15 lives. Experts pointed to faulty wiring as a possible cause.

More than 1,000 sheep and goats died in the fire, according to the agriculture ministry, including

those in the Mazidagi area, 36km from Mardin.

"Most of them had their eyes completely closed, too swollen to see in front of them," the 29-year-old, who largely taught himself how to care for the animals, said while treating burns around blackened hooves and udders.

"Had it continued for a few more days, the spoiled milk would have caused septicaemia," he said, referring to blood poisoning by bacteria. "We almost lost them."

Every day, Kizil voluntarily visits farms to monitor the animals and convince farmers to keep their damaged herds. Caring for injured and unproductive animals is a

heavy burden for the young breeder, who owes 27,000 Turkish lira (\$825) to the bank while also paying for medicine and hay.

Former kebab seller Mehmet Celebioglu, in his 30s, went into debt to buy 160 sheep and a few goats. Now only about 40 remain — female sheep unable to produce milk and young goats orphaned by the fire.

"They were lying in the fields when the fire broke out. 120 sheep burned on the spot. Their eyes melted... these are all that are left," he said.

"My brothers risked their lives to save them," added his 18-year-old sister Gulistan, recalling how the fire cut off the electricity and water sup-

plies as hot wind raged over the hills.

But selling the remaining stock is not an option for Celebioglu, originally from Adana, a large city in the south. "Selling them? They'd pay me 2,000 to 3,000 lira," he said.

"I've spent two years teaching myself this job and most of all, I love my animals."

The farmers' attachment to their sheep encouraged Kizil to support them and reach out to disaster victims, as he did after treating injured animals following the massive earthquake that struck southeastern Turkey in February 2023, killing 55,000 people.

Now a local star on Instagram, he is known for making braces and

prostheses for disabled animals. More than 240,000 followers track his work rehabilitating foxes, cats and injured birds. Recalling the night of the fire, he said: "It was a battlefield around here."

"The butchers were trying to grab the wounded animals and slaughter them, while we were trying to keep them alive."

Images of the animals moved vets from several cities to rush to the scene voluntarily.

The municipality in the predominantly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir took in injured animals at its shelter, while others were sent to clinics in Izmir (west Turkey), Adana, and Istanbul. — AFP

Public to get rare glimpse of Buckingham Palace balcony room

The room behind Buckingham Palace's famous balcony opens to the public for the first time next week, giving a rare glimpse into one of the royal residence's inner sanctums.

For decades the royal family has been seen emerging from the room after coronations, weddings and other landmark occasions.

From the appearance of World War II leader Winston Churchill alongside the royal family in 1945 to the wedding of King Charles and Princess Diana in 1981, the balcony and the room behind it has repeatedly played witness to history.

But despite endless images of the balcony, the room itself has al-

ways been kept under wraps. Charles most recently appeared on it following his birthday parade last month along with his daughter-in-law Catherine, Princess of Wales.

The 42-year-old princess's presence drew huge interest as it was her first appearance at an official royal event since she announced she was undergoing cancer treatment earlier this year.

Visitors will be able to see the room as part of a tour of the palace's east wing — the first time it has been opened to the public since it was created around 175 years ago.

Almost 6,000 tickets for the new

tour were snapped up within hours of going on sale in April.

The wing was added between 1847-49 to accommodate the growing family of Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert.

"It was Prince Albert's idea to have a balcony at Buckingham Palace, because he saw it as a way of enabling the royal family to connect with the people, and of course that's exactly how, in a sense, it continues to be used on important occasions," said Caroline de Guitaut, surveyor of the king's works of art.

Guitaut, responsible for 700,000 works of art at 13 royal residences including Buckingham

“It was Prince Albert's idea to have a balcony at Buckingham Palace, because he saw it as a way of enabling the royal family to connect with the people, and of course that's exactly how, in a sense, it continues to be used on important occasions.”

Caroline de Guitaut
Surveyor of the king's works of art

Palace, said some of the earliest occasions on which the royal family used the balcony included waving off troops headed to the 1853-1856 Crimean War -- and welcoming them back.

Much of the wing reflects early 19th century king George IV's love of Chinese-themed art.

Tours of the east wing will also include the palace's state rooms, which have been open to the public during the summer since 1993.

The east wing part of the tour will take visitors along much of the 73-metre long principal corridor, and include the yellow drawing room and centre room behind the balcony.

The yellow drawing room features a Chinese-style fireplace from George IV's seaside pleasure palace in Brighton on the English south coast and even some of the pavilion's wallpaper that was discovered in storage by Queen Elizabeth II's grandmother and hung at her request.

The Brighton royal pavilion was sold to finance the Buckingham

Palace extension with its contents moved to the east wing's principal rooms.

Victoria and Albert furnished the corridor with chairs, side tables, large pagodas and Chinese porcelain, including an incense burner in the shape of a Buddha.

Highlights in the room behind the balcony include a newly restored glass chandelier, shaped to resemble a lotus flower, and two Chinese 18th-century imperial silk wall hangings, presented to Victoria by the Chinese emperor Guangxu to mark her Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

Although visitors will have views down the Mall, the avenue leading to the palace, they will not be able to step out onto the balcony.

They will, however, be able to view Jonathan Yeo's new portrait of the king in which he is painted almost entirely in red. — AFP

UK police hunt crossbow attack suspect after 3 women killed

UK police were searching on Wednesday for a suspect who may have a crossbow after the wife and two daughters of a BBC radio racing commentator were killed in a suspected "targeted" attack.

Kyle Clifford, 26, from north London, is wanted in connection with the deaths of the three women in the town of Bushey, north of London, on Tuesday night.

The BBC confirmed on its news website that the victims were Carol Hunt, the 61-year-old wife of BBC Five Live racing commentator John Hunt, and their two daughters, aged 25 and 28.

Local police said officers were called to a house in the town where the three women were pronounced dead at the scene.

Chief Superintendent Jon Simpson said armed officers and specialist search teams were involved in the manhunt, urging Clifford to contact police and warning the public not to approach him.

Simpson called it "a horrific incident involving what is currently believed to be a crossbow, but other weapons may also have been used".

Interior minister Yvette Cooper called the deaths "truly shocking" and said she was being kept updated about the inquiry.

One neighbour told reporters the victims were a friendly family. "We would see them every day passing by and they would say good morning," she said. "It's really sad what's happened, very shocking."

There is no licence required to own a crossbow in the UK, but it is illegal to carry one in public without a reasonable excuse. — AFP

Most complete UK dinosaur in a century found on Isle of Wight

The fossil remains of a plant-eating dinosaur estimated to have roamed the earth some 125 million years ago have been discovered on England's Isle of Wight, with scientists believing it to be the most complete new specimen found in Britain in a century.

Weighing roughly the same as a large male American bison at about 900 kg, the herbivorous species was likely a herding animal, Jeremy Lockwood, a PhD student at the University of Portsmouth who helped with the excavation, said in a statement.

The dinosaur, made up of 149 bones, was found in the cliffs of Compton Bay on the Isle of Wight, off the southern coast of England, in 2013 by late fossil collector Nick Chase.

It was named "Comptonatus chasei" as a tribute to Chase.

"Nick had a phenomenal nose for finding dinosaur bones ... This really is a remarkable find," Lockwood said.

"It helps us understand more about the different types of dinosaurs that lived in England in the Early Cretaceous," said Lockwood, also the lead author of a new paper describing the species published in the Journal of Systematic Palaeontology.

The remains of a meat-eating dinosaur belonging to an ancient predator bigger than anything known from the whole of Europe was discovered on the island in 2022. It was also from the Cretaceous Period. — REUTERS

EIFFEL TOWER PARIS: SYMBOLIC PROTEST



An acolyte of street artist James Colomina sells bottled water from the Seine River ironically described as "finely polluted" in front of the Eiffel Tower Paris, on Wednesday. Colomina's installation is to draw attention to the investment by Paris City Council to clean up the Seine for the 2024 Olympic Games. The aim of this symbolic action is to denounce the exorbitant expenditure and to question the sustainability of this initiative. — AFP

Nato begins sending F-16 jets to Ukraine as Biden leads summit

Nato allies announced on Wednesday they had started the long-promised transfer of F-16 jets to Ukraine as leaders meet for a summit in Washington clouded by political uncertainties in the United States.

With the pomp of the three-day gathering in the US capital, President Joe Biden is aiming to rally the West and also reassure US voters amid intense pre-election scrutiny on whether at 81 — six years older than the alliance — he remains fit for the job.

Kicking off events for the 32-nation alliance with a celebration on Tuesday evening, Biden committed a new air defense system for Kyiv and urged unity against Russian President Vladimir Putin, who launched the Ukraine assault in 2022.

"Make no mistake. Ukraine can — and will — stop Putin," Biden said in a forceful speech.

The White House followed up Wednesday by saying that Denmark and the Netherlands had begun sending F-16 jets to Ukraine.

Biden last year approved the key request by Ukraine, which wants advanced Western aircraft as it struggles to gain parity in the skies with Russia.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the F-16 transfer "concentrates Vladimir Putin's mind on the fact that he will not outlast Ukraine, he will not outlast us and, if he persists, the damage that will continue to be done to Russia and its interests will only deepen."

"The quickest way to get to peace is through a strong Ukraine," Blinken said.

But Donald Trump, who is edging out Biden in recent polls, has mused about bringing a quick peace settlement by forcing Ukraine to surrender territory to Russia.

The Republican mogul has repeatedly questioned the utility of Nato — formed in 1949 as collective defense against Moscow — which he sees as an unfair burden on the United States.



World leaders, US Democrat and Republican senators and Nato officials pose for a photo opportunity ahead of a meeting at the US Capitol on Wednesday in Washington, DC. — AFP

Starmer signals Ukraine can use UK missiles to strike Russia

Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer indicated on Wednesday that Ukraine can use long-range missiles supplied by the UK to strike military targets in Russia during their war.

Starmer told reporters on his flight to Washington for Nato's 75th anniversary summit that decisions on the use of British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles were for the Ukrainian armed forces.

UK military aid is "for defensive purposes but it is for Ukraine to decide how to deploy

it for those defensive purposes", said Starmer, who became UK leader last Friday following a landslide election win for his Labour party.

The comments confirm that Labour is pursuing the same stance on the air-launched missiles as the previous Conservative governments led by Rishi Sunak, Liz Truss and earlier Boris Johnson.

Britain has been one of Kyiv's staunchest allies since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale assault on

neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022. The UK has provided money, weapons and troop training to Ukraine's fight.

Britain was the first country to provide longer-range weapons to the Ukrainian military, announcing last May that it would send Storm Shadow missiles.

Starmer was due to reaffirm Britain's support for Ukraine and its "unshakeable commitment" to the western military alliance Nato during the summit, where he is due to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. — AFP

On the eve of the summit, Russia fired a barrage of missiles on Ukraine, killing dozens, including in Kyiv where a children's hospital was reduced to debris.

Biden invited to the summit Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who voiced gratitude for the F-16s which he said would better protect his country from

such "brutal Russian attacks".

The new aircraft will "bring just and lasting peace closer, demonstrating that terror must fail everywhere and at any time," Zelensky wrote on social media.

The summit will look for ways to "Trump-proof" the alliance including by having Nato itself take over coordination of arms

delivery from the United States.

Outgoing Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg has also sought a pledge to keep supplying arms at the same rate — some 40 billion euros (\$43 billion) annually — that Nato members have been since Russia attacked. "I expect that regardless of the outcome of the US elections, the US will remain a strong

and staunch Nato ally," Stoltenberg said as leaders gathered for the summit.

Biden has also invited four key Pacific partners — Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — as he seeks to increase Nato's role in managing a rising China.

Ukraine wants firm assurances that it will one day join Nato, which considers an attack on any member an attack on all.

A Nato diplomat said negotiations had settled on wording of a statement that will voice support for Ukraine's "irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including Nato membership".

Kyiv's membership enjoys wide backing from Baltic and Eastern European nations still haunted by decades under the Soviet yoke.

But Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have led opposition, concerned that the alliance would effectively be entering war with nuclear-armed Russia as it occupies swathes of Ukraine.

Zelensky, who has achieved hero status in much of the West for his media-savvy defiance of Russia, voiced open annoyance at the last Nato summit in Lithuania at the failure to provide a clearer path to membership.

Other leaders attending the summit include Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, one of Putin's closest partners in the West, who ahead of Washington went to Ukraine, Russia and China on a self-described peace mission criticized by Brussels and Washington.

Biden, Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will later welcome their counterparts for gala dinners around the Washington area, which is in the throes of a searing heat wave.

One new Nato leader is British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is visiting days after taking office in a landslide victory by his Labour Party. He will meet both Biden and Zelensky and is expected to confirm Britain's strong support for Ukraine. — AFP

STOCK MARKET

(Rates are against Dh1)	Buy	Sell
Indian rupee	23.28	22.57
Pakistani rupee	77.22	75.13
Sri Lankan rupee	84.60	82.37
Philippine peso	16.14	15.73
Bangladeshi taka	32.71	31.35

↗	Dubai	DFM
	4,080.22	+1.93
↗	Abu Dhabi	ADX
	9,138.45	+2.34

OIL PRICES (\$)

BRENT	DME OMAN	WTI
↗	↘	↗
85.45	84.53	82.55
+0.86	-1.01	+1.19

GOLD PRICES

London	\$/oz
2,378.20	+17.69
Mumbai	₹/10gm
72,804	+444.00
Dubai	Dh/gm
289.00	+2.00

1 oz
UAE gold bullion coin
BUY FOR Dh9,521.35* **SELL FOR** 9,390*

* Indicative retail price provided by DMCC at 7pm as of Tuesday



Today, we have launched our plan to develop the largest logistics hub in the world for the trade of foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables. This expansion will support our economic agenda and create larger commercial and investment opportunities."

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Vice-President, and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai

BUSINESS

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Dubai to be world's largest logistics hub to boost trade in foodstuffs, fruits, vegetables

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President, and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, on Wednesday announced the development of a logistics hub for foodstuffs, fruit and vegetable trade, the largest such facility in the world, serving the world's largest market for foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables.

This initiative aligns with the emirate's strategies to enhance investment and economic opportunities, contributing to the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, which aims to double the size of Dubai's economy and transform it into one of the top three economic cities globally by 2033. The project also aims to improve quality of life for Dubai's residents and enhance the city's overall attractiveness and livability.

Sheikh Mohammed said: "Today, we have launched our plan to develop the largest logistics hub in the world for the trade of foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables. This expansion and doubling of the current market area will support our economic agenda and create larger commercial and investment opportunities. We have entrusted DP World with the management, operation, and development of the market, linking it with markets globally."

He added: "Dubai's strategic location and advanced facilities make it a commercial and investment hub that attracts major companies. Our efforts will double in future to enhance the emirate's role in creating investment opportunities for global companies



The project will create new economic opportunities and a better investment environment in this crucial food sector, supporting Dubai's D33 economic vision, says Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, First Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the UAE.

and youth, integrating them into developmental projects. Dubai aims to be a leading destination for markets, export, and re-export operations across various sectors, maximising economic opportunities for investors in this field."

Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, First Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Fi-

nance of the UAE, witnessed the signing of the partnership agreement between Dubai Municipality and DP World.

This agreement marks the creation and management of the Foodstuffs, Fruits and Vegetables Market, set to be the largest of its kind globally.

Sheikh Maktoum emphasised that Dubai is advancing under

the vision of Sheikh Mohammed, aiming to showcase new successes in achieving the ambitious goals of the economic agenda to be among the top three economic cities globally by 2033. The flexibility, efficiency, and sustainability of Dubai's economic model enhance its global attractiveness for investment opportunities.

Sheikh Maktoum stated: "The

new project will create new economic opportunities and a better investment environment in this crucial food sector, supporting Dubai's D33 economic vision."

Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of DP World, noted that Dubai is a global model for generating investment opportunities and connect-

ing regional and global markets across various sectors of trade.

He highlighted that establishing the world's largest foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables market will reinforce strong foundations of trade in this sphere across regional and global markets, particularly through novel logistical and financial solutions bound to be offered by the market. — WAM

Oil steadies as Opec keeps forecasts unchanged

Oil prices steadied on Wednesday as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries kept its growth forecast for oil demand unchanged for this year and next, while U.S. crude and gasoline inventories likely fell last week.

Brent futures were up by 1 cent, or 0.01%, at \$84.67 a barrel at 1312 GMT, after falling 1.3% in the previous session. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 11 cents, or 0.11%, to \$81.52 a barrel, after falling 1.1% in the previous session.

Opec maintained its 2024 and 2025 global oil demand growth forecasts at 2.25 million barrels per day (bpd) and 1.85 million bpd, respectively, it said in a monthly report on Wednesday.

"Expected strong mobility and air travel in the Northern Hemisphere during the summer driving/holiday season is anticipated to bolster demand for transportation fuels and drive growth in the United States," Opec said in the report. US crude oil fell by 1.923 million barrels and gasoline inventories by 2.954 million barrels, according to market sources. — REUTERS

Nasdaq Dubai welcomes listings of three new Sukuk worth \$2.35B by Indonesia

Nasdaq Dubai welcomed three Sukuk issued by the Republic of Indonesia (Perusahaan Penerbit SBSN Indonesia III) totalling \$2.35 billion, under its \$35 billion Trust Certificate Issuance Programme.

These new issuances reinforce Dubai's stature as the world's leading centre for Sukuk listings, with a total value of \$96.39 billion, while further strengthening close ties between Dubai and Indonesia.

The three Sukuk issuances include \$750 million Trust Certificates due in 2029, \$1 billion Trust Certificates due in 2034 and \$600 million Trust Certificates due in 2054, which is a Green Sukuk. The successful listing of these Sukuk solidifies the Republic of Indonesia's position as one of the leading Sukuk issuers on Nasdaq Dubai, with a total of 20 listings amounting to \$24.1 billion.

"You have obviously seen in the total value of debt listed on Nasdaq Dubai adds up to \$134.1 billion, with Sukuk amounting to \$93.89 billion. Nasdaq Dubai continues to also lead on the ESG related listings with green issuances totalling \$19.7 billion of the \$29.75 billion ESG related issuances.



Husin Bagis, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the UAE, rang the market opening bell alongside Eko NM Saputro, Finance Attache at the Indonesian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of Indonesia and Hamed Ali, CEO of Nasdaq Dubai and DFM

To celebrate this occasion, Husin Bagis, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the UAE, rang the market opening bell alongside Eko NM Saputro, Finance Attache at the Indonesian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of Indonesia and Hamed Ali, CEO of Nasdaq Dubai and DFM.

Husin Bagis said: "We are hon-

oured to witness the listing of the new three series of Indonesia Global Sukuk. This transaction attracts interest from diverse investor types and geography, showcasing robust investment appetite and market confidence for Indonesia given the Republic's strong economic fundamentals."

Husin Bagis further commented: The 30-year tranche

was a green series and showed evidence of the Republic's dedication and long-term commitment to green and sustainable financing to combat the impact of climate change."

Hamed Ali said: "We are pleased to welcome the Republic of Indonesia's latest sukuk listings on Nasdaq Dubai. These listings not only highlight the importance

of Dubai as a hub for Islamic finance but also strengthens the economic ties between the UAE and Indonesia. Moreover, the demand for these issuances demonstrates the confidence that global investors have in our market, reflecting Nasdaq Dubai's commitment to providing a robust platform for both sukuk issuers and investors." — WAM

Britain likely to lose nearly one in six millionaires by 2028

Britain is likely to lose nearly one in six of its US dollar millionaires by 2028, but their number is set to grow in other countries including the United States and surge in Taiwan, according to a report published on Wednesday.

The UBS Global Wealth Report for 2024 forecast the number of dollar millionaires in Britain would fall by 17% to 2,542,464 in 2028 from 3,061,553 last year. It also forecast a 4% fall in the Netherlands, to 1,179,328 from 1,231,625.

Paul Donovan, Chief Econo-

mist of UBS Global Wealth Management, said the shift away from Britain partly reflected the fact that, with the third highest number of millionaires, its figure was currently "disproportionately high."

"You have obviously seen in the UK over the last few years, as you have seen in other countries, implications arising from sanctions against Russia," he told a press conference.

Donovan said Britain's decision to scrap its "non-dom" status - which lets wealthy, often foreign

residents avoid tax on overseas income - had also had a "small effect." "The non-indigenous millionaire population, the global population, which is constantly shifting, will be looking for low tax locations all of the time," he said, adding this was "not a function of UK policies per se" but reflected the "pull factors" of other countries, pointing to Dubai and Singapore.

British real estate group Winkworth said separately on Wednesday that demand for high-end properties had been dented by tax

policies targeting wealthy individuals and a proposal by the new Labour government to tax private schools.

The UBS report forecast the total of dollar millionaires in the United States would rise by 16% by 2028, in Germany by 14%, in France also by 16%, in Japan by 28%, in Spain by 12% and in Italy by 9%.

Global wealth rises

UBS said that for its report "wealth" is defined as the value of financial assets plus real assets owned by households, minus their

debts. The report is based on 56 markets accounting for around 92.2% of global wealth, the Swiss bank said.

Overall, in dollar terms, global wealth grew by 4.2% in 2023 after a decline of 3% in 2022, the study said.

The number of adults worth over \$1 million will have risen in 52 of the 56 markets by 2028, the report forecast. The strongest growth in millionaires - of 47% - was expected to be in Taiwan, driven by the country's microchip industry.

UBS said that over the 15 years it has published its report the Asia-Pacific region has posted the biggest growth in wealth, up almost 177%, followed by the Americas at nearly 146%, while Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) was up just 44%.

Asia-Pacific had, however, also seen the sharpest increase in debt, the report said. Total debt in the region was up by over 192% since 2008, more than 20 times the growth in EMEA and almost four times the rise for the Americas. — REUTERS

Shell, Total and BP take stakes in UAE gas project

Energy majors TotalEnergies, Shell and BP will each take a 10 per cent stake in a liquefied natural gas project in the UAE, Adnoc said Wednesday. Japanese trading company Mitsui & Co. will also acquire 10 percent of the Ruwais LNG plant, scheduled to come online in 2028, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) said.

Adnoc will retain a 60 per cent majority stake, the firm said following a signing ceremony.

The Ruwais plant, currently under development in Abu Dhabi, is expected to produce about 9.6 million metric tonnes per annum (mtpa), Adnoc said, more than doubling the company's LNG production capacity in the UAE.

Ruwais, which will run on nuclear power, will be "one of the world's lowest carbon-intensive

LNG facilities", said Adnoc chief executive Sultan Al Jaber.

Adnoc also said it has signed "several" long-term LNG sales agreements with international partners, including for one mtpa with Shell and 0.6 mtpa with Mitsui & Co., taking Ruwais's committed production capacity to 70 per cent.

President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed a number of global partners and investors who signed the agreement on Wednesday to join Adnoc's lower-carbon intensity liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in Ruwais.

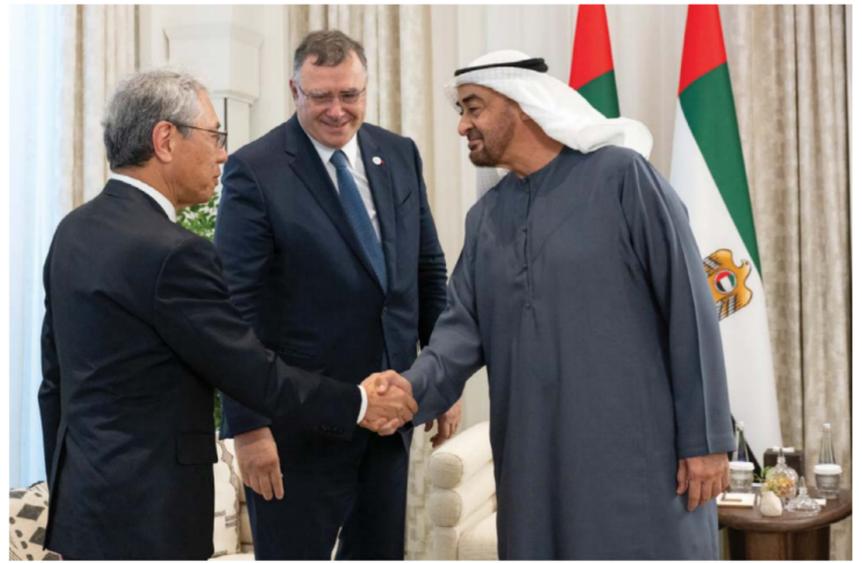
The meeting was attended by Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council.

During the meeting, which took place at Qasr Al Shati in Abu Dha-

bi, Sheikh Mohamed welcomed the officials from the companies who signed the equity agreement. They were accompanied by Sultan Al Jaber.

Sheikh Mohamed endorsed the agreement, emphasising its significance within the framework of the UAE's ongoing initiatives to invest in clean energy projects. He highlighted the importance of identifying solutions to the common challenges faced by the energy sector and enhancing cooperation with partners in the sector worldwide, serving sustainable development for all.

Sheikh Mohamed discussed with company officials the potential for cooperation between all sides, particularly in employing innovative solutions to drive sustainable economic development. — AFP, WAM



President Sheikh Mohamed shakes hands with Kenichi Hori, president and CEO of Mitsui & Co, before a meeting heads of global energy companies, partnering in Adnoc's Ruwais LNG project at Al Shati Palace. Patrick Pouyanne, chairman and CEO of TotalEnergies, is also seen. — WAM

Indian state slashes levies on hybrid cars

A move by India's Uttar Pradesh state to waive some levies on hybrid cars will make them 10% cheaper, delivering Japan's Toyota Motor a big win in lobbying efforts and raising industry and analyst expectations that other states could follow suit.

Just as it does with electric cars, the government of India's most populous state will also waive the registration tax on some hybrid car sales, it said in a July 5 notification.

Hybrid cars offer fuel savings as they operate on both electric motors and combustion engines.

Shares of Maruti Suzuki, India's top carmaker which produces and sells hybrid cars in partnership with Toyota, have surged 5.5% since local media reported on the state's notification for the first time this week.

"This is a sizeable incentive provided by a state for hybrid cars. Uttar Pradesh's move could encourage other states to follow," Morgan Stanley said in a note, adding that with more hybrid models to come, their share of total sales will rise.

Uttar Pradesh accounts for 10% of India's total car sales.

Toyota, which holds an 85% share of India's 'strong' hybrid car market with its fast-selling Hycross and Hyryder SUVs, is "likely to be a key beneficiary of this move, followed by Maruti Suzuki," Nomura said in a note.

Toyota and Maruti Suzuki did not respond to Reuters queries.

The state's levy exemptions apply to so-called strong hybrids, which can run on electric motors for a while, and to plug-in hybrids.

Strong hybrid models made up less than 3%, or about 28,000 units, of India's total car sales of 1 million in January-March this year, while EVs made up nearly 4%, according to Nomura.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has focused its green mobility push on electric vehicles, offering companies millions of dollars in incentives to build such cars, while giving no concessions for hybrids. India's federal sales tax on EVs is just 5%, while the levy on hybrids is as high as 43%, close to the 48% imposed on petrol cars. Registration taxes levied by a state are separate, increasing the overall car cost.

Honda Motor, which sells a strong hybrid variant of its popular City sedan in India, said the decision would "undoubtedly attract a larger set of customers to join the nation's green mobility mission". Toyota, the world's biggest carmaker, has long lobbied Modi's government to cut taxes on hybrids, which it argues pollute less than petrol cars but receive scant policy support. — REUTERS

Shares climb and bonds rally as Sept Fed rate cut chances grow

Europe's STOXX up 0.6%; Asia shares near two-year high; dollar flat, yen under pressure



An electronic board displays that the closing numbers of the Nikkei Stock Average hit a new all-time high on the Tokyo Stock Exchange on Wednesday. Asian markets diverged on July 10 after fresh records on Wall Street and remarks by the Fed chief that hinted the US central bank would cut interest rates later this year, without offering a clear timeframe. — AFP

Shares climbed and bond yields dipped on Wednesday following cautious but encouraging remarks on inflation by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell the day before, which raised expectations for imminent US rate cuts.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.6 per cent by 1040 GMT, led by gains in travel and leisure shares. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan eased 0.08 per cent, but remained close to the more than two-year high hit at the start of the week.

Euro zone bond yields dipped in France and Italy in particular, as investors unwound the political risk premium they had attached to the countries before French parliamentary elections which had suggested gains for the far right.

Germany's 10-year bond yield, the benchmark for the euro zone bloc, fell 6 basis points (bps) to 2.52 per cent, France's 10-year yield dropped 9 bps to 3.163 per cent and Italy's 10-year yield was lower by 10 bps at 3.858 per cent.

Yields, which move inversely to prices, had risen on European bonds at the end of June as investors feared a win for the French far right would drive up spending. Italian yields also rose as investors avoided countries with high debt levels.

In the end in France a surprise left-wing surge left the country facing a hung parliament.

Globally, speculation around the timing of interest-rate cuts has been dominating markets this year, as investors try to ascertain the moment at which policymakers feel they are bringing inflation under control.

The New Zealand dollar slid on Wednesday after its central bank held its cash rate steady at 5.5 per cent on Wednesday as expected, but signalled confidence inflation was expected to return to its target range of 1 per cent to 3 per cent in the second half.

The kiwi fell around 0.8 per cent after the decision and was last at \$0.6071, as traders sharply ramped up bets of RBNZ rate cuts later this year. Swaps now imply

more than 30 basis points worth of easing in October, as compared to 16 bps before the outcome.

The Aussie, meanwhile, rallied 0.9 per cent to an over one-year high against the New Zealand dollar, with the former underpinned by wagers that the next move in Australian rates might be up given inflation is proving stubborn.

Wake me up when Sept ends

Stocks, having slumbered for much of the year, have been energised on growing expectations of a Fed easing cycle likely to commence in September, with Powell saying on Tuesday that the United States was "no longer an overheated economy".

However, he provided little clues on how soon those rate cuts could come.

"If the labour market shows signs of cooling, so long as inflation data doesn't move higher and stays where it is, that might be enough to still deliver some music from the Fed," said Rob Carnell, ING's regional head of research for Asia

Pacific. The chances of a September cut have risen to more than 70 per cent compared to a near-even chance a month ago, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

The closely-watched monthly US inflation report is due on Thursday, where core consumer prices are expected to hold steady in June.

S&P 500 futures gained 0.15 per cent, while Nasdaq futures firmed 0.29 per cent, as heavily weighted stocks such as AI chipmaker Nvidia and carmaker Tesla rose in pre-market trading.

Dollar dithers

The dollar traded close to three-week lows, meanwhile, as the cautious nature of Powell's remarks kept risk sentiment grounded.

The dollar index, which measures the US currency against six others including the euro and yen, was little changed at 105.09, after rising about 0.1 per cent on Tuesday.

Against the yen, the dollar rose 0.1 per cent to 161.515, as the Japanese currency remained un-

der pressure from the stark interest rate differentials between the US and Japan.

But data on Wednesday showed Japan's wholesale inflation accelerated in June as the yen's declines pushed up the cost of raw material imports, keeping alive market expectations for a near-term interest-rate hike by the central bank.

The Bank of Japan said on Tuesday some market players called on the central bank to slow its bond buying to roughly half the current pace under a scheduled tapering plan due this month.

In commodities, oil prices were jittery as expectations that US crude and gasoline inventories fell last week, bullish for prices, contended against the resumption of output in the US Gulf in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl.

Brent futures fell 0.17 per cent to \$84.53 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude eased 0.09 per cent to \$81.31 per barrel.

Gold gained 0.36 per cent to \$2,372.12 an ounce. — REUTERS

Saudi Aramco kicks off sale of three-part bonds, reports IFR

Saudi Aramco has begun a three-part bond sale, news service IFR reported on Wednesday, which could raise at least \$3 billion, a source with knowledge of the matter previously told Reuters.

The sale comes after Saudi Arabia raised a total of \$12.35 billion from a much-anticipated secondary share sale in Aramco, after increasing the size of the offering, a document showed.

The bond sale marked Aramco's return to debt markets after a three-year hiatus, taking advantage of favourable market conditions. Aramco has long been a cash cow for Saudi Arabia, which is seeking funds to invest in new industries and wean its economy away from oil under its Vision 2030 plan. The oil giant expects to pay out \$124.3 billion in dividends for 2024, the majority of which goes to the

government, which directly owns about 81.5% of the company. With the latest bond sale Aramco joined top firms and governments in the Gulf rushing to markets this year to fund investments. The proceeds will be used for general corporate purposes, IFR reported.

Under the three-part bond sale on Wednesday, Aramco is selling bonds maturing in 10, 30 and 40 years. It gave an initial guidance

around 140 basis points (bps) over U.S. Treasuries (UST) for the 10-year bond, 180 bps over UST for the 30-year, and 195 bps for the 40-year, IFR reported. State-owned companies in emerging markets issued dollar-denominated bonds worth \$21.4 billion in the first half of the year - up 22% from a year earlier, according to a report by investment firm Tellimer.

Saudi state-owned firms led the

group with 23% of the overall issuance value, while the government raised \$12 billion of dollar-denominated bonds in January and \$5 billion in sukuk, or Islamic bonds, in May.

Aramco last month was awarded \$25 billion worth of contracts for its gas expansion plans. It also said it would buy 10% of Renault and Geely's thermal engines joint venture Horse Powertrain, and an-

nounced a non-binding deal with U.S. energy firm Sempra to buy liquefied natural gas.

Aramco last tapped global debt markets in 2021 when it raised \$6 billion from three-tranche sukuk. It flagged in February it was likely to issue bonds this year. Its 40-year tranche would become its second-longest dated bonds after \$2.25 billion of notes due in November 2070. — REUTERS



Ukraine's Maryna Aleksiiwa and Vladyslava Aleksiiwa compete in the Women's Artistic Swimming duet technical final in Montpellier, southern France, on May 5, 2023. — AFP

Ukraine twins smiling through bombs to go for Olympic gold

As synchronised swimmers, Maryna and Vladyslava Aleksiiwa are used to having to smile no matter what.

The sisters are one of Ukraine's best hopes of a gold medal at the Paris Olympics after winning a bronze in artistic swimming at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

But the trials the 23-year-old twins have been put through -- forced to flee their homes, surviving shelling and sleeping in bomb shelters -- have tested even their sunny stoicism.

They have even had to jump out of the pool and "run to the basement in wet swimsuits" when the explosions got too close, Maryna said.

Russian tanks were stopped in the suburbs of their hometown Kharkiv during the war almost two years ago, with the sisters having to leave their sparkly costumes behind when they were evacuated. Regular bombardments did not stop them returning to Kharkiv to prepare for the Games, even if the windows of their training pool were broken from the missile attacks on the border city.

"Everything has been bombed: our pool, where we started training, our school, our city centre," added Maryna.

The Ukrainian army eventually

pushed the Russian troops back, but Kharkiv is still hugely vulnerable. Only 30 kilometres (19 miles) from the border, it has been subjected to almost daily bombing and shelling.

Things got even worse when the Russian army drove towards the city in a surprise offensive in May before being pushed back.

It is not exactly the ideal environment for elite swimmers to go for gold, especially when there is no generator to warm the water when the power fails, as has often happened with the country's electricity grid taking a pounding from the Russians.

AFP has been following the sisters on their turbulent path to Paris, an odyssey that has taken them from Kharkiv to Italy, France, Qatar, Poland, Spain, Japan and back.

"When the war started, we did not know what to do," said Vladyslava, the shyer of the two, who often lets her twin Maryna finish her sentences.

"But then we understood our main goal could be to show courage..."

"To show Ukraine is still alive," Maryna added. "We must show strength." With the Russians threatening to take the city in the early days of the war, the sisters fled Kharkiv with the rest of Ukraine's artistic swimming team

and trained in Italy for six months.

But they were determined to go back to Ukraine to be closer to their parents, training in Kyiv and "sleeping at night in the corridor of a bomb shelter" before returning to Kharkiv.

They only left their home city -- the heart of Ukraine's artistic swimming scene -- for short trips abroad to compete.

Even if it was more dangerous, "it's much better to be together, (even) without electricity and music to train," Vladyslava said during a break in the World Aquatics World Cup in France last year where they won the duet gold.

But even in those carefree moments when they joked about the joys of having electricity, the war was never far away.

When we caught up with the twins again last July at the World Aquatics Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, they struck an even more sombre note.

"It is hard to focus when your

country is at war and you are away from family," Vladyslava admitted.

"We have friends who are sportsmen who died on the battlefield defending our country... It is an awful time for us."

Yet back relaxing on their sofa in Kharkiv on a rare day off in November, they did not turn a hair when the air raid siren sounded, even though Maryna's apartment is on the top floor and more exposed to shelling.

The sisters wore jeans and jumpers and light makeup in contrast to the heavy warpaint they put on for performances.

The sirens go off "five or six times every day" she said. "At night also. It's normal."

Lying on a table nearby was Maryna's bronze Olympic medal from Tokyo.

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Maryna Aleksiiwa

Ukrainian synchronised swimmer

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Every morning they read the news to see if it was safe to train, only going to the bomb shelter when it was really dangerous.

Eventually, however, they had to face reality.

"We realised we couldn't really prepare well in Kharkiv when it was being shelled five to 10 times a day," Maryna said.

So they moved to Kyiv for their final run-in in February, formally qualifying for the Paris Olympics, which start on July 26, the same

month.

"We are afraid for our family who stayed in Kharkiv. There are more and more missiles and bombs -- weapons which have been banned -- and so much has been destroyed," Maryna added.

Not that life in Kyiv is a cakewalk.

"Sometimes it is like being in a horror film," said Vladyslava. "Often (during attacks and alerts) you have to leave your bed in the middle of the night and you don't know where you are running to."

"It's hard mentally and emotionally," the sisters said in unison. "It's OK physically, but mentally it's hard."

There have been good moments too though. The sisters were among athletes chosen to model Ukraine's Olympic outfits for Paris, and they also got to meet President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"I was sure that they would be stars," said their childhood trainer, Maryna Krykunova, a tall, elegant woman in a tweed coat, who first came across them when they were eight years old.

Even then they were tall and supple and naturally in sync for duets, she said.

With girls who are not siblings, "we have to spend a lot of time making them similar", she said.

"With Maryna and Vlada, they

are already twins so it's much better."

Russia, which has traditionally dominated the sport, will not be competing at the Olympics after its teams were banned over the invasion.

But individual Russian athletes who have not taken a strong pro-war stance will be able to compete as neutrals, the International Olympic Committee ruled.

Ukraine's foreign ministry condemned the decision, and the sisters have also spoken out, telling AFP in April that it was "maybe better to not allow a country that killed our sportsmen (to participate)."

But they have since softened their stance.

"We've been training every day for seven hours and we have a goal... to show the courage of our country to the whole world," said Vladyslava.

The youthful India side would be the ultimate riposte to their Russian competitors who messaged them in the first days of the war telling them it was only a "safety operation".

"Don't worry, we will save you," they said. "You're crazy," Maryna replied. "I invite you to Kharkiv and you will see how my home town is now... everything has been bombed." — AFP

Perfect start for England in Anderson's farewell Test

England debutant Gus Atkinson upstaged James Anderson's farewell by taking a sensational seven wickets as the West Indies collapsed to 121 all out on Wednesday's opening day of the first Test at Lord's.

The build-up to the three-match series had centred on England great Anderson's last appearance in the five-day game following a record-breaking Test career that has yielded 701 wickets -- the most by any fast bowler at that level.

But Surrey quick Atkinson stole the spotlight with a remarkable haul of 7-45 in 12 overs -- including three wickets in just one over.

Anderson, by contrast, did not add to his tally of Test wickets until he had last man Jayden Seales lbw to end the West Indies innings.

West Indies debutant Mikyle Louis top-scored with 27 as the tourists were dismissed inside 42 overs. Having played just one warm-up match and with inexperienced top-order batsmen Kirk McKenzie, Alick Athanaze and Kavem Hodge holding only nine caps between them before this Test, it was little surprise the West Indies struggled after losing the toss in overcast conditions. — AFP

Djokovic gets free pass to semis as Krejckikova sets up Rybakina clash

Novak Djokovic progressed to a record-equalling 13th Wimbledon semifinal without hitting a ball on Wednesday after Alex de Minaur pulled out injured.

Australian ninth seed De Minaur, 25, announced shortly after midday at the All England Club that he was "devastated to pull out due to a hip injury".

It means Djokovic has now equalled Roger Federer's men's record of 13 semifinal appearances at Wimbledon as he closes on the Swiss great's mark of eight singles titles.

The 37-year-old Serbian is through to a record-extending 49th men's Grand Slam semifinal.

Djokovic, the world number two, does not have a title to his name this year and is still seeking a first victory against a fellow top-10 player.

But a historic 25th Grand Slam triumph is coming into sharp focus for Djokovic, who demolished Holger Rune in straight sets in the fourth round.

Barbora Krejckikova reached her first Wimbledon semifinal on Wednesday with a 6-4 7-6(4) win over Latvian 13th seed Jelena Ostapenko in the battle of former French Open champions.

The Czech 31st seed kept her composure from the back of the court to force her opponent into 35

unforced errors across the match as Ostapenko's bid for a second Grand Slam title since her first in 2017 unravelled on Court One which, on a rare occasion this tournament, had its roof open.

The 28-year-old will face Elena Rybakina who crushed Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-2 on Wednesday.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic during a practice session on Wednesday. — REUTERS

The 2022 winner from Kazakhstan broke the Ukrainian 21st seed four times in a match lasting just 61 minutes on Centre Court.

Rybakina was broken in the first game in front of the watching Queen Camilla but hit back straight away and barely put a foot wrong after that. "It's always tough

to play against Elina, she's a great player, great fighter. No matter the score, it is not as easy as it might look like," she said. "Of course I have such amazing memories from 2022 and I'm just enjoying every time I step on the court, especially when I play good. It's just really amazing." — REUTERS

Gill, Sundar guide India to 23-run win in third T20I

Captain Shubman Gill struck a fluent half-century as India claimed a 23-run win over hosts Zimbabwe in the third T20 international in Harare on Wednesday to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

A youthful India side without several members of their victorious World Cup squad elected to bat and posted 182 for four in their 20 overs, before Zimbabwe overcame a dismal start to reach 159 for six thanks to an unbeaten 65 from 49 balls by Dion Myers.

India's innings was anchored by an excellent 66 off 49 balls from opener Gill, before Rituraj Gaikwad added a breezy 49 from 28 balls to lift the touring side to a formidable score.

Only home seamer Blessing Muzarabani (2-25) and Pakistan-born spinner Sikandar Raza (2-24) managed to stem the runs. Zimbabwe slumped to 39 for five after seven overs, but an excellent sixth-wicket stand of 77 between Myers and Clive Madande (37 from 26 balls) gave them the slimmest of victory hopes. Washington Sundar took 3-15 in four overs, however, including the key wicket of Madande, and the visitors closed out a comfortable win. — REUTERS

The next superstar? Boy wonder Yamal lights up world football

Lamine Yamal has dazzled at Euro 2024 but it was on Tuesday in Munich he came of age with a sensational strike against France to fire Spain into the final with a 2-1 victory.

After France started well and took the lead through Randal Kolo Muani, the 16-year-old produced a bolt from the blue to stun Les Bleus, becoming the youngest goalscorer in the tournament's history.

Yamal's dramatic intervention after 21 minutes rocked Didier Deschamps' side and Dani Olmo fired home the decisive second four minutes later.

The Barcelona winger created goals for teammates in the wins over Croatia, Georgia and Germany but had not managed to find the net himself until now.

"We were a goal down and I just got the ball -- I didn't think about it much and then shot at goal," player of the match Yamal told ZDF.

"I'm not thinking much about (only being 16), I'm just enjoying it and I'm proud to be in the final."

The forward, who made his Barcelona debut at 15 in the 2022-23 campaign, has improved with virtually every appearance and become a vital figure for his team.

With Spain it is a similar story, Yamal already La Roja's key player despite having made just 13 appearances for his country.

The last of those was on a humid night in Bavaria where he made history and scored arguably the goal of the tournament.

"We have seen a genius, the work of a genius," said delighted Spain coach Luis de la Fuente.

"We are lucky he is Spanish and we can enjoy him for many years."

Yamal's game is bright but not excessive, with his tricks designed to open up space for himself rather than to show off. He largely makes sensible decisions but also fires up the crowd with showstopping dribbles.

In that regard he is similar to a player he looked up to as a child, former Barcelona great Lionel Messi.

Last week a barely-believable photo emerged of the Argentina forward bathing a baby Yamal, as part of a charity calendar Barcelona players were pictured in, back in 2007.

"The beginning of two legends," wrote Yamal's father Mounir Nasraoui on Instagram, sharing the photo.

Spain's 38-year-old right-back



Spain's Lamine Yamal celebrates after scoring a stunning goal against France. — AFP

Jesus Navas, who started against France, is older than Mounir.

France midfielder Adrien Rabiot is 29 but lacked the wisdom not to challenge a record-breaking player seemingly undaunted by any challenge he faces.

"(We have to) show him that to play in a Euros final, he will have to do much more than what he has done so far," said Rabiot before

the game.

Yamal posted a graphic with the caption "Move in silence, only speak when it is time to say checkmate" on Instagram, hours before doing just that by eliminating France on the pitch.

For his stunning goal Yamal's tricky footwork and agility helped him lose Rabiot and earned him the space to shoot.

The youngster nearly got another in similar fashion in the second half, shaking free of Theo Hernandez and whipping narrowly over.

If there is one area he has to improve in, it is becoming more lethal in front of goal but that will surely come.

The winger picked up a booking in the final stages by pulling back Hernandez to stop the French

defender breaking, a cynical but effective decision and another example of his maturity beyond his years.

"I'm very proud of Lamine, people will talk about the goal, the stellar appearance of this 16-year-old kid, the future awaiting him is huge, but I congratulated him for his defensive commitment, such a complete

game, constantly helping out," said midfielder Rodri.

Yamal will turn 17 on July 13, the day before the final in Berlin against England or the Netherlands. What does he want for a present?

"To win, to win, to win," said Yamal. "It was my objective, to reach my birthday still in Germany." — AFP



Images of Lionel Messi holding baby Yamal have gone viral. — X

When Messi met baby Yamal for a photoshoot in 2007

Rituraj Borkakoty
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Lamine Yamal jumped for joy and smiled from ear to ear when the referee blew the final whistle on Tuesday night.

Yamal, the 16-year-old prodigy who emerged from Barcelona's youth academy, became the youngest player to score a goal in the history of Euros with a stunning left-footer, inspiring Spain to stage a stirring fightback and beat Kylian Mbappe's France in the semifinal.

Having already delivered a string of jaw-dropping performances in Germany before heading into the semifinals, Yamal has now become the toast of world football, sparking an avalanche of social media posts comparing him to Lionel Messi.

Remarkably, it was only last week that old photos of a teenage Messi holding a baby Yamal broke the internet.

In 2007, the baby-faced Messi was beginning to take giant strides in elite football when he did a photoshoot for a charity calendar at Camp Nou.

Some of those pictures show Messi holding a six-month old baby.

That baby was none other than Yamal.

No one back then had an idea that the little baby would go on to become a global sensation.

Photographer Joan Monfort, who took those pictures in 2007, still remembers the day fondly.

"We made the calendar with the help of UNICEF. So UNICEF did a raffle in the neighborhood of Roca Fonda in Mataró where Lamine's family lived. They signed up for the raffle to have their picture taken at the Camp Nou with a Barca player. And they won the raffle," Monfort was quoted as saying by AP.

By 2007, Messi was already football's hottest young player who

had scored wonder goals against Real Madrid and Getafe.

But Monfort said the young Argentine genius looked clueless when asked to hold baby Yamal for the photoshoot.

"Messi is a pretty introverted guy, he's shy," Monfort recalled. "He was coming out of the locker room and suddenly he finds himself in another locker room with a plastic tub full of water and a baby in it. It was complicated. He didn't even know how to hold him at first."

Monfort was not aware that those photos had resurfaced online until he received a message from a friend.

The photo was shared last week on Instagram by Yamal's father, Mounir Nasraoui, with the caption: "The beginning of two legends."

While Messi went on to become one of the greatest players in history, Lamal has now shown that he has what it takes to be an absolute legend of the beautiful game.

Messi drops retirement hint after Argentina reach Copa final

Defending champions Argentina booked their place in the Copa America final after goals from Julian Alvarez and Lionel Messi gave them a 2-0 win over Canada in Tuesday's semifinal in New Jersey.

Argentina will face either Uruguay or Colombia in Sunday's final in Florida, a match that could represent the last shot at silverware

for several senior squad members including Messi, Angel Di Maria and Nicolas Otamendi.

Messi, 37, admitted after the match that the final on Sunday could be the last international match for some of the veterans in the team.

"Let's enjoy what we are experiencing as a national team, as a

group. It is not easy to be in a final again, to compete again to be champions. I'm living it as I have been living everything lately: enjoying it very much and being aware, as it happens to Fideo (Di Maria) and Ota (Otamendi), that these are the last battles," Messi told TyC Sports in an apparent hint at retirement following the

Copa America.

Head coach Lionel Scaloni hopes the stalwarts will continue to play for Argentina until the 2026 World Cup.

"You know how I feel about Angel. We don't want to retire him earlier than needed," Scaloni said.

"We don't want to feel melan-

choly. We have to let him play, and then we'll see if we can convince him or not to stay with us. But so far, he's here, and he has to be allowed to enjoy this moment.

"For Leo (Messi), it's similar to Angel. We have to let him be and we will never be the ones to close the door. He can be with our team for as long as he wants to be. And if

he wants to retire but still come and hang around, it would be great."

Argentina have won a joint-record 15 Copa titles and reached the final six times in the past eight editions but Canada caused them real problems in the opening 20 minutes, Jacob Shaffelburg twice shooting wide from promising positions. — REUTERS

*Forever
in our Hearts*



CHITILAPULLY JACOB SUNNY (75)

[Chairman: **Chittilappilly & Elite Jewellers (UAE & Qatar), Reliant Credits India Ltd.,**
Ex-Chairman: **Dubai Jewellery Group**]

Funeral: **Friday (12-07-24)**

The funeral will be held at 4 pm at Little Flower Church,
Elamkulam, Kochi, after prayers at home at 3 pm.

In Loving Memory

Wife: **Reethamma Sunny (Elanjickal).**

Children: **Laniya, Linet, Dion Sunny (Late).**

Son-in-law: **Dr. Rajesh Antony and Felix De Souza.**

Grand Children: **Alaina & Naythan.**

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