

The statement said exporters can apply to the program through the institution's website, www.jedco.gov.jo.

BRIEFS

PM directs ‘clear’ plans for economic vision

AMMAN (JNews) — Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh directed the concerned authorities to start setting a “clear” implementation plan and timetable for carrying out the outcomes of the Economic Modernization Vision plan, said the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The Cabinet agreed in a session Wednesday to form a ministerial team for outlining the vision’s executive programs, comprised of ministers of planning and international cooperation, state for prime ministry affairs, finance, state for follow-up and government coordination, digital economy, industry, trade and supply, environment, and investment.

Qatar discusses recruiting Jordanians

AMMAN (JNews) — Minister of Labor Nayef Al-Istiteh discussed with his Qatari counterpart Ali bin Smaikh Al-Marri an agreement that would allow Jordanians to work in the Qatar, according to the Jordan News Agency, petra.

The discussions also covered a memorandum of technical cooperation between the two nations, and the potential of exchanging experiences in the areas of occupational standards, employer inspection, and promotion of occupational health and safety.

Maaytah urges students’ political empowerment

AMMAN (JNews) — Chief Commissioner of the Independent Election Commission Musa Maaytah stressed the importance of empowering university students in politics, according to the Jordan News Agency, petra.

The engagement, he noted, should be in line with the Royal directives and the outcomes of the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System, as reflected in the constitutional and legal amendments, which lowered the candidate’s age in parliamentary elections.

Petra hotel occupancy projected to reach 100%

AMMAN (JNews) — The Director General of the Jordan Tourism Board, Abdul Razzaq Arabiyat said that he expected hotel occupancy in Petra to reach 100 percent between September and November, according to Al-Ghad News.

Arabiyat said during a media forum organized by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists that tourism has begun to recover and that the next season will “be strong” and see a revitalized tourism activity in the Kingdom.

Grain storage to hit 2.35 million tonnes in 2023

Dana Al-Zyadat

AMMAN — Jordan’s stock of grain reached 1.6 million tonnes, and will further increase to 2.35 million tonnes in 2023, once storage is expanded with the completion of new silos, secretary-general of the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply Dana Al-Zoubi said.

She said the expansion is in line with Jordan’s efforts to maintain a comfortable level of supplies to ensure food security domestically.

Zoubi told *Jordan News* that the efforts are already underway to enhance food security to reach self-sufficiency in all areas, especially with regards to strategic essential commodities and food staples, such as wheat and barley.

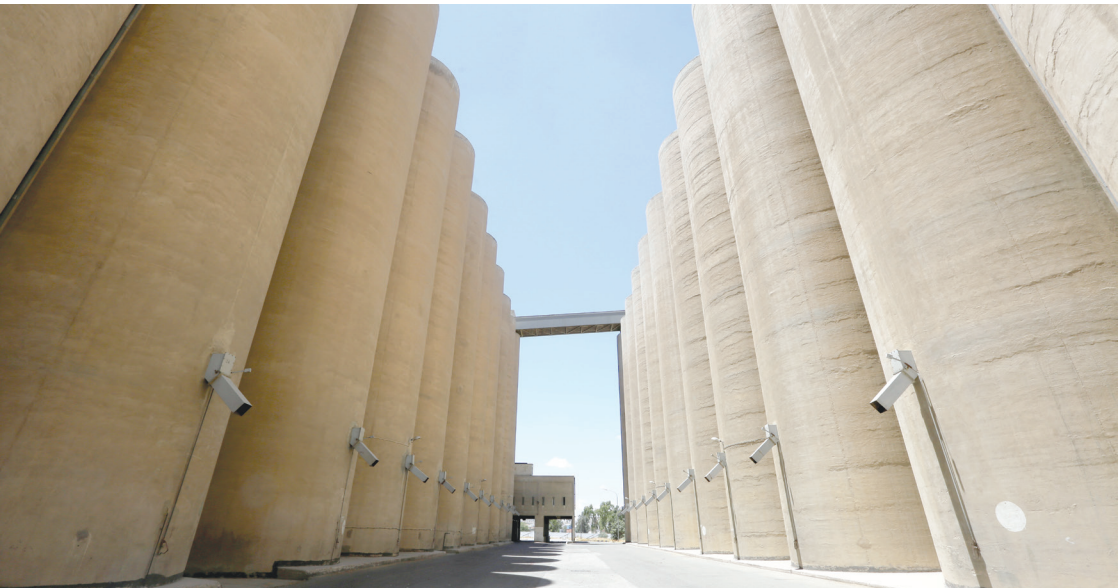
“We stopped building silos, with vertical storage, due to their high cost and moved towards horizontal storage due to the low cost of construction and control,” she said.

She added that the storage capacity of Juwaida grain silos will rise to about 250,000 tonnes with the completion of the expansion project.

She revealed that new grain storage areas will be set up next year in different places across the country, such as Qatraneh with a capacity of 500,000 tonnes, Al-Muwaqar with 100,000 tons, and Al-Ghabawi with 100,000 tonnes.

“Now, we have enough amounts of wheat that are sufficient to cover the need for 13 months,” she said.

Zoubi noted that there are other



Grain silos in Jordan. (Photo: Ameer Khalifeh/JNews)

projects to enhance food security. “We are working with Egypt to establish logistical places for storage, packaging, and manufacturing industries,” she said.

The director-general of the Jordan Silos and Supply General Company, Emad Al-Tarawneh, said that the expansion of the Juwaida grain silos was completed and that the storage space was inaugurated earlier this week. He said the project is funded by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, with a value of JD70 million.

“The Aqaba grain silos are in the final stages,” he said. But he added that a grain silo in northern Jordan

still awaits funds to start the project.

Tarawneh explained that the local production of wheat and barley is weak, but that the Ministry of Agriculture is offering incentives to encourage farmers to cultivate wheat and barley.

Mahmoud Al-Oran, secretary-general of the Jordanian Farmers Union, said Jordan had the option for early planning, but did not until Russia invaded Ukraine last February.

“We had an early option to exploit the agricultural areas and provide the necessary support to Jordanian farmers to cultivate grain, and when the Russian-Ukrainian war occurred,

we started to move,” he said. “Now, it is noticeable that the crisis is worsening.”

“We need to develop an emergency plan to get out of the crisis, as Jordan imports 900,000 tonnes of wheat annually, while the local production is 20,000 tonnes,” he explained.

He said that the irrigated area is 3 million dunums, which “is not being exploited well.”

“We need good planning and to work according to serious strategies,” he said, adding that expansion projects carry a reassuring message to citizens that “we have enough wheat.”

JAF concludes “Desert Storm” drill with US, British armies

AMMAN (JNews) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), along with the US and British armies, concluded a military exercise code-named “Desert Storm 2022”, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

JAF said in a statement that the drills were under directives by His Majesty King Abdullah to improve the capabilities and preparedness of the army in all fields, Petra said.

The multi-stage exercise sought to establish operational and tactical

alignment between the participating armies, deploy ground and air forces firepower to simulate combat in a high-risk operational environment, and achieve goals quickly and with minimal risks to ground forces.

The drill, according to JAF, saw the

use of satellite- and laser-guided munitions, and high-precision projectiles.

Units from the Royal Artillery Force, the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan Brigade/ Rapid Intervention, F16s of the Royal Jordanian Air Force and F15s of the US Air

World Bank team visits National Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases Center

AMMAN (JNews) — A World Bank health team concluded a two-day visit to the National Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases Center aimed at examining prospects for supporting the center to enable it to fulfill its mandate, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

It said the center reported in a statement on Wednesday that the delegation, led by the bank’s regional director, was informed on the center’s aims and duties, and potential for mutual cooperation.

The purpose of the tour is to analyze the resilience of health systems during emergencies, like the coronavirus pandemic, as well as strategies to strengthen and reinforce capabilities, the statement said.

The two parties reviewed the availability and maturity of health-related data and information systems, data sharing protocols, emergency financial resources, and the government’s ability to deploy extra resources in the case of epidemics or other health emergencies.

They also discussed the health system’s ability to respond to health emergencies with quality care while maintaining basic health services.

Medical Corps event brings together mental health experts

AMMAN (JNews) — Latest figures from the Family and Juvenile Protection Department showed that 31 percent of domestic violence cases are due to emotional, social, and psychological causes, according to the director of the department, Col. Firas Al-Rasheed.

Specialists, meanwhile, stressed the importance of including mental health in Jordan’s primary health care services, according to a report by Al-Ghad News.

Speaking at an event about mental health organized by the International Medical Corps, Rasheed said that “many serious violence cases that the administration deals with are linked to psychological factors such as depression and other psychological disorders, while other causes are related to social and economic motives.”

He stressed the need to provide mental health care and psychosocial rehabilitation, pointing to the integrated services offered by the administration, which include psychological and social support services.

For his part, deputy head of the International Medical Corps delegation in Jordan, Ahmed Al-Jurn, said that “one out of every four people had suffered at some stage in his life from a mental disorder, which means that 2 million people have experienced or will experience some type of mental disorder or distress.”

“We at the corps follow the protection approach in identifying the needs of the individual by evaluating methods of assistance, protection systems, and the quality of services received by the beneficiary,” he said.

He explained that 70 percent of the beneficiaries of protection programs receive specialized psychological services but added that not every case that goes through violence needs psychological care, although many do.

Regarding mental health services, he said that despite efforts being made to increase attention to mental health care in Jordan, only less than 2 percent of the health budgets

in Arab countries is devoted to such cases.

“Despite many attempts to support mental health, the opportunities to support specialized psychological programs are decreasing,” Jurn said, contending that it is civil society organizations’ role to help devise new ways to increase access to specialized psychological services.

He expected that the need for mental health and psychosocial support to increase in the coming years.

Head of the Ministry of Health’s Directorate of People with Disabilities and Mental Health, Malak Al-Auri, said that “mental health care has been included in primary health services,” pointing to efforts being made in terms of training and reha-

bilitating cadres in health centers.

She said that over the past few years, progress has been made in the field of mental health services, as these services are now available in 52 clinics across the Kingdom.

The services are also provided at public, private, and university hospitals, as well as hospitals affiliated with the armed forces. Medications associated with these treatments are free, she added.

For his part, Director of Family and Protection at the Ministry of Social Development Amer Al-Hyassat pointed to the importance of psychological and social support programs, underlining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children.

He said that there are 20 care institutions operating under the Social Development Ministry, of which four are governmental and 16 are affiliated with the voluntary sector.

He said that specialists provide psychological and social support services in the home, while the most difficult cases are referred to competent authorities.

Dutch, French embassies to spend 1.9m euros on Ruwaished outpost

AMMAN (JNews) — The Dutch and French embassies to Jordan agreed on a 1.9 million euro joint funding project to support Jordan’s army and security apparatus in protecting the Kingdom’s border with Syria, AmmanNet reported.

Ruwaished border post with Syria has seen several bungled infiltration attempts by armed men, or drug traffickers since the beginning of the year.

The Dutch embassy said a memorandum of understanding was signed at the mission’s premises in Amman. It said in a statement that the signing was attended by representatives of the Jordanian Armed Forces- Arab Army, the French ambassador to Jordan and the acting deputy of the Dutch embassy.

It said the Netherlands will disburse 1.45 million euros, while France will pay the remaining 450,000 euros.

GAM announces 4-year plan valued at JD918 million

AMMAN (JNews) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) launched its strategic plan for the years 2022-2026 with the aim of raising and improving the quality and standards of living for citizens through entertainment, culture, and sports, according to Al-Mamlaka TV.

The projects includes implementing 212 projects and initiatives to achieve 15 strategic aims and 30 strategic goals with a total value of JD918 million between 2022 and 2026.

It includes establishing new parks and gardens, rehabilitating and developing already existing parks at a value of JD44 million, expanding the Amman Bus routes to include 286 buses.

The strategy also includes the first and second phases of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, which includes traffic improvements for intersections, traffic solutions, and a biomechanical waste treatment project that will recycle waste and produce energy and fertilizer.

It estimated the cost of financing the second phase of the BRT project at JD281 million for the years 2022 to 2026.

In its document, GAM said that the first and second phases of the BRT project include implementing designs for vital inter-



An aerial view of Amman. (File photo: Ameer Khalifeh/JNews)

sections that were studied in phase two as well as other intersection improvements.

The World Bank said that it is working with GAM to finance and implement the second phase of the BRT project in Amman, according to the practice manager for the MENA Transport Unit, Ibrahim Al-Dajani.

Dajani added that “the bank is proud to participate in many projects in Jordan, the most important of which is the BRT project with the Ministry of Transport and the GAM,” explaining that “the length of the second phase is up to 50km.”

Gov’t earmarks JD30m for aid funds amid global fuel price hikes

AMMAN (JNews) — The government set aside JD30 million for the National Aid Fund (NAF) and a fund for impoverished university students to mitigate the effects of global fuel price rises, according to Minister of State for Media Affairs Faisal Al-Shbouh, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported on Wednesday.

The NAF aids around 220,000 households, while the poor student’s fund provides financial aid to 74,000 university students.

In the next six months, the financial assistance will be added to the beneficiaries’ monthly payments. The decision also includes financial assistance for medium and large-sized public transport vehicles, added Shbouh, who is also the government spokesperson.

Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh directed Finance Minister Mohamed Al-Ississ to make the appropriate reclassifications in the 2022 budget to cover the costs.

ACI exports up 61% in first five months of 2022

AMMAN (JNews) — Exports of the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) jumped 61 percent to JD2.8 billion in the first five months of 2022, compared with JD1.7 billion in the same period of 2021, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Most industrial sectors witnessed an upward trend between January and May this year, except for the drug and medical supplies industry, which decreased by 18 percent to JD188 million, compared with JD228 million recorded in the corresponding period last year.

Statistics issued by the ACI on Wednesday showed that the chamber’s exports have been on an upward trajectory since the start of 2022, recording unprecedented rates.

About 1,400 various Jordanian products are exported to more than 142 markets worldwide.

India, the US, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq accounted for JD1.5 billion of the overall exports, more than half of the ACI’s exports during the past five months.

According to ACI’s figures, Jordanian exports to India during that period shot up by 155 percent to JD652 million, against JD255 million in 2021, placing the South Asian

country at the top of foreign and Arab importers from Jordan.

The US came second with JD391 million, compared with last year’s JD323 million, up by 21 percent, followed by Saudi Arabia with JD278 million, compared with JD238 million, also a 21 percent rise. Iraq imported some JD229 million worth of Jordanian exports, compared with JD205 million, signaling an increase of 12 percent.

Exports in the past five months were spread over these sectors: mining industry with JD971 million, chemicals and cosmetics with JD589 million, engineering, electricity, and information technology with JD376 million.

Exports from catering, food, agricultural, and livestock industries amounted to JD282 million, medical supplies to JD188 million, and dermatology and knitting to JD174 million.

The chamber’s exports from other sectors were spread into JD120 million in the packaging, paper, carton, and office supplies sector, JD109 million in the plastic and rubber industries sector, JD40 million in the construction sector, and JD9 million in the wood and furniture industries sector.

Work on Jordan Gate Towers begins in August

By Roaa Rayyan

AMMAN (JNews) — Renovation of the Jordan Gate Towers will resume in August and work will be carried out in three phases, Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) spokesperson Nasser Al-Rahamneh said.

The project started in 2005 and was supposed to be completed five years later. But work suddenly stopped in 2006 and the high-class commercial and residential structures are still seen standing tall and dominant in West Um Uthaina near Sixth Circle.

Rahamneh said GAM is taking part in the project and that the first stage of work will start in August and end in next May.

"The first phase comprises of preparing the implementation plans, which include architecture and construction, drawing up the contractors' contracts and a list of specifications," he said.

He noted that the initial renovation will also include finishing up work on the exterior of the structures, and isolating the towers to protect them from weather conditions.

The second phase, he added, will focus on the northern tower, which boasts of luxurious apartments and a shopping mall. He said work on the tower, which is linked to its southern twin through a multi-story podium, will begin May 2023 and be completed by December 2024.

The third stage, which includes the southern tower, will begin in March 2023.

Rahamneh said he did not have details on the cost, saying the figures will be announced after the "tenders are approved".

GAM agreed to become a partner in the project since it is a "national institution, which works to stimulate the wheel of the economy, to enhance the infrastructure across the Kingdom."

He pointed out that GAM's work "reflects on people's lives in the various fields". He said that was GAM's goal being a partner in the Jordan Gate Towers project.



Cranes stand outside the Jordan Gate Towers in Amman. (Photo: Flickr)

With prevailing cash crunch, furniture sector faces gloomy future

By Razan Abdelhadi

AMMAN — Furniture sales fell by 40 to 50 percent as a result of a biting recession, almost drying up liquidity in the once vibrant sector, said Sharaf Al-Hayajneh, Head of Jordan Furniture Exporters and Manufacturers Association.

Hayajneh, who is also furniture, carpets, and stationary sector representative at the Jordan Chamber of Commerce, said the "liquidity has become almost lost from the market".

"Global increases in production inputs and raw materials contributed to raising furniture prices by a rate ranging between 30 to 35 percent," he said. "The decline in demand and the rise in prices contributed to the erosion of the capital of some traders and thus the accumulation of losses."

He urged the government to raise the salaries of employees to revive a flow of liquidity in the sector. "The priorities are different now especially in view of the rise of prices of basic commodities, most prominent of which is staple foods," he pointed out.

He said that the decline in sales and an economic stagnation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic "led to a financial distress for many shop owners".

"I can say that the investment in the sector became threatened, due to the inability of many of them to continue," he said.

He told *Jordan News* that the government allowed the import of used furniture from abroad, which dealt another blow to the sector. "We are not against selling used furniture, but it must be at least local, not imported", he said.

"These goods are not subject to taxes, and therefore their prices are not high, and that is why many resort to buying

them," he explained.

He said furniture shops do not receive government support. "We are ignored, unfortunately, because the government considers us a luxury sector," he charged.

"We hope that the government will have clear plans to encourage the local industry and to increase the percentage of Jordanian labor," he said.

Leen Al-Araji, who is an interior designer at a furniture store, said that "there is a 50-percent decline in sales because many people are turning to upholstery furniture instead of buying new furniture, especially since the priorities have changed."

She indicated that she does not expect that the situation will improve soon. "On the contrary, if things remain as they are now, I expect many stores to go bankrupt."

Furniture trader Mohammad Ali said that the sector is in a "much worse condition now than we expect." He asserted that "traders who sell basic commodities are complaining about the difficult situation".

"But what can we say?" he asked. Jordan needs a radical change at the economic level, especially since "all expectations indicate a further deterioration is coming our way in the coming days", Ali said.

He said that "shop owners are more affected by the deteriorating conditions these days. Traders take their salary, whether there is sale or not, but the shop owners are the ones who suffer the most."

He also painted a gloomy image about the future of the industry. "If the situation persists, shop owners will be forced to close down, which means they will fire their employees, which will result in an increase in unemployment and poverty rates," he said.

SPONSORED CONTENT

With Roberto's, Amman is getting a taste of La Dolce Vita

AMMAN — The recent grand opening of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Amman has brought no shortage of hype: from the exquisitely appointed interiors to the unparalleled level of service, to the incredible variety of food and beverage destinations, the hotel has elevated the buzz about town to a fever pitch.

But among all the wealth of venues, facilities, and amenities that guests are eagerly lining up to experience, there's one that's drawing particularly enthusiastic attention: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Amman's signature dining destination, Roberto's.

Already a much-loved and well-established favorite of the Dubai culinary scene, the arrival of Roberto's in Amman has brought a new, innovative standard of culinary excellence to Jordan's capital.



(Photo: Ritz-Carlton)

Under the uncompromising leadership of Italian Chef Carmelo Rosselli and General Manager Marco Scarpa, Roberto's is delivering an unparalleled dining experience at every turn.

Sprawling across the 20th floor of the hotel — making it the highest restaurant in the city — Roberto's gives guests more than just panoramic views of the surrounding vista: the destination offers a vibrant twist on Italian fine dining, eschewing rigid formality in favor of a chic, lively ambiance that exudes true Italian hospitality.

This, as Chef Rosselli explains, is the essence of the idea of *la dolce vita*.

Chef Rosselli is no stranger to the Roberto's brand; having spent more than 15 years of his illustrious career in the UAE, he was in Dubai when the original Roberto's first opened — and the restaurant's founding chef, like Rosselli, was a native of Sicily.

"From the very beginning, Roberto's was always about high-quality, authentic Italian cuisine, ... and there was always this commitment to great service and attention to detail."

"From the very beginning, Roberto's was always about high-quality, authentic Italian cuisine," he said. "And there was always this commitment to great service and attention to detail."

This commitment to going above and beyond is exemplified by Chef Rosselli, who is already showing that he is willing to go to any lengths to ensure the exceptional, world-class quality of his dishes and ingredients.

Whether that means sourcing prized Mazara and Carabinero prawns from the shore of Sicily or bringing in a steady supply of live lobsters, wild Mediterranean Branzini, or Italian truffles, Rosselli refuses to settle for anything less than exceptional.

The menu at Roberto's represents the merging of traditional Italian fare with tasteful touches of sophistication — like the addition of caviar to their signature tuna tartare — and unique infusions of ingredients from other cultures and culinary traditions, all underpinned by a commitment to seasonality through the use of high-quality, seasonal ingredients.

Roberto's also features an exceptional array of distinctive cocktails, crafted by the restaurant's dedicated mixologist.

The dining experience at Roberto's is further elevated by the restaurant's one-of-a-kind ambiance. "It's not that classic idea of fine dining, with low music and heavy formality," said Rosselli. "When you enter, you'll find a DJ playing live music, and you have options for how you spend your evening: you can dine in the main restaurant, or you can enjoy a more relaxed, social vibe in the lounge."

The lounge at Roberto's even features a slightly different menu than the main restaurant, with more shareable bites and more casual plating.

Overall, the atmosphere and unrivalled hospitality that guests can find at Roberto's is something Chef Rosselli sees as a meeting point between his Sicilian upbringing and the restaurant's setting in the heart of Jordan's capital.

"In Sicily, just like in Jordan and other Arab countries, we have this tradition of coming together for family meals—sitting around a big table, sharing in a delicious, festive, warm experience," he said. "We want to infuse the restaurant with that sense of togetherness, celebration... *La Dolce Vita*."

And what a sweet life it is, indeed, now that Roberto's has finally opened its doors.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Zain Innovation Campus holds session with Techstars Accelerator

AMMAN — As part of its continuous contributions towards the entrepreneurship sector in Jordan, along to its role in linking the start-up founders and entrepreneurs across the country to well-known and regional accelerators and incubators, to provide them with opportunities to grow and develop, Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) held a discussion session with Techstars Accelerator.

The session was moderated by the Entrepreneurial Advisor Nidal Qanadilo at ZINC main branch located at King Hussein Business Park, with the participation of Vijay Tirathrai, Techstars managing director, and numerous of successful Jordanian start-ups founders, who accomplished remarkable achievements on local, regional and global scales.

These included Yousef Wadi CEO and co-founder of NESTROM, Mohammad Issa, co-founder of Medical ONEX, and Yahya Aqel CEO founder of Aumet, the session also was attended by representatives of startups, entrepreneurs, youth, in addition to a group of representatives of Jordanian incubators and accelerators who are interested in the field.

ZINC organized this session in the aim

of searching for distinguished Jordanian start-ups to support them to unlocking markets access, in the Middle East and North Africa, the session also focused on

sharing the experience on conducting & ensuring new partnerships and raising capital to help these start-up founders develop their ideas into viable businesses.



(Photo: Zain)

Capital Bank approves capital increase in favor of Public Investment Fund

AMMAN (JNews) — In an extraordinary meeting held virtually on Wednesday, Capital Bank's General Assembly approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to raise the bank's capital through issuing new shares in favor of the Public Investment Fund (PIF) as a strategic investor, the bank said in a press statement.

It said the meeting was presided over by the Chairman of the Board of

Directors of Capital Bank Group, Bassem Khalil Al-Salem, in the presence of Group CEO Dawod Al-Ghoul and 86.9 percent of the bank's shareholders.

Salem described the agreement — which will "see PIF purchasing 23.97 percent of the Group's capital at an investment value of JD131.2 million — as one of the most significant transactions conducted by the banking

sector in the region, and one that reflects positively on Capital Bank's long-term position and financial prospects," according to the statement.

Salem also stated that 63 million shares will be issued for the benefit of PIF upon completion of the deal, which in turn will raise the Group shareholders' equity to exceed JD600 million.

Salem also stressed the significance of this strategic investment as a testament to Capital Bank's solid reputation in the region.

He asserted that, despite the capital increase, Capital Bank is still able to achieve double-digit returns to shareholders through its ambitious expansion and investment plans.

He underscored that this deal "is a manifestation of greater confidence in Capital Bank Group, which has a proven track record of continued, sustainable growth in the Jordanian banking sector".

The bank, he added, has historically been able to not only weather enormous challenges but to transform them into worthy growth opportunities, even during the most challenging circumstances recently faced by Jordan and the world at large.

During his opening statement, Salem cited some of Capital Bank's key achievements over the past two years, which included acquiring two of the most prominent foreign banks operating in Jordan and Iraq, Bank Audi and Société Générale de Banque Jordanie.

The group had also launched its digital bank, Blink, in addition to issuing the first \$100 million perpetual AT1 bond in Jordan.



(Photo: Capital Bank)



MORE NATIONAL NEWS ONLINE
jordannews.jo



A general view of Gaza on May 10, 2015. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Most Gaza children suffer ‘distress’ after 15 years of blockade – NGO

GAZA, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Four out of five children in Gaza suffer from emotional distress, Save the Children said Wednesday, 15 years after Israel slapped a strict blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Israel imposed the measure in June 2007, as Hamas took control of the densely populated enclave. Israel and Egypt continue to severely restrict the flow of people and materials in and out.

In a report called “Trapped”, Britain-based Save the Children said the mental health of Gazan chil-

dren has continued to deteriorate. Since 2018, the number reporting symptoms of “depression, grief, and fear,” had risen from 55 percent to 80 percent, the report said. Save the Children’s director for the occupied Palestinian territories, Jason Lee said: “The children we spoke to for this report described living in a perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness, and grief, waiting for the next round of violence to erupt, and feeling unable to sleep or concentrate. “The physical evidence of their distress – bedwetting, loss of abil-

ity to speak or to complete basic tasks – is shocking and should serve as a wakeup call to the international community,” he added. Children make up nearly half of Gaza’s population of 2.1 million. Around 800,000 young people in the territory who have “never known life without the blockade”, Save the Children said.

‘Open-air prison’ Israel insists the blockade is necessary to protect its citizens from Hamas, a group blacklisted as a terrorist organization by much of

the West. Israel has launched four wars against Gaza since 2007, most recently in May 2021. Over the past 12 months, Israel has granted more work permits for Gazans seeking better paid jobs inside Israel. It has also relaxed some restrictions on the flow of goods in and out of the territory. But the blockade remains broadly unchanged, with Palestinians generally barred from leaving Gaza through the Erez crossing to Israel. Gazans also face huge obstacles exiting through the Rafah crossing

to Egypt. In a statement marking the anniversary of the blockade, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that “Israel, with Egypt’s help, has turned Gaza into an open-air prison.” HRW’s director for Israel and Palestine, Omar Shakir, told AFP: “Young people face the brunt of (the blockade) because they don’t know of a Gaza before the closure. “Their horizons are forcibly narrowed to a 40 by 11km strip of land and that prevents them from the chance to interact and engage with the world,” Shakir said.

Child killed in Iraq strike blamed on Türkiye

MOSUL, Iraq (AFP) — A child was killed on Wednesday in an air strike on Iraq’s northern region of Sinjar, security sources said, blaming the Turkish air force. The heartland of Iraq’s Yazidi minority, Sinjar is frequently targeted by Turkish air strikes against bases of Türkiye’s separatist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). The strike hit a “municipal council building in Snuny”, a village near the border with Syria, said a security official in autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan. “A 12-year-old child was killed and six other people were wounded,” the official said on condition of anonymity. Another security source said two civilians were killed in the strike on the base of Ezidikhan, a Yazidi protection force close to the PKK. Both sources alleged the attack had been carried out by the Turkish air force. Türkiye launched a new offensive in northern Iraq in April dubbed “Operation Claw-Lock”, which it said targets PKK bases and training camps. Designated as a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies, the PKK has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. The Yazidis are a non-Arab, Kurdish-speaking minority who have been persecuted for centuries, most recently by Daesh.

Libyan court passes jail massacre case to military tribunals

TRIPOLI (AFP) — A Libyan court said Wednesday it could not rule on the case of a notorious prison massacre under former dictator Muammar Gaddafi, arguing it should be heard by a military tribunal. In 1996, 1,269 inmates were killed following an uprising at the Abu Slim jail in Tripoli. Fifteen years later, rare protests by family members demanding to know the truth about the killings helped spark the uprising that toppled Gaddafi. But despite his departure and killing in the 2011 revolt, they have yet to receive answers. A Tripoli appeals court has been examining the case since May 2021 and had been set to deliver a verdict on the case on Wednesday. But instead, the judge “ruled that the entire case had a military character, as many of those implicated belonged to the military”, a prosecution source told AFP. “He decided to transfer the entire

case to a competent military court.” The source said the case was now “entirely outside the civilian court system” and in the hands of the military courts. In 2019, a Libyan court had declared the case inadmissible, but the Supreme Court overturned that ruling and later handed the file to a new court. Wednesday’s ruling is another stage in the Abu Slim families’ long wait for justice. It was only in 2001 that they were informed that their loved ones had died. Many were buried in mass graves inside the prison, later exhumed after Gaddafi’s fall. The main suspects are the dictator’s former intelligence chief Abdallah Al-Senussi and Mansour Daou, head of Gaddafi’s personal guard. Other senior regime figures are also on trial in the case. International rights groups have long called for fair trials and accountability for those involved.

UN experts alarmed by Iran ‘violent crackdown’ on protests

GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — A group of independent UN rights experts expressed alarm Wednesday over a “violent crackdown” on teachers and wider civil society in Iran, demanding that those responsible be held to account. The experts, who are appointed by the UN but do not speak on its behalf, alleged that more than 80 teachers had been arrested or summoned by the authorities in the Islamic republic. The reported arrests come amid repeated protests by teachers against working conditions and low wages, including one held on May 1 — International Workers’ Day — when they took to the streets of several cities, joined by transport workers. “We are alarmed at the recent escalation of arbitrary arrests of teachers, labor rights defenders and union leaders, lawyers, human rights defenders and other civil society actors,” the experts said in a UN statement. “The space for civil society and independent associations to carry out their legitimate work and activities is becoming impossibly narrow,” they added. The experts also alleged that five people had been killed in wider protests since the start of May, due to

“excessive use of force by security forces”. They blamed a government decision to cut food subsidies for fueling the protests, along with anger over corruption. The statement called for “those responsible for using excessive force to be held to account through comprehensive and independent investigations”. Iran has been mired in economic crisis since the US reimposed sweeping sanctions after then president Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally pulled out of a nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. The country has in recent weeks also been hit by protests sparked by the May 23 partial collapse of a building in the southwestern city of Abadan. Authorities say they have arrested 13 officials, including a mayor and two former mayors, in connection with the disaster, one of Iran’s deadliest in years. But supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last month that protests were being exploited by Iran’s “enemy”, a reference mainly to the US. “It’s a miscalculation that they think they can make the Iranian nation oppose the Islamic republic,” he warned.

Syrians returning from Al-Hol camp stigmatized over Daesh ties

RAQQA, Syria (AFP) — Noura Al-Khalif married a Daesh supporter and then wound up without her husband in a Syrian camp viewed by many as the last surviving pocket of the so-called “caliphate”. The 31-year-old woman has been back in her hometown outside the northern city of Raqqa for three years but she is struggling to shake off the stigma of having lived in the Al-Hol camp. “Most of my neighbors call me a (Daesh) supporter,” she told AFP from her father’s house near Raqqa, where she now lives with her two children. “I just want to forget but people insist on dragging me back, and ever since I left Al-Hol I haven’t felt either financial or emotional comfort.”

Al-Hol, in the Kurdish-controlled northeast, still houses about 56,000 people, mostly Syrians and Iraqis, some of whom maintain links with Daesh. About 10,000 are foreigners, including relatives of Daesh fighters, and observers are increasingly worried what was meant as a temporary detention facility is turning into a terrorist breeding ground. Most of Al-Hol’s residents are people who fled or surrendered during the dying days of Daesh in early 2019. For staying, whether by choice or not, until the very end, they are seen as fanatical Daesh supporters, although the camp’s population also includes civilians displaced by battles against the extremists. The stigma is a challenge for Khalif who arrived in Al-Hol from Baghouz, the riverside hamlet where Daesh was declared definitively defeated by US-backed Kurdish forces. “Al-Hol camp was more merciful

to us than Raqqa. I left the camp for my children and their education, but the situation here is not better,” she said. **Tribal chiefs** In 2014, Khalif married a Saudi-born terrorist and lived with him across several Daesh-held regions before the two were separated by the fighting. She has not heard from her husband since she left for Al-Hol in 2019. After a few months living in the camp, Khalif was permitted to leave along with hundreds of other Syrians under an agreement between Syrian tribal chiefs and Kurdish authorities overseeing the facility. More than 9,000 Syrians have since been allowed to exit Al-Hol under such deals which aim to

empty the camp of nationals, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Khalif’s homecoming has been anything but sweet. She said she struggles to make a living cleaning homes and faces constant suspicion. “Some families won’t let me clean their homes because I wear the niqab (face veil) and because they think I’m a (Daesh) supporter,” she said. “Society won’t accept me.” Raqqa tribal elder Turki Al-Suaan has arranged for the release of 24 families from Al-Hol with the aim of facilitating their reintegration into their communities, but he acknowledged that it was no easy task. Raqqa resident Sara Ibrahim warned that there was a danger in stigmatising people returning to

Raqqa from Al-Hol, most of whom are women and children. “A lot of families in Raqqa refuse to engage with these people and this ... could push them towards extremism in the future,” she said. Fearing prejudice, Amal has kept a low profile since she arrived in Raqqa seven months ago from Al-Hol. The 50-year-old grandmother and members of her family were among the last of those who flooded out of Baghouz, where the extremists made their final stand. “My neighbors in Raqqa do not know that I was in Al-Hol camp, and I fear people will have a bad idea if they know that I was living” there, she said, a niqab covering her face. “As long as I am comfortable with my life ... there is no need for people to know,” she added.



Amal, a former detainee at the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp where relatives of suspected Daesh fighters were held, at her home in Syria’s northern city of Raqqa on June 4, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

Life in the slow lane for Iraq’s gridlocked traffic

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Five years ago, Iraqi taxi driver Osama Mohammed would make about six trips a day across Baghdad. Today, traffic is so bad he feels lucky to do three. “The first thing you see in the morning is traffic jams,” said 40-year-old Mohammed, describing his “exhaustion” at the stop-and-go traffic he endures across the sprawling capital. It has become so bad that he now often turns down fares. “It is better to forget about it because you will spend two hours on the road,” he said. “Your day will end in traffic jams.” Experts point at many reasons for the growing chaos: a post-war mini boom has brought more people and more cars, while the war-battered infrastructure has barely changed.

Security checkpoints still add to the gridlock, a legacy of the years of war and sectarian conflict when Baghdad was rocked by frequent car bombings. Most importantly, political paralysis and a state sector hobbled by widespread corruption have snarled road and rail projects that could bring relief. In a city of eight million, the number of vehicles has surged from 350,000 before 2007 to over 2.5 million today, said Baghdad municipally spokesman Mohammed Al-Rubaye. The research group Future of Iraq estimates that the fuel each vehicle wastes daily by idling in Baghdad traffic jams is equivalent to driving 20km. The problem intensifies air pollution in a country already strug-

gling with more frequent sandstorms, a trend linked to climate change, and blistering summer heat that peaks above 50°C. **Legacy of war** Baghdad’s roadside concrete blast walls may have largely gone, but decades of war have left a legacy of pockmarked roads and dilapidated infrastructure. The country suffered through the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the US-led invasion in 2003, years of sectarian fighting and the battle against Daesh terrorists who were finally defeated in 2017. Since then, entire new neighborhoods and high-rise buildings have sprung up, such as the futuristic new central bank headquarters designed by the firm of late Iraqi-British star architect Zaha Hadid.

The relative stability has accelerated domestic migration, particularly an influx of laborers from the impoverished south. But the capital still lacks a robust public transport system, with no trains or trams and only infrequent buses. A metro rail system would “reduce congestion by 40 percent”, Rubaye estimated, but for now this is a distant dream. One such project was envisioned in 2011 with French firm Alstom. And in 2020 a letter of intent was signed to develop a 20km 14-station elevated metro system. Some \$45 million has already been spent on the project plans, according to former Baghdad governor Faleh Al-Jazairi, but with no visible impact so far.

Xi assures Putin of China's support for Russian 'sovereignty, security'

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping assured his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin of Beijing's support for Moscow on "sovereignty and security" during a call Wednesday, according to state media.

China is "willing to continue to offer mutual support (to Russia) on issues concerning core interests and major concerns such as sovereignty and security," Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported Xi as saying.

It was the second reported call between the two leaders since Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

China has refused to condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and has been accused of providing diplomatic cover for Russia by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv.

According to CCTV, Xi praised the "good momentum of development" in bilateral relations since the start of the year "in the face of global turmoil and changes".

Beijing was willing to "intensify strategic coordination between the two countries", Xi reportedly said.

The Kremlin said the two leaders had agreed to ramp up economic cooperation in the face of "unlawful" Western sanctions.

"It was agreed to expand cooperation in the energy, financial, industrial, transport, and other areas, taking into account the situation in the global economy that has become more complicated due to the unlawful sanctions policy of the West," the Kremlin said following the phone call.

The West has adopted unprecedented sanctions against Russia in retaliation for its invasion of Ukraine and Moscow considers that Europe and the US have thus caused a global economic slowdown.

Moscow is also looking for new markets and suppliers to replace the major foreign firms that left Russia following the invasion.

'No limits' relationship

The EU and US have warned that any backing from Beijing for Russia's war in Ukraine, or help for Moscow to dodge Western sanctions, would damage ties.

China as well as India are two major economies that have not taken part in retaliatory measures against Moscow over its invasion.

In the eyes of Chinese officials, the Europeans have allowed themselves to be sucked into backing Ukraine, at Washington's initiative, in a move contrary to their interests as Russian gas consumers.

Once bitter Cold War enemies, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up cooperation in recent years as a counterbalance to what they see as US global dominance.

The two countries have drawn closer in the political, trade, and military spheres as part of what they call a "no limits" relationship.

The two sides last week unveiled the first road bridge linking the two countries, connecting the far eastern Russian city of Blagoveshchensk with the northern Chinese city of Heihe.

The call Wednesday between the two leaders fell on Xi's 69th birthday and was their first reported communication since the day after Russia launched its invasion of its European neighbor.

Xi, who has described Putin as an "old friend", also invited his Russian counterpart to the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics in early February.

Beijing is Moscow's largest trading partner, with trade volumes last year hitting \$147 billion, according to Chinese customs data, up more than 30 percent on 2019.



European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen (back) looks on as EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson (left), Egyptian Minister of Petroleum Tarek El-Molla (center), and Israeli Minister of Energy Karine Elharrar (right) sign a trilateral natural gas deal at the ministerial meeting of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in Cairo on June 15, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

EU signs gas deal with Egypt, Israel to end 'dependency' on Russia

CAIRO (AFP) — Israel and Egypt plan to boost gas exports to Europe under an agreement signed during a Cairo visit Wednesday by EU Chief Ursula Von der Leyen as the bloc seeks to wean itself off Russian gas.

Von der Leyen also pledged food relief worth 100 million euros (\$104 million) for Egypt, which has been reeling from grain shortages as a result of the Ukraine war.

The European Commission president had vowed on Tuesday, during a visit to Israel, to confront Russia for its use of fossil fuels to

"blackmail" European countries.

The memorandum of understanding on gas exports between Egypt, Israel, and the EU was signed at the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, the Egyptian petroleum ministry said.

In a joint press conference with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Von der Leyen said the memorandum comes as Europe seeks to "get rid of its dependency on Russian fossil fuels".

Under a landmark \$15 billion deal in 2020, Israel already exports gas from an offshore field to Egypt,

where it is liquefied and shipped to European countries.

But a significant increase in gas exports from Israel via Egypt would require major long-term infrastructure investments.

Von der Leyen also pledged "immediate relief of 100 million euros" to support food security in Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, which has relied on Russia and Ukraine for over 80 percent of its wheat.

She also pledged 3 billion euros in "agriculture, nutrition, water, and sanitation programs over the next

years here in the region".

Sisi said Von der Leyen's first official visit builds on the recent "intense momentum" of Egyptian relations with the EU.

During her Israel visit, von der Leyen had accused Moscow of deliberately cutting off gas supplied to European countries "in retaliation for our support to Ukraine".

"This is a big step forward in the energy supply to Europe, but also for Egypt to become a regional energy hub," she said in Cairo, also highlighting Egypt's renewable energy potential.

Before Roe ruling, clinics in some states have already stopped abortions

(NYT) — Although Roe vs Wade remains the law of the land, women can no longer get a legal abortion in two states, Oklahoma and South Dakota. In at least one other, Missouri, they can no longer make an appointment. And in a fourth state, Wisconsin, clinics will not schedule abortions for after the end of the Supreme Court's term in late June.

Before May 2, when a draft Supreme Court opinion that would overturn Roe was leaked, there had been at least one abortion clinic in every state. But in some states, health care providers are not waiting for the actual decision to be issued to start operating as if Roe were overturned.

"It's already happening," said Caitlin Myers, a professor of economics at Middlebury College who studies abortion accessibility. She is leading a national survey of abortion clinics and supplied data on her recent findings, which was verified by The New York Times.

The changes in the last few weeks suggest how quickly an overturning of Roe could reduce abortion access across the South and Midwest, which would be a hard-fought victory for the anti-abortion movement. Roe guarantees a constitutional right to abortion until the point of fetal viability, around 23 weeks, and without it, around half of states are expected to ban the procedure. Many of those states already had limited access — six had a single clinic, and three had two — and various restrictions that made abortions harder to get. Now it is changing from hard to impossible, at least without crossing state lines.

In Oklahoma, clinics have stopped operating because the state passed a new ban, even though it clearly conflicts with Roe. "We haven't had abortion for two and half weeks," said Susan Braselton, a clinic escort and a board member of the Roe Fund in Oklahoma, which helps patients finance abortions.

"From the moment life begins at conception is when we have a responsibility as human beings to do everything we can to protect that baby's life and the life of the mother," Governor Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma said in a statement upon signing the ban last month. "If other states want to pass different laws, that is their right, but in Oklahoma we will always stand up for life."

The only clinic in South Dakota, Planned Parenthood in Sioux Falls,



A flag reading "Don't Tread on My Uterus" is displayed outside the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC on June 04, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

which also served patients from North Dakota and Minnesota, performed its last abortion Monday, even though the state has not yet banned it. Abortions at the clinic were already sporadic. A Minnesota doctor flew in around once a month to provide them.

And in some other states, legal abortion has become much more scarce. In Idaho there were four clinics, but Planned Parenthood in Boise closed June 1. At another, Compassionate Abortion Care in Boise, the only doctor is set to take a summer vacation, and staff members are telling patients that abortion may not be legal by the time he returns. A third is offering only medication abortion.

At Planned Parenthood clinics across the country, phone recordings tell callers that abortion remains legal and accessible, but some have stopped scheduling abortions.

A banner at the top of the website for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin says: "Our doors are open. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin will continue to help patients get the care they need — including safe and legal abortion. No matter what." But the organization there decided to stop offering any new appointments for abortion after June 25, anticipating that the court might release its opinion two days later, on its last

scheduled decision day. Wisconsin still has an 1849 law on the books criminalizing abortion.

Danika Severino Wynn, the vice president for abortion access at the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in a statement that local affiliates were independently deciding what to do as the court's decision nears.

"Planned Parenthood affiliates in these states that are extremely hostile to abortion access are being forced to make the difficult decision whether or not to suspend providing abortion services following the court's decision, due to their state's legal landscape," she said.

Even in states that intend to ban abortions, many would allow the procedure to save the life of the mother or for pregnancies caused by rape or incest. But with clinics closing in states with bans, women eligible for such care may still need to travel to receive it.

The legal limbo has also been confusing for patients, said Dr Erin King, executive director of the Hope Clinic for Women in Granite City, Illinois.

"Every time a restriction is enacted in a state, there's mass confusion about how to comply and what it means," she said. "After the leak, we had patients calling to ask if abortion was still legal."

"Trying to get information out — as providers and organizations who work directly with patients, that's a huge part of the role."

She said that — for now — the message they give patients is: "Abortion is legal in this country. It may be very difficult to access in some states, but it is legal."

Türkiye wants written response from Finland, Sweden over NATO bid concerns

ANKARA (AFP) — Türkiye said on Wednesday that it was waiting for a "written response" from Sweden and Finland to Ankara's objections to their NATO bids.

"We have transmitted our questions in writing to these two countries," Türkiye Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters.

"Now we're waiting for their written responses," he said.

The two Nordic countries reversed decades of military non-alignment by applying for NATO memberships in May, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Any NATO membership deal must, however, be unanimously approved by all 30 members of the alliance, and Türkiye has thrown a spanner in the works and blocked their bids.

Ankara is accusing the Nordic neighbors of providing a safe haven for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, listed as a "terrorist" group by Türkiye and its Western allies.

Türkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told members of his party on Wednesday that "as long as Sweden and Finland don't adopt con-



Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. (Photo: AFP)

crete measures on the fight against terrorism, our position will not change."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Monday, during a visit to Sweden, that NATO was working "hard and actively" to resolve Türkiye's concerns "as soon as

possible".

Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin acknowledged on Tuesday that the Nordic bids could stall if agreement with Türkiye is not reached before a summit later in June.

WTO talks extend to Thursday

GENEVA (AFP) — The World Trade Organization's ministerial conference will run over into a fifth day Thursday in the hope of striking thus-far elusive deals on fishing subsidies, food security and combating COVID-19.

The gathering of trade ministers at the WTO's headquarters in Geneva was due to wrap up on Wednesday, with the global trade body hoping to prove it still has a role to play in tackling big global challenges.

But WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who has hinged her leadership on breathing new life into the sclerotic organisation, said landmark deals were within reach if ministers ploughed on.

She said countries "feel that we really can cross the line on some of these things if we gave it a bit more time".

The last WTO ministerial conference, in December 2017 in Buenos Aires, was widely considered a flop, closing without a major agreement.

The global trade body only takes decisions by consensus among all 164 members.

Okonjo-Iweala, who took office in March 2021, is keen to make the WTO a relevant player on the international stage.

The former finance and foreign

minister of Nigeria was hoping to pull off a coup by securing a long-sought deal on curbing harmful fishing subsidies.

Negotiations towards banning subsidies that encourage overfishing and threaten the sustainability of the planet's fish stocks have been going on at the WTO for more than two decades.

Diplomats say a deal is closer now than ever before.

But India threw a spanner in the works late Tuesday, insisting it would not sign up without a 25-year exemption — far longer than many are comfortable with.

Besides fisheries, the WTO conference is trying to strike deals on agriculture, food security, COVID-19 vaccine patents, the WTO's response to pandemics, and reform of the organization itself.

Despite the overtime, one diplomatic source close to the negotiations said it was "not yet clear that there is a deal to be had".

Some emerging from the negotiating rooms are blaming Indian intransigence on not just fisheries but on every topic.

'Saving WTO, not lives'

Ministers are discussing the possibility of imposing a temporary waiver

on COVID-19 vaccine patents.

But serious objections remain from some countries that host major pharmaceutical companies, like the UK and Switzerland, notably on the scope of the proposals.

NGOs believe the text does not go nearly far enough.

Civil society activists staged a "die-in" protest in the WTO's atrium, accusing the EU, Britain, Switzerland, and the US of thwarting a meaningful COVID intellectual property waiver.

"The proposal on the table is intended to save the reputation of the WTO but it will not save a human life from the pandemic," demonstration organizer Deborah James told AFP.

Swiss economy minister Guy Parmelin insisted he remained against a wide-ranging waiver, adding that "patents have not slowed access to vaccines — quite the opposite".

As for whether the Swiss were isolated, he said many other nations were simply "hiding their cards", with a touch of "hypocrisy in certain countries".

A second pandemic-related text being negotiated seeks to tackle supply constraints faced by certain countries in getting hold of COVID-fighting tools.



MORE REGION & WORLD ONLINE
jordannews.jo

Russia maintains grip on Syria while mired in Ukraine

HAID HAID

IN LATE February, when Russia launched its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, regional analysts began speculating how the fighting would impact Moscow's military presence in Syria. The guesswork did not last long. Faced with unexpected resilience from Ukraine's army, Russia reportedly began to withdraw infantry, aviation, and engineering units from various parts of Syria.

As a result, many assumed that Moscow's willingness — or even its ability — to support Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad had been wounded by overextension in Ukraine. The conclusion: Russia's military role in Syria would be significantly decreased.

But recent developments on the ground tell a much different story. In addition to reinforcing its forces in northern Syria in response to Turkish threats of a cross-border military operation, Moscow is carrying out operations as before with joint air force drills with Damascus over the war-torn country, and humanitarian aid to people in Sweida and Hassakeh.

Taken together, these activities suggest that despite decreasing its presence in Syria, Russia is determined to mobilize its forces there to maintain its means of influence.

Since September 2015, an estimated 63,000 Russian military personnel have been deployed to Syria. While the number of soldiers currently stationed in the country is likely much lower, what's important to recognize is that Moscow does not actually need to keep many troops there to maintain an operational advantage. That's because the level of active fighting has dramatically decreased since March 2020, after the ceasefire brokered by Russia and Türkiye in Idlib. With somewhat frozen frontlines, Russia can recall units from Syria without fear of a pushback from opposition forces.

A more accurate measure of Russia's influence in Syria is its ability to stabilize the fractured north, and so far, Moscow's war in Ukraine has had little effect on that mission.

In fact, Russia has increased its activities in the northern part of the country to deter Türkiye from carrying out a new military operation against Kurdish factions based there. In late May, Moscow deployed soldiers, six Ka-52 "Alligator" attack helicopters, and two Su-34 fighter bombers to the Qamishli airport, according to Syrian media. It also deployed military convoys with dozens of vehicles to the cities of Manbij and Tel Rifaat.

More importantly, Russia has increased its air force activities over the Syria-Türkiye border as well as the frontlines in Hassakeh and Aleppo governorates. The aim of these activities is to ensure that a new Turkish offensive cannot take place without a green light from Moscow.

Meanwhile, Moscow remains engaged in mediating between the Syrian regime and Kurdish fighters in the northeast. Despite the absence of active hostilities between Damascus and Kurdish soldiers, clashes are still common in the region, and Russia's ability to ease tensions is often tested. The latest round of Russian-led negotiations occurred in April, when Russia succeeded in getting rival Kurdish and Syrian government forces to lift sieges held against each other. The deal demonstrates Moscow's continued ability to act as a mediator.

Russia also appears determined to stand between Iran and Israel to prevent any escalation between those two states. For instance, Russia has allowed Israeli warplanes to use Syrian airspace to target Iranian-linked sites and arms shipments in Syria. Russia has also continued to prevent Iran from deploying its allies close to Israel's borders.

At the same time, however, Russia has pressured Israel to limit airstrikes in Syria, in deference to Iran's interests; reportedly fired S-300 missiles at Israeli jets over Syria; and carried out joint patrols along the occupied Golan Heights in simulated confrontation with "hostile" warplanes and drones.

Beyond its military presence, Russia's ability to influence events in Syria is contingent on the financial support it provides to allied militias. While information about Russia's funding to local militias in Syria is scant, according to Syrian news websites, Moscow does appear to have transferred roughly \$250,000 in May to pay some 16,000 fighters affiliated with local armed groups.

How long this support will last is unclear. Financial difficulties caused by the war in Ukraine could hamper Moscow's ability to continue funding a second war effort. If Russian money dries up, some militias might agree to be paid by Iran or the Syrian regime, but former rebels in the south operating under the umbrella of the Fifth Corps, which remains hostile to Tehran and Damascus, are unlikely to do so peacefully. Such a development could further destabilize southern Syria, which in turn would threaten Jordan's national security across the border

through a new wave of refugees and smuggling. Hence, Russia's continued involvement in Syria has security implications beyond the troubled north. Moscow's shifting role in Syria will remain a topic of intense regional speculation. But while the war in Ukraine is stretching Russia's military capacity and altering its strategic priorities, it's hard to imagine any scenario in which Moscow completely abandons its role in maintaining Syria's fragile status quo. On the contrary, Russia's Ukraine-fueled withdrawal from Syria, once eagerly predicted, now seems like wistful conjecture.

The writer is a Syrian columnist and a consulting associate fellow of Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa program. Syndication Bureau, www.syndicationbureau.com

Comprehensive strategies are a must for public morale

AMER AL-SABAILEH



LAST WEEK, Jordan witnessed the launching of the Economic Modernization Vision, representing a national roadmap across sectors to be implemented in three phases over the coming 10 years. And while this approach is not novel for Jordan, the aftermath of the launch revealed some necessary steps that must be taken to ensure the gap between citizens and policy is bridged.

Within less than 24 hours of launching the economic plan, vague statements by two ministers emerged regarding increasing the prices of fuel four consecutive times in the coming months. The most intriguing statement was that of the Minister of Interior, a stranger to the economic file, who contradicted relevant statements during a meeting with a group of investors in Al-Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid.

Contradicting statements by representatives of different sectors are definitely not leading Jordan towards bridging the aforementioned gap. This

situation can well explain the ineffectiveness many of these policies can bring, which leads to frustration and high levels of pessimism among the people in Jordan. The government's narrative and the following policies should always be comprehensive and clear, not provocative and contradicting.

Lack of harmony and understating by those who are supposed to be targets for the policies is unfortunate and not acknowledged. Yet, it is the reason behind the prevailing negativism and pessimism, especially given that policies should aim at generating positive perceptions among the people.

The path towards enhancing the sense of responsibility and optimism among the people while preparing them for imminent hardships can be achieved through a national narrative that is convincing and aided by a change in both the implementation of the public policies and in the conduct of the public figures. In addition, the people must be part of the solution without suffering continuous financial and physiological pressure.

Right now, it is beyond any doubt that having a comprehensive long-term strategy that addresses all aspects of Jordanian lives — including microeconomic reforms and enhancing critical thinking skills amongst the population — is of utmost importance.

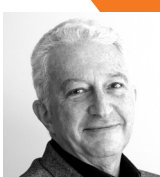


(Photo: Envato Elements)

Radio broadcasts still have a long way to go

JEAN-CLAUDE ELIAS

TECH-BIT



DO DIGITAL radio broadcasts signal the end of frequency modulation, or FM? It is unlikely that the end will occur soon, especially since most countries have not yet adopted the technology.

Despite the wide availability of countless digital channels, networks, and ways to choose and listen to your music in high-definition sound quality, the good old, time-honored radio broadcast still has its audience and even has a long way to go.

Regardless of the support it is stored on or the internet service streaming it to you, the music you play from your own collection is music you select. Radio programs, on the other hand, make you feel like there is someone out there talking to you and choosing the music for you, bringing a pleasant feeling of the unexpected, the irreplaceable element of surprise. From a psychological viewpoint, this is priceless. This is even more accentuated if the broadcast includes not just music but also news and commercials. Entertainment and human communication are keywords here.

Some people still tune in to their favorite FM radio station at home or in the office. Still, the majority turn to the radio while driving in their car because of the convenience, the feeling of communication, and the fact that you can leave the radio playing on endlessly and focus on the road.

In terms of quality of sound, that is another story altogether. In most countries, the standard is still the FM radio, which does not quite cut it anymore, at least compared to the various digital contents we have gotten accustomed to. Limited audio spectrum, heavy compression, congestion, signal loss,

and interferences are technical elements that make FM a less-than-perfect medium.

This is where Digital Audio Broadcast (DAB) enters. In terms of sound quality and signal stability, DAB is clearly superior to FM. However, currently, just one country out of approximately three globally provides DAB and enhanced DAB (DAB+) services.

In the Arab world, and according to worldradio.org, the site of the reference DAB organization, only Kuwait, Qatar, and Tunisia have regular DAB broadcast services, whereas Algeria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are still in the trial phase and are setting up their norms and regulations. As for Bahrain and Jordan, they are said to "have an interest in the subject". Worldradio.org adds: "A DAB+ workshop and trial took place in Amman in August 2017 organized by WorldDAB and Arab States Broadcasting Union, and hosted by Jordan Radio TV and the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)."

TRC confirmed, over the phone, that there were no DAB broadcasts for the time being in the country. Importers of audio equipment have also confirmed that no DAB-enabled radio sets or receivers, be it for cars or homes, are imported into Jordan.

In terms of digital radio, apart from DAB, which is mainly considered a replacement for FM, one can always go to internet radios. Ligo.co.uk estimates that there are some 30,000 such stations in the world — an overwhelming number to choose from. This very wide choice is by itself a major advantage, given that it lets you select the exact type of program or music that you like, in the language that you prefer.

The disadvantage is the average sound quality.

To preserve internet bandwidth, most often over WiFi, most stations are set with an encoding of 128kbps, with some set at 256kbps, which is still short of the better 320kbps. Therefore, internet radio sound quality is similar to that of the average Youtube music videos — except that the latter comes with the obvious image element advantage.

Radio is about relating to and listening to broadcasts from a remote location in the world, would not be as interesting to you, except in very special cases. Plus, the unmatched convenience of pressing just one button on your car stereo and listening to your favorite DJ is something internet radio cannot provide.

Listening to recorded music has continuously and repeatedly evolved over the last 50 years. From the analog times of the mediocre-sounding audio cassette tapes and the glorious vinyl records that were the reigning storage media until around 1985, the digital world has since taken us to the CD and now to audio streaming.

Depending on where we are at a given time of the day and what we are doing, we have a wide choice of means and channels, analog and digital. While on the road, however, nothing beats the good old radio.

The writer is a computer engineer and a classically trained pianist and guitarist. He has been regularly writing IT articles, reviewing music albums, and covering concerts for more than 30 years.



BECOMING: A TALE ABOUT BREAKING THE CHAINS



(Photos: Handouts from Tamara Al-Ajlouney)



By Roa'a AbuNada

BECOMING IS a bold, no-holds-barred visual storytelling of several up-and-coming filmmaking students. This short film tightly packs a complex tale about breaking away from societal chains and the right to forge individual identities. It also explores themes of freedom and discrimination, which are highlighted through a series of fragmented scenes.

The film follows Akka, a young woman in her twenties, who is dissatisfied with her job at a local bookshop. She dreams of being a contemporary dancer but suppresses this desire due to financial difficulties, social norms, and societal expectations. She neither has the courage to accept her inner calling nor to pursue dancing as she anticipates the challenges and rejections she will experience.

On a regular day at the bookshop, while reading as usual, Akka unconsciously starts tapping on the table. This tapping opens a portal to a dream-like reality where music begins to play. She initially resists going with the flow of the music, but gradually starts breaking the invisible chains, following the rhythm, and moving freely with the beat. Eventually, she comes out of the other-worldly portal and returns to her seat at the bookshop with a full understanding of what she really wants.

The alternating scenes of her consistent torments, daily burdens, current life, and future lives paints a glowing aura of shadows. Akka overcomes these difficulties in vivid flashes, attempting to break free from the normative mold. The story is a metaphor of a woman dis-

covering her two identities and of not having the life she desires. These strong ulterior messages are communicated to affirm people's, especially women's, choices and, more importantly, the freedom of choice itself.

A motif in the film and its posters is a pearl necklace firmly wrapped around a fish. "There is a symbolism behind the fish and the pearls. The fish dances around freely in the water, but as soon as it is moved out of its safe zone, it dies. Fish, unlike other animals, do not decay immediately after death; they keep an appearance of freshness," said Tamara Al-Ajlouney, the film's director.

According to Ajlouney, there are several references in the film inspired by other visual works: "We mainly took (the television show) *Euphoria* as a makeup reference. Marcell Rév, the cinematographer of *Euphoria*, tried to emulate emotions through colors, so the strong red we choose helped elevate the visuals out of reality and push the emotions into the image. The red symbolizes rebellion, breaking restrictions, and the strength derived from freedom."

"For the dramatic smash cuts that interrupt the dancing, we got this inspiration for this editing technique from the movie *Lucy*, which is to put unrelated images together to deliver certain feelings or ideas."

"Even the chained fish with pearls is inspired by a painting by René Magritte, who was a surrealist painter. Surrealism goes perfectly with our concept that balances rational visions of life and the one that assert the power of the unconscious and dreams. And we believe that the first step to achieving your dream and breaking all chains is to accept that dream in the conscious and the unconscious mind."

The film's crew consists of stu-

"We mainly took (the television show) *Euphoria* as a makeup reference. Marcell Rév, the cinematographer of *Euphoria*, tried to emulate emotions through colors, so the strong red we choose helped elevate the visuals out of reality and push the emotions into the image. The red symbolizes rebellion, breaking restrictions, and the strength derived from freedom."



dents who took a filmmaking class together, Ajlouney explained. "We did not know one another well but we recognized that we all shine in different ways. Some of us multi-tasked our way till we go the final film. I not only directed the film, but I also co-wrote the script with Hesham Al-Karshan, who served as cinematographer and assisted Akka Hamdan in the post-production process. Akka was our main performer, Mayar Kabajah and her sister Lour oversaw costume design and hair styling, while Hala Aljabrah did an outstanding job on the makeup," Ajlouney said.

The crew went through several brainstorming sessions before coming up with the final concept. Filming began on May 14 at Sanad Bookshop in downtown Amman. They moved to a dancing room at the University of Jordan's Faculty of Arts and Design. Filming concluded on May 27 when the last scenes were shot at Kabajah's house.

A booklet was created to record the process of making the film. It includes the conflict, structure, storyboards, shot list, call sheet, outfit sketches, and makeup looks. The booklet will serve as a way for the crew to remember the moments they shared while working on their debut film.

This type of ambitious work highlights the potential of college students and how they should be empowered to pursue their creative interests. Ajlouney told *Jordan News*: "One of the biggest challenges was to bring our vision to life on a low budget. We paid for everything from our own personal stipend, and we got all the equipment we needed through friends and connections. Even the locations we scouted were given to us for free."

"After pouring our hearts into this, we finally got to see it on the big screen in a screening event facilitated by our beloved professor, Diran Malatjalian, who has been our biggest supporter since day one, at the University of Jordan. Hopefully, we will be participating in screenings and film festivals around the world," Ajlouney concluded.





A view of the Grand Canyon landscape from the top of the Bright Angel Trail, in Arizona, on March 5, 2020. (Photos: NYT)

TRAVEL

Hiking down to Phantom Ranch, the Grand Canyon’s ‘destination hotel’

(NYT) — When a friend first mentioned the Grand Canyon’s Phantom Ranch, I could not believe my ears. It’s America’s most elusive hotel reservation, she said, the only lodging within the canyon itself, all 446km of it. A cluster of century-old stone cabins tucked along a stream, reachable only by mule ride or by trudging down nearly 1.6km into the crust of the earth.

“Rustic, amazing, gorgeous” were some of her words. But you must plan well in advance. “They do reservations by lottery a year out,” she warned.

I dashed home and jumped online.

When I was lucky enough to secure a cabin for my family for 13 months later, in November 2019, I felt like I was throwing a pebble into an unknowable future. I was fending off a cancer attack, living scan to scan. As I plodded through another barrage of radiation and chemotherapy, my doctors smiled sympathetically when I kept saying that I had to be fit enough to get to Phantom Ranch.

My family of four arrived at our appointed day, just after sunrise at the top of the South Kaibab Trail, laughing at the idea that Phantom Ranch is, truly, the ultimate destination hotel. The entire point of the place is the experience involved in getting there.

“The Lowest Down Ranch in the World,” wrote the Coconino Sun newspaper when the lodgings opened in 1922. Mary Jane Colter, the pioneering architect for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, had turned a rustic out-

post where Teddy Roosevelt once camped into an oasis for the smart set. Her cabins and dining hall (which seconds as a general store and post office) are all built of the native stone. Every egg and can of beer to the ranch comes down from the South Rim by mule train.

Now owned by the National Park Service and run by a private contractor, Phantom Ranch usually sleeps around 90, in 11 private cabins and four dorms that are divided by gender. But since our two-night stay, the pandemic has changed much of the experience that my family had just weeks before the coronavirus first cropped up in China. Under the current rules, the dorms are closed and several of the cabins are being used by staff, reducing the number of nightly guests to 52. Instead of the traditional family-style meals in the dining hall, campers must now fetch breakfast and dinner from a window to eat outside or in their cabins.

Phantom Ranch usually sleeps around 90, in 11 private cabins and four dorms that are divided by gender.



One of the 11 cabins at Phantom Ranch in Grand Canyon, Arizona, on March 5, 2020. This unique hotel is reachable only by mule or by trudging down nearly a mile into the crust of the earth.

A far bigger interruption is set for next year, when the park service will embark on a long-delayed upgrade of the ranch’s wastewater treatment plant. Starting in May, the fabled lodge will be shuttered for months — and possibly even a year — as workers shuttle new pipes and pumps down by helicopter. So, for now, the lottery is not taking further reservations, although cancellations do still make cabins available from time to time. New openings are posted on the Phantom Ranch website.

The day of our descent, we sent our single shared duffel down by mule train and set out with day-packs stuffed only with water and lunch. We could see the measure of our hiking across the canyon in the bands of white, yellow, red, and gray stone, each marking a geologic stratum of billions of days.

For most of the morning we walked alone, the four of us, separated by a few hundred yards, as other hikers came and went. We had so much to see and so little need to talk of it. We each kept our own pace, with our younger daughter, Frances, then 22, leading the way and my wife, Shailagh, picking up the rear. We would come to a vista and pause to marvel at how far we had come, or to shake our heads in amazement at the vast temples of stone around us.

We had covered at least 6.5km of ground and perhaps 536m in elevation before we caught our first full glimpse of the Colorado River, the creator of all this. We thrilled at the sight, but also at the sound of water in a land of silence. Down the last corkscrew trail, we entered a tunnel burrowed through the rock and crossed the elegant, 94-year-old suspension bridge that crosses the Colorado.

Frances and her older sister, Lilly, were already on the other side, at Boat Beach, with Lilly, then 24, gleefully up to her ankles in the river. I came down, tossing off shoes and socks and shirt, and plunged into the river. The river’s chill and strong westward pull provided a moment of arrival like few others. I surfaced to see my family there, bathed in sunlight and surrounded by unimaginable splendor. A rumbling laugh rose inside me that became like a sob but was entirely of joy and exaltation.

Cabin 7, was a small stone structure with an elegant roofline painted green. ... (It had) no TV, no mint on the pillow. We could hear the creek rushing past and see the cottonwoods out the window.

We walked into Phantom Ranch along Bright Angel Creek, beneath cottonwoods, alders, and acacias. Our home for the next two nights, Cabin 7, was a small stone structure with an elegant roofline painted green and brown, two bunks inside, a sink, a small bathroom. No TV, no mint on the pillow. We could hear the creek rushing past and see the cottonwoods out the window.

The resident ranger advised we not miss the wee hours when the Milky Way had the moonless sky to itself. So that night, I sneaked out around 4am to absorb the spectacle and see the day arrive. Sitting on the riverbank, I was dazzled as a bluish glow crept ever so slowly along the eastward rim until it erased the froth of the most distant stars and left only the brightest constellations. I walked back for breakfast thinking how we could all use more days that start like that.

Stuffed with pancakes and coffee, we had before us a full day to do as we pleased. That meant heading out on achy legs to the winding North Kaibab Trail that runs along Bright Angel Creek to the North Rim. We sneaked up the narrow but marvelous canyon carved by Phantom Creek, one of the thousands of such crevasses that have formed the whole of Grand Canyon. Water is the scarcest commodity here but is also the artist of all you see. Perched on rocks along the creek, we ate bag lunches.

On our last day, we set out well before sunrise for a return hike nearly 16km in distance and close to 1,600m in elevation up the Bright Angel Trail. Our sore legs soon loosened, and for the next five hours, we loped up through the layers of stone. Many times, looking up, we laughed to see the cliff face we’d need to ascend, switchback by switchback, to get to the canyon’s rim.

This break in the stone has served for millennia as the main path in and out of the canyon. The whole of it speaks to continuance. The century-old Phantom Ranch will have its restorative pause and reopen its doors, ready for the next century. From the canyon’s rim, we whooped and gasped and turned to look back. It was hard to believe that enchanted oasis was even there, way down at the bottom of all that.

The river’s chill and strong westward pull provided a moment of arrival like few others.



Hikers heading down the South Kaibab Trail in Grand Canyon, Arizona, on March 5, 2020.



A Variety of different kinds of tea: herbal, black, green, red, and fruit tea. (Photo: Envato Elements)

GOOD FOOD

Craving summertime mocktails that shine? Make sure to include tea

By Rebekah Pepler

In early 2020, I developed long COVID and stopped being able to tolerate alcohol. In my experience, it was among the triggers of relapses so severe I would spend long stretches of time incapacitated with renewed symptoms of extreme fatigue, brain fog, tachycardia, and more. As a food and drinks writer, this presented a particularly distressing work challenge: How could I create recipes that I could not always have? The tea cabinet offered endless inspiration. Teas have long imbued alcoholic drinks with both tannic qualities and aromatic range. (Think whiskey-laced toddies or 17th-century batched drinks like Regent’s Punch.) They can also lend a wide range of depth and character to nonalcoholic drinks.

“Tea is a really good way to build complexity into a cocktail,” said John deBary, a New York City-based bar expert, author and founder of the nonalcoholic drink brand Proteau. “Black tea, green tea, and Lapsang souchong are all really good go-tos when I make a nonalcoholic drink.” Whether your tea is bagged or loose-leaf, a household blend or single origin from a specific region and terroir, deBary suggests thinking about its application: The more ingredients in a drink, the less

emphasis there is on the specific tea’s flavor. While he often works with specialty teas, he emphasized that “the best tool is what you have with you.” Once you have chosen your tea, draw out its flavor by using one of two extraction methods, hot or cold. Steeping tea leaves in hot water before straining offers an immediate perk: The tea component of your drink is ready to use (after cooling to room temperature). Brewing teas longer and thus stronger also allows for stronger tea flavor and, often, more tannins, which can give your nonalcoholic drink a spirited mouthfeel. If you are using the tea in a mixed drink with many components, the hot method

is fine. However, if you have time and don’t want to risk over-extracting your tea (and creating an astringent infusion), deBary recommends the cold brew method: combining tea with cold water and letting it sit overnight in the refrigerator. To build tea-based drinks, experiment with complementary flavors. DeBary often pairs green tea with grapefruit or black tea with lemon. Chamomile, floral, and botanical mix especially well with a vegetal celery simple syrup and fresh lime in a nonalcoholic Celery Sour, while the tannins in strongly brewed black tea play well with a spiced, salted lime cordial and ginger beer in an alcohol-free Dark ‘n’ Stormy Mocktail.

These days, after about a year of not drinking and a slow road to regaining my tolerance, I can again drink alcohol without worry of a symptom relapse, though I still imbibe in much smaller measures than my pre-long COVID body allowed. The Celery Sour mocktail in particular has become a recent favorite. I pour the drink as is for myself and add a splash of mezcal or gin to my partner’s, both of us raising our slightly green, chamomile-laced glasses to the complexity, character, and nuance that tea offers to drinks across the alcohol spectrum.

This article originally appeared in The New York Times.

Celery Sour Mocktail

Serve this bright, refreshing nonalcoholic mixed drink up in a chilled cocktail glass, or stretch it by pouring it over ice in a lowball glass and topping with a splash of soda water or tonic. However you choose to serve it, reserve the extra celery simple syrup and use it as a replacement for regular simple syrup in all manner of drinks, nonalcoholic and spirited, alike. Or, if you do not have time to make the celery simple syrup for this drink, you can substitute in standard 1:1 simple syrup, though the resulting sour will lose some of its vegetal nuance.

ment for regular simple syrup in all manner of drinks, nonalcoholic and spirited, alike. Or, if you do not have time to make the celery simple syrup for this drink, you can substitute in standard 1:1 simple syrup, though the resulting sour will lose some of its vegetal nuance.

RECIPES

YIELD: 1 MOCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS
For the celery simple syrup
1 cup sugar
4 whole allspice berries
10 black peppercorns
Pinch of flaky sea salt (optional)
1 cup celery leaves (or 1/2 cup celery leaves and 1/2 cup parsley leaves)
For the Chamomile tea base

2 chamomile tea bags (or 2 tablespoons loose leaf tea)
2 (3-inch) pieces lemon peel
For the mocktail
1/2 lime, cut into quarters
1/2 celery stalk, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
3/4 ounce celery simple syrup
3 ounces chilled Chamomile tea
Ice

INSTRUCTIONS
> Step 1: Prepare the celery simple syrup: In a small saucepan, combine sugar, allspice, peppercorns, and salt (if using) with 1 cup of water. Heat over low, stirring frequently, just until sugar dissolves, about three minutes. Remove from the heat, add the celery leaves (and parsley leaves, if using). Set aside to steep at room temperature for one or two hours. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing on the solids. (You should have about 1 1/2 cups syrup.) Keep it in the refrigerator, tightly covered in an airtight container, for up to three weeks.
> Step 2: Prepare the chamomile tea base: In a tea kettle or small saucepan over high heat, bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Remove from the heat, add the tea and lemon peels. Allow to steep for 10 minutes, then remove the tea bags and peels or, if using loose-leaf tea, strain through a fine-mesh sieve and set aside to cool completely. Keep it chilled in the refrigerator, tightly covered in an airtight container, for up to five days.
> Step 3: Prepare the mocktail: In a shaker, add lime, celery pieces and the simple syrup. Muddle to smash and release the lime’s juices. Add the chilled chamomile tea and ice. Cover and shake vigorously until well chilled, about 15 seconds. Strain into a chilled Nick and Nora or coupe glass.



(Photo: Envato Elements)



Celery Sour Mocktails. (Photo: NYTimes)

Dark ‘n’ Stormy Mocktail

Strongly brewed black tea anchors this nonalcoholic take on a classic Dark ‘n’ Stormy, lending its rich tannins to the final drink. When choosing a black tea, look to Darjeeling, English or Irish breakfast, or Assam. (For something without caffeine, reach for buckwheat tea and increase the brew time to 20 minutes.) The spices in the salted lime cordial are easily shifted to your pantry and preferences. If you do not have ground ginger, totally fine. If you want to add cardamom, go for it. The point is to infuse the cordial with a warmth that complements the ginger beer’s sharp spice. Please do not, however, skip the salt. The hit of salinity enhances the cordial’s flavors. Leftover cordial – sweet, spiced, and deeply sour, can be mixed on its own with sparkling water or tonic or, if you are looking to incorporate it into an alcoholic drink, into a gimlet.

ger, totally fine. If you want to add cardamom, go for it. The point is to infuse the cordial with a warmth that complements the ginger beer’s sharp spice. Please do not, however, skip the salt. The hit of salinity enhances the cordial’s flavors. Leftover cordial – sweet, spiced, and deeply sour, can be mixed on its own with sparkling water or tonic or, if you are looking to incorporate it into an alcoholic drink, into a gimlet.

RECIPES

YIELD: 1 MOCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS
For the salted lime cordial
Finely grated zest from 6 limes
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1 1/4 cups fresh lime juice (from about 6 limes)
For the chilled black tea
2 black tea bags (or 2 tablespoons loose-leaf black tea, such as Darjeeling)
For the mocktail
Ice
3 ounces chilled black tea
1 ounce salted lime cordial
4 ounces fresh ginger beer
Lime wedge

INSTRUCTIONS
> Step 1: Make the cordial: In a medium bowl, combine the lime zest, sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger, pepper, and cloves. Use your fingers to rub the zest and spices into the sugar until the sugar is green and very fragrant. Slowly pour in the lime juice, whisking to combine and dissolve the sugar completely. Cover and refrigerate for at least 12 hours, up to 24. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing on the solids. (You should have about 1 1/2 cups cordial.) Discard the solids, and keep the cordial in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to one week.
> Step 2: Make the chilled black tea: In a tea kettle or small saucepan over high heat, bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Remove from the heat, add the tea. Allow to steep for 10 minutes, then remove the tea bags or, if using loose-leaf tea, strain through a fine-mesh sieve and set aside to cool completely, then refrigerate. Keep it chilled in the refrigerator, tightly covered in an airtight container, for up to five days.
> Step 3: Make the mocktail: Fill a highball glass with ice. Add the tea and cordial. Top with ginger beer, stir gently to combine and finish with a lime wedge.



Dark ‘n’ Stormy Mocktails. (Photo: NYTimes)



(Photo: Envato Elements)

READERS BOOKS

A presentation of ‘history at its most gripping’ time

Set in Venice, 1522, intelligence arrives from the East, confirming Europe's greatest fear: the vastly rich Ottoman Sultan has all he needs to wage total war, and his sights are set on Rome. With Christendom divided, Suleyman the Magnificent has his hand on its throat.

From the palaces of Istanbul to the blood-soaked fields of Central Europe and the scorched coasts of North Africa, *The Lion House* pioneers a bold new style of eye-witness history to tell a true story of power at its most glittering, personal, and perilous: Suleyman's rise to become the most feared and powerful man of the 16th century.

It is a journey built on brutal choices and intimate relationships: the Greek slave who becomes Suleyman's closest friend, the Venetian plutocrat who sells him gems and wins him allies, and the Russian consort who steals his heart.

Within a decade, Suleyman had mastery over millions of souls, from Baghdad to the walls of Vienna, while his pirate admiral Barbarossa dominated the Mediterranean. And yet, the real drama takes place in small rooms and whispered conversations: as the Sultan exchanges love letters with his own vizier, as he awakes in terror after dreaming of his own assassination.

The Lion House is not just the story of two civilizations in an existential duel or a story of one of the most consequential lives in world history. It is a tale of the timeless pull of power, dangerous to live with, deadly to live without.

Reviews

"History at its most gripping ... This vivid study of Suleyman the Magnificent is as enthralling as fiction." — The Sunday Times

"Luminous, erudite ... a gripping account that



evokes an epic poem, saga or 'book of kings'... It is as immersive as the blurb claims, conjuring the world of the eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia, and South-Eastern Europe in the early 16th century with the limpid clarity of the many gems that stud its pages ... Even more than the detail, it is the characters that intrigue and often inspire ... The book leaves the reader with Suleiman truly magnificent." — Spectator

"Those lucky readers who come to Christopher de Bellaigue's book in proximity to read-

ing Mantel can suddenly have a new panel thrown open to them like an unfolding altarpiece ... all written in the present tense. This creates the obvious sense of liveliness and urgency ... Bellaigue sets about the task with such confidence and skill that it works. ... A dazzling and dark work. Witty and often wise, it speaks to the frailties and the precariousity of power." — David Aaronovitch, The Times

"There are books that enlarge the mind, (and) there are books that enrich the soul, but rarely comes a book so beautifully-written and profound that it manages to do both." — Elif Shafak, Author of *The Island of Missing Trees*

"Christopher De Bellaigue has a magic talent for writing history. It is as if we are there as the era of Suleyman the Magnificent unfolds." — Orhan Pamuk, Nobel Laureate in Literature

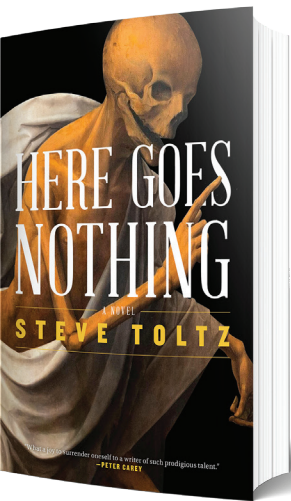
"Essential reading for anyone wishing to understand political ambition and the role of narcissistic leaders and scheming courtiers in any age." — Robert Peston, Political Editor ITV News



A scathingly comedic tale of life, death, and love

Angus Mooney is not happy. He has been murdered, cut off in the prime of his life, and he feels humiliated. He never even believed in an afterlife and oh how wrong he had been. Left confused, death has provided Mooney more questions than answers. And he desperately misses his audacious and fiery wife, Gracie, who is expecting their first child.

The only upside is that Mooney has found a way to see what his murderer is up to, and how Gracie is faring. The downside: Gracie and his murderer are getting uncomfortably close, and a worldwide pandemic means the afterlife is about to get very crowded.



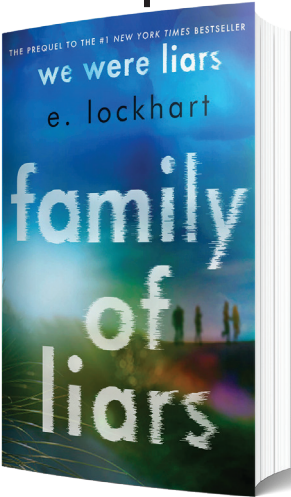
TikTok's highly anticipated prequel

The instant New York Times bestseller and prequel to the TikTok phenomenon *We Were Liars*. Return to the story of another summer, another generation, and the secrets that will haunt them for decades to come.

From a windswept private island off the coast of Massachusetts: an ocean, churning with secrets and sorrow and a fiery, addicted heiress and irresistible, unpredictable boy. The tale is of a summer of unforgivable betrayal and terrible mistakes.

Welcome back to the Sinclair family. They were always liars.

"This is a cunning, clever and absolutely gripping novel, full of surprises, which sent me straight back



to its first page as soon as I reached the post," said the Guardian.

Spoiler alert! Read *We Were Liars* first.

GAMES & HOROSCOPES

• 16/06/2022
©2022 TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC

HOROSCOPES

BY MAGI HELENA



ARIES

Regular physical exercise will keep you healthy and fully energized. Nip potential problems in the bud by doing what you promised to do. You are more likely to be considered for the friend zone than as a lover now.

CANCER

Your expert advice may be in demand. You owe it to your friends and loved ones to give thoughtful guidance rather than casual assurances. When someone is in real need, it's satisfying to lend a helping hand.

LIBRA

You may meet trustworthy and fascinating people who can easily become friends. Use communications to hash out problems at work that threaten to drain your enthusiasm. This is a time to deal in facts, not opinions.

CAPRICORN

There's no need to worry if you are doing things correctly. Don't overthink someone's slip of the tongue or brief misgivings. You may receive some relief from one of your responsibilities when you are least expecting it.

TAURUS

There may be an opportunity to join a club or organization where you can pursue self-improvement as well as socialize. A loved one may be too busy to provide the attention you crave so find other ways to occupy your time.

LEO

Your energy levels may be at a low point but are ready to bounce back. You might feel overly sensitive to negativity or unpleasantness. Turn your attitude around and find the learning opportunity in any mistake.

SCORPIO

If you rely on intuition, you might make a mistake now. You may be spacing out in a romantic mood when the boss expects your complete attention. You'll have the confidence you need if you can be honest with yourself.

AQUARIUS

Experience is the greatest teacher. You can gain insights into which actions produce the best results by reviewing and processing past events. A strong dose of reality may paint fantasies in a different light.

GEMINI

Use intelligent business strategies to handle your finances and bank account. Your ambitions for material wealth could be sparked by an inspiring story or book. Be wise with your money and work with what you have.

VIRGO

Biting off more than you can chew lead you to feel overwhelmed. Steer clear of disagreements over shared finances. Some information might be difficult to find but inside tips could be worthwhile to know.

SAGITTARIUS

Respect someone's opposing viewpoint. You and a loved one may experience a temporary misunderstanding. Meeting a financial goal may be easier if you enlist the support of friends and business contacts.

PISCES

If you are evasive when questioned, you may drive a wedge between you and a loved one. Don't put off tasks or hold back. Get a job done so there will be more time to get more pleasant projects underway.

GOREN BRIDGE

BY BOB JONES

RESOURCEFUL

East-West vulnerable, South deals

NORTH		EAST	
♠	A 5 3	♠	10 8 7 4
♥	4 2	♥	3
♦	K 6 3 2	♦	J 10 9 7
♣	A 7 5 3	♣	K Q J 8
SOUTH		WEST	
♠	K Q J 6 2	♠	9
♥	K 9	♥	A Q J 10 8 7 6 5
♦	A Q 5 4	♦	8
♣	9 6	♣	10 4 2

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	4♥	4♠	All pass

North stretched a bit with his spade bid, but that is normal in a competitive auction. North's bid was sound. West won the first trick with his ace of hearts lead and continued with a

heart at trick two. East ruffed and shifted to the king of clubs. South, worried that East might have a six-card club suit, won with dummy's ace. This is the kind of deal that experts take pride in. Non-experts will draw the trumps and try to cash the diamonds for 10 tricks. When diamonds split 4-1, they curse their luck and move on to the next deal. An expert will think: "What can I do if the diamonds split poorly?"

Our expert declarer led a spade to his king and then cashed the queen of spades. He exited with his remaining club. West played his 10, but East saw that a third round of clubs by the defense would only help declarer, so he overtook the 10 with the jack and shifted to the jack of diamonds. Declarer won with his ace, led a low spade to dummy's ace, and ruffed a club, leaving West with no more clubs.

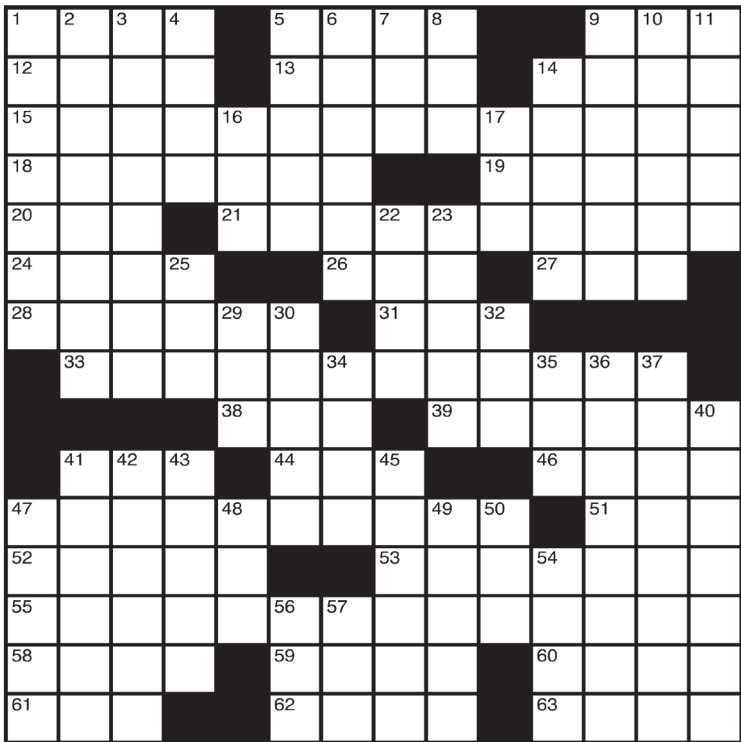
He cashed his last trump, the jack, and discarded a diamond from dummy. East was helpless. In this three-card ending, East could not hold onto his high club and three diamonds. East discarded a diamond and the king, queen, and five of diamonds took the last three tricks. Very nicely played!

CROSSWORD

BY JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS AND RICH NORRIS

- Across**
- L.A. Rams' ___ McVay, youngest head coach to win the Super Bowl
 - Fly high
 - Old NCAA football ranking sys.
 - Regarding
 - Limerick's land
 - Coagulate
 - Test format with options
 - Grassland
 - Using pointe shoes
 - Didn't stick around
 - Dojo move
 - Card game requirement, maybe
 - ___-pitch
 - Farm female
 - Roman who defeated Hannibal
 - Triage areas: Abbr.
 - Bat specialty, and what you need to find in four long answers
 - Name in "Kill Bill" credits
 - Military jeep successor
 - Aid for the lost
 - They're not from around here, briefly
 - Lowly worker
 - Nocturnal bird that woke up Vinny in "My Cousin Vinny"
 - Messenger ___
 - As is fitting
 - 41 -Across, e.g.
 - Cocoa butter confection
 - Golfer's pocketful

- Sell on the street
 - Series finale: Abbr.
 - ___ the ramparts ... "
 - Dire March time
 - Slithery swimmers
- Down**
- Longtime Agassi rival
 - Online GEICO alternative
 - Brit's pond
 - "It wasn't me"
 - Photo tint
 - Persian Gulf ships
 - Word shortened to its middle letter, in texts
 - "Parks and ___"
 - Devil-may-care
 - Protective covering
 - So inclined?
 - Large sea snail
 - Bug
 - Soil-moving implement
 - Jack Ryan portrayer before Harrison
 - Holy scroll
 - Book after Galatians: Abbr.
 - Chit
 - Ancient Mesoamerican
 - Guy found running through the alphabet?
 - Court recitation
 - Little terror
 - Give credit where credit isn't due
 - Like early childcare
 - Glossy coats
 - "Scorpion" co-star Katharine
 - More pretentious
 - Pummels with snowballs



- "Us, too"
- Handled
- Watch closely
- Candlemaker's supply
- Mekong Valley language
- Musical series set at McKinley High
- City with two MLB teams
- Possessed



SUDOKU

LEVEL 1 2 3 4

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, please visit sudoku.org.uk

Yesterday's Solution

6	8	1	4	2	5	7	9	3
9	4	2	7	3	1	6	5	8
3	5	7	6	9	8	2	1	4
8	1	5	9	6	3	4	2	7
2	9	6	8	4	7	5	3	1
4	7	3	1	5	2	9	8	6
5	6	9	3	8	4	1	7	2
1	3	4	2	7	9	8	6	5
7	2	8	5	1	6	3	4	9

5						1		
	6		4			9	5	
		7		3	6			
						1		
4	1		3		2		9	7
		3						
			2	1		6		
	4	5			7		1	
6			8					2

Brilliant Germany equal their biggest win over Italy

BERLIN (AFP) — Germany equalled their biggest ever win over European champions Italy as Timo Werner scored twice in a thumping 5-2 Nations League victory on Tuesday.

The result in Monchengladbach matched the Germans' 5-2 triumph over the Azzurri at Berlin's Olympic Stadium back in 1939.

Germany captain Manuel Neuer said the result was an "important milestone" for the hosts.

"You could tell today that we wanted to dominate," he said.

An early goal by Joshua Kimmich and Ilkay Gundogan's penalty at Borussia Park put Germany 2-0 up before the floodgates opened early in the second half.

Thomas Mueller scored his 44th goal for Germany on his 116th international appearance before Werner scored twice in quick succession.

Italy's consolation goals came late on through 18-year-old striker Wilfried Gnonto and Alessandro Bastoni.

"We played really good football at times and deserved to win," said Gundogan.

"If we play like we did today, many teams will have a hard time against us."

The result sees Germany move second in Group A3 as previous leaders Italy dropped to third, with Hungary top after a shock 4-0 win over England in Wolverhampton.

Germany could only scramble a 1-1 draw thanks to a late Kimmich goal when the sides last met in Bologna in early June, but this was a vastly improved performance.

Italy coach Roberto Mancini paid the price for making nine changes from the team which drew with England last weekend as only Gianluigi Donnarumma and David Frattesi kept their places in an experimental



Italy's goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma gestures after Germany's fourth goal during the UEFA Nations League football match Germany vs Italy at the Borussia Park stadium in Monchengladbach, western Germany, on June 14, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

side.

German coach Hansi Flick made five alterations to the team which drew with Hungary in Budapest last Saturday as Gundogan seized his chance on his return.

The Manchester City star bossed the Italian midfield, creating more space up front.

Germany took the lead when Werner and Hoffenheim's David Raum combined to set up Kim-

rich, who fired in on 10 minutes.

Italy conceded again just before half-time when Bastoni brought down Jonas Hofmann and Gundogan swept the resulting penalty past Donnarumma.

Mueller grabbed Germany's third goal when he drilled a sloppy clearance into the Italian net.

Werner punished the visitors with two goals inside a minute, as Serge Gnabry provided both assists

after slicing through the Italy defense.

Neuer, who had been outstanding all night, was finally beaten when he blocked a shot by Federico Dimarco into the path of Gnonto, then Bastoni headed in.

"We didn't play the game we wanted," admitted Gnonto. "Germany were clearly better and we have to match this level, which won't be easy."

England's Care given Rugby World Cup hope ahead of Barbarians clash

LONDON (AFP) — Danny Care has been told he could yet feature for England at next year's Rugby World Cup after earning a surprise recall from head coach Eddie Jones for Saturday's non-cap international against the Barbarians.

The Harlequins' scrum-half has been included in England's squad for the match at Twickenham nearly four years after making the last of his 84 Test appearances.

Care was a key figure in Harlequins' march to the Premiership title last season and has been one of the form players in the English top-flight for several years.

He will be 36 by the time of next year's World Cup in France but En-

gland forwards coach Richard Cockerill believes he could force his way back into Jones' plans.

"If Danny's playing well enough and he's playing better than anybody else, whether they're young or old, then he'll come into contention," Cockerill said Wednesday.

"World Cups are about having that balance — having enough caps of experience to be able to control and manage the pressure, but also having those young guys who are so hungry."

Care's England career appeared to be over after he was dropped by Jones following a 35-15 win over Japan in November 2018.

But he has been a pivotal player

in Harlequins' revival, forming an effective half-back partnership with Marcus Smith, who has forced his way into the England set-up under Jones at No 10.

"He's very experienced," said Cockerill of Care. "He's worked with Eddie before, he's worked with a lot of the guys who are in the squad now before."

"He's a bright man, he picks things up very quickly and is clearly a very instinctive player. He's dropped in very easily and has trained very well and been very good with the group."

Care will also hope to be in England's squad for their three-match tour of Australia in July.

Yorkshire charged by ECB following Rafiq cricket racism row

LONDON (AFP) — Yorkshire and a "number of individuals" have been charged by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) following the governing body's investigation into how the county dealt with racism allegations made by former player Azeem Rafiq.

The ECB did not name any of the people involved in a statement issued on Wednesday.

The board said the charges arose from alleged breaches of the ECB's anti-discrimination code as well as rules concerned with the conduct of players and officials.

The governing body added an independent panel of the Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) would now hear the cases, expected to take place in September and October.

The ECB said it was standard practice for the CDC panel to publish its decisions and written reasons in full.

Pakistan-born former off-spinner Rafiq first raised allegations of racism and bullying in September 2020, related to his two spells at Yorkshire.

It was not until a year later that the club finally released a statement saying the retired player had been the victim of "racial harassment and bullying", upholding seven of his 43 allegations.

But the following month the club confirmed nobody would be disciplined, a decision that was greeted with widespread incredulity.

Pressure mounted on Yorkshire, leading to a mass clear-out of senior boardroom figures and coaching staff at its Headingley headquarters.

Earlier this month, however, former Yorkshire coach Andrew Gale won a claim for unfair dismissal, leaving the club facing the prospect of paying out huge sums in compensation.

The ECB had previously warned Yorkshire it was prepared to remove lucrative England international matches from Headingley unless the club made changes.

But those games, including next week's third Test against New Zealand and a one-day international against South Africa in July, are set to go ahead as scheduled after a package of governance reforms was approved.

England shocker heaps pressure on Southgate before World Cup

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom (AFP) — Gareth Southgate was a national hero less than a year ago as he led England to a first major tournament final for 55 years but is now in the firing line after a humiliating 4-0 defeat to Hungary.

England's worst home loss since 1928 leaves the Three Lions facing the ignominy of relegation from the top tier of the Nations League.

But it is the impact such an embarrassment will have on Southgate's preparations for the World Cup in five months' time that is the most pressing concern.

England have only two more matches, away to Italy and home to Germany in September, before starting their World Cup campaign against Iran on November 21.

The switch to a winter World Cup due to the climate in Qatar created a quirk in the calendar that forced international sides to play four matches this month after a physically exhausting campaign for many players at club level.

World champions France are also bottom of their Nations League group without a win in four games, while Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne and Dutch manager Louis van Gaal have criticized the punishing schedule.

Southgate pointed to that as a major factor in England's failure to win in four consecutive games for the first time in his six-year tenure.

"This has been a really unique set of fixtures," he said. "I was concerned about it before because I knew we were going to have to make changes and we couldn't field a full team for every game."

"I tried to give some young players experiences and rest some of the players I think have had long seasons. We are going to need them in the World Cup and we didn't want to break them."

The 51-year-old was derided with chants of "sacked in the morning" and "you don't know what you're doing."

Southgate admitted earlier this week that he will not "outstay his welcome" as national team boss as criticism of his conservative approach persists.

Critics of the former Middlesbrough boss, who favors two defensive midfielders in his line-up, believe he has been too slow to embrace the array of attacking talent at his disposal.

Manchester City pair Phil Foden and Jack Grealish are just two of the creative options whose chances to shine on the international stage have been limited under Southgate.

However, he appeared to double down on his idea of how England can be successful in Qatar after such a disastrous Nations League campaign so far, which has featured just a single goal, from the penalty spot.

"I'm very clear, I know what works for us and I have evidence now of what doesn't," he said.

"Tonight is another example of why that core of the team has been so important and why the balance of the team has to be right."

Southgate's loyalty to Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and Manchester United captain Harry Maguire has been questioned in the past.

But their places in the starting line-up for the World Cup look even more assured as they were rested for the Hungary mauling.

Southgate will also be hoping for a return to form and fitness for Ben Chilwell and Luke Shaw in the coming months after not naming a natural left-back in his squad this month.

There are also concerns at the other end of the field, with Southgate admitting he is worried by an over-reliance on Kane and Sterling for goals.

But he is certain he is the man to lead England to Qatar and deserves the chance to prove himself again when it matters most, at a major tournament.

"I know there will be a lot of criticism and call for change," said Southgate. "But I go back to the fact when we've had our strongest teams we've had excellent results."

'Sacked in the morning'

Captain Harry Kane and Raheem Sterling were quick to shut down any questions over Southgate's future given the credit he has in the bank for not only reaching the final of Euro 2020 but also the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup.

However, it was the manager who was the target for abuse from a frustrated crowd as Hungary ran riot in Wolverhampton.



England's manager Gareth Southgate reacts as Hungary score during the UEFA Nations League, League A group 3 football match between England and Hungary at Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton, central England on June 14, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

Taiwan slams Qatar World Cup over 'unfriendly' fan labeling

TAIPEI CITY (AFP) — Taiwan on Wednesday demanded organizers of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar correct an official fan identification card that labels its citizens as Chinese, and urged that politics be kept out of sports.

The "Hayya" fan ID card acts as a visa to enter the country and a pass to access stadiums.

But neither Harry Kane nor "Chinese Taipei" — the name used for the island in international sports events — are listed on the online portal as options.

China claims self-ruled, democratic Taiwan as part of its territory, a stance Taipei firmly rejects.

The island lives under the constant threat of invasion by China, which Beijing has vowed to retake one day, by force if necessary.

Taiwan's foreign ministry said it has demanded that organizers in Qatar correct its "unfriendly" and "improper" measures against Taiwanese fans, said spokeswoman Joanne Ou in a statement.

"We again urge the World Cup organizers not to allow improper political factors to interfere in a pure sports event ... to let sports be

sports and return a clean World Cup to global fans," she said.

The issue of Taiwan's name has cropped up in nearly every major global sporting event, as authoritarian China balks against even the merest signal of the island's sovereignty.

The sporting world's use of the name "Chinese Taipei" is based on a 1981 compromise made with the International Olympic Committee to allow Taiwan to compete on the international stage.

Hayya program chief Saeed Al-Kuwari told reporters he "believed" the card system would list China for the nationality of Taiwanese passport holders.

He said fans should follow the country designation provided when the application reads the fan's passport, rather than try to select a nationality.

Organizers have insisted that all nationalities will be welcomed to the tournament.

Qatar is expecting more than one million fans to visit during the World Cup, which runs from November 21 to December 18, and all must register for the ID card.



Australia's Marcus Stoinis plays a shot during the first one-day international cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy on June 14, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

also out of action and Cameron Green not fit enough to bowl.

Stoinis strained his side smashing 44 off 31 in Tuesday's two-wicket win in Pallekele and Cricket Australia said Wednesday that the 32-year-old will play no further part in the five-match series.

Agar also got hurt as he took two wickets but "will remain with the squad to continue to rehabilitate and ongoing assessment," a

statement said.

Batsman and part-time spinner Travis Head and left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann, currently playing a four-day Australia A match in Hambantota, will join the ODI squad on Thursday.

Speaking before the announcement, Test skipper Pat Cummins — who played his first ODI in 18 months on Tuesday — said that Australia still have "plenty of options".

"All the planning was going to be for a perfect preparation, we had the Aussie A team over here, a big squad, but there were always going to be things that crop up," Cummins said on the eve of the second one-day international.

"It's not ideal, the amount of injuries, but we will strike that balance," said the 29-year-old Cummins.

"Scott Boland has come in, hopefully Starc (Mitchell Starc) will be back soon, Mitch Marsh back bowling," Cummins said.

"It feels like we still have plenty of options."

After the ODI series Australia are also due to play two Tests in Sri Lanka in Galle from June 29.

"National selectors will continue to monitor the squad through the ODI series before deciding if any changes need to be made ahead of the two Test matches in Galle," Cricket Australia said.

Asked about a new \$6.2 billion mega-deal for the broadcast rights for the Indian Premier League, Cummins said it was "great for the game".

"It shows millions and millions of fans are out there that love watching cricket," said Cummins, who played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the recently concluded IPL.



MORE SPORTS ONLINE
jordannews.jo



Emotional BTS say they are taking a break to ‘figure things out’

SEOUL (AFP) — K-pop megastars BTS told fans they were taking a break from the super group to focus on their solo careers, citing exhaustion and the pressures of stratospheric success in an emotional video appearance.

But the Grammy-nominated septet's label HYBE pushed back on Wednesday as their share price went into freefall, telling AFP that the pop juggernaut would still be working together.

The seven members of BTS, credited with generating billions of dollars for the South Korean economy, dropped the bombshell on Tuesday, telling fans that they were "exhausted" and needed time apart.

"We're going into an off phase now," said Suga, 29, speaking Korean to his bandmates at a group dinner, a video of which was posted to the group's official YouTube channel.

The clip included English subtitles, which used the word "hiatus", but HYBE quickly disputed that, saying group activities would not be suspended.

"They will be doing team and individual projects simultaneously," a representative for the label, whose share price was down 27 percent early Wednesday, told AFP.

In the video, RM, 27, said they were "exhausted" and that they "didn't know what kind of group

we were anymore".

"The problem with K-pop and the whole idol system is that they don't give you time to mature," he said, referring to South Korea's notoriously hard-driving music business model.

"Somehow, it's become my job to be a rapping machine," he said, adding that this made him feel "trapped".

"I wanted to shed that for a little bit, but the world wouldn't let me be."

Jimin, 26, said the members are "slowly trying to figure things out now".

"I think that's why we're going through a rough patch right now, we're trying to find our identity and that's an exhausting and long process."

'Overwhelming'

By the end of the dinner, several of the members of the group behind "Dynamite" and "Butter" had grown tearful as they voiced gratitude for their supporters, a fandom known online as the "ARMY".

J-Hope, 28, said the group "should spend some time apart to learn how to be one again".

"I hope you don't see this is a negative thing," the artist implored fans. "And see that it's a healthy plan".

"It's not that we're disbanding — we're just living apart for a

while," said Suga.

Jungkook, 24, said, "we promise we will return someday even more mature than we are now", and asked for the "blessing" of fans.

ARMY's online reaction was tearful but supportive, with tens of thousands of comments quickly posted under the YouTube video.

"I can't imagine how much pressure they felt these latest years. Being called the biggest band in the world, having all that responsibility... must be overwhelming," one fan wrote.

"I really love how honest they are here," wrote another.

"They are also people like us. They get exhausted and worn out. They deserve to rest and enjoy what they love to do," the commenter added.

BTS has said they were going on short breaks before, first in 2019 and later in December 2021.

The news comes just days after the group released "Proof", an anthology album that included a new single, "Yet To Come (The Most Beautiful Moment)".

J-Hope, who is slated to headline Chicago's Lollapalooza on his own later this summer, said in the clip that time apart could help BTS "become a stronger group".

'Confusing'

BTS's label enjoyed a surge in

profits despite holding fewer concerts during the pandemic.

But their messaging around the band's next steps was "confusing" and "not clear", Lee Moon-won, a K-pop culture commentator, told AFP.

"It appears what they meant is BTS will continue their 'supplementary' group activities (such as on YouTube) while pursuing solo careers," he said, while not releasing music as a band.

"It would have been more appropriate had the label first issued a statement clearly detailing what it would mean," Lee said, adding that it was a bad decision to have the band announce the development, which was sure to send fans into a tailspin.

BTS are the first all-South Korean act to reign over Billboard's US top singles chart, a milestone they achieved with "Dynamite", the first BTS song sung completely in English.

They're also one of few acts since The Beatles to release four albums that hit number one stateside in less than two years.

The group has twice been nominated for a Grammy but has yet to win.

BTS recently made headlines for visiting the White House to deliver a message to President Joe Biden on the fight against anti-Asian racism.

Growing numbers avoiding news as ‘too depressing’ — report

PARIS (AFP) — The depressing state of the world is leading people to switch off from the news, the Reuters Institute reported on Wednesday.

The combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war and cost-of-living crisis have led to declining interest in the news, a survey by the British research group found.

Across 46 countries surveyed and 93,000 participants, it found the share who said they actively avoided the news had increased from 29 to 38 percent since 2017.

The numbers doubled in some countries, including Brazil (54 percent) and Britain (46).

Young people in particular found the news to be a downer, but the chief reason for avoiding the news was its repetitiveness, especially around COVID-19 and politics.

"I actively avoid things that trigger my anxiety and things that can have a negative impact on my day," a 27-year-old British respondent told the researchers.

"I will try to avoid reading news about things like deaths and disasters."

Others said the news led to arguments they would rather avoid, or a feeling of powerlessness,

while many young people said they found it hard to understand.

Lead author Nic Newman said the findings were "particularly challenging for the news industry".

"Subjects that journalists consider most important, such as political crises, international conflicts, and global pandemics, seem to be precisely the ones that are turning some people away," he was quoted as saying.

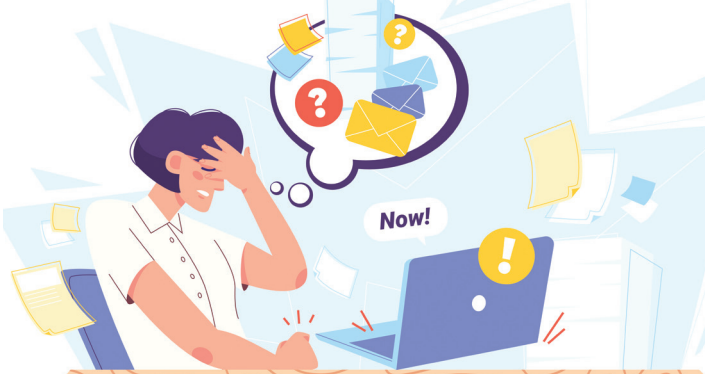
Most of the study was completed before the invasion of Ukraine in February, but subsequent surveys in five countries found these issues had only deepened in its aftermath.

Trust in the media fell in half the countries surveyed and rose in just seven, the report said, reversing gains made during the pandemic.

Overall, trust was at 42 percent, down from 44 percent when the media had a small positive bump from the pandemic.

The United States showed the lowest level of trust at 26 percent, tied with Slovakia.

The problem is being compounded by young people increasingly detached from legacy media, with 15 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds saying they use TikTok as a primary source of news.



‘Lightyear’ banned in 14 markets after same-sex kiss controversy

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Disney's latest animation "Lightyear", which features a same-sex kiss, has been denied release in more than a dozen mainly Muslim countries, a source close to the company told AFP on Tuesday.

Countries across Asia and the Middle East have refused to give Pixar's "Toy Story" spinoff a showing, in the latest development for parent company Disney as it tries to navigate differing public and political attitudes on LGBTQ issues.

Regulators in the UAE this week announced they were banning the movie for "violation of the country's media content standards," tweeting a picture of titular hero Buzz Lightyear in a red "No" symbol.

Indonesia — the world's largest Muslim-majority country — said it had not banned the film, "but suggested the owner of the movie think about their audience in Indonesia where an LGBT kissing scene is still considered sensitive."

Rommy Fibri Hardiyanto, head of Indonesia's censoring office overseen by the Ministry of Education and Culture, told AFP that Disney has not offered a re-cut version of "Lightyear".

In neighboring Malaysia, the Film Censorship Board said if cuts were not made the film would not be screened in the country.

"It is not appropriate to show the two scenes, and they are not suitable to be viewed by children," an official, who declined to be named, told AFP.

Disney is understood to have declined to make any cuts, offering the film "as is" in all markets.

As a result, a total of 14 countries and territories where the company wanted to show "Lightyear" have not granted the film a release, AFP has learned.

The others are: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

New Spider-Verse film ‘tests limits of animation’

ANNECY, France (AFP) — With more than 240 characters across six dimensions, the makers of "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" are pushing animation and storytelling to their limits with the follow-up to their Oscar-winning hit.

Early, unfinished images of the sequel — one of the most anticipated releases of 2023 — received a standing ovation at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in France on Tuesday.

It once again centers on New York teenager Miles Morales, who is just one of several different forms of spider superhero spread across parallel dimensions.

Like the first installment, 2019's "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse", it is set to be a demonstration of technical wizardry, with different visual styles used for each of the universes the superhero visits.

Among the scenes unveiled on Tuesday was a wildly impressive fight with a vulture in New York's Guggenheim Museum, with a heav-



ily pregnant Spider-woman crashing into the scene on a motorcycle.

Morales "has always been the core of it. But we didn't want to rest on our laurels and take the easy path," Kemp Powers, one of the film's three directors, told AFP.

The team feels the weight of expectation this time around.

The first film was a sleeper hit, gradually building up steam thanks to strong reviews and audience reactions — ultimately winning the best animation Oscar.

"It's very ambitious — the idea was to push ourselves creatively and test the limits of what technology can do," said co-director Joachim dos Santos, while promising that the plot would



still be comprehensible to everyone from "babies to grandparents".

'Wonderful medium'

The team is having particular fun

creating a new villain The Spot, to be voiced by Jason Schwartzman, whose body is a series of holes that look like a shape-shifting, unfinished drawing.

"Animation is a wonderful medium because there's things you can only do with animation," co-director Justin Thompson told AFP.

"You couldn't imagine any live-action medium being able to replicate what we're doing right now with The Spot in terms of his appearance, his movement, his interaction with multiple people at the same time... it would look so cheesy in live-action, but it actually looks fluid in animation."

While the directors enjoy escaping the limits of reality — "none of the film is bound by physics or gravity," said Powers — there are some unavoidable constraints.

"We take five or six years per film.

We have large crews but no one can imagine how much time it takes to make only a few seconds," he said.

"While our imagination has no limits — time is a limit."

The film is due for worldwide release in June 2023 and a third installment is planned for the following year.

The creators are determined that both get a full theatrical release, especially after Powers had to see his previous film, Pixar's "Soul", go straight to streaming because of the pandemic.

"We make these for the big screen, and these will be on the big screen, barring an alien invasion or a world war!" he said.



MORE TRENDING ONLINE
jordannews.jo