NEW YORK: Polestar CEO Thomas Ingenlath was joined by members of the Polestar and Gores Guggenheim teams, gathering in New York City to mark the latest milestone in Polestar's journey towards sustainable mobility.

Polestar rings Nasdaq bell to celebrate public listing

Public listing boosts Polestar's ambitious plans for growth

NEW YORK: Polestar, the Swedish electric car brand, has rung the famous bell at the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York City to celebrate its public listing. Polestar began trading officially under the ticker "PSNY" on 24 June, 2022. Polestar CEO Thomas Ingenlath was joined by members of the Polestar and Gores Guggenheim teams, gathering in New York City to mark the latest milestone in Polestar's journey towards sustainable mobility.

Thomas Ingenlath, CEO of Polestar, states: "This is such a proud day and ringing the bell at Nasdaq is a symbolic celebration. Today truly marks the beginning of the next chapter in the story of Polestar. We have a clear vision of what that story will be, and the listing gives us the platform to accelerate and push harder for a transition towards more sustainable mobility." The bellringing was amplified on Nasdaq's digital billboard screens in Times Square which flashed images of some of Polestar's over 2,000 global employees as well as the company's vision statement. PSNY-branded Polestar 2 cars were also on display on the famous city square.

Polestar offices and retail locations across its 25 active markets were connected and watched the event live, celebrating locally. The public listing will help Polestar build its ambitious plans for growth in some of the most attractive global EV segments, while driving forward its industry-leading sustainability goals, including a completely climate-neutral car by 2030. Polestar has great momentum as it enters a period of rapid growth and builds a diversified product portfolio, launching three new premium electric cars, including two SUVs, by 2024. The first, Polestar 3, a full-size electric SUV, is expected to launch in October 2022 and will set a new standard in this high margin, premium segment.

Hong Kong's economy faces uncertain future 25 years after handover

HONG KONG: When Hong Kong transitioned from British to Chinese rule, Edmond Hui was a floor trader at the bustling stock exchange, witnessing the roaring growth of a city at the crossroads of the West and Asia. Under a deal signed with Britain ahead of the 1997 handover, China promised Hong Kong could keep its capitalist system for 50 years, an arrangement that helped the city thrive as one of the world's top financial hubs. Friday marks the halfway point of that experiment, with uncertainty clouding the economic future of Hong Kong-a city reliant on an increasingly isolated China, struggling to shake off the reputational damage from political unrest and pandemic-induced border closures.

Hui, now the chief executive of a mid-tier stockbroker with nearly 300 employees, said post-handover markets have undergone a drastic shift, becoming more China-focused than ever. "Before 1997, foreign capital propped up half of the market," he said. "After 1997, things changed gradually until the whole market was held up by Chinese capital." China's meteoric rise in the past two decades yielded vast benefits for Hong Kong, which became the gateway for mainland firms to raise funds and for foreign businesses to access what is today the world's second-largest economy.

"Hong Kong was sort of a poster child of free trade and open markets," veteran pro-Beijing Hong Kong politician Regina Ip told AFP. But the interlocking of its fate with China has also led to warnings about overreliance and complacency. Chinese companies made up around 80 percent of the market capitalization in Hong Kong's stock market this year, up from 16 percent in 1997.

And Chinese firms now account for seven of the top 10 holdings of the benchmark Hang Seng Index, which used to be anchored by homegrown brands such as Cathay Pacific and Television Broadcasts Limited. Hong Kong's GDP, meanwhile, has gone from being equivalent to 18 percent of mainland China's in 1997 to less than three percent in 2020. Hui greeted this comprehensive shift with a mild shrug. "It's just a matter of changing who's boss," he said. "We can only hope that our country's momentum will surpass that of Europe and the United States."

'The gateway to China'

As China's economic and political power has grown over the last few decades, so have tensions with Western nations-which has also affected Hong Kong. Beijing cracked down on dissent in the city after massive democracy protests in 2019, prompting the United States to revoke Hong Kong's preferential trade status on the grounds that it was no longer autonomous enough.

Washington also sanctioned some Hong Kong officials. "Back in 1997, we were able to play the role of a very important middleman. But now... everyone has more doubts about our background," Yan Wai-hin, an economics lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told AFP. "If a trading partner feels that (Hong Kong) isn't a neutral middleman... then the mutual trust might be lost." Yan said regional rivals such as Singapore were looking to capitalize on what they saw as an opening to supplant Hong Kong.

Adding to that pressure, the tightening of political control has also meant Hong Kong has stuck to mainland China's zero-COVID policy. Stringent travel restrictions have kept the business hub cut off both from China and the world for the last two years, with authorities acknowledging it has prompted a talent exodus. But Ip said once restrictions were lifted, Hong Kong would recover. —AFP

HONG KONG: Police watch pedestrians walking on a bridge in the Wanchai district of Hong Kong on June 29, 2022.— AFP

How long will it take to get over inflation hump?

SINTRA: Inflation has surged back to levels not seen in many developed economies since the 1970s and 1980s. Economists and central bankers at the European Central Bank's conference in Portugal warn it will take time before price rises cool.

How did we get here?

For the ECB, established in 1998 to oversee the European single currency, the burst of inflation is without precedent. "The current levels of food and industrial goods inflation have not been seen since the mid-1980s," ECB President Christine Lagarde said in her remarks at the conference on Tuesday. Likewise, the "increase in the relative price of energy in recent months is much higher than the individual spikes that occurred in the 1970s" during the oil shock, Lagarde said. The take-off in inflation, over eight percent in the eurozone in May, was at the end of a "a sequence that happens in a chaotic world", Richard Baldwin, an economics professor at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, told AFP. The supply shock caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 had been followed by a "demand twist" where people used their money more on goods, Baldwin said. Instead of seeing this fading, the Russian invasion in Ukraine is causing "a huge spike in fuel and food prices" and heaping pressure on inflation, he said. But it is not just energy. As health restrictions fall away, consumers are turning back to services, while the pent-up demand for tourism is being released, Lagarde noted. "There is no playbook for this inflation," said economist Baldwin.

How long will it stay?

With no end in sight for the war in Ukraine, the disruptions caused to the supply of energy could keep prices high for some time to come. Domestic factors could also prop up high inflation rates, with workers demanding higher and higher compensation to make up for the rising cost of living. Adding to the pressure are low unemployment rates, handing more leverage to workers looking for pay rises.

What can central banks do?

The message put out by central banks is one of their most powerful tools to calm markets and control prices. But the task at hand "has become quite difficult in view of high inflation numbers" and as "people feel high inflation every day when they're buying food or going to the gas station", Isabel Schnabel, a member of the ECB's executive board, told AFP. "We can do little about current inflation, but we will take decisive measures so that inflation returns to our (two-percent) target over the medium term," Schnabel said. "Once inflation is there and it starts to increase the expectations and wages, monetary policy should act," Sebnem Kalemli-Ozcan, an economic professor at the University of Maryland, told AFP.—AFP

TUDELA: A pilot drives the first solar car Lightyear 0 during its world premiere presentation on a road in Tudela, northern Spain.— AFP

Solar panels provide more juice to electric vehicles

PARIS: Startups and major carmakers are starting to incorporate solar panels on their electric vehicles, an addition that extends the range of the cars even if perpetual motion remains a dream. As it rolls under the blistering sun of northern Spain, the Lightyear 0 generates enough electricity every day to drive 70 kilometers thanks to the five square metres of solar panels integrated into hood and roof. The company was founded by young Dutch engineers who earned their spurs in running solar cars in races across the Australian desert.

Thanks to the drop in the price of solar panels, Lightyear is trying to incorporate them into road cars. With its sleek, aerodynamic line and motors integrated into the wheels, the Lightyear 0 consumes less energy than electric SUVs. Coupled with a battery that offers 625 kilometers per charge, the company says some customers who drive only short distances each day may only need to charge during the winter. "The clock is ticking, we need to have sustainable cars as soon as possible," one of the founders, Lex Hoefsloot, told AFP. "Charging points are still a big hurdle. If we don't need them, we can scale electric cars much quicker," he added. Lightyear targeted the top-end of the market with the 0, with the 1,000 or so cars produced setting back buyers 250,000 euros, the equivalent of a Bentley. The company hopes to launch a mass-market model with a price tag of 30,000 euros ($31,500) in 2024-2025.

As sales of electric vehicles are soaring, a number of models with solar panels are expected to arrive in dealerships in the coming months. Toyota is now proposing solar panels as an option on Prius hybrids, as well as its first 100 percent electric vehicle, the BZ4X. Tesla also plans to offer solar panels as an option on its pickup that is due to hit the road next year. Mercedes equipped its luxurious EQXX with solar panels in the roof. —AFP