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News in brief

aramco

Aramco unveils record profits

RIYADH: Oil giant Saudi Aramco on Sunday unveiled record profits of \$48.4 billion in the second quarter of 2022, after Russia's war in Ukraine and a post-pandemic surge in demand sent crude prices soaring. Net income leapt 90 percent year-on-year for the world's biggest oil producer, which clocked its second straight quarterly record after announcing \$39.5 billion for Q1. — AFP (See Page 8)

'India's Warren Buffet' dies

MUMBAI: Colorful stock market billionaire Rakesh Jhunjhunwala - dubbed by local media India's Warren Buffet - has died, his office said Sunday, just a week after he launched the country's newest airline. The "Big Bull of Dalal Street" - the Wall Street of Mumbai - had a net worth of \$3.5 billion with significant holdings in more than 30 Indian blue-chip stocks. — AFP (See Page 8)



Rakesh Jhunjhunwala



TEHRAN: A handout picture shows Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian meeting Kuwait's newly-appointed ambassador to Iran Bader Abdullah Al-Munaikh on August 13, 2022. — AFP

Max 40 students per class, ban on raising school fees

KUWAIT: Four new private foreign schools are preparing to receive new students for the upcoming academic year starting on August 28 after they were licensed by the ministry of education, as part of preparations by the ministry to organize the educational system at all private schools.

The ministry of education stressed it is closely monitoring fees charged at private schools so that they do not exceed what was previously agreed,

pointing out that any increase in fees is subject to studies and analyses and not based on personal whims or individual decisions by the schools.

Private schools have started distributing books to students, and their warehouses are ready to distribute books to those who haven't received them on the first day of school. Furthermore, based on ongoing maintenance and expansion efforts, the capacity of each classroom is set at a maximum of 40 students.

It is expected that some private schools will suffer from a lack of janitors, bus drivers and support staff, as some schools have not completed the procedures necessary to transfer commercial visas and hire necessary workers. These procedures are currently underway in cooperation with concerned government departments.

Meanwhile, a new decision has been issued to appoint Kuwaiti educational staff for the new aca-

demical year by Education Minister Ali Al-Mudhaf. "These regulations have been set after studying the numbers of graduating Kuwaiti teachers and comparing them to the requirements of educational zones and specializations," he said.

According to the decision, the work areas for Kuwaiti teachers for the 2022-23 academic year with certain specializations will be in areas that need them. Residents of Sabah Al-Ahmad City, Ali Sabah Al-Salem (Um Al-Haiman) and Wafra residential area are exempt from this decision, but they have to start work in the schools of these areas. Teachers with specializations not mentioned in this decision will be hired in educational areas where they reside. The public teaching sector must publish an internal memo for the distribution of Kuwaiti staff, with the exception of fresh graduates, and to stay within the framework agreed upon, the decision added.



OSLO: This photo taken on July 18, 2022 shows a female walrus named Freya at the waterfront at Frognerstranda. — AFP

Walrus in Oslo fjord euthanized

OSLO: A walrus nicknamed Freya that attracted crowds while basking in the Oslo fjord was euthanized on Sunday, with Norway officials saying it was the only option but experts slamming an "infinitely sad" decision. "The decision to euthanize was taken on the basis of a global evaluation of the persistent threat to human security," the head of Norway's Fisheries Directorate said. — AFP (See Page 12)

Rushdie on 'road to recovery'

NEW YORK: Salman Rushdie is on the road to recovery and showing signs of his "feisty and defiant" self, family and friends said Sunday, days after an assault left him on a ventilator with multiple stab wounds. But his condition, while still serious, has since shown signs of improvement and he no longer requires assisted breathing. — AFP (See Page 5)

Electrical fire kills 41 in Cairo Coptic church

CAIRO: More than 40 people were killed when a fire ripped through a Coptic Christian church in a working-class district of greater Cairo during Sunday mass, church officials said. The blaze, blamed on an electrical fault, hit the Abu Sifin church located in the densely populated Imbaba neighborhood west of the Nile river, part of Giza governorate.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable of condolences to

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi over the victims of the deadly fire. In his cable, HH the Amir expressed his deepest sympathy with the victims' families and wished the injured a quick recovery.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Sisi. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry also expressed Kuwait's empathy and support for Egypt. The ministry conveyed sincere condolences to Egypt and the families of the victims, wishing quick recovery to the injured.

Witnesses described how people rushed into the burning house of worship to rescue those trapped but were soon overwhelmed by the heat and the deadly smoke.

Continued on Page 6

'Avoid driving': Dust storms return to UAE

DUBAI: Large parts of the United Arab Emirates were hit by dust and sandstorms on Sunday as authorities urged caution on the roads and battened down for expected heavy rain. Homes and landmarks in major cities were caked in a fine layer of brown dirt and visibility plunged in the latest adverse weather following a series of choking dust storms around the Middle East.

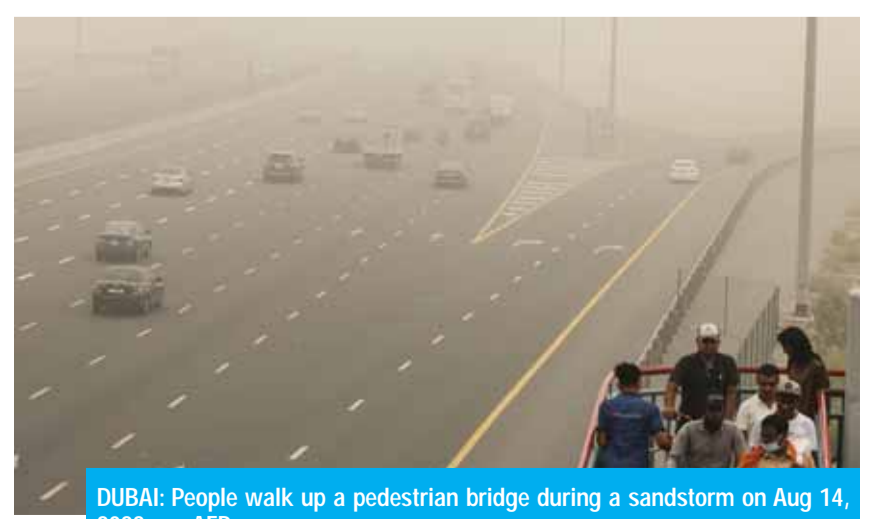
On Saturday, Abu Dhabi's official

media office urged motorists to "avoid driving unless absolutely necessary". Visibility was below 1 km in Abu Dhabi and Dubai on Sunday. Forecasts of rainstorms this week, unusual in high summer in the desert state, follow the deaths of seven Asian migrants in flash flooding last month.

Emergency services said they had answered hundreds of calls for help as floodwaters swamped the streets of the port city of Fujairah and other eastern districts. A series of sandstorms, widely thought to be exacerbated by climate change, have smothered Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran and others this year, closing airports and schools and sending thousands to hospital with breathing problems. — AFP



GIZA, Egypt: Damage is seen at the Abu Sifin church located in the densely populated Imbaba neighborhood west of the Nile river on Aug 14, 2022. — AFP



DUBAI: People walk up a pedestrian bridge during a sandstorm on Aug 14, 2022. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Amir condoles with Egyptian President over church fire victims

Kuwait's Crown Prince, Prime Minister express condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable of condolences to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi over the victims of the deadly fire in Abu Sifin church, west Cairo. In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his deepest sympathy with the victims' families and wished the injured a quick

recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Sisi.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry expressed deep grief over the horrific fire. The Ministry conveyed sincere condolences to families of the 41 victims, wishing speedy recovery for the 14 injured. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) expressed condolences over the victims of the massive blaze. The OIC stands in solidarity with Egypt through this tragedy. OIC Secretary-General Hussein Taha said in a statement on Sunday, wishing a speedy recovery for those injured during the blaze. Furthermore, the Arab Parliament voiced sincere condolences for Egypt over the blaze. Speaker of the Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi said in a statement the Parliament stands in full solidarity with Egypt during this difficult time, praying for Almighty Allah to bestow His mercy upon the souls of victims and a speedy recovery for the injured.

At least 41 people were killed and 14 others injured when a massive fire ripped through a Coptic church in the Egyptian city of Giza on Sunday, the health ministry said. The electrical fire inside the Abu Sifin church caused plumes of smoke, which blocked the entrance to the church, resulting in a stampede among worshipers, according to a ministry statement. Hospitals across Egypt's second largest city were placed on alert as part of efforts to ensure the facilities are well-equipped to deal with a potential influx of patients. Egypt's top prosecutor Hamada Elsayay has ordered a probe into the circumstances behind the incident, added the statement. — KUNA



CAIRO: This handout image provided by the office of Egypt's Prime Minister shows Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli (center) visiting the Abu Sifin Coptic church after a fire broke out during a Sunday service in a working-class district of Greater Cairo on August 14, 2022. — AFP



Kuwait stands with Egypt after fire

recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Sisi.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated on Sunday Kuwait's empathy and support for Egypt after the fire that erupted in Abu Sifin Church and left dozens of deaths and injuries. The Ministry conveyed sincere condolences for Egypt and the families of the victims, wishing quick recovery for the injured. Also,

MoI Passports Undersecretary receives complaints

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports and Acting Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Fawaz Al-Mashaan will receive citizens and residents with complaints and transactions on Monday at the Residency Affairs Department and on Tuesday at the Nationality and Travel Documents Department every week from 6:00 pm until 9:00 pm, the Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information Department said. In other news, Director General of the Customs Directorate Gen Suleiman Al-Fahad said the second stage of e-services will launch through the government application "Sahel" as part of the government's digital transformation.



Fawaz Al-Mashaan

Raids continue in Jleeb, Mahboula

KUWAIT: Field security sectors carried out an extensive security campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula, resulting in the arrest of 29 men and women on charges of violating public morals, and 51 others for various violations in the two areas.

The General Department of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior said that in implementation of the directives of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to continue security campaigns on a daily basis, the concerned field sectors continued their security campaigns in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, led by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt Gen Anwar Abdul Latif Al-Barjas, accompanied by Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs and Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Hatem Al-Sayegh and a number of security officials.

The entrances and exits of the two areas were closed, and a force of investigation officers was deployed. Necessary legal procedures will be taken against those arrested. The ministry called on all citizens and residents to cooperate with security men and not harbor any violators of the residency law, as it is a crime punishable by law. It stressed the need for sponsors to abide by the residence law, as a block will be placed on the sponsor, whether a person or company, banning sponsorships, visas and renewals, and transferring them to investigations. In the event of non-compliance, the procedures and conditions of the residence law will be applied and the violating worker will be prevented from entering the country.



Municipality teams crack down on basements' violations

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Campaigns against the use of buildings basements for commercial purposes continue as inspectors are intensifying their field tours in investment areas. The supervisory team of Hawally closed three basements used for purposes other than what they were licensed for. Meanwhile 127 shades on state property were removed. In Ahmadi, two citations were issued and three engineering warnings were handed out, in addition to closing two basements.



Firemen douse building blaze

KUWAIT: Firefighting teams controlled a fire in a commercial building under construction in the Capital governorate. The Public Relations and Media Department of Kuwait Fire Force said firefighting teams managed to put out a fire in wood and trash in a room of the commercial building under construction without any casualties.



Local

Palestinian short film 'Touchline' screened at Kuwait women's society

Film tells story of 1948 Nakba through young footballer's eyes



KUWAIT: People watch Palestinian short film "Touchline" at the Women's Cultural and Social Society. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Director Mohammed Saffouri speaks to the audience.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Women's Cultural and Social Society screened on Saturday a Palestinian short film "Touchline", directed by Mohammed Saffouri, at Lulwa Al-Qatami hall. The film tells the true story of the Palestinian Catastrophe (Nakba) through the eyes of a young football player in 1948. In his speech during the panel discussion, Palestinian American Saffouri said that the award-winning film is based on his grandfather's life, as the war began in Palestine when he was about to join the national soccer team and he was forced to give up his dream.

Saffouri revealed that he heard this story directly from his grandfather when he was a child, and he remembered it as being particularly fascinating, but brief and precise enough to evolve into a strong narrative that could be delivered in less than 15 minutes. Saffouri added that the Palestinian cause is known among Arabs but not by Westerners, noting the film aims to introduce the American people to the situation in Palestine and the Nakba of 1948.

"We all know that Palestine is occupied, but there are many people in Western countries who have no idea about the cause. We have to tell the untold story, and there are a lot of Palestinian stories that are untold. We all have a story to tell about our family members," Saffouri explained. He discussed during the event insights about the film.

The story is set in 1948 and centers around a 17-year-old boy called Ahmad who plays football in a local club in Haifa, and gets an offer to play for the Palestinian national team. On his way home, the war starts and people flee. Ahmad comes home and finds his family also packing to seek refuge somewhere safe, so he faces the fact that he will leave his friends and dreams behind.

Touchline is the first Jordanian film to be screened at the Tribeca film festival in New York. The film is written and directed by Saffouri and produced by Tareq Baddar. Cinematography is by Ghassan Nazmi and the music by Omar El-Deeb. The short film was made as part of the director's senior thesis while studying at George Mason University.



A general view of the audience.



KUWAIT: The head of the regional International Committee of the Red Cross Mamadou Sow in a group photo during his visit to the Kuwait Crescent Society. — KUNA

ICRC panel head hails Kuwaiti support

KUWAIT: The humanitarian initiatives taken by Kuwait to support the international humanitarian efforts have been praised by the head of the regional International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mamadou Sow, after his meeting with the head of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. "The initiatives taken by Kuwait are appreciated by all global organizations that care for humanitarian work, and especially by the ICRC," Sow said in appreciation of the support by KRCS given to the ICRC's committee in the GCC to alleviate

pressures on refugees around the world. "Kuwait is one of the most important supporters of the international red cross to help those in need around the globe, and the existing cooperation is fruitful to put forth effective humanitarian solutions to those who need it most," Sow continued.

Meanwhile, Dr Sayer welcomed Sow and affirmed the society's readiness for cooperation. "The cooperation between KRCS and ICRC locally and internationally is something to admire, as the regional committee is a prolific and effective partner in upgrading humanitarian cooperation," Sayer said in appreciation of the partnership. Sayer also noted that the help of state and international institutions played a vital role in its cooperation with the society, which provides experienced support under its own supervision.

'Kanaad' fishing not allowed for two months

KUWAIT: Fishing for the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel, locally known as 'Kanaad', will be halted until Oct 15, Head of the Kuwait Fishermen's Union Dhafer Al-Suwayyan announced. "The fishing sector is considered one of the most important food security sectors in the country, and it deserves to be improved and supported," he said, pointing out that support has remained the same since the start of the '90s and not

been improved relative to other sectors. Suwayyan also stressed the importance to follow the regulations set by the Environment Public Authority and the supervising agricultural committee for the fishing sector when fishing for 'maid' (mullet) fish in Kuwait Bay.

"Maid fish tend to stay close to the coast, therefore it is important to harvest them within the coasts of Kuwait Bay to avoid their migration to coastal waters outside Kuwait," Suwayyan said. He hoped to gain the support of EPA to supervise with its own investigators, especially since maid is one of Kuwaitis' favorite dishes and an increase in stocks will help lower prices.

Notably, EPA has allowed fishing by enthusiasts in Kuwait Bay by reservations through the authority's website. Fishermen should be ready to pay any fees required in order to preserve maid fish in the market to meet customer demand.



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing the fish market in Sharq. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

On the occasion of the



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News in brief

Minister refers
partnership authority
director to retirement

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid referred director of the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects Fadhela Al-Hassan to retirement, according to sources. The Minister also suspended the Public Institution For Social Security's Deputy Director for Financial and Administrative Affairs Ayman Al-Bloushi pending an ongoing investigation.

Finance Minister
Abdulwahab Al-RushaidRewards to be
distributed to
customs employees

KUWAIT: General Manager of Kuwait Customs affirmed 2,322 employees will be rewarded for excellent work for 2021, which will be deposited in their accounts in the next few days. "The reward is set to be distributed to 2,322 employees - a total of KD 2.79 million - in accordance with the stipulations set by the Civil Services Commission," sources told Kuwait Times.

Deliveroo sets up
water distribution
stations for riders

KUWAIT: As part of Deliveroo's commitment to rider safety and satisfaction, Deliveroo will set up water distribution stations providing riders with access to cold water throughout the month of August. In addition to ensuring water is available all day across major restaurant partners, Deliveroo supervisors have been stationed at three key areas across Kuwait during peak summer hours, with distribution windows open from 12:00 PM until 10:00 PM throughout August.

"The Deliveroo team is constantly implementing initiatives to ensure rider safety and protection year-round," said Seham Al-Husaini, Deliveroo's General Manager. "From specialized rider kits to dedicated water distribution stations, we aim to ensure summer hours are comfortable and safe for every rider."

The water stations are one of multiple initiatives that Deliveroo has spearheaded in service of its riders this year. Deliveroo also provides riders with its signature summer rider kits, supporting riders by providing cooling vests, short and long-sleeve tees, bar muffs, phone mounts, windshield visors, and more. In addition, Deliveroo regularly collaborates with popular restaurant partners throughout the year to treat riders as part of their "Deliveroo Champions" initiative. Since launching its "Deliveroo Champions" campaign, Deliveroo has partnered with various local restaurants and cafes (including Starbucks, AZ Kitchen, Rock House Sliders, and more) to thank riders.

In addition to all ongoing initiatives, Deliveroo constantly encourages customers to offer riders a bottle of water with each delivery and also grants customers the chance to include a tip for their riders upon checkout - a tribute to their hard work and a gesture of thanks. With the Deliveroo team and the community coming together in various ways to thank riders for their hard work, Deliveroo is constantly striving to increase rider safety and satisfaction.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The sunset captured in Kuwait on August 13, 2022. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Book expo Kuwait's biggest cultural event: Minister

International book exhibition takes place Nov 16-26



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi chairs a meeting with the high committee for the Kuwait International Book Fair. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's cultural significance lies in its Kuwait International Book Fair, which will be launched in the period between the 16th and 26th of November of this year with the support of the government, a senior government official said Sunday. Furthermore, this necessitates coordination in a manner that represents Kuwait faithfully, Minister of Information, Minister of

Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said during a press conference. "The creativity of our youth should be the focus of the exhibition in order to enrich their creative path," Minister Mutairi insisted during the press conference which was held after a meeting with the high committee for the Kuwait International Book Fair. The committee's discussion involved the subject of

the "sustainable book" which was presented by the management of the exhibition, which is part of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. Minister Mutairi insisted, "the government should involve as many local publications as possible, as well as provide all the necessary support they may require to minimize all obstacles that they may face." —KUNA

Kuwait Airways resumes flights to Madinah

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) said Sunday it would resume commercial flights to Madinah in Saudi Arabia at a weekly rate of two flights - on Sunday and Wednesday, as of August 17. The weekly rate will increase to three flights on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday, as of September 13, according to a KAC statement. The Madinah destination is highly important for the Muslim travelers willing to visit the holy sites in the city, it noted, adding that the national flag carrier spares no effort in providing its customers with a variety of options and services the best suit their needs. —KUNA

Resumption of UK priority visa services for students

KUWAIT: The British Embassy will resume priority and super priority visa services from August 12. "Priority and super priority services will be different for visit visa requests, as there will be no cap for requests regarding student visas currently, but a maximum cap is in place for visit visas," a statement by the British Embassy said. The process takes around three weeks, and since August is considered



the peak month for visa requests, the embassy has encouraged visa applicants, especially those applying for a student visa, to apply as early as possible to avoid any delays.

Students who have applied before August 12 through the regular service, which usually takes around seven weeks on average, cannot transfer their request to priority or super priority, as they have to withdraw their request and apply for a new one. "It is necessary that applicants inform the embassy about any urgent or humanitarian circumstances through the correct means," the embassy said. Family visas, on the other hand, can take up to 24 weeks, and efforts are currently underway to return as soon as possible to the previous timeframe of 12 weeks. The embassy also stressed the importance of having all documents ready before applying.

UK Visas
& Immigration

VFS GLOBAL

UK

Student Visa Update





Calls for peace in Kenya as presidential race tightens

Trump vs Biden again? Documents scandal makes it more likely



KRAMATORSK, Ukraine: Local residents stand next to the destroyed buildings following a rocket attack in the town of Kramatorsk in Donetsk region, amid the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Nuke plant standoff stirs Chernobyl memories

‘We could have the same fate as the people of Chernobyl’

VYSCHETARASIVKA, Ukraine: Anastasiya Rudenko clutches the gleaming gold medal her late husband Viktor was awarded for working in the Chernobyl nuclear disaster zone. He died in 2014 from bladder cancer—perhaps a result of radiation, she thinks. Now she mourns his loss in the Ukrainian village of Vyschetarasivka, across the river from the Zaporizhzhia atomic power plant.

Kiev and Moscow accuse each other of shelling near the facility. Rockets have struck a radioactive waste storage area and monitors warn of a “grave” crisis with potential for catastrophic fallout. Across a 14-kilometre (nine-mile) stretch of the Dnipro River, the station’s hulking silhouette is clearly visible from the village where Rudenko handles paperwork proving her partner’s fateful role in history’s greatest nuclear calamity.

“We could have the same fate as the people of Chernobyl,” the 63-year-old told AFP. “There’s nothing good in what’s going on, and we don’t know how it will end.”

In ‘the zone’

Ukraine remains deeply scarred by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, when a Soviet-era reactor exploded and streamed radiation into the atmosphere in the country’s north. Russia captured

the site when it began its large-scale invasion of Ukraine in late February, stirring safety fears, but it was abandoned within weeks when Moscow failed to take Kyiv.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine was also occupied in the early days of the war but it has remained in Russian hands ever since. Ukraine says enemy troops are launching attacks from the facility—Europe’s largest—and its own military cannot return fire.

The escalating situation brings dark echoes from the past for those with close links to Chernobyl. Anastasiya’s husband Viktor worked as one of the 600,000 “liquidators”, tasked with painstakingly decontaminating the “Chernobyl exclusion zone,” where high radiation levels forced civilian evacuations.

The official death toll of Chernobyl remains just 31, however that figure is hotly contested with some estimating that thousands of liquidators may have suffered fatal doses of the invisible rays. Viktor

drove a truck in “the zone” for a total of 18 days. A gold service ribbon awarded by the Ukraine Chernobyl Union shows atoms swirling around the “bell of Chernobyl”, a symbol which has become a ringing reminder of the event.

A brittle document from Ukraine’s defence ministry archives certifies Viktor’s work and the dose of radiation he absorbed — 24.80 roentgen. “When I see my husband’s papers, I feel pain,” explained Anastasiya. “Many people died or were permanently injured.”

“When the Zaporizhzhia plant is being shelled we can see it quite well,” she added. “People are rumouring that there is something leaking, but they avoid publicly admitting it.”

Living liquidators

Vasyl Davydov says there are three “liquidators” still living in the village of Vyschetarasivka, a bucolic collection of garden-fringed bungalows with a hazy view of the Zaporizhzhia plant’s six reactors

and twin cooling towers.

He is one of them. He spent three and a half months working on Chernobyl decontamination, with 102 trips to “the zone” operating a crackling dosimeter to measure levels of radiation and razing tainted homes to the ground.

In his garden the 65-year-old unpacks his own service medals onto a refrigerator lying on its side, used as a makeshift table. One depicts the figure of Atlas holding the world, the image of a globe supplanted by the Chernobyl plant.

There are pictures too. Of Davydov as a handsome uniformed serviceman, posing with comrades and in front of a patriotic sign declaring: “Soldier! We will revive life on the grounds of Chernobyl.” “I was there. I saw it all, and I saw the scale,” he said.

Just days after Russian troops took the plant iodine tablets, to block a certain kind of radiation, were handed out in the village in case of emergency, according to Davydov. But his time working in “the zone” seems to have inured him to a fear of living opposite the Zaporizhzhia plant, even in a moment of crisis.

“If you believe everything, then you can go crazy,” he said. “So you filter everything through your experience.” “What will my fear do?” he asked. “How can it help me?” —AFP

Rushdie attack suspect pleads not guilty

ERIE, United States: The man accused of stabbing Salman Rushdie at a literary event pleaded not guilty to attempted murder charges Saturday, as the severely injured author appeared to show signs of improvement in hospital.

Hadi Matar, 24, was arraigned in court in New York state, with prosecutors outlining how Rushdie had been stabbed approximately 10 times in what they described as a planned, premeditated assault. After the on-stage attack on Friday, Rushdie had been helicoptered to hospital and underwent emergency surgery. His agent Andrew Wylie had said the writer was on a ventilator and in danger of losing an eye, but in an update on Saturday he told the New York Times that Rushdie had started to talk again, suggesting his condition had improved.

Author of “The Satanic Verses” and “Midnight’s Children”, Rushdie had lived in hiding for years after Iran’s first supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ordered his killing. And while Friday’s stabbing triggered international outrage, it also drew applause from Islamist hardliners in Iran and Pakistan. President Joe Biden on Saturday called it a “vicious” attack and offered prayers for Rushdie’s recovery.

“Salman Rushdie—with his insight into humanity, with his unmatched sense for story, with his refusal to be intimidated or silenced—stands for essential, universal ideals. Truth. Courage. Resilience.” Biden said in a statement. Matar is being held without bail and has been formally charged with second-degree attempted murder and assault with a weapon. Police provided no information on his background or what might have motivated him.

Effective death sentence

The 75-year-old novelist had been living under an effective death sentence since 1989 when Iran’s then-

supreme leader Khomeini issued a religious decree, or fatwa, ordering Muslims to kill the writer. The fatwa followed the publication of the novel “The Satanic Verses,” which enraged some Muslims who said it was blasphemous for its portrayal of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). In a recent interview with Germany’s Stern magazine, Rushdie spoke of how, after so many years living with death threats, his life was “getting back to normal.” “For whatever it was, eight or nine years, it was quite serious,” he told a Stern correspondent in New York.

“But ever since I’ve been living in America, since the year 2000, really there hasn’t been a problem in all that time.” Rushdie moved to New York in the early 2000s and became a US citizen in 2016. Despite the continued threat to his life, he was increasingly seen in public—often without noticeable security. Security was not particularly tight at Friday’s event at the Chautauqua Institution, which hosts arts programs in a tranquil lakeside community near Buffalo. Witnesses said Rushdie was seated on stage and preparing to speak when Matar sprang up from the audience and managed to stab him before being wrestled to the ground by staff and other spectators.

Matar’s family appears to come from the village of Yaroun in southern Lebanon, though he was born in the United States, according to a Lebanese official. An AFP reporter who visited the village Saturday was told that Matar’s parents were divorced and his father—a shepherd—still lived there. Journalists who approached his father’s home were turned away. Matar was “born and raised in the US,” the head of the local municipality, Ali Qassem Tahfa, told AFP.

“The Satanic Verses” and its author remain deeply inflammatory in Iran. When asked by AFP on Saturday, nobody in Tehran’s main book market dared to openly condemn the stabbing. “I was very happy to hear the news,” said Mehrab Bigdeli, a man in his 50s studying to become a Muslim cleric.

The message was similar in Iran’s conservative media, with one state-owned paper saying the “neck of the devil” had been “cut by a razor.” In Pakistan, a spokesman for the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a party that has staged violent protests, said Rushdie “deserved to be killed.” —AFP

Iraq judiciary not to dissolve parliament

BAGHDAD: Iraq’s judiciary said Sunday it lacks the authority to dissolve parliament as demanded by populist Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr, who is engaged in an escalating standoff with political rivals.

Followers of Sadr, in defiance of his Shiite rivals of the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, have been staging a sit-in protest at Iraq’s parliament. In the latest twist to the political turmoil, the firebrand cleric has urged the judiciary to dissolve parliament by the end of this week to pave the way for new legislative elections.

But the judiciary replied that “the Supreme Judicial Council has no jurisdiction to dissolve parliament”, citing “the principle of a separation of

powers”. Under the constitution, parliament can only be dissolved by an absolute majority vote in the house, following a request by one-third of deputies or by the prime minister with the approval of the president.

Nearly 10 months on from the last elections, Iraq still has no government, new prime minister or new president, due to repeated squabbles between factions over forming a coalition. In the latest turmoil to strike the oil-rich but war-scarred nation, Sadr has called for “early democratic elections after a dissolution of parliament”.

The Supreme Council said it agreed with Sadr’s criticism of the system’s “failure to elect a president of the republic, a prime minister and the absence of a government formed within the constitutional timeframe”.

“This is an unacceptable situation that must be remedied,” it said. The Coordination Framework opponents of Sadr launched their own Baghdad sit-in on Friday, nearly two weeks after his supporters stormed parliament and began an open-ended protest, first inside, then outside the legislature. —AFP



BAGHDAD: Members of the security forces snap pictures as supporters of Iraq’s pro-Iran Coordination Framework set up tents on a bridge leading to the capital Baghdad’s Green Zone, a day after they launched their own sit-in and nearly two weeks after supporters of Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr stormed parliament and began an open-ended protest. —AFP

International

Trump vs Biden again? Documents scandal makes it more likely

Trump is like a steroid boost for Democrats

WASHINGTON: If you think you've seen this movie before, it's because you have—except the second time will be even more nerve-racking. Yes, world: Get ready for Biden vs Trump 2. That's a potential take-away from the scandal embroiling Donald Trump over his alleged hoarding of secret government documents almost two years after losing reelection to Joe Biden.

If Trump was previously considered



“I’m stronger in my belief now”

likely to announce a 2024 comeback bid, one school of thought is that the FBI search of his Florida estate, allowing Trump to depict himself as a martyr, makes that decision almost certain.

“I believed he was gonna run before—I’m stronger in my belief now,” Republican Senator Lindsey Graham told Fox News. If Trump does run, goes the theory, then Biden surely does, too. Despite being the oldest man ever in the job at 79, Biden sees it as his historic mission to rid the United States of Trump.

And so, after surviving the tense, at times nightmarish 2020 election,

Americans may do it all over again. This time it would be in reverse—the incumbent a by-then 81-year-old Biden and the challenger a 78-year-old Trump.

Given Trump's constant lies that he won the 2020 election and searing evidence of his role in stoking the violent January 6 assault on Congress, a rematch would be ugly. “If you think Trump's 2016 and 2020 campaigns were nasty, you ain't seen nothing,” said American University history professor Allan Lichtman, a leading authority on US presidential elections.

Good for both sides?

To practitioners of the dark political arts, the FBI raid on Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort is a game-changing moment that, ironically, could benefit either side. For Biden the logic is obvious. The biggest name in the Republican Party is on the ropes, facing not only the FBI probe, but legal cases linked to allegations of everything from subverting the election, to fraud and rape.

That's embarrassing for Republicans and energizing for Biden's Democrats, who increasingly dream of avoiding a predicted wipe-out, or even scoring their own surprise victory, in November midterm elections to decide control of Congress.

“Trump is like a steroid boost for Democrats,” Jim Kessler, at the Democratic think tank Third Way, told The Hill. As the Republican-supporting

Wall Street Journal editorial board says: Republicans “should be making the midterms a referendum on Mr Biden's first two years. Democrats would prefer to talk until November—really, until the end of time—about Mr Trump.”

Yet Trump will also see benefits. Once again he's dominating the national psyche, while his fervent base has a new conspiracy theory to feed off, lighting up right-wing social media with calls to arms and threats of Civil War 2.0.

“Donald Trump has more than \$100 million in his political war chest. But he has something even more valuable—an active FBI investigation against him,” wrote Richard Lowry, editor of the conservative magazine National Review. “It has put him front-and-center again. It has made it easy for him to portray himself as an embattled victim.”

Trump's choice, Biden's strategy

In a Republican primary, Trump's political footprint would likely crush the strongest of rivals. “If Trump wants it at this point, I don't see how it's not his,” Republican political strategist John Thomas told Politico. “It'll be a coronation.”

And Trump getting in would also essentially trigger Biden's decision to follow—scotching any thoughts he may privately have of stepping aside for a younger figure before 2024. “Trump is the critical first mover in whether or not there is a rematch,” said Lara Brown, director of the Graduate School of Political Management at George



WASHINGTON: File combination of pictures created shows US President Joe Biden (L) in Wilmington, and former US President Donald Trump (R) in Washington. — AFP

Washington University.

“I do believe that President Biden is waiting to see if Trump declares and if he does, I believe he will also declare very quickly after.” Voters may not want either man. A July poll by NewsNation/Decision Desk HQ found 60 percent said Biden shouldn't run in 2024 and 57 percent said the same of Trump.

Biden backs himself against Trump. “In the next election, I'd be very fortunate if I had that same man running against me,” Biden said in March. While it's been a difficult year for Biden, the last couple months have seen him turn his presidency around, racking up remark-

able legislative and policy successes.

And although Biden remains deeply unpopular, with approval ratings around 40 percent, the improved record in the White House, and widespread anger at the Supreme Court's overturning of national abortion rights, leave advisors optimistic.

So while Republicans get lost in Trump dramas, Democrats will focus on kitchen table issues, an aide said. “This is about meeting people where they live and the things that matter most in their lives,” the aide said, speaking on condition of anonymity. “There'll be a lot of things that will be in the news, but we are going to speak to people in their lives.” — AFP

Ortega, wife in absolute control

SAN JOSE Costa Rica: First they jailed their opponents, now they've set their sights on the Catholic Church: Nicaragua's first couple-President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo—are in a bid for absolute control over the lives of citizens, experts say. The former guerilla and his partner have steadily increased their grip on power since he returned to the nation's top office in 2007, particularly via constitutional reforms that removed presidential term limits.

This style of government “concentrates discretionary decision making in the hands of the presidential couple,” sociologist Elvira Cuadra, who lives in exile, told AFP. The shift towards authoritarianism effectively allows Ortega to rule for life, she said.

“What we have is the building of a cult of personality,” said Eliseo Nunez, an analyst and former legislator also living in exile. Things have become markedly worse in Nicaragua since the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2018 that left

more than 350 people dead.

In the last year alone, the government arrested 46 opposition figures and critics, while the courts sentenced them to up to 13 years in prison. Among those detained were seven presidential hopefuls prevented from standing in last November's elections when Ortega won a fourth consecutive term. It is not just the opposition and detractors being marginalized or persecuted, however. Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front party is being purged of dissenting voices within.

And now, the Catholic Church has become the last bastion of resistance and rebellion against the government, riling the presidential couple. In her daily speeches, Murillo has called criticism by bishops a crime and “a sin against spirituality.”

Rolando Alvarez, the bishop of the northeastern city of Matagalpa, has now been confined to his Managua residence for more than a week, after the government accused him and the Catholic Church of inciting violence to destabilize the country.

“What has happened is that the government has always wanted a mute church, it doesn't want us to speak, nor to denounce injustice,” said Alvarez. Legislator Wilfredo Navarro told the Sandinista Canal 4 televi-

sion station that Alvarez and other priests were “false prophets” and accused them of playing politics.

Ortega and Murillo “have their own ideas, they're closing up the country, canceling critical voices,” said Cuadra. Opposition persecution -

Authorities have additionally forced the near century-old La Prensa newspaper, a staunch critic of the government, to shut down its print version and remain entirely online. Its journalists have fled the country.

The Catholic Church's television station and other Christian media have also been shut down. Parliament, dominated by Ortega allies, has canceled the legal status of more than 1,000 civic organizations and foundations that defend human rights, vulnerable children and freedom of expression, as well as private universities and cultural bodies.

Authorities used a law passed in 2020 to declare many non-governmental groups illegal for not registering as foreign agents and for blocking the government's attempts to scrutinize and control them. In July, members of a religious order founded by Mother Teresa fled to Costa Rica on foot after the government said they were not authorized to provide social assistance. Ortega, 76, was part of a gov-



MATAGALPA, Nicaragua: Police officers and riot police patrol outside Matagalpa's Archbishop Curia preventing Monsignor Rolando Alvarez from leaving, in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. — AFP

erning junta from 1979 to 1985 following the fall of the Somoza family dictatorship before becoming president until 1990, when he was defeated in elections.

He returned to power in 2007 but has since been accused by the opposition of

corruption and nepotism—he named Murillo as his running mate in the last two election campaigns. Cuadra said one sign of weakness is that the president and vice president “only have support from the police forces.” — AFP

Electrical fire kills 41 in Cairo...

Continued from Page 1

“Everyone was carrying kids out of the building,” Ahmed Reda Baioumy, who lives next to the church, told AFP. “But the fire was getting bigger and you could only go in once or you would asphyxiate.”

The Egyptian Coptic Church and the health ministry reported 41 dead and 14 injured in the blaze before emergency services said they had brought the blaze under control. Sisi declared on his Facebook page in the morning: “I have mobilized all state services to ensure that all measures are taken.” He later said he had “presented his condolences by phone” to Coptic Pope Tawadros II, who has been the head of the denomination in Egypt since 2012.

The interior ministry later said that “forensic evidence revealed that the blaze broke out in an air-conditioning unit on the second floor of the church building”. Father Farid Fahmy, of another nearby church in Imbaba, told AFP the fire was caused by a short circuit. “The power was out and they were using a gener-

ator,” he said. “When the power came back, it caused an overload.”

Copts are the largest Christian community in the Middle East, making up at least 10 million of Egypt's 103 million people. The minority has suffered attacks and complained of discrimination in the majority Muslim north African country, the Arab world's most populous. Copts have suffered deadly attacks by Islamist militants, particularly after Sisi overthrew former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, with churches, schools and homes burnt down.

Copts complain they have been left out of key state positions and have deplored restrictive legislation for the construction of churches compared to that of mosques. Sisi, the first Egyptian president to attend the Coptic Christmas mass every year, recently appointed the first ever Coptic judge to head the Constitutional Court.

Accidental fires are not uncommon in the sprawling megalopolis of Cairo, where millions live in informal settlements. Egypt, with its often dilapidated and poorly maintained infrastructure, has suffered several deadly fires in recent years. In March 2021, at least 20 people died in a blaze in a textile factory in an eastern suburb of Cairo. In 2020, two hospital fires claimed the lives of 14 COVID-19 patients. — Agencies



GIZA, Egypt: Egyptian firefighters are pictured outside the Abu Sifin church located in the densely populated Imbaba neighbourhood west of the Nile river, part of Giza governorate, on August 14, 2022. — AFP

Rain brings relief to France fires, more evacuated

TOULOUSE: A forest fire that flared anew in southern France sent 1,000 more people fleeing while overnight rain brought blazes elsewhere in the country under control, officials said on Sunday. France has been buffeted this summer by a historic drought as well as a series of heatwaves and several forest fires. A fire that had been raging since Monday in the southern Aveyron region appeared to be under control and dying out on Saturday afternoon when it suddenly reignited in a “virulent” manner, gobbling up 500 more hectares, the prefecture said.

At least 1,000 people were evacuated from the village of Mostuejols near the city of Millau and six nearby hamlets, it said. Around 3,000 people had already been evacuated because of the fire, but were allowed back when it appeared under control. No casualties have been reported so far from the blaze, which has consumed a total of 1,260 hectares so far.

A local man was under investigation for accidentally starting the fire when a metal part of his trailer touched the road, sending off sparks that ignited the dried vegetation. To limit such risks in eastern France, police said on Saturday they were banning entry to all but residents in most forests in the Bas-Rhin region near the German border.

Meanwhile in the southwestern Gironde region around Bordeaux, a huge fire that had flared on Tuesday was under control after rain fell overnight, a senior official said. “The night was favorable to us, since as you know, we had rain and very little wind... The fire is now contained,” Ronan Leautic, deputy prefect of Arcachon commune, told reporters on Sunday. He added that 8,000 residents forced to evacuate could now return home. There was further relief after a fire in the eastern department of Jura that destroyed over 1,000 hectares was brought under control.

Lower temperatures, rain forecast
Arnaud Mendousse, of Gironde fire and rescue,



BELIN-BELIET, France: A doe looks on in a burnt forest following a fire in South Gironde on Aug 13, 2022. — AFP

said earlier there had been between 10 and 30 mm of rain in the region but on “terrain that is extremely dry”. “We know that this offers a respite but does not signify an end to the fight. We know that if it does not rain in the next 48 to 72 hours the risk will increase considerably.”

He said the humidity level has gone up and the temperature was relatively low at around 25 degrees Celsius, but warned: “The fire is not completely out and the soil remains extremely hot.” Meteo France was forecasting lower temperatures and rain and thunderstorms for most of the country on Sunday.

In the northwest, in the legendary Broclician forest in region of Brittany - where King Arthur roamed and where wildfires are normally rare - a fire was contained after rain fell overnight, but remained under watch after devastating 400 hectares, officials said. EU members including Germany, Poland, Austria and Romania have sent reinforcement to France to help battle blazes and several water-bombing planes from the European Union fleet have also joined firefighting efforts. — AFP

International

Calls for peace in Kenya as presidential race tightens

'We must all avoid raising tensions that could easily trigger violence'

NAIROBI, Kenya: Kenyans prayed for peace Sunday as they waited anxiously for the final outcome of a tight presidential race, with the two frontrunners neck and neck, according to partial official results. As of Sunday morning, Deputy President William Ruto had scored 51.25 percent of the vote, reversing earlier gains for his main rival Raila Odinga, who had 48.09 percent, according to data from the election commission covering nearly 50 percent of constituencies.

Tuesday's vote passed off largely peacefully but after previous elections sparked deadly violence and rigging claims, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is under intense pressure to deliver a clean poll and release results by 16 August. Riot police were deployed overnight inside the commission's heavily-guarded tallying centre in the Kenyan capital Nairobi after political party agents disrupted the process, hurling rigging allegations at each other.

The commission's chairman Wafula Chebukati has accused party agents of delaying the tallying process by haranguing election workers with unnecessary questions. More than a dozen civil society groups, trade unions as well as the Kenyan chapters of Amnesty International and Transparency International issued a statement Sunday urging calm.

"We call on all political candidates, their supporters and the public to exercise restraint. We must all avoid raising tensions that could easily trigger violence," the group of 14 organisations said. The poll pitted Odinga, a veteran opposition leader now backed by the ruling party, against Ruto, who was widely expected to succeed President Uhuru Kenyatta until his boss joined

hands with former foe Odinga in a dramatic shift of political allegiances.

'Let us have peace'

Both candidates have pledged to maintain calm, with the memory of the 2007-08 and 2017 post-poll violence still fresh for many Kenyans. At a church service in Nairobi on Sunday, Odinga, 77, recited the opening lines of the Peace Prayer of St Francis and said: "I want to become an instrument to bring peace, to heal, to unite and keep the hope alive in our country."

Congregants in Odinga's stronghold of Kisumu also prayed for a peaceful outcome, with 81-year-old bishop Washington Ogunyong Ngede telling his flock: "Don't let politics divide us. We must remain united."

"Because leaders come and go but the country of Kenya lives forever," said Ngede, a lifelong friend of the Odinga family. "Let us have peace," he said to cheers and ululations from the gathering of some 300 worshippers.

Kenyans voted in six elections, choosing a new president as well as senators, governors, lawmakers, women representatives and some 1,500 county officials. Lawyer David Mwaure-one of the four presidential candidates, along with former spy George Wajackoyah-conceded on Sunday, endorsing Ruto, whose party won a key gubernatorial race when Johnson Sakaja secured control of Nairobi, Kenya's richest city.

'Model for the continent'

The election is being closely watched by an international community that views Kenya as a pillar of stability in a volatile region, with US Secretary of State

have killed thousands of people in staged shootouts, while hundreds of others, most of them from the opposition, have disappeared, activists say.

The government denies the allegations, and ahead of Bachelet's visit Dhaka said in a statement that it would highlight its "sincere efforts to protect and promote human rights of the people". "Bangladesh strongly hopes that the Chief of UN human rights mechanism would witness by herself how the country is doing miracles to keep on track their development journey; integrating human rights into it," it said. Bachelet, 70, a former Chilean president, is due to step down at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, North Korea on Sunday criticised UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for his "dangerous words" after he called for the complete and verifiable denuclearisation of Pyongyang during a visit to Seoul.

Guterres, who was in South Korea on a two-day visit, expressed his "clear commitment" to North Korea's denuclearisation, calling it a "fundamental objective to bring peace, security and stability to the whole region". His comments came as Washington and South Korean officials have repeatedly warned that the North is preparing to carry out what would be its seventh nuclear test. But the North's vice foreign minister Kim Son Gyong denounced the UN chief, accusing him of showing "sympathy" to the hostile policy of the United States. "I cannot but express deep regret over the said remarks of the UN secretary-general that grossly lack impartiality and fairness," he said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Kim said "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation" of North Korea was "an infringe-

interview." China's strict control measures have led to stigma against not just recovered patients, but also their families, neighbours, friends and even frontline healthcare workers, said Jin Dongyan from the School of Biomedical Sciences at Hong Kong University. "It is unscientific to think that people who were infected once will continue to carry the virus and be infectious long after recovering," Jin told AFP.

"Due to the lack of awareness, some fear that those who have been infected are more susceptible to being reinfected, but in reality, it's the opposite." Zou is now fighting a court battle with her employer, who has refused to pay her wages since she got sick, and who cites her disease history as a reason to bar her from returning to work. Her employer, a service company named Shanghai Yuanmao BPO, declined to comment citing the pending court case.

'Treated like a virus'

He Yuxiu is a Chinese social media influencer who goes by a pseudonym and was living in Ukraine until Russia invaded. She fled the war and returned home, then found a job as a Russian-language teacher in north China's Hebei province, relieved to have left her troubles behind. But when her school learned that she had been infected with COVID-19 while in Ukraine, she was fired. "I never imagined I'd lose my first job for this reason," she said in a video posted on China's Twitter-like Weibo.

"Why should we be treated like a virus when we have defeated it?" The stigma is

ing a pause forced by COVID-19. The "Falcon Strike" exercise comes after China's biggest-ever military drills around Taiwan, which were conducted in retaliation to a visit there by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Thai Air Chief Marshall Prapas Sornchaidee said "Falcon Strike", running from August 14-25 in the northeast of the country, was meant to "strengthen relations and understanding" with China.

The visiting Chinese contingent will include



NAIROBI: Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) clerks work to verify presidential results of the just concluded general election in the national tallying centre at 'The Bomas of Kenya' in Nairobi. —AFP

Antony Blinken describing the country's polls "as a model for the continent".

"We encourage peace and patience as the vote tallying continues from the August 9 elections," Blinken said on Twitter late Saturday. Turnout was about 65 percent, much lower than the 78 percent recorded in 2017, a reflection, some observers say, of the disenchantment with the political elite, particularly among young people.

The winner of the presidential race needs to secure 50 percent plus one vote and at least a quarter of the votes in 24 of Kenya's 47 counties. If not, the country will be forced to hold a runoff within 30 days of the original vote.

Observers say that with the race so close, an appeal to the Supreme Court by the losing candidate is almost certain, meaning it could be many weeks before a new president takes office. —AFP

UN rights chief in Bangladesh, visits Rohingya camps

DHAKA: United Nations rights chief Michelle Bachelet arrived in Bangladesh on Sunday for a four-day visit that will include a trip to squalid camps housing nearly a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

The exodus of Rohingya was sparked by a 2017 Myanmar army offensive against the mostly Muslim minority, with the UN's highest court last month giving the green light to a landmark case accusing the Buddhist-majority country of genocide.

Five years later the refugees refuse to go home in the absence of guarantees for their safety and rights from military-ruled Myanmar, making host country Bangladesh increasingly impatient. Bangladesh, meanwhile, has come under fire for its own rights record under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whom Bachelet will meet during her visit, as well as local activists.

Nine groups including Human Rights Watch said that Bachelet should "publicly call for an immediate end to serious abuses including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances" in Bangladesh.

In December the United States imposed sanctions on a notorious elite police unit and seven top security officers, including the national police chief, over gross human rights violations. Under Hasina, security forces

China's ex-COVID patients live under dark shadow

BEIJING, China: When Zou tested positive for COVID-19 while working as a cleaner in one of Shanghai's largest quarantine centres, she hoped it wouldn't be long before she could pick up the mop and start earning again. But four months on, she is still fighting to get her job back — one of scores of recovering COVID patients facing what labour rights activists and health experts say is a widespread form of discrimination in zero-COVID China.

Using snap lockdowns and mass testing, China is the last major economy still pursuing the goal of stamping out the virus completely. Those who test positive, as well as their contacts, are all sent to central quarantine facilities, while a flare-up in a factory can grind production to a halt.

Rights groups say the strict rules are feeding COVID-related discrimination and shutting out thousands of people from China's already bleak job market — with migrant workers and young people hit hardest. "People are afraid they might contract the virus from us, so they shun us," said Zou, who only gave her last name for fear of retribution for speaking to AFP.

"Recruiters check COVID testing history going back several months during an



GUANGZHOU, China: File photo shows a health worker taking a swab sample from a woman to be tested for the COVID-19 coronavirus at a swab collection site in Guangzhou, in China's southern Guangdong province. —AFP

widespread — job ads for factory workers in Shanghai posted last month said applicants with a history of COVID-19 infection would be refused work. The story of a young woman who lived in a toilet for weeks in Shanghai's Hongqiao railway station since she was unable to find work or return to her village due to the stigma of having been infected went viral last month.

And a theatre in the southern Chinese city of Foshan was forced to apologise after a notice banning recovered patients from entering sparked a public backlash.

Beijing's National Health Commission and human resources ministry last month banned employers from discriminating against recovered COVID patients, while Premier Li Keqiang has called for heavy punishments for those breaking the rules.

But job seekers and activists are sceptical. Factories in Shanghai continued to refuse to hire recovered workers even after the city announced strict anti-discrimination rules, employment agent Wang Tao said, because they fear a mass outbreak or health inspections. —AFP

US congressional team in Taiwan on heels of Pelosi visit

TAIPEI: A US congressional delegation arrived in Taiwan on Sunday, officials said, days after China held military drills around the island in retaliation for US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit. Sunday's unannounced trip came after Pelosi infuriated Beijing by visiting Taiwan earlier this month, sparking unprecedented air and sea drills that raised the prospect of conflict.

The five-member delegation, led by Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, will meet with President Tsai Ing-wen and attend a banquet hosted by Foreign Minister Joseph Wu during the visit, according to Taiwan's foreign ministry.

They will discuss "US-Taiwan relations, regional security, trade and investment, global supply chains, climate change, and other significant issues of mutual interest", the American Institute in Taiwan said in a statement. Taiwan hailed the delegation's visit as another sign of warm ties between Taipei and Washington.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its sincere welcome (to the delegation)," the ministry said in a statement Sunday. "As China is continuing to escalate tensions in the region, the US Congress has again organized a heavyweight delegation to visit Taiwan, showing a friendship that is not afraid of China's threats and intimidation, and highlighting the US' strong support towards Taiwan."

The other members of the delegation are Democratic members John Garamendi and Alan Lowenthal of California, Don Beyer of Virginia and Republican representative Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen from American Samoa, according to the institute. China views Taiwan as its own territory to be taken one day, by force if necessary. For a week after Pelosi's visit, it sent warships, missiles and jets into the waters and skies around the island.

China patrols continue

Beijing has raged about the trip by Pelosi, who was the highest-ranking elected American official to visit Taiwan in decades. Taiwan has accused China of using her visit as an excuse to kickstart drills that would allow it to rehearse for an invasion.

It held its own exercises simulating defence against a Chinese invasion of its main island. China drew down its drills but said it would continue to patrol the Taiwan Strait. In its daily update, Taiwan's defence ministry said Sunday that it had detected 22 Chinese planes and six ships operating around the Taiwan Strait.

Of those, 11 planes crossed the median line—an unofficial demarcation between Taiwan and China that Beijing does not recognise. China earlier this week vowed zero tolerance for "separatist activities" in Taiwan and reaffirmed its threat that it would take control of the self-ruled island by force if provoked.

"We are ready to create vast space for peaceful reunification, but we will leave no room for separatist activities in any form," China's Taiwan Affairs Office said in a white paper Wednesday. China will "not renounce the use of force, and we reserve the option of taking all necessary measures". —AFP

China, Thailand kick off joint air force drills

BANGKOK: Thailand and China kicked off a joint air force exercise on Sunday, the kingdom's military said, the first such drills in years follow-

fighter jets, bombers and airborne early-warning (AEW) planes, the defence ministry in Beijing said last week.

It added that the drills will involve training for "air support, strikes on ground targets, and small- and large-scale troop deployment". The Thai-Chinese air force drills were held regularly since 2015 until the pandemic hit.

Washington has expressed growing concern over China's assertiveness in the Pacific region, and last week launched the "Super Garuda

Shield" exercise in Indonesia with its allies. Thailand and sought to strengthen its defence ties with China, and was among the first countries to buy Chinese naval hardware under a deal finalised in 2017.

In 2020, however, a subsequent \$724 million deal for two Chinese-made submarines was delayed after a public outcry. Further wrangling over the vessels' engines may see the delivery pushed back to 2024, local media reported this month. —AFP

Business

MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 2022

Kuwait's economic data, inflation prompted CBK rate hike: Bouresli

'Discount rate increase to help maintain Kuwaiti dinar's attractiveness'

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) raised the discount rate for the fifth time this year by about a quarter of a percentage point, from 2.5 to 2.75 percent, with the aim of maintaining the attractiveness of the dinar, expanding the margin between the domestic discount rate and the US interest from its narrowest level in a century, according to the latest banking data.

The Central Bank also clarified that the maximum limits for interest rates on lending transactions in dinar, setting the new interest for commercial lending transactions and other forms of lending with a duration of no more than a year at 5.25 percent, and a duration of more than one year at 6.75 percent, while setting the interest on consumer loans and housing at 5.57 percent.

In an interview with Kuwait Times, Amani Bouresli, former minister of commerce and industry and finance professor at Kuwait University, spoke about the possible impact of CBK's decision to raise the discount rate on Kuwait economy and businesses.

Bouresli said since the Kuwaiti dinar is partially pegged to the US dollar, there will certainly be a local consensus to raise the interest rate in tandem with the increase in the US interest rate by the Federal Reserve. "The CBK has increased the rate at the right time as the world is experiencing unprecedented wave of inflationary pressures. In order to tame spiraling inflation, it is imperative to activate monetary policies, and raising the interest rate is one of the main tools to check prices," she



Amani Bouresli

pointed out.

"The repeated hikes in interest rates that we witnessed in recent months have been initiated with a view to taming inflationary pressures. These measures are expected to continue until inflation rates come under control," she said, adding, "then the reverse cycle of lowering interest rates will start."

In terms of the effects of raising the discount rate, Bouresli said the CBK decision is an economically sound decision as stable prices are a crucial prerequisite for sustained economic growth. She said there will be a tendency from institutions and individuals to save more money and cut their spending due to the increase in interest rates on deposits, which will also go up in return.

Bouresli clarified that the CBK had three options before it when the Federal Reserve raised the interest rate. "First, the CBK could have raised the interest rate in tune with the Federal Reserve decision at the same time and at the same rate. Second, it could have maintained the status quo as what happened at the beginning of the Fed hike. And third, it could raise the rate higher than what the Federal Reserve did, as what happened recently," she said.

"The present economic situation in the GCC and Kuwait in particular prompted the CBK to raise the discount rate. For example, when oil prices go up, it



is a positive thing for the Kuwaiti economy, while a spike in oil prices will have a negative impact on global economy as the prices of energy and essential commodities will go up. So, our domestic economic situation may not be affected like the global market," Bouresli added. "The monetary policy cycle is now increasingly synchronized around the world. It must occur but its extent may be higher or lower, according to domestic economic factors which may be varied from global economic factors," she pointed out.

Regarding the possible impact of a hike in inter-

est rate on individuals and businesses domestically, Bouresli said: "The interest rate hike will not be in the interest of business owners and those who need to borrow, but savers will have full advantage. In general, a rise in interest rate will have a negative impact on the corporate sector and could lead to a minor slowdown in economic activity. With inflation at multi-decade highs in many countries and pressures broadening beyond food and energy prices, policymakers have pivoted toward a tighter policy. A higher interest rate could help tame prices locally, which are also witnessing an upward move."

Saudi Aramco unveils record \$48.4bn profit

RIYADH: Oil giant Saudi Aramco on Sunday unveiled record profits of \$48.4 billion in the second quarter of 2022, after Russia's war in Ukraine and a post-pandemic surge in demand sent crude prices soaring. Net income leapt 90 percent year-on-year for the world's biggest oil producer, which clocked its second straight quarterly record after announcing \$39.5 billion for Q1.

Aramco is just the latest oil major to rake in eye-watering sums after ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, TotalEnergies and Eni also revealed multi-billion-dollar profits in the second quarter.

"While global market volatility and economic uncertainty remain, events during the first half of this year support our view that ongoing investment in our industry is essential," said Aramco president and CEO Amin H Nasser. "In fact, we expect oil demand to continue to grow for the rest of the decade," he added.

Net income rose 22.7 percent from Q1 in "strong market conditions", Aramco said. Half-year profits were \$87.9 billion, up from \$47.2 billion for the same period of 2021. Aramco will pay an \$18.8 billion dividend in Q3, the same as it paid in Q2. It "continues to work on increasing crude oil maximum sustainable capacity from 12 million barrels per day to 13 million by 2027", its earnings announcement said. The quarterly profits, the highest since Aramco's record-breaking IPO, beat a company-compiled analyst forecast of \$46.2 billion.

Aramco shares were down about 1.0 percent at 40.4 riyals (\$10.8) in early trading on the Saudi stock exchange. They are up 25 percent this year.

Crown jewel

State-owned Aramco floated 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial



RIYADH: In this file photo taken on November 11, 2019, a billboard displaying an advert for Aramco is pictured in the Saudi capital Riyadh. —AFP

public offering. The "crown jewel" and leading source of income for the conservative kingdom temporarily supplanted Apple as the world's most valuable company in March. It now lies second in the list with a market valuation of \$2.4 trillion.

Saudi Arabia has sought to open up and diversify its oil-reliant economy, especially since Mohammed bin Salman's appointment as crown prince and de facto ruler in 2017. Despite raising production, Aramco has pledged to reach "operational net zero (carbon) emissions" by 2050. Carbon pollution is tallied in the country that uses the fuel, not where it is produced.

Nasser said Aramco recovered quickly from a series of attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on its facilities earlier this year, including a dramatic strike in Jeddah that sent smoke billowing during a

Formula One practice session in March. "We were able to restore our production in all these facilities immediately. In a few weeks, all these facilities were working and producing at full capacity," he told a media conference call. Earlier this month, the International Energy Agency said global oil demand will rise more than previously forecast this year as heatwaves and soaring gas prices prompt countries to switch fuels for power generation.

Oil prices have dropped by \$30 per barrel from a peak in June due to growing supplies, but remain close to \$100. The OPEC group of oil-producing countries has been gradually raising production, despite pressure from Western leaders including US President Joe Biden who visited Saudi Arabia last month to pump more. — AFP

salaries and related benefits, the largest cost item, it said. Tadawul is among the top 10 global stock markets and had a market capitalization of about \$2.8 trillion on December 8, 2021, when it listed. It became the third publicly traded regional stock exchange, after the Dubai Financial Market and Boursa Kuwait.

The group's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) decreased by 18.8 per cent year-on-year to 155.3 million riyals in the second quarter due to the fall in operating revenue and higher operating expenditures. Free cash flow decreased 14 per cent year-on-year to 313m riyals in the second quarter as a result of lower EBITDA.

The Tadawul's capital markets segment revenue, which includes trading services and listing fees, fell 14.2 per cent year-on-year to 115.9 million riyals in the second quarter.

Trading services revenue fell an annual 23.6 per cent to 89.4 million riyals due to "normalization of trading values" that contracted by 21.6 per

cent, the bourse said. Listing fees revenue rose an annual 46.2 per cent to 26.5 million riyals, mainly because of an increase in the number and size of listings, the bourse said. During the first half of 2022, the total number of companies listed on the main market increased to 215 from 203 in the same period last year as the stock market continued to attract investors.

The number of newly-listed companies on both the main market and parallel market reached 25 in the first half of the year with a total offered value of 14.9 billion riyals.

The number of initial public offerings (IPOs) in the first six months of the year in the main market and the parallel market reached 246. Khalid Al-Hassan, group chief executive of the Saudi Tadawul Group, said. The group recorded net profit after zakat of 278.3 million in the first half of the year, a 23.1 per cent decrease on the prior-year period, as operating revenue fell 8.3 per cent and operating expenditure rose 9.8 per cent. —Agencies

'India's Warren Buffet' dies days after airline launch

MUMBAI: Colorful stock market billionaire Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-dubbed by local media India's Warren Buffet-has died, his office said Sunday, just a week after he launched the country's newest airline. Calling the 62-year-old "indomitable", Prime Minister Narendra Modi echoed tributes from other senior officials, tweeting that the death of the tycoon was "saddening."

The "Big Bull of Dalal Street"-the Wall Street of Mumbai-had a net worth of \$5.8 billion with significant holdings in more than 30 Indian blue-chip stocks. Jhunjhunwala had invested \$35 million for an estimated 40 percent stake in Akasa Air which made its maiden flight in the Asian country's crowded aviation market last Sunday.

Having made his money betting on stocks and lacking any experience in the airline industry, the decision to enter the capital-intensive sector raised eyebrows. "A lot of people question why I've started an airline. Rather than answer them, I say I'm prepared for failure," he told an industry event in February.

"It's better to have tried and failed than not tried at all," he said. "I hope to prove people wrong. Now it's become a matter of ego." "Full of life, witty and insightful, he leaves behind an indelible contribution to the financial world," Modi said. Jhunjhunwala had been putting aside around 20-25 per cent of his wealth to various philanthropic activities.

"I am going to work until the last day of my life. I pray to God that whenever you are going to take me, let me get up in the morning, do my yoga, have a lovely breakfast, come to the office, do some trading, do some investing and in the evening, go have two good drinks and then you can take me," Jhunjhunwala had said in an interview two years ago when asked about his retirement plans after turning 60.

Things, however, didn't turn out as he had wished for. He died on Sunday morning following a cardiac arrest. Heart, kidney and diabetes-related issues had affected his mobility in his last few days; he was restricted to a wheelchair. The legendary investor, who is often compared to Warren Buffett, said death was a part of life and that he was not afraid of it. "I do not know when it will come. I cannot predict it. I can model it but I cannot know it. So it is inevitable. What is death? Death is permanent sleep," he had said.

Also called the Oracle of Dalal Street, Jhunjhunwala is survived by his wife Rekha and three children - Nishtha, Aryaman and Aryavir. Richest Indian Gautam Adani and mining baron Anil Agarwal on Sunday led India Inc in paying tributes to Rakesh Jhunjhunwala. "Extremely saddened by the untimely passing away of the most legendary investor that India has had. "Shri Jhunjhunwala inspired an entire generation to believe in our equity markets with his brilliant views. "We will miss him. India will miss him but we will never forget him. RIP," Adani tweeted. —Agencies



Rakesh Jhunjhunwala

Saudi Tadawul Group 2Q profit dips

RIYADH: Saudi Tadawul Group, the holding company that operates the kingdom's stock exchange, posted a 24 per cent year-on-year decline in second-quarter profit on lower operating revenue and higher expenses. Net profit after zakat for the three months to the end of June fell to \$36.7 million, the group said in a bourse filing on Sunday.

Operating revenue for the second quarter fell 4.9 per cent year-on-year to 298.1m riyals due to a drop in trading services and listing fees. The bourse's operating expenditures increased 16.6 per cent year-on-year to 160.6m riyals in the second quarter, mainly because of an increase in

Business

'Now hiring': American employers struggle to find enough workers

COVID, early retirements and immigration laws cause severe worker shortage

WASHINGTON: Salespeople, food servers, postal workers — "Help Wanted" ads are proliferating across the United States, as companies struggle to deal with a worker shortage caused by the pandemic, a rash of early retirements and restrictive immigration laws.

More than 10 million openings went unfilled in June, according to government data, while fewer than six million people were seeking work, even as employers desperately try to boost hiring amid a frenzy of consumer spending. "We have a lot of jobs, but not enough workers to fill them," the US Chamber of Commerce, which represents American companies, said in a statement.

Many of those who stopped working as COVID-19 first ravaged the US economy in early 2020 have never returned. "There would be 3.4 million more workers today if labor force participation—the percentage of the working-age population currently employed or actively seeking work—was at the pre-pandemic rate, the Chamber calculated. It has slipped from 63.4 percent to 62.1 percent.

And where have all these people gone? Many simply took early retirement.

"Part of that is just the US population continues to age," Nick Bunker, a labor-market specialist with jobs website Indeed, told AFP.

Too few immigrants

The huge cohort of "baby boomers" had already begun leaving the labor market, but there has been an "acceleration in retirements" since the pandemic struck, Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG, told AFP. Millions of people opted for early retirement, concerned for their health and with sufficient assets—thanks to a then-buoyant stock market and high real-estate prices—to leave the workplace.

In the short term, Bunker said, "We're unlikely to get back to exactly the pre-pandemic level of labor-force participation because of the aging of the population."

Adding to this, said Swonk, "We haven't had immigration at the pace to replace the baby boomers."

Restrictions imposed under president Donald Trump, plus the impact of COVID, steeply reduced the number of foreigners entering the country. "It



LOS ANGELES: A "now hiring" sign is posted in the window of a restaurant in Los Angeles.— AFP

has rebounded a little bit, but still not at the levels we were seeing several years ago," Bunker said. The Chamber of Commerce also underscored the impact of generous government assistance during the pandemic, which "bolstered people's economic stability—allowing them to continue sitting out of the labor force."

Long COVID

Large numbers of women quit their jobs in 2020, in part because extended school closings required many to stay home to care for children. Those who wanted to place children in day care were often frustrated, as labor shortages hit the day care sector as well.

Swonk noted that not only COVID infections but also the debilitating effects of long COVID have had a serious impact. It's "really one of the most underestimated and misunderstood issues"

keeping workers sidelined, she said.

To lure workers back, many employers have boosted pay and benefits. And if Americans' buying frenzy slows, analysts say, companies will need fewer workers. The labor shortage is expected to ease a bit as the Federal Reserve continues aggressively raising interest rates in its effort to combat inflation.

In the meantime, wage earners have profited. Over the past year, millions have changed jobs, often lured elsewhere by higher wages and better working conditions. This "Great Resignation" has resulted in higher hourly wages. The private sector average is now \$32.27, up 5.2 percent in a year, adding to inflationary pressures. The US labor market showed new signs of vitality in July.

The 22 million jobs lost due to COVID-19 have returned, and the unemployment rate is a historically low 3.5 percent.— AFP

Wall St investors upbeat on Apple's long-term rally

NEW YORK: As the world's most valuable company, Apple has the biggest influence in the S&P 500 Index and its participation in the market capitalization weighted benchmark is essential to any sustainable rally.

Apple shares beat the S&P for a ninth consecutive week and have helped to fuel a 22 percent rebound in the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 from a low in June. Apple is a so-called tentpole stock that dominates investor attention and can help define investment narratives, according to Nicholas Colas, co-founder of research firm DataTrek. In that respect, he said, Apple's recent performance is "quite heartening".

The S&P 500 is down 10 percent in 2022 despite rallying since June. Apple's shares, on the other hand, are on the cusp of turning positive for the year after tumbling with other technology stocks in the first half. Its shares have outperformed in both of the bull markets since the 2008 financial crisis.

In snapping up Apple shares, investors are betting that the iPhone maker's strong balance sheet will allow it to continue returning cash to shareholders and wring big profits out of its more than 1 billion users despite the potential for a recession in the US with the Federal Reserve bent on fighting soaring inflation. "Apple is a safe haven that people flock to when uncertainty abounds in the rest of the market," said Daniel Morgan, senior portfolio manager at Synovus Trust.

"Apple shares are driving the rally in the S&P 500 based on the durability of its model." Like the broader market, risks to Apple's ascent abound. Inflation is weighing on consumers while China's stringent COVID-19 policies pose a lingering threat to its supply chains — Agencies



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 11 AUG 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,902	8,584.83	-0.5%	-0.2%	12.4%	378,716,264	166,326,106	31,506	27.4	2.6	78.5%
Main Market	9,818	5,858.95	-0.2%	-0.3%	-0.5%	768,014,415	70,323,133	28,224	13.7	1.3	21.5%
All Share	45,720	7,699.47	-0.4%	-0.2%	9.3%	1,146,730,679	236,649,239	59,730	24.5	2.3	100%

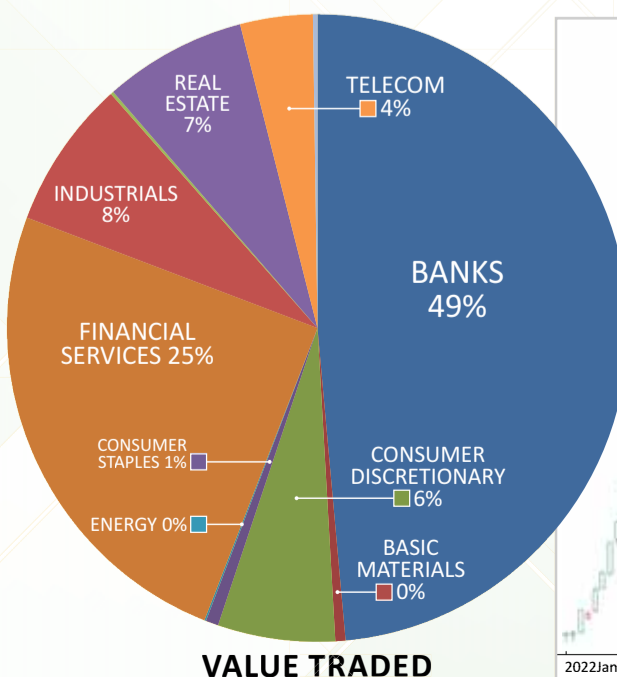
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	27,511	1,845.28	-0.7%	-0.7%	13.7%	251,310,922	114,911,404	18,512	26.5	2.5	59.84%
BASIC MATERIALS	908	1,018.51	0.4%	1.2%	-0.6%	2,891,088	1,244,875	650	13.0	1.3	1.97%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	793	1,539.21	-1.7%	0.7%	15.2%	99,415,625	14,455,161	5,387	13.3	8.1	1.72%
CONSUMER STAPLES	164	537.69	-1.3%	-0.9%	-26.5%	3,764,655	1,552,308	307	16.7	1.0	0.36%
ENERGY	248	1,193.41	3.5%	4.0%	-16.4%	6,284,737	210,837	276	15.1	1.2	0.54%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,243	1,439.29	0.3%	0.1%	1.1%	525,603,106	58,664,008	17,950	13.8	2.1	9.23%
HEALTH CARE	217	438.05	-5.0%	-5.2%	-45.0%	11,998	6,000	11	12.5	3.1	0.47%
INDUSTRIALS	4,457	1,250.52	-0.5%	0.0%	9.6%	37,707,845	18,179,060	6,197	46.2	1.5	9.69%
INSURANCE	652	1,565.63	2.5%	3.6%	2.1%	4,302,180	367,651	344	7.4	1.0	1.42%
REAL ESTATE	2,702	1,255.98	0.6%	0.0%	-5.3%	198,052,079	17,560,214	7,752	13.3	1.2	5.88%
TECHNOLOGY	9	672.94	2.4%	-5.6%	-1.6%	8,525	763	9	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,850	1,256.34	0.0%	1.0%	15.3%	14,576,085	8,937,151	2,118	14.7	2.2	8.37%
UTILITIES	221	528.95	0.0%	0.5%	-11.8%	2,801,834	559,805	217	15.5	2.5	0.48%

Top Gainers					
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KSHC	36.4	19.74	18,037,186	729,817	708
IFAHR	55.2	19.48	38,068,616	2,077,787	941
ERESCO	70.3	15.63	16,639,230	1,110,747	367
HAYATCOMM	77.9	14.56	176,586	13,164	44
WETHAQ	40.1	13.60	3,668,223	143,983	217

Top Losers					
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
UPAC	231	-15.38	147,730	35,734	52
KHOT	169	-11.05	4,109	725	14
PAPCO	47.9	-10.13	3,910	198	6
LAND	62.9	-8.84	751,094	47,450	41
AJWAN	16.1	-8.00	2,931,725	47,256	78

Top Volume					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	96.5	2.23	208,076,619	20,229,076	5,089
AUB	307	0.33	102,991,470	31,468,511	4,449
ASIYA	56.7	-0.70	65,652,443	3,941,465	2,162
NCCI	128	2.40	55,755,228	7,225,714	1,550
KFH	860	-2.60	47,534,487	41,410,714	8,554

Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	860.0	-2.60	47,534,487	41,410,714	8,554
AUB	307	0.33	102,991,470	31,468,511	4,449
GFH	96.5	2.23	208,076,619	20,229,076	5,089
NBK	1,073	0.47	14,562,855	15,534,492	1,534
GBK	361	0.84	32,649,814	11,774,495	711



Market Summary:

- Premier Market M. Cap reduced to 35.9 billion KD (%78.5), while the Main marker remained at 9.8 billion KD (%21.5).
- Premier and Main indices have fallen following the last week's global markets.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7699, support levels at 7677, 7635, and 7574, while resistance at 7726. Premier index closed at 8584, support levels at 8527, 8426, and 8335, while resistance at 8599. The Main index closed at 5858, with support levels at 5845, 5813, and 5780, while resistance at 5865.

Business

Farming under fire on the frontlines in eastern Ukraine

Embargo on grain exports has created a crisis for Ukrainian farmers

SLOVIANSK, Ukraine: The combine harvester lies crippled in a field of eastern Ukraine, surrounded by a blackened patch of cropland. The machine was lumbering through a pasture outside the village of Maidan-around 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the frontline with Russian forces-when it struck a mine, according to farmer Pavlo Kudimov.

One front wheel was wrenched off and the giant rotating reel prised aside, as the cabin was scorched by flames. The next morning the driver remained in hospital suffering serious burns as the wreck still smoldered, a reminder of the risks of tending land in a breadbasket that has become a brutal war zone.

"Farming has always been hard, but it's even harder now," Kudimov told AFP. At the start of August, the first shipment of grain left Ukraine since Russia launched its large-scale invasion and blockaded Kyiv's ports on the southern Black Sea. Ukraine accounts for 10 percent of the world wheat market and the boat left under a deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations, eager to assuage a global food price crisis hammering poor nations. Inside Ukraine, the embargo on grain exports has created a crisis for farmers. With no access to international markets, silos are full, prices have dived and the supply chain logjam has yet to ease up.

'Risking our lives'

Farmers in Donbas-the eastern region where the war with Russia shifted after the Kremlin gambit to capture Kyiv failed-are facing threats on two fronts.

Comprising the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, Donbas is the industrial and farming heartland of Ukraine. But every day the air raid sirens sound. Rockets rain down, military jets attack

ground targets and cluster bombs speckle fields.

Endless sunflower pastures are now gouged with defensive trenches. Last year, farmer Sergey Lubarskyi was paid up to 8 hryvnia (\$0.22) for each kilo of wheat.

Since the blockade, he can now fetch just 3 hryvnia-if he can transport it to the regional hub of Kramatorsk. In the frontline village of Rai-Aleksandrovska, he can only fetch 1.80 hryvnia.

"Drivers are afraid to come here," he says. Eduard Stukalo, 46, farms 150 hectares on the outskirts of the city of Sloviansk. Some 30 hectares of wheat have "completely burned down"-he suspects from artillery fire. It is a struggle to convince workers to collect the crop that remains near the frontlines.

"Farmers like us will go bankrupt this year," he says. "No one wants to go there to harvest, because everyone is afraid of incoming missiles."

"We were risking our lives also when we sowed the fields in April and May this year," he added.

"Cluster bombs hit our fields. Bombs exploded 100 to 200 meters from us." But some are driven by wartime austerity to work the land, despite the risks. "We go to work in the fields, because there is no other employment here," said 57-year-old Svitlana Gaponova, plucking aubergines in a field outside the besieged settlement of Soledar. "It's scary, but it's distracting," she said as the sound of munition blasts rolled across the horizon.

'Nothing left'

In this impoverished portion of Ukraine, there is also a strong tradition of subsistence farming. At the Sunday market, stallholders sell the meager produce they can nurture in their personal plots.

"People plant their gardens and they work there constantly," said Volodymyr Rybalkin, military



Farmers are at work to collect eggplants some kilometers away from the frontline in Donbas region on August 10, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

administration head of the frontline Svatohirsk district, discussing residents' reluctance to leave.

"We constantly explain to people what is happening around, and try to motivate them to evacuate to safer cities." Though these plots do not weigh on the scales of global trade and politics, they are not exempt from the perils of wartime. In the early hours last Monday morning, incoming fire cratered the space behind 57-year-old

Lyubov Kanisheva's modest cottage on the outskirts of Kramatorsk.

Next door more than a dozen beehives were shattered and upended. Now the swarming hum of bees merges with the hounding air raid siren. In Kanisheva's plot, grape vines have been caked in dust and tomatoes smashed into the earth. "The garden was just for our needs, but we managed to grow a lot," she said. "There is nothing of it left." —AFP

Mali says has caught up on debt payments

BAMAKO: Mali announced it had "settled all unpaid" debt repayments after tough sanctions imposed by West African states following two coups in the Sahel nation. Bamako proved unable to service its debt during the January-July sanction period, the finance ministry said in a statement.

After the penalties, which included a financial and trade embargo, were lifted on July 3, "all measures were taken to settle the outstanding sums", it added. "The State of Mali has the honor of informing economic operators and technical and financial partners that all of Mali's outstanding debts have been settled," the statement said.

The ministry said foreign debt now stood at more than 130 million euros while monies raised through the markets were more than 101 million euros. One of the poorest nations in the world, Mali has been battered by a jihadist campaign that began in the north in 2012 and has claimed thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands.

Mali suffered a military coup in August 2020 and again in May 2021. That led the World Bank and African Development Bank to suspend payments to Bamako, which had defaulted particularly on loans raised on the West African markets. The junta finally accepted demands from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and scrapped plans for a return to civilian rule after five years. New electoral legislation has been drawn up and a date set for presidential elections in February 2024. —AFP

LuLu Hypermarket holds India Utsav 2022

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence Day on 15 August, LuLu Hypermarket, the largest retailer in the region, is holding a mega promotion from 10-16 August at all outlets of the hypermarket, titled 'India Utsav 2022'.

India Utsav 2022 was inaugurated on 11 August with great fanfare at the Al-Rai branch by Indian Ambassador Sibi George in the presence of top management officials of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, along with a large gathering of special guests, shoppers, and well-wishers of the hypermarket.

The week-long festival of India and Indian products features foods and goods sourced from across the length and breadth of India at very special prices. A wide range of offers and discounts on all branded Indian products, including on garments, and footwear, as well as on groceries, fresh fruits and vegetables are available during India Utsav 2022.

In addition, shoppers visiting any of the LuLu Hypermarket branches during the seven-day festival will be able to taste and buy a whole range of exotic foods and distinctive dishes from food stalls representing the different states of India.

Special events underscoring the variety and diversity of Indian culture and tradition as well as its distinctive music, dance and other art forms, including Bhangra dance, patriotic songs, and traditional instrumental music performances, are also being held throughout the festival period.

Adding even more allure to the India Utsav 2022 promotion are several large colorful displays and creative cutouts of iconic monuments and places of interest in India. These displays, positioned in the foyer and along aisles of the hypermarket, provide an attractive and dramatic backdrop to the festival.

India Utsav 2022, which is also a celebration of India's Independence Day, is yet another sign of LuLu Hypermarket's abiding interest in sharing with customers the joy and happiness of community celebrations.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George inaugurates 'India Utsav 2022' in the presence of top management officials of LuLu Hypermarket at the Al-Rai branch in Kuwait.



solutions by stc expands its Cloud PBX solution

KUWAIT: solutions by stc, the specialized business arm of Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, announced the expansion of its Cloud PBX solution with a range of cost-effective and flexible bundles aimed at providing seamless connectivity and boosting productivity. The solution is offered through a variety of bundles, some of which have been especially designed to cater to the local Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Through the Cloud PBX solution expansion, solutions by stc seeks to further build on its longstanding commitment to support local SMEs, while assisting businesses who had been impacted by the pandemic.

solutions by stc indicated in a statement that the Cloud PBX solution offers flexible plans with a range of Direct Inward Dialing numbers (DIDs) and basic or executive handsets. Customers can also get licenses for concurrent calls while customizing their

plans by adding or removing features in line with their diverse needs. The Cloud PBX solution offers a range of features including fax, voicemails, phone-email integration, conference calling, text messaging, as well as others. Based on their business needs, customers can add extra features such as an extension dialing plan, auto-attendant, call forwarding, direct number assignments, and hunt groups amongst others. They can also enjoy continued connectivity, allowing them to stay connected whether they are at the office, a branch, or working remotely. In addition to Cloud PBX, solutions by stc also offers multiple Fixed PBX solutions, in addition to various packages to suit each client's requirements.

To provide a seamless experience for its customers, solutions by stc highlighted that the cloud-based solution requires a minimal investment in comparison to traditional PBX systems, while offering a range of options to enhance efficiency. The innovative system can also be easily deployed and is backed by a support network consisting of several top-notch partners with the objective of providing customers with a well rounded and seamless experience. solutions by stc has also dedicated a team of experts to support and advise customers on the most suitable packages that fit their needs, while

providing a range of after sale services to ensure ongoing maintenance and continuity of the integrated systems.

Considering the need for PBX systems in most businesses, solutions by stc has specifically designed this solution to cater to the SME segment by designing affordable and customizable packages. The Company is committed to fulfill and support the needs of local startups and SMEs by offering flexible, scalable, guaranteed and reliable solutions and services that showcase the strength of stc's 5G network and ICT integrated solutions that cater specifically to their business needs, in their path to recovery following the pandemic. solutions by stc aims to continue supporting the SME market through various relief packages and cost-effective solutions that aim to empower the sector, in line with Kuwait's 2035 Vision.

Following its strategy to offer business solutions all under one roof, solutions by stc has taken great strides to introduce new products that cater to the growing and diverse customer base. These include a range of connectivity solutions such as fixed or wireless services, 5G technology led by stc, as well as ICT, IoT, AI, and other IT products and services. solutions by stc will continue to introduce pioneer-



ing technology enabled solutions based on the latest innovations in this digital era, serving as the preferred gateway to its customers through digital transformation.



This picture shows a rabbit receiving moxibustion treatment at an animal clinic in Beijing. — AFP photos



This picture shows a Chinese medicine vet massaging a dog after acupuncture treatment at an animal clinic in Beijing.



This picture shows veterinarian Li Wen (left) checking an X-ray snapshot on his mobile phone as he prepares to have acupuncture for a dog at an animal clinic in Beijing.

Beijing's pet lovers turn to acupuncture to treat their furry friends

Strapped in tight, the prone poodle nervously eyes the vet as he gently sticks fine needles into its back and paws, summoning the ancient art of acupuncture to treat the pet's aches and pains. Duniu is just one of a growing number of animals being signed up for traditional medicine in China-care their masters say is less invasive and comes with fewer side effects than conventional treatments.

In one Beijing practice, pets of all shapes and sizes come for treatments. "The advantage of traditional Chinese medicine is that there is no surgery," 38-year-old Zhai Chunyu tells AFP, accompanied by Duniu, his poodle. "So the animal's suffering is reduced." At just three years old, Duniu suffers from Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, which affects the thigh bone and can lead to painful osteoarthritis. "He was in so much pain that he could no longer put his paw on the ground" and "had no appetite," says Zhai, who works in finance.



Veterinarian Li Wen showing a dog acupuncture point graphic at an animal clinic in Beijing.

"A doctor advised me to have the head of the femur removed. But I didn't want to because I have another poodle who has been there and he suffered a lot from the operation and the after-effects." But then

a friend advised him to try acupuncture. "After five to six sessions, we saw the results. Duniu manages to walk and even run a little now," Zhai says.

'Treat them gently'

Animal acupuncture is centuries old in China, says veterinarian Li Wen, who founded his practice in 2016. "Traditional Chinese medicine is not intended to replace conventional medicine" because "both have their strengths" and are complementary, he says. Before starting the treatment, the vet first checks the animal's body, examines its eyesight and the color of its tongue, takes its pulse and asks its owner questions.

He then plants his needles at acupuncture points specific to dogs and cats. "Out of the 10 animals that I receive on average every day, there are always one or two who rebel," Li says. "You have

to communicate with them, treat them gently, reassure them that you're not here to hurt them."

Recordings of soft bamboo flute music and the chirping of birds are played at the clinic to help the animals relax. Li mainly deals with cases of paralysis, limb weakness, epilepsy, pain and urinary retention. But acupuncture can also be used for ailments when no other treatment is available.

That was the case with Xiaomei, a 12-year-old male Labrador suffering from nerve compression in his lower back. "Last September, after swimming, he was unable to get back on his feet. A veterinarian then told us that it was impossible to treat and that he would become paralyzed," his owner Ma Li, 41, tells AFP. "Thanks to acupuncture, he still has difficulties but can walk normally and even run."

'He loves it!'

"The first time, he was scared," says Yang Lihua, a 65-year-old retiree accompanied by her Pekingese Niannian, who is suffering from a herniated disc. "Now he loves it! After the session, he is so relaxed that he sleeps in the car on the way home." The acupuncture market for animals remains limited for the moment, Li says.

"But since 2016, it has been gaining popularity," he adds. "As education levels, living conditions improve and incomes rise, more and more people are realizing the benefits of this medicine." Ma's Labrador jumps into the back seat of her mistress's car after her session, looking content. "Doesn't he look happy?" she exclaims. — AFP



A dog receiving acupuncture treatment at an animal clinic in Beijing.



A dog receiving acupuncture treatment at an animal clinic in Beijing.



A dog receiving moxibustion treatment at an animal clinic in Beijing.



A cat receiving infrared therapy at an animal clinic in Beijing.



A model of human body acupuncture points and moxibustion at an animal clinic in Beijing.



A rabbit receiving infrared therapy at an animal clinic in Beijing.

GAMING INDUSTRY FEELS SQUEEZE AFTER PANDEMIC BOOM

In the height of the pandemic, video games offered people solace in isolation. But now that life is slowly returning to pre-crisis normal, and inflation is soaring, gaming companies are feeling the pinch. Makers of consoles, accessories, and software for gaming are experiencing the same kind of post-pandemic effect as tech titans who saw business boom while Covid-19 fears kept people close to home.



In this file photo illustration, a copy of "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3" for the PlayStation 3 is displayed in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The squeeze has been exacerbated by steep inflation spurring belt-tightening and gaming fatigue after years of relying on indoor entertainment. Early in the pandemic, "people flocked to Twitch in droves-streamers and viewers alike," said Brandon Williams, who goes by the handle "BWpaco" on the Amazon-owned platform where gamers broadcast video game action.

"But I've talked to quite a few people who have stopped streaming because

they've had burnout or because it's not for them," the 30-year-old streamer added. "Or, they don't have the time anymore since they went back to work in person." Twitch viewership that soared during the pandemic has ebbed but remains above what it was in 2019, according to twitchtracker.com.

Games still in play



In this file photo a gamepad is pictured as a screen displays the online Twitch platform in Toulouse, southwestern France.

Matt Piscatella, an analyst with market research group NPD, estimated that people in the United States will spend about \$55.5 billion on gaming in total this year, less than last year but still up 28 percent from the pre-pandemic year of 2019. US video game giant Activision Blizzard, which Microsoft is in the process of purchasing, reported that sales in the first half of this year declined, with gamers spending less time in its powerhouse "Call of Duty"

franchise.

Nvidia, the California-based maker of high-performance graphics cards popular with gamers, recently issued an earnings warning because of "declining revenues in video games." Even spending on mobile games is showing signs of weakening, according to analysts. "Higher prices in everyday spending categories such as food and gas, the return of experiential spending such as travel and attending live events, a lighter release slate of new games, and continued new generation console hardware supply constraints were all likely contributors to the decline seen in the second quarter," Piscatella said.

Omdia analyst Steven Bailey said delayed releases of keenly-anticipated titles such as "Starfield" and "Suicide Squad" also contributed to a pandemic boom "correction" that was inevitable.

Lurking

The bump that new titles give to video game sales is a wild card likely to benefit the industry going forward, as players typically throng to get their hands on hot releases. Piscatella expressed hope the video game market will stabilize in the year ahead and then return to steady growth. The rising cost of living from inflation is forcing gamers to make choices with their money, but that doesn't mean they are abandoning play, the analyst noted. More than three-quarters of US consumers play video games, and subscription services such as Xbox Game Pass and PlayStation



In this file photo Todd Howard, Director and Executive Producer at Bethesda Game Studios, introduces 'Starfield' during the Bethesda E3 conference at the Event Deck at LA Live in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

Plus help tamp down the cost, Piscatella said.

Pandemic effects on video game play have gone beyond the economic arena, giving rise to a trend of players seeking "comfort games" that emphasize cooperation rather than competition. The explosion of Nintendo's "Animal Crossing" game devoted to community building is an example of this phenomenon, with players uniting to sustain virtual towns.

And, according to streamer BWpaco, viewers are taking to listening to Twitch channels as they might a radio broadcast while their attention is elsewhere. "They're just lurking," the streamer said. "I feel now that things have opened back up, and people are more busy, they have it on as background noise." — AFP



This aerial view shows water buffaloes grazing on straw while surrounded by dried and cracked and dried up soil in a section of Iraq's receding southern marshes of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.

To feed and cool his buffaloes, Hashem Gassed must cross 10 kilometers (six miles) of sunburnt land in southern Iraq, where drought is devastating swathes of the mythical Mesopotamian Marshes. The reputed home of the biblical Garden of Eden, Iraq's swamplands have been battered by three years of drought and low rainfall, as well as reduced water flows along rivers and tributaries originating in neighbouring Turkey and Iran.

Vast expanses of the once lush Huwaizah Marshes, straddling the border with Iran, have been baked dry, their vegetation yellowing. Stretches of the Chibayish Marshes, which are popular with tourists, are suffering the same fate. "The marshes are our livelihood—we used to fish here and our livestock could graze and drink," said Gassed, 35, from a hamlet near Huwaizah.

Southern Iraq's marshlands were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016, both for their biodiversity and their ancient history. But now, beds of dry streams snake around the once verdant wetlands, and the area's Umm al-Naaj lake has been reduced to puddles of muddy water among largely dry ground. Like his father before him, Gassed raises buffaloes, but only five of the family's around 30 animals are left.

The others died or were sold as the family struggles to make ends meet. Family members watch carefully over those that remain, fearful that the weak, underfed beasts might fall in the mud and die. "We have been protesting for more than two years and no one is listening," Gassed said. "We are at a loss where to go. Our lives are over."

'No more fish'

Nestled between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the Mesopotamian Marshes suffered under the former dictator Saddam Hussein, who ordered that they be drained in 1991 as punishment for communities protecting insurgents, and to hunt them down. The wetlands have sporadically gone through years of harsh drought in the past, before being

revived by good rainy seasons.

But between August 2020 and this month, 46 percent of the swamplands of southern Iraq, including Huwaizah and Chibayish, suffered total surface water loss, according to Dutch peace-building organization PAX.

Another 41 percent of marsh areas suffered from reduced water levels and wetness, according to the organization, which used satellite data to make the assessment. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in Iraq said the marshes were "one of the poorest regions in Iraq and one of the most affect-



Water buffaloes swim in the Hawiza marsh near the city of Al-Amarah.



Children stand on a boat lying on the dried-up bed of Iraq's receding southern marshes of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.—AFP photos

ed by the climate change", warning of "unprecedented low water levels".

It noted the "disastrous impact" on more than 6,000 families who "are losing their buffaloes, their unique living asset". Biodiversity is also at risk. The swamplands provide a home for "numerous populations of threatened species", and are an important stopping point for around 200 species of migratory water birds, according to UNESCO. Environmental activist Ahmed Saleh Neema said there were "no more fish", wild boar or even a subspecies of smooth-coated otter in the marshes.



Children sit atop a boat lying on dried and cracked and dried up soil in a section of Iraq's receding southern marshes of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.



A view of boats along the banks of a stream in the Hawiza marsh near the city of Al-Amarah in southern Iraq.

'Like a desert'

He said the Huwaizah swamplands were irrigated by two tributaries of the Tigris River, which originates in Turkey, but that their flows had dropped. Iraqi authorities are rationing supplies to cover different needs, he said. "The government wants to preserve the largest quantity of water possible," he added, lamenting "unfair water sharing" and "poor (resource) management".

After pressure from protesters, authorities partially opened the valves, he said, but had closed them again. On the Iranian side, the Huwaizah Marshes, called Hoor al-Azim, are also suffering. "The wetland is facing water stress and currently about half of its Iranian part has dried up," Iran's state news agency IRNA reported recently.

Hatem Hamid, who heads the Iraqi government's water management centre, said that "on the Iranian side, the main river that feeds the Huwaizah marsh has been totally cut for more than a year". The water needs of Iraqi farms and marshlands are only half met, he acknowledged, as authorities are closely monitoring reserves and trying to cover a range of uses, with drinking water one of the "priorities".

Iraqi officials point to canals and small streams that have been rehabilitated to feed into the marshes—and to where some families have relocated from dried-out areas. But it is "impossible to compensate for the very high evaporation in the marshes" in temperatures that pass 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), he added.

In Chibayish, the effects of the drought are all too clear to Ali Jawad, who said dozens of families had left his hamlet. "They migrated towards other regions, looking for areas where there is water," the 20-year-old said. "Before, when we used to come to the marshes, there was greenery, water, inner peace," he added. "Now it's like a desert." — AFP

Walrus that attracted crowds in Oslo fjord euthanized

A walrus nicknamed Freya that attracted crowds while basking in the sun of the Oslo fjord was euthanized, Norway officials said on Sunday. "The decision to euthanize was taken on the basis of a global evaluation of the persistent threat to human security," the head of Norway's Fisheries Directorate Frank Bakke-Jensen said in a statement.

"We carefully examined all the possible solutions. We concluded that we could not guarantee the well-being of the animal by any of the means available," he said. Officials had previously said they were considering euthanasia for the mammal because repeated appeals to the public to keep their distance from the young female weighing 600 kilograms (1,300 pounds) had been in vain.

Freya, whose name is a reference to the Norse goddess of beauty and love, had made headlines since July 17 when she was first spotted in the waters of the Norwegian capital.

Walruses normally live in the even more northerly latitudes of the Arctic. Between long naps—a walrus can sleep up to 20 hours a day—Freya had been filmed chasing a duck, attacking a swan and, more often than not, dozing on boats struggling to support her bulk. Despite repeated appeals, curious onlookers continued to approach her, sometimes with children in tow, to take photographs.

Freya had already been sighted in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden and chose to spend part of the summer in Norway. Freya first gained notoriety in Norway by climbing onto pleasure boats in Kragero, an idyllic southern coastal village. The walrus is a protected species that feeds mainly on invertebrates such as molluscs, shrimps, crabs and small fish. — AFP



This file photo shows young female walrus nicknamed Freya resting on a boat in Frognerkilen, Oslo Fjord, Norway.—AFP

Sports

Duplantis, Warholm head stellar cast at European Athletics Championships

Athletics draw a record 1,540 participants from 47 nations in 50 medal events

MUNICH: World and Olympic pole vault champion Armand Duplantis will headline the European Athletics Championships that also features the top Norwegian duo of Karsten Warholm and Jakob Ingebrigtsen, and Italy's Olympic 100m champion Marcell Jacobs. Track and field will headline the European Championships in Munich, the biggest sports event in Germany since the 1972 Summer Olympics in the same Bavarian city.

The athletics has drawn a record 1,540 participants from 47 nations in 50 medal events, rubbing shoulders at the second edition of the European Championships with eight other Olympic sports: beach volleyball, canoe sprint, cycling, gymnastics, rowing, sport climbing, table tennis and triathlon.

In total, 31 reigning individual champions from Berlin 2018 are competing in the 25th edition of the Euro athletics champs, including Croatia's Sandra Perkovic, who is targeting a record-breaking sixth successive title in the discus. All 10 European gold medalists from the World Athletics Championships in Oregon are due to compete once again on the continental stage after the 2020 edition in Paris was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. All eyes, however, will be on Duplantis, fresh from breaking his own world record in Eugene as he clinched world gold with 6.21 meters.

The championship record of 6.05m - set by the Soviet and Ukrainian great Sergey Bubka - looks in danger if the US-born Swede puts his mind to it. Norway's Ingebrigtsen was one of the stars of Berlin 2018, winning double gold in a memorable 1500-5,000m double. A world silver medalist behind Jake Wightman in the 1500m in Eugene, Ingebrigtsen will attempt the same double in Munich, with the Briton handily stepping down to the 800m.

Calm preparations

Ingebrigtsen's teammate Warholm ran one of the greatest Olympic track performances of all time when he smashed the 29-year-old world record to win the 400m hurdles at last year's Tokyo Games in a time of 45.94sec. But the 26-year-old suffered a hamstring injury in June and although he made the world final in Oregon, he could only finish seventh.

If fully fit, Warholm will be the one to beat at the Olympic Stadium. "I'm going to run everything I've got in a European Championship final and take the best time I can," Warholm told Norwegian tabloid VG. "I have been able to train without worry since the worlds," he added. "Whereas, before the worlds it was a race against time to be ready - very stressful - now I was able to prepare myself more calmly and it's a very good feeling."

Italy's Jacobs was another one to disappoint in the United States, withdrawing before the semi-finals of the men's 100m with a thigh injury. His coach Paolo Camossi was confident Jacobs would be able to compete in both the 100 and 4x100m relay in Munich. "He's running free. He's having fun. The workouts are promising," he said. "If we are here in Munich, it is because he is fine and can compete. Marcell is the Olympic gold medalist and he is here to win, but it is not a race to be taken lightly."

There are also injury concerns over Britain's Dina Asher-Smith, the reigning double European sprint champion who skipped the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Defending her world title, she had to be happy with a 200m bronze in Eugene and can expect strong competition from Switzerland's Mujinga Kambundji and fellow Briton Daryll Neita. British hopes look more secure in the women's middle-distance events, as Keely Hodgkinson and Laura Muir are favorites, and in form, in the 800 and 1500m respectively.



EUGENE: Armand Duplantis of Team Sweden clears the bar to set a world record at 6:21 and win gold in the Men's Pole Vault Final on day ten of the World Athletics Championships Oregon22 at Hayward Field on July 24, 2022 in Oregon. —AFP

Eilish McColgan is also doubling up in the 5,000-10,000m after having won silver and gold in Birmingham. In the multi-discipline events both world champions are in

action: Belgium's Nafi Thiam goes in the heptathlon and France's Kevin Mayer in the decathlon. Mayer has warned that his body had not fully recuperated from Eugene. —AFP

Haddad Maia, Halep face off in WTA title

TORONTO: Simona Halep will bid for a third Canadian title at the WTA Toronto Masters on Sunday against determined Brazilian outsider Beatriz Haddad Maia. Haddad Maia stunned 2021 finalist Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) in the semi-finals while Halep put years of big-match experience to good use in a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over seventh-seeded American Jessica Pegula.

Halep, the former world number one from Romania who won 2016 and 2018 trophies in Canada, showed her definitive return to form with the victory after dropping from the top 10 in the rankings a year ago due to injury. "We never played against each other," Halep said. "So I didn't really know what to expect. But it was a great fight. I'm really happy that I went through."

"Of course, I can improve," Halep added. "But I'm building the confidence,

I'm building the game, and I'm really happy that I'm in this position." Haddad Maia, who stunned world number one Iga Swiatek in the third round, blunted the noted serving attack of Czech Pliskova, who fired nine aces in defeat. The first Brazilian to get to the final of a WTA Masters event has now won 17 matches since June, when she won grasscourt titles in Birmingham and Nottingham.

The South American, ranked 24th in the world, is guaranteed to breach the Top 20 next week. Her match was a rollercoaster, with Haddad Maia fighting off Pliskova while leading 5-1 in the opening set. Pliskova then seized a 4-1 lead in the second only for Haddad Maia to claw her way back. "I feel happy, it's a special moment," Haddad Maia said. "I had a very tough draw. I had to push myself, I played (through) a lot of tough moments."

"I was especially down in the match that I was not playing well, but I was mentally strong. That's why I'm having the chance to play tomorrow against Simona in the final. She's a champion, a person who works very hard. I know it will be a very tough battle. But I'm going to enjoy and leave everything on the court." Halep, who will return to the

top-10 thanks to her victory, needed two and a quarter hours to knock out American Pegula, who was the highest seed left in the field.

The 30-year-old winner of Roland Garros and Wimbledon titles could return to sixth in the world if she beats Haddad Maia on Sunday. She will again have experience on her side as she competes in her 18th career Masters final in search of her ninth title at the elite level. Halep lost the opening set against Pegula in 35 minutes but levelled at a set apiece thanks to an early break in the second.

The fire is back

Halep missed two match points on her opponent's serve and swiped her racket angrily on the cement as Pegula held for 4-5 in the third. "The fire is back, it's a good sign if I do that," said the Romanian, who was supported by a sizeable number of compatriots in the stands. Halep clinched the win on her third opportunity as Pegula hit the net with a return. "I changed a little bit the tactics," Halep said. "In the first set, it was a little bit too fast. She was hitting super strong and I didn't feel the



TORONTO: Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil hits a shot against Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic during the National Bank Open, part of the Hologic WTA Tour, at Sobeys Stadium on August 13, 2022. —AFP

rhythm. Then I just calmed down and I tried to just push her back a little bit more." Halep saved 12 of the 17 break points she faced as she earned her 37th victory this season while playing in her seventh semi-final of 2022. —AFP

Hurkacz topples Ruud to set Montreal final against Carreno Busta

MONTREAL: Hubert Hurkacz shrugged off a slow start to upset fourth seed Casper Ruud on Saturday and book a title clash with Pablo Carreno Busta at the ATP Montreal Masters. Poland's Eighth-seeded Hurkacz needed two hours to claim a 5-7, 6-3, 6-2 victory over his Norwegian opponent, who had dropped just one set all week.

But his workload was minor compared to that of unseeded Spaniard Carreno Busta, who needed three hours to hold off Briton Daniel Evans 7-5, 6-7 (7/9), 6-2. Carreno Busta had a match point in the second set tiebreaker but couldn't close out victory for another 50 minutes, finally sprinting away as he won the last dozen points of the match. Evans sent over his sixth double-fault of a long evening to surrender the contest.

Carreno Busta reached his first Masters final, where he'll be vying to become the first unseeded Canadian champion since Argentina's Guillermo Canas in 2002. The last player ranked outside the top eight to win the Canadian crown was Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in 2014, when the men played in Toronto. This year, Ruud was the highest-seeded player to make it to the semi-finals, after world number one Daniil Medvedev, second seeded Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz and third-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece all fell in the second round.

Carreno Busta fired 45 winners, but said he was pleased to get through despite not playing his best tennis. "It's important to win these kind of matches, I'm so happy to be in the final," he said. "Suddenly this week, my level has been unbelievable." Against Ruud, Hurkacz finished with 47 winners - including 18 aces - and 19 unforced errors, advancing on his second match point. "I was just trying to stay in the match, he was better for the first set and a half," Hurkacz said. "I just had to hold on and fight."



MONTREAL: Hubert Hurkacz and Jan Zielinski of Poland compete in a semifinals doubles match against Daniel Evans of Great Britain and John Peers of Australia during Day 8 of the National Bank Open at Stade IGA on August 14, 2022 in Montreal, Canada. —AFP

Hurkacz energy

Hurkacz has gone to three sets in each of his matches this week, but said he wasn't feeling any physical toll. "I feel good, I have energy," he said. "So far so good," he said. Ruud and Hurkacz traded early breaks, but the Norwegian gained the edge in the first set, winning it on another break of serve. He then inflicted further punishment by breaking Hurkacz to love in the opening game of the second as he tried to set a tone for the remainder of the match. But Hurkacz struck back with an immediate break and carried on to level the match at a set apiece. Hurkacz got away quickly in the deciding set, grabbing a 4-1 lead with

two quick breaks of serve before closing out the comeback triumph.

He avenged a loss to Ruud in the fourth round at Roland Garros two months ago. "I was just staying aggressive, searching for opportunities, just trying to take every single chance to get ahead in the rally and make him uncomfortable," Hurkacz said. Hurkacz has won his first five ATP finals - including the Miami Masters in April - and is keen to carry on with his string of victories. "I just try to compete as hard as I can, be as well-prepared (as possible). I was fortunate to win the first few finals. But tomorrow is a new match. It's going to be a very tricky one." —AFP

Nitithorn shrugs off pressure to win Series

SINGAPORE: Thailand's Nitithorn Thippong seized the initiative as his rivals faltered on Sunday, closing with a flawless three-under-par 69 to win the International Series Singapore. His four-day, 16-under-par total of 272 was enough to leapfrog previous leaders Gavin Green and Phachara Khongwatmai and hand him a one-shot victory on Sunday at the sun-baked Tanah Merah Country Club.

The Singapore tournament was part of the new

International Series, which received funding of \$400 million from the Saudi-backed LIV. The final day of the event was set for a dramatic showdown, with 11 players within three shots of the lead going into the back nine. However, it was Nitithorn who eventually reigned supreme, crediting his mental game for helping him win his biggest career title to date.

"I'm really (at a) loss for words with this victory. It's my biggest win so far and I cannot describe my feeling. I was fully focused on the process and playing my own game the entire week," he said. "I kept believing in myself and did not allow myself to be distracted by other pressures. I'm so happy I managed to win this week." Malaysia's Green, who had led the tournament since the second round, could have forced a playoff with Nitithorn had his birdie putt from 15 feet dropped into the hole at the last.

Green instead settled for a share of second place with overnight co-leader Phachara, of Thailand, and Canada's Richard T Lee, all of whom signed off with identical 273s. "I don't think the last putt could have gone any closer to the hole. I thought I had made it. But it stopped breaking right at the end. But it is what it is. This is golf. I gave it a chance and that was all I could do," said Green. Australia's Todd Sinnott shot the day's lowest score of 64 to finish in a tie for fifth with Taiwan's Chan Shih-chang. Chan looked to be heading for a grandstand finish after snatching the outright lead on 16-under with a birdie on 14. However, a disastrous triple bogey on 18 dashed all hopes of securing his fifth win on the Asian Tour. LIV Golf rebel Patrick Reed, meanwhile, could not live up to his pre-tournament billing, blaming his putting woes for a tied 31st-place finish, eight strokes behind Nitithorn. —AFP

Popovici, skinny magician of the water conjures up world record

ROME: As David Popovici has accelerated past his older rivals in the pool this summer, it seemed inevitable that the skinny 17-year-old would threaten world records, the only surprise when he broke the 100m freestyle mark in Rome on Saturday was that he got so quick so fast. On Friday, the Romanian had become only the fourth man in history to swim under 47sec as he set a European record to win his semi-final at the European Championships in Rome.

That was more than half a second faster than his gold-medal time at the World Championships in June. On Saturday, he was even quicker, swimming 46.86sec to slice 0.05sec off the record set by Brazilian Cesar Cielo in the 2009 World Championships, also in Rome, in the era of buoyant body suits. "Yesterday I said that the European record was just one step in the right direction - and I was right. There was no rush and I had to be extremely patient about the world record," he said after his victory.

In the World Championships in Budapest, Popovici outpaced Caeleb Dressel, who had swum the fastest 100m in a textile suit, in the heats. The Olympic champion withdrew from the competition before the semis. "It's nice being able to say that I am the fastest to ever do it and it's a good thing to know I clashed with all of the titans of this race." His coach, Adrian Radulescu said that he too was surprised by the speed of Popovici's progress.

'Hard work'

"It's amazing that it is happening so early," said Radulescu, just 32. Asked on Thursday what makes him successful, Popovici acknowledged that success comes at a price. "When Erling Haaland, a football player, was asked the same question, he replied 'hard work' So, it's just really a lot of hard work and a lot of sacrifice and it all comes down to the question of how badly do you want it; and I really do want it, badly!" "What are you willing to do that others aren't? This includes living a completely different lifestyle."

This summer, Popovici has dominated the World Championships and the European Junior Championships in his home town, Bucharest. After Rome he plans to head to the world junior championships in Lima. "Really, all I want to get out of this meet and out of world juniors in Peru is simply having fun. The medals, the records, everything, the good times are simply a bonus. If we manage to have fun, that's very satisfying," he said.

Not everyone might share his idea of fun. "Everything in sport is fun. Getting extremely tired and then wanting to vomit," he said. "Having all sorts of lactate problems...that's fine. It's not fun at the time but after half an hour you don't want to kill yourself anymore and you feel as if it's all worth it." Popovici was nine when he joined the swimming club where Radulescu coaches. —AFP



Thailand's Nitithorn Thippong

Sports

AC Milan off to winning start; Dumfries steals show for Inter

Silvio Berlusconi's Monza beaten at home by Torino

MILAN: AC Milan got off to a winning start in their Serie A title defense with a hard-fought 4-2 win over Udinese on Saturday as Denzel Dumfries' stoppage-time strike earned Inter Milan a late win at Lecce. Milan bounced back from going behind with less than two minutes on the clock to claim the three points thanks to two goals from Ante Rebic, a Theo Hernandez penalty and a strike from Ibrahimovic.

The margin of defeat was harsh on Udinese who acquitted themselves well in front of a large and raucous home crowd at the San Siro despite the match being bang in the middle of Italy's summer holiday season. "We can do better, there were a lot of positives but and other things on which we can improve but that's normal for this period of the season," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli to DAZN.

Fans at a packed San Siro roared "we are the champions" as the team came out on a balmy summer's evening in Milan, but they were soon stunned into silence when Rodrigo Becao met Gerard Deulofeu's corner with a header which squeezed past Mike Maignan. Milan responded and were ahead with less than a quarter of an hour gone after a long VAR check on a clash between Davide Calabria and Udinese's Brandon Soppy led to Hernandez smashing in his 12th-minute spot-kick. Rebic swept home the hosts' second three minutes later.

Udinese were livid at the decision to award Milan's penalty, described as "without any logic" by the club's technical director Pierpaolo Marino. A hugely entertaining first half ended with the Milan fans again wondering what was going on thanks to Adam Masina, whose diving header in the fourth minute of added time levelled the scores in spec-

tacular fashion.

Masina then calmed the home side's nerves when he handed Diaz a tap-in to put Milan back ahead, unwittingly nodding Hernandez's cross into the Spaniard's path. Diaz was at the heart of things again in the 68th minute, pressuring Roberto Pereyra in the Udinese area before stealing the ball and rolling back a low pass which Rebic stretched to push in the fourth which sealed the win.

Dumfries steals show

Dumfries stole the headlines on Romelu Lukaku's return to Serie A with a 94th-minute strike just as Inter looked to have dropped points at promoted Lecce. Lukaku nodded home from close range with only 81 seconds gone to give Inter the lead at the Stadio Via del Mare, an ominous sign for Lecce as he had netted against the southern side on his Italian top flight debut in 2019, a 4-0 thumping for Inter at the San Siro.

However Marco Baroni's side, pushed on by passionate home support, refused to be cowed by their more illustrious opponents and drew level less than two minutes after half-time through Assan Ceesay, who slipped in a precision finish after being neatly put through by Federico Di Francesco. Kristijan Bistrovic and Lameck Banda both stung Samir Handanovic's fingers in the Inter goal but the away side had chances to win as they pressed in the latter stages.

Dumfries headed off the post and Lukaku was denied by goalkeeper Wladimir Falcone just before the Netherlands wingback bundled in the winner which was harsh on the spirited hosts. "Last year we



LECCE: Inter Milan's Dutch midfielder Denzel Dumfries (bottom) celebrates after scoring during the Italian Serie A football match between Lecce and Inter on August 13, 2022. —AFP

dropped too many points in this type of match, but we showed a lot of character today and deserved to win, as we were fighting to the last moment," Dumfries told Sky Sport Italia. Silvio Berlusconi's Monza were given a reality check in their first ever Serie A match, beaten at home 2-1 by Torino.

Aleksei Miranchuk opened the scoring two minutes from the break on his Torino debut, expertly

finishing off Antonio Sanabria's through ball following a quick passing move. Sanabria doubled the away side's lead with an acrobatic scissor kick midway through the second half, much to the disappointment of Berlusconi who was in the stands at the Stadio Brianteo. Atalanta won Saturday's other early match, 2-0 at Sampdoria through goals from Rafael Tolo and Ademola Lookman. —AFP

Pressure on Springboks; All Blacks bounce back

JOHANNESBURG: A week after enjoying the adulation of South African rugby supporters, the Springboks found themselves back at square one after losing to New Zealand's All Blacks in a wide-open southern hemisphere Rugby Championship. Springbok coach Jacques Nienaber faced some tough questioning after his team lost 35-23 to the All Blacks at Ellis Park on Saturday.

With Argentina beating Australia in another reverse of the previous week's results, all four teams had one win and one loss after the first two rounds of the championship. The All Blacks will try to build on Saturday's success with two home games against Argentina on August 27 and September 3, while the Springboks have a tough assignment with two matches against the Wallabies in Australia.

The win was particularly sweet for the All Blacks after they were mauled by their critics following a 26-10 defeat in Mbombela a week earlier. Coach Ian Foster suggested that the All Blacks were in the process of turning around their fortunes after losing five of their previous six games. "It's hard to win all the time," said Foster. "When you look at long-term success it often starts with adversity, with a low point. We're bringing a few young boys in and trying a few new combinations but it takes time and some people are impatient."

"I understand the frustrations, but inside the camp what means a lot to us is how we pull together, work hard and improve the areas where we need to perform." Nienaber came under scrutiny for some of his selections, notably the decision to start with the relatively untried Joseph Dweba at hooker instead of Malcolm Marx, who was man of the match in Mbombela.

Dweba was replacing the injured Bongani Mbonambi, who has shared game time with Marx over the past three years. But Dweba had a poor game and was replaced by Marx after half an hour. Prop Ox Nche, who was picked ahead of Trevor Nyakane, was also substituted after 30 minutes as the Springboks were unable to replicate their forward supremacy of the previous week. Another selection gamble that appeared to backfire was Duane Vermeulen at eight.

'Bomb squad'

Playing after an eight-week injury lay-off, Vermeulen was also substituted in the first half, when the All Blacks were leading 15-0. Nienaber refused to discuss the selection. "There is a rugby reason why we did that but unfortunately that's privileged. Every single player knows the reason." South Africa's "bomb squad" strategy of having six forwards and only two backs on the bench was also called into question after an early injury to wing Jesse Kriel caused a reshuffle of the backline.

"Since I have been part of the coaching set-up, in 45 games we probably went with a 6-2 split 30 times and it won us a World Cup, the Rugby Championship and a British and Irish Lions series," said Nienaber. But he admitted the tactic carried risks. Nienaber said the Springboks would have to adjust their tactics for their trip to Australia. "The Wallabies will be a little bit different," he said. "We will have to change quite a bit going to them. They have a completely different style of attack and defense. We haven't had results against them for quite some time so it's a nice challenge for us." —AFP

Hull top Championship table as Norwich remain winless

LONDON: Hull went to the top of English football's second-tier Championship with a 2-1 victory over Norwich on Saturday that meant the Canaries remained without a win. Norwich had been widely tipped to make an immediate return to the Premier League following their relegation last season. But goals in either half from Hull forward Oscar Estupinan kept the visitors waiting for a league win, for all Marcelino Nunez's free-kick gave Norwich hope.

"We dominated the game and gave away a calamitous (first) goal," said Norwich manager Dean Smith. "It was certainly an eventful afternoon. For the last 20 minutes we were probably playing attack versus defence, but we were punished by giving away a stupid goal." QPR goalkeeper Seny Dieng scored a stoppage-time equalizer to force a 2-2 draw at Sunderland as the London club completed a remarkable comeback. Dieng headed home deep into time added on after Sunderland had gone 2-0 up thanks to first-half goals from Ross Stewart and Ellis Simms.

Ilias Chair revived Rangers in the 87th minute and five minutes later it was from his cross that Dieng grabbed the equaliser before making a fine

Spaun clings to PGA Memphis lead; Smith and Zalatoris charge

WASHINGTON: JJ Spaun birdied two of the last three holes to shoot a two-under par 68 for a one-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the US PGA Tour's St Jude Championship. Spaun tapped in to birdie the par-5 16th and holed a 17-foot birdie putt at the 17th then stood alone at the top after Austrian Sepp Straka missed a nine-foot par putt at the 18th at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee. The 31-year-old American stood on 13-under 197 through 54 holes with Straka on 198 after shooting 68.

British Open champion Cameron Smith of Australia fired 67 to share third on 199 with Americans Will Zalatoris and Trey Mullinax. Americans Tyler Duncan and Troy Merritt were another stroke adrift. "I know I've got to play better," Spaun said of the final round. "You look at the names, those guys, major champions and multiple winners and really hot golfers just playing really

Seven-try Argentina thrash Australia to top Rugby Championship

SAN JUAN: Argentina gained revenge on Australia for last week's defeat with a seven-try bonus point 48-17 victory in the Rugby Championship on Saturday. Tries from Juan Imhoff, Jeronimo De La Fuente, Juan Martin Gonzalez, Emiliano Boffelli, Tomas Albornoz and two from Thomas Gallo helped Michael Cheika's Pumas to a convincing victory and even took them to the top of the table after their first win in the competition since 2020.

To add to the party atmosphere, Agustin Creevy came off the bench to equal Nicolas Sanchez's record of 94 Pumas caps. Argentina had wilted in the final quarter in Mendoza a week ago but this time they did not just hold on in San Juan but romped away in the closing minutes. They were off to a dream start as Imhoff scored his first Pumas try since a brace against



NORWICH: Fans arrive ahead of a match at Carrow Road in Norwich, eastern England in this file photo. —AFP

save at the other end. Rotherham thrashed a Reading side managed by former England midfielder Paul Ince 4-0. The Millers were 3-0 up inside 18 minutes, with Richard Wood heading the hosts in front before Conor Washington and Jamie Lindsay increased the lead. Chiedozie Ogbene made it 4-0 before half-time. Millwall came from two goals down to beat Coventry 3-2.

The Sky Blues were 2-0 up inside half an hour through Kyle McFadzean and Matty Godden but

Jake Cooper's goal before half-time got the Lions back into the game. George Honeyman equalised early in the second half and, after Coventry's Gustavo Hamer was sent off, George Saville's 85th-minute goal won the game for Millwall. Huddersfield earned their first points of the season after they beat Stoke 3-1. Yuta Nakayama headed the Terriers in front before half-time with Lewis Baker, who had a penalty saved when the game was still scoreless, equalizing for Stoke. —AFP

good. "I'm just going to give it all I've got and hopefully make some more birdies than I did today."

The tournament opens the FedEx Cup playoffs, three season-ending events with a winner's prize of \$18 million. Only 125 players qualified on season points and only the top 70 advance to next week's BMW Championship, where the 30 qualifiers for the Tour Championship in Atlanta are decided. Spaun won his first PGA title after 147 tour starts in April at the Texas Open while Straka, who missed six consecutive cuts coming into this week, won his first PGA title in February at the Honda Classic.

Spaun began with nine pars before a bogey at 10, but sank an 11-foot birdie putt at the par-3 11th and overtook Straka with his closing surge. "It was one of those days where I felt like I was going to get lapped," Spaun said. "In reality I was even par and still tied for the lead for the most part. It kind of helped me be OK with being patient." After three birdies and two bogeys in the first seven holes, Straka took the lead alone with a 16-foot birdie putt at the 13th and added a six-foot birdie putt at 15 before Spaun overtook him.

"It was a lot of good, a lot of bad, but overall I'm pretty happy," Straka said. "I hung in there nicely, got up and down a couple times when I needed to and I

Ireland in the 2015 World Cup quarter-finals. He took the ball on the left wing before chipping ahead and chasing. Australia seemed to have the danger covered but full-back Tom Wright spilled the ball into Imhoff's arms and the veteran wing raced clear to score with exactly 60 seconds on the clock. The Pumas needed less than five minutes to score a second try following a stunning 50:22 kick from Santiago Carreras.

Argentina claimed their own line-out and a few phases later Gallo burrowed over under the posts. Boffelli kicked both conversions but Australia were soon on the scoresheet. Last week, the Wallabies enjoyed great success with their rolling maul and gave up several kickable penalties to instead kick to the corner for a close range line-out, scoring four tries off powerful drives. They did it again on Saturday and once again Argentina were unable to defend their line as captain James Slipper barged over on 12 minutes. Attacks were clearly on top and five minutes later the returning James O'Connor kicked a penalty from under the posts as Australia chipped away at Argentina's lead. O'Connor then had a try ruled out for an illegal clear-out by Slipper in the preceding ruck. —AFP



MEMPHIS: JJ Spaun of the United States plays a shot from a bunker on the tenth hole during the third round of the FedEx St Jude Championship at TPC Southwind on August 13, 2022 in Memphis. —AFP

was able to convert the few birdies putts I had." World number two Smith, facing the distraction of reports on a possible jump to LIV Golf after the playoffs, would become world number one with a victory. "That would mean a lot," Smith said. "That has been one of my goals since the start of the year." —AFP



SAN JUAN: Argentina's Los Pumas fullback Juan Cruz Mallia (center) runs through a tackle by Australia's Wallabies wing Marika Korobete (left) and teammate Wallabies flyhalf James O'Connor (right) during their Rugby Championship match at Bicentenario stadium in San Juan, Argentina on August 13, 2022. —AFP

Sports

United bottom of table for first time in 30 years after 4-0 rout

Man United battered by Brentford

LONDON: Erik ten Hag's bad start as Manchester United manager descended into an embarrassment as a 4-0 thrashing by Brentford on Saturday left the Red Devils bottom of the Premier League. The former Ajax boss' reign began with Brighton's first ever win at Old Trafford last weekend, but much worse was to come as the Bees punished a series of errors to score four times in the first 35 minutes. Josh Dasilva's strike slipped through David de Gea's grasp to open the floodgates before Mathias Jensen pounced on United's attempt to play out from the back to make it 2-0 inside 18 minutes.

Ben Mee then exposed the visitors' frailty from set-pieces for his first Brentford goal and Bryan Mbuemo rounded off a stunning counter-attack 10 minutes before half-time to sink United to the bottom of the table for the first time in 30 years. The jubilant home support taunted Ten Hag with chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning." But the Dutch coach has inherited a rabble rather than being the root cause as United lost a seventh consecutive away league match for the first time since 1936.

"We all have seen the game. I think Brentford were more hungry and we conceded goals to individual mistakes," said Ten Hag. "You can have a

good plan but that puts the plan in the bin." United have now conceded four goals or more seven times in the Premier League since the start of last season. The arrival of £57 million (\$69 million) centre-back Lisandro Martinez from Ajax has done little to shore up United's leaky defence and questions will be asked of why Ten Hag has left Raphael Varane on the bench in favour of the Argentine and the out-of-sorts Harry Maguire.

Ten Hag did recall Cristiano Ronaldo to the starting line-up, but the wantaway five-time Ballon d'Or winner played a part in the opening goal. Ronaldo went to ground too easily seeking a foul as he was surrounded by Brentford bodies. Dasilva's shot should still have been a comfortable save for De Gea, but the ball squirmed underneath the Spaniard. "It was a horrible day," said De Gea. "I feel like I cost the team."

'Memories for life'

De Gea compounded that mistake eight minutes later with an attempted pass to Christian Eriksen, who was outmuscled by his former teammate Jensen, and the Dane coolly slotted home to double Brentford's lead. Martinez's diminutive 5ft 9in (1.8m) frame was raised as a red flag for his

ability to adapt to the physicality of the Premier League. And the Argentine was beaten at the back post by Mee for the third goal after Ivan Toney headed a corner across goal.

Credit to Brentford in just their second season in the English top-flight for 75 years may get swept away in the waves of criticism coming United's way. But Thomas Frank's men produced a stunning move to tear United open again for their fourth goal. Toney was released down the left wing and picked out Mbuemo with a precise first-time pass for the Frenchman to race in behind Luke Shaw and finish low past De Gea.

"These players keep giving me and the fans memories for life," said Frank. Ten Hag made his feelings clear at the break with a triple substitution with Shaw, Martinez and Fred the scapegoats. United did at least stop the bleeding after the break and should have had at least one consolation as Ronaldo looped a header over before Eriksen's effort lacked the power to beat David Raya. The damage, though, was long since done for Ten Hag and worse could still be to come. United host Liverpool, who beat their historic rivals 5-0 and 4-0 last season, in their next game on August 22. —AFP

Premier League Table

English Premier League table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Man City	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Arsenal	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Brentford	2	1	1	0	6	2	4
Newcastle	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Leeds	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Brighton	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Tottenham	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Chelsea	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Aston Villa	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Bournemouth	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Fulham	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Liverpool	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Wolves	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Leicester	2	0	1	1	4	6	1
Southampton	2	0	1	1	3	6	1
Everton	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Crystal Palace	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Nottingham Forest	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
West Ham	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Man Utd	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Ten Hag given baptism of fire to Utd's new reality

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag expressed his surprise at seeing Manchester United capitulate to a 4-0 defeat at Brentford that leaves the Red Devils bottom of the Premier League for the first time in 30 years. But after just two games in charge, the Dutchman is getting a crash course in United's new reality. The 20-time English champions have now lost seven consecutive away league

games for the first time since 1936. That run included similar thrashings at Manchester City, Liverpool and Brighton. Indeed United have conceded four or more goals seven times in the Premier League since the start of last season.

Any hope of a new dawn under the former Ajax boss has been blown apart by the same failings on and off the pitch that have persisted during a decade of decline at Old Trafford. Ten Hag's predecessor Ralf Rangnick signed off from his miserable caretaker spell last season by stating the United squad needed "open heart surgery" and up to 10 new players after labouring to a sixth-placed finish in the Premier League.

Two games into the new season, only three new faces have arrived in the form of Lisandro Martinez, Tyrell Malacia and Christian Eriksen. The United squad is

arguably even weaker than last season with Paul Pogba, Edinson Cavani, Jesse Lingard, Nemanja Matic and Juan Mata having left for free, while goalkeeper Dean Henderson has joined Nottingham Forest on loan. United's transfer window has instead been dominated by two moves that have not happened.

Despite Barcelona's desperation to sell, Frenkie de Jong has resisted the chance to reunite with his former Ajax boss. Cristiano Ronaldo, meanwhile, is keen to cut short his second spell at Old Trafford but cannot find a Champions League contender willing to pay up for the five-time Ballon d'Or winner. The club's owners, the American Glazer family, are again at the forefront of the fans' fury. Protests ahead of the 2-1 home defeat to Brighton last weekend forced the club shop to be closed before kick-off. —AFP

New-look Barcelona frustrated by Rayo in season opener

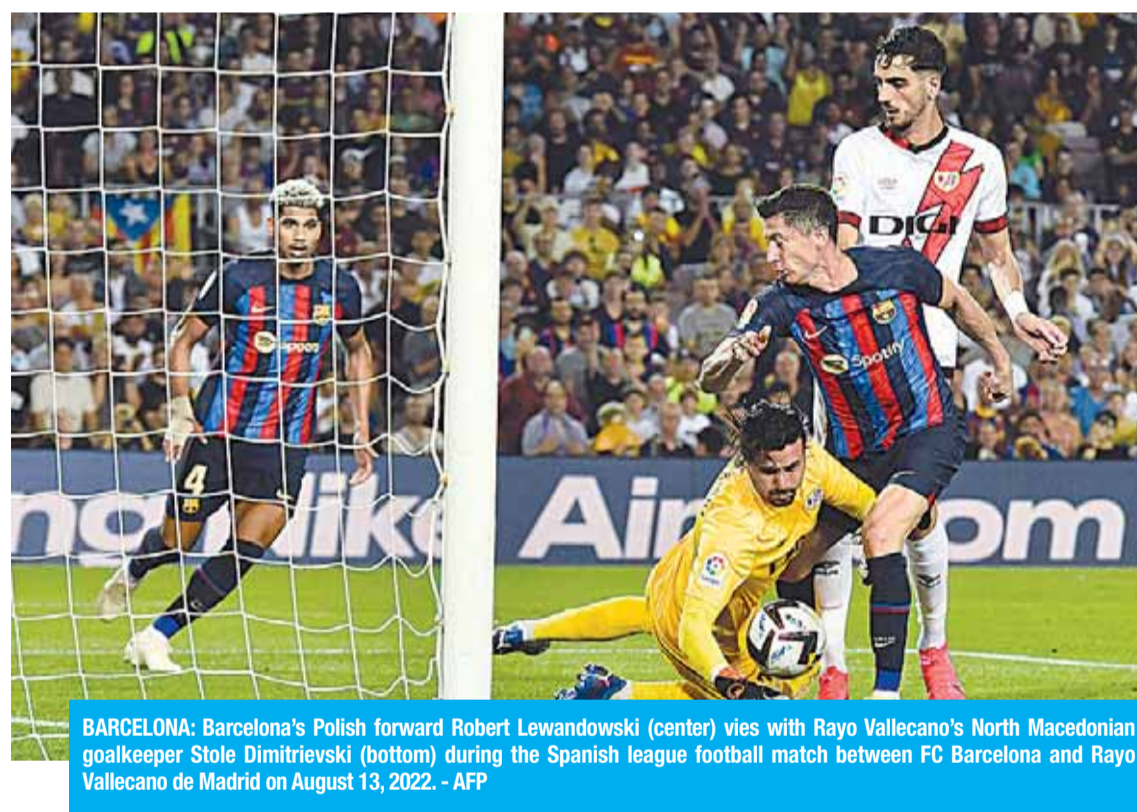
MADRID: Barcelona were held 0-0 by Rayo Vallecano in their opening game of the La Liga season and had captain Sergio Busquets sent off late on. The Catalans had 21 shots on goal and the majority of possession at the Camp Nou but were unable to break the deadlock.

Barca boss Xavi started close-season signings including defender Andreas Christensen, winger Raphinha and striker Robert Lewandowski, who were only able to feature after being registered with the league late on Friday. The five-time Champions League winners had to comply with La Liga's strict financial controls before being able to confirm the likes of ex-Bayern Munich attacker Lewandowski in their squad ahead of the new campaign.

"We could have won, but now we have to correct our mistakes and think about Real Sociedad next weekend," said Barcelona defender Eric Garcia. "We wanted to start the season on the right foot and with a victory, but we knew that Rayo gave us a lot of problems last year. They were good defensively tonight." The hosts dominated the opening half an hour as Lewandowski was denied a goal on his competitive debut.

The Poland forward was judged to be offside from an Ousmane Dembele pass before his delicate chipped finish was cancelled out. As rain fell at the Camp Nou in temperatures of 26 degrees Celsius (79 degrees Fahrenheit) Pedri came close to breaking the deadlock with 10 minutes of the half to play but his curling effort flew past the post. Despite their first half control Marc ter Stegen ensured the sides stayed level at the break with a fine save to stop Rayo's Alvaro Garcia during injury time.

Barca continued their onslaught on the Rayo defence but were unable to beat goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski, who was involved in two heavy collisions on his line within the first 10 minutes of the second half. With half an hour



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski (center) vies with Rayo Vallecano's North Macedonian goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski (bottom) during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Rayo Vallecano de Madrid on August 13, 2022. —AFP

to play Xavi brought on Frenkie de Jong for Gavi despite the Netherlands midfielder being linked with a move away from Catalunya to lighten club debt, which forced Lionel Messi to leave 12 months ago.

Falcao goes close

Xavi's Rayo counterpart Andoni Iraola also made changes in the final 30 minutes including giving experienced Colombia striker Radamel Falcao his competitive debut. With nine minutes left De Jong combined with Lewandowski but the 33-year-old's

shot skimmed the upright.

Seven minutes later another Barca summer signing was denied a goal as midfielder Franck Kessie, who arrived from AC Milan, was offside before beating Dimitrievski. Xavi's side ended the game with 10 men as club skipper Busquets was red-carded for an elbow on Falcao in the fourth of eight injury time minutes. Less than 60 seconds later, Falcao thought he had scored the winner, and claimed Rayo's third straight win over the Catalans, but was found to be offside and the visitors held on for the point.

Mbappe 'needs time'

The France superstar missed his club's first two games of the new campaign—a 4-0 defeat of Nantes in the season-opening Champions Trophy, and then the 5-0 win at Clermont—due first to suspension and then injury. "Physically, we knew his lack of game time in pre-season would cost him," Galtier told broadcaster Canal Plus when asked about Mbappe's performance and attitude, with the 23-year-old appearing frustrated at times on the night. "He is a competitor, he wants to be good, and he wants to be good quickly." Mbappe, whose last match was against Gamba Osaka in Japan almost three weeks ago, had a penalty saved midway through the first half by Montpellier goalkeeper Jonas Omlin after the VAR spotted a handball in the area. However, it was his shot that was diverted in by Sacko for an own goal to break the deadlock, and Mbappe later got his goal following a Neymar corner in the second half, but Galtier admitted the striker was not yet on peak form.

"A top-level footballer can't just switch himself on or off. He needs time to be back to 100 percent of his athletic ability and when he gets there he will make even more of a difference," Galtier admitted. "He likes to get forward and score goals and it is really quite normal that he should be, not disappointed, but a bit short of full fitness compared to his teammates."

Meanwhile Neymar thought he had a hat-trick late on when he finished from a Lionel Messi pass, only for the celebrations to be cut short when the VAR spotted an offside in the build-up. Soon after that Sanches scored moments after coming on for his debut following a move from Lille for a reported 15 million euros (\$15.4m).

PSG are expected to make more signings before the transfer window closes and have been strongly linked with Napoli's Spanish international midfielder Fabian



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar celebrates after scoring his team's fifth goal during the French L1 football match between Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) and Montpellier Hérault SC on August 13, 2022. —AFP

Ruiz. Earlier in Ligue 1, Monaco bounced back from their midweek Champions League elimination to draw 1-1 with Rennes. Knocked out in the third qualifying round of Europe's elite club competition by PSV Eindhoven, Monaco had Youssouf Fofana sent off inside 15 minutes at the Stade Louis II. Axel Disasi then had a penalty saved for the hosts, and Gaetan Laborde put Rennes ahead before the hour mark. However, Swiss forward Breel Embolo pounced on an error by Rennes substitute goalkeeper Dogan Alemdar to ensure a share of the spoils. —AFP

News in brief



LE MANS: Belgian's drive Stoffel Vandoorne steers his BR Engineering BR1 AER LMP1 during the circuit test day at Le Mans in northwestern France. —AFP

Vandoorne wins Formule E

PARIS: Stoffel Vandoorne clinched the Formula Electric World driver's title on Sunday after finishing second in the final race of the season in Seoul in a Mercedes. Mercedes won the constructors' world champion for the second year in a row but has already said it will leave the discipline next season. Swiss Edoardo Mortara in a Venturi won the race and finished third in the championship behind Belgian Vandoorne and New Zealander Mitch Evans in a Jaguar. "It's the best feeling ever," said Vandoorne a 30-year-old former Formula 1 driver. "It's been a great season and the team has done a great job. Mitch and Edoardo have been pushing me all season but it's all been about consistency. They have more wins than me but I have more podiums." Although he has only won once this season, in Monaco, Vandoorne scored points in 15 of the 16 races and finished on the podium seven times. He succeeds his Mercedes teammate, Dutchman Nyck de Vries as x=champion.

Minisini wins swimming gold

ROME: Italian artistic swimmer Giorgio Minisini won his second solo gold medal on Sunday at the European Championship, the first major competition to allow men-only events. Minisini added the free solo gold to the technical solo title he won on Friday. He also won the mixed free duet with Lucrezia Ruggiero on Saturday. Spaniard Fernando Diaz del Rio was again second with Frenchman Quentin Rakotomalala, who did not compete on Friday, taking bronze. That left Serbian Ivan Martinovic, who only took up artistic swimming 10 months ago and won bronze on Friday, as the first man to compete solo at a major championship and not win a medal. In the women's free event Marta Fiedina won her third gold of the competition, and Ukraine's fifth, ahead of Linda Cerruti of Italy and Vasiliki Alexandri of Austria.

South Africa's Olivier out

LONDON: South Africa suffered a setback just days before their Test series against England when fast bowler Duanne Olivier was ruled out of the entire campaign with a hip injury. The 30-year-old sustained the injury during this week's four-day tour match against the second-string England Lions in Canterbury and Olivier, a veteran of 15 Tests, is now returning home. "Duanne presented with significant discomfort involving his right hip flexor muscle at the close of play on day three of the four-day tour match," said Proteas team doctor Hashendra Ramjee in a Cricket South Africa statement issued Sunday. "After clinical assessment, he was referred for an MRI scan which revealed a grade two tear involving the right pectineus muscle. "Due to the extent of the injury, he has been ruled out of the three-match Test series against England and will return home where he will commence his rehabilitation with the Gauteng Central Lions medical team." —From AFP

Neymar scores brace, Mbappe on target in PSG victory

PARIS: Neymar continued his outstanding start to the season with a brace while Kylian Mbappe marked his return to the team with a goal but also had a penalty saved as Paris Saint-Germain trounced Montpellier 5-2 in Ligue 1 on Saturday. Neymar rolled in a spot-kick to put PSG 2-0 up at the break on a hot night at the Parc des Princes after Falaye Sacko's own goal had put them ahead.

The Brazilian then headed in his second and PSG's third shortly after the interval, taking his tally for the season to five goals already after just three games. Wahbi Khazri pulled one back for Montpellier before Mbappe made it 4-1 and new signing Renato Sanches came off the bench to get the fifth late on. Enzo Tchato notched another consolation for the visitors at the death but PSG have now recorded three wins out of three this season under new coach Christophe Galtier, scoring 14 goals in the process.

Neymar has picked up where he left off last season, when he scored nine in PSG's final nine Ligue 1 matches. So often plagued by fitness issues since arriving in Paris in 2017, he finally looks in rude health. In contrast, Mbappe was playing his first competitive game since announcing on the final night of last season that he had agreed a new three-year deal to stay at PSG, turning down a move to Real Madrid in the process.

Conte, Tuchel see red as teams draw

Forest celebrate first home game in Premier League for 23 years



LONDON: Chelsea's Italian midfielder Jorginho (right) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-Min (center) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur at Stamford Bridge in London on August 14, 2022. — AFP

LONDON: Harry Kane snatched a 96th minute equalizer to salvage a 2-2 draw for Tottenham from a feisty London derby against Chelsea on Sunday. Both managers Antonio Conte and Thomas Tuchel were sent-off after the full-time whistle for their second physical altercation of the match. Chelsea looked set to get a new era at Stamford Bridge off to the best possible start as they twice led through Kalidou Koulibaly and Reece James.

Tottenham were well off the level required if they are to live up to hopes of challenging Manchester City and Liverpool for the title, but showed the newfound character instilled by Conte to fight back for a point. The Italian and Tuchel were both booked in the aftermath of Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's first equalizer. Tempers then flared again during a handshake after Kane nodded in with virtually the last action of the game.

Tottenham have still only won once at Stamford Bridge in 32 years in the league, but Conte will be delighted to escape with a share of the spoils against his former club. New Chelsea chairman Todd Boehly was welcomed by a huge banner from the Chelsea support and saw an early return on the near £170 million (\$206 million) investment in the transfer market since he sanctioned a £2.5 billion takeover to buy the club from Roman Abramovich.

Despite the drastic changes in the boardroom, on the field it was like the old times under Abramovich as Chelsea outthought, outplayed and outmuscled Spurs for the first 45 minutes. Two of Chelsea's new signings

combined for the opening goal as it was from Marc Cucurella's corner that Koulibaly found space to volley home.

Conte again resisted the temptation to start any of his six new signings, but it was not until the introduction of Richarlison just before the hour mark and a switch of formation that Tottenham began to threaten. Kane had a glorious chance to level when he uncharacteristically dragged wide with only Edouard Mendy to beat. Spurs did level 22 minutes from time in controversial fashion to light the spark between the two managers.

Kai Havertz looked to be clearly fouled by Rodrigo Bentancur before Tottenham broke forward and the ball eventually fell to Hojbjerg to fire low and hard past Mendy. Tuchel reacted furiously to the decision and Conte's overzealous celebration. The German fought fire with fire as he sprinted down the touchline to celebrate when James thrashed home Raheem Sterling's pass to restore Chelsea's lead 13 minutes from time. However, Kane had the final say as he flicked in Ivan Perisic's corner deep into added time.

Earlier, Nottingham Forest celebrated their first home game in the Premier League for 23 years by beating West Ham 1-0. The two-time European champions have made 14 new signings in a bid to maintain their top-flight status and two of those making their home debuts were the stars as Taiwo Awoniyi scored the only goal and Dean Henderson saved Declan Rice's penalty.

Forest had fortune on their side as the Hammers

The goal was Musiala's 14th in the top grade, seeing him overtake Bayern legend and former club president Uli Hoeneß as the teenager with the most goals in Bayern colors. Thomas Müller then scored a trademark goal in the 44th minute, sticking a skinny leg out to deflect a shot from Joshua Kimmich into the back of the net.

Mane went close again in the 69th minute, but dragged a diving header just wide. The Senegalese got the ball across the line just two minutes later, but had it chalked off for offside. The result continued a poor run of form for Wolfsburg in the Bavarian capital. The Wolves have now lost 24 and drawn two from 26 games in Munich, with no Bundesliga side having played so many away games against an opponent without a single victory.

Mainz and Union fight out 'not too pretty' 0-0 draw - Mainz and Union Berlin split the points after a dull 0-0 draw at a two-thirds full Mewa Arena in 31-degree heat on Sunday. "It was a tough game... It certainly wasn't too pretty when you look at it," admitted Berlin coach Urs Fischer after the game. "But from my side, I'm actually satisfied. We are happy to take the point home." Mainz went close with the only notable chance of the first half, when an attempted cross from Lee Jae-sung was swatted to safety by Union keeper Frederik Rønnow.

Rani Khedira had a chance to put Union in the lead in the 59th minute but dragged his low shot just wide. Mainz had a chance to win it in injury time when Dutch striker Delano Burgzorg latched onto a loose ball in the penalty area, but Union defender



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Italian head coach Antonio Conte (right) and Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel shake hands then clash after the English Premier League football match on August 14, 2022. The game finished 2-2. — AFP

also had a first-half goal controversially ruled out and hit the underside of the crossbar twice after the break through Pablo Fornals and Said Benrahma. But that

mattered little to a jubilant 30,000 crowd at the City Ground, who revelled in their first three points back in the big time. — AFP

Musiala scores again as Bayern beat Wolfsburg

BERLIN: Nineteen-year-old Bayern forward Jamal Musiala continued his blistering early season form, scoring again as Munich beat Wolfsburg 2-0 on Sunday. Musiala, who declared himself eligible for Germany in 2021 despite playing for England as a junior, now has four goals in three competitive matches to start the season. The 2-0 scoreline flattered Wolfsburg, with Munich going close to scoring on several occasions. Senegalese striker Sadio Mane had two goals stuck off for offside.

Wolfsburg roared out of the blocks and almost forced a Bayern own goal when Canadian Alfonso Davies hit the post from an attempted clearance. The home side gradually grew into the ascendancy and Mane looked to have put Bayern 1-0 up in the 19th minute when he latched onto a bullet pass from Serge Gnabry to convert from one metre out, but VAR ruled the goal out for offside. Bayern then turned up the heat on the visitors, going close several times before Musiala got his team's first, guiding a strike past keeper Koen Casteels from the edge of the penalty area despite losing his footing just seconds before.



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's German midfielder Leroy Sane (center) plays the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between FC Bayern Munich and VfL Wolfsburg on August 14, 2022. — AFP

Robin Knoche shouldered the ball away from the goal to safety.

Mainz manager Bo Svensson praised his side's discipline. "It was difficult for all the players to play in these conditions," he said. "They were very disciplined and did the things I asked them to do." After the game, Khedira said "it was incredibly difficult to keep up the intensity in this heat." Union have now gone a club record nine Bundesliga matches without a loss, winning seven and drawing two since they last tasted defeat, against Bayern Munich in March. — AFP

Celtic crush Kilmarnock

GLASGOW: Celtic edged back ahead of Rangers on goal difference at the top of the Scottish Premiership with a 5-0 thrashing of Kilmarnock on Sunday as both Moritz Jenz and Giorgos Giakoumakis scored overhead kicks. Kyogo Furuhashi, Jota and Carl Starfelt were also on target in a dominant display from Ange Postecoglou's champions to maintain their perfect start after three games. The Hoops needed two late goals to see off Ross County last weekend, but got off to a flying start when Furuhashi turned in Daizen Maeda's cross after just seven minutes.

Celtic did not let the plastic pitch or the baking temperatures slow them down as Jota's blistering strike into the top corner and Jenz's second goal in as many games for the club killed the game off before half-time. "We knew that (the pitch) was one of our challenges today, along with it being a hot day to try and play the football we want to," said Postecoglou.

"The boys' attitude was first rate. "It was a great start for us. Last week we scored late and we said we want to wear teams down. That doesn't discount the fact we want to start strong and put teams away early." Kilmarnock manager Derek McInnes had spoken before the game about his determination to make life as difficult as possible for the champions. But the former Aberdeen boss was disappointed by his side's defending. — AFP