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Kuwait University to admit certain foreign students

Expat students will study at their own expense • Those eligible can apply from Aug 21-27

KUWAIT: Kuwait University announced on Monday it will start receiving applications for admission from Aug 21 to 27 from certain foreign high school graduates residing in Kuwait and students from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries desiring to study at the university at their own expense. Acting Secretary General of Kuwait University and its spokesperson Dr Mohammed Zainal said in a press statement that the submission of applica-

tions for admission will be online for students who meet the admission requirements - being graduates of the unified system (public and private Arabic schools), religious institutes, and American and British schools in Kuwait. Zainal explained that foreign students who are eligible to apply should have a minimum average grade of 75 percent and higher in the science field and 80 percent and higher in the arts field. They should

have secondary school certificates for the 2021/2022 or 2020/2021 academic years. He said the results of the TOEFL, IBT TOEFL or IELTS tests may be counted as an alternative to the academic aptitude test in English when calculating the equivalent average before the end of the application period, as stipulated in the admission and transfer policy approved by the Kuwait University Council. Zainal said foreign students can apply

for admission to Kuwait University in 10 faculties only for vacant seats, namely in the faculties of arts, education, law, sharia, social sciences, administrative sciences, life sciences, engineering, petroleum and allied medical sciences. Zainal pointed out that all the conditions are mentioned on the webpage of the deanship of admission and registration and that there are special admission conditions for some colleges, stressing the

need for students to verify these conditions in case they want to register. Zainal pointed out the announcement of the results of the admission of foreign students will be made after the end of the application period by sending text messages to accepted students with the dates of approval of their admission to attend in person at the admission and registration office in Shuwaikh with the required documents.

MoI stops issuing family reunion visas

KUWAIT: Informed security sources said the interior ministry has stopped issuing all kinds of family and tourist visas, including family reunion visas, until further notice. The sources explained the decision comes as work is underway to amend the mechanism for issuing visas, with new procedures and conditions to be approved. The sources said all residency affairs departments in the six governorates received verbal instructions on Monday to stop all types of entry visas for expatriates until new instructions are issued. The sources added certain categories of expats such as doctors are excluded from this decision, while family reunion visas that have already been issued are still valid.

Elephants and howitzers as India turns 75

NEW DELHI: India marked the 75th anniversary of independence on Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi giving a speech from Delhi's historic Red Fort, which was decorated with portraits of freedom fighters and guarded by mechanical elephants. Following a 21-gun salute, reportedly executed using howitzers made domestically for the first time under Modi's "Make In India" industrial strategy, the prime minister said Indians should shed "colonialism in our minds and habits". "Hundreds of years of colonialism has restricted our sentiments, distorted our thoughts. When we see even the smallest thing related to colonialism in us or around us, we have to be rid of it," Modi said in a 90-minute speech from the ramparts of the fort in the Indian capital. Wearing a cream-colored

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NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets participants after addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort during the celebrations to mark country's Independence Day on Aug 15, 2022. — AFP

Iran denies link with Rushdie's attacker

TEHRAN: Iran on Monday denied any link with the attacker of British author Salman Rushdie but blamed the writer himself for "insulting" Islam in the novel "The Satanic Verses". "We categorically deny" any link with the attack and "no one has the right to accuse the Islamic Republic of Iran," said foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani in Tehran's first official reaction to Friday's stabbing. "In this attack, we do not consider anyone other than Salman Rushdie and his supporters worthy of blame and even condemnation," he said at his weekly press conference in Tehran. "By insulting the sacred matters of Islam and crossing the red lines of more than 1.5 billion Muslims and all followers of the divine religions, Salman Rushdie has exposed himself to the anger and rage of the people." Rushdie, 75, was left on a ventilator with multiple stab wounds after the attack at a literary event Friday in upstate New York. But by Sunday he was off the ventilator and "on the road to recovery," though with severe injuries, his agent Andrew Wylie said. The suspected assailant, 24-year-old Hadi Matar from New Jersey, was wrestled to the ground by staff and audience members before being taken into police custody. He was later arraigned in court and pleaded not guilty to attempted murder charges. In 1989, Iran's then-supreme leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a religious decree, or fatwa, ordering Muslims to kill Rushdie for what he deemed the blasphemous nature of "The Satanic Verses". Commenting on the novel, Kanani said that "the anger at that time at this inappropriate action was not limited to Iran and the Islamic Republic. "Millions of people in Arab, Islamic and non-Islamic countries reacted with anger. Condemning the action of the attacker on the one hand and absolving the action of the one who insults sacred and Islamic matters on the other is completely contradictory."

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Taleban mark turbulent first year in power

KABUL: Taliban fighters chanted victory slogans next to the US embassy in Kabul Monday as they marked the first anniversary of their return to power in Afghanistan following a turbulent year that saw women's rights crushed and a humanitarian crisis worsen. Exactly a year ago, the hardline Islamists captured Kabul after a nation-wide lightning offensive against government forces just as US-led troops were ending two decades of intervention in a conflict that cost

tens of thousands of lives. "This great victory came after countless sacrifices and hardships," Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister and co-founder of the Taliban movement, said on Twitter. "On this day... the Islamic Emirate brought the world's superpower and its allies to their knees and Afghans gained their independence," added Baradar, who in 2020 signed a deal with Washington offering security guarantees in return for the withdrawal of foreign forces. The last American troops left on Aug 31, ending a chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans who had rushed to Kabul's airport in the hope of boarding a flight out of the country. Images of crowds storming the

Continued on Page 6



KABUL: Taliban fighters hold weapons as they ride on a humvee to celebrate their victory day near the US embassy on Aug 15, 2022. — AFP

Ruto declared president amid results chaos

NAIROBI: Deputy President William Ruto was Monday declared winner of Kenya's hard-fought presidential poll but the announcement was mired in controversy after several members of the election commission rejected the results. Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) chairman Wafula Chebukati said Ruto had won almost 7.18 million votes (50.49 percent) in the Aug 9 vote, against 6.94 million (48.85 percent) for his

rival Raila Odinga. "I stand before you despite intimidation and harassment. I have done my duty according to the laws of the land," Chebukati said. "In accordance with the law, I... hereby declare that Ruto William Samoei has been duly elected as the president." Shortly before his announcement, four out of seven IEBC commissioners said they could not recognize the results, raising rigging fears in the closely-watched poll in the East African political and economic powerhouse. Ruto is a 55-year-old rags-to-riches businessman who had characterized the vote as a battle between ordinary "hustlers" and "dynasties" who had ruled Kenya since

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ELDORET, Kenya: Supporters of Kenya's President-elect William Ruto celebrate on Aug 15, 2022. — AFP

Local

Economist believes Kuwait govt fails to realize expats' full potential

Government is responsible for citizens' poor access to services: Ramadan

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The topic of amending the demographics of Kuwait through reducing the number of expats has been a long-time issue that turned into a popular demand for some citizens in Kuwait, while others look at it as an economic opportunity that will contribute to boosting the economic growth of the country.

There have also been many demands in the past years calling to take advantage of financially-secure expats, similar to other GCC countries that have been giving facilities and advantages to their expat residents instead of giving up on them.

Meanwhile, the numbers of domestic workers have increased in the past few years to reach 49 percent of the total population of citizens in Kuwait, which has started to become a real issue for the government, Economist Mohammad Ramadan told Kuwait Times. He pointed out the numbers of domestic workers in Kuwait reached 723,000, equivalent to 49 percent of the total number of citizens, 23 percent of expats and 16 percent of the total population of Kuwait.

"People talk a lot about the percentage of Kuwaitis and their desire to adjust the percentage of expats in Kuwait. But we see a Kuwaiti family of four having two housemaids, who do not have bank accounts, do not pay rent and transfer most of their monthly income to their countries, in addition to the

increasing consumption of electricity and resources," Ramadan said. "Therefore, these categories of expats do not contribute effectively to the increase in Kuwait's GDP, and the economic benefit of their existence is almost non-existent."

Financially viable

Ramadan suggested these domestic workers should be replaced by temporary workers, who will work for specific hours inside the house and leave. Thus, these workers will live in rented accommoda-



Attracting expats a great opportunity for economic growth

tions and have bank accounts, resulting in economic activity. On the other hand, Ramadan pointed out the issue of taking advantage of financially-viable expats in Kuwait. "The problem is that the government does not manage the demographics issue well. While citizens blame expats when they cannot receive the services they want well, the government is responsible for the poor access of citizens to services," he argued.

"If we see GCC governments and how much they spend on investing in their expats, we will see the great economic growth they have achieved," Ramadan said. He stressed economic growth comes from expats and not citizens, with the importance of



attracting Arab expats and capital during periods of political upheavals witnessed by some Arab countries, which would be a great opportunity for economic growth in the country.

"UAE and Bahrain give residents who have investments in their countries or receive a specific income long-term residency to attract them, in addition to Saudi Arabia, which seeks to increase its expatriate numbers by 50 percent from the current 38 percent," he said. "Therefore, an expat who receives a high income and has long-term residence

should be our target, who can realize great economic activity in the country."

But Ramadan said he does not expect the government to attract expats during the coming period, considering that citizens in the country do not have sufficient awareness of the importance of expats in the country, in addition to the problem of visa traffickers that the government can quickly end if it wants to, by giving company owners enough space to hire enough numbers of employees instead of looking for them in the black market.

Election schedule delays council of ministers meeting

KUWAIT: A meeting of the Cabinet on Monday to discuss issues including preparations for the National Assembly elections has been delayed most likely till Wednesday. "The meeting yesterday was postponed because the government has yet to agree on a final decision on the election schedule, as law consultants and ex-members of the parliament, among other authorities, found the government's process to set these schedules will open the door for electoral appeals to the constitution court on election results scheduled for late September, which could be accepted by the government, resulting in the results being dismissed," sources told Kuwait Times.

"On the other hand, another perspective is that the government should fix the problem as an urgent matter to satisfy election needs, as there are new areas that are still outside election schedules that should be included in their nearest electoral district according to their geographic loca-



The National Assembly.

tion," the sources said.

The government will conduct a meeting which will assign a specific date for the elections, between September 24 and October 1, as elections must be held no more than two months after the dissolution of the National Assembly. If elections are not held before October 2, the previous

National Assembly will resume as it was, according to the constitution. "The Council of Ministers will hold a meeting to schedule a date to accept candidature requests for the National Assembly, as the process takes 10 days and must be held within a month of the dissolution of the National Assembly," sources told Kuwait Times.



KUWAIT: The Nayef Palace in Kuwait City. — KUNA photos

Nayef Palace's ICESCO Islamic Heritage inclusion 'cultural milestone'

KUWAIT: The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (ICESCO) inclusion of the Nayef Palace in Jibla area as an Islamic Heritage Site is another cultural milestone for Kuwait, said an official on Monday. Dr Waleed Al-Saif, President of the Heritage Committee of the Islamic World in ICESCO, said that the inclusion of Nayef Palace dur-

ing the 10th session of the committee held in Rabat, Morocco, in July had been an unprecedented success for Kuwait. There are other sites permanently included in the organization's list including Kazma area, sites in Failaka Island, Al-Qurainya, and Nayef Palace, revealed Dr Saif, adding that there other sites in the preliminary list namely Kuwait Towers, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Palace, Mubarak Al-Kabir marine reserve, and Boubyan Island. The official noted that the committee included members from nine Islamic nations elected by the Ministers of Culture from 54 Muslim countries.

Nayef Palace was included in the list of Islamic Heritage Sites in accordance to international standards of evaluation, affirmed Dr Saif who noted that such monuments needed to be preserved and protected for future generations. The Nayef Palace is

dentials to head of the UN Office in Geneva (UNOG) Tatiana Valovaya. Conveying the greetings of his country's political leadership, the Kuwaiti diplomat acknowledged the UN's pivotal contributions across various fields, chiefly, the global body's humanitarian endeavors. Similarly, the UN official heaped praise on Kuwait's humanitarian devotion, underlining the country's ties with the UN and other international organizations. The Kuwaiti diplomat has enjoyed a prolific diplomatic career, having represented his country in a slew of international events over the years. — KUNA

Kuwait appoints Al-Hein permanent UN representative

GENEVA: Kuwait on Monday named ambassador Nasser Al-Hein as the country's permanent representative to the United Nations and international organizations, with the envoy submitting his cre-



Antique cannon at Nayef Palace's gate.

constructed on an area of 28,802 square meters in the capital Kuwait City. It houses 219 rooms of numerous functions. It holds various facilities such as a mosque, a garrison dormitory, and an ammunition depot to name a few. The Palace began construction in 1919 and it was completed in the era of the Amir Sheikh Salem Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Nayef Palace was near Kuwait's third protective wall from the south and it was constructed under the supervision of Mohammad Suleiman Al-Bhao, a builder involved in the construction of Seif Palace in Kuwait as well as Al-Murabba Palace in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Nayef Palace was expanded in 1950 and currently serves a ceremonial role during the Holy Month of Ramadan when a canon drill is performed and broadcasted on national television to signal breaking the fast. — KUNA



Nasser Al-Hein submits his credentials to Tatiana Valovaya.

Legalese

Calculating end of service benefits

By Fajer Ahmed

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Kuwait labor law has been set for the benefit of the employee and is one of the best laws internationally when it comes to end of service benefits. With that said, many details may be involved in the calculation of end of service benefits, so today I would like to go over some basic information regarding end of service benefits.

Question: If I am getting a basic salary, plus a yearly ticket, and monthly allowance for my rent and phone utilities, how do I calculate end of service benefits? Is it based on my basic salary or do I add all the benefits I get within a year and then divide by 12?

Fajer: Neither. You calculate it based on monthly benefits you are getting and not yearly or basic salary. For you it will be your basic salary in addition to your monthly allowance for rent and phone utilities.

Question: If I have been working for a company for 12 years, and my basic salary is KD 500. How do I calculate my end of service benefits?

Fajer: It really depends on who resigned and how the employment agreement was terminated. Please see below:

	A	B	C	D
Termination by	Employer (Resignation)	Employee (Resignation)	Employee (Resignation)	Employee (Resignation)
Number of years worked	N/A	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
Type of Agreement	Indefinite - Does not have a term	Indefinite - Does not have a term	Indefinite - Does not have a term	Indefinite - Does not have a term
1-5 years	15 days' salary per year	% of A	% of A	Same amount as A
5+	One month's salary per year			
Maximum	18 months' salary			

Question: I terminated my agreement by resigning three years after working, because of a violation from my employer. He keeps my passport and does not want to give it back. Am I still entitled to end of service benefits?

Fajer: Please note that if you terminate your agreement based on a serious violation from your employer, such as keeping your passport, you are not only entitled to end of service benefits, but are entitled to them in full.

Article 48

An employee shall be entitled to end of service benefits if they terminate their employment contracts for the following reasons:

- The employer does not follow the terms of the contract or the Kuwait labor law.
- The employee was assaulted at the workplace by the employer.
- The employment poses a threat to the employee's health, which is approved by the ministry of health.
- The employer committed fraud concerning the work conditions upon signing the contract.
- The employee is acquitted after being falsely accused by the employer.
- The employer commits an act that violates the employee's public morals.

Local

World traveler Drew Binsky lands in Kuwait

Binsky on a mission to break stereotypes by sharing positive stories

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Exploring all the countries of the world was a dream that came true for American traveler Drew Binsky. He left his homeland in 2012 for adventures that go beyond just a vacation for an authentic travel experience. He explored the unseen culture and hidden gems that regular tourists cannot access. Binsky shows people around the globe the hidden beauty of 197 countries. He currently has an online community of over 11 million follow-



“Kuwait as a country of hospitality and generosity”

ers. The 31-year-old traveler grew up in Arizona, and the travel bug hit him when he was studying abroad in Prague.

During his visit to Kuwait, Binsky told Kuwait Times that realizing his dream was the best moment of his life, when he entered his 197th and final country of Saudi Arabia in October 2021, praising Kuwait as a country of hospitality and generosity. “This is my second time in Kuwait. The last time I visited Kuwait was in September, but now that I’m here in August, the weather is totally different. I can hardly breathe when I step outside,” he said.

He praised the hospitality of the Kuwaiti people and the country’s rich culture and cuisine. “I’m spending time with other Kuwaiti travelers. I enjoy coming here. I like Kuwait more than other Gulf countries that are more commercialized. I like to



KUWAIT: Drew Binsky with Kuwaiti traveler Sulaiman Al-Roudan.

experience the hospitality in Kuwait, but I should know how to survive the Kuwaiti summer! Later I’m going to experience the diwaniya,” Binsky said.

Breaking stereotypes

Binsky loves breaking stereotypes by sharing positive stories about people and culture. “After visiting all countries in the world, I want to continue traveling and deliver powerful stories on YouTube, to change the stereotyping of some places that were promoted as unsafe places and that Islam is evil. Americans stereotype Islam because of the media, and I want to change the narrative and show people what is really happening,” he told Kuwait Times.

Binsky revealed that he has a passion to visit



Drew Binsky with Kuwaiti traveler Sulaiman Al-Roudan in a diwaniya.

dangerous countries, where he finds it exciting to be the only tourist. He developed a love for visiting countries that are perceived as dangerous, such as Afghanistan, Venezuela, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Libya and Iran, where he had his best memories. “My favorite countries are Iran, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Philippines and Mexico. I’m planning to visit Czechia, Serbia, Portugal, and later Qatar for the World Cup, and may come back to Kuwait. I will continue traveling to faraway places and build the strongest travel community,” he said.

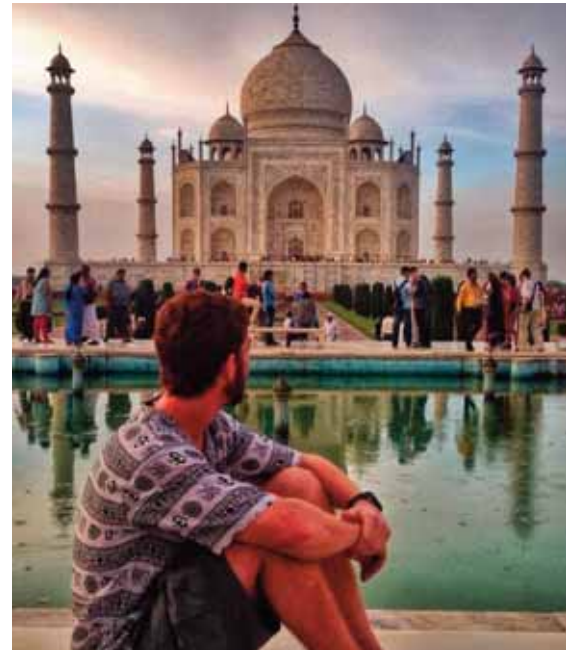
In his message to Kuwait Times’ readers, Binsky said: “The best moment happens when you do not have a plan, and you will realize that 99.9 percent of people are very nice and willing to help you out.



Drew Binsky in Kuwait.

The media only shares the bad side of countries. I encourage everybody to travel more. Western media does not reflect what is actually happening in these countries.”

Binsky moved to South Korea to become an English teacher after he graduated. During his 18 months living in Korea, he started his first travel blog to document his travel experiences around the world. After three years, he grew his blog to 150,000 monthly readers and had around 100,000 social media followers. His blog was named “Hungry Partier” at first, which he then changed to “Drew Binsky”. He left Korea in 2015 and started traveling full-time, with the dream to visit every country in the world.



Indian Embassy celebrates 76th Independence Day

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait celebrated the 76th Independence Day of India on Monday, marking a significant milestone in the history of the country. Thousands of Indians joined the celebrations virtually as the ceremony was held in accordance with COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. The event was livestreamed on the embassy’s social media accounts.

The official celebration titled #AzadiKaAmritMahotsav got off to a solemn start at 8 am at the embassy premises with Indian Ambassador Sibi George paying a floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. It was followed by unfurling of the national tricolor flag and singing of the Indian national anthem. The ambassador read out Indian President Droupadi Murmu’s message to the nation on the occasion. George also addressed the participants and Indian nationals who attended the celebrations virtually.

The ambassador thanked the leadership and government of the friendly State of Kuwait for their continued support in further deepening and strengthening India-Kuwait bilateral relations and for taking special care of the Indian diaspora in Kuwait, which numbers around one million.

“During 2021-22, we were able to take our bilateral relationship with Kuwait to a high new level of dynamic partnership in both political and economic fields. Despite many challenges, our political engagement and business cooperation continued its upward trajectory,” the ambassador pointed out.

Extending greetings to all Indians in Kuwait on the occasion, the ambassador said, “We have been celebrating ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ along with the celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. I thank the Kuwaiti leadership for the wholehearted support extended to the embassy in celebrating the confluence of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations,” he said.

George highlighted the efforts undertaken by



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George hoisting the Indian national flag on the occasion of the country’s 76th Independence Day at the Indian Embassy on Monday.

the embassy on various fronts, including promotion of trade, investment, culture and tourism, expansion and deepening of institutional cooperation in different domains, and various measures to ensure the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait.

Cultural connect

Highlighting the embassy’s efforts to work along with the Indian community in promoting India-Kuwait relations, he said: “During 2021-22, we witnessed the Indian tricolor flying on the iconic Kuwait Towers for the first time in the history of the towers, not once but twice.” He recalled the recent visit of Indian naval ship INS TEG which was accorded a rousing welcome by the Kuwait’s naval authorities.

The ambassador also cited examples of increased India-Kuwait cooperation in the field of culture over the last two years. “With the support of NCCAL, we organized several cultural events and exhibitions at the Kuwait National Library, Kuwait National Museum, Yarmouk Cultural Center, Sadu House and Kuwait Art Association,” he said.

The ambassador also recalled the International Day of Yoga celebrations, special cycle rally, 75 varieties of Indian dishes served at the ‘Made in India Festival’, Indian traditional fashion show, mango festivals, herbal plants exhibition, state facilitation events, 3 Ts campaign and the several Made in



Sibi George paying floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi



A group photo with the choir.

India exhibitions that the embassy organized at its premises and all across Kuwait. “Today, as I speak to you, over a hundred buses are carrying the Indian tricolor all across the streets of Kuwait as part of our 3 Ts campaign,” he pointed out.

George, who is leaving Kuwait as Indian ambassador and taking over as the new Indian envoy to Japan early next month, thanked Indians in Kuwait, various community organizations and Indian Embassy officials on the occasion.

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

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News in brief

Mail Delivery
under review

KUWAIT: The ministry of communications has put forward a tender to provide customs delivery and distribution. "Through providing the tender, the ministry aims to improve its services by using advanced technology and provide it to customers hoping for these services," Undersecretary Kholoud Al-Shehab said. "This request is in line with our specified goals, including direct delivery for customers at their homes or places of work, in order to raise the standards of mail service when we start operations at the end of this year," Shehab added.

Iran lauds
ties with Kuwait

TEHRAN: Iranian-Kuwaiti ties are witnessing new developments with the appointment of a new Ambassador of Kuwait to Iran, said an Iranian diplomat Monday. Speaking to the press, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that relations between the two countries were based on mutual respect and understanding. He expressed hopes that bringing the representation to the ambassadorial level would pave the way to increase joint cooperation between Iran and nearby countries in the region. Last Saturday, the new Ambassador of Kuwait to Iran Abdullah Al-Munaikh presented his credentials to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

local spotlight

Kuwait's heat and
practical solutions

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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Summer in Kuwait burns nerves. The temperature exceeds human beings' tolerance, especially after civilization increased concreted areas. Among the good ideas for practical solutions for the flames of Kuwait's summer is what we see in the expansion of The Avenues. It is not a blemish for the private sector to have practical solutions that become examples for the government, as both the public and private sectors are at Kuwait's service.

The idea of covering large areas, where you feel that you are in the open with natural lighting, moderate temperature, spaces you can use as you want, gardens, playgrounds, restaurants and shops, and even private residences. This is an innovative idea in which nature was adapted in favor of human beings, and this can be considered the best solution for the summer temperatures in Kuwait.

The human being is the student of nature - he learned from it and is still learning, and still needs its lessons. The first lesson the human being learned was from the crow, on how a human should be buried after death. He learned about fire from lightning, and about energy from the water's movement. He learned how to reclaim land from water, then dig the land so water can pass. So, learning from nature is not something new; rather it is an old habit, and we were very late in benefiting from it.

Whoever says the cost of power in these indoor spaces is high should ask experts, as shops inside these spaces consume less than half of the cooling power shops in the open under the heat are using. The cost of construction and maintenance can be made available if we partner with various sectors, bearing in mind the pros of these spaces towards the general mood and reduction of the costs of escaping abroad.

Thanks to the private sector that proved practically the success of indoor open spaces. I hope the government studies the feasibility of allocating one covered space in every residential area, where residents can walk, sit in the garden and shop, while feeling they are out of Kuwait's scorching summer and returning home in minutes with more comfort.

Summer in Kuwait does not call for warnings or escaping. It only needs practical solutions that are now available.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture showing the beach in Fahaheel on August 14, 2022. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Zain hosted students of KON Program at its Innovation Campus

Company supports program as part of partnership with LOYAC



KUWAIT: The students at the Zain Innovation Campus.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, hosted students of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program at its Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event came as part of Zain's sponsorship of the seventh edition of the training program organized by LOYAC in collaboration with Babson College in Boston.

Zain continues to support this unique program as part of its belief in the great value it adds to the local entrepreneurial community and its contributions to developing the business skills of Kuwait's future entrepreneurs. This year, Zain's strategic partnership with LOYAC reaches its 18th consecutive year, which the company considers a great achievement and a step forward that truly reflects the strength and resilience of the collaboration

between the private sector and non-profit organizations in empowering Kuwaiti youth.

Zain hosted KON students at its Innovation Campus (ZINC) in its main headquarters in Shuwaikh, where they pitched their projects to the judges panel that consisted of executives from Zain and private sector companies. The judges reviewed the presentations and shared their thoughts and suggestions with the students to further enhance their projects and lead them towards becoming successful, sustainable, and profitable startups.

During its support to the program's past four seasons, Zain received amazing feedback from young ambitious youth who had a keen interest in entrepreneurship in Kuwait. The program continues to empower young students, help them discover their potential, and lead them towards suc-

cess, helping them unleash their creativity and bright ideas.

KON, one of LOYAC's latest youth development programs, trains school children (ages 12-16 years) in the area of Social Entrepreneurship. The program is held in two periods and comes in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education.

Zain is proud to be a Strategic Partner of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that caters to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

KFH sponsors 400 College of Engineering and Petroleum students

KUWAIT: Under its platinum sponsorship, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) takes pride in supporting 400 graduate engineers from Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum in the 41st Engineering Design Exhibition. In line with 'Keep it Green' campaign, KFH supported over fifty graduate projects during the 3-day exhibition and allocated a 'Sustainability Award' for projects focusing on sustainability and environmental issues.

The Bank provided support to more than 400 graduate engineers during the current academic year by facilitating the sources and providing sponsorship to complete their design projects. A team from KFH was present at KFH pavilion during the exhibition to serve its customers and answer all their inquiries. The Bank has also provided various services including account opening, card issuance and other banking services.

Dr Duaij Al-Rukaibi, Manager - Engineering Training and Alumni Center - College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University expressed his pride of the support extended by KFH to the college in general and to the graduate engineers during the year. He added that the graduates need all the support for their design projects as they reflect the students' efforts and hard work during their study year. The design projects are the results of several years of hard work, endeavor dedication and persistence. KFH has always stood by these engineers and participated in transforming their knowledge into reality.

Rukaibi congratulated the winners and stated that this distinction is one of the strategies adopted by Kuwait university which has vast space for researches, headed by its manager Prof. Dr. Yousef Al-Roomi. Kuwait University enhances and encour-



Part of KFH pavilion in the exhibition.



KFH team honoring the winners.

ages its graduates to achieve distinctive presence. He conveyed his gratitude and appreciation to Kuwait Finance House for their sponsorship and

support. Also, he extended his thanks to all departments at Kuwait university for their teamwork cooperation to make this exhibition a success.



Kenya set to learn outcome of closely fought election race

Anger flares at slow response to deadly Cairo church fire



TAIPEI, Taiwan: Picture released by Taiwan's Presidential Office on August 15, 2022 shows Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (R) greeting US representative delegation at the Presidential Office in Taipei. —AFP

China conducts fresh drills around Taiwan

Five-member congressional delegation met with President Tsai Ing-wen

BEIJING: China staged fresh military drills around Taiwan on Monday, slamming a new visit by United States lawmakers to the island days after a similar trip by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi triggered a furious response from Beijing.

The unannounced two-day trip by senior members of Congress prompted China to renew its rhetoric that it would “prepare for war” over Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy that Beijing’s leaders claim and have vowed to one day seize.

The five-member congressional delegation-led by Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts-met with President Tsai Ing-wen on Monday, according to Washington’s de facto embassy in Taipei. “The delegation had an opportunity to exchange views with Taiwan counterparts on a wide range of issues of importance to both the United States and Taiwan,” it said.

Tsai told the lawmakers she wants “to maintain a stable status quo across the Taiwan Strait” and “jointly maintain the prosperity and stability of the Indo-Pacific region”, her office said in a statement. She said Russia’s invasion of Ukraine demonstrated “the threat that authoritarian states pose to the world order”, according to her office, and also thanked Washington for its support in the face of Chinese military threats.

The bipartisan trip sparked another bellicose response from Beijing, which said it had carried out a fresh round of “combat readiness patrol and combat drills in the sea and airspace around Taiwan island” on Monday.

“The Chinese People’s Liberation Army continues to train and prepare for war, resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and resolutely crush any form of ‘Taiwan independence’ separatism and foreign interference attempts,” Wu Qian, a spokesman for China’s defense ministry, said.

“We warn the US and the DPP authorities: ‘Using Taiwan to contain China’ is doomed to failure,” he added, referring to Taiwan’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party. In a defiant response, Taiwan’s

defence ministry vowed to face the latest drills “calmly and seriously and defend national security”.

“Apart from expressing condemnation (of China’s drills), the Ministry of National Defence will comprehensively grasp the movements in the sea and airspace around the Taiwan Strait,” the ministry said.

It added that its forces had detected 30 Chinese planes and five ships operating around the strait on Monday. Of those, 15 planes crossed the median line—an unofficial demarcation that Beijing does not recognise.

Monday’s drills followed days of huge exercises around Taiwan in the wake of Pelosi’s visit, which saw Beijing send warships, missiles and jets into the waters



Slams new visit by US lawmakers

and skies near the island. Taipei condemned those drills and missile tests as preparation for an invasion.

China’s Communist Party has never ruled Taiwan but says it will use force if necessary to take the island and bristles at any perceived treatment of it as a sovereign nation state.

‘Evil neighbour’

That decades-old threat was reiterated in a white paper published last week, when China’s Taiwan Affairs Office said it would “not renounce the use of force” against its neighbour and reserved “the option of taking all necessary measures”.

tronics repair shop in Kuje, off the main road. In central Abuja, many taxi drivers like Segun Afolayan have stopped working at night. “After six or seven (in the evening), everybody runs back to their houses,” said Afolayan, who has been driving in the capital for over 30 years. “Before it was not like that.”

Patrols, checkpoints

After the Kuje jailbreak that made global headlines and prompted President Muhammadu Buhari to say he was “disappointed” with his intelligence services, the police and military announced new measures to beef up security. Early August, the Inspector-General of Police Usman Alkali Baba “ordered (the) massive deployment of additional police operatives and operational assets within the Federal Capital Territory and its environs.”

Defense spokesman Major General Benard Onyeuko also told FCT residents they were “undaunted and unrelenting” in “efforts to ensure the safety of lives and properties”. But the patrols and checkpoints that appeared in Kuje last month have now vanished according to residents. In central Abuja, the usual checkpoints that appear mostly at night are in place but there are no obvious signs of any additional ones.

For Kabir Adamu, security analyst with Beacon Consulting, a concern is that gunmen “could access the FCT through vulnerable points, ungoverned spaces”. The capital, including the international airport, is surrounded by mountainous and forested areas that are difficult to patrol, but the police have said that “clearance operations” were underway.

Emergency Situations Minister Armen Pambukhchyan said.

Rescue operations were continuing “very carefully” with people still believed to be trapped beneath the debris, he added. Pambukhchyan told reporters that video footage of the incident showed that “there can be no talk of a terrorist attack” as the fire started before the explosion.

He said the fire spread to “pyro materials”. Local media had earlier said the explosion went off at a place that stored fireworks. The cause of the fire was being established. The minister said that smoke and small fire could persist for several more days with lots of plastic smouldering at the scene.

Photos and videos posted on social media after the blast showed a thick column of black smoke over

Taipei has remained defiant throughout the standoff with Beijing, with Premier Su Tseng-chang saying the island welcomed “all countries and friends across the world” who want to support it. “We shouldn’t be too afraid to do anything, afraid to let visitors come and afraid to let our friends come, just because we have an evil neighbour next door,” he said.

Foreign minister Joseph Wu struck a similar tone after meeting the US delegation on Monday. “Authoritarian China can’t dictate how democratic Taiwan makes friends, wins support, stays resilient and shines like a beacon of freedom,” Wu said in a tweet.

Pelosi has stood by her visit which, combined with Beijing’s response, sent tensions in the Taiwan Strait soaring to their highest in decades. President Joe Biden said the US military was opposed to the trip by his fellow Democrat, who is second in line to the presidency after the vice president.

Congress is constitutionally an equal branch of government in the United States, with lawmakers free to travel where they wish, and Taiwan enjoys bipartisan backing in divided Washington.

The United States switched diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. But it remains a key ally of Taiwan and maintains de facto diplomatic relations with Taipei. Washington’s official policy opposes both Taiwan declaring independence and China forcibly changing the island’s status.

It remains deliberately ambiguous about whether it would come to Taiwan’s aid militarily if China invaded. Visits by senior US officials to Taiwan have happened for decades and even Pelosi’s trip was not without precedent—then-speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich visited in 1997.

But the frequency and profile of US visits has increased both under former president Donald Trump and Biden. Taiwan has also seen a flurry of delegations visit from Europe and other Western allies in recent years, partly in response to Beijing’s more aggressive stance under Chinese President Xi Jinping. —AFP



ABUJA: In this photo taken on July 6, 2022, a police officer stands beside a burnt prison vehicle after suspected Boko Haram gunmen attacked the Kuje Medium Prison. —AFP

Despite steps taken to try and prevent further incursions, some government workers are concerned about gangs and jihadists getting closer to the capital. Daniel, a 37-year-old civil servant who asked to be identified only with his first name, said “before the present administration, things were quite safe”. But now, “I don’t feel safe,” he said, stood outside a government building. “You have soldiers and police everywhere but if it truly gets down to it, how prepared are they to stop such an event? No one really knows,” he added. —AFP

the market and what appeared to be a series of detonations can be heard. Prosecutors meanwhile launched a probe into violations “on stocking inflammable goods”, breaches in fire safety standards and the death of people “due to negligence”.

Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the site of the blast on Monday, according to his press service. In all, 200 firefighters and medical workers were sent to the scene, as well as fire engines and construction site equipment.

Rescue workers used a digger to clear away rubble, an AFP journalist at the scene reported earlier. The disaster comes as the country of three million people is still recovering from a 2020 war with Azerbaijan, which ended in a heavy defeat and sparked a political crisis. —AFP



TOKYO: Members of right-wing organisations shout “bansai” as they gather on the grounds of Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on August 15, 2022, to mark the 77th anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II in 1945. —AFP

Japan angers China, S Korea with war shrine visit

TOKYO: Two Japanese ministers paid respects Monday at a controversial war shrine, infuriating China and South Korea where the site is seen as a symbol of past militarism, especially during World War II. The Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo honours 2.5 million war dead, mostly Japanese, who perished since the late 19th century—but it also enshrines convicted war criminals.

Trips to the shrine by government officials have long angered countries that suffered at the hands of the Japanese military before and during the war, particularly South Korea and China. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin reacted angrily to Monday’s visits, calling them a “serious provocation”.

“China urges Japan to seriously learn from history, cut off militarism, and avoid further losing trust with its Asian neighbours and the international community,” he said. The South Korean government also expressed “deep disappointment” at the visit to the shrine, “which glorifies Japan’s past wars of aggression and enshrined war criminals”, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Sanae Takaichi, the hawkish minister for economic security, and Kenya Akiba, minister for reconstruction in the disaster-hit northern Tohoku region, offered their respects at the shrine on the 77th anniversary of Japan’s WWII surrender.

Takaichi is a regular visitor to Yasukuni and was close to former prime minister Shinzo Abe, whose assassination last month shocked the world. “This year, there is war in Ukraine. I prayed that no more people will die in wars,” Takaichi told reporters, saying she had offered her “gratitude” to the war dead enshrined there.

Trade minister Yasutoshi Nishimura also visited the shrine at the weekend. But Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office in October, opted to make a traditional cash offering on Monday. A Japanese prime minister has not appeared at Yasukuni since 2013, when Abe sparked fury in Beijing and Seoul and earned a rare diplomatic rebuke from close ally Washington.

Kishida’s office told AFP he gave the offering at his personal expense and “through a proxy, in the capacity of president of the Liberal Democratic Party”. In recent months, Kishida has urged warmer ties with South Korea, saying the two countries “can’t afford to waste time” in improving relations, following years of tensions over wartime issues.

Also on Monday, Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako attended a national ceremony to mark the anniversary of the WWII surrender. —AFP

Abuja residents live in fear after attacks

ABUJA: When gunmen bombed their way into Kuje prison freeing hundreds of inmates just 25 miles from Nigeria’s capital, Assumpta Mgbé who lives nearby huddled her children around her. “The ground was shaking, and we could hear the sound of gunshots for more than 30 minutes,” said the 40-year-old woman who has spent two decades in the town where she owns a corner shop. “No one expected it,” she said of the daring July 5 assault claimed by the Islamic State group affiliate in Nigeria, ISWAP, that usually operates far away in the northeast.

The insurgents have claimed several attacks in states surrounding the Federal Capital Territory over recent months, reminding the six million FCT population of more violent times they thought long gone. Since Kuje, “people are afraid to come outside” to shop and it’s affecting Mgbé’s business as well as that of many others. It’s not just ISWAP that worries residents but also heavily-armed criminals known as bandits who kidnap and kill.

“You don’t know what will happen and when it will happen, but everybody is just kind of apprehensive on a daily basis,” said Joseph Umeadi who works in an elec-

Armenian blast death toll rises to six

YEREVAN: The death toll from an explosion at a bustling market in the Armenian capital Yerevan rose to six on Monday as search operations continued for people believed trapped under rubble. Another 61 people were injured and 15 were missing after Sunday’s blast that led to the collapse of a building at the Surmalu wholesale market, Armenia’s

International

Anger flares at slow response to deadly Cairo church fire

Asphyxiation caused all 41 deaths as corpses bore ‘no other visible injuries’

CAIRO: Egyptians voiced outrage Monday over reports that firefighters and paramedics took over an hour to respond to a blaze that tore through a Coptic Christian church and killed 41 people. Grief has spread over Sunday's fire among Copts, the Middle East's largest Christian community, which makes up at least 10 million of Muslim-majority Egypt's population of 103 million.

But many other Egyptians have also voiced outrage over the disaster in the now scorched Abu Sifin church, located in the greater Cairo neighbourhood of Imbaba west of the Nile River. As debate flared on social media, one Twitter user charged that the reportedly slow response time “is not just negligence, it's complicity”.

“My cousin's children died,” video creator Moha El Harra said in a widely shared online livestream after Sunday's blaze, which was blamed on an electrical fault. “I'm from the area. I know that the ambulance could have been there in three minutes. It took them an hour and a half. “All we want is justice for the local ambulance authority, the fire services, civil defence. All of them need to be held to account.”



“All we want is justice”

Smoke inhalation

Health Minister Khaled Abd el-Ghaffar had declared Sunday that “paramedics were informed of the fire at 8:57 am” and the first ambulance “arrived at the site at exactly 8:59 am”. But many challenged

this, with eye-witnesses saying it took “an hour and a half” for emergency services to arrive.

“No, the ambulance did not arrive within two minutes,” one local resident, Mina Masry, told AFP. “If the ambulance had come on time, they could have rescued people,” he added, stressing that many lives were lost to smoke inhalation, not burns.

A statement from the public prosecutor's office confirmed that asphyxiation caused all of the 41 deaths as the corpses bore “no other visible injuries”. Another local witness, Sayed Tawfik, said that, as the inferno raged, some panicked people inside “threw themselves out of windows to escape the fire”.

He pointed to a car parked on the street with a deep indentation which he said was “left by a person who is now lying in the hospital with a broken arm and back”. Residents said bystanders braved flames and smoke to save children from the burning building. “Everyone was carrying kids out of the building,” said Ahmed Reda Baioumy, who lives next to the church. “But the fire was getting bigger and you could only go in once or you would asphyxiate.”

Child victims

Slow response times of emergency services are not unusual in Egypt, where neighbourhood residents routinely improvise rescue efforts, even within the megalopolis of Cairo. Smoke detectors and alarms and fire escapes are rare and in many areas,



CAIRO, Egypt: Egyptian mourners react during the funeral of victims killed in Cairo Coptic church fire, at the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Giza Governorate. —AFP

such as Imbaba, warrens of narrow roads make it hard for fire engines to reach disaster sites. Baioumy, the neighbour, told AFP that firefighters were hampered by the church's location “on a very narrow street”. Egypt, with its informal residential areas and often dilapidated infrastructure, has suffered several deadly fires in recent years. Most recently, a church went up in flames a week ago in the eastern Cairo district of Heliopolis, though no deaths or injuries were reported. — AFP

Zuma appeals ruling to send him back to jail

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa: South Africa's ex-leader Jacob Zuma on Monday asked a top court to overturn a ruling that ordered him back to jail to serve a sentence that had triggered protests and looting.

Zuma, 80, was released on medical parole last September, just two months into a 15-month term he was handed for snubbing anti-corruption investigators. In December, the High Court reversed his release, describing the decision as “unlawful.”

The Supreme Court of Appeal, sitting in the central city of Bloemfontein, on Monday started hearing Zuma's bid for his medical parole to be restored. Attorney Maribolla Mphahlele, representing the prisons services, said a doctor had established that Zuma suffered “from a terminal disease or a condition that is chronic and progressive.” The doctor recommended parole due to “incapacity,” as Zuma's condition had “progressively deteriorated since 2018 and (Zuma) is unable to perform the activities of daily living or self-care,” Mphahlele said, without giving details.

While in prison, Zuma was taken to hospital for surgery to treat an undisclosed ailment. He did not physically appear in court on Monday. Zuma was jailed in July for 15 months for contempt of court after he refused to give testimony to a graft inquiry.

His jailing sparked violent protests and looting in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal that spread to the financial hub Johannesburg in July, claiming over 350 lives and dealing a crippling blow to South Africa's economy. —AFP

Islamic Jihad faces questions after Zionist strikes

GAZA CITY: More than a week since Zionist air strikes smashed into a Gaza Strip highrise, local resident Said Bessia pointed to a hole punched through concrete where a missile killed an Islamic Jihad commander.

“This is where he was sitting,” Bessia said, referring to Tayseer al-Jabari, who was meeting several top militants on the sixth floor of the Palestine Tower building. The August 5 strikes were among the first of a three-day bombardment of the densely populated Palestinian enclave which, even the militants acknowledged, dealt a blow to their leadership.

It also exposed the deadly failure of some of the group's rockets, and divisions between Islamic Jihad and another militant group, Gaza's rulers Hamas. Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid said his country's strikes “landed a devastating blow” that targeted the “entire senior military command” of the Iran-backed group in Gaza.

One senior Islamic Jihad leader told AFP that the commanders killed were replaced “within minutes”, but Ahmed al-Mudallal, from the group's political bureau, acknowledged the impact. “This round was difficult,” he told AFP. “We lost many major military leaders that were important to us.” Mudallal's son



KAFR ‘AQAB, Palestinian Territories: Sister of Palestinian Mohammed al-Shaham, 21, killed during an Zionist entity home raid, carries her brother's bloodied shirt as she mourns with his mother (2nd L) and other women at their family home in Kafr Aqab town, in Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem, on August 15, 2022. —AFP

Ziad — an Islamic Jihad officer — was killed alongside senior commander Khaled Mansour in a strike in Gaza's southern city of Rafah.

Zionist entity said it launched aerial and artillery fire on Islamic Jihad positions as a “pre-emptive” operation to stop an imminent attack. In response, Islamic Jihad fired more than a thousand rockets — but many of those either hit farmland or were intercepted by Zionist entity's air defence system.

Kayhan newspaper, whose director is appointed by current supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, greeted the attack. “Bravo to this courageous and duty-conscious man who attacked the apostate and depraved Salman Rushdie in New York,” it said.

With the exception of reformist publication Etemad, Iranian media followed a similar line, also describing Rushdie as an “apostate”. One state-owned paper in Iran said that the “neck of the devil” had been “cut by a razor”. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday condemned Iranian state media for having “gloated” about the attack, saying that “this is despicable”. — AFP

ed 24 years later when East Pakistan, backed by India with Soviet support, fought a war of independence in 1971 to become Bangladesh. At Partition, the disputed region of Kashmir was also split between India and Pakistan, with the Himalayan territory the spark for two of the nuclear-armed rivals' three wars and numerous skirmishes since.

India's population has soared from around 340 million to 1.4 billion today, and the country is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous nation this decade. But while the economy is one of the world's largest – and fastest-growing – millions remain mired in poverty and Modi's government is struggling to create jobs for its booming population.

Women are often marginalized and suffer high levels of sexual violence, while the often oppressive and inescapable system of Hindu caste hierarchy still continues to apply in much of the country. India's waterways and its cities are among the world's most polluted and the country is the third-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, with its “net zero” target date 48 years from now.

When it comes to religion, independent India's founders strove to ensure that all Indians could practice their faith but that there was a clear separation between state and religion. But many, particularly among India's about 200 million Muslims, fear that these ideals are under attack by Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), many of whose supporters espouse Hindu hegemony. — AFP

Ruto declared president amid...

Continued from Page 1

independence from Britain in 1963. After the results were announced, he vowed to work with “all leaders” in Kenya. “There is no room for vengeance,” Ruto said, adding: “I am acutely aware that our country is at a stage where we need all hands on deck.”

The outcome was a bitter blow for Odinga, the 77-year-old veteran opposition leader who had the weight of the ruling party behind him after forging a 2018 pact with outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta in a stunning shift of allegiances. The days-long wait for the outcome of the race had already set the East African nation on edge.

But in a shock announcement, IEBC vice chair Juliana Cherera told reporters that she and three of her

colleagues could not “take ownership of the result that will be announced,” calling the process “opaque”. “However we have an open door that people can go to court and because of the same we urge Kenyans to be peaceful because the rule of the law is going to prevail,” she added.

As confusion reigned, scuffles broke out at the IEBC's heavily guarded national tallying center in Nairobi, where some people were seen throwing chairs shortly before Chebukati's announcement. Although last Tuesday's poll passed off largely peacefully in the regional political and economic powerhouse, memories of vote-rigging and deadly violence in 2007-08 and 2017 still loom large. The IEBC had been under intense pressure to deliver a clean election after it faced stinging criticism of its handling of the 2017 election.

Kenyans voted in six elections to choose a new president as well as senators, governors, lawmakers, women representatives and some 1,500 county officials. Kenyatta, the 60-year-old son of the first post-independence president, has served two terms and could not run again. — AFP

Taleban mark turbulent first...

Continued from Page 1

airport, climbing atop aircraft – and some clinging to a departing US military cargo plane as it rolled down the runway – aired on news bulletins around the world. “We fulfilled the obligation of jihad and liberated our country,” said Niamatullah Hekmat, a fighter who entered the capital on Aug 15 last year just hours after then-president Ashraf Ghani fled the country. “The time when we entered Kabul, and when the Americans left, those were moments of joy.”

Many Taleban fighters gathered in Kabul's central Massoud Square, where they displayed the regime's white banners and performed a traditional victory dance, some holding weapons and others taking pictures on their mobile phones. “We all are happy that we are celebrating our independence in front of the US embassy,” fighter Aminullah Sufi Omar told AFP.

However, for many ordinary Afghans – particularly

women – the return of the Taleban has only increased hardships, with aid agencies saying that half the country's 38 million people face extreme poverty. Initially, the Taleban promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterized their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

But many restrictions have been imposed on women to comply with the movement's austere vision of Islam. Tens of thousands of girls have been shut out of secondary schools, while women have been barred from returning to many government jobs. And in May, they were ordered to fully cover up in public, including their faces, ideally with a burqa.

“Since the day they have come, life has lost its meaning,” said Ogai Amail, a resident of Kabul. “Everything has been snatched from us, they have even entered our personal space,” she added. Top Taleban officials in Kabul gathered at the auditorium of the state television channel to mark the anniversary, while in the movement's power base in Kandahar, a small group of women dressed in burqas and supportive of the new regime marched in the streets.

Taleban fighters on Saturday dispersed a rare women's rights rally by firing gunshots in the air and beating some protesters. — AFP

Elephants and howitzers as...

Continued from Page 1

turban speckled with the colors of the Indian flag. Modi also said India should crush the “termite” of corruption and nepotism, follow an “India First” mantra and ensure that “in speech and conduct, we do nothing that lowers a woman's dignity”.

“Self-reliant India is the responsibility of every citizen, every government, every unit of society,” he said. The “Jewel in the Crown” of the British Empire became independent in 1947 after two centuries of colonial occupation and exploitation. With Britain in dire financial straits at the end of World War II – in which about 90,000 Indian soldiers died – the country was hurriedly split in two: Muslim-majority Pakistan and a mostly Hindu India.

This precipitated one of the biggest-ever movements of humanity as millions of people, uprooted from areas their families had inhabited for generations, rushed to be on the right side of the new border. It also unleashed a cataclysm of sectarian violence in which at least a million people were killed. Entire trains full of people were massacred and huge numbers of women were raped.

More blood flowed and millions of others shift-

International

A year into Taleban's rule, misery and disease conquer Afghanistan

Catastrophic humanitarian crisis grips war-ravaged country

MUSA QALA: The heaving wards of a ramshackle clinic in southern Afghanistan are just one sign of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis that has gripped the war-ravaged country since the Taleban returned to power a year ago. Last month, the Musa Qala District Hospital in Helmand province was forced to shut its doors to all except those suffering from suspected cholera. The infirmary was soon jammed with listless patients, intravenous drips needled into their wrists as they recuperated on rusting gurneys.

Though the clinic lacks facilities to test for cholera, about 550 patients presented themselves within days, showing symptoms of a disease caused by a lack of basic sanitation needs: clean drinking water and an adequate sewerage system. "It's very difficult," hospital chief Ehsanullah Rodi, run ragged on just five hours of sleep a night since the influx began, told AFP. "We didn't see this from last year, or another year." The United Nations says Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is the world's worst.

Hungry children

Poverty in the country - felt most keenly in Afghanistan's south - has been driven to desperate new levels, exacerbated by drought and inflation since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Since the Emirate (Taleban) came into power, we can't even find cooking oil," said one woman, perched on a hospital cot next to her malnourished six-month-old grandson in Lashkar Gah, Helmand's provincial capital.

"Poor people are squashed under their feet," the 35-year-old said. Her grandchild is being treated for the fifth time at Boost Hospital, a sun-baked maze of paint-peeled buildings run jointly by the health ministry and Doctors Without Borders (MSF). Many of the beds on the malnutrition ward host two tiny, frail patients - some suckling gamely on syringes of milk, while others heave onerous breaths as they fight to regain their strength.

Former HK teacher who lost an eye in protests jailed

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong teacher-turned-publisher was jailed for nine months after pleading guilty to unlawful assembly on Monday, more than three years after being shot in the eye by police during a protest. Raymond Yeung Tsz-chun, 32, lost 95 percent of sight in his right eye after it was hit by a police projectile during one of the first protests in what would become a huge, sometimes violent pro-democracy movement that upended the financial hub for months.

On that day police fired 240 rounds of tear gas and 19 rubber bullets, along with bean bags, pepper balls and so-called react rounds to disperse hundreds of thousands of protesters opposing a bill to allow the extradition of criminal suspects to mainland China.

Yeung was arrested in hospital for "rioting" and released unconditionally after a few months. But nearly three years later, he was rearrested and charged with two counts of "participating in an unlawful assembly".

On Monday, Yeung was sentenced to a total of nine months in jail by principal magistrate Ada Yim. The prosecution said Yeung was "standing among offensive protesters in standoff with the police" and "helping to



UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet

Bangladesh activists brief UN rights chief on 'police state'

DHAKA: Bangladeshi activists said Monday they briefed the visiting UN human rights chief on gross violations including extrajudicial killings and disappearances under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Michelle Bachelet is the first UN rights chief to visit Bangladesh, and is also due to visit camps housing hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees who fled a 2017 military onslaught in Myanmar.

She met with rights activists in Dhaka on Monday. "We said (Bangladesh) is now a police state, not a people's state," said Sanjida Islam Tulee, a sister of an opposition official allegedly abducted by the notorious elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in 2013 who never returned. "We said more than 600 people have become victims of enforced disappearance by the state agencies," she told AFP, adding that they also spoke about the independence of the country's judiciary. Tulee is a coordinator of Mayer Daak (The Call of the Mothers), which represents hundreds of victims of disappearances and their families, and those killed in allegedly staged police encounters.

In December, the United States imposed sanctions on the RAB as well as seven top security officers, including the national police chief, over gross human rights violations. Activists say that since then, the situation has improved, nearly halting extrajudicial killings and disappearances. The government denies the allegations of disappearances and extrajudicial killings, with one minister saying that some of those who went missing in fact fled Bangladesh.—AFP



MUSA QALA: People gather at an entrance of the Musa Qala District Hospital in Musa Qala, Helmand. The heaving wards of a ramshackle clinic in southern Afghanistan are just one sign of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis that has gripped the war-ravaged country since the Taleban returned to power a year ago. — AFP

"We can't even find dry bread," said Breshna, the mother of another patient, who guesses her age at between 15 and 20. "We haven't had anything to eat in three or four days." Assistant nursing supervisor Homeira Nowrozi, fighting to be heard above wailing infants, said staff "have not any rest". "We have a lot of patients that come in critical," she said, because parents could not afford to travel sooner. "We don't know how many mortalities ... we have in the districts, because they didn't come to hospital."

A moral tangle

Afghanistan's plight began well before August 15, 2021 when the Taleban captured Kabul on the heels of a

move metal barriers to build roadblocks". They also cited as proof of his participation Yeung's successful legal challenge in 2020 against police officers' failure to display their identification numbers in operations to disperse protesters. Magistrate Yim said the wound to Yeung's eye was "a pity" but declined to discount his sentence as police had given repeated warnings.

Doxxed, forced to move

Yeung gave up his teaching job at an elite secondary school in 2020 due to "his damaged sight and the pressure on the school", according to his lawyers. He was doxxed and his family was forced to move after being harassed, the court heard.

Yeung said the experience motivated him to become a full-time publisher at Hillway Culture, a publishing house he founded in 2016 featuring books about democracy movements and political issues.

Hillway was barred from joining the official Hong Kong Book Fair last month and its own "Hong Kongers Book Fair" had to cancel a day before its opening after its venue lease was suddenly revoked. In an interview with AFP two weeks before his court date, Yeung said: "I hope my case could make some people think again why a person like me took part in the protests."

Yeung also said he did not bare ill will towards any individual officer over his injury. "We should ask whether the system failed to filter out the rotten apples, or if the system itself is a rotten barrel," he said. "If I were an officer in that system... would I be the one who fired that shot?" — AFP

Thailand to charge park official in activist's murder

BANGKOK, Thailand: Four people suspected of murdering an environmental activist who disappeared eight years ago are set to be indicted, Thai officials said Monday, reversing a controversial decision to dismiss charges two years ago.

Ethnic Karen leader Por Cha Lee Rakcharoen, better known as Billy, went missing in April 2014 while working on a lawsuit accusing officials of destroying minorities' homes in Kaeng Krachen national park. An investigation centred around then-park chief Chaiwat Limlikitaksor, who was the last person to see Billy alive, but in 2020 murder charges against him were dropped due to "insufficient evidence".

The decision ignited criticism, with Billy's wife vowing to fight on and international rights groups saying the dismissal made a "mockery" of the Thai legal system. On Monday Prayuth Pecharakun, deputy spokesman of the Office of the Attorney General, told AFP that his office had reversed course and "decided to indict four suspects involved in the case of Billy".

He confirmed Chaiwat—along with three unidentified individuals—would be "indicted for premeditated murder, detention and concealing a corpse". Chaiwat is believed to have been the last person to see Billy alive after the activist was detained for apparently collecting honey illegally. He has consistently denied any involvement, maintaining he released Billy. In 2019 divers found burned fragments of a skull stuffed in an oil drum in the park's reservoir, while other bones were scattered around the lake.

The remains were believed to be Billy's based on a forensic investigation using his mother's DNA, investigators said. However this evidence was deemed "not enough" to identify to whom exactly the remains belonged, according to the attorney general's office in 2020. At the time Human Rights Watch castigated officials' handling of the case, claiming it made "a mockery of Thai government pledges to pursue justice and end the culture of impunity". The fresh indictments come after Billy's widow, Pinnapa Prueksapan, submitted a petition earlier this year to the attorney general's office calling for the stalled legal action to be revived.—AFP

hasty withdrawal of US-led troops and the collapse of the government they propped up. But the Taleban's takeover pushed the country - home to 38 million people - over the precipice. The United States froze \$7 billion in central bank assets, the formal banking sector collapsed, and foreign aid representing 45 percent of GDP stopped overnight.

Over the past year, would-be donors have grappled with the conundrum of funneling fresh funding to the ailing nation, which the Taleban rebranded the "Islamic Emirate" in line with their austere theocratic beliefs. "How do you provide assistance in a country where you don't recognize the government?" asked Roxanna Shapour of the Afghanistan Analysts Network.

Myanmar jails Suu Kyi for six years for corruption

YANGON, Myanmar: A Myanmar junta court jailed ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi for six years for corruption on Monday, according to a source close to the case. Suu Kyi, 77, has been detained since the generals staged a coup and toppled her government on February 1 last year, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief period of democracy.

She has since been hit with a series of charges, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud, and she faces decades in jail if convicted on all counts. Suu Kyi was sentenced to "six years imprisonment under four anti-corruption charges", said the source, who requested anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

She appeared in good health and did not make any statement following her latest sentencing, the source added. The Nobel laureate has already been sentenced to 11 years in jail for corruption, incitement against the military, breaching COVID-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law.



NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar: File photo shows detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi (L) and detained president Win Myint (C) during their first court appearance in Naypyidaw. A Myanmar junta court jailed ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi for six years for corruption. - AFP

Stark choice facing DR Congo's displaced

RUTSHURU, DR Congo: When fighting broke out near his home in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Furaha Nyimutozo fled for his life. Now, weeks later, he says he has a bleak choice: "starving to death or going back to our fields to harvest the food and risk getting shot at by the rebels."

Nyimutozo is one of hundreds of thousands of people whose lives have been turned upside down since a long-dormant armed group called the M23 resumed fighting last year. Its campaign has triggered both a humanitarian crisis and a tense political showdown. The DRC accuses its Rwanda of abetting the militia—an allegation that Kigali denies.

According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, 200,000 people have fled their homes. Most of the displaced live with families who have taken them in, said Blaise Ngoy, the UNHCR spokesman in North Kivu district, which borders Rwanda and Uganda. The agency itself was taking care of another 4,000 families, he

Importing humanitarian aid to address crises such as the June earthquake - which killed more than 1,000 people and left tens of thousands more homeless - is relatively simple, she said, as it is "non-political, it's life-saving assistance". Cash is also airlifted to fund food aid and healthcare, but development aid for long-term projects that could transform the economy is more complex. "If you go in and say, 'I'm going to pay all teacher salaries', that's great. But then what will the Taleban do with the money they save from not having to pay teacher salaries?" asked Shapour.

In Musa Qala - a dusty farming outpost with a shipping container bazaar staffed by child shopkeepers - the deprivation is visible. The local economy seems to barely subsist on motorcycle repairs, the sale of pallid poultry carcasses, and canisters of energy drinks kept tepid in grimy chest freezers. The town witnessed some of the bloodiest chapters of the 2001-2021 war, and is connected to Lashkar Gah by a makeshift track up a desiccated riverbed lined with jagged rocks. The road begins again further south at Sangin, a place where mud-walled compounds have been so badly ravaged by gunfire and artillery that they are crumbling back into the earth. In a cruel irony, desperation and the demand for humanitarian services have only deepened with the arrival of peace. "Now we can visit the hospital whether it's night or day," said Maimana, whose eight-year-old daughter Asia was being treated at Musa Qala. "Before, there used to be fighting and mines - the roads were blocked." Helmand public health director Sayed Ahmad told AFP that the flood of new patients means there is "less space" and that "there are fewer staff, so there are difficulties".

Nevertheless, Ahmad - a soft-spoken doctor whose office is lined with medical tomes - insists "the overall situation is better" than under the previous government, when corruption was rife.—AFP

Journalists have been barred from attending the court hearings and Suu Kyi's lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media. The coup sparked widespread protests and unrest which the military sought to crush by force.

According to a local monitoring group, the crack-down has left more than 2,000 civilians dead and seen some 17,000 arrested.

Confined to jail

Suu Kyi has been the face of Myanmar's democratic hopes for more than 30 years, but her earlier six-year sentence already meant she is likely to miss elections the junta says it plans to hold by next year. In June, she was transferred from house arrest to a prison in the capital Naypyidaw, where her trial continues in a courthouse inside the prison compound.

She remains confined to jail in the capital, with her link to the outside world limited to brief pre-trial meetings with lawyers. Many of her political allies have also been arrested since the coup, with one chief minister sentenced to 75 years in jail.

Last month, the junta stoked renewed international condemnation when it executed Phyto Zeya Thaw, a former lawmaker from her National League for Democracy (NLD) party for offences under anti-terrorism laws. Suu Kyi learned of the execution at a pre-trial hearing, a source with knowledge of the matter said, but has yet to speak on the matter. — AFP

added. The UN's humanitarian aid coordinating agency, OCHA, had already recorded 900,000 internally displaced people in the DRC up to the end of June.

Funding crisis

Thousands have found a haven at the Rugabo sports stadium in Rutshuru. Huge white tents bearing the UNCHR blue letters are set out inside the venue, which in better times hosted football matches. Now, 1,500 families are housed there, in tents that each take in more than 40 families—a unit that means two parents and four children on average.

The stench of woodsmoke from cooking is heavy in the air. Feeding the people is no easy task, said Pierre Atchom, the agency's head in Goma. He told AFP the agency needed \$225 million to handle the deep and wide-ranging crisis in eastern DRC.

"To date, we have 43 million. The needs are enormous," he said, adding with regret that the situation failed to get the media attention of the Ukraine war. If the agency was forced to pull out of the region, the consequences would be disastrous, said Atchom.

Families at the site said they were struggling to make ends meet with what the UNHCR was able to provide. But they shuddered at what would happen if the agency had to withdraw. "If you have a family, it's a real struggle," said Julienne Nyiramana, a mother of four. "We are asking for help so that we can return to our villages." —AFP

TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2022

Business

NIC recognized as 'Best Investment Banking Company in Kuwait 2022'

Prestigious award from World Finance Magazine that focuses on financial and banking sector

KUWAIT: National Investments Company (NIC) has announced receiving another recognition from World Finance Magazine, winning the title of Best Investment Banking Company in Kuwait 2022. This is a culmination of the Company's efforts in providing financial advisory to clients.

World Finance is one of the leading global magazines, established almost 20 years ago, and based in London - United Kingdom. It covers all sort of banking, finance, and commercial businesses stories worldwide and has readers in more than 100 countries. It combines in-depth regional coverage with reports on global financial markets, regulation, policy-making, retail banking, investment banking, commerce, technology, projects finance, infrastructure, and real estate, with an average readership of about 120,000 per issue.

NIC was among several other nominated companies for the Best Investment Banking Company in Kuwait. The selection based on several performance evaluations and technical analysis conducted by financial experts and investment specialists as well as votes by its readers' votes.

Fahad Al-Mukhaizim, CEO of NIC, said: "Pleased to announce this exceptional achievement, which indicates the Company's ongoing efforts to achieve excellence in providing clients with unmatched services."

Unique opportunities

Al-Mukhaizim has also explained that receiving global recognition from the renowned World Finance Magazine highlights the company's ability to offer unique and competitive services. He promised that the company will continue to develop and innovate further services that adds value to customers.

Al-Mukhaizim went on to say that the Investment Banking Sector (IBS) has recently played a key role and became one of the most competitive player locally and regionally, this is due to the decades of combined experience, the wide range of advisory services and a prominent presence in investment activity - private property management and alternative investments in local, regional, and international markets.

It is worth mentioning that NIC has managed to achieve outstanding results and excessive performance in the different sectors in which it operates, which positioned NIC among the leading investment companies in Kuwait and GCC and confirms its posi-



Fahad Al-Mukhaizim

- The award is a result of the company's efforts in providing innovative services to its clients
- The investment banking sector has played a key role and is now one of the most established and recognized players locally and regionally
- The Company has also successfully executed a number of investment transactions with prominent global partners that equals approx \$41 million

tion as one of the biggest investment companies in terms of Assets Under Management, which has reached KD 1.3 billion by end of Q2 2022 equivalent to (\$3.68 billion).

Al-Mukhaizim has shared a brief about IBS at National Investments Company. IBS handles two types of business activities: Financial Advisory Services and Alternative Investments.

The Financial Advisory Services Department (FASD) provides a range of services such as mergers and acquisitions, which include purchases, sales, mergers, post mergers restructuring, negotiations, final documents, and process structuring as well as capital market transactions including initial public offerings, preparing subscriptions, listing on Boursa Kuwait, bonds and sukuk issuance, bonds classification as well as mandatory and optional acquisition offers. Additionally, FASD provides other consultancy services that cover companies' evaluation, feasibility studies, business plans, strategies, growth and development, financial restructuring, process restructuring, ensuring good governance, examining investments, and providing services for public and private sectors partnership projects. FASD has managed to attract outstanding deals with prominent institutions to offer consultancy services, and was able to carry out a wide and strong range of operations, including leading the IPO of Ali Alghanim and Sons Automotive Company as a Global Coordinator, Joint Bookrunner and Listing Advisor-raised demand amounting to KD 1.08 billion equivalent to (\$3.53 billion) while prepar-

ing for another IPO and listing during 2022-2023.

The Alternative Investments Department (AID) has unmatched experience in investing in various sectors including financial services, real estate, food and beverage, infrastructure, education, hospitality, venture capital and technology. In H1 2022, IBS has succeeded in executing a number of unique investments in the infrastructure, credit, and information technology sectors.

2021 achievements

Al-Mukhaizim has shared an overview of IBS during 2021, highlighting that the Sector has recorded major achievements and played major roles in finalizing huge deals, despite all the economic challenges faced because of the pandemic, and via executing number of mandates to handle mergers and acquisitions on behalf of customers, and number of sales and restructuring agreements, as well as contracts to provide public advisory services. The sector has also attracted many new investments in different sectors including infrastructure, credit, and information technology.

AID invested in Pipe Technologies, a US-based financial technology specialist. Pipe Technologies is valued at about \$2billion and is considered the world's first recurring revenue trading platform, through fund-raising, it is also one of the fastest financial technology companies, more than 4,000 companies have registered with Pipe Technologies since its launch, and more than 25 percent of the



platforms are non-service companies operating in the programming sectors, revealing that annual tradable recurring revenue on Pipe Technologies exceeds \$1 billion, and is heading for about \$2 billion, with tens of millions of dollars being traded monthly.

Al-Mukhaizim pointed out that the management of alternative investments has shown remarkable success through the investment in a project for FedEx Italy, where NIC has invested \$14.1 million and partnered with a leading developer in a logistics warehouse project in Italy, and one of the leading developers established the project, and signed a contract to lease it to FedEx for 15 years. AID also invested \$12.8 million and successfully exited a development project for a logistics warehouse in Germany. Near the end of 2021, NIC invested \$14.0 million in a large student housing project in Orlando, Florida.

Al-Mukhaizim also spoke about the performance of FASD, saying that in 2021, the department succeeded to complete the listing of Al-Safat Investment Company on Boursa Kuwait, which has a capital of approximately \$93 million.

While concluding, Al-Mukhaizim has expressed his gratitude to IBS in general and AID and FASD in particular and highlighting that National Investments Company has been and will continue to work precisely and efficiently to meet clients' expectations and requirements locally, regionally and globally, while maintaining its position as one of the most prominent specialized investment entities with a proven track record.

Oil prices tumble on possible Iran deal, China economy

LONDON: Oil prices slumped more than five percent Monday on the rising prospects of a return of Iranian oil to the market and data showing China's economic recovery stuttering under COVID-19 restrictions and a slumping property sector. Stock markets drifted lower and the dollar traded mixed as investors welcomed signs of cooling US inflation, which nevertheless remains at the highest level in decades.

"It's been an underwhelming start to the week in financial markets with the eternal optimism of investors clashing with the reality of Chinese economic data," noted OANDA senior market analyst Craig Erlam. China's central bank slashed key interest rates in a surprise move Monday as a raft of data showed weakness in the world's second-largest economy.

The figures showed China's industrial production and retail sales growth for July came in lower than expected. Industrial production was up 3.8 percent year-on-year, but down from 3.9 percent in June and well below analysts' forecasts.

"The risk of stagflation in the world economy is rising, and the foundation for domestic economic recovery is not yet solid," China's National Bureau of Statistics warned. Stagflation refers to long-running high inflation combined with rising

unemployment and weak growth.

Beijing's rigid adherence to a zero-COVID strategy has held back economic recovery as snap lockdowns and long quarantines batter business activity and a recovery in consumption. "This weakness in the Chinese economy comes against the struggle to adapt to a zero-COVID policy, which the government shows little sign of relaxing, against a backdrop of rising cases," said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson. "Problems in the property sector also aren't helping, where many home buyers are halting mortgage payments in protest at delays to the completion of new homes."

Iran talks

Meanwhile, Iran's foreign minister said Tehran will deliver its "final" proposal later Monday on talks to revive its 2015 nuclear accord with world powers, after Washington had accepted key demands. A deal would mean that Iran's crude output of 2.5 million barrels per day would no longer be under international sanctions and help relieve supply constraints that have been pushing up prices.

Oil prices, which had already been sharply lower on the Chinese data, pushed even further lower and recording daily drops of more than five percent. Europe's main equity markets



TOKYO, Japan: A woman walks past an electronic board showing the Japanese yen's exchange rate movement (top-center) against the US dollar in Tokyo on August 15, 2022. —AFP

were lower in afternoon trading while Wall Street stocks fell back at the opening bell.

Market analyst Fawad Razaqzada at City Index and FOREX.com said talk of a US recession is back after a key manufacturing survey plunged into the negative, a signal of worsening business conditions.

Markets are also keenly awaiting the release Wednesday of the minutes from the Fed's last policy meeting in July for clues to the US central bank's interest rate plans. Investors are concerned that after successive three-quarter point raises any further

increases of a similar magnitude could choke off economic recovery. The negative reading for the new orders question on the New York Federal Reserve's Empire State Manufacturing Survey, compared to the positive result from July, shows that the interest rate hikes may already be having an effect on slowing activity that has fuelled inflation.

Patrick O'Hare, analyst at Briefing.com, called lower stock prices a reflection "of weakening demand that comes with a weakening economy, and, by extension, a weakening in earnings growth prospects." —AFP

Kingdom Holding invests \$1.3bn in global equities

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Kingdom Holding invested more than \$1.3 billion in the first half of this year in global equities including \$500 million in Russian energy companies as it continues to expand its portfolio of equity investments.

The investment holding company that is majority owned by Saudi Arabia's Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, invested in Russian

companies Gazprom, Rosneft and Lukoil, according to a regulatory filing to Saudi Arabia's Tadawul stock exchange, where its shares are traded.

Kingdom Holding acquired depositary receipts issued by Gazprom and Rosneft worth about 1.37 billion Saudi riyals and 196 million riyals in February. It invested about 410 million riyals in Lukoil's depositary receipts in February and March, according to the bourse filing. Most western companies and financial institutions have left the Russian market in response to its military offensive in Ukraine on February 24. The value of depositary receipts of Russian oil and gas companies have declined sharply following severe

restrictions on energy exports from Russia.

Kingdom Holding did not say if it still holds investments in the three Russian energy companies. The company's other major equity investments this year include more than 827 million riyals in Phoenix Group and 831 million riyals in M & and 187.5 million riyals in Liberty Strategic Capital. Kingdom Holding has invested more than 12.81 billion riyals in global equities and depositary receipts since 2020. The largest investment, valued at 2.5 billion riyals, was in Spain's Telefonica in 2020. Over the past three years, the company has invested across sectors, taking or boosting stakes in companies including

Lyft, BlackRock Capital, French energy major TotalEnergies, Uber and Chinese companies Alibaba, Baidu Tencent, Didi and JD.com, according to the bourse filing.

Kingdom Holding's business interests span sectors from aviation to education, banking and finance, industry, health care, real estate, petrochemicals and private equity. The company, which reported total investments of more than 36 billion riyals and assets of 50.82 billion riyals at the end of last year, is known for its high profile investments. It also holds stakes in social media giant Twitter, UAE-based ride-hailing company Careem, hospitality majors Accor, Four Seasons and Savoy, and global banking giant Citigroup among others. —AFP

China cuts rates as economic recovery weaker than expected

BEIJING: China's central bank slashed key interest rates Monday in a bid to kick-start the country's stuttering economic recovery as data showed factory output and retail sales for July came in weaker than analysts' expectations. The world's second-biggest economy saw a bounce in business activity as some coronavirus restrictions eased in June, but the boost is fading and Beijing remains welded to a zero-COVID policy of snap lockdowns and long quarantines, which has battered sentiment.

For July, China's industrial production rose 3.8 percent on-year, down from a 3.9 percent jump in June, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Monday. Retail sales grew at a slower-than-expected 2.7 percent from a year ago, down from 3.1 percent in June, while the urban unemployment rate fell to 5.4 percent, the NBS said.

"The risk of stagflation in the world economy is rising, and the foundation for domestic economic recovery is not yet solid," the NBS warned in a statement. "We think the weakness in retail sales was due to renewed virus disruptions and the blow to consumer sentiment from the problems in the property market," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics said in a note on Monday.

The virus remains a risk, with zero-COVID meaning that "targeted lockdowns will remain commonplace, depressing consumer activity and spending," he said, while slow progress in expanding vaccination among the elderly means this policy will not be abandoned soon. "July's economic data is very alarming," Raymond Young, Greater China economist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd, told Bloomberg TV. China's property sector has been teetering, with frustrated homebuyers across dozens of cities taking part in mortgage boycotts as cash-strapped developers struggle to complete projects.

The country's economic growth was just 0.4 percent on-year in the second quarter-its slowest rate since the initial COVID outbreak. And the People's Bank of China Monday cut its policy rates, bringing its seven-day reverse repurchase rate-a key rate at which the central bank provides short-term liquidity to banks-to a new low. It also cut its one-year medium-term lending facility, surprising forecasters, although some analysts believe this may not be enough to revive credit growth. — AFP

Business

Ship carrying UN wheat for Ethiopia leaves Ukraine port

More than 400,000 people are at risk of starvation in Ethiopia: FAO

KYIV: A UN-chartered ship carrying 23,000 tons of Ukrainian grain has set sail for Ethiopia, one of the five countries considered to be at highest risk of starvation. The Liberia-flagged MV Brave Commander departed from the Ukraine's Black Sea port of Yuzhne, east of Odesa, on Sunday, a regional official said.

It plans to sail to Djibouti, where the grain will be unloaded and transferred to Ethiopia under a UN World Food Programme initiative. Ukraine and Russia signed an UN and Turkey-brokered deal in Istanbul on July 22 to restart grain shipments through the Black Sea, which had been disrupted by the war in Ukraine, following Russia's invasion in February.

Ukraine and Russia are two of the world's biggest grain exporters. The UN said in June that 750,000 people in Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen are facing starvation.

More than 400,000 of those at risk are in Ethiopia, according to a report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the WFP. "The capacity is there. The grain is there. The demand is there across the world and in particular, these countries," WFP Ukraine coordinator Denise Brown said.

"So, if the stars are aligned, we are very, very hopeful that all the actors around this agreement will come together on what is really an issue for humanity. So, today was very positive."

"I hope that other ships chartered by the (UN's) World Food Programme will come to our ports. I hope there will soon be two, three more ships," Kubrakov added.

The minister earlier said on Twitter that the ship was fully loaded and ready to leave but did not say when it would depart. The MV Brave Commander docked at the Pivdennyi port, close to Odessa, on Friday. According to the Ukrainian infrastructure ministry, it will leave for Djibouti from where the grain will then be sent to Ethiopia.

It will be the first shipment of food aid since Kyiv and Moscow agreed a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey last month to unblock Black Sea grain deliveries after Russia's February invasion of Ukraine.

The agreement lifted a Russian blockade of Ukraine's ports and established safe corridors through the naval mines laid by Kyiv. "We are definitely planning other ships to leave the ports of Ukraine, to help people around the world... This should just be the first of many humanitarian ships to leave the ports," Marianne Ward, WFP deputy country director in Ukraine, told journalists.

The first commercial ship carrying grain left on August 1 and in total, 16 vessels have departed from Ukraine since the July deal, according to Kyiv. But no UN vessel carrying humanitarian food assistance has set sail. Ukraine and Russia are two of the world's biggest grain exporters.

The WFP says a record 345 million people in 82 countries face acute food insecurity and up to 50 million people in 45 countries are on the brink of famine and risk being tipped over the edge without humanitarian support. —Agencies



Internally displaced woman carry blankets in the makeshift camp. —AFP

Malaysia Airlines to buy 20 Airbus A330neo jets

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia Airlines has agreed to acquire 20 Airbus A330neo planes to update its fleet of widebody jets, the European aircraft-maker said Monday.

Under the deal, the southeast Asian airline will buy 10 planes from Airbus and lease the 10 others from Avolon, a Dublin-based aircraft leasing company. No figures were released for the transaction, but the plane was worth \$296.4 million according to the last published catalogue prices in 2018. Airlines usually pay less than the listed prices.

The more fuel-efficient A330neo will gradually replace 21 older-generation A330ceo planes in the Malaysia Airlines fleet. The A330neo is Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), parent company of Malaysia Airlines, has selected the A330neo for the carrier's widebody fleet renewal program. The initial agreements cover the acquisition of 20 A330-900 aircraft, with 10 to be purchased from Airbus and 10 to be leased from Dublin-based Avolon.

The announcement was made at an event in Kuala Lumpur, attended by MAG CEO Izham Ismail and Airbus

Chief Commercial Officer and Head of International Christian Scherer, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the aircraft to be ordered from Airbus. The agreements with engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce and Avolon were also signed at the ceremony.

Powered by the latest Rolls-Royce Trent 7000 engines, the A330neo will join the carrier's fleet of six long range A350-900s and gradually replace its 21 A330ceo aircraft. The carrier will operate the A330neo on its network covering Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East. Malaysia Airlines will configure its A330neo fleet with a premium layout seating 300 passengers in two classes.

Izham Ismail said: "The acquisition of the A330neo is a natural transition from our current A330ceo fleet. The A330neo will not only provide fleet modernization and enhanced operational efficiency, but will also meet environmental targets through reduced fuel-burn per seat, while keeping passenger safety and comfort at its core. This is a significant milestone as MAG moves towards the successful execution of our Long-Term Business Plan 2.0 to position itself as a leading aviation services Group within the region."

In addition to the renewal of the widebody fleet, Airbus and MAG also signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) to study a wider collaboration in the areas of sustainability, training, maintenance and airspace management. Christian Scherer said: "Malaysia Airlines is one of the great Asian carriers and we are proud and humbled to be its preferred supplier of widebody aircraft. The decision



An Airbus A330-800 aircraft prepares to land at Toulouse Blagnac airport, southern France, during its first flight. —AFP

is a clear endorsement of the A330neo as the most efficient option in this size category for premium operations. It's also the clear winner in terms of in-flight comfort and we are looking forward to working with Malaysia Airlines to define an exceptional cabin experience."

The A330neo is the new generation version of the popular A330 widebody. Incorporating the latest generation engines, a new wing and a range of aerodynamic innovations, the aircraft offers 25% reduction in fuel consumption and CO2-emissions. The A330-900 is capable of flying 7,200nm / 13,300km non-stop. —AFP

EV maker Rivian's losses nearly triple to \$1.7 billion

SAN FRANCISCO: Electric automaker Rivian said its losses had nearly tripled to \$1.7 billion in the second quarter, but that it is on the road to meeting production goals.

The California-based maker of electric trucks, SUVs, and delivery vans said that it delivered 4,467 vehicles during the quarter, generating revenue of \$364 million compared to zero revenue in the same period a year earlier. Rivian said it produced 6,954 vehicles in the first half of this year and is aiming to make a total of 25,000 vehicles by year's end. The company ended June with a backlog of approximately 98,000 preorders from customers in Canada and the United States, according to an earnings letter to shareholders. Wedbush analyst Dan Ives saw the rise in Rivian preorders as an encouraging sign, and felt the company was smoothing out vehicle production after a "bumpy" start.

"We believe this was another big step in the right direction for Rivian," Ives told AFP.

"Customer demand looks strong as the Rivian team has resolved the supply chain issues that have plagued the company the last year."

If Rivian gets its production facilities going full throttle, it will be in a strong position to benefit from pent-up demand for electric trucks, even with Ford and Tesla bringing models to market, the analyst reasoned. "Supply chain continues to be the limiting factor of our production; however, through close partnership with our suppliers we are making progress," Rivian said in an earnings letter.

"We expect to be able to add a second shift for vehicle assembly towards the end of the third quarter," Rivian blamed its losses on investments in people and technology, along with auto production lines capable of cranking out lots of cars running at low capacity.

Per vehicle costs should drop as production line volume ramps up, Rivian said.

The company expected to post an overall loss of \$5.45 billion this year due to factors including rising costs of materials and freight as well as supply line challenges, the earnings letter said.

Rivian shares slipped about 2 percent in after market trades that followed release of the earnings figures. Tech titan Amazon was an early investor in Rivian, and committed to buying 100,000 electric delivery vans from the automaker by the end of this decade as part of an effort to reduce climate-damaging emissions by its e-commerce fleet. Rivian said Amazon has rolled out custom electric delivery vans in more than a dozen cities in the United States. —AFP



volume in the previous periods and wait time). Currently, it seems that Tesla has more than 500,000 orders on hand for four core models. —AFP

UK clears new Moderna vaccine targeting Omicron variant

LONDON: The UK's drug regulator said Monday it had approved an updated Moderna vaccine against COVID-19 that targets the Omicron variant as well as the original form of the virus.

The Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said in a statement that it had approved the vaccine for adult booster doses "after it was found to meet the UK regulator's standards of safety, quality and effectiveness". It was the first such "bivalent" COVID-19 vaccine to be approved by the British regulator.

The MHRA's chief executive June Raine said data from a clinical trial had shown it prompted a "strong immune response" against the original virus and Omicron and would provide a "sharpened tool in our armoury" as the virus kept evolving. Moderna's CEO Stéphane Bancel said in a statement that the US biotech company was "delighted" by the decision, "the first authorization of an Omicron-containing bivalent vaccine".

While vaccines have helped lower hospitalizations and deaths from COVID, which first emerged in China in late 2019, the current jabs are mainly aimed at the earlier strains of the disease.

The World Health Organization warned in July that the pandemic was "nowhere near over", due to the spread of Omicron subvariants and to the lifting of control measures. Half of the Moderna vaccine targets the original 2020 virus and half the Omicron variant, which is officially known as BA.1.

'Bivalent' vaccines

The MHRA said the vaccine was also found to generate a "good response" against two Omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, which have partly driven a wave of new cases of the disease in Europe and the United States. The vaccine



XIAMEN, China: This photo shows a health worker conducting a swab test on a resident for the COVID-19 in Xiamen, in China's eastern Fujian province. The UK's drug regulator said Monday it had approved an updated Moderna vaccine against COVID-19 that targets the Omicron variant as well as the original form of the virus. —AFP

had the same "typically mild" side effects as the original Moderna jab, it added. Moderna said in June that its "bivalent" vaccine performed better against both Omicron and the original virus compared to its original Covid vaccine, called Spikevax. The EU's medicines watchdog said that month it had started to review the new shot.

Moderna said it had also submitted the vaccine to regulators in Australia and Canada and was expecting further authorization decisions in the coming weeks.

The European medical agency is also studying a rival

noticeably more than at the launch/ramp-up phase (over 130 days).

In the case of the Model 3, the numbers are lower, but still at record highs: 89 days (or over three months) on average for deliveries completed in Q2 2022. A year earlier, it was barely 50 days, while two years ago, it was just 20 days. As we understand, the numbers are averages for the models, which means that some versions (the top of the line or with options) might have shorter wait times. On the other hand, the entry-level versions (which are potentially less profitable for the company) might require a longer wait time. Troy Teslike expressed hope that production of the Tesla Model Y in Texas will increase and reduce the queue, which will be checked in the next edition of the survey.

The data is especially interesting because Tesla has recently decided to axe the possibility of ordering the Tesla Model 3 Long Range (AWD) version in the

US and Canada, explaining that the waitlist is too long. The version is expected to be re-introduced at some point in 2023.

As we can see, the issue with the Tesla Model Y (top-selling electric car in the US and globally in 2022) is even bigger. However, the data for the Model 3 also indicates an accelerated increase of the number of days from 60 in Q1 to 89 in Q2.

A different approach to see how long customers are waiting for cars is to see Tesla's estimated delivery time, which is visible when ordering. According to the research done by Troy Teslike, it's 4 months on average globally. The Tesla Model 3 LR in the US and Canada spiked to over 5 months, but the Model Y LR was at over 7 months. The biggest issue is with the Tesla Model X LR which is at over 9 months.

A side effect of this method is that it can be used to estimate the order backlog (assuming production

Wait time for Tesla Model 3/Y in US increasing

WASHINGTON: The wait times for deliveries of the new Tesla Model 3 and Tesla Model Y in the US have been consistently increasing for more than a year, a new customer survey reveals.

According to survey data released by Troy Teslike, who tracks various Tesla-related stats, the queue for the Model 3 and Model Y is now longer than ever. In the case of the Model Y, buyers who took delivery in Q2 2022 waited 175 days (almost 6 months since placing an order) on average. That's much longer than in Q2 2021 (46 days), and

Business

Japan's GDP expands in Q2 as government lifts COVID curbs

Economy still faces headwinds amid soaring energy prices

TOKYO: Japan's economy expanded in the three months to June, official data showed Monday, after the government lifted COVID-19 curbs on businesses. The world's third-largest economy grew 0.5 percent quarter-on-quarter due to stronger consumption and capital investment, but the rise was below market expectations of 0.7 percent.

While the country never imposed strict stay-at-home orders during the pandemic, the government in March removed virus restrictions primarily targeting business opening hours. Inbound tourism remains limited to group tours, however, and the economy is facing headwinds from the energy price crisis to fears of a global recession fuelled by biting inflation.

From April to June, private consumption grew 1.1 percent compared with the 0.3 percent registered in the January-March quarter, according to the data released by the Cabinet Office.

Capital spending expanded 1.4 percent, compared with a 0.3 percent contraction in the previous quarter. "After the government lifted a quasi-state of emergency in late March, consumption of services showed a relatively strong rebound, while capital investment returned to growth," BNP Paribas said in a note issued before the GDP data.

Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting also noted that "as the spread of the Omicron variant subsided, private consumption steadily increased,

especially in-person services, and lifted the overall economy." The data is preliminary, and GDP figures are often revised in later months.

In May, the Cabinet Office reported that the economy shrank slightly in the first quarter of 2022, but on Monday, this was revised to zero percent. That means no change was observed following a modest rebound in the final quarter of 2021. Consumer prices are rising in Japan, although not at the blistering rate seen in the United States and many other major economies.

The Bank of Japan sees the price rises as temporary and is sticking to its long-held monetary easing policies in a bid to achieve stable growth, a decision that has caused the yen to plummet to 24-year lows against the dollar. Supply chain disruption caused by COVID-19 lockdowns in China and sky-high energy costs due to the war in Ukraine have also created a challenging environment for growth.

"We now think the economy's recovery is less impressive than we had expected at the end of last year, with an unexpected resurgence of COVID-19 infections at the beginning of this year and now," Masamichi Adachi and Go Kurihara of UBS said in a statement ahead of the data release.

Japan is currently experiencing a record-breaking wave of COVID-19 infections. It has logged around 35,000 deaths from the disease overall, far lower than many other countries. —AFP



TOKYO: People stroll in an underground shopping mall in Tokyo on August 15, 2022. Japan's economy expanded in the three months to June, official data showed on August 15, after the government lifted COVID-19 curbs on businesses. —AFP

KIB launches KIB Mubader Center to empower start-ups

KUWAIT: Continuing to support Kuwait's vision and its national efforts to position the country as an economic and commercial hub within the region, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the launch of KIB Mubader Center: a start-up incubator and accelerator. The Center will serve as a full-fledged platform and resource to aspiring entrepreneurs and fledgling businesses, offering information, training, counsel and mentorship to enable entrepreneurs and start-ups to scale their businesses sustainability and run their firms effectively.

KIB Mubader Center was set up with the notion of being a fully engaged partner for the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community. The Center seeks to work hand in hand with Kuwaiti enterprises to upskill and capacity build, with the help of an advanced suite of educational and training tools, as well as specialized educational content, offered in partnership with the top expert service providers in this field from around the globe. KIB Mubader Center will also provide all the necessary support throughout the business lifecycle and financial journey, including giving them access to the banking services they need.

Speaking about the inspiration behind the launch of the Center, Abdullah Al-Awadhi from KIB, said: "The launch of this initiative comes as part of KIB's long-standing efforts as a banking institution to play an active role in supporting aspiring Kuwaiti businesses and the SME sector. Entrepreneurs, small business and start-ups play an absolutely crucial role in economic growth and diversification, helping achieve sustainable development and ensuring ongoing innovation.

Al-Awadhi noted that KIB Mubader Center will aim to help foster a stronger entrepreneurial community in Kuwait, empowering start-up ventures to be able to play a leading role in economic building. "Our goal is to also cultivate a culture of innovation and invention - which will inevitably benefit national economic development and Kuwait's efforts to become a regional business hub.

Concluding his statement, Al-Awadhi stressed that KIB continues to be focused on setting up programs and initiatives that support Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups. He also underscored that KIB will remain fully invested in the growth and development of KIB's Mubader Center, supporting its mission and development goals of fostering the next generation of entrepreneurs in Kuwait.



Abdullah Al-Awadhi

Has blockchain found a use beyond crypto trading?

PARIS: The bitcoin boom spawned new billionaires and videos of beach parties and Lamborghinis. The crypto crash brought devastation for small investors and bankruptcy for many companies. Blockchain technology underpins crypto and has been hailed as a world-changing innovation, but does it have any use beyond creating speculative financial instruments?

AFP asked crypto critic Stephen Diehl, author of recently published "Popping the Crypto Bubble", to run the rule over some of the most popular claims made for blockchain technology.

More secure voting?

As tension and confusion engulfed the United States after the 2020 election, Changpeng Zhao, billionaire founder of crypto firm Binance, had a suggestion. A "blockchain-based mobile voting app", he tweeted, would mean "we won't have to wait for results, or have any questions on its validity".

Fellow crypto billionaire Vitalik Buterin replied that there were "significant challenges" but he thought it was "directionally 100 percent correct". So far, experiments have been very small scale.

For Diehl, blockchain was more likely to introduce problems than solve them.

"From the American perspective, every single district runs its own voting programme," said.

"This is seen as a feature because to corrupt any one election you would have to corrupt many, many

civil servants. "Centralizing the voting system in one digital place would be pretty risky-then all you have to do is corrupt the blockchain and you could corrupt democracy."

Automated house buying?

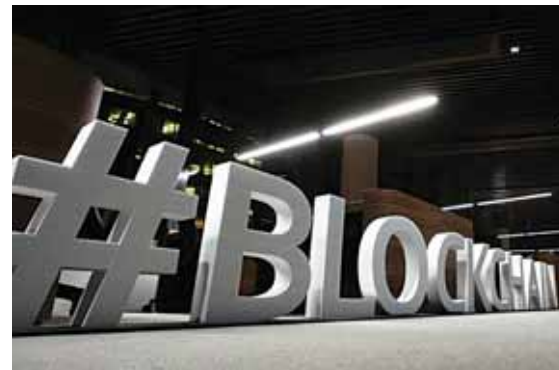
Blockchain at heart is a ledger, a way of storing transactions that is according to fans-secure, transparent and permanent. Those qualities have led countless enthusiasts to propose that the technology could in effect replace paper contracts for things like house buying.

Diehl said it was "absurd" that the blockchain was "going back to things that were solved a millennium ago to justify its own existence". "This is the system we've had since the Middle Ages-you have a government registry of land, a title and deed that get transferred when the ownership changes," he said. "The blockchain isn't solving anything here."

Payments without banks?

The blockchain emerged from a 2008 white paper on bitcoin, which was conceived as an alternative to fiat currency. The opening line reads: "A purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash would allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another without going through a financial institution." Bitcoin was the first cryptocurrency. There are now more than 10,000 others sitting on many different blockchains. Big firms have been desperate to find ways to accept payments in crypto.

Diehl pointed out that cryptoassets are speculative instruments not suitable for payments. "When was the last time you paid for your coffee with Apple stocks," he asked. "It just doesn't happen. You want something that's going to be stable so the price of your coffee is the price of your coffee next week."



Supply chain tracking?

Want to know where your mango came from? Some supermarkets believe the best way for you to find out is to access a blockchain-based system capable of tracking the fruit from the tropics of Central America to your cornerstore. Walmart and Carrefour are among the firms trumpeting blockchain systems. Carrefour told AFP earlier this year that shoppers would be able to scan a QR code and discover the provenance of an array of products.

The shops hope the blockchain will provide security, certainty and transparency.

Diehl pointed out that digital supply chain management has been around for years and is perfectly adequate without blockchain. "Blockchain is not adding any incorruptibility to the system," he said, pointing out that people in the supply chain could tell lies on the blockchain as easily as on any other platform.

"If I have a carton of apples and report that I put 100 percent of them on the truck, but then I skim off 50 percent for myself, the blockchain is not going to prevent that." —AFP

KIPCO announces a net profit of KD 5.37m for 1H

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced a net profit of KD 5.37 million (\$17.5 million) for the first six months of 2022. This represents a 68 per cent increase compared to the KD 3.2 million (\$10.4 million) reported for the same period of 2021.

Earnings per share for the first half of 2022 came to 0.8 fils (\$0.3 cents), compared to 0.2 fils (\$0.1

cents) reported in the same period of 2021. For the second quarter of 2022 (the three months ended June 30, 2022), the company reported a net profit of KD 2.2 million (\$7.2 million), compared to KD 11.6 million (\$37.8 million) for the corresponding quarter of 2021. KIPCO had reported a one-off investment gain in the second quarter of 2021.

KIPCO's consolidated assets for the first six months of the year stood at KD 10.6 billion (\$34.6 billion), compared to KD 10.2 billion (\$33.3 billion) reported at year-end 2021. Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said: "Our companies continue to deliver positive performance, as we highlighted at our Shafafiyah Investors' Forum earlier this year.

Both our banking and insurance businesses have reported positive performance so far this year, and our real estate arm has registered an increase in operating profit. As for KIPCO's merger with QPIC, the ongoing process is on track, and we are confident that this transformative transaction will be completed before the end of the year."



Sheikha Dana Nasser

Thai economy sees stunted growth

BANGKOK: Thailand's economy grew 2.5 percent in the second quarter as returning foreign tourists failed to offset high inflation and concerns over regional tensions, the country's main economic agency said Monday.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy was hit hard during the pandemic, though visitor numbers are slowly improving with the relaxation of travel rules since May. But the Ukraine war and now tension over Taiwan could put any economic recovery at risk, Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) warned.

"We have to continue monitoring to see how long counteraction from China over Taiwan will last," NESDC Secretary General Danucha Pichayanon said. "The relaxing of our COVID controls, the recovery of tourism are factors that support the growth."

The agency said that gross domestic product rose 2.5 percent in April-June compared to the same period a year ago-well below the anticipated growth of three percent. The NESDC also revised the expected full-year growth rate from 2.5-3.5 percent to 2.7-3.2 percent.

Economist Charl Kengchon, from the Kasikorn Research Centre, characterized the results as a "mixed bag", with the tourism boost failing to lift



In this file photo taken on November 2, 2021, Buddhist monks wearing face masks walk inside the Grand Palace, a day after Thailand welcomed the first travelers vaccinated against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Bangkok. —AFP

growth. "I think that is because inflation hit a 14-year high in June, so it is a drag on spending both (in the) household sector and business," he said.

Inflation in the month of June hit 7.7 percent and was at 6.5 percent for the quarter, according to the NESDC. The impact of the Russia-Ukraine war and Taiwan tensions were also a worry, Charl said, affecting supply chains. "We expect Thailand

exports to cool in tandem with the global economic growth next year, so we have to rely so much on tourism," he said.

Thailand welcomed roughly 40 million people annually pre-pandemic, and has set ambitious targets on arrivals for the coming year in the hope of coaxing life back into the damaged tourist sector. —AFP

Germans face big energy levy as govt vows aid

BERLIN: German households face an energy surcharge reaching hundreds of euros in the wake of the Ukraine war, according to the rate published Monday, prompting the government to promise relief measures. The charge has been set at 2.419 cents per kilowatt hour, Trading Hub Europe, a non-profit company of energy network operators in Germany, said. For a family of four with an annual average energy usage of 20,000 kwh, this would come to about 483.80 euros (\$493.70) before goods and services taxes.

The surcharge is aimed at sharing out the soaring costs borne by energy importers after Russia drastically curtailed gas supplies to Germany after the invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Yoga teacher and author Stacie Graham gives a yoga session at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.

—AFP photos

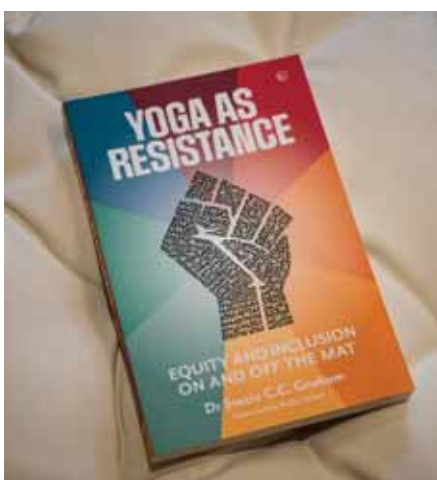


Yoga students attend a class at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.

UK YOGA 'WARRIORS' FIGHTING TO DIVERSIFY BOOMING INDUSTRY

London-based yoga instructor Stacie Graham is on a mission to make the ancient practice more racially and socially diverse, urging her charges to become "warriors for change" in the booming industry. Yoga, which originates from India, and pilates—a form of exercise focused on postural alignment—are now a \$30 billion-a-year industry, according to the Global Wellness Institute. But this success masks a lack of diversity, which affects the entire fitness sector, argued Graham, who also works as a diversity policy consultant for corporations.

"Here we are in London. If you go to any space where there is a gym or yoga studio, you will likely not see 'London', but typically white, female, able bodies—middle class-participating," she said. "And my question has been: how is that possible?" A survey of yoga teachers and practitioners in the UK by the medical studies site BMJ Open found that 87 percent were women, and 91 percent white, around 10 percent higher than the national proportion of white people. Graham has just published book "Yoga as Resistance," to help industry professionals broaden their clientele.



A photograph shows the book "Yoga as resistance" by Yoga teacher and author Stacie Graham at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.

'Subtle exclusion'

She also convenes regular workshops with other teachers, practicing yoga and plotting how to diversify the industry. "You want to be warriors of change, yoga gives us everything we need for that fight," she tells her charges as they perform the Warrior 2 posture; one leg bent, the other

stretched behind, and the arms horizontal, like arrows. Attendee Ntathu Allen, who specializes in "breathing and healing" sessions for women of color, told AFP that she is sometimes asked "if I'm really a teacher" when she arrives at a new studio.

Pam Sagoo, owner of Flow Space Yoga in London's multicultural Dalston neighborhood, was also at the workshop. "You just have to look outside the window and look at the people... to know you need appeal to a wider audience," giving the examples of black and older people. It is a similar situation in the United States, where "there are not many black women in these spaces, and it does not encourage others to enter," Raquel Horsford Best, a teacher based in Los Angeles, told AFP by phone. Instructors and owners partly blamed access issues, economic factors and the difficulty of keeping studios afloat. To be profitable, studios often charge high prices. A single session in London costs around £20, potentially pricing many out.

But Graham points to "more subtle" exclusionary factors, such as a performance-oriented atmosphere that discourages those who are less flexible, less



Yoga students attend a class at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.

slim and older. As a result, many people who could "really benefit" from yoga, such as those suffering from pandemic-related mental health issues and long Covid, are missing out, she added.

Despite the awareness generated by the Black Lives Matter movement, Graham believes that economic constraints discourage studio owners from making the necessary efforts and investments to make yoga more inclu-

sive. The first step would be to diversify the recruitment of teachers and staff. "They should recruit more instructors of color, Asians," urged Raquel Horsford Best. And, of course, making the classes more affordable. Sagoo, for instance, offers substantial discounts to people on benefits, and free classes to certain associations. — AFP



Yoga teacher and author Stacie Graham gives a yoga session at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.



Yoga teacher and author Stacie Graham gives a yoga session at the studio "She's lost control" in East London.

'Bullet Train' locked and loaded atop N America box office

Sony's "Bullet Train" held the top spot for the second week running in the North American box office, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations estimated Sunday during a relatively flat mid-

August period of moviegoing. As the last major studio release of the summer, the action thriller starring Brad Pitt pulled in \$13.4 million, less than half its take the previous week but still nearly doubling up on its closest competitor.

Pitt, who plays a professional assassin on a Japanese train seemingly loaded with them, heads a cast that includes Joey King, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Latin music star Bad Bunny, as well as Sandra Bullock and Channing Tatum in bit roles. Holding second spot was former number one "DC League of Super-Pets," Warner Bros.' animated film which pairs the likes of Superman and other action heroes with furry partners. It earned \$7.2 million.



In this file photo (from left) Puerto Rican rapper-actor Bad Bunny, US actor Brad Pitt, US actress Joey King and English actor Aaron Taylor-Johnson attend the Los Angeles premiere of "Bullet Train" at the Regency Village theatre in Westwood, California. — AFP

Jumping back up three spots to third was "Top Gun: Maverick," Paramount's long-awaited-and extremely popular-Tom Cruise sequel. It pulled in \$7.1 million, for an eye-popping \$674 million in North American ticket sales over the past 12 weeks.

Fourth spot went to Disney's action comedy "Thor: Love and Thunder," at \$5.3 million. It stars Chris Hemsworth as the uber-muscular space Viking, who pines for his ex-girlfriend (Natalie Portman). It has now eclipsed \$325 million over six weeks. Following closely in fifth was Universal's "Nope," also at \$5.3 million. The sci-fi/horror flick, boosted by the involvement of popular writer/director Jordan Peele, stars Daniel Kaluuya.

Overall, domestic releases are gradually getting back on track since the coronavirus pandemic hammered the industry, but the schedule remains relatively "thin," according to Franchise Entertainment Research's box office newsletter. "There's no question, the total box office would be bigger with more studio releases," it said. Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were:

"Minions: The Rise of Gru" (\$4.9 million)
 "Where the Crawdads Sing" (\$4 million)
 "Bodies Bodies Bodies" (\$3.3 million)
 "Elvis" (\$2.6 million)
 "Fall" (\$2.5 million) — AFP

'The Horse Whisperer' author Nicholas Evans dies at 72

British writer Nicholas Evans, who authored the international best-selling novel "The Horse Whisperer", has died at the age of 72, his literary agent announced on Monday. A screenwriter and journalist as well as a novelist, Evans died on Tuesday last week following a heart attack. His death was only made public on Monday.

"United Agents are very sad to announce the sudden death of the celebrated best-selling author Nicholas Evans who died suddenly on Tuesday ... following a heart attack, aged 72," a statement said. "The Horse Whisperer", published in

1995, was Evans' debut novel and earned him widespread global acclaim.

It chronicles the story of a trainer hired to help an injured teenager and her horse back to health after an injury and sold more than 15 million copies worldwide becoming a number one bestseller in 20 countries. The book was turned into a movie in 1998 by Hollywood actor Robert Redford, who starred as the title character, with Scarlett Johansson playing young rider Grace MacLean in her breakout role.

Kristin Scott Thomas played her mother, and Sam Neill the father. Evans, born in 1950 in western England, worked as a journalist in both print and broadcasting, before shifting into other television work and then novel writing. His other work includes "The Loop" (1998), "The Smoke Jumper" (2001), "The Divide" (2005) and "The Brave" (2010). — AFP





A general view shows the Flower Carpet on the Grand-Place in Brussels.

Chicago teens create world record-breaking cereal mosaic, raising money for Ukraine

Teenagers in Chicago armed with boxes of breakfast cereal created a Guinness world record-breaking mosaic on Thursday - and raised money for Ukraine in the process. Using some 5,000 boxes of cereal donated by Kellogg's, members of the Chicago Children United for Ukraine created a gigantic cereal mosaic on the floor of the

Wintrust Financial Corporation's Grand Banking Hall in downtown Chicago. They used yellow Corn Pops boxes and blue Rice Krispies to recreate a depiction of the Ukrainian flag. Ukraine has been fighting off a Russian invasion since February. "We wanted to raise awareness for Ukraine," said 15-year-old Michael Kotcher. "So, we decided to

break a record with a good cause behind it." The cereal will be donated to a local food bank, while donors have pledged nearly \$15,000 to the fundraiser so far. "It's just great because we're helping globally and locally," said Kotcher. — Reuters



Review



Beyonce escapes to dance world in 'Renaissance'

Beyonce has been reborn again; this time it's on a shimmering dance floor. But in her seventh studio album, "Renaissance," she has subverted the public's perception of her hitmaking history. Six years since her Grammy award-winning "Lemonade," people expect Beyonce to consistently deliver. But she does not allow herself to be pigeonholed in her consistency, perfectionism and pop/R&B genre. She croons confidently in "Cozy," that she is "comfortable in my skin. Cozy with who I am," and it shows in this hour-long 16-track album. Her voice glides with comfortability and ease in this cohesive dance-music album influenced by Black artists like disco queens Diana Ross and Donna Summer ("Summer Renaissance,") sampling Summer's "I Feel Love," Afrobeats ("Move") and most surprisingly twinges of Generation Z's favorite fast-paced hyper-pop ("All Up In Your Mind"). Each song is an adventurous, experimental journey into Beyonce's pandemic psyche. In the album announcement posted on her Instagram, she said that creating this album has allowed her "to dream and to find escape during a scary time for the world."

Beyonce builds a wistful, fun, out-of-body and almost extraterrestrial world filled with love, joy and friendship in "Renaissance." It's a world devoid of the intensity of the political, social and environmental challenges she states are present in 2022.

Speaking of an extraterrestrial world, "Alien Superstar," sampling Right Said Fred's 90s hit "I'm Too Sexy," pays homage to ballroom dance culture. The singer boldly states against a thumping rhythm and synth, that she is "too classy for this world, forever, I'm that girl." The album's high points are significantly due to the seamless transitions into each song like "Cuff It" and "Energy." "Cuff It" begins as a summer disco/R&B fusion anthem to fall in love with as Beyonce proclaims she feels like falling in love with a drink in her hand. "Cuff It" transitions to "Energy," which starts with Jamaican American rapper BEAM. —AFP

New this week: 'House of the Dragon,' Lakers doc and Lovato

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

Movies

In the almost 25 years since Princess Diana died, there has never been any shortage of content examining the enormous impact and intrigue of her short life. But a new documentary from director Ed Perkins, "The Princess," which debuted earlier this year at the Sundance Film Festival and is available on HBO (and HBO Max), turns the lens back on us. The film doesn't have any talking heads or voiceover, but instead uses only archival footage to tell a different kind of story. It is a meditative, transportive experience that is surprisingly effective.

start her career. Co-starring "Top Gun: Maverick's" Danny Ramierz, "Look Both Ways" hits Netflix on Wednesday. And for those looking for a scare, Paramount+ is debuting "Orphan: First Kill" on Friday. The film is a prequel to Jaume Collet-Serra's 2009 horror "Orphan" and follows Esther as she escapes from an Estonian psychiatric facility and makes her way to America.

Music

Demi Lovato's next album flirts with NSFW. "Holy Fvck" is both a track and the title of the 16-song album, out Friday. "I felt like it was a great, eye-catching title track for the rest of the album," the pop star told SiriusXM. "And especially because there's songs on the album that have, like, kind of religious undertones, there's songs on the album that have this dichotomy of good and

album "Viva Las Vengeance" on Friday, led by the sugary single "Middle of a Breakup" and the high-energy title track. "Viva Las Vengeance" is a look back at who I was 17 years ago and who I am now with the fondness I didn't have before. I didn't realize I was making an album and there was something about the tape machine that kept me honest," Urie says. It's Panic's first music since the 2018 release of "Pray for the Wicked." You can also catch the band at this year's MTV VMAs on Aug 28.

Television

The high-stakes drama is off the court in "Legacy: The True Story of the LA Lakers," a 10-part docuseries debuting Monday on Hulu. The series promises to detail how real estate magnate Jerry Buss' 1979 acquisition of the team led to its transformation into a championship, multibillion-dollar franchise - business and family conflict included. There's a Buss connection to the series: Jeanie Buss, his daughter and the Lakers CEO and controlling owner, is an executive producer. Filmmaker Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") directed, with Shaquille O'Neal, Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar among those interviewed.

Tatiana Maslany won a lead actress Emmy in 2016 for playing some half-dozen characters in "Orphan Black." A nine-episode Disney+ comedy series set in the Marvel universe gives her two sides of one coin to work with. "She-Hulk: Attorney at Law," Jennifer Lewis' career takes a turn after a transfusion from her cousin Bruce Banner, aka the Hulk, makes her a very reluctant superhero and courtroom advocate for her peers. Familiar Marvel faces in the series debuting Thursday, include Mark Ruffalo as Smart Hulk, Tim Roth as Emil Blonsky-the Abomination, and Benedict Wong as Wong.

It's been three years-plus since "Game of Thrones" called it a wrap, but who's counting? The fans who've awaited its prequel, "House of the Dragon," finally arriving Sunday, on HBO. The story of the House of Targaryen, set two centuries before "Game of Thrones," is based on George R.R. Martin's "Fire & Blood." The cast includes Paddy Considine as King Viserys Targaryen, whom the lords of Westeros picked to succeed his grandfather, and Matt Smith as Prince Daemon Targaryen, his younger brother with "the true blood of the dragon." Could there possibly be trouble brewing? — AP



Two of this summer's most delightful theatrical releases "Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris" and "Mr. Malcolm's List" are quietly now available to rent on demand and watch from home. The former is a grounded fantasy adorned with mid-century designer lore, featuring Lesley Manville as a post-WWII British housekeeper and widow. She dreams of owning a Christian Dior gown and must travel to Paris to get one (and her middle-age Sabrina moment). "Mr. Malcolm's List," meanwhile, is an ode to Jane Austen - a Regency-era romance full of gossip, intrigue and high society hijinks starring Freida Pinto, Zawe Ashton and Sope Dirisu as the titular Mr. Malcolm.

On the other streamers, Lili Reinhart, of "Riverdale" fame, leads a Netflix pic "Look Both Ways" about a college senior whose life splits into parallel realities on graduation night. In one, she gets pregnant and has to move home to Texas. In another, she heads to Los Angeles to

bad, and that song kind of represented both." The album's first punky single "Skin of My Teeth," is about Lovato's struggles with sobriety. "The reaper knocks on my door/Cause I'm addicted to more," she sings.

What did you accomplish during the pandemic? The indie rock band the Mountain Goats released three new studio albums with a fourth on the horizon. That newest album, "Bleed Out," is set to come out on Friday and is described as "a cinematic experience inspired by action films from the '60s, '70s, and '80s." The first single, "Training Montage," comes with a video that is all manner of silly, with the band doing pushups, running down stairs and riding skateboards. Oh, and while you wait for the album, frontman John Darnielle also managed to release the true-crime novel, "Devil House," earlier this year.

Don't panic, Brendon Urie is back. His band Panic! At The Disco offers the

Review

Post Malone concert doc is all flash, no substance

There's a moment in Post Malone's new concert film when its star confesses to how surreal his life has become: "Sometimes I feel like I'm not a real person." Fans will get no clarity on that astounding statement after watching Amazon's "Post Malone: Runaway," a limp, uninspiring 60 minutes of flash with no substance. It's unreal. Not only does the best-selling, genre-mixing hitmaker himself not come across as a real person, the film never tries to help him. Fans won't learn anything new, and the curious may even be turned off.

The documentary captures Post Malone's first US arena tour in 2019 - a 37-date tour through North America with stops in Los Angeles, Dallas and New York, among others. The filmmakers - director Hector Dockrill and writers Sam Bridger and Casey Engelhardt - got backstage access without doing anything meaningful with it, ending up more like hype men than independent observers.

"Post Malone: Runaway" is in many ways like an hourlong music video, with some 10 songs - "Take What You Want," "Wow" and "Rockstar," among them - captured with shaky, distorted camera angles, interspersed with backstage glad-handing and tons of beer pong. Oh, so much beer pong. It both humanizes Posty but also makes him look like an overage bro holding onto childish things.

There are few moments in the film that show our hero not cradling a cigarette or a Solo cup, a tortured genius who seems perennially tipsy, screaming out his lyrics in a sort of existential crouch onstage and getting angry about drink pong rule violations after shows. Introspection is not his strong suit. "It's either you're with it or you ain't," he says. "The songs, I guess, are what they are and I am who I am." The filmmakers seem happier returning to shots of hysterical fans and seem a little too enamored of the tour's pyrotechnics.



How is Malone able to create such hits like "Sunflower"? Don't look here. "It just has a certain vibe and a certain feeling to it that's rare to come by," says songwriter Billy Walsh. The non-Posty interviews consist of superstar guests who stop by backstage - Alicia Keys and Timbaland, among them, and a truly uncomfortable-looking Billie Joe Armstrong. "That was awesome," the Green Day songwriter says, not entirely convincingly.

Then there are the voices of Malone's own entourage, including weirdly his bus driver, who are, after all, paid to be excited to be on tour with him. "You can't deny him any more. He's real," says Cheryl Paglierani, his agent. He is real, gotcha.

That brings up the mood of the documentary, which is sort of a grievance tour. There's a defensiveness to Malone and his team that's laughably unfounded. He's portrayed as fighting the impression that he's a lightweight and not the youngest artist to have three diamond-certified singles or to have broken the record for most simultaneous top 20 Hot 100 Billboard hits. It's hard to punch up when you've sold out Madison Square Garden. Poor Posty also has to deal with the public glare. He reveals it's hard going to different cities, getting lit every night and then doing it again the next night. Often he will glare at the very camera trying to capture his greatness: "On tour, you're surrounded by people every single day. It's exhausting sometimes," he says.

His team points out that unlike Elvis or Michael Jackson or Madonna, Malone lives in a time of social media, which sometimes has haters writing that he's not as good as he imagines. He's deep in his 20s now. Is he really discovering Twitter is an awful place? One of the most awkward moments is the appearance of Ozzy Osbourne for "Take What You Want." Malone seems unable to integrate one of rock's greatest gods - or even talk to him - and Ozzy is left on stage marooned and manically grinning, just raising his arms up. The torch has not been passed, shall we say. —AP

Sports

Last chance for World Cup glory?

KARIM BENZEMA

34



France

Forward

95 selections
(since 2007*)

37 goals

LUKA MODRIC

36



Croatia

Midfielder

149 selections
(since 2006)

21 goals

LIONEL MESSI

35



Argentina

Forward

162 selections
(since 2005)

86 goals

CRISTIANO RONALDO

37



Portugal

Forward

188 selections
(since 2003)

117 goals

MANUEL NEUER

36



Germany

Goalkeeper

110 selections
(since 2009)

Sources: FIFA, UEFA, AFP Photos

*Dismissed from French selection between 2015 to 2021 for "sextape" blackmail concerning teammate Mathieu Valbuena

AFP

World Cup 2022: the official ball

Al Rihla

Means "the journey" in Arabic. Designed to travel faster in flight to support peak game speeds

20 panels

In treated polyurethane, the form and texture allows a high level of stability and precision

"Speedshell" technology

Makes the ball more aerodynamic, increases speed in flight, improves rotation in the air

CRT-Core

Maximises shape retention, air inflation, and rebound accuracy

Design inspired by the culture, architecture, traditional boats and flag of Qatar

First official World Cup ball made using water-based inks and glues

A selection of previous balls

1930 - Uruguay T-Shape

Brown leather with removable air chamber

1970 - Mexico Telstar

32 black and white panels. More visible for the first televised World Cup

2006 - Germany Teamgeist

First ball without stitches

2010 - South Africa Jabulani

Eight heat-joined panels, criticised by players

2014 - Brazil Brazuca

Six heat-joined panels for a better performance in the rain

2018 - Russia Telstar 18

A new form of panel for improved stability in the air, and an integrated computer chip

Source: FIFA

AFP

Fans seeking rooms have ‘lot of options’

DOHA: Qatar said that World Cup fans have "a lot of options" with more than 100,000 rooms currently available and tens of thousands more expected by the tournament's kickoff. Some football supporters have expressed concern that they have been unable to find accommodation in line with their budget for the World Cup, which runs from November 21 to December 18. Prices range from 300 Qatari rials (just over \$80) to several thousand dollars per night. Qatar has so far taken more than 25,000 bookings, said Omar Al-Jaber, the official in charge of accommodation for the tournament's organizing committee, specifying that he was taking

about "bookings, not rooms or nights". "If you go through our website, you will find a lot of options," he told reporters on a tour of an available apartment in Doha. "And if you don't find it today, you need to check tomorrow or after tomorrow... because... we add more inventory to this portal. "More than 100,000 rooms (are) available as of today," he said. "If we go to November, maybe we'll reach more than 130,000 rooms or 140,000 rooms." Supporters normally find accommodation themselves for such tournaments. But Qatar - set to host the most geographically concentrated World

Cup in history and with limited hotel capacity - is seeking to channel supporters through an official platform that is reserved for ticket holders and managed by the tournament's organizers. Eighty-five percent of accommodation - whether permanent or temporary - is now complete and the remainder will be finished by a "deadline" of end-August, according to Jaber. The country will be closed to visitors without match tickets during the course of the tournament, Jaber said. As of last month, the US, Mexico, United Kingdom, Argentina and India accounted for some of the biggest sources of reservations.— AFP

Teams qualified for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar

Sports

Lisowska and Ringer claim European marathon golds

World champion Mayer bombs out of Euro decathlon

MUNICH: Poland's Aleksandra Lisowska claimed the first title at the European championships, winning the women's marathon on Monday. The 31-year-old Pole clocked 2hr 28min 36sec, Croatia's Matea Parlov Kostro taking silver, at 7sec, with Nienke Brinkman of the Netherlands claiming bronze, a further 10sec adrift.

The men's marathon title went the way of host nation Germany as Richard Ringer produced an extraordinarily well-judged final burst past Ethiopian-born Zionist Maru Teferi for gold. Ringer dug deep in front of thousands of onlookers to time 2:10.21, with Teferi taking silver, 2sec behind, and another Ethiopian-born Zionist, Gashau Ayale, claiming bronze a further 6sec adrift.

The opening day of the athletics championships had opened in dramatic style as world decathlon champion Kevin Mayer's bid for a first European title came to a shuddering halt as he pulled up in the opening 100m. World record holder Mayer, twice world champion and a two-

time Olympic silver medalist, had warned that he would withdraw from the grueling two-day event should he feel even the slightest pain.

And so it proved as the Frenchman took the foot off the pedal after 70 meters of the 100m, the first of 10 events at Munich's Olympic Stadium. "I did a decathlon three weeks ago," he said in reference to his world title-winning effort in Eugene, Oregon, dubbing his bid to add the continental title to his haul as a "mission impossible". "I pulled up before injury. I had a hundredth of a second to decide: carry on and I injure myself, or I stop. It's very hard.

"I gave myself every chance to have a great time again because, regardless of the fears and stress it could generate, on the track I have so much fun! "I wanted to give myself a chance to get there, I didn't succeed, it doesn't matter: I'm world champion, my season has been a success, which was unexpected given my injuries." The evening session at the Olympic Stadium sees medals up for grabs in both the men and women's shot put, as well as the women's 10,000m. —AFP



MUNICH: Poland's Aleksandra Lisowska crosses the finish line to win the women's Marathon during the European Athletics Championships in Munich, southern Germany on August 15, 2022. —AFP



TORONTO: Simona Halep of Romania hits a shot against Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil during the singles final of the National Bank Open, part of the Hologic WTA Tour, at Sobey's Stadium on August 14, 2022. —AFP

Halep holds off Maia to win 3rd Canadian crown

TORONTO: Simona Halep kept control against unpredictable Beatriz Haddad Maia on Sunday, beating the Brazilian 6-3, 2-6, 6-3 to win a third WTA Masters 1000 title in Canada. The former world number one from Romania added the trophy in Toronto to those she captured in Montreal in 2016 and 2018. She needed two and a quarter hours to deny the South American lefthander the upset victory. "Here there are many Romanians and they always come to support me. I'm really happy that I could win also here," said Halep, who was backed by chants of "Simona!" from her vocal fans throughout the match.

She shrugged off nine double-faults and broke Haddad Maia five times from 10 chances as she became the third player with at least nine WTA 1000 titles, after Serena Williams (13) and Victoria Azarenka (10). Halep, who was playing in her ninth final at the elite level as Haddad Maia tackled her first, won her 38th match of the season and claimed her biggest success since the Rome trophy in May, 2020. After a year outside of the world's top-10 she is projected to rise to sixth this week with the start of the US Open approaching on August 29.

"I was there for many years but now I feel like it's a big deal to be back in top 10," she said. "I'm really happy with this performance. "When I started the year I was not very confident and I set the goal to be top-10 at the end of the year - and here I am. "It's a very special moment. I will enjoy it. I will give myself credit. I'm just dreaming for more." Haddad Maia, enjoying a breakout season that included grasscourt titles at Birmingham and Nottingham in June, had toppled world number one Iga Swiatek on her way to the final.

She struck first with a break on the way to a quick 3-0 lead. But Halep, a two-time Grand Slam champion, quickly responded, winning the opening set as she spun off six straight games to claim the opener 6-3, in 50 minutes. Haddad Maia answered in the opening game of the second set with a break, consolidating through a double break for 4-0 before Halep stopped the rot to hold for 1-4. The Brazilian delivered a huge serve on set point three games later to square the contest at a set each.

'A day to learn'

But Halep came out ahead after they traded three breaks of serve in the final set, wrapping it up on her second match point as Haddad Maia fired a service return into the net. Haddad Maia said she was at times overwhelmed by the occasion. "It was an emotional beginning, even when I was 3-Love up I couldn't hold the emotions. I couldn't control myself," she said. "Simona started to play better, to improve. I was trying to be more aggressive. "Today Simona deserved it, she played better than me," added Haddad Maia, the first Brazilian to reach the final of a WTA 1000 event. "She was more brave. "Sometimes we learn - today, it's a day to learn." —AFP

Shaheen fitness and WCup key as Pakistan tackles Netherlands

ROTTERDAM: Pakistan will look to collect crucial World Cup qualifying points when they tackle the Netherlands in a three-match ODI series from Tuesday but will have a wary eye on the fitness of star bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi. The 22-year-old paceman suffered a knee injury on the recent tour of Sri Lanka, a worrying setback with the Asia Cup - and a meeting with old rivals India - coming up at the end of the month.

Pakistan team bosses do not want to overload a fast bowler who has already played 97 times across all three formats since his international debut just four years ago. "We're taking a couple of doctors with us to take care of Shaheen and want him to play a game against Netherlands to see if he's fit and ready for the Asia Cup," said Pakistan skipper Babar Azam.

"But we have 11 trump cards. Each of them can be match winners on their day. I have faith in every one of them, whether batters or bowlers." The series in Rotterdam was postponed due to COVID in 2020. It forms part of the 13-nation Super League from where the top seven teams plus hosts India will qualify for the 2023 World Cup. Pakistan are currently third with 90 points, having beaten a formidable Australia 2-1 in their last ODI series at home.

Failure to make the top seven would mean having to negotiate a perilous route through a qualifying competition. "There are important Super League points at stake which we can't lose," said Azam who may be stunned to find Europe baking in a heatwave. "I think the conditions will be similar to England. The weather will be cooler so we have practiced with the air conditioning on indoors, perhaps that helps simulate the conditions," he said Thursday on the team's departure for Europe.

Recall for 38-year-old

The two teams have only played three one-day

Zalatoris beats Straka in playoff to win PGA Memphis title

WASHINGTON: Three-time major runner-up Will Zalatoris won his first US PGA Tour title on Sunday, defeating Austria's Sepp Straka in a playoff to capture the St. Jude Championship. Zalatoris made a seven-foot bogey putt on the third extra hole to end a season of near misses that included second-place efforts at the US Open and PGA Championship. "We've been close and to see it finally pay off has been awesome," Zalatoris said. "Looking forward to having some celebrations tonight."

World number 14 Zalatoris, runner-up last year in his Masters debut, took a \$2.7 million top prize. His eight top-10s had been the PGA's most by a non-winner as was his prior \$6.7 million in season prize money. Zalatoris, who turns 26 on Tuesday, joined Colombian Camilo Villegas in 2008 as the only players whose first PGA victory came in a FedEx Cup playoff event.

Zalatoris fired a four-under par 66 and Straka shot 67 to leave both on 15-under 265 after 72 holes at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee. Straka, who missed six consecutive cuts entering this week, sank a six-foot par putt at 18 on the first extra hole to extend the playoff. Teeing off at 18 again, Zalatoris went right and hit a cart path and tree while Straka's ball clung to a sidehill above a water hazard.

Zalatoris pitched off pine straw into the fairway while Straka took off his left shoe, thought better of a wet stance and put it back on, then took a penalty drop. Both pitched to the green to set up clutch putts, with Zalatoris curling in a par effort from just outside 13 feet and Straka topping him from half that distance. On the third playoff hole, the 151-yard par-3 11th, Zalatoris bounced his ball atop a stone wall at a water hazard and had it wedge in a crack against grass while Straka's ball found the water.

Straka hit his third into a greenside bunker and



Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi

internationals - all in multi-national events at the 1996 (Pakistan) and 2003 (South Africa) World Cups and 2002 Champions Trophy (Sri Lanka). Pakistan won all three. After qualifying for the Twenty20 World Cup to be played in Australia later this year, the Netherlands are seeking a huge lift in their 50-over fortunes.

They are placed last in the Super League, having won only two of their 16 matches with one no-result and 13 defeats. Those two wins - against Ireland - followed 12 straight losses in series against Afghanistan, New Zealand, West Indies and England. England also smashed a world record total of 498-4 against them in June. But new skipper Scott Edwards believes playing against bigger nations has helped his young team. "ODI cricket is still a benchmark for Associates," said Edwards, who replaced Pieter Seelaar as skipper in June. —AFP

blasted out four feet beyond the cup. After pondering a dangerous shot, Zalatoris took a penalty, chipped from the drop zone to seven feet and sank the bogey putt for the triumph. "It was a grind," Zalatoris said. "To see that decision pay off at the last was pretty cool." The tournament opened the FedEx Cup playoffs, three season-ending events with a winner's prize of \$18 million. Only the top 70 players in season points advance to next week's BMW Championship, where 30 qualifiers for the Tour Championship in Atlanta are decided.

Zalatoris took the season points lead and clinched a trip to Atlanta. "Just got to keep doing what we're doing," he said. Straka, who won his first PGA title in February at the Honda Classic, barely missed his second season win. "It was pretty crazy," Straka said. "This is one of those courses where every shot you hit, you're on the edge of your seat. Add the nerves of competing for a playoff event and it can get a little crazy." Lucas Glover, the 2009 US Open champion, shared third on 268 with fellow American Brian Harman.

Reigning US Open champion Matthew Fitzpatrick of England was on 269 with Spaniard Jon Rahm, Australian Adam Scott and American Collin Morikawa - all major winners - plus Americans Tony Finau, Andrew Putnam and Trey Mullinax. British Open champion Cameron Smith, an Australian who would have become world number one with a victory, was issued a two-stroke penalty before teeing off for an improper ball placement in Saturday's third round, dropping him four back at the start. Smith, silent about reported plans to jump to Saudi-backed LIV Golf after the PGA playoffs, fired 70 to share 13th on 271.

'Ace' into cupholder

Glover and Scott played their way into next week's playoff event along with Americans Andrew Putnam and Wyndham Clark. American JJ Spaun, the 54-hole leader, fired a 78 to share 42nd on 275. Denny McCarthy had a unique "ace" when his second-hole tee shot landed in a fan's portable chair cupholder. The American blasted off pine straw to just inside 33 feet then sank his birdie putt. —AFP

Sanchez makes Marseille debut in Brest draw

PARIS: Alexis Sanchez came off the bench to make his debut for Marseille as his new club drew 1-1 with Brest in Ligue 1 on Sunday. The Chilean forward was named among the substitutes by coach Igor Tudor for the game in Brittany, four days after signing a one-year contract. He was introduced at the start of the second half but did not have a major influence on the game as Marseille failed to hold onto the lead given to them in the first half at the Stade Francis-Le Ble by Nuno Tavares.

Portuguese left-back Tavares scored his second goal in as many games since joining Marseille on loan from Arsenal to put his new side ahead shortly before half-time. He converted a cross from Jonathan Clauss, only for Pierre Lees-Melou to equalise for Brest with a superb strike just after the hour mark. Former Barcelona and Arsenal star Sanchez, who has won 143 caps for Chile, joined Marseille as a free agent after terminating his contract with Inter Milan.

He started just nine games for Inter last season, but Marseille are hoping his experience will prove invaluable in the Champions League group stage. Tudor's side have four points from a possible six in Ligue 1, with Sunday's draw following a 4-1 win over Reims last week. Reigning champions Paris Saint-Germain are already two points clear at the top of the table after just two games. They followed a 5-0 win at Clermont on the opening weekend by beating Montpellier 5-2 on Saturday, with Neymar scoring twice and Kylian Mbappe once. —AFP



BREST: Brest's Algerian forward Youcef Belaili (left) fights for the ball with Marseille's French midfielder Matteo Guendouzi during the French L1 football match between Stade Brestois 29 (Brest) and Olympique de Marseille (OM) on August 14, 2022. —AFP

Sports

Roma squeeze past Salernitana; Immobile fires Lazio to victory

Radu blunder sinks Cremonese; Spezia beat Empoli

MILAN: Roma began their Serie A campaign with a hard-fought 1-0 win at Salernitana on Sunday, while Ciro Immobile shot Lazio to a comeback 2-1 win over Bologna. Paulo Dybala and Georginio Wijnaldum both made their league debuts for Jose Mourinho's Roma but it was an older hand in Bryan Cristante who decided the match in the 33rd minute. Italy international Cristante claimed the points with a drive from the edge of the area which took at least one deflection before nestling in the bottom corner. Roma's margin of victory would have been larger had they capitalized on a series of chances, in particular in the first half.

"I would have been happy if we'd won 3-0 or 4-0 but what I liked was that even though we didn't score as many as we should have we had enough maturity to control the game" Mourinho told reporters. Dybala was unlucky not to be on target on an impressive Roma debut in which he immediately struck up an understanding with Nicolo Zaniolo and Tammy Abraham. The Argentina forward struck the post in the dying seconds of the opening half after a winding run from

Zaniolo, who could have easily had two of his own before the break in an exciting display from the 23-year-old.

Zaniolo, long considered one of Italy's brightest young talents, has had to battle back from two serious knee injuries and despite reported interest from Juventus and Tottenham looks committed to Roma. It was far from one-way traffic at the Stadio Arechi as Salernitana, who completed a miracle escape from the drop to stay in Serie A, squeezed Roma back towards their own goal. But they struggled to create chances and despite visibly tiring in the latter stages Roma would have sealed the win through Wijnaldum with five minutes left had Dybala not strayed offside in the build-up.

Immobile saves Lazio

Italy striker Immobile coolly slotted home the winner with 11 minutes remaining at the Stadio Olimpico to complete a comeback which looked unlikely when the hosts went a man down in the fourth minute. Goalkeeper Luis Maximiano was sent off for handling outside his own area, and Maurizio Sarri's side were a goal down in the 38th minute following

another couple of blunders from Alessio Romagnoli and Mattia Zaccagni led to a silly foul on Nicola Sansone and a penalty which Marko Arnautovic happily tucked away.

Lazio were level in terms of on-pitch personnel going in at the break after Adama Soumaoro picked up two bookings in the space of five minutes at the end of the first half. And they were level on the scoreboard in the 68th minute thanks to Lorenzo De Silvestri's own goal, the Italian watching on in horror as Manuel Lazzari's cross was patted onto him by goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski and then rolled into his own net.

Lazio were in the ascendancy and it was no surprise when the club's all-time top scorer netted the winner after being put through by Sergej Milinkovic-Savic. Elsewhere, Cremonese were denied a point from their first top-flight match since 1996 after an Ionut Radu blunder handed Fiorentina a 3-2 win in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

Goalkeeper Radu, whose horrendous mistake for Inter Milan helped AC Milan win the Serie A title last season, somehow managed to carry Rolando



Ciro Immobile

Mandragora's cross into his own net at the death. Matteo Bianchetti's leveler in the 68th minute had left Cremonese hoping for a draw which would have come despite being down to 10 men for more

than half the match following Gonzalo Escalante's red card for a bad foul on Christian Kouame. In Sunday's other late match Spezia beat Empoli 1-0 thanks to a strike from M'Bala Nzola. — AFP

Talking points from the Premier League

MANCHESTER: Manchester United sit bottom of the Premier League for the first time in 30 years after the second weekend of the season saw tempers flare and temperatures soar. United could not stand the heat as they conceded four times inside 35 minutes in a 4-0 humiliation at Brentford. The other side of Manchester is again sitting pretty at the top of the table as City cruised to a 4-0 win over Bournemouth. The points were shared in the game of the weekend as Chelsea and Tottenham drew 2-2 in a feisty clash that will be remembered for two altercations between managers Thomas Tuchel and Antonio Conte. AFP Sport looks at talking points from the Premier League weekend.

Tuchel wins battle but not war

Tuchel won the tactical battle on Conte's return to Stamford Bridge, but his team failed to land the knockout blow as Chelsea let two points escape in the first clash of the season between the traditional top six. Spurs headed into the campaign with greater optimism on the back of a strong end to last season and six new signings to back Conte in his first full season. After a grueling pre-season tour of the USA and a slow start in the transfer market, Chelsea were by Tuchel's own admission were "not ready" for the new campaign. But with new chairman Todd Boehly in the stands for the start of a new era at Stamford Bridge, it was the Blues who made an early case to be the most likely challengers to City and Liverpool for the title.

Tuchel's surprise selection of Ruben Loftus-Cheek ahead of captain Cesar Azpilicueta gave Chelsea the ability to switch easily between a back five and four as they swarmed over their London rivals. "It was a good plan, but the execution was brilliant," said Tuchel. "I loved the commitment, intensity and concentration level." Tuchel ultimately blamed two controversial calls to allow both Spurs goals to stand for not winning the game. Tottenham,



LONDON: Manchester United's Scottish midfielder Scott McTominay (left) vies with Brentford's Danish midfielder Mathias Jensen during the English Premier League football match between Brentford and Manchester United at Gtech Community Stadium in London on August 13, 2022. — AFP

though, showed as much fight as their manager on the touchline to bounce back twice and snatch a point through Harry Kane's 96th minute header.

Man Utd sink to new depths

A new dawn for Manchester United has only brought new lows. One week on from Brighton's first ever victory at Old Trafford, the Red Devils were blown away at Brentford as Erik ten Hag became the first United manager since John Chapman in 1921 to lose his opening two games in charge. The Dutchman is just the latest manager in the firing line as the public face of a failing institution. More protests against the Glazer family's own-

ership of the club are planned ahead of United's next game at home to Liverpool on August 22.

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. Two games into the new season, only three new faces have arrived in the form of Lisandro Martinez, Tyrell Malacia and Christian Eriksen. More business is expected in the final three weeks of the window, but United again find themselves wasting their huge commercial resources on panic buying players not wanted by the Premier League elite. — AFP



In Sunday's other Championship match, Chuba Akpom's double helped Middlesbrough draw 2-2 with Sheffield United at the Riverside. The visitors led through Sander Berge's 18th-minute strike before Akpom levelled from close range for his first Boro goal since April 2021. Ryan Giles turned

Iliman Ndiaye's centre into his own net midway through the second half but Akpom's header eight minutes from time rescued a point for the home side. The draw means Boro, who saw substitute Duncan Watmore hit a post late on, remain without a win this season. — AFP

Championship leaders maintain perfect start

LONDON: Blackburn Rovers extended their perfect start to the English Championship season with a 2-1 win at home to West Bromwich Albion on Sunday. Rovers only had two shots on target in the whole of the 90 minutes at Ewood Park but made them count.

Ben Brereton Diaz fired them in front just before half-time ahead of setting up Sam Gallagher, who doubled their lead just two minutes after the restart. Albion were the more dominant side for much of the game but only had Grady Diangana's deflected goal to show for their efforts. Rovers are the only side in English football's second-tier with a 100 percent record so far this season after after winning their first three league games for the first time since 1988.

Chippa inflict first loss on Orlando Pirates' 'plumber' coach

JOHANNESBURG: Perennial strugglers Chippa United shocked Orlando Pirates 1-0 on Sunday in a South African Premiership third-round match, condemning new Spanish coach Jose Riveiro to his first loss. Tanzanian Abdi Banda netted four minutes from time for the Gqeberha-based club, rising unchallenged to powerfully nod a corner past Ghana goalkeeper Richard Ofori.

The goal stunned Pirates supporters, who had watched the Buccaneers dominate the match only to

be let down by poor finishing, a problem that has affected the club for many seasons. Success was particularly sweet for Chippa boss Daine Klate, who debuted as a Premiership coach only last weekend, as is a former Pirates winger.

The arrival of Riveiro in South Africa after eight seasons coaching in Finland, mainly as an assistant, sparked a social media storm, with many calling him a "plumber". In South African football, a "plumber" is a foreign coach considered unqualified to handle a Premiership club. Riveiro laughed off the accusation, saying "I have been involved in football for many years and my results at Pirates will show whether I am a football coach or a 'plumber'."

Pirates lie eighth, two places above Chippa in the table, having won at home against Swallows and a drawn away to Stellenbosch. Reports say Pirates,

along with Mamelodi Sundowns and Kaizer Chiefs, will take part in the first edition of the Africa Super League, scheduled to start in August 2023.

Sundowns hammered Chiefs 4-0 on Saturday before a sell-out 50,000 crowd in Pretoria with a goal from new Ethiopian forward Abubeker Nassir completing the rout. Blunders by Chiefs' centre-back Siyabonga Ngezana contributed to early goals from Uruguayan Gaston Sirino and Namibian Peter Shalulile for the record 12-time champions. Shalulile, voted the top Premiership player and winner of the Golden Boot last season, scored again after half-time. Seeking a sixth straight title, Sundowns stand fourth, one point below pacesetters Richards Bay, TS Galaxy and AmaZulu. Promoted Richards Bay from an eastern coastal town are competing in the top flight for the first time. —AFP

City's Mendy was 'predator' pursuing women, trial hears

CHESTER: An English court on Monday heard that Manchester City and France footballer Benjamin Mendy, on trial for rape and sexual assault, was a "predator" who callously pursued vulnerable women. Mendy, 28, is on trial at Chester Crown Court in northwest England, facing eight counts of rape, one count of sexual assault and one count of attempted rape, relating to seven young women.

The Premier League star has pleaded not guilty to all the charges in a complex trial that is expected to last 15 weeks. The jury trial opened last week and the prosecution began their opening arguments on Monday. Prosecutor Timothy Cray told the court that Mendy and his co-defendant, Louis Saha Maturie, were "predators, who were prepared to commit serious sexual offences" as they pursued women.

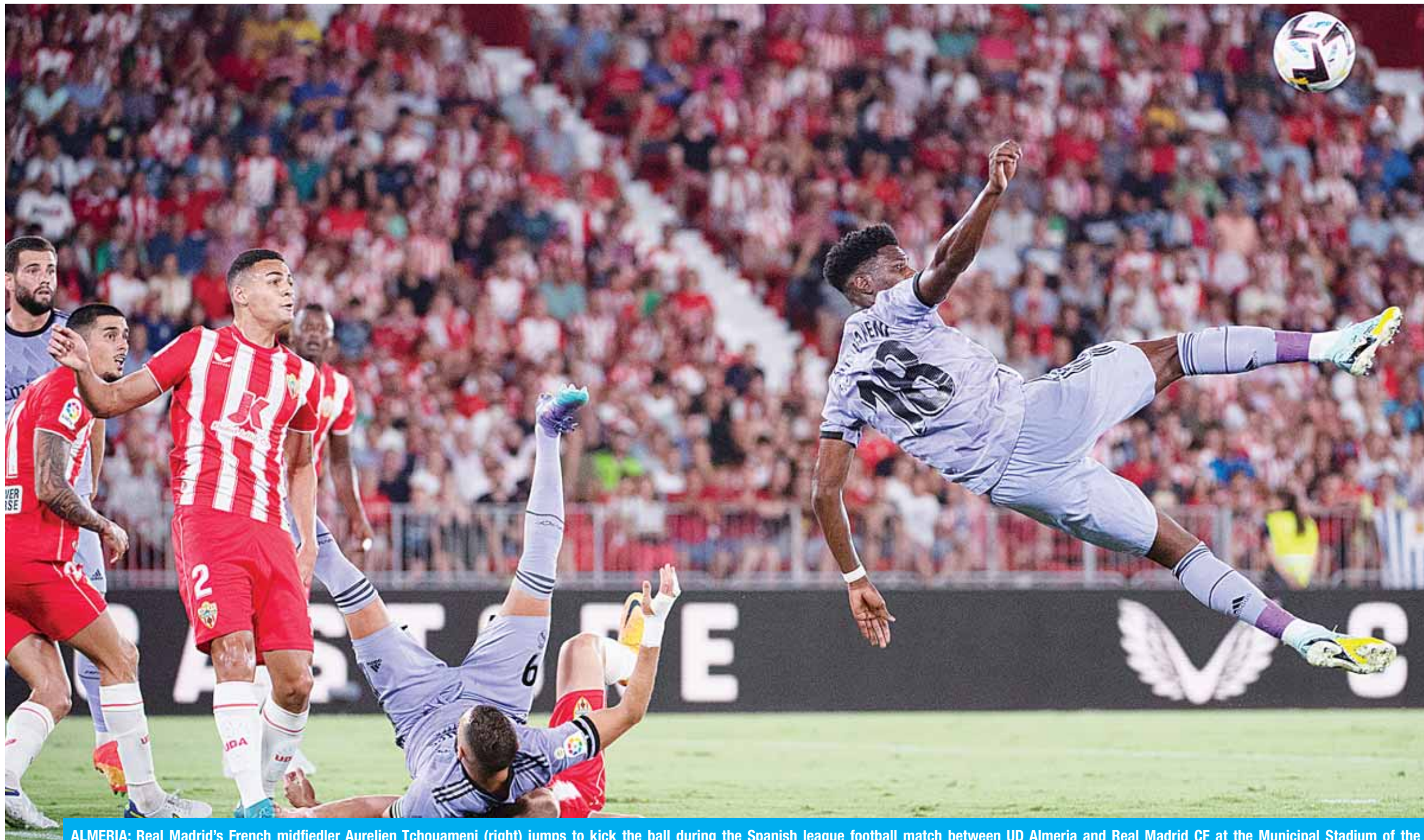
Cray alleged that Mendy behaved with "callous indifference" to women who were "vulnerable, scared, isolated". Maturie's job was "to find young women and to create the situations where those young women could be raped and sexually assaulted", he argued. The men "turned the pursuit of women for sex into a game and if women got hurt or distressed, too bad," the lawyer said. The alleged offences are said to have taken place between July 2012 and August last year.

Maturie, 40, has also pleaded not guilty to eight counts of rape and four counts of sexual assault. None of the women said to have been assaulted can be named under English law, which also places restrictions on what can be reported about the case. Mendy joined Premier League champions City from French side Monaco in 2017. He has played 75 times for Manchester City, but his playing time was limited by injuries and a loss of form.

He was suspended by City after being charged by police in August last year. The last of Mendy's 10 international caps came in November 2019. The defender picked up a World Cup winner's medal after playing just 40 minutes of France's successful 2018 campaign in Russia. The trial comes as former Manchester United star player and Wales manager Ryan Giggs is on trial at Manchester Crown Court on charges of assaulting his former partner by headbutting her and submitting her to controlling and coercive behavior. —AFP



Benjamin Mendy



ALMERIA: Real Madrid's French midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni (right) jumps to kick the ball during the Spanish league football match between UD Almeria and Real Madrid CF at the Municipal Stadium of the Mediterranean Games in Almeria on August 14, 2022. —AFP

Alaba free-kick gives Real win to start title defense

Japan star Kubo nets winner on Real Sociedad debut

MADRID: David Alaba scored with a stunning free-kick immediately after coming on as a substitute as reigning champions Real Madrid came from behind to beat Almeria 2-1 in their opening game of the season in La Liga on Sunday. Carlo Ancelotti's side trailed to an early goal by Largie Ramazani away against their promoted opponents, but Lucas Vazquez equalized just after the hour mark.

The winner arrived with 15 minutes remaining at Almeria's Power Horse Stadium, as Alaba strode onto the pitch and curled a free-kick in off the upright after Luka Modric had been fouled just outside the box. Real were made to work hard for the points against an Almeria side who won last season's second-tier title to return to La Liga after a seven-year absence.

"We had lots of shots on goal but once we got the first goal it made things much easier for us," said Ancelotti. "I am happy with the way the game went. We were not spectacular but there were lots of things to take into account, like the game on Wednesday and the heat." At one point it looked like Madrid might suffer a defeat in their opening league game of the season for the first time since 2008, with Ancelotti's decision to rotate his squad not initially paying off.

The Italian had made five changes to the line-up that started in Wednesday's 2-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt in the UEFA Super Cup in Helsinki, when goals by Alaba and Karim Benzema gave the defending European champions the first silverware of the campaign. Alaba and Modric were among the players dropped to the bench, while close-season signings Antonio Rudiger and Aurelien Tchouameni were handed first competitive starts for their new club.

Rudiger caught out

Yet the game was just six minutes old when former Chelsea defender Rudiger was caught out by a ball over the top and Ramazani ran through to beat Thibaut Courtois. Ramazani, the 21-year-old Belgian winger who used to be on the books at Manchester United, ran off to celebrate in acrobatic fashion as Saudi-owned Almeria enjoyed a dream start to their top-flight comeback.

Yet the hosts needed some inspired goalkeeping from Fernando Martinez to keep them ahead into half-time, with the standout save coming low to his left to deny Rudiger five minutes before the break. Vazquez then had the ball in the net in the 43rd minute only to be denied by a very tight offside call, but the full-back was the man who dragged the away side back level in the 61st minute as he pounced on a loose ball in the area to score.

Almeria, who had already seen a hanging Vinicius cross strike the frame of their goal on its way behind before that, soon conceded again. When Modric was fouled just outside the box by Rodrigo Ely, Austrian defender Alaba was waiting on the sideline for the chance to come on. The break in play allowed him to replace Ferland Mendy, and he came straight on to take the free-kick and score in stunning fashion to complete the latest comeback from Ancelotti's team.

Earlier, Japan star Takefusa Kubo marked his Real Sociedad debut by scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win at Cadiz. Kubo, 21, moved to San Sebastian last month on a five-year deal from Real Madrid, after never managing to break into the first team at the Santiago Bernabeu. Signed by Madrid from FC Tokyo as an 18-

tackle from me. "We did not insult each other, we did not hit each other, we were fighting for our teams and from my side there's absolutely no hard feelings. I'm surprised that we both got a red card for that."

Tuchel's ire was instead directed towards the officials as both Tottenham's goals could have been disallowed. Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's strike was allowed to stand despite a potential foul on Kai Havertz in the build-up and Richarlison standing in an offside position when the Dane's shot was hit. Before the corner leading to Kane's equalizer, Spurs defender Sergio Romero also escaped a red card for dragging Marc Cucurella to the ground by his hair.

"It was a clear foul on Kai Havertz. Ok, the situation goes on and on and on, then it is a clear offside," added Tuchel. "Since when can you pull hair on the football field? It's ridiculous. "That's the only frustration. I'm the happiest coach on earth because we played a fantastic match." Conte batted away several questions about his tete-a-tete with Tuchel, but admitted a gap between the sides remains despite Spurs' improvement. Chelsea won all four meetings between the sides last season, three of them after Conte took charge in November.

"In my opinion it is better to talk about the game," said Conte. "Chelsea showed to be a really good team, but compared to last season we did a bit better. "The differ-



ALMERIA: Real Madrid's Austrian defender David Alaba (left) celebrates scoring this team's second goal during the Spanish league football match between UD Almeria and Real Madrid CF at the Municipal Stadium of the Mediterranean Games in Almeria. —AFP

year-old in 2019, he was farmed out on loan to Mallorca, Villarreal and then Getafe, before returning to Mallorca last season.

Carlos Soler's penalty gave Valencia a 1-0 win over promoted Girona in their first La Liga outing under new coach Gennaro Gattuso. Valencia held on after having Swiss defender Eray Comert send off early in the second half. Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw by Rayo Vallecano in their opening game at the Camp Nou on Saturday. Atletico Madrid begin their campaign away at Getafe in one of three matches to be played on Monday. —AFP



LONDON: Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel gestures on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur on August 14, 2022. —AFP

ence is clear. This team won the Champions League two years ago, last year won the Club World Cup, got to the final of the FA Cup and Carabao (League) Cup. "There is a difference between Chelsea and Tottenham but we are here to reduce this gap. Last season we lost three times, this time we drew so it's a little step forward." —AFP

Famous clubs battle for Champions League slots

PARIS: The last stage of the Champions League qualifying marathon kicks off on Tuesday with three clubs who have already got their hands on the trophy eager to grab one of the last six group slots and the cheque that goes with it. Benfica, who won the European Cup in 1961 and 1962 and have reached the final five times since then, face Dynamo Kyiv. While Benfica coach Roger Schmidt worries whether Alex Grimaldo will recover from the dizzy spell that forced him off in Saturday's 1-0 league win at Casa Pia, the Ukrainians made clear they have weightier concerns.

The game will be in Lodz, where Dynamo are in exile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. When the squad returned to training in Poland after winning in Austria to eliminate Sturm Graz in the previous round, the club's website made clear that this is more than a football game. The players, it said, "realize they keep fighting for the honor of the country by adding points to the UEFA rankings table."

"All Kyivans miss home and look forward to the return to Ukraine, but the fact that they give our nation and warriors positive emotions makes them leave emotions behind. They have a single goal - to go through to the Champions League group stage." The two clubs met in the group stage last season. They drew 0-0 in Kyiv in the opening round. Dynamo's only point. The Portuguese side won 2-0 at home in the last round to edge Barcelona for second in the group. Returning to the group stage this year offers a hefty reward.

Each club is guaranteed 15.64 million euros (\$16.04 million) for taking part. They can also collect 2.8m euros for every group stage victory and 930,000 euros for a draw. Teams that miss out, drop to the Europa League group stage where they are guaranteed 3.63m euros. PSV Eindhoven, who needed an extra-time goal to eliminate Monaco in the previous round, face Rangers. Ruud van Nistelrooy, who replaced Schmidt as coach at the 1988 European champions, faces old international team-mate and club adversary Giovanni van Bronckhorst, in Glasgow on Tuesday.

The two coaches were long-time Netherlands team-mates. They played on opposite sides the last time the clubs met in the Champions League. Rangers, with Van Bronckhorst in midfield, won home and away in the 1999 group stage. Van Nistelrooy scored PSV's goal at Ibrox as Rangers won 4-1. "We are ready," declared van Bronckhorst after a 4-0 league win over St. Johnstone on Saturday. —AFP

'Fair tackle' as Tuchel insists no hard feelings

LONDON: Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said he was happy to take a "fair tackle" from Tottenham boss Antonio Conte after both were shown red cards for clashing twice during a heated 2-2 on Sunday. Conte's overexuberant celebrations of Spurs' first equalizer resulted in the two coaches being booked for squaring up.

Tuchel then responded by running down the touchline in celebration when Chelsea retook the lead through Reece James 13 minutes from time. But Harry Kane's 96th minute equalizer meant Conte had the last laugh. Tuchel was not happy at the Italian for not making eye contact during a handshake at full-time, which sparked another melee between both sets of coaches and players.

"It was hot from the temperature and hot between the benches and hot on the field and hot between the spectators," said Tuchel with temperatures soaring above 30 degrees Celsius in the English capital. "There's no hard feelings. I feel like it was a fair tackle from him and a fair