



3 Kuwait's PACI wins 2nd ISO certificate



7 Gang-raped Indian woman 'numb'; attackers released



8 UK rail workers strike again as inflation intensifies crisis



16 Kuwaitis grab medals at pan-Islamic games



Electoral fraud prompted use of Civil IDs for voting

Municipality to dismiss all expat employees in a year

NBK trainees tour Kuwait Times, Kuwait News



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-In-Chief Abdullah Bofain (second right) and senior staff pose for a group photo with high school students and NBK trainees on Thursday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed high school students enrolled in National Bank of Kuwait's summer training program on a field trip to its offices on Thursday. The students visited various departments of the newspaper, learning about print media in Kuwait. The students

had a glimpse into how editors, reporters, designers and proofreaders collaborate to bring out the paper on time day after day. They learned about the progression of the paper from the manual to the digital era, and how technology has changed the media landscape and industry. The inquisi-

tive young trainees had a lot of questions to ask during the interactive session. After visiting the newsroom, the students were given access to the archive section of Kuwait Times, home to decades of history, and witnessed the evolution of the newspaper over the years. (See Pages 12,13)

KUWAIT: The government said yesterday that a fact-finding ministerial committee found wide-scale electoral fraud of illegally transferring bulks of voters across constituencies, which helped to forge the will of Kuwaiti voters. To resolve this violation, the government on Wednesday approved an emergency decree requiring voters to vote in constituencies based on their residential addresses stated in their Civil IDs, which will be used for the first time ever.

The decree was issued by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and pub-

lished in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm late Wednesday night and accordingly became effective.

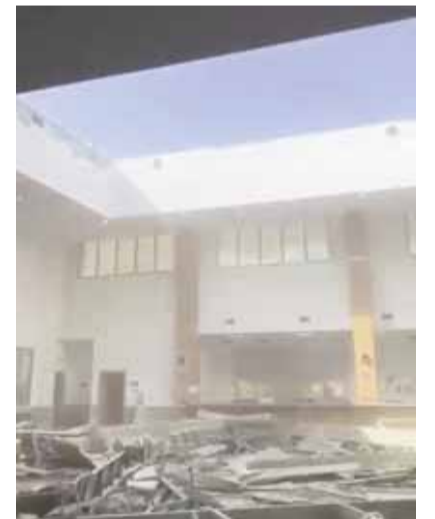
The requirement to use only Civil IDs for voters to prove their place of residence is a major change in the Kuwaiti elections which in the past depended on electoral rolls prepared by the Interior Ministry and updated every year in February.

The use of electoral rolls had allegedly allowed candidates to illegally transfer the registration of thousands of voters from one district to another to dramatically boost their

Continued on Page 6

Jahra Traffic building roof collapses

KUWAIT: No casualties from the roof collapse of the Jahra Traffic building, Deputy Premier Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah confirmed on Thursday. The damages were material only, he noted, adding that he has called for an immediate investigation into the incident so as to hold the suspects accountable and charge them for negligence. — KUNA



FBI is now US conservatives' 'evil demon'

WASHINGTON: Agents of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation are used to criticism, but never in the agency's history have they faced anything like the attacks from conservatives after last week's raid on former president Donald Trump's Florida home. Over its more than 100-year history, the FBI has been excoriated by southerners committed to racist segregation, by civil libertarians defending political activists and especially by African Americans whose 1960s liberation movement was treated as an acute national threat by the agency.

But the extraordinary threats of the past week originate in the FBI's political bedrock: conservative Republicans. "It's the world turned upside down," said Kenneth O'Reilly, a retired University of Alaska historian, who has written books about the FBI and politics. According to O'Reilly, the FBI has historically been a "deeply conservative institution" with a bipartisan constituency in Washington. But since Trump condemned the FBI as corrupt and fascist after they searched his Mar-a-Lago estate on August 8 for illegally retained top secret documents, the attacks have kept coming - and his supporters have fanned the flames.

Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel accused the bureau of "abuse of power." Senator Marco Rubio, a Republican from Florida, compared the agency to secret police in a Marxist dictatorship, while Representative Paul Gosar declared: "We must destroy the FBI." Online, including on Trump's own Truth Social network, the threats were more violent - and turned real.

Continued on Page 6

Algeria forest blazes kill 38

EL KALA: Algerian firefighters were Thursday battling a string of blazes, fanned by drought and a blistering heatwave, that have killed at least 38 people and left destruction in their wake. Deadly forest fires have become an annual scourge in the North African country, where climate change is turning large areas into a tinderbox.

According to multiple sources, including local journalists and the fire service, at least 38 people have been killed, mostly in the El Tarf region near Algeria's eastern border with Tunisia which was baking in 48 degree

Celsius heat. At least 200 more people have suffered burns or respiratory problems from the smoke, according to various Algerian media.

A journalist in El Tarf described "scenes of devastation" on the road to El Kala in the country's far northeast. "A tornado of fire swept everything away in seconds," he told AFP by telephone. "Most of those who died were surrounded while visiting a wildlife park." Emergency services were still battling a blaze around Tonga lake, he said.

An AFP team in El Kala reported a strong smell of smoke and said authorities feared that strong winds could cause new fires to break out. They also saw major damage in the wildlife park and a witness, who asked not to be named, said 12 people had

Continued on Page 6



EL KALA, Algeria: Algerian men check a burnt area at a restaurant in the Zoo following raging fires in Algeria's city of El-Kala. —AFP

Iraq protest camps dig in for long haul

BAGHDAD: In the capital of crisis-torn Iraq, two tent cities have sprung up as rival Shiite blocs have set up protest camps, complete with cooked meals and air-conditioners against the blistering heat. As the war-scarred country's political impasse has dragged on ever since inconclusive October elections, both sides are digging in for the long haul in and near Baghdad's high-security Green Zone.

Supporters of firebrand cleric and political kingmaker Moqtada Sadr,

who has hundreds of thousands at his beck and call, came in late July when they stormed parliament and then set up camp on the lawns outside. The gathering is a show of strength by Sadrists against their Shiite opponents from a pro-Iran faction called the Coordination Framework, in the midst of a tug-of-war over Iraq's political future.

The pro-Iranian group followed suit by organizing their own sit-in, on an avenue leading to the Green Zone, the district housing government institutions and foreign embassies. The camps are organized in the "mawkeb" tradition, where stalls provide food and drinks to pilgrims during Ashura and Arbaeen - two major festivals on the Shiite Muslim calendar - on their journey to the holy city of Karbala.

Continued on Page 6



BAGHDAD: Supporters of the Iraqi Coordination Framework rest during a sit-in on a bridge leading to the heavily-guarded Green Zone of the capital Baghdad. —AFP

Local

Kuwait Amir offers condolence over Algeria's forest fire victims

Amir expresses condolences over Morocco's bus accident victims

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday sent a cable to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune over the victims of forest fires in eastern Algeria, which left many casualties. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished a speedy recovery for the wounded, and hoped the officials would overcome the effects of this natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Tebboune.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Thursday voiced Kuwait's support for Algeria in its battle against wildfires in several provinces in eastern Algeria. In a press statement, the ministry expressed sincere condolences and commiseration to the Algerian leadership, government and people as well as the families of the victims, and wished a swift recovery for the injured.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday sent a cable to

Moroccan King Mohammad VI over the victims of a bus crash in Khouribga Province in central Morocco, which left dozens of casualties. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished a speedy recovery for the wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to King Mohammad VI.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping over the victims of the recent heavy rainfall that hit the western province Qinghai, leading to casualties and destruction. His Highness the Amir expressed solace towards those who perished in the natural disaster and wished for swift recovery for those wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the President of China. —KUNA

Amir offers condolences over China rainfall victims



KRCS: Humanitarian work mirrors Kuwait's time-honored approach

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said on Thursday that humanitarian work reflects the longstanding approach and pure conduct of Kuwait and its people. Speaking to KUNA on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Day, which falls on Friday, Al-Sayer said Kuwait has made numerous humanitarian accomplishments only out of its pioneering role in the international humanitarian space. The State of Kuwait is deservedly well-positioned on the global map of humanitarian and relief activities and efforts at both

regional and international levels, he pointed out.

The world marks the World Humanitarian Day on August 19 every year in order to remember the great efforts and sacrifices of all relief and humanitarian workers, especially those who lost their lives while doing their humanitarian duties, he said. He considered this year's event as an occasion to underline the significance of protecting and supporting those who try hard to save lives and deliver aid amid challenging and exceptional circumstances. Sayer boasted that the KRCS had contributed to easing out the woes and anguish of people in crisis-hit countries, particularly Arab ones, by means of delivering urgent relief and humanitarian aid to them. The Kuwaiti charity's chief concluded by calling on the world to stand united as a single group in order to offer necessary aid to affected people worldwide in a bid to safeguard their human dignity. —KUNA



EL-KALA: Algerian men check a charred bus in which at least 12 people were reportedly burnt to death following raging fires in Algeria's city of El-Kala on August 18, 2022. —AFP



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KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri met Thursday with the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait Jim Holtznider. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral ties, in addition to latest regional and global developments. —KUNA

Kuwait's Consul General to Dubai presents credentials

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Consul General to Dubai and Northern UAE Ali Al-Thaydi on Wednesday presented his credentials to Deputy Director of the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dubai, Rashid Al-Qusair. The Consulate of Kuwait conveyed UAE Foreign Ministry's welcome to the consul, wishing him success in his new position and praising the relation between the two countries. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Consul General to Dubai and Northern UAE Ali Al-Thaydi presents his credentials. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Dhari Al-Ajran met Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George on August 18, 2022 and discussed ways of furthering India-Kuwait bilateral cooperation.

Local

Al-Jazeera Kuwait office holds vigil for Shireen Abu Akleh

Network commemorates journalist on 100th day since assassination



KUWAIT: Journalists raise pictures of Shireen Abu Akleh during a vigil at Al-Jazeera Media Network's office in Kuwait on August 18, 2022. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Saad Al-Saeedi, Al-Jazeera Bureau Chief in Kuwait, speaks during the vigil.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Al-Jazeera Media Network organized on Thursday a solidarity vigil at its office in Kuwait in which dozens of journalists and activists participated, to commemorate one hundred days since the assassination of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

In a press statement, Saad Al-Saeedi, Al-Jazeera Bureau Chief in Kuwait, said, "A hundred days have passed since the assassination of our colleague Abu Akleh, the correspondent for Al-Jazeera channel, after the occupying regime's military killed her deliberately."

He added, "The bullet killed Shireen, but it did not kill the Palestinian case. Palestine will remain in

the hearts of Arabs. Al-Jazeera Network will continue to chase the killer until he is brought to justice. We spare no effort to take Shireen's right and follow up on the just cause. Shireen is the martyr of Al-Jazeera and the martyr of the Palestinian cause."

Saeedi quoted Al-Jazeera Network statement on this occasion, saying, "Al-Jazeera Media Network, as part of its global campaign to bring

justice to Shireen's soul and reveal the truth to her audience, will continue and through international legal experts to proceed with the procedures for submitting the case file to the Public Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court."

All international human rights and press freedom organizations, governments, journalists, and influencers are focusing their efforts on Thursday, August 18, by demanding

justice for Shireen and holding her killers accountable, he said.

Al-Jazeera described the killing of Abu Akleh as a "blatant murder" that violated "international laws and norms" and said that she was "assassinated in cold blood." The network pledged to file a case at the International Criminal Court in The Hague to investigate her murder.

Demonstrators in Kuwait have taken to Al-Jazeera's office to protest against the killing of veteran Al-Jazeera journalist Abu Akleh. Abu Akleh, 51, was fatally shot on May 11, 2022, when Zionist entity forces opened fire on journalists reporting on raids in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.



'Palestine will remain in the hearts of Arabs'

Moi campaigns continue in Mahboula, Jleeb and Khaitan

KUWAIT: For the sixth consecutive day, the Ministry of Interior continued campaigns against violators under the instruction of Acting Minister Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah; this time in Khaitan. "Based on the instructions of the minister and under the supervision of undersecretary Anwar Al-Barjas, the campaign throughout all departments in the ministry continues in order to ensure the security and control in all areas in Kuwait," the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Interior.

The Public Relations Department insists that it will continue its security efforts, specifically in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh areas. The surprise inspection campaign in Khaitan resulted in arresting many Iqama violators and wanted criminals, it said. "The department urges all citizens to cooperate with the police to combat all negative aspects that occur in our society," it noted in the statement, insisting the importance of holding proper documentation and not harboring any violators.



KUWAIT: Officials during the meeting.

Kuwait sets new regulations for food delivery drivers

KUWAIT: A meeting which included undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Assistant of Traffic and Operations Major General, Jamal Al-Sayegh and a number of officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition concluded with putting new regulations for food delivery companies.

These regulations include:

1. The driver must have a health certificate from the Ministry of Health.
2. A sticker must be put representing the com-

- pany on the delivery vehicle.
3. The Iqama of the deliveryman must be on the same company he works for.
4. A unified uniform must be assigned to all drivers.

The ministry insisted that all companies must follow all regulations, and legal procedures will be taken against those who violate those regulations starting from October 1.

Municipality shuts down 35 basements

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced Thursday that a total of 35 violating basements have been shut down in the second week of its inspection campaign on commercial estates. "The campaign with the cooperation of the Kuwaiti Fire Force aims to prohibit the use of basements as storage or stores in violation of licensing regulations," the municipality said in a press conference. "Throughout the second week, a total of 136 tickets and warnings have been issued, 13 basements have been emptied and 36 violating departments have been blocked," the municipality clarified. The municipality stressed the importance of increasing its inspections in all governorates in order to ensure no violations are occurring. — KUNA



Kuwait's PACI wins second ISO certificate

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced on Thursday that it had won for the second time, the (ISO/ IEC 27001:2013) certificate for information security management. In a statement, PACI said that this certificate, which is valid for three years, includes providing the highest international standers for all authority systems, especially in the data security, protection programs, facility security and safety. The authority added that this achievement is the result of efforts to protect its data and ensure its information security system. The PACI stated that fulfilling all the regulatory and security requirements for these systems is part of being an information bank that contains the data of all individuals and entities, boasting that its obtaining of this certificate since 2013, is "valuable and unique distinction for the authority." —KUNA

Expatriates' KU scholarships might be canceled

KUWAIT: After the start of Kuwait University's admission of expatriate students who will be studying on their own expense, the Ministry of Higher Education is now studying the cancellation of the scholarship program for 50 non-Kuwaiti high school graduates which the minister selects every year based on their grades.

"Scholarships for 50 students given by the Minister of Higher Education does not make sense and is not fair, given that other students are paying fees for their classes," sources told Kuwait Times. "The previous procedure included accepting expatriates based on vacancies after the acceptance of Kuwaitis and children of Kuwaiti mothers in order to reward high achieving expatriate students, especially since one of the factors that lower KU's rating is the lack of non-Kuwaiti students."

Even though many students have applied for this sponsorship this year, the plans for cancellation is very likely; if not for this year, it will be for the next academic year, according to the sources. "Kuwait University will not increase its sponsorship as many embassies have requested, as current vacancies cannot hold more students, especially since students studying on their own fees, have been accepted," the sources clarified after many embassies expressed its hopes to increase expat students eligible for scholarship.

Local

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News in brief

Ministry says hiring expat imams at 'unfavorable' locations

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs released a statement Thursday confirming that it has requested to hire non-Kuwaiti imams and muezzins to work in mosques at remote locations "that are unfavorable for Kuwaiti candidates". The ministry's explanation comes in response to complaints that it was seeking to hire expatriate candidates contrary to the government's current trend of 'Kuwaitization' of public posts. "We are experiencing rapid urban development in new areas, as well as resignations due to deaths and other reasons especially COVID," the ministry affirmed. "We requested the increase of non-Kuwaiti imams to work in new areas considered undesirable for Kuwaitis, such as remote areas located near the border, farms or chalets," the ministry clarified.

Cash transactions banned in domestic workers' offices

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry made a decision to ban any use of cash in transactions relating to domestic workers' offices. "All licensed offices and institutions that bring domestic workers into Kuwait must comply with the new law which prohibits the use of cash in their transactions, and payments must be directly from the customer's account through modems allowed by the Kuwaiti Central Bank," the Ministry announced.

Kuwait oil price down \$1.28 to \$98.07 pb

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti crude oil price fell by \$1.28 to \$98.07 per barrel on Wednesday, compared with \$99.35 per barrel the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday. Brent crude rose by \$1.31 to \$93.65 pb and West Texas Intermediate hiked by \$1.58 to \$88.11 pb.

Sudanese cultural enthusiasts commend Kuwait's contributions

KHARTOUM: A number of Sudanese cultural officials commended on Thursday the contributions of Kuwait National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL), saying that the council had been providing essential assistance and contributions to the Sudanese intellectual scene. Speaking to KUNA, Hatem Elias — former director of the Khartoum international book fair — affirmed that the NCCAL was a bridge introducing the Sudanese audience to Kuwaiti cultural wealth and products. He reiterated Sudan's keenness on Kuwait publishing companies' participation in its cultural functions and events.

Elias commended Kuwait's investment in the field of culture, intellect and illumination, saying that the volume of cultural achievements done by Kuwait, especially last half century, was tremendous.

Tayeb Ahmad Al-Tayeb — a passionate reader — lauded the publications by the NCCAL, saying that they were essential for the Arab book libraries. Meanwhile, writer and academic Ahmad Al-Sadeq noted that the excellent quality and valuable books and products put out by the NCCAL.

Sadeq affirmed that the NCCAL products were very popular in Sudan, stressed that he was keen on owning various books produced by the council. He commended Kuwait's efforts to spreading knowledge and literature in his country, affirming that many intellectuals in Sudan had benefited from Kuwait's cultural wealth and began their own journey thanks to the Gulf country's efforts. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: People take to the beach despite strong winds and high waves at a beach in Kuwait on August 17, 2022. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Experts demand restructuring of Arab environmental media: Bahzad

Recommendations of the 6th experts' workshop in cooperation with KEPS

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Environmental Training Center concluded its sixth workshop for expertise for the current year. The event was held in cooperation with the Kuwait Environment Protection Society under the theme 'The Reality of Environmental Awareness and Media in the Arab World'. It featured the participation of 12 Arab countries, who developed 70 proposals to restructure environmental media and make maximum use of professional and technical expertise in the press and media field.

Jenan Bahzad, Director of Programs and Activities and Member of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Environment Protection Society, pointed out the importance of "cooperation of environmental information centers with various media outlets." It is imperative to "provide them with the necessary information, as well as the latest studies, regional and international activities and cooperating with non-governmental associations related to environmental affairs, in addition to strengthening the role of environmental media to be participating effectively, and utilizing modern media to reach the largest segment of society," she added.

Bahzad recommended to the experts to establish an Arab research center to attract researchers specialized in Arab media to study and develop Arab leadership in the various fields of media, and to include the specialization of environmental media within Arab media colleges. She also recommended forming Arab work teams for the exchange of knowledge between the supervisors of environmental pages and programs in the various media, experts, interested parties and concerned organizations, as well as the creation of an electronic environmental library that brings the Arab world together to view all

environmental resources that are difficult to access and benefit from the proposed solutions to them, in addition to activating digital media, and broadcasting an Arab visual channel specialized in the environmental field that brings together experts, associations and media professionals."

Challenges facing media

In the meantime, Bahzad summarized the challenges faced by the environmental media as seen by experts in several points, including "the absence of opinion polls that determine the levels of environmental awareness among different segments of the

ness and lack of specialized human cadres capable of responsible environmental knowledge, and the absence of media institutions specialized in the environment."

Bahzad reported the most prominent environmental issues that were addressed by the workshop and that she finds the shortcomings in her Arab media coverage. She lists those issues as the impact of wars, conflicts and destruction of the environment during conflicts and their profound impact on future generations, the failure to cover what is happening in Palestine from the Zionist occupation's measures regarding land confiscation and burning trees carried out by the occupier, in addition to the methods of disposal of waste of all kinds, whether organic, inorganic and the extent to which they are used, the societal culture in protecting the environment, encroachment on the environment in cutting down trees, sudden and suspected fires that are deliberate, overgrazing and marine pollution, in addition to over-construction and lack of planting trees, bushes and poaching, which caused the extinction of some birds and animals, and raising environmental awareness for children in line with their knowledge and skills. She called out for involving the private and public sectors to deliver and develop correct information, and to establish a unified Arab center that trains cadres from all Arab countries in the field of environmental awareness and information, in addition to adding awareness and training concepts in schools and universities.



Jenan Bahzad



Recommendation to establish Arab research center

public and private audience, the lack of information and the need for material support, in addition to the fact that the specialized media lacks of the existence of information bases and the shortcomings of modern studies and curricula, the absence of transparency in some Arab countries in the environmental media, the lack of capabilities and technical cadres specialized in the environmental field, the absence of information, bias in reporting news, and fear when declaring what is happening in the environment, in addition to the lack of impartiality and orientation to politics and leaving the environment on the sidelines, the weak-

IKEA collaborates with EPA in distributing one million eco-friendly bags

KUWAIT: In line with the commitment to have a positive impact on both people and planet, IKEA Kuwait is collaborating with the Environment Public Authority (EPA) in Kuwait to distribute a total of one million biodegradable eco-friendly bags, as part of EPA's environmental awareness campaign.

The EPA campaign aims to decrease plastic waste in Kuwait by shedding light on the danger of excessive plastic usage and to encourage a public behavior of replacing plastic bags with eco-friendly bags that dissolve in water, leaving no toxic residue behind.

"At IKEA, our ambition is to become a climate positive business. To meet the challenges of unsustainable consumption, climate change, and growing inequality, we are taking ambitious steps towards a more sustainable future. Our collaboration with EPA is a step on this journey," said Carsten Ebel, Director of Sustainability at Al-Homaizi Ltd.

"IKEA is a value-based business. We decided to side with the many since the beginning, more than 76 years ago, and the IKEA vision, to create a better everyday life for the many people, is now more relevant than ever. This means it is our responsibility to support the overall commitment to reduce plastic pollution, and to do everything we can to address it like encouraging people to use the biodegradable eco-friendly bags which are made from renewable and recycled materials," continued Ebel. For a bet-



ter environment in Kuwait, IKEA calls all its customers to collect their eco-friendly bags from the EPA's dedicated booth at any of IKEA stores: The Avenues, 360, and The Assima Mall.

"We are honored to partner with EPA in Kuwait, and very happy to be chosen as part of this valuable campaign. This will help us all make better and more

eco-friendly choices. We praise the EPA's instrumental efforts in promoting greener and sustainable solutions, which will indeed support the on-going global sustainable efforts in Kuwait. We also look forward for more cooperations in the future, hoping to encourage everyone in Kuwait to a better home and a better life," Ebel concluded.



Gang-raped Indian woman 'numb' after attackers released

Zionists troops raid Palestinian human rights offices



KHARKIV, Ukraine: Rescue workers inspect the site of a destroyed hostel as a result of a missile strike in the second largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. — AFP

Russia strikes ahead of UN chief meeting

Moscow denies deployment of heavy weapons in southern Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine: Russian strikes battered the northeast Ukraine region of Kharkiv Thursday, killing at least five people, hours ahead of the first face-to-face meeting since the start of the war between the Turkish and Ukrainian leaders.

Moscow meanwhile denied it had deployed any heavy weapons at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine where a recent escalation in fighting has increased fears of a nuclear disaster.

The head of the Kharkiv region Oleg Syneghubov said Moscow's forces had launched eight missiles from Russian territory at around 0430 local time (0130 GMT) striking across the city.

"Three people died, including a child. Eight people, including two children, were rescued," the emergency services said. Syneghubov posted images from the scene of one strike showing the smouldering remains of several burnt out buildings and twisted wreckage of destroyed vehicles nearby.

In separate strikes on the town of Krasnohrad south west of Kharkiv, bombardments that damaged

residential buildings left two dead and two more injured, he said. "Kharkiv. 175 days of horror. Daily terror, missile strikes on residential areas and civilians," a senior presidential aide, Mykhaylo Podolyak, wrote on social media.

A 'political solution'

The strikes in the war-scarred east of the country come a day after bombardments killed at least seven in the city and as the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and UN chief Antonio Guterres were convening in the western city of Lviv.

The two were key brokers of a deal last month with Moscow and Kyiv allowing the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine after Russia's invasion blocked essential global supplies.

A spokesman for Guterres said that the UN chief, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Erdogan will discuss the grain deal, as well as "the need for a political solution to this conflict".

He added that he had "no doubt that the issue of the nuclear power plant" would be raised. In his reg-

ular nightly address on Wednesday, Zelensky said he and Guterres would "work to get the necessary results for Ukraine". The UN chief is slated to travel on Friday to Odessa, one of three ports involved in the grain exports deal-hammered out in July under the aegis of the UN with Ankara's mediation.

He will then head to Turkey to visit the Joint Coordination Centre, the body tasked with overseeing the accord. According to the UN, the first half of August saw 21 freighters authorised to sail under the deal carrying more than 563,000 tonnes of agricultural products, including more than 451,000 tonnes of corn. The first wartime shipment of UN food aid for Africa reached the Bosphorus Strait on Wednesday carrying 23,000 tonnes of wheat.

'Provocation'

Russia's defence ministry meanwhile said Thursday its forces had not deployed heavy weapons at the Zaporizhzhia plant, accusing Kyiv of preparing a "provocation" at the station. "Russian troops have no heavy weapons either on the territo-

ry of the station or in areas around it. There are only guard units," the ministry said in a statement.

Zelensky touched on the Zaporizhzhia plant in his address on Wednesday, saying Ukrainian diplomats and scientists were in "constant touch" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the goal of sending a mission by the watchdog to the occupied nuclear facility.

"The Russian army must withdraw from the territory of the nuclear power plant and all neighbouring areas, and take away its military equipment from the plant," he added. "This must happen without any conditions and as soon as possible." Earlier Wednesday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Russia's seizure of the plant "poses a serious threat to the safety and the security of this facility (and) raises the risks of a nuclear accident or incident".

Also calling for a Russian withdrawal and inspections by the IAEA, Stoltenberg accused Moscow of using "the ground around the nuclear power plant as a staging area, as a platform, to launch artillery attacks on Ukrainian forces, and this is reckless". — AFP

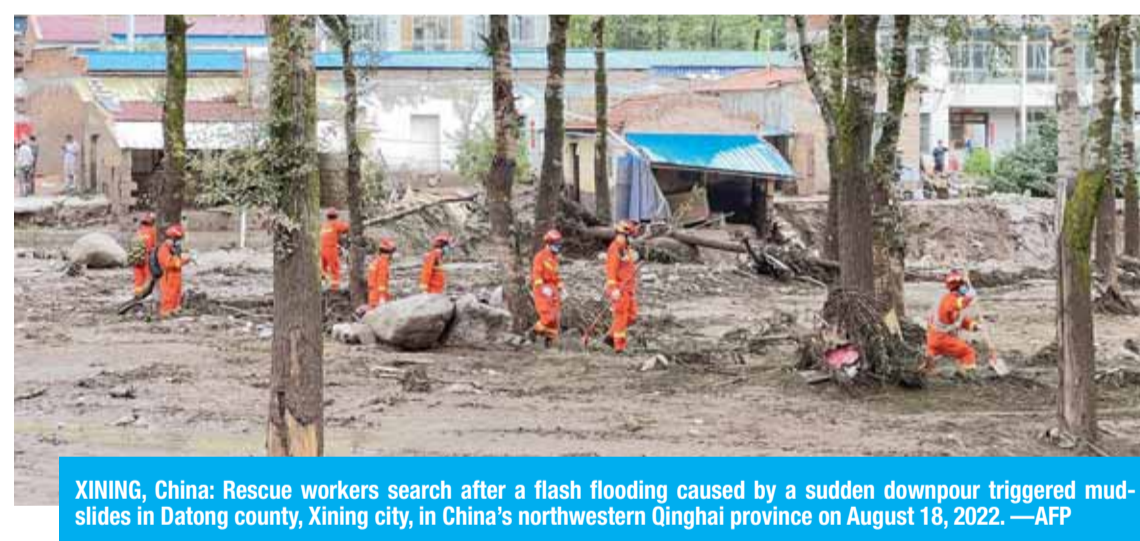
16 killed, many missing in China floods

BEIJING: Sixteen people were killed and many left missing in flash flooding in northwest China, state media reported Thursday, as the country battles extreme weather that has shuttered factories and caused rolling power cuts.

The deluge comes during a summer of soaring temperatures and torrential rains in China, with multiple cities clocking their hottest days on record and floods causing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of damage.

Floods hit this week in a mountainous region of Datong county in Qinghai province, affecting more than 6,200 people from six villages, state broadcaster CCTV said. Photos of the aftermath showed roads covered in mud, uprooted trees, damaged homes and rescue workers carrying shovels.

"As of noon on the 18th, 16 people have been killed," added CCTV, saying that rescue work was ongoing. At least 18 people are missing and 20 have since been rescued, and a "frontline headquarters" has been set up to organise the emergency response, according to state media reports. "The rescue work is progressing in an orderly manner," the report said, adding that sudden heavy rainfall



XINING, China: Rescue workers search after a flash flooding caused by a sudden downpour triggered mudslides in Datong county, Xining city, in China's northwestern Qinghai province on August 18, 2022. — AFP

Wednesday night had triggered the situation.

Extreme weather

Scientists say extreme weather across the world has become more frequent due to climate change, and will likely grow more intense as temperatures rise. Severe flooding in southern China in June displaced more than half a million people and caused an estimated \$250 million in damage.

On Wednesday, Chinese authorities warned that heavy rains were also expected to hit northern regions of the country including the capital Beijing

and its neighbouring Tianjin and Hebei. Earlier this week, President Xi Jinping called on officials in the northeastern Liaoning province to "ensure the safety of people's lives in flood control", state media reported.

Meanwhile, millions of people in southwest China are facing rolling power cuts after a crushing heatwave led to an electricity supply crunch that has forced factories to halt work. Sichuan province relies heavily on dams to generate its electricity but the heat has caused reservoirs to dry up, exacerbating the energy shortage. — AFP

Rushdie attack awakens old demons for Arab writers

CAIRO: Only ever found in incomplete, clandestine translations in Arabic, "The Satanic Verses" could have gone largely unnoticed in the Arab world, were it not for the Iranian religious edict against its author Salman Rushdie.

Then supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's fatwa calling for Rushdie's death, issued on February 14, 1989, struck a nerve with Arab authors, themselves often in danger of ruffling authoritarian feathers and "offending moral values".

When the novel came out in September 1988, sparking mass protests in India, Pakistan and elsewhere, the Arab world was more focused on the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, against Zionist entity and the Iran-Iraq war.

In Britain and in Rushdie's native India, the book

attracted both praise and ire, with tens of thousands railing against it for "insulting" the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Part of the controversy centred on fictional dream sequences involving the Prophet in the work of magical realism, which the Muslim protesters derided as blasphemous.

British-Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif said, however, that the real shock to many readers of Rushdie's novel was "the language he used to describe the Prophet". It was "the jokey, familiar language he generally used to describe his characters—a radical departure from the usual venerating tone people are used to," she said.

A few days after the Iranian fatwa, a group of 40 Arabic intellectuals published an open letter from Damascus titled "In Defence of a Writer's Right to Live". "We are not here to defend the book, but its author and his right to live and write," they declared, decrying a history of book burning and persecution of writers dating back to the Middle Ages.

Lebanese writer Fawwaz Traboulsi, one of the signatories back then, reiterated the sentiment on Facebook last Sunday—a day after Rushdie was stabbed during a lecture in upstate New York.



TEHRAN: Iranians check newspapers at a bookshop in Tehran on August 13, 2022, a day after a man stabbed British author Salman Rushdie, the target of a 1989 Iranian fatwa calling for his death, during a literary event in New York state. — AFP

Rushdie, 75, was airlifted to a nearby hospital, where he underwent emergency surgery for life-threatening injuries. His condition remains serious but he has shown signs of improvement. — AFP

Indian FM defends ties with Myanmar

BANGKOK: India's foreign minister on Thursday defended his country's ties with the Myanmar junta, despite growing international concerns about recent executions and the legitimacy of elections planned for next year.

Myanmar's decade-long experiment with democracy was halted last year and the country has since spiralled into bloody conflict after the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in a coup. It has become a global pariah, with some western countries downgrading relations and levelling economic sanctions against the junta.

But India, China and Russia have continued to engage with the regime, including conducting ministerial visits. Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said New Delhi's position on Myanmar has been consistent over decades and goes back to the country's struggle for freedom against colonialism.

"Our relationship is not something which should be judged... by the politics of the day," Jaishankar told an audience at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. As a direct neighbour India could not avoid dealing with the military junta regime because of border issues such as organised crime, coronavirus and Indian insurgents in Myanmar, he said.

"We also have to manage our border relationship and the complexities of being a neighbour," he said. Earlier this year New Delhi's incoming ambassador to Myanmar presented his credentials to coup leader Min Aung Hlaing-making India one of the few nations to recognise the junta as a legitimate government.

Jaishankar said as an immediate neighbour, India had an empathy and an understanding that was different from other countries far away that were pontificating about Myanmar's democracy. Despite their engagement with the junta, "we deeply believe that Myanmar is best served by being a democracy—by reflecting what are the sentiments and wishes of its people," he said. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc have so far proven fruitless. Last week, Myanmar's ruling junta moved to restrict the country's 92 political parties from meeting foreigners or international organisations ahead of an election expected next year. — AFP

International

Hague trial set for 1994 Rwanda genocide accused Felicien Kabuga

Kabuga pushed into the courtroom in a wheelchair

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Felicien Kabuga, an alleged financier of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, will go on trial in The Hague on September 29 facing charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, a UN judge announced Thursday.

Once one of Rwanda's richest men, Kabuga allegedly helped set up hate media that urged ethnic Hutus to "kill Tutsi cockroaches" and funded militia groups. Now in his 80s, Kabuga was arrested in France in May 2020 and transferred to a UN tribunal in The Hague to face charges of playing a key role in the slaughter of 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

"The Chamber orders the trial to commence at the Hague branch with opening statements on the 29th of September... and evidence to start on the 5th of October," Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) judge Iain Bonomy said.

Wearing a dark suit, spotted black tie and striped white shirt, a frail-looking Kabuga listened intently through headphones perched on his head. Earlier he was pushed into the courtroom in a

wheelchair.

Kabuga was originally scheduled to appear in court in Arusha, where the other arm of the MICT resides, but judges had ruled he would remain in The Hague "until otherwise decided." In June, the judges denied a defence objection, ruling Kabuga was indeed fit to stand trial.

Bonomy said on Thursday the defendant would appear "three times a week for two hours at a time." Kabuga is being held at the tribunal's detention unit a few kilometres (miles) away. He will be allowed to attend hearings through a video link if necessary, the judge said.

"Routine is an important part of Mr Kabuga's life," he said. "Whatever is required will be done." Kabuga listened motionless but told Bonomy he wanted to change lawyers when asked if he wished to address the court.

On the run

His current defence lawyer, Emmanuel Altit, pleaded not guilty on his client's behalf at Kabuga's first appearance in November 2020. He faces six charges including one count of genocide and three counts of crimes against humanity:

persecution, extermination and murder.

The UN says 800,000 people were murdered in Rwanda in 1994 in a 100-day rampage that shocked the world. An ally of Rwanda's then-ruling party, Kabuga allegedly helped create the Interahamwe Hutu militia group and the Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), whose broadcasts incited people to murder.

The radio station also identified the hiding places of Tutsis where they were later killed, prosecutors said in the indictment. More than 50 witnesses are expected to appear for the prosecution, which said they needed about 40 hours to wrap their case.

Prosecutors said Kabuga controlled and encouraged RTLM's content and defended the station when the minister of information criticised the broadcasts. Kabuga is also accused of helping to buy machetes that were distributed to genocidal groups, and ordering them to kill Tutsis.

Later fleeing Rwanda, Kabuga spent years on the run using a succession of false passports. Investigators say he was helped by a network of former Rwandan



PARIS, France: File photo shows a courtroom sketch of Felicien Kabuga, one of the last key suspects in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, wearing a protective face mask as a protection due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

allies to evade justice. Following his arrest in a small apartment near Paris, his lawyers argued that Kabuga, whose age is now given as 87 on the indictment, should face

trial in France for health reasons. But France's top court ruled he should be moved to UN custody, in line with an arrest warrant issued in 1997. —AFP

Wildfires in Portugal, Spain contained

LISBON: Massive wildfires in Portugal and Spain were largely under control Thursday after forcing thousands from their homes and destroying large swathes of land. The fires in both countries followed punishing heatwaves and long dry spells, leaving forests parched and primed to burn.

In Portugal, over 1,000 firefighters were still deployed in the Serra da Estrela national park, but the blaze was mostly contained after days of burning out of control. With more hot weather forecast, however, there were fears it could flare up again.

"The fire is under control, but it is not extinguished. Consolidation work will continue in the coming days," civil protection commander Miguel Oliveira told TSF radio. "It is always possible, and very likely, that there will be new reactivations, but we hope that they do not take on worrying proportions," he said. The huge fire in central Portugal was brought under control last week, only to restart again Monday. More than 25,000 hectares (nearly 61,800 acres) of land is estimated to have been scorched by the fire in the UNESCO-listed park, home to diverse wildlife species including wildcats and lizards.

Forecasts are predicting a fresh heatwave on Saturday, the latest in a string of hot spells in Portugal this year. July was the hottest on record in nearly a century. Interior Minister Jose Luis Carneiro said Wednesday "we will experience increased risks" of fires in the coming days due to hot and dry conditions. —AFP

Zionists raid Palestinian HR offices

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: Zionist security forces on Thursday raided the offices of multiple Palestinian human rights groups in the occupied West Bank, which the state has branded "terrorist organisations".

The military said soldiers and police officers "closed seven institutions and confiscated property" in the overnight raids. At the Ramallah offices of human rights group Al Haq, the front door had been welded shut and a Hebrew statement left saying it would remain closed for "security reasons".

"Any activity in this place jeopardises the security of the area, of the security forces and of public order," said a statement seen by AFP. A priest said an Anglican church on the building's ground floor was damaged as troops sought to access the Al Haq offices.

"The soldiers came into the premises around 3:00 am and we started hearing shots and banging on the doors," Father Fadi Diab of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church told AFP. Al Haq is one of six Palestinian groups branded terrorist organisations by Zionist entity in October for their alleged links to leftist militant group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

Zionist entity has not publicly shared any evidence of the alleged ties to the PFLP, which has been labelled a terrorist organisation by many Western governments.

Staff from Al Haq removed the metal sheet covering their office door on Thursday and vowed to get back to work despite computers and other equipment being seized.



RAMALLAH: Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh speaks at the Palestinian Al Haq Foundation in the West Bank city of Ramallah after Zionist entity raided and closed an entrance to their offices, on August 18, 2022. —AFP

"We were established here not by Zionist entity, not by their decision and we will continue our work," Al Haq director Shawan Jabarin told a press conference.

On Thursday morning, tear gas canisters littered the street outside Al Haq's office. The Zionist military said it responded to "rocks and Molotov cocktails" being thrown at soldiers during the overnight raids. West Bank cities are nominally under the full control of the Palestinian Authority but the Zionist security forces carry out frequent incursions, which

are often met with stones or petrol bombs.

EU backs rights groups

Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh vowed solidarity with Al Haq and the other non-governmental organisations raided overnight. "This is not only an NGO, but this is also a State of Palestine institution — therefore as long as they work within the law, we will stand solid with them," Shtayyeh told AFP, as he visited the Al Haq offices. —AFP

Electoral fraud prompted...

Continued from Page 1

chances of winning a seat in the National Assembly. The Public Authority for Civil ID (PACI) will issue new electoral rolls based on the voters' addresses.

This measure will prevent corrupt candidates from moving voters from one constituency to another, depriving them from a means that could have boosted their chances to win seats in the Assembly. The explanatory note of the Amiri decree said that the fact finding committee, formed on July 5 and presented its report on August 13, conclusively found massive movements of voters by candidates to boost their chances of winning.

The explanatory note said that vote transfers amounted to vote rigging and fraud which resulted in the forgery of the will of the nation. The decree to change the way of voting was welcomed by many. Former National Assembly Speaker and prominent opposition figure Ahmad Al-Saadoun said the government has paved the way to allow the people to freely cast their votes in the process of reforms.

Former MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji said the measure will boost the integrity of elections, but he expressed concerns that it might spark a constitu-

tional controversy. Two weeks ago, the National Assembly was dissolved by an Amiri decree which also called for holding snap elections to elect a new Assembly. The decree cited continued political disputes between the government and opposition MPs as the cause of dissolving the house.

In a televised speech delivered by HH the crown prince two months ago, the Amir vowed to prevent corruption in the forthcoming elections and pledged that the government will not interfere in the election of the Assembly Speaker. Adopting the Civil IDs for voters was one of the major demands by opposition MPs to ensure free and fair elections. No date has been yet decided for the snap polls but under Kuwait's constitution, the new elections must be held within two months of dissolving the Assembly, before October 1 in this case.

In the meantime, the Interior Ministry said yesterday that 10 people suspected of organizing and taking part in the outlawed tribal primaries were remanded for 21 days in jail pending the start of their trial. The people were arrested after organizing the tribal primaries which are banned under the law.

Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Rana Al-Fares yesterday revealed a one-year plan to dismiss all expat employees at Kuwait Municipality. She said the plan starts at the beginning of September when a third of the expat workforce will be served dismissal notices. The second phase begins on January 1 next year and the third on July 1, 2023. Children of Kuwaiti women and stateless people known as Bedoons are exempted from the plan.

the area told AFP. He described scenes of panic in the city of half a million people, where nearly 100 women and 17 newborn babies had to be evacuated from a hospital near the forest. Algerian television showed people fleeing their burning homes, women carrying children in their arms. Local media said 350 people had fled their homes.

Some 39 blazes were ravaging various parts of northern Algeria, according to the fire service, and there were fears that hot winds could spark new ones that authorities are ill-equipped to fight. The scenes sparked fears of a repeat of fires last year which killed at least 90 people and ravaged 100,000 hectares of forest and farmland in the country's north. —AFP

FBI is now US conservatives'...

Continued from Page 1

On August 11, an armed 42-year-old man attacked the FBI's branch in Cincinnati after writing on social media accounts attributed to him that people should "respond with force" to the raid on Trump and "kill the FBI on sight." The man failed to enter the office in the Ohio city, and was later shot dead by police. One day later, a 46-year-old man in Pennsylvania was arrested for making similar threats. "If You Work For The FBI Then You Deserve To Die," he wrote on social media. "My only goal is to kill more of them before I drop."

Long mythologized in film and television, the FBI - the storied home of the 1930s G-Men and the powerful, inscrutable J Edgar Hoover - has regularly fielded criticism from all sides, O'Reilly told AFP. "Among southern racists in the early 60s, there was a big backlash against the FBI, treating it like the Gestapo" when it investigated the lynchings of African Americans.

The worst period, O'Reilly said, was in the 1960s

Iraq protest camps dig in...

Continued from Page 1

"We grabbed our pillows and came," Fadel Rahman, a 33-year-old Sadrist, told AFP.

Along with about 20 other people, he said he helped to finance a mawkeb with a contribution of about \$170. "We serve meals to the protesters. There is tea and cold water, which is the most important thing in this heat," Rahman said, as temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). His demand is "to remove the corrupt" - a catch cry of Sadrists who are seeking the dissolution of parliament and an early general election.

More than 10 months on from Iraq's last legisla-

tion, the country still lacks a prime minister and government. Negotiations to end the crisis have stalled against a backdrop of behind-the-scenes haggling and a flood of bitter invective between the two rival camps. The avenue leading to the parliament building in Baghdad is lined by colorful tents shielding the Sadrists from the sun.

In 1995, FBI actions did spark a violent attack. Anti-government extremists bombed a federal office building in Oklahoma City that included the regional FBI headquarters, killing 168 people. The two extremists were motivated in part by the FBI's poor handling of two hostage-like sieges in 1992 and 1993 that turned deadly. But through all of that, the FBI maintained general political and popular support.

The current anti-FBI turn has its roots in Trump's long battle with the bureau's investigations, and specifically its probes into hundreds of his supporters who violently stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. For O'Reilly, the open threats by Trump supporters and politicians are what makes the current moment shocking. "I would guess the overwhelming majority of FBI agents voted for Trump," he said. "So it's just a wild idea that the most conservative elements of the Republican Party see the FBI as a tool of the radical left." —AFP

tive election, the country still lacks a prime minister and government. Negotiations to end the crisis have stalled against a backdrop of behind-the-scenes haggling and a flood of bitter invective between the two rival camps. The avenue leading to the parliament building in Baghdad is lined by colorful tents shielding the Sadrists from the sun.

In all, their camp is supplied by 70 mawakeb, dishing out around 100 kilograms (220 pounds) each day of rice alone, as well as other food and drinks, at a cost of \$4,000, an organizer told AFP. The lucky ones have mobile air-conditioners that are plugged into the parliament's power supply. Sandwiches are distributed to them by volunteers. The back of a pick-up truck has been transformed into a mobile canteen where stews, rice and beans simmer in large pots. "Every night we get together with my friends to decide on the next day's menu," said Mohamed Hussein, 33, sweating under the sun as he served up lunch. —AFP

Algeria forest blazes...

Continued from Page 1

been burned to death in their bus as they tried to escape. Several roads in the area were closed. State television reported Thursday morning that Prime Minister Ayman Benabderrahmane was visiting the area. Firefighters were also battling a large blaze in the mountainous area of Souk Ahras, a journalist in

International

21 die as blast rips through mosque in Afghan capital

Most of the injuries were caused by shrapnel and burns

KABUL: A blast that ripped through a mosque packed with worshippers in the Afghan capital killed at least 21 people and wounded more than two dozen others, police said Thursday. The number of bombings across Afghanistan has declined since the Taliban returned to power last year, but several attacks—some targeting minority communities—have rocked the country in recent months, including those claimed by the jihadist Islamic State (IS) group.



Security was deteriorating in the country

No group has claimed responsibility for Wednesday evening's blast at Kabul's Sediqia Mosque, which has an adjoining madrasa. "He was my cousin, may God forgive him," said one local resident who gave his name as Masiullah, referring to a relative who died in the explosion.

"One year had passed from his marriage, he was 27 years old... he was a good person." Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said 21 people were killed and 33 others wounded. Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency, which operates a hospital in Kabul, said it had received 35 patients, including three who died.

"Most of the injuries were caused by shrapnel and



KABUL: Afghans pray at a grave of victims, after burial ceremony in a cemetery on the outskirts of Kabul on August 18, 2022. The death toll from a blast which ripped through a mosque packed with worshippers in the Afghan capital Kabul on August 17, has risen to 21, police said. — AFP

burns. Our surgeons were operating throughout the night. There were nine children among the victims that we received," country director Stefano Sozza said in a statement on Thursday.

Local hospitals contacted by AFP said they were not permitted to provide details of casualties they had treated. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on Thursday said security was "deteriorating" in the country.

"We deplore yesterday's attack in a Kabul mosque, the latest in a disturbing series of bombings which have killed & injured more than 250 people in recent weeks, the highest monthly number of civilian casualties over the last year," said a statement released on Twitter.

Security challenge

Taliban officials insist they have full control of security and frequently deny or play down incidents report-

ed on Afghanistan's vibrant social media. They have also taken recently to preventing local and foreign media from covering the aftermath of attacks—sometimes using violence—and on Thursday armed Taliban fighters blocked journalists from reaching the latest blast site.

Wednesday's explosion comes nearly a week after a suicide bomber killed top Taliban cleric Rahimullah Haqqani, along with his brother, at his madrasa in Kabul. Haqqani was known for angry speeches against IS, which later claimed the attack.

The jihadist group has primarily targeted minority communities such as Shiites, Sufis and Sikhs. The Taliban claim they have defeated IS, but experts say the group remains a key security challenge for the hard-line Islamists.

While IS is a Sunni Islamist group like the Taliban, the two are bitter rivals and greatly diverge on ideological grounds. Taliban leaders on Thursday led a major gathering of more than 2,000 clerics and elders in the southern city of Kandahar, the movement's de facto power base.

In a statement sent to the media, a Taliban spokesman said "important decisions" would be taken at the conference but provided no details. The Taliban on Monday marked the first anniversary of their return to power following a turbulent year that saw women's rights crushed and a humanitarian crisis worsen.

Initially, they promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, but many restrictions have gradually been imposed. Afghanistan is in economic crisis, with its overseas assets frozen by Washington and aid curtailed to keep funds out of the Taliban's hands. No country has officially recognised the government. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Activists hold placards during a protest against the release, following a recommendation by a Gujarat's state government panel, of men convicted of gang-raping Bilkis Bano during the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat. — AFP

Gang-raped Indian woman 'numb' after attackers released

AHMEDABAD, India: A Muslim woman who was gang-raped as 14 other people were murdered during one of post-independence India's worst religious riots has said she is "numb" after her attackers were released early from prison.

In a case that drew global outrage, Bilkis Bano and two of her children were the only survivors among a group of 17 Muslims attacked by a Hindu mob in the western state of Gujarat in 2002. Bilkis was pregnant at the time and seven of those killed were relatives including her three-year-old daughter. The attack took place when current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was Gujarat state premier.

Eleven Hindu men were later sentenced to life in prison but were freed on Monday, with the Gujarat government timing its announcement to coincide with celebrations for the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The attackers, released following a recommendation by a state government panel, were greeted by relatives outside the prison who gave them sweets and touched their feet in a traditional Indian sign of respect. Bilkis said in a statement released by her lawyer on Wednesday that she was "bereft of words. I am still numb." "I trusted the highest courts in our land.

I trusted the system, and I was learning slowly to live with my trauma. "The release of these convicts has taken from me my peace and shaken my faith in justice. My sorrow and my wavering faith is not for myself alone but for every woman who is struggling for justice in courts," she said. On Thursday around a dozen people staged a demonstration in New Delhi against the release of the men.

Opposition politician Rahul Gandhi, grandson of former premier Indira Gandhi, tweeted: "Prime Minister... the entire country is seeing the difference between your words and deeds." Modi was accused of turning a blind eye to the riots but was cleared of any wrongdoing in 2012, two years before becoming leader of the Hindu-majority nation that is home to 200 million Muslims.

"BJP's bias for a religion is such that even brutal rape and hate crimes are forgivable," prominent Muslim politician Asaduddin Owaisi said, referring to Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. The Gujarat state government, run by the BJP, defended the decision to release the men. "The remission of the 11 convicts was considered after taking various factors like life imprisonment term in India which is typically of 14 years or more, age, behaviour of the person and so on," senior official Raj Kumar was quoted by the Hindustan Times as saying. According to the official toll, around 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were hacked, beaten, shot or burnt to death in the riots, which erupted after 59 Hindu pilgrims died in a train fire that was blamed on a Muslim mob. More than three dozen Muslims were later convicted over the fire, although the cause remains disputed. — AFP

But earlier this month a more senior judge declared such requests must be granted, and on Thursday Law agreed to lift the restrictions.

'Vague charges'

During many of the pre-trial proceedings, which can now be reported for the first time, defendants have described feeling pressured by prosecutors to plead to what they believe are vague charges. Defence lawyers have also argued that prosecutors have not properly detailed what the conspiracy is that their clients are alleged to have taken part in.

"The prosecution has been allowed to dance around and change and add (to the charges)," veteran barrister Gladys Li argued at one of the hearings. "We will not be held at gunpoint to offer a plea."

The prosecution has denied being vague on the charges. The 47 defendants are some of Hong Kong's best-known dissidents, ranging from moderate reformists and former lawmakers to more radical China critics. Some, such as Joshua Wong and Benny Tai, are already serving sentences for protest-related convictions. As the case has wound its way through the courts, most have opted to plead guilty—a step that usually gets them a reduced sentence. So far just 18 defendants have opted for a full trial. It is still not clear when the trial will begin, and those in the dock face up to life in jail. On Tuesday, AFP reported that Hong Kong's justice minister had ordered a no-jury trial for the 47.—AFP

Restrictions lifted on HK's largest security trial

HONG KONG: Reporting restrictions blanketing Hong Kong's largest national security prosecution were lifted on Thursday following an earlier a High Court ruling, shedding new light on pre-trial hearings that have dragged on for more than a year.

Beijing imposed a sweeping security law on Hong Kong after 2019's huge and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests. It criminalised most dissent and transformed the once-outspoken city into something more closely resembling the authoritarian mainland.

The largest joint prosecution is of 47 leading democracy activists, most of whom have been held behind bars for more than a year as prosecution and defence lawyers prepare for an eventual trial in what is new legal territory.

They are charged with "conspiracy to commit subversion", for organising an unofficial primary election. Repeated requests by the defendants to lift reporting restrictions covering those hearings were denied by trial judge Peter Law.

Najib starts final bid to overturn 1MDB jail sentence

PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia: Malaysia's top court on Thursday began hearing ex-leader Najib Razak's appeal to overturn his jail sentence for corruption in a high-stakes legal gambit that could see him locked up or potentially launching a political comeback.

Following a brief drama at the Federal Court seen as an attempt by defence lawyers to delay proceedings, government prosecutors started outlining why the former prime minister's 12-year jail sentence over a financial scandal at state fund 1MDB should stay.

The court dismissed Najib's plea for a retrial two days earlier, clearing the way for the hearings, which will be held until August 26. Lead defence lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik surprised the court Thursday by telling the panel of five judges that he wanted to be discharged from the case, citing inadequate time to prepare as he had been recently appointed.

The court, however, refused to discharge him and Chief Justice Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat ordered the prosecution to present its case. Najib, 69, and his ruling party were roundly defeated in 2018 elections following allegations of their involvement in the multibillion-dollar scandal.

He and his associates were accused of stealing billions of dollars from the country's investment vehicle and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to pricey art. Following a lengthy High Court trial, Najib was found guilty of abuse of power, money laundering and criminal breach of trust over the transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10.1 million) from former

No easy comeback

Dressed in a dark suit and white mask, Najib arrived in court and waved to about 70 supporters, who shouted "bossku", meaning "my boss", which has become a rallying cry among his defenders. "This is not a fair trial. Najib is a victim of political persecution," one of the supporters, 65-year-old businessman Mohamad Yusof Khalid, told AFP.

But government prosecutor V. Sithambaram painted a different picture in court. He said the funds that went into Najib's bank account "were used for his personal expenses like buying Chanel watches and to pay credit cards". In a statement after the hearing, Najib objected "in the strongest of terms" to how the court forced his lawyer to continue despite him wanting to be discharged, which he said effectively left him without proper counsel.

"I am now in a situation where my right to counsel and a fair hearing is illusory," he said. If the conviction is upheld, Najib will begin serving his jail sentence immediately, lawyers said. An acquittal, however, could propel him into contention for his former political post, as he remains popular in Malaysia despite the scandal that plagued his administration.

He remains a lawmaker with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the leading party in the current government, and helped its candidates win in recent by-elections. Some analysts, however, said it may not be an easy comeback for Najib as rivals within his own party may try to derail him.—AFP



PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia: Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak (C) speaks next to his lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik (R) during a press conference at the federal court in Putrajaya. — AFP

S Lanka police fire tear gas to disperse protest

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka police fired tear gas and water cannon on a small protest Thursday to break up the first demonstration since the crisis-hit island nation lifted a state of emergency. An unprecedented economic collapse has sparked often huge anti-government rallies this year after months of hardship caused by shortages of essential goods, rolling blackouts and spiralling inflation.

The government has curbed dissent by imposing a state of emergency giving security forces sweeping detention powers, but the ordinance lapsed overnight. Several hundred students attempted to march to the city centre in Colombo for a rally outside the railway station before they were blocked and dispersed by

officers armed with batons and riot shields.

A police official told AFP that Wasantha Mudalige, leader of the Inter-University Student Federation, was among six people taken into custody. Police said they used minimum force and only arrested those who attacked officers or damaged state property.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced this week that his government would not renew the state of emergency it imposed last month, after hundreds of thousands of people stormed the home of his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The measure had been widely criticised by rights groups as a draconian limit on freedoms. Student groups have since tried to drum up support for protests against Wickremesinghe, who took charge after Rajapaksa fled abroad, but the response has so far been muted. Sri Lanka's 22 million people have endured chronic shortages of food, fuel and medicine since late last year after the country ran out of foreign currency to finance imports. The country defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in mid-April and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a possible bailout. — AFP

FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2022

Business

Britain rail workers strike again

Decades-high inflation intensifies crisis

LONDON: Railway staff in Britain on Thursday staged the latest in a series of strikes, once again disrupting commuters and leisure travellers, as decades-high inflation hits salaries and prompts walkouts across various industries.

The latest action by rail workers, which will be repeated on Saturday, is part of a summer of strike action by the sector and others at a scale not seen since the 1980s under former prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

The dispute over pay rises and working conditions has shown little sign of resolution and is likely to be exacerbated by news this week that UK inflation topped 10 percent in July for the first time since 1982. The global impact of the war in Ukraine on energy and food prices, and, to a lesser extent, post-Brexit trade frictions are blamed for the surging cost-of-living crisis in Britain.

Tens of thousands of railway staff are set to walk out over the two days, leaving a skeleton train service and stranding holidaymakers and commuters, even if home-working continues for many office staff after COVID restrictions were lifted. Meanwhile, London transport workers serving the underground "Tube" and bus network will walk out on Friday, creating three days of travel misery in southeast England.

"It's extremely unreliable these days, so I'm finding I'm having to drive, park and pay a lot more," recruitment consultant Greg Ellwood, 26, told AFP at an unusually quiet Euston station in London.

"We're all just trying to make a living and get by... So I've got all the sympathy in the world for them," he added, referring to the strikers.

'Defend jobs'

Among the sectors also calling strikes are dockers at Felixstowe, Britain's largest freight port situ-

ated in eastern England, who will start an eight-day stoppage Sunday. The waves of industrial action could continue into the autumn, since the Bank of England forecasts inflation will top 13 percent later this year, tipping the economy into a deep and long-lasting recession.

"We will continue to do whatever is necessary to defend jobs, pay and conditions during this cost-of-living crisis," Sharon Graham, head of major British union Unite, said this week. "This record fall in real wages demonstrates the vital need for unions like Unite to defend the value of workers' pay," Graham said. She hit out at suggestions, including from BoE governor Andrew Bailey, that pay rises were in part fuelling inflation.

"Wages are not driving inflation," she insisted ahead of the latest UK inflation data that showed rocketing food prices were the main factor behind July's spike. Inflation has soared worldwide this year also on surging energy prices, fuelled by the invasion of Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia.

Mick Lynch, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), urged the UK government to get involved in talks over pay, jobs and conditions. "Instead of waging an ideological war against rail workers, millions of voters would rather that the Government allow for a fair negotiated settlement," he said at a picket line at Euston.

Pay deals

But a transport department spokesperson blamed union leaders like Lynch for inflicting "misery" on millions, urging them to work with industry "to agree a deal that will bring our railways into the 21st century".

Some proposed strikes planned for the British summer have been halted after unions and companies agreed pay deals at the eleventh hour. But



LONDON: Police officers patrol at Waterloo Station in London on August 18, 2022 as Britain's train network faced further heavy disruption in major walkouts that follow the sector's biggest strike action for 30 years already this summer. —AFP

while British Airways ground staff and plane refuellers at Heathrow airport have scrapped proposed walkouts, other sectors are holding firm.

More than 115,000 British postal workers employed by former state-run Royal Mail plan a four-day strike from the end of August. Telecoms giant BT will face its first stoppage in 35 years and walkouts have recently taken place or are soon to occur by Amazon warehouse staff, criminal lawyers and refuse collectors.

Major UK business lobby group, the CBI, this

week acknowledged workers' ongoing "struggle with rising costs like energy prices" and said employers were "doing their level best to support staff". It also claimed, however, that "the vast majority" of companies "can't afford large enough pay rises to keep up with inflation".

Analysts are forecasting sector-wide stoppages to last beyond the summer as inflation keeps on rising. It comes as teachers and health workers have hinted at possible walkouts should they not receive new pay deals deemed acceptable. —AFP

Stocks wobble over Fed rate hike fears

LONDON: Stock markets fluctuated on Thursday after the Federal Reserve signalled its intention to maintain a policy of aggressive US interest rate hikes to bring down the highest inflation in decades. European equities were mixed, with London and Frankfurt rising in afternoon trading while Paris was flat.

Wall Street opened lower, extending losses following the release of Fed minutes on Wednesday. "Closely watched minutes of the last Federal Reserve meeting show US central bank policymakers are set to stay firmly on the path of rate rises," noted Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

While policymakers said they would eventually have to start tempering their tightening pace, they said they would keep borrowing costs elevated "for some time", though admitted there was a risk of going too far and damaging the economy.

But Craig Erlam, analyst at OANDA trading platform, said Wednesday's minutes could also indicate that the Fed "is aware of the risks and may therefore ease off the break as soon as the opportunity arises in order to avoid tightening too much".

"It also raises the possibility of a swift U-turn from hiking rates to cutting them as markets have indicated recently and policymakers have pushed back against," he said. "Needless to say, there are many more twists and turns to come."

The minutes dampened hopes that after a period of sharp increases this year, the bank could possibly



TOKYO: A woman walks past an electronic share price board showing the closing numbers on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. —AFP

begin lowering them in 2023 once inflation was coming down. Bets on a more dovish approach in the new year had been boosted by data showing US inflation came down quicker than expected in July.

That helped drive a rally in equities from their June lows and weighed on the dollar. But the realisation that policy would likely stay restrictive undermined the sense of optimism. "The key take-away from these minutes would appear to show that there is little inclination on the part of anyone on the (policy board) to even look at the possibility of rate cuts," said Michael Hewson at CMC Markets.

He added they "chime with more recent com-

Taipei's representative in Washington Hsiao Bi-Khim wrote: "We welcome this announcement, and Taiwan's ready to start!" The United States and Taiwan share a longstanding trade and investment relationship. The island is also a crucial global supplier of some of the most advanced semiconductors, used in everything from mobile phones and laptops to cars and missiles.

But Taiwan's largest trading partner by far remains China, which bristled at the announcement and said it "firmly opposes this". "China has always opposed any official exchanges between any country and the Taiwan region of China," Beijing's commerce ministry spokeswoman Shu Jueting told reporters on Thursday, adding that the matter concerned China-US relations.

Beijing views Taiwan as its own territory to be seized one day, by force if necessary, and last year 42 percent of Taiwan's exports went to China and Hong Kong compared with 15 percent for the United States. Washington diplomatically recognises Beijing over Taipei, but maintains de facto relations with Taiwan and supports the island's right to decide its future.

'Intimidate and coerce'

The United States has said its position on Taiwan remains unchanged and has accused China of threatening peace in the Taiwan Strait and using the visit by Pelosi as a pretext for military exercises. Its top envoy in East Asia on Thursday said Beijing will likely

ramp up pressure on Taiwan in the coming months after the drills.

"While our policy has not changed, what has changed is Beijing's growing coercion," Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told reporters on a teleconference call.

"These actions are part of an intensified pressure campaign... to intimidate and coerce Taiwan and undermine its resilience," he said. The envoy said Washington would respond to China's aggression with "calm, but resolute steps" to keep the Taiwan Strait open and peaceful.

His comments come after a top US naval commander said this week that Washington and its allies must contest China's ballistic missile fire over Taiwan, which he called a "gorilla in the room".

China's exercises included firing multiple ballistic missiles into waters off Taiwan—some of the world's busiest shipping routes—which was the first time China has taken such a step since the mid-1990s.

Taiwan has staged its own drills simulating a defence against invasion and on Wednesday displayed its most advanced fighter jet in a rare nighttime demonstration in the wake of China's moves around the island. "In the face of the threat from Chinese communist forces' recent military exercises, we have stayed vigilant while establishing the concept of 'battlefields everywhere and training anytime'... to ensure national security," Taiwan's air force said in a statement. —AFP

US home sales fall for sixth straight month in July

WASHINGTON: Existing home sales fell sharply in July, declining throughout the United States and in every price category amid high borrowing costs, according to industry data released Wednesday. The sixth consecutive monthly decline came as home prices continued to rise albeit at a slightly slower pace, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

The housing market soared during the pandemic as Americans, flush with savings, took advantage of bargain mortgage rates to snap up homes. The sector is a huge part of the world's largest economy since it drives spending in other categories, including appliances, furniture, and home improvement materials.

High demand exacerbated the pre-pandemic housing shortage, sending prices higher. But as the Federal Reserve has raised interest rates aggressively to combat scorching inflation, the sales pace has taken a hit.

Existing home sales fell 5.9 percent compared to June, to an annual rate of 4.81 million units, seasonally-adjusted, NAR reported. That was below what economists had projected, and the lowest since November 2015, if the brief 2020 pandemic slump is excluded.

"The sales declines are pretty much across the board," with all four regions of the country, including the Midwest—the most affordable-seeing drops, NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun told reporters.

After topping \$400,000 in May for the first time, the median sale price dipped slightly from June, as it does every year, Yun said, to a still-high \$403,800. That's 10.8 percent higher than July 2021.

Pre-pandemic, prices were rising by about five percent a year, Yun said. With the stock of unsold homes at just 3.3 months of supply, "this is still considered a tight market," with 39 percent of homes sold above list price, he added.

Purchases have dropped as loan costs jumped to nearly six percent, but Yun said it is possible that rates, which have fallen closer to five percent, may have peaked and sales could "stabilize... giving an additional boost of purchasing power to home buyers."

Other data show that builders are starting to pull back, and new home construction has slowed, and Yun said he is concerned that if mortgage rates ease further, a rush of new buyers into the market could worsen the housing shortage.

Existing home sales make up 90 percent of the real estate market. The government is due to release data on July new home sales Tuesday. —AFP

US, Taiwan announce plans for trade talks

TAIPEI, Taiwan: Taiwan and the United States announced plans on Thursday for trade talks in the early autumn as a senior US diplomat warned Beijing will continue to squeeze the self-ruled democracy it claims as its own.

Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have soared to their highest in years after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei, sparking a furious response from Beijing which launched its largest military drills around the island. The negotiations would cover a variety of areas, including agriculture, digital trade, regulatory practices and removing trade barriers, the Office of the US Trade Representative said in a statement.

The talks "will deepen our trade and investment relationship, advance mutual trade priorities based on shared values, and promote innovation and inclusive economic growth for our workers and businesses," said Deputy United States Trade Representative Sarah Bianchi. "We welcome this opportunity to deepen economic collaboration between our 2 freedom-loving countries while shaping a new model for trade cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," Taiwan's foreign ministry said in a tweet.

Business

Turkey stuns markets by cutting rate despite soaring inflation

Move increases the risk of yet another currency crisis

ISTANBUL, Turkey: Turkey's central bank on Thursday stunned the markets by lowering its main interest rate even as inflation soared to a 24-year high and looks set to climb further.

The central bank said "recession is increasingly assessed as an inevitable risk factor" as it lowered its one-week repo auction rate to 13 percent from 14 percent. "Just insane — with inflation at 80 percent and rising," BlueBay Asset Management economist Timothy Ash remarked in an emailed comment.

"Turkey's central bank (has) stepped up its fight against economic orthodoxy," Jason Tuvey of Capital Economics added in an ironic note. "The move increases the risk of yet another currency crisis."

The Turkish lira lost one percent of its value against the dollar within moments of the announcement. Turkey's monetary policy decision contradicts the approach pursued by most other countries as they try to combat the spike in consumer prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The war has sent food and energy prices soaring and forced central banks to raise borrowing costs — even as economic growth remains anaemic.

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan subscribes to the unorthodox belief that high interest rates cause inflation rather than rein it in. He has fired three central bank governors since 2019 who have tried to pursue a more conventional economic course.

Election focus on growth

Turkey now has a real interest rate of negative 66.6 percent when adjusted for inflation. This forces busi-



ISTANBUL: File photo shows a money changer counts Turkish lira banknotes at a currency exchange office in Istanbul. Turkey's central bank on August 18, 2022, stunned the markets by lowering its main interest rate even as inflation soared to a 24-year high and looks set to climb further. — AFP

nesses and ordinary people to spend as much as possible before their liras lose even more value with each month. Turkey's approach has propelled economic growth that Erdogan hopes can help him secure a third decade in power in a general election scheduled for next June.

But it has been accompanied by a sharp depreciation of the lira that has eroded living standards and pushed the financial sector to the brink of crisis.

The Turkish government has adopted a series of alternative measures to combat inflation which most economists dismiss as either insufficient or too com-

plex and expensive to work. These include limiting bank lending and offering state guarantees to ensure that Turks' deposits do not lose too much value over time. The central bank has also dug in deeply into its foreign currency reserves to try and prop up the lira's exchange rate. These interventions have made Turkey increasingly dependent on deals with petrodollar-rich nations such as Russia and Ankara's one-time rivals in the Middle East. Turkey reported a big jump in its hard currency holdings this month that the finance minister linked to a financial transaction with an unnamed foreign country.

Media reports said Russia's state-held nuclear energy firm Rosatom had transferred billions of dollars for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant. The central bank vowed on Thursday to push ahead with its "liraisation strategy" aimed at reducing the use of foreign currency. It also spelled out its sharp focus on economic growth. "It is important that financial conditions remain supportive to preserve the growth momentum in industrial production and the positive trend in employment," it said.

Some economists interpreted the rate decision as a concerted effort by Erdogan's team to devalue the lira in order to spur growth through cheaper exports.

Erdogan has touted this export-driven growth as a "new economic model" that a powerful and independent Turkey should pursue in order to reduce its dependence on global powers. "The need to devalue the lira is an integral component of this path," economist Umur Akcay of the Institute for International Political Economy tweeted after the rate cut.—AFP

have also suffered through lengthy blackouts and spiralling cost-of-living pressures after scarcity and a currency crash drove up prices.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka had already projected the economy could shrink a painful 7.5 percent for the calendar year, dwarfing the previous record 3.6 percent contraction in 2020 as the pandemic raged.

"But now we think it will exceed 8.0 percent," governor Nandalal Weerasinghe told reporters in Colombo. He said inflation—officially running at 60.8 percent—will peak at "about 65 percent" in September, followed by a gradual easing caused by lower demand and improvements in supplies.

The foreign exchange shortage that sparked the economic crisis had eased thanks to better currency inflows and lower imports, he added. "We are now able

to finance the most essential imports such as petrol and diesel and medicines," Weerasinghe said.

At the peak of Sri Lanka's fuel shortages, motorists had to wait for days and sometimes weeks to top up, but strict fuel rationing has shortened queues. Months of protests over the collapsing economy culminated in the resignation of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was forced to flee his official residence after it was stormed by a huge crowd last month.

Rajapaksa is accused of mismanaging the island nation's economy to the point where it was unable to finance even the most essential imports. He has since travelled to Thailand and close associates have said he was desperate to return home, where he faces corruption charges that had been suspended because of his presidential immunity.—AFP

HK sets up task force on Southeast Asian job scams

HONG KONG: Hong Kong law enforcement on Thursday announced a task force to track down and help trafficked residents ensnared by so-called "boiler room" scams in Southeast Asia that have become a growing scourge.

In recent months, victims have reported being lured to countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos on false promises of romance or high-paying jobs, and then held against their will and forced to work, sometimes for months.

These operations have received ongoing news coverage around Asia, but it caused fresh outrage in Hong Kong and Taiwan recently after the press published graphic photos and videos of victims being threatened and abused. Hong Kong has received requests for help from 20 people, with eight of them unaccounted for in Myanmar and the other 12 confirmed safe, Under Secretary for Security Michael Cheuk said on Thursday.

"Our top priority at the moment is trying to secure their safe return," Cheuk said, adding that the city will work with Chinese embassies and local law enforcement. Cheuk urged the public to exercise caution when travelling to Southeast Asia, and to avoid the northern and southern parts of Myanmar.

"Boiler room scam operations really took off in border areas and special economic zones in Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos during the pandemic," Jeremy Douglas, Regional Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for Southeast Asia, told AFP.

"And in quite a few they're using trafficked labour to work the scams. It's nightmare for law enforcement and human rights." Human rights lawyer Patricia Ho said Hong Kong's existing laws were not enough to tackle such scams, as the city had no legislation that specifically outlawed human trafficking and forced labour.—AFP

Crisis-hit S Lanka warns of record 8% economic contraction

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economic meltdown will result in a record contraction of at least eight percent this year but the public could soon expect some relief from runaway inflation, the head of the country's central bank said Thursday. The island nation defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April and is seeking an International Monetary Fund bailout after months of food, fuel and medicine shortages. Its 22 million people



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WEEK ENDED ON 18 AUGUST 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,075	1,063	1,081	1,063	18	19,675,326	-10	-0.93%	11.95%	1,064	1,080	19.4	2.08	2.3%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	362	348	362	345	17	26,144,863	-13	-3.60%	30.97%	346	364	19.8	1.64	1.9%	1.19
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	213	213	214	210	4	6,599,297	0	0.00%	1.61%	212	217	33.5	0.66	1.8%	1.19
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	229	233	235	227	8	16,129,052	4	1.75%	-2.53%	233	238	19.6	0.85	2.1%	1.32
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	860	882	892	845	47	68,764,421	22	2.56%	16.61%	860	890	29.3	3.69	1.3%	1.19
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	838	829	838	822	16	2,533,426	-6	-0.72%	16.37%	826	847	55.0	3.37	0.5%	1.07
204	National Investments	Financial Services	305	297	305	292	13	2,444,961	-5	-1.66%	35.62%	296	310	11.1	1.18	15.1%	1.77
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	157	156	158	153	5	4,694,330	0	0.00%	9.86%	153	161	85.6	0.81	3.2%	0.95
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	93	92.3	93	91.1	1.8	3,131,892	-0.2	-0.22%	-21.78%	90	95	-	0.54	9.8%	1.16
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	130	125	132	124	8	24,435,939	-6	-4.58%	-28.07%	124	132	15.6	0.94	2.3%	1.02
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	808	801	813	793	20	2,593,360	-7	-0.87%	7.07%	787	809	17.1	1.84	1.6%	1.14
501	National Industries	Financial Services	270	284	288	268	20	47,448,216	16	5.97%	17.87%	278	287	6.5	1.18	4.0%	1.42
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,526	1,495	1,526	1,480	46	295,323	-15	-0.99%	71.64%	1,490	1,513	14.0	1.40	4.0%	0.84
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	926	925	938	920	18	616,563	0	0.00%	8.57%	915	935	12.5	1.75	6.5%	0.92
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	316	317	320	314	6	1,152,664	-2	-0.63%	-8.65%	313	323	12.1	0.78	5.7%	1.01
603	Agility	Industrials	885	850	885	840	45	20,011,215	-39	-4.39%	7.94%	846	875	65.4	1.45	2.0%	1.45
605	Zain	Telecommunications	617	622	629	609	20	16,759,178	5	0.81%	4.54%	621	626	14.8	2.29	5.3%	0.83
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,375	3,470	3,472	3,360	112	853,207	110	3.27%	7.63%	3,461	3,466	7.9	3.78	11.7%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	193	198	200	193	7	3,521,167	-4	-1.98%	-9.17%	195	203	-	0.73	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,924	1,950	1,952	1,923	29	1,738,667	30	1.56%	51.16%	1,939	1,958	15.6	13.95	1.7%	1.35
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	307	305	308	300	8	142,996,548	-2	-0.65%	20.68%	305	314	17.9	2.04	2.8%	1.78
821	Warba Bank	Banking	244	246	249	242	7	12,591,048	1	0.41%	-10.22%	243	249	29.0	1.34	0.0%	1.08
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	428	411	429	408	21	2,314,724	-18	-4.20%	-28.83%	405	432	41.9	1.20	3.8%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	410	418	418	400	18	1,304,677	9	2.20%	2.30%	415	428	31.7	1.71	2.4%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	201	196	202	194	8	13,516,391	-5	-2.49%	-14.04%	196	201	15.4	2.51	9.0%	0.51
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,431	2,399	2,475	2,354	121	201,868	-90	-3.62%	18.76%	2,350	2,439	25.5	8.20	2.7%	0.77
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	855	856	857	849	8	2,242,534	0	0.00%	-	830	860	13.4	3.94	-	0.99

* As of end of week closing

Business

US retail sales flatline in July as gas prices fall

Fed's next policy meeting will take place in late September

WASHINGTON: US retail sales held steady in July as gas prices fell sharply, but the new data released Wednesday showed consumers are still spending, keeping the pressure on the Federal Reserve to continue its aggressive interest rate hikes.

Americans flush with savings have been a key driver of the US pandemic recovery, and the Fed is keeping a careful eye on economic data as it battles to quash red-hot inflation without tipping the world's largest economy into recession.

While the headline data of the closely-watched report flatlined at \$682.8 billion, rather than rise slightly as economists had expected, sales increased 0.7 percent when gasoline and motor vehicles are excluded from the calculation, the Commerce Department said.

"Despite the flat headline reading, the core retail sales figures in July show the consumer has staying power," Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics said. "Today's solid report keeps the Fed in an aggressive policy tightening mode."

The central bank has raised the benchmark borrowing rate four times this year, including two massive three-quarter point increases in June and July after US annual inflation spiked to 9.1 percent in June.

Price relief

The inflation rate slowed in July to 8.5 percent, but policymakers have made it clear in recent com-

ments that they are not done with their efforts to cool the economy.

Still, Bostjancic said the Fed might dial back the pace of increases. "With inflation, commodity prices, and inflation expectations easing, the Fed might decide to scale back the rate hike to 50bps (basis points)," she said in an analysis.

The Fed's next policy meeting is in late September. US gas prices at the pump soared in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February, but in recent weeks have been trending down and have fallen by more than \$1 a gallon after hitting an all-time high over \$5 in mid-June, squeezing family budgets.

While spending on automobiles fell 1.7 percent and gasoline stations dropped 1.8 percent, Americans ramped up spending on furniture, food, electronics and at online stores.

Sales of building materials and garden supplies jumped 1.5 percent, but at clothing and department stores they fell. The data are seasonally adjusted but do not take into account changes in prices, so as costs rise a shopping dollar does not stretch as far.

Still, the report shows the stockpile of savings is helping consumers deal with the higher prices, and bodes well for economic growth, said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics. "The big picture here is favourable," he said. "If you're looking for recession, you won't find it here." —AFP



BETHESDA, United States: In this file photo a jogger runs past gas stations in Bethesda, Maryland. US retail sales held steady in July as gas prices fell and spending on automobiles dropped sharply. —AFP

Norway central bank hikes interest rate

OSLO: Norway's central bank raised Thursday interest rates by half a percentage point to 1.75 percent, and flagged another hike in September as it seeks to get surging inflation under control. The move was double the quarter point increase that had been signalled in June, and comes after inflation accelerated to an annual rate of 6.8 percent in July.

"A markedly higher policy rate is needed to ease the pressures in the Norwegian economy and to bring inflation down towards the target," Norges Bank Governor Ida Wolden Bache said in a statement. Norway's central bank targets 2.0 percent annual inflation.

But with rises in prices becoming broader based than just volatile energy products, there have been mounting concerns that inflation could persist at higher levels than earlier expected.

"A faster rate rise now will reduce the risk of inflation becoming entrenched at a high level and the need for a sharper tightening of monetary policy further out," the central bank statement said.

After having long kept its policy rate at zero to cushion the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Norwegian economy, Norges Bank was one of the first Western central banks to begin raising rates last September.

Thursday's increase was the fifth in the past year, and the second in a row of a half percentage point, instead of the usual quarter-point moves. Data also released Thursday by the national statistics office showed the Norwegian economy, excluding the offshore oil and shipping sectors, bounced back into growth with a 0.7 percent expansion in the April-June period.

The country's economy contracted by 0.6 percent in the first quarter of the year. The Norwegian government expects the nation's economy will grow by a vigorous 3.6 percent this year. —AFP

UK pet owners face grim choices amid soaring costs

HOLYWELL, United Kingdom: Unable to afford the cost of cremation for his much-loved dog Khan under the weight of sharply increasing living costs, David McAuliffe turned to a social media group offering help for under-pressure pet owners.

With inflation in the UK at a 40-year high, millions are feeling the pinch from soaring bills. "Especially the way things are going: the gas, the electric, food prices, fuel everything is a struggle," said McAuliffe, as he sat with his partner Julie Fielding at Pet Cemetery in Holywell, North Wales.

"(But) the dogs rely on you for everything and you've got to do right by them at the end of the day." The pair, who live on welfare, turned

to a Facebook group that channels donations to families who otherwise would not be able to afford expenses such as cremations, which are becoming pricier as fuel bills soar.

It costs over £200 (\$241) to cremate a medium-sized dog, with prices up 10 percent over the last two years. Jason Ward, general manager of The Pet Cemetery, said most owners want their pets to have a private cremation so they can take the remains to bury or keep at home.

"The alternative, for families who don't have a private cremation, is for their body to be disposed of en masse with other pets," he said, adding they are often collected in bags from veterinary surgeries with other clinical waste.

During Britain's lengthy pandemic lockdowns, furry companions were many people's main crutch and source of companionship. That strong bond is on full display at Pet Cemetery, where many plots serve as the resting place for both pets and owners.

The ashes of McAuliffe's mother and Fielding's sister are already laid alongside Khan and their previous dog Flash, and it is the cou-

ple's final wish to be interred with them. "When the time comes, that is where we want to rest," they said.

Costs of living

It is not only pet cremation that has become more expensive. McAuliffe and Fielding, who have two other dogs, have seen insurance and other costs increase. "You just do what you have to do and take care of your pets the best you can," said McAuliffe.

"If we have to go without, then we'll go without. As long as our pets are OK." Pets that have recently passed away often required emergency medical care soon before their death—delivering a brutal financial double blow to an already grieving family.

Sometimes families have no choice but to send their pet's body to be disposed of as waste, which Ward says can cause "distress". "(Pets) are a member of the family, they contribute a great deal to our well-being, and during the pandemic all families have spent more time with their pets," he said. —AFP

Germany to lower tax on gas to help consumers

BERLIN: Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Thursday that Germany would temporarily slash the sales tax on gas to help consumers facing soaring bills amid a crunch in Russian energy supplies. Scholz said the move to cut the VAT on gas to seven percent from 19 percent currently was intended to offset an energy surcharge in the wake of the Ukraine war expected to cost households hundreds of euros.

"The discounted sales tax will apply as long as the gas surcharge is being applied, that is until March 31, 2024," he told reporters. "With this measure we are offering gas customers relief that is significantly larger than the extra burden imposed by the surcharges."

Scholz said the government expected energy companies "to pass on this reduction in full to consumers," while pledging further state relief measures "to ease the pressure" on households. "The question of social justice is decisive so that the country remains united in this crisis," Scholz said.

Trading Hub Europe, a non-profit company of energy network operators in Germany, on Monday said the surcharge had been set at 2.419 cents per kilowatt hour. For a family of four with an annual average energy usage of 20,000 kwh, this would come to about 483.80 euros (\$491.85) before goods and services taxes.

The surcharge is aimed at sharing out the surging costs borne by energy importers after Russia drastically choked off gas supplies to Germany fol-



BERLIN: File photo shows a Berlin resident cooking dinner on a gas stove. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on August 18, 2022 that Germany would "temporarily" slash the sales tax on gas to help consumers amid a crunch in Russian energy supplies. —AFP

lowing its invasion of Ukraine. Gas importers have so far swallowed the additional costs themselves, but a new rule agreed by the government allows them to pass on ballooning costs via the levy to households from October 1.

Scholz has attempted to reassure Germans that they will receive state aid to help cushion the blow

of the additional costs, repeatedly intoning: "You'll never walk alone." The centre-left-led coalition has expressed fears that the soaring bills could lead to social unrest in Europe's top economy.

Far-right and left-wing parties have announced street protests beginning in September demanding relief for German consumers. —AFP

Sweden to help consumers facing electricity costs

STOCKHOLM, Sweden: Sweden's government on Wednesday vowed to compensate households and companies for soaring electricity costs in the wake of the Ukraine war, to the tune of up to 60 billion kronor (\$5.76 billion).

At least half of the amount was to go to households who could expect to be compensated "this winter", Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson told reporters.

"We have electricity and gas prices at a level we've never seen

before", she said.

On Wednesday, electricity on the Nordpool market hit a record 5.69 kronor per kilowatt hour in southern Sweden. It was expected to fall back slightly to 5.50 kronor on Thursday.

Swedish electricity prices have soared after Russia drastically curtailed gas supplies to Europe following its invasion of Ukraine.

Gas prices have thereby soared, at a time when there is little wind energy being generated in northern Europe due to current weather conditions.

Svenska Kraftnat, the state-owned operator of the national grid, has therefore been raking in soaring so-called capacity fees, which have left it with a surplus despite massive investments in its grid, Andersson said.

That surplus should make its way back to consumers, Andersson said,

adding: "The higher the electricity price goes, the higher the amounts we're talking about".

Hydro power accounts for about half of the electricity generated in Sweden, which also relies on nuclear and wind power.

It is not yet known what form the compensation would take nor when it would be introduced, but the government said measures could include lower electricity prices as well as direct refunds to households and companies.

The government has tasked Svenska Kraftnat with drawing up a concrete proposal by November 15.

The Social Democratic government's announcement comes just three weeks ahead of legislative elections, with opinion polls putting the left and right blocs neck-and-neck. —AFP

Nigerian electricity workers suspend nationwide strike

LAGOS: Utility workers in Nigeria have suspended a nationwide strike that had thrown parts of Africa's most populous nation into darkness, a union leader said Thursday. The National Union of Electricity Employees had called the nationwide industrial action on Wednesday morning.

It said the strike was to compel the government to honour a 2019 agreement to pay retired workers of a former state-owned electricity company. Power cuts were soon after reported in the economic capital Lagos, in the northern city of Kano and in the oil hub of Port Harcourt.

After a scheduled meeting late on Wednesday with the labour minister and other government representatives, "we suspended the strike," union leader Joe Ajaero told AFP. He said the government asked for two weeks to look into their demands.

"Normal operation will be restored immediately. But if after two weeks nothing is done we will resume the strike," said Ajaero. While the country has about 7,000 megawatts of electricity available, it distributes less than 4,000 because of a lack of technical capacity, resulting in patchy supplies.

The national grid has also suffered many collapses since the start of the year.

Many homes and companies depend on diesel-powered generators, which means higher operating costs. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



This file photo taken on July 21, 1998 shows Japanese designer Hanae Mori being applauded by her models at the end of her 1998/99 Fall/Winter haute couture collection in Paris.



This photo shows late Japanese designer Hanae Mori in Tokyo.



This file photo taken on January 21, 1997 shows Japanese designer Hanae Mori (left) receiving a lily from the model displaying her wedding dress in Paris after the presentation of her spring/summer haute couture collections. — AFP photos

Hanae Mori: Grande dame of Japanese fashion

Japanese designer Hanae Mori, who cracked the Parisian haute couture world and was dubbed "Madame Butterfly" for her signature motif, has died in Tokyo aged 96, her office told AFP. Over the decades Mori's luxurious creations were worn by Nancy Reagan, Grace Kelly and countless members of high society.

But she was also a pioneer for Japanese women, one of a tiny number to head an international corporation. An employee at Mori's office said Thursday that she died at home "of old age" on August 11, and that a private funeral had taken place. The designer's trailblazing career took her from Tokyo, where she started out making costumes for cinema, to New York and Paris—and in 1977 her label became the first Asian fashion house to join the rarefied ranks of haute couture.

The exclusive French club sets exacting standards for their hand-crafted, and extremely expensive, garments. "When humans work with their hands, their creativity expands," Mori told AFP during a 2006 retrospective in Tokyo, where a robot modelled a replica of her classic "Chrysanthemum Pyjamas"—a kimono-like robe made from hot-pink chiffon and silk.

In January, the designer summed up her feelings toward the industry in a special column for Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun

daily. "Fashion is something that pushes you, gives you courage to spread your wings and allows you to have adventures," she said.

Encounter with Chanel

Born in 1926 in a rural corner of western Japan, Mori studied literature at Tokyo Women's Christian University before turning her hand to design. She opened her first atelier above a noodle shop in Tokyo, and came to specialize in dressing the stars of the silver screen. As Japan's postwar economy grew, so did her business, which she ran with her husband—a textile executive who encouraged her to visit Paris and New York when the arrival of television made the film industry less profitable.

"This was a kind of turning point for me," she once said of the trips in the early 1960s, during which she met Coco Chanel in Paris. It turned out to be an inspirational encounter. When she stepped into Chanel's studio the iconic designer suggested she wear something in bright orange to contrast with her black hair. Taken aback, it got Mori thinking.

"The whole Japanese concept of beauty is based on concealment... I suddenly realized that I should change my approach and make my dresses help a woman stand out," she said, according to the Washington Post.



This file photo taken on July 7, 2004 shows Japanese designer Hanae Mori (centre right) walking on the catwalk after the presentation of her autumn-winter 2004-05 haute couture collection in Paris.

'East Meets West'

In 1965, Mori unveiled her first collection abroad, in New York, under the theme "East Meets West". Her designs combined traditional patterns like cranes and cherry blossoms—and her trademark butterflies—with Western styles, from woollen suits to sharp satin tailoring. Mori moved her brand from Tokyo to Paris in the late 1970s and was quickly embraced by fashion insiders.

She saw a distinction between herself

and her Japanese peers who later made a global name for themselves—such as Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons fame. "The young Japanese designers who live in Paris are passionately avant-garde," she told the Washington Post. "I am not. I love to follow the traditional way."

Mori built her brand into a business empire, which in its heyday occupied a whole building in Tokyo designed by the architect Kenzo Tange—later torn down

and replaced with another structure at typical Japanese speed. From the loss of the building to the retirement of her fashion house from haute couture, "not everything was positive", she reflected in her Yomiuri column. "It was like my butterfly wings were torn off. But this butterfly was able to fly all over the world for 70 years, because I loved making clothes."

'Wanted to be different'

Mori designed the gown worn by princess Masako—now empress—at her 1993 wedding, as well as uniforms for Japan Airlines flight attendants. And in 1985, she created stage costumes for, appropriately, "Madame Butterfly" performed at La Scala in Milan. But with growing losses in the early 2000s, her empire was largely sold off and she shuttered her Paris atelier in 2004 after her last couture show there. Hanae Mori boutiques remain open in Tokyo and her fragrances are still sold worldwide.

As a powerful businesswoman, Mori was a rarity in Japan, where boardrooms are still heavily male-dominated. Speaking of her early married life, she once remarked that she was never invited out with her husband's friends. At that time "Japan was a gentlemen's country", she said, but "I wanted to be different". — AFP

Enrique Galan is seldom happier than when he disappears deep into the Everglades to hunt down Burmese pythons, an invasive species that has been damaging Florida's wetland ecosystem for decades. When not working at his job staging cultural events in Miami, the 34-year-old spends his time tracking down the nocturnal reptiles from Southeast Asia.

He does so as a professional hunter, hired by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to help control the python population, estimated to be in the tens of thousands. At night, Galan drives slowly for miles on paved roads and gravel tracks, his flashlight playing on grassy verges and tree roots, and the banks of waterways where alligator eyes occasionally glint.

He charges \$13 an hour and an additional fee per python found: \$50 if it's up to four feet (1.2 meters), and \$25 more for each additional foot. But on this August night, he has an extra motivation.

The FWC has been holding a 10-day python-hunting contest, with 800 people participating. The prize is \$2,500 for whoever finds and kills the most pythons in each of the categories—professional and amateur hunter. And Galan would love to win that money to celebrate the arrival of Jesus, his newborn baby.

Pets released into wild

Burmese pythons, originally brought to the United States as pets, have become a threat to the Everglades since humans released them into the wild in the late 1970s. The snake has no natural predators, and feeds on other reptiles, birds, and mammals such as raccoons and white-tailed deer. "They're an amazing predator," says Galan in admiration.

Specimens in the Everglades average between six and nine feet long, but finding them at night in the wetland of more than 1.5 million acres (607,000 hectares)

Hunting pythons in Florida, for profit and therapy

A professional python hunter, hired by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Enrique Galan catches a Burmese python, in Everglades National Park, Florida. — AFP photos

takes skill and patience. Galan has a trained eye, as well as the courage and determination needed for the job. After two unsuccessful nights, he spots a shadow on the shoulder of Highway 41: he jumps out of his truck and lunges at the animal, a baby Burmese python.

Grabbing it behind the head to avoid being bitten, he puts it in a cloth bag and ties it with a knot. He will kill it hours later with a BB gun. A few miles further on, a huge python slithers across the tarmac. Galan again bolts from his truck but this time the snake escapes into the grass, leaving behind a strong musky scent, a

defense mechanism.

Therapy for some

Galan took an online training course before hunting pythons, but says he learned everything he knows from Tom Rahill, a 65-year-old who founded the Swamp Apes association 15 years ago to help war veterans deal with traumatic memories through python hunting. For a few hours, Rahm Levinson, an Iraq war veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, hunts with Rahill and Galan. "It really helped me through a lot of stuff struggling at home," he said.

"I can't sleep at night and having someone to go out at 12 o'clock, two o'clock in the morning, and catch pythons is something productive and good." Galan is proud to participate in a project that has eliminated more than 17,000 pythons since 2000. "One of the best things that I get out of it is the amount of beauty that I'm just surrounded by. If you just look closely, open your eyes and observe, you'll see a lot of magic here." — AFP

Climate change causes wonky bumblebee wings

Warmer and wetter weather linked to climate change appears to stress out bumblebees and make their wings more asymmetrical, which could ultimately affect their future development, according to UK scientists in a new research paper. "With hotter and wetter conditions predicted to place bumblebees under higher stress, the fact these conditions will become more frequent under climate change means bumblebees may be in for a rough time over the 21st century," scientists at Imperial College, London, wrote in the Animal Ecology journal on Wednesday.

The large furry bees, known for their distinctive buzz, only feed on flowers, making them vulnerable to changes to the countryside due to intensive farming. Their population has declined in Britain over the past century, with two species becoming extinct, according to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

The Imperial College scientists looked at more than 6,000 bumblebee specimens in natural history museums, collected across Britain during the 20th century. The scientists examined the right-left symmetry between the bees' four wings, because asymmetry is an indication that the insect experienced stress during development.

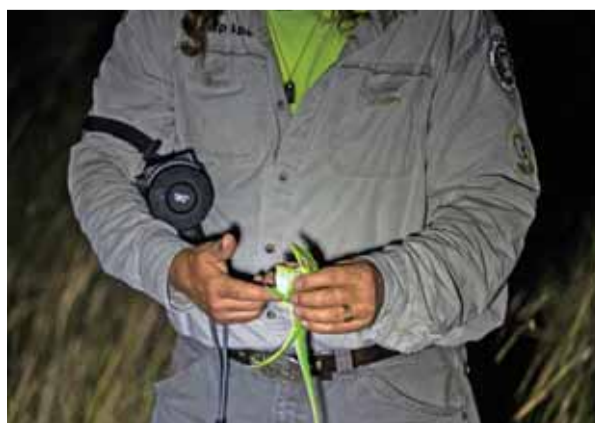
They found that bees from the second half of the 20th century consistently had a higher average rate of asymmetry. Asymmetry was also "consistently higher in warmer and wetter years," according to the paper's senior co-author Richard Gill.

"Overall, these results could suggest bumblebees experienced increasing stress as the century progressed and that aspects of climate change could have contributed to this trend," the paper said. The weather conditions linked to wonky wings "will likely increase in frequency with climate change", it continued.

In April, scientists in the United States who studied more than 20,000 bees in the Rocky Mountains found that bumblebees had lower heat tolerance than smaller bees and were "more threatened under climate warming than other bees". Insects are facing a huge impact from both warming climate and intensive agriculture. Another study released in April in the journal Nature found that these factors cause insect populations to plummet by nearly half compared to areas less affected by temperature rises and industrial farming. — AFP



A professional python hunter, hired by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Tom Rahill catches a Florida native water snake as he searches for Burmese pythons, in Everglades National Park, Florida.



Tom Rahill catches a lizard as he searches for Burmese pythons, in Everglades National Park, Florida.



Enrique Galan catches a Burmese python, in Everglades National Park, Florida.



NBK trainees make headlines on field trip to Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

By Shakir Reshamwala

Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed high school students enrolled in National Bank of Kuwait's summer training program on a field trip to its offices on Thursday. The students visited various departments of the newspaper, learning about print media in Kuwait.

The students had a glimpse into how editors, reporters, designers and proofreaders collaborate to bring out the paper on time day after day. They learned about the progression of the paper from the manual to the digital era, and how technology has changed the media landscape and industry. The inquisitive young trainees had a lot of questions to ask during the interactive session.

After visiting the newsroom, the students were given access to the archive section of Kuwait Times, home to decades of history, and witnessed the evolution of the newspaper over the years. They then

toured the printing press onsite, where the paper is printed every night to be distributed all over Kuwait, helping people begin their day with their favorite source of news.

But the youngsters were in for a surprise, as a commemorative issue on their visit was printed right in front of them, delighting them immensely. The visit to Kuwait Times was part of the program's fourth and final course for the year. The program aims to support young students and give them the opportunity to enhance their skills and prepare them to enter the workforce through an intensive training program, as part of NBK's social responsibility.

The program includes a number of training subjects for students, like teamwork, creative thinking and the best ways for self-expression, as well as professional ways to interact with customers. Moreover, the program offers the latest and best standards through advanced academics and training.





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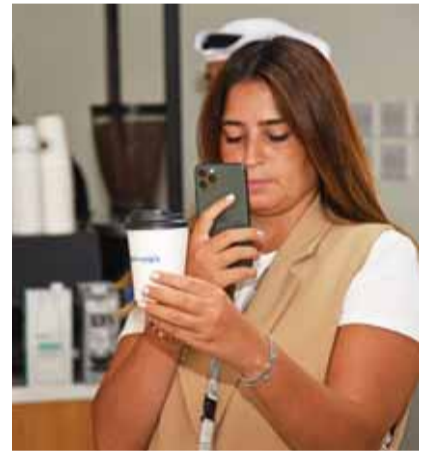
لأنك تستحق الأفضل، نقدم لك البطاقة التي ستغير مفهومك عن البطاقات اللثمانية. استمتع بتصميم مبتكر يناسب ذوقك مع حرية اختيار طريقة حصولك على المكافآت، سواء حسب مصروفاتك أو الجهات التجارية المفضلة لديك، بالإضافة إلى إعفاء من الرسوم السنوية عند الإنفاق أكثر باستخدام البطاقة.

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Sports

Boxer Joshua brushes off 'nonsense' retirement talk

Boxing star avoids comment as tweeter jailed

JEDDAH: Heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua called retirement speculation "nonsense" on Wednesday after suggestions he could hang up his gloves if he loses to Oleksandr Usyk again this week. Joshua, 32, is bidding to reclaim the world titles he lost to Ukraine's Usyk, who beat the Briton by unanimous decision in London last September. Some experts have said a third professional defeat could end the career of the former Olympic heavyweight gold medalist - a claim dismissed by Joshua.

"I'm competing with a pound-for-pound (one of the most skilled across all weight classes) fighter," he told AFP ahead of Saturday's fight in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. "I'm not losing against some has-been. It's crazy to suggest I should retire. "If I would lose to one of the top fighters of the world today (people would say) 'Oh he should retire, he lost to one of the best'. What type of nonsense is that?" Joshua remains one of the sport's biggest draws but his lustre faded with his surprise defeat by Andy Ruiz Jr in 2019, and dimmed further when he lost to Usyk last year.

However, he avenged the Ruiz loss in Saudi Arabia, and he is hoping for the same result again in Saturday's "Rage on the Red Sea" in the coastal city of Jeddah. "If people really want me to walk away,

then cool. I ain't begging no one," Joshua said. "People always ask questions and they're entitled to their questions. "For me personally, I still want to compete. I love it. It's challenging, but I love the challenge. Sometimes I question whether I want to do it, it's that hard. "It's not an easy job but I've got the will, I've got the strength to keep on pushing."

Joshua declined to comment on human rights in Saudi Arabia as news broke Wednesday that a woman had been jailed for 34 years over her Twitter activity, days before his world heavyweight fight in Jeddah. Joshua, who has been based in Saudi Arabia ahead of Saturday's unification bout with Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine, said people seemed "cool" in the kingdom and that he preferred to avoid "negative" talk.

"I'm here enjoying Saudi Arabia now we're all here loving the positive side of things. Don't focus on anything that's negative. I've had a great time," he told AFP. "What I experienced is only what I can talk about. I'm not on the internet researching, digging and digging and digging. I'm sure if you want to find that stuff out you have to dig." As Joshua was preparing for his fight, it emerged that a Saudi woman studying in Britain was jailed for 34 years - with a further 34-year travel ban - for posting messages on Twitter. —AFP



JEDDAH: Ukrainian boxer Oleksandr Usyk (center left) and British boxer Anthony Joshua (center right) attend a press conference ahead of the heavyweight boxing rematch for the WBA, WBO, IBF and IBF titles in Jeddah on August 17, 2022. —AFP



BRIDGETOWN: Nicholas Pooran of West Indies survives a quick rising delivery from Lockie Ferguson of New Zealand during the 1st ODI match between West Indies and New Zealand at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados, on August 17, 2022. —AFP

Brooks powers Windies to 5-wicket win over NZ

BRIDGETOWN: Shamarh Brooks played the sheet anchor role to perfection in guiding the West Indies to a five-wicket victory over top-ranked New Zealand in a low-scoring opening day-night One-Day International of a three-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Wednesday. After the home side's bowling combination pace and spin dismissed the visitors for 190 off 45.2 overs batting first, Brooks' 91-ball 79 with nine fours and one six provided the much-needed solidity to take his team to 193 for five off 39 overs in reply.

His 72-run fourth-wicket partnership with captain Nicholas Pooran (28) steadied the chase and ensured there would be no repeat of the collapses which have become an all-too-common feature of their game in recent years. "It was important just to get a start because this was not the easiest pitch to bat on," said Brooks after receiving the "Man of the Match" award. "It was especially gratifying to be in a good partnership with the captain and to see the way he really buckled down, which is not his nature."

Not only did the result mark New Zealand's first ODI loss of the year but it also ended the Caribbean team's abysmal run of nine consecutive losses in the 50 overs-per-side format. More importantly, it earned them 10 vital points in the bid to qualify for next year's World Cup in India. Left-arm spinner Akeal Hossain and fast bowler Alzarri Joseph claimed three wickets each as the Black Caps, winners of the preceding T20 International series in Jamaica 2-1, laboured in the conditions earlier in the day with captain Kane Williamson top-scoring with 34.

"We need to roll up our sleeves and learn to adapt to different conditions, because it definitely wasn't easy batting out there," was the New Zealand captain's assessment of his team's innings. "It's all part of the learning process and we just have to move on from here." Put in on a bright afternoon, New Zealand looked to be establishing the platform for a formidable total via an opening stand of 41 between Finn Allen (25) and Martin Gupthill (24).

Hossain changed the complexion of the innings with the first three wickets but it was Joseph's double-strike in the 30th over which proved the most incisive as he first trapped Daryl Mitchell leg-before and then induced an outside edge from Williamson's bat to wicketkeeper Shai Hope. A 40-run seventh-wicket stand between Michael Bracewell (31) and Mitchell Santner (25) gave New Zealand hope of pushing past 200 but Jason Holder claimed two wickets in two balls and Joseph wrapped up the innings in the 46th over when Trent Boult played on. —AFP

Quintana denies use of drug after disqualification

PARIS: Colombian Nairo Quintana on Wednesday denied taking a banned pain medication after he was retrospectively disqualified from this year's Tour de France over a positive tramadol test result. Former two-time runner-up Quintana, 32, finished sixth overall in the race that ended on July 24. The pain medication has been on a list of International Cycling Union (UCI) prohibited substances since 2019.

"I know nothing about the use of this substance and deny ever having used it in my career," Quintana, who is due to take part in the Vuelta a Espana beginning on Friday in the Netherlands, said in a statement published on Twitter. "With my team of lawyers we are exhausting all avenues to mount my defense." Tramadol is only banned in competition and while Quintana has been disqualified from the Tour after testing positive for the substance on both July 8 and 13, he will not be banned from future races.

The UCI said Quintana "has been sanctioned for an infringement of the in-competition ban on using tramadol... with the aim of protecting the safety and health of riders in light of the side-effects of this substance". The governing body added that "the analyses of two dried blood samples... revealed the

presence of tramadol and its two main metabolites". Quintana has 10 days to appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the UCI said.

"As this is a first offence, Nairo Alexander Quintana Rojas is not declared ineligible and can therefore participate in competitions," it added. Quintana's Arkea-Samsic team said they were aware of the decision but would "make no further comment". The team did not say whether Quintana would still take part in the Vuelta but



Colombian rider Nairo Quintana

Wallabies Hooper out of SA Tests, Foley recalled

SYDNEY: Captain Michael Hooper was missing from the Australia squad named Thursday for two home Rugby Championship Tests against South Africa as veteran playmaker Bernard Foley earned a shock recall. Hooper pulled out of the team's two-match swing of Argentina this month a day before their opening clash and jetted home, saying he was not in the "right mindset" to lead his country.

In his absence, the Wallabies won the first Test 41-26 but were humiliated 48-17 in the second. Rugby Australia boss Andy Marinos previously said "you cannot put time limits on these things" when asked about Hooper's return. Coach Dave Rennie said he had spoken to the 121-Test veteran since their return from Argentina. "We're not in a position to discuss that in detail and we've got no firm timeline as to when he will return," he added.

Fellow Test centurion James Slipper, who took over as skipper in Argentina, is again expected to captain the side for their showdowns against the Springboks in Adelaide on August 27 and Sydney a week later. Japan-based Foley, 32, returns for the first time since the 2019 World Cup. The 71-Test fly-half, who plays for Kubota Spears, gets another chance with Quade Cooper out with a season-end-

ing injury and James O'Connor dropped after starting Australia's last Test.

"Obviously with Quade's injury and his (Foley's) availability, we started having a conversation after the first Argentinean Test," Rennie said. "James (O'Connor) got a crack in the last Test and we wanted him to drive the ship and allow us to implement our plan, but we were clunky and lacked cohesion, so he's missed out on selection. "Bernard hasn't played an enormous amount of rugby recently... we'll make a call on him once we get him in camp on Sunday."

While Hooper's absence is a blow, the Wallabies welcome back a host of players from injury, including winger Andrew Kellaway and props Angus Bell and Scott Sio. Fellow prop Allan Alaalatoa, centre Hunter Paisami and hooker David Porecki also return after leaving the Argentina tour early for personal and injury reasons. Young NSW Waratahs backrower Langi Gleeson was named in his first national squad, with Queensland Reds fullback Jock Campbell the only other uncapped player.

"To have their experience on deck will be invaluable in what's going to be a massive challenge coming up against South Africa two weeks in a row," said Rennie. "We know that respect is earned daily and we'll be doing everything we can to ensure we put in performances that are worthy of that respect in Adelaide and Sydney." South Africa head into the Tests on the back of a 35-23 home loss to New Zealand, having stunned the All Blacks 26-10 in their Rugby Championship opener. All four teams in the southern hemisphere competition have won one and lost one so far. —AFP



Australia's captain Michael Hooper

the Grand Tour's race director, Javier Guillen told Spanish news agency EFE that he "can start the race, according to the rules". "The rider and the team will decide what they are going to do," added Guillen.

On Tuesday, the Breton outfit announced Quintana had signed a contract extension until 2025. Quintana was the first Colombian to win a Grand Tour when he claimed Giro d'Italia glory in 2014 before adding a Vuelta triumph two years later. Although he never won the Tour, he was an inspiration to many more Colombian cyclists that came after him, such as Egan Bernal who in 2019 became his country's first winner of the world's most prestigious race. —AFP

Five riders to watch at Vuelta a Espana

UTRECHT: The Vuelta a Espana starts on Friday with three-time defending champion Primoz Roglic in the spotlight. Here AFP Sport looks at the main contenders for the overall title:

Primoz Roglic - Jumbo-Visma/Slovenia (age 32)

The former ski-jumper, who suffered an agonizing penultimate-stage defeat on the 2020 Tour de France, can make Vuelta history by winning a fourth straight title. He could take a lead from the day 1 team time-trial, but faces being ganged up on in the Sierra Madre in the final week. Coming back off an injury lay-off but is physically the strongest rider on the roster. Joked during the Tour de France saying: "I'm getting ready for the Vuelta".

Remco Evenepoel - Quick-Step/Belgium (22)

Quick-Step are finally unleashing the 22-year-old while also talking down his chances. Touted in Belgium as the 'new Eddy Merckx' before he plunged into a ravine in Italy in 2020 breaking a hip. Evenepoel has won 11 races this season, is a brilliant one-day racer and one of the best time-trial riders. In Spain, he will have world champion Julian Alaphilippe to guide his every move. "He's done everything to be ready for this," Quick Step boss Patrick Lefevere said of his prodigy this week.

Richard Carapaz - Ineos/Ecuador (29)

One bad day cost Carapaz the Giro d'Italia in May but the cool Ecuadorian climber can count on deep mental reserves and high-level tactical nous. Could be his last ride for Ineos as sole leader and he will enjoy back up from Dutch powerhouse Dylan van Baarle, and climbers Pavel Sivakov and Tao Geoghegan Hart. Carapaz got ahead of Roglic to win his only grand tour on the Giro in 2019, but has been on the podium at the Tour and the Vuelta too. The team time-trial and long second week individual time-trial should also help his overall quest.

Simon Yates - Bike Exchange/England (30)

The 2018 Vuelta champion is one of a clutch of riders who have the credentials to pull off a triumph and will almost certainly be in the mix on the major mountain stages. Could be disadvantaged by the opening day team time-trial but Yates has the ability to punish rivals on the steepest of climbs. May concentrate on stage wins should he fare poorly in the time-trials.

Jai Hindley - Bora/Australia (26)

This mountainous Vuelta should suit his patient style of waiting for the big moment to strike. "We'll let the road decide," he said this week. Took his foot off the gas since his Giro triumph in May so may need to nurse his losses in the first week in the Basque Country hills and Asturias mountains and bank on coming into form in the Sierra Madre. The ambitious 26-year-old has stepped up a level with the support of the German team since his close-season move to Bora, who plan to unleash him on the Tour de France next season. —AFP

Sports

Nadal's disaster hands Medvedev No 1 status

Coric crashes Nadal's Cincinnati welcome back party

CINCINNATI: Rafael Nadal's disaster comeback match on Wednesday at the Cincinnati Masters leaves the Spaniard lagging in the chase for the top ATP ranking. Nadal was ambushed 7-6 (11/9), 4-6, 6-3 in his second-round start by Croat Borna Coric, ending his hopes of overtaking Daniil Medvedev for the world number one rankings. Top seed Medvedev, who played on Thursday for a quarter-final spot against Denis Shapovalov as he tried to tighten his grip on his current top position heading into the US Open.

Third-ranked Nadal was rocked by his loss after six weeks away as he healed an abdominal muscle injury that forced his withdrawal from a Wimbledon semi-final against Nick Kyrgios. Now Nadal goes into the US Open, which begins on August 29 in New York, with only one summer hardcourt match. "In terms of New York, it's a Grand Slam, a different kind of tournament," Nadal said. "I was only able to play two sets before this match in the last 40 days. "I know that to gain condition. I will have to (be) on the tour practicing with the guys (other players)."

The 36-year-old Spaniard with 22 Grand Slam titles said he hopes to feed off fan energy at the US Open, where Nadal won titles in 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2019. "There is an energy the crowd gives me in New York. It's a very special place for me," Nadal said. "I've had unforgettable moments there and I'm going to try my very best every single

day to be ready for that."

Coric crashes

Coric spoiled the return of Nadal after a five-year absence from the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters on Wednesday with a 7-6 (11/9), 4-6, 6-3 upset victory in the second round. The 36-year-old Spaniard, who won the Cincinnati title in 2013, was playing his first match in well over a month after withdrawing with an abdominal injury from his Wimbledon semi-final against Nick Kyrgios. "When you come back from injury, if you win the first match things get better," Nadal said. "That was not the case today."

Nadal began the season with three titles and 20 consecutive wins but will head into the US Open after only one summer hardcourt match. "This tournament was difficult for me. He played better," Nadal said. "It's difficult to take a lot of positive things from this match. "I need to practice. I need to return better. That's the truth."

The night appearance by the 22-time Grand Slam champion was interrupted for an hour and a quarter by rain in the opening set. Once back, the pair struggled into a first-set tie-breaker which lasted for well over a quarter of an hour. Nadal missed on two set points of his own and had to save two set points for Coric. But on the Croat's third opportunity, Nadal handed over the set after an hour and a quarter on court with a costly double-fault. "I had chances in the

tiebreaker and I played terrible on two easy set points," Nadal said.

Nadal then took another 75 minutes to square the match thanks to a break in the seventh game of the second set. The Spaniard was broken to trail 2-4 on a forehand wide, opening the door for Coric, who finished off the victory in just under three hours. "It was very special," said Coric, who had shoulder surgery last year. "I've been out the last two years injured. I didn't play on the big stage. "I was looking forward to playing this match. It was all kind of crazy I would say."

Kyrgios, meanwhile, lost his way amid objections to on-court advertising lights, with the Wimbledon runner-up falling 6-3, 6-2 to American Taylor Fritz. The Australian was in complaint mode from the start, lamenting the distraction of flickering LED lights on an advertising board and demanding a fix. World number 28 Kyrgios, after a standout summer which included the Washington title this month, could not find his best game in crashing out to 11th seed Fritz after only 50 minutes.

Raducanu rolls on

Women's 10th seed Emma Raducanu dispatched her second Grand Slam champion in less than 24 hours, crushing Victoria Azarenka 6-0, 6-2. The teenaged US Open champion claimed the first 10 games before Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open champion, finally captured a game. But the young Briton, who ousted Serena Williams the night before with another love set,



OHIO: Rafael Nadal of Spain plays a backhand during his match against Borna Coric of Croatia during the Western & Southern Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center on August 17, 2022. —AFP

denied Azarenka on two break points in the final game to win in 63 minutes.

"It was another really difficult match and a tough matchup to play Vika," Raducanu said. "I knew I had to be really on my game. I didn't have much time to turn around. "I'm obviously pleased with how I played today and how I stayed really focused." Andy Murray needed a post-match on-court visit from the trainer after losing 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Cameron Norrie in the second round. Three-time Grand Slam champion Murray, twice a Cincinnati

champion, needed massage on his right thigh before leaving the court after battling for nearly two and three-quarter hours.

"My consistency maybe was not where I'd want it," Murray said. "But there was some positive tennis in there at times. I definitely had enough opportunities to win." After cramping at other events in recent weeks, the 35-year-old Scotsman is worried about his physical situation. "It's a big concern for me. It's something I need to address and find a solution for," Murray said. —AFP

Mclroy, Tiger lead players meeting on LIV Golf threat

WASHINGTON: Tiger Woods led a US PGA Tour players-only meeting regarding the threat posed by Saudi-backed LIV Golf, and how to combat it, ahead of this week's BMW Championship. Four-time major winner Rory Mclroy and two-time PGA Championship winner Justin Thomas confirmed Tuesday's gathering on Wednesday, Mclroy saying players departed united on a plan of action moving forward. "The one thing that came out of it, which I think was the purpose, is all the top players on this tour are in agreement and alignment of where we should go going forward," Mclroy said. "And that was awesome."

Several big-name players have left the PGA for the record purses and shorter events of the LIV Golf Series, where hefty guarantees and \$25 million purses have attracted such stars as Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Phil Mickelson, Bubba Watson, Bryson DeChambeau, Henrik Stenson and Sergio Garcia. The PGA responded with indefinite bans

and raised the purses of several events in hopes of competing with the riches of the Saudi-backed circuit. Exact details of what players want were not revealed but Mclroy said one key issue from the meeting was having more opportunities for the world's best golfers to play against each other outside of the majors.

"We need to get the top guys together more often than we do," Mclroy said. "I'm talking about all in the same tournaments, all in the same weeks." Mclroy said for now the nature of the talks was a matter between the players and PGA Tour leaders. "I don't think that's for a public forum right now," Mclroy said. "I think that's between the players and between the executives at the tour to try to sort of manage a way forward."

Woods, a 15-time major champion who is recovering from leg injuries suffered in a February 2021 car crash, made the effort to appear in person at the meeting ahead of the FedEx Cup playoff event, which tees off Thursday in Wilmington, Delaware. "It was impactful and I think it shows how much he cares about the tour," Mclroy said. "It shows how much he cares about the players that are coming through and are going to be the next generation."

Mclroy made it clear that of all the players in the room, it was Woods who commanded the greatest attention. "He's the hero that we've all looked up to.



WILMINGTON: Rory Mclroy of Northern Ireland hits a shot on the 11th hole during the Pro-Am prior to the BMW Championship at Wilmington Country Club. —AFP

His voice carries further than anyone else's in the game of golf, Mclroy said. "His role is navigating us to a place where we all think we should be. "It's pretty apparent that whenever we all get in the room, there's an alpha in there, and it's not me. He cares a lot." —AFP

Kuwait gears for 25th Arabian Gulf CUP

KUWAIT: The inspection committee for the association of Arabian Gulf Cup has affirmed the readiness for Kuwait to host the competition which is expected to start January of next year in case the

competition excludes Iraq from hosting it. The competition is planned to be hosted in Basra City in Iraq, but the current political and security issues might affect Iraq's hosting of the competition.

The inspection committee, headed by secretary general, Jasem Al-Rumaihi, confirmed the readiness for Jaber Stadium and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, to host the two groups, while the stadiums of Kuwait Club, Al-Shabab, Al-Sadaqa Wa Al-Salam and Thamer will be used for training for all participating nations.

The inspection panel concluded its visit with a

meeting with representatives of Kuwait Football Association (KFA), at the attendance of secretary general Salah Al-Qenaqi, who welcomed the visitors to Kuwait and affirmed the readiness of Kuwait to host the competition. The committee will send a report to the Association of the Arabian Gulf Cup to take the final decision about choosing the hosting country. It is worth noting that Kuwait has hosted the 23rd edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup which was won by the Omani National Football Team after Iraq apologized to host the competition — KUNA

Blackburn lose perfect record in Championship

LONDON: Blackburn Rovers lost their 100 percent record in the English Championship on Wednesday when they were defeated 3-0 at Reading. League-leading Rovers went into the game having won all three of their opening matches as they look to return to the Premier League.

By contrast, Reading had lost two of their opening three games, including a 4-0 rout at Rotherham at the weekend. But they were deservedly in front on Wednesday with Tom McIntyre heading them ahead on the quarter-hour mark. Junior Hoilett added a second on the hour with substitute Lucas Joao tucking away the third. Despite the defeat, Blackburn stay top of the table with a one-point lead over Hull and Watford.

Sheffield United climbed to fourth after a 2-1 home victory against 10-man Sunderland. Goals from Anel Ahmedhodzic and Max Lowe put the Blades in command. After being forced to play with only 10 men for around an hour after Dan Neil was

sent off, Sunderland reduced the arrears with a goal from Lynden Gooch. D'Margio Wright-Phillips scored an added-time equalizer for Stoke as they snatched a 2-2 draw at home to Middlesbrough.

Former England centre-half Phil Jagielka's own goal - on his 40th birthday - looked set to hand Boro all three points. But with Chris Wilder's side ready to celebrate their first victory of the season, 20-year-old sub Wright-Phillips - grandson of former Arsenal striker Ian Wright - snatched a point. Jacob Brown's second goal of the season had put Stoke in front before Duncan Watmore made it 1-1. West Brom and Cardiff drew 0-0 in the night's other game. — AFP

LeBron agrees Lakers extension for \$97m

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James has agreed to terms on a two-year NBA contract extension with the Los Angeles Lakers worth \$97.1 million, according to multiple reports on Wednesday. The deal, according to ESPN and The Athletic, includes a player option for the 2024-25 season, in which James could see his 17-year-old son Bronny become an NBA rookie.

The contract could be worth \$111 million to the superstar forward if the NBA salary cap makes a major jump for the 2023-24 campaign. Terms would give James a career guaranteed total earnings number of \$532 million, edging the four-time NBA champion and four-time NBA Most Valuable Player ahead of Kevin Durant for the record guaranteed career earnings total. James, 37, has said he wants to play through the 2024-25 season for the chance to play alongside his eldest son, a top high school prospect in Los Angeles.

James, who would have been entering the final season of his Lakers' contract in October, will now be able to negotiate a new deal or become a free agent in two seasons, the same options available to star teammate Anthony Davis. The Lakers won their most recent NBA title in 2020 but missed the playoffs last season, going 33-49, and James was limited to 56 games by injuries although he averaged 30.3 points, 8.2 rebounds and 6.2 assists a game. —AFP



LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khakdiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Ranjit Khiva**, holder of Passport No. L1435090 do hereby change my father's name from Nachhatar Khiva to Nachhatar Singh. He will henceforth be known in the name of Nachhatar Singh. And I also undertake to carry out this

name change in all my documents. (C# 2037)

I, **TOSIF MOHAMMED RAIS MOHAMMAD** holder of passport No. V6052629 do hereby change my name to TOSIF MOHAMMAD RAISE MOHAMMAD for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name TOSIF MOHAMMAD RAISE MOHAMMAD

and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2038) — 18-08-2022

My Old Name: DIVY VIVEK DABARE, Passport No. T8762544 changed to New Name: MIRAJ VIVEK DABARE for all purposes and documents. Objections please call: 60681599. (C# 2039) 19-08-2022



MUNICH: Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's Pole Vault qualification during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Munich, southern Germany on August 18, 2022. —AFP

Duplantis and Warholm make Athletics Championships bow

Wightman cruises into 800 meters semis

MUNICH: Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Karsten Warholm lent some stardust to the fourth day of action at the European Athletics Championships in Munich on Thursday. Olympic pole vault champion Duplantis, fresh from breaking his own world record in Eugene as he clinched world gold with 6.21 metres last month, qualified with ease for Saturday's final.

Although he rattled the bar down on his first attempt at 5.65m, the US-born Swede made no mistake on his second effort to guarantee his spot in his bid to retain the continental title. The championship record of 6.05m - set by the Soviet and Ukrainian great Sergey Bubka - looks in danger if Duplantis puts his mind to it and the weather stays fair. Likewise, there were no dramas for a second defending champion in Warholm, who set off at a ripping pace in his 400m hurdles semi-final at the Olympic Stadium.

He streaked ahead of the field and while he stuttered slightly going into the final hurdle, the Norwegian clocked a winning 48.34sec, rising a clenched fist as he went through the line. Warholm ran one of the greatest Olympic track performances of all time when he smashed the 29-year-old world record to win the 400m hurdles at last year's Tokyo Games in a time of 45.94sec. But the 26-year-old suffered a hamstring injury in June and although he made the world final in Oregon, he could only finish seventh.

Warholm's closet rivals for gold in Friday's final, scheduled for 2000 GMT, will likely be

France's Wilfried Happio, who won his semi in 48.89sec, and Cuban-born Turk Yasmani Copello, European champion in 2016 and silver medalist behind Warholm in Berlin in 2018. "I am happy with being able to again be in that European final," said Copello. "Tomorrow, I will be leaving it all on the track - finals aren't there to lose, but rather to win."

Bol back on track

Dutch runner Femke Bol, fresh from winning European gold in the 400m flat on Wednesday, was back on the track in hot, sunny conditions in her favored 400m hurdles. The world silver medalist and Olympic bronze medalist in the hurdles dominated her semi-final in 53.73sec to qualify for Friday's final, scheduled for 1945 GMT, and maintain her bid for an audacious double.

Britain's Jake Wightman, surprise victor of the 1500m at the world championships over Norwegian star Jakob Ingebrigtsen, clocked the fastest qualifying time of 1:45.94 in heats for the 800m. Semi-finals for the two-lap race are set for Friday, with the final on Sunday at 1740 GMT. "I was a bit nervous about this early morning race," said Wightman. "I didn't know what I'd need to do to make it to the next round so I ran faster, wanted to win the heat. "I pushed hard in the last 100m. I am looking forward to the semis."

Reigning champion Nafi Thiam of Belgium was in pole position with just the 800m to race in the heptathlon. The Belgian, a two-time Olympic and world champion, registered 13.34sec in the 100m hurdles, 1.98m in the high jump, 14.95m in the



Norway's Karsten Warholm

shot put and 24.64sec in the 200m on the first day of action on Wednesday. Thursday saw her go out to a disappointing 6.08m in the long jump before she rebounded with 48.89m in the javelin for a total of 5,776 points. Poland's Annik Sulek sits second in 5,604pts. — AFP

Benfica overpower Dynamo Kyiv 2-0 in Champions League

PARIS: Benfica took a big stride towards qualifying for the Champions League group stage Wednesday by defeating Dynamo Kyiv 2-0 in Poland in the first leg of their play-off tie. Gilberto and Goncalo Ramos scored first-half goals for twice former European champions Benfica in the Polish city of Lodz, where Dynamo are in exile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Red Star Belgrade, the 1991 European Cup winners, lost 3-2 away to Israeli champions Maccabi Haifa, who are hoping to reach the group stage for the third time after 2002-03 and 2009-10.

Haitian forward Frantzzy Pierrot struck twice for Maccabi as the hosts opened the scoring but then fell behind as Red Star replied with goals from Aleksandar Pasic and Guelor Kanga. Pierrot equalized shortly after half-time and Tjaronn Chery grabbed the winner on the hour to give Maccabi a narrow advantage heading into next week's return leg in Serbia. Qarabag drew 0-0 with Czech champions Viktoria Plzen in Baku. — AFP



Benfica's Portuguese forward Goncalo Ramos celebrates after scoring a goal. —AFP

Kuwaitis grab medals at pan-Islamic games



Abdullah Shaaban

KONYA: Kuwaiti swimmer Waleed Abdulrazaq won the silver medal of 50-m butterfly contest in the Islamic Solidarity Games. Finishing with a time of 23.66 seconds, Abdulrazaq made a new national record for this competition. Compatriot Abdullah

Shaaban followed suit and grabbed the silver medal of the -60 kg Men's Single Kumite competition. The Turkiye-hosted event, which brought together some 6,000 athletes from across more than 50 Islamic countries concluded on Thursday. — KUNA



Waleed Abdulrazaq