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Security measures before entering prisons tightened

All visitors will be inspected without exception • Phones, narcotics seized

Biden nominates new ambassador to Kuwait

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden announced Friday his intent to nominate Karen Sasahara as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Kuwait. The White House said in a statement that Sasahara is a "career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Counselor" and has "most recently served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa."

The statement added Sasahara is "the recipient of numerous State Department performance awards, including five Senior Foreign Service Performance Awards". It indicated she speaks Arabic, Spanish, French and Russian. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah goes through inspection procedures during his visit to the Central Jail on Saturday. — KUNA (More pics on Page 3)

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed the need to tighten security measures when entering prison gates and thoroughly inspect everyone without exception. This came in a press release issued by the ministry on Saturday during Sheikh Talal's inspection visit to the Central Jail, accompanied by Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry Lt Gen Anwar Al-Barjas and a number of senior security officials to witness the progress of work.

Sheikh Talal inspected the prison facilities and listened to an explanation of the services provided to inmates in terms of housing, food, healthcare, family visits and entertainment, sports and cultural activities. It recommended that the needs of correctional inmates continue to be met, that sentences be carried out on an ongoing basis and that everything that would qualify and train inmates be upgraded to become good members of society.

Sheikh Talal expressed appreciation for the efforts made within the correctional institutions sector and the implementation of sentences through the care, activities and programs provided to

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News in brief

Monkeypox case denied

KUWAIT: Jahra Hospital Director Jamal Al-Duaij categorically denied the presence of any case of monkeypox in the country in response to reports on social media. He said a child who was transferred from Adan Hospital was diagnosed with a dermatological infection and does not display any monkeypox symptoms. He said a PCR test was done as a precaution, which confirmed it is not a monkeypox case.

PM issues demographics law

KUWAIT: A new law on remedying the demographic imbalance in Kuwait has been issued by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah. "The minister of justice is responsible for all laws concerning the demographic imbalance," the first article of the law stipulates. The second article decision says "all ministers are responsible to execute the decision from the date of its affirmation, and this must be announced officially in the official gazette". The new law cancels all decisions that contradict it.

Direct access to ministers via Sahel

KUWAIT: The government announced adding a new service to the Sahel app to allow the public to communicate directly with ministers. Citizens can make complaints, ask questions, offer recommendations, propose initiatives or make any other requests through the app, the official spokesman of the government app Yousuf Kazem explained.

Kuwait denies militia attack

KUWAIT: An Iraqi militia claimed it targeted Ali-Al-Salem Airbase located in west of the country on Friday, August 12, but Kuwaiti military sources assured to Kuwait Times that these claims are false. "The claim is completely false, and our air defenses are capable to deter any attacks from outside forces. Nothing has crossed our air borders, as our military is always on guard for any such intrusions," a military source said.

Jaber Hospital performs 100 robot surgeries

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Jaber Hospital has carried out over 100 robot-assisted surgeries, a figure that is forecast to surge to 200 by the end of the year, the clinic's top surgeon said on Saturday. The medical procedures mainly encompassed obesity, colon, abdominal wall, hernia and bladder operations, Dr Sulaiman Al-Mazeedi, head of Jaber

Hospital's surgery department, said. He added his surgical department is the only unit in Kuwait to use endoscopies and robots in surgical operations, based on the great support of the health ministry.

Dr Maher El Chaar, Co-Medical Director of Bariatric Surgery at St Luke's University Hospital in Pennsylvania said he came to Kuwait as a visiting doctor in order to perform some complicated robot-assisted surgeries. Colon Surgery Consultant at Jaber Hospital and Associate Professor at the College of Medicine Dr Ahmad Al-Khamis said the robot is used in colon surgeries to deal with several problems. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Dr Sulaiman Al-Mazeedi and Dr Maher El Chaar.

Power shift for double-decker Mumbai buses

MUMBAI: India's entertainment capital is expanding its fleet of London-style red double-decker buses nearly a century after they made their debut - this time as electric vehicles. The first of 200 new buses are expected to start service on Mumbai's busy roads from December, joining nearly 400 single-floor EVs already in operation.

India - home to 1.4 billion people - is the world's third-biggest carbon emitter,

and the government has pledged to reach net-zero emissions by 2070. The drive to electrify public transport is fueled in part by the need to reduce pollution in cities with some of the world's worst air. The electric bus was developed by Switch Mobility, an arm of Indian auto manufacturing giant Ashok Leyland. Similar electric double-deckers built by the company were rolled out in London in 2014.

"We want common people to use electric mobility and achieve their goals of net-zero," Switch Mobility India chief executive Mahesh Babu told AFP at Thursday's unveiling of the new fleet. The Switch EiV 22 vehicle, built in India, has 65 passenger seats and a battery pack that would give it a range of 250 km. — AFP



MUMBAI: India's Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Hinduja Group Chairman Ashok Hinduja, Ashok Leyland Director Shom Hinduja and Switch Group India's CEO Mahesh Babu pose for pictures during the launch event of the first electric double-decker public transport bus on Aug 18, 2022. — AFP

Algeria fires gut UNESCO listed park

ALGIERS: More than 10 percent of a UNESCO-listed biosphere reserve has been destroyed by fires that tore through northeastern Algeria, killing at least 38 people, an expert told AFP on Saturday. The figure cited by Rafik Baba Ahmed, former director of the El Kala Biosphere Reserve, means that the burned area of the park alone is almost double what

the civil defense service said has been destroyed throughout Africa's largest country since June.

Algeria's northeast was particularly hard-hit since Wednesday by blazes exacerbated by climate change, but the fire service on Saturday said most of the fires there had been put out. "The Wednesday fires damaged around 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres)" of the park, Baba Ahmed said. According to the United Nations cultural agency UNESCO, El Kala Biosphere Reserve covers more than 76,000 hectares. It is the last refuge of the Barbary Red Deer and "home to a very remarkable bird life, more than 60,000 migratory birds every winter", UNESCO's website says.

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Forest fires in northern Algeria

Burnt zones since August 1



Local

Consumers say cheaper prices main reason for shopping online

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: As the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine affected prices of products in Kuwait, many consumers changed their shopping habits and started to shop online from apps and websites abroad in order to save money, especially amid regular offers that encourage them to buy. Meanwhile, a Digital Trust Index published by Forbes showed 88 percent of GCC consumers trust online shopping.

Kuwait Times spoke to consumers who shop online and asked them about the reasons they buy online, and if it helps them save money. Anood Abdulrahman said her main reason to shop online is the diversity of products and better prices, especially cosmetics. "The regular market offers discounts during specific times of the year and on selected items, while online we can buy all what we want at half the price and sometimes lower, not to mention the time saved visiting malls," she said.

Regarding the quality of the products, Anood said: "This is one of the disadvantages of buying online -the quality of products, especially clothes, is a matter of luck; sometimes you receive a high-quality item, while other times you feel like that you paid for things that are



not worth it."

Najah Aman pointed out that she started shopping online due to lower prices and nicer products that differ from the local market, stressing she stopped buying from the local market due to the low quality of items which cost three times the price compared to online products.

The Central Bank of Kuwait indicated in a recent report that spending by citizens and residents on online purchases

increased by 54 percent, with a value of KD 2.4 billion, as their total spending on websites during the first half of 2022 amounted to around KD 6.9 billion, compared to KD 4.49 billion at the end of the same period in 2021.

Sameh Mohammad said that due to his busy day, online shopping is the best option that helps him save time, in addition to various options of items compared to the local market. He added most consumers who buy online are



influenced by their friends and families, and prices are much cheaper than what the local market offers.

Nada Adel said because of better prices consumers can find online, the amount of spending has increased significantly and led to increased competition in the local market to attract customers and provide them with better prices. "The problem we face in Kuwait is that local shops that have good quality items, such as clothes, increased their

prices. This opened the way to shop online from abroad, as producers copy their designs using a lower quality of fabric and attract customers with better prices. This is the main reason that encouraged many people to buy online," she told Kuwait Times. Nada added: "Some customers cannot afford local prices, but they want to catch up with the latest trends, so they use online apps and websites based abroad to save money."

MEW completes annual program for maintenance

KUWAIT: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Assistant Undersecretary for Electric Power and Water Distillation Stations Khalifa Al-Freij announced the completion of the preparation of a comprehensive annual maintenance program for electrical and distillation units at all power and water distillation stations.

Freij said in a press statement on Saturday that maintenance will be carried out on 88 electrical units, representing 83 percent of total units, and the necessary maintenance work of 59 distillation units, equivalent to 100 percent of the total number of distillation units, in addition to desalination units with reverse osmosis technology at Shuwaikh, Zour and Western Doha plants.

Freij explained that the comprehensive annual maintenance program for electrical units will start from September and continue until the end of May 2023 at all six main power and water distillation stations spread over the regions of the country. He pointed out that engineers and technicians of the stations will participate and supervise all maintenance work in accordance with the approved maintenance programs in coordination with contractors in preparation for the summer of 2023 and meet the needs of the electric and water networks in line with the needs of the escalating consumption of electricity and water.

Freij pointed out that the preparation of the maintenance program is carried out in accordance with international standards to achieve the required quality and efficiency and in full coordination with all sectors of the ministry and the oil sector. He pointed out that electricity consumption this year reached 16,180 megawatts until Aug 9 at temperatures of 49 Celsius, an increase in electricity consumption of 3.03 percent from last year, noting that the ministry covered this consumption through its power plants and water distillation stations.



Khalifa Al-Freij

Kuwait eyes closer ties with ICRC

GENEVA: Kuwait is keen on promoting its relations with international humanitarian organizations in general and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in particular, said its permanent Representative at the UN and other international organizations in Geneva on Friday. Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen made the remark to KUNA following a meeting with ICRC President Peter Maurer at the ICRC's headquarters in Geneva.

The meeting aimed at strengthening humanitarian action and manifesting Kuwait's vital role in easing out the sufferings and woes of people due to international crises, Hayen elaborated. He added that he had discussed with the ICRC's president deep relations between Kuwait and the ICRC, along with ways and means of promoting bilateral strategic dialogue. Kuwait's continued aid to Yemen, Syria and other needy African countries, which have been hit hard by global crises, was also considered during the meeting, added the Kuwaiti diplomat. — KUNA



GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent Representative at the UN and other international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen with ICRC President Peter Maurer. — KUNA



Kuwait's Ministry of Education headquarters.

MoE rejects request to open Arab school

KUWAIT: The education ministry has rejected an application by an Arab Embassy to open a school for the children of its community like other foreign schools such as Indian, Pakistani and Filipino schools. The embassy requested through the foreign ministry to allow it to open the school and follow the curriculum of its country, while adhering to laws and decisions in effect in Kuwait.

They said the school will enable children to complete their schooling in their country in case they return or join universities there, without the

need for exams and qualifying tests, as the case is now. Informed sources said that among the justification of rejecting the request is that foreign schools in Kuwait have different cultures and rely on certain languages, but Arabs have the same Arab and Muslim culture and language as Kuwait, so children of Arab communities can join Arab private schools that have the same curriculum of government schools.

Sources said if the education ministry grants this embassy a license to open a school for its community, then all Arab embassies will ask for the same and open schools for their communities in Kuwait, and this means the load will increase on the education ministry to supervise and follow up these schools.



BEIRUT: The Lebanese agriculture minister meets AOAD officials. — KUNA

Lebanon, AOAD mull agricultural revamp

BEIRUT: Lebanese Minister of Agriculture Abbas Hassan and a visiting team of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) on Saturday explored ways and means of overhauling the agricultural sector in Lebanon. "The meeting looked into how to develop the agricultural sector in Lebanon, particularly wheat and pisciculture, and to spur citizens to remain in the countryside by means of promoting alternative agriculture," the minister told KUNA. He underlined that food security, which has now become the main concern of everybody, can only be ensured through the agricultural sector.

Director-General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) Ibrahim Al-Dukhri said his Beirut visit aimed at weighing Lebanon's agricultural affairs, adding that his organization would come up with a vision to revamp the fishery sector in Lebanon. He noted that he and the Lebanese ministry of agriculture had tackled agricultural problems in this Arab country and ways of bankrolling projects that could contribute to developing the sector. — KUNA

local spotlight

What will the National Assembly achieve?



By Atyab Al-Shatti

Local@kuwaittimes.com

The major pillars that determine the outcome of each parliament are works and achievements towards securing citizens' rights and freedoms, passing laws to set the development strategies of the country and unifying all segments of the society to form one nation, which is a responsibility that requires professionalism and experience from members of parliament. Such requirements do not only need academic credentials and qualifications, but also an absolutely clear political vision and understanding of Amiri decrees well to assist through best practices and endeavors to develop and improve the country.

On October 19, 2020, the Cabinet approved a decree calling for elections on December 5, 2020, according to the "one vote" electoral system. Among the conditions for candidacy were:

- 1- Original Kuwaiti nationality, according to the law.
- 2- The name of the candidate must be included in one of the electoral rolls.
- 3- The candidate should not be younger than 30 years of age to be eligible to run for elections.
- 4- The eligibility to read and write the Arabic language.
- 5- The candidate must not have been previously convicted of a felony or a crime against honor or trust, unless the crime has been cleared off the records and a determined time has passed as determined by the criminal law to consider them to stand for elections. Anyone who has been convicted of a final verdict in the crime of insulting the divine, the prophets or HH the Amir shall be deprived from running in elections.

Now, what this decree missed out and caused severe chaos is the fact that article four does not require any sort of proficiency, experience and academic expertise such as in law or political science from the candidate to become eligible to run for parliament. No minimum educational level is required but to be able to read and speak Arabic, and therefore anyone regardless of their experience, credentials or agenda can run!

This has caused democracy to suffer in Kuwait, as byelections assisted many candidates to reach the parliament without considering priorities and needs of the people, but rather personal needs expressed in the byelections. Moreover, unqualified parliamentarians misrepresented the country at an international level by making radical racist statements against migrant workers, women and marginalized communities.

The current decree lacks the understanding or the true role of a parliamentarian, who should possess minimum qualifications and credentials to assist in the legislative process. The parliament has witnessed several unjust laws passed by the parliamentarians, such as passing the law that considered Islamic college graduates who haven't studied the law qualified to practice law and become judges, lawyers and present cases!

Unqualified parliamentarians displayed undesired racism against marginalized communities, which backfired against Kuwait's image internationally. Kuwait is now being held responsible for racist statements and hate speech made by a former unqualified parliamentarian.

I quote Montesquieu: "There is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice."

Local

Jaber Hospital has carried out over 100 robot-assisted surgeries

Using a robot more precise than regular laparoscopic surgeries

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Head of the Surgery Department at Jaber Hospital and Head of Kuwait Board of General Surgery Dr Sulaiman Al-Mazeedi said the surgical team of Jaber hospital has conducted more than 100 procedures with the use of surgical robots. He said Jaber Hospital is the only general surgery department with a robot in Kuwait, while Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center has another robot in a department headed by the pioneer in robot surgeries in Kuwait Dr Saad Al-Dousari.

Dr Mazeedi said most general surgeries done with the use of the robot are for obesity, colon cancer, abdominal walls and complicated hernia, in addition to cholecystectomies. He said the advantage of using a robot is that it is more precise than regular laparoscopic surgeries, adding that earlier large incisions in the abdomen were being made, then came laparoscopes, and now the world has advanced to robotics. He said that this transformation is in line with the ministry of health's vision in improving the health system in Kuwait and providing distinguished care to citizens.

Meanwhile, Head of the Robotic Surgery Department at St Luke's Hospital in Philadelphia Dr Maher El Chaar said: "In the past few days, I had the honor to visit Jaber Hospital in Kuwait on the kind invitation of the ministry of health, and I

am very grateful for the generosity and warm welcome I received. During the visit, I had the pleasure to work and collaborate with a dedicated and passionate team of very talented surgeons who performed, over the course of five days, a variety of advanced robotic surgical procedures with great success."

He added: "In the recent decade, the implementation of robotic surgery and the use of artificial intelligence in the US have changed the field of surgery and resulted in significant improvement in patient outcomes across all specialties, and I am truly amazed at the unwavering commitment of the ministry to bring this innovative technology to Kuwait to benefit the Kuwaiti people and to improve the outcomes of surgical patients. During the visit, we were able to exchange expertise and work together on developing regulations and guidelines for the use of the technology. I would also like to thank my friend Dr Sulaiman Al-Mazeedi for his leadership, hard work, dedication and commitment to position Jaber Hospital and Kuwait as the robotic hub of the Middle East."

Colon Surgery Consultant at Jaber Hospital and Associate Professor at the College of Medicine Dr Ahmad Al-Khamis said the robot is used in colon surgeries to deal with several problems, adding that among things the robot can help are if the patient has cancerous tumors in the rectum itself,



KUWAIT: Dr Sulaiman Al-Mazeedi and Dr Maher El Chaar with the robot-assisted surgery team.

or if the problem is in the colon due to previous procedures, or if doctors expect the problem will be present for a longer time. "In such conditions, the robot provides us with continuous accuracy without getting tired while dealing with these issues," he said.



KUNA: Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Central Jail accompanied by Undersecretary Lt Gen Anwar Al-Barjas and a number of security leaders to see the progress of work. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The collapsed housefront of a building in Oyoum.

Six injured in house collapse

KUWAIT: A house collapsed in Oyoum on Friday night, injuring six people, the Public Relations Department of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced. "A squad from Jahra and Jahra Al-Harfiya were sent to the location, where a housefront had collapsed. One of the persons was trapped under the rubble. Fire squads were able to rescue the person," KFF said. Ambulance took three of the injured persons to hospital, while three others were treated at the scene of the incident.

36-ft yacht on fire

Fire squads from Kuwait Fire Force as well as the marine rescue squads controlled a fire on a 36-ft yacht near Um Al-Maradem island on Friday afternoon. "We were notified of the incident on a 36-ft yacht which had three people on board. We sent our squads from Muhallab and Shuaiba stations immediately, and they successfully controlled the fire without any injuries," KFF announced.

Fire controlled in Jabriya

A fire on Friday afternoon was controlled on Friday afternoon in Jabriya, KFF announced. "The central command sent squads from Hawally and Salmiya stations to the location, where a 600 sq m basement was on fire. There were no injuries in the incident," KFF said.



The charred interiors of a Salwa apartment.

Fire in Salwa flat

A fire erupted on Friday afternoon in an apartment in Salwa. "The central command sent fire squads from Mishref and Qurain stations to handle the incident. The team was able to control the fire, which was in an apartment on the first floor of a building in Salwa, without any injuries," the Public Relations Department of KFF announced. An investigation is currently underway to find the reasons behind the fire.



Charred goods are seen in a Jabriya basement.

On the occasion of the



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Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

News in brief

Domestic workers to be added to ration cards

KUWAIT: Along with their sponsor, domestic workers can now be added to tamween (ration) cards, as long as their sponsor is registered on the same card, ministry of commerce and industry announced. Separately, disagreement between members of Abdaly Cooperative Society over two managerial and financial reports resulted in a heated debate, ending with the rejection of both reports. "The Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Social Affairs Fahad Al-Shuraian then issued a ministerial decision to replace the manager who was appointed by the previous minister of social affairs Mubarak Al-Arow," sources told Kuwait Times. As a result of the decision, the manager of the co-op Shujaa Awadh will be replaced by Bader Al-Adwani in order to complete the tenure of the previous manager.

Summer allowance will be sent in two parts

KUWAIT: The procedures for allocating summer allowances for members of the committee is closely being monitored, head of the training committee at the College of Applied Sciences Faisal Al-Dhahi announced. "Because of the college's budget, we will not be able to send the allowances for summer in one transaction. Instead, it will be divided in two parts, the first 70 percent will be sent out this week as soon as supervisors are done with their monitoring, and the other 30 percent will be sent after the new budget is confirmed," Dhahi clarified. "The panel is closely monitoring this issue along with officials of the committee until the allowance and rewards are fully deposited into deserving accounts," added Dhahi.

Kuwait deplors Mogadishu attack

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday voiced Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of an attack on a hotel in the Somali capital Mogadishu, which left multiple casualties. In a press statement, the foreign ministry restated Kuwait's principled and unswerving position based on decrying violence and terrorism. It also extended its heartfelt condolence and solace to the government and people of Somalia as well as the victims' families, and wished swift recovery to those injured in the attack. — KUNA



Non-oil Kuwaiti exports jump 60%

KUWAIT: With a 60 percent increase, non-oil Kuwaiti exports during the first half of this year reached KD 209.1 million, an increase of KD 78.5 million, compared to KD 130.6 million in the same period last year. "The main reason for the increase in exports comes from the great demand for Kuwaiti products in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which totaled KD 143.9 million in the first half of 2022, in comparison to KD 85.2 million in 2021, while Kuwaiti exports to the Europe and the Americas have decreased regardless of the return to normal life in these countries," announced official sources from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to Kuwait Times.

"It is important to diversify and increase our exports through signing commercial agreements with European and African countries, as well as countries in the Americas, especially since Kuwaiti products are now able to compete globally," the ministry of commerce and industry insisted. Kuwait's exports to other Arab countries jumped to KD 49.5 million in the first five months of 2022, compared to KD 22.2 million in the same period last year.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Cars traverse a roundabout in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti aid society distributes 140 tuk-tuks to unemployed Yemenis



ADEN: The tuk-tuks that were distributed by Kuwait Society for Relief. — KUNA

ADEN: The Kuwait Society for Relief distributed 140 transport tuk-tuks to unemployed youth in three Yemeni governorates as part of the 8-year-old "Kuwait Next to You" campaign in the Yemeni city of Taiz. In a press statement during the event on Thursday, Undersecretary of Taiz Governorate Abdulqawi Al-Mekhlafi expressed his thanks and appreciation to Kuwait, HH the Amir, the government and the people for the great support they provide to the Yemeni people. He pointed out the importance of this project in reducing unemployment, creating jobs and helping dozens of families attain productivity, stability and decent living.

Adel Baashen, Deputy Director of the Kuwait Society for Relief office in Yemen, said this project is one of the important projects for economic empowerment and livelihood support funded by the society and implemented in several Yemeni governorates. "These projects are implemented based on studying the needs of Yemeni society in finding jobs to earn a living, especially amid the difficult living situation the country is going through," he added.

Raed Ibrahim, head of the Communication Foundation for Human Development, said this project includes the distribution of 140 transport tuk-tuks in the governorates of Taiz, Abyan and Marib,

with the aim of empowering young people and creating job opportunities that enable them to support their families and achieve stability and self-sufficiency. He pointed out the project provides more durable and powerful transport vehicles than those in the region and enables them to be used in multiple ways, creating meaningful job opportunities for beneficiaries, representing 140 needy families.

He expressed his thanks and appreciation to Kuwait, HH the Amir, the government and the people of Kuwait and to the Kuwait Society for Relief for their generous and influential support to the Yemeni people in various development and aid fields. — KUNA

ISESCO urges strong humanitarian action to achieve peace, security

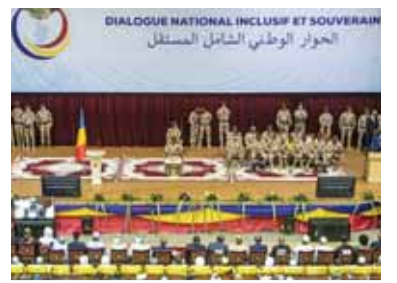
RABAT: The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) called Friday for strengthening humanitarian work to achieve security and peace in the world. In a statement on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day, which falls on Aug 19 every year, the organization urged countries and governments to give priority to financing the social and humanitarian sector. ISESCO stressed the importance of strengthening policies and programs that take into account social assistance and mental health in order to support women and child victims of persecution, wars and conflicts.

In the statement, it expressed commitment to enhancing efforts and coordinating joint action within the framework of a comprehensive humanitarian alliance in order to support the most vulnerable groups in society. The organization commended the courage and dedication of volunteers who are committed to humanitarian work to achieve peace and security in the world, especially amid the outbreak of armed conflicts, wars and the negative repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ISESCO reiterated its keenness to consolidate humanitarian action through its work strategy, programs and initiatives aimed at promoting the values of peace, solidarity and mercy, recalling its various programs and initiatives. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) recently included Naif Palace in the list of Islamic Heritage Sites. — Xinhua



Chad at 'decisive moment' as dialogue opens

Nicaragua detains dissident bishop for 'provocative' activities

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CHERNIHIV, Ukraine: Volunteers clear the rubble of a house destroyed as a result of the shelling in the city of Chernihiv. — AFP

Putin to allow nuke plant inspection

Guterres visits Odessa to make more Ukrainian grain available to poor countries

ODESSA, Ukraine: Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed that independent inspectors can travel to the Moscow-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, the French presidency said Friday, as fears grow over fighting near the site. The apparent resolution of a dispute over whether inspectors travel via Ukraine or Russia came as a US defence official said Ukraine's forces had brought the Russian advance to a halt. "You are seeing a complete and total lack of progress by the Russians on the battlefield," the official said, speaking on grounds of anonymity.

According to French President Emmanuel Macron's office, Putin had "reconsidered" his demand that the International Atomic Energy Agency travel through Russia to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear site. The UN nuclear watchdog's chief, Rafael Grossi "welcomed recent statements indicating that both Ukraine and Russia supported the IAEA's aim to send a mission to" the plant.

Meanwhile, UN chief Antonio Guterres urged Moscow's forces occupying Zaporizhzhia not to disconnect the facility from the grid and potentially cut sup-

plies to millions of Ukrainians. A flare-up in fighting around the Russian-controlled nuclear power station—with both sides blaming each other for attacks—has raised the spectre of a disaster worse than in Chernobyl.

The Kremlin said that Putin and Macron agreed that the IAEA should carry out inspections "as soon as possible" to "assess the real situation on the ground". Putin also "stressed that the systematic shelling by the Ukrainian military of the territory of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant creates the danger of a large-scale catastrophe," the Kremlin added.

Guterres in Odessa

The warning came just a day after Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Guterres, meeting in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, sounded the alarm over the fighting, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the United Nations to secure the site.

"This summer may go down in the history of various European countries as one of the most tragic of all time," Zelensky said in his Friday evening address. "No instruc-

tion at any nuclear power plant in the world provides a procedure in case a terrorist state turns a nuclear power plant into a target." During his visit to the southern port of Odessa on Friday, the UN secretary general said that "obviously, the electricity from Zaporizhzhia is Ukrainian electricity. This principle must be fully respected". "Naturally, its energy must be used by the Ukrainian people," he told AFP in separate comments.

On Thursday, Moscow said Kyiv was preparing a "provocation" at the site that would see Russia "accused of creating a man-made disaster at the plant". Kyiv, however, insisted that Moscow was planning the provocation, and said Russia's occupying forces had ordered most staff to stay home Friday.

Guterres visited Odessa as part of an effort to make more Ukrainian grain available to poor countries struggling with soaring food prices, after a landmark deal with Russia last month to allow its export. The deal, the only significant agreement between Russia and Ukraine since Moscow invaded in February, has so far seen 25 boats carrying some 600,000 tonnes of agricultural products

depart from three designated ports, Kyiv has said. Guterres is expected to head to Turkey after Odessa to visit the Joint Coordination Centre, the body tasked with overseeing the accord. The grain deal has held, but brought little respite along the sprawling front lines after nearly six months of fighting between US-supplied Ukrainian forces and the Russian military.

The United States on Friday announced a new \$775 million arms package, including more precision-guided missiles for HIMARS systems that enable Ukraine to strike Russian targets far behind the front lines. The primary tool of Moscow's forces has been artillery barrages, and recent bombardments over the eastern Donetsk region—which has been partially controlled by Russian proxies since 2014 — left several dead. The Ukrainian head of the region, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said on social media Friday that Russian strikes had killed five people and wounded 10 more in three settlements. Strikes early Friday in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, left one person dead and damaged a school and a private business, the head of the region said. — AFP

Cuba bids farewell to firefighters

MATANZAS, Cuba: Thousands of Cubans turned out Friday to bid a final farewell to 14 firefighters killed while battling a blaze at a fuel depot this month. A long line of firefighters, soldiers and ordinary citizens solemnly filed past 14 coffins draped in the Cuban flag at a ceremony in Matanzas, some 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of the capital Havana.

Also on hand were several of the island nation's top dignitaries, including leader Raul Castro, who headed an honor guard featuring President Miguel Diaz-Canel and Defense Minister General Alvaro Lopez Miera.

"A very sad day, it is very sad to say goodbye to

those brothers who fought hard battles," Yuniar Exposito, a 32-year-old rescue and salvage technician who escaped the fire, told AFP as he wept.

The blaze broke out on August 5 when lightning struck a tank containing 26 million liters of fuel at a depot on the outskirts of Matanzas, a city of some 140,000 people. Early the next morning, a major explosion occurred when a second fuel tank caught fire-killing the firefighters already on site. Two other firefighters had also died in the blaze. Some 130 people were injured, of whom 18 remain in hospital. It took six more days to bring the fire under control, during which time the 14 firefighters were officially listed as missing. Four of the depot's eight fuel tanks were destroyed. Each had a capacity of some 50 million liters (13.2 million gallons). After missing firefighters' remains were found, officials said Wednesday the bodies were too charred to allow for DNA identification.—AFP

Merrick Garland, the man who could put Trump in court

WASHINGTON: Merrick Garland, the US attorney general, was denied a lifetime seat on the Supreme Court by Republicans in the Senate. He now faces a decision arguably every bit as weighty as anything he may have faced on the nation's highest court: the potential prosecution of a former president of the United States. The 69-year-old Garland personally approved the stunning August 8 FBI search of Donald Trump's Florida home and will have the final say on whether he is to be charged with any crimes. Such a move against a former president would be unprecedented—Richard Nixon was pardoned by Gerald Ford before any criminal charges could be brought stemming from the Watergate scandal.

And while Nixon was a spent force anyway—having resigned in disgrace—the 76-year-old Trump retains an iron grip over the Republican Party and is openly mulling another run for the White House in 2024.

"The idea of prosecuting a former president for anything is pretty extraordinary," said Steven Schwinn, a law professor at the University of Illinois Chicago. "But Trump's actions were pretty extraordinary."

While the Mar-a-Lago raid appears to center around the mishandling of classified documents, Trump is also facing legal scrutiny for trying to overturn the results of the November 2020 election and for the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol by his supporters. Trump has not been charged so far in connection with either case but the House committee probing the Capitol riot, in a series of public hearings, has laid out a roadmap for Garland to potentially follow.

Whether he will do so is the burning question in the nation's capital. The raid on Trump's Florida home ignited a political firestorm and indicting him would



Merrick Garland

ratchet up tensions even further in a country already bitterly divided along Democratic and Republican lines. Garland is politically astute enough to foresee the consequences of going after Trump, Schwinn said, and has "complicated considerations to put in the balance." "On the one hand, Garland has got to be thinking about what his job is—and that is enforcing the rule of law," he said.

"On the other hand, he is undoubtedly aware that any criminal pursuit of President Trump is going to embolden his base and has already led to threats of violence against federal officers and others."

Trump and his Republican allies have already accused Garland, who was named the country's top law enforcement official by Democratic President Joe Biden, of "weaponizing" the Justice Department for political purposes.

"Nothing like this has ever happened to a President of the United States before," Trump said after the raid on Mar-a-Lago, calling it a "witch hunt" by vengeful Democrats. The FBI raid prompted Trump ally Marjorie Taylor Greene to introduce a resolution in the House to impeach Garland for a "blatant attempt to persecute a political opponent."

It has no chance of passage in the Democratic-controlled chamber. On the left, some Democrats have accused Garland of moving too slowly in taking legal action against a former president they believe should be behind bars for mounting an insurrection.—AFP



MATANZAS, Cuba: Relatives of the firefighters who died in a huge fire at an oil depot in early August cry next to the urns in Matanzas, Cuba. Thousands of Cubans turned out to bid a final farewell to 14 firefighters killed while battling a blaze. — AFP

Islamic State 'Beetle' jailed for life by US court

ALEXANDRIA, United States: A member of the notorious Islamic State kidnap-and-murder cell known as the "Beetles" was sentenced to life in prison by a US court on Friday for the deaths of four American hostages in Syria.

El Shafee Elsheikh, 34, was given eight concurrent life sentences with no possibility of parole after being convicted in April of hostage-taking, conspiracy to murder US citizens and supporting a terrorist organization.

Judge T.S. Ellis, handing down the sentence in a US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, said Elsheikh's conduct "can only be described as horrific, barbaric, brutal, callous and, of course, criminal."

Elsheikh, wearing large glasses, a black COVID face mask and a dark green prison jumpsuit with "Alexandria Inmate" on the back, did not visibly react and declined an opportunity to speak to the court.

The trial of the former British national, which fea-

tured emotional testimony from former hostages and parents of the murdered Americans, was the most significant prosecution of an IS militant in the United States.

Diane Foley, mother of murdered hostage James Foley, addressed Elsheikh and the court and noted Friday was the eighth anniversary of her son's "gruesome beheading." "You have been held accountable for your depravity," Foley told Elsheikh. "You have lost your country, your citizenship, your freedom and your family. "Love is much stronger than hatred," she added. "I pity you, Elsheikh, for choosing hatred."

The jury deliberated for less than six hours at the end of a two-week trial before finding Elsheikh guilty

for his role in the deaths of four Americans—journalists Foley and Steven Sotloff and aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

Elsheikh and another former "Beetle," Alexandra Kotey, were captured by a Kurdish militia in Syria in January 2018 and handed over to US forces in Iraq. They were flown to the United States in 2020 to face trial. Kotey, 38, pleaded guilty in September 2021 and was sentenced to life in prison in April.

Another alleged "Beetle," Aine Davis, 38, has been deported to Britain from Turkey and remanded in custody on terrorism charges. The fourth in the group, executioner Mohammed Emwazi, was killed by a US drone in Syria in November 2015.—AFP

International

Nicaragua detains dissident bishop for 'provocative' activities

'The bishop is under house arrest in the capital city'

MANAGUA, Nicaragua: Nicaraguan bishop and regime critic Rolando Alvarez was detained Friday for "destabilizing and provocative" activities, in a worsening standoff between the Church and a government accused of increasing authoritarianism.

After two weeks under police siege at his official residence in Matagalpa, central Nicaragua, Alvarez was taken Friday by police to Managua some 130 kilometers (81 miles) away, authorities said.



Physical condition deteriorated

Supporters said Alvarez was taken "with violence" to an unknown location, prompting the United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS) to express concern.

In a tweet tagged #SOS, the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) said that "the national police has entered the residence of our diocese of Matagalpa and has taken" the bishop. It said this happened at 3:00 am at the church residence in Matagalpa where Alvarez and a group of priests and lay people had been held under siege by police since August 4.

Vilma Nunez of the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (Cenidh) told AFP that police "removed (the bishop) with violence" and without telling anyone where he was being taken. Hours lat-

er, the national police said in a statement that Alvarez was brought to Managua.

"The bishop is under house arrest in the capital city," it said, without revealing where. "He was able to meet with his family members this morning," it added. Eight others, including five priests, who had been holed up with Alvarez were taken to Managua with him, according to CELAM, and were all under investigation.

Later, the Church said Alvarez was being held at his "family home" where cardinal Leopoldo Brenes was allowed to visit him. Brenes reported the bishop's "physical condition has deteriorated" but his "spirit is strong," the archdiocese of Managua said in a statement. The other eight were being held at El Chipote prison, according to Cenidh—a notorious lockup for government critics.

'Very concerned'

Police said Alvarez's detention was a "public order" operation necessitated by the bishop's "destabilizing and provocative activities." UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "very concerned by the severe closure of democratic and civic space in Nicaragua, and recent actions against civil society organizations, including those of the Catholic Church."

"Reports of a raid against the residence of the Catholic bishop of Matagalpa only heightens these concerns," he said. The Catholic Church in Nicaragua has been under increasing government pressure since opposition protests in 2018 were met with repression that resulted in hundreds of deaths.

President Daniel Ortega maintains the protests were part of a Washington-backed opposition plot to unseat him. He has accused bishops of complicity and claimed protesters used church



SAV JOSE, Costa Rica: Nicaraguan citizens hold a demonstration in front of San Jose's Cathedral in Costa Rica to protest against the Nicaraguan government and the detention of Nicaraguan bishop and regime critic Rolando Alvarez, in San Jose. — AFP

buildings as "barracks."

Alvarez himself is accused by the authorities of inciting violence to destabilize the Central American country. He was placed under siege at his residence after criticizing the closure of Church radio stations and news channels.

Ortega, a 76-year-old former guerrilla, has governed Nicaragua since 2007, winning three successive reelections. The last vote took place in November 2021 with Ortega's main rivals in jail alongside dozens of other government opponents and critics.

According to the European Union, Nicaragua

has more than 180 "political prisoners." In the first half of 2022, the bloc says, Nicaraguan authorities closed down over 1,200 civil society organizations. The Vatican has said Nicaragua expelled its ambassador to the country in March.

Last week, the Cenidh said another Nicaraguan priest, Oscar Benavidez, was "removed from his vehicle and taken by patrol car to an unknown destination." Arturo McFields, a former Nicaraguan ambassador to the Organization of American States, tweeted Friday that the "dictatorship kidnapped Rolando Alvarez... continuing its infernal pursuit of the Church." — AFP

Man dead in Sweden mall shooting

MALMO: The man who has died in a shooting at a shopping centre in Sweden was the target of the attack, police said on Saturday. A man and a woman were wounded in a shooting at a mall in the southern city of Malmo on Friday, with the man eventually succumbing to his injuries and the woman hospitalised.

On Saturday, the chief of Malmo police, Petra Stenkula, told a press conference that "Actually, everything leads us to believe that this man was the target of this execution." Police have said that they have arrested the 15-year-old suspected shooter. The woman victim, who was in serious condition, was thought to have been a passerby.

Police consider the shooting to be "an isolated criminal incident" and have excluded any terror links. In July, three people were killed in a shooting in a shopping mall in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, around 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Malmo. — AFP

Mexico arrests ex-prosecutor over missing students

MEXICO CITY: Mexico on Friday arrested a former attorney general who led a controversial investigation into the disappearance of 43 students in 2014 — one of the country's worst human rights tragedies. Arrest warrants were also issued for dozens more suspects including military personnel, police officers and cartel members, prosecutors announced.

Ex-attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam is the most senior figure detained so far in connection with the case, which shocked the nation and generated international condemnation.

He is considered the architect of the so-called "historical truth" version of events presented in 2015 by the government of then-president Enrique Pena Nieto that was widely rejected, including by relatives. Murillo Karam, a former heavyweight of the once-dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was arrested for the crimes of forced disappearance, torture and perverting justice, the attorney general's office said.

Arrest warrants were also issued for 20 members of the military, five administrative and judicial officials, 44 police officers and 14 members of the Guerreros Unidos cartel, prosecutors later announced. They are accused of involvement in

organized crime, forced disappearance, torture, homicide and obstruction of justice, they said.

The teaching students had commandeered buses in the southern state of Guerrero to travel to a demonstration in Mexico City before they went missing. Investigators say they were detained by corrupt police and handed over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel which mistook them for members of a rival gang, but exactly what happened to them has been hotly disputed.

According to the official report presented in 2015, cartel members killed the students and incinerated their remains at a garbage dump.

Those conclusions were rejected by independent experts and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the families. On Thursday a truth commission investigating the atrocity branded the case a "state crime" involving agents of various institutions.

It said that military personnel bore at least partial responsibility, either directly or through negligence. "Their actions, omissions or participation allowed the disappearance and execution of the students, as well as the murder of six other people," said the commission's head, deputy interior minister Alejandro Encinas. Further investigations were necessary to establish the extent to which military personnel participated, he said.

"An action of an institutional nature was not proven, but there was clear responsibility of members" of the armed forces, Encinas added. The "historical truth" did not attribute any responsibility to military personnel, President Andres Manuel Lopez



CHILPANCINGO, MEXICO: File photo shows a student walks past portraits of some of the 43 missing students of the rural teacher college of Ayotzinapa. — AFP

Obrador said Friday that any soldiers and officials involved in the disappearance must face justice.

"Publicizing this atrocious, inhuman situation, and at the same time punishing those responsible, helps to prevent these deplorable events ever happening again" and "strengthens institutions," Lopez Obrador said.

"We said from the beginning that we were going to speak the truth, no matter how painful it was," he told reporters during a visit to the northwestern border city of Tijuana. — AFP

Security measures before entering...

Continued from Page 1

inmates, which strengthens Kuwait's position as a leading country for the preservation of human rights. The interior ministry announced

Algeria fires gut UNESCO...

Continued from Page 1

"It is (a) mosaic of marine, dune, lake and forest ecosystems, with its marine strip rich in corals, Posidonia meadows and fish," UNESCO says. According to Baba Ahmed, forest covers 54,000 hectares of the park and most of the trees are cork oak. "It is considered one of the main biodiversity reserves in the Mediterranean basin," he said, extolling its "exceptional biological richness".

But Baba Ahmed said he was "very pessimistic" about the future of the area regularly damaged by forest fires. "Over time the fires weaken the forest, making it vulnerable to other attacks: harmful insects but especially to human activities." As a consequence, the area loses its flora and fauna, the forestry expert added.

Civil Defense Colonel Boualem Boughlef said on television Friday night that since June 1, 1,242 fires had destroyed 5,345 hectares of woodlands in Algeria. Baba Ahmed said that figure is not realistic. While Algeria's northeastern fires have been largely extinguished, firefighters fought two blazes on the other side of the country in Tlemcen, in the far west, the civil defense said Saturday on its Facebook page.

The fires led Algerians both at home and in the diaspora to collect clothing, medicines and food to help those affected. European Union foreign policy

that an inspection campaign carried out by prison security men during the visit resulted in the seizure of a large number of mobile phones and suspected narcotics, and legal measures were taken in this regard.

Sheikh Talal was received upon arrival by the assistant undersecretary for private security affairs and the assistant undersecretary for correctional institutions affairs and the implementation of sentences Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Mulla and senior officials of the sector. — KUNA

chief Josep Borrell has also offered support, and French President Emmanuel Macron called his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune to express his condolences "for the victims of the fires", state news agency APS reported on Saturday. Spain and Portugal too fought massive wildfires over the past week, including in another UNESCO-listed park where more than 25,000 hectares were estimated to have been scorched. — AFP



EL KALA, Algeria: An elderly Algerian woman reacts in front of the ruins of her home, destroyed in a wildfire, on Aug 18, 2022. — AFP

Bryant's widow fears fatal crash pics will spread

LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant's widow told a court Friday she was devastated when she learned first responders had snapped graphic photographs of her dead husband and daughter in the wreckage of the helicopter crash that killed them.

A tearful Vanessa Bryant said she lives in fear of the pictures surfacing on the internet, and "constantly being spread". "Once it's spread, you can't get it back," she said. US basketball legend Kobe Bryant and his teenage daughter were among nine people who died when their chopper smashed into a hillside near Los Angeles in 2020.

Vanessa Bryant alleges she has suffered emotional distress because personnel from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and firefighters took pictures of the scene which they later shared, including at a bar, with friends and other first responders. One sheriff's deputy acknowledged that he had sent the pictures to a fellow deputy as the pair played "Call of Duty".

Vanessa Bryant told a Los Angeles court on Friday she had bolted out of the house to find a place to cry away from her daughters when she learned of the existence of the photos. "I broke down and cried, and I wanted to run down the block and just scream," the Los Angeles Times reported her saying. "I don't want my children to ever come across them," she said. "I have three little girls."

Bryant is suing Los Angeles County for unspecified millions of dollars in damages, in a case that has been joined to that of Chris Chester, whose wife and daughter also perished in the crash. The suits allege negligence and invasion of privacy. Attorneys say the grisly mobile phone pictures were snapped as "souvenirs" by first responders who had no business taking photos.

Lawyers for Los Angeles County do not dispute that the photos were taken, but insist they have never been made public and have now been deleted. Chester told the courtroom in Los Angeles of his dis-



Vanessa Bryant

belief when he learned of the pictures a month after the tragedy - including that they had been flaunted at a bar and at an awards ceremony.

"I had largely insulated my family from the details" of the crash, he said. "Now, I thought there would be pictures of the remains" on the Internet, he said, adding he had instantly warned his sons: "Please don't start Googling for them." "I'm fearful every day," he told the nine-strong jury. "There's been a lot of things that people thought didn't exist — that have turned up on the internet."

Mira Hashmall, representing the county in the civil litigation, said earlier that the case, which began last week, hinged on this issue of public dissemination. "From the time of the crash to now, the county has worked tirelessly to prevent its crash site photos from getting into the public domain," she said. "Over two and a half years later, no county photos have appeared in the media, none can be found online, and the plaintiffs admit they've never seen them."

Relatives of other victims were last year granted \$2.5 million in compensation over the photo-taking. An investigation into the crash found the pilot had probably become disoriented after flying the Sikorsky S-76 into fog.

Bryant is widely recognized as one of the greatest basketball players ever, a figure who became the face of his sport during a glittering two decades with the Los Angeles Lakers. He was a five-time NBA champion in a career that began in 1996 straight out of high school and lasted until his retirement in 2016. — AFP

International

Chad at 'decisive moment' as dialogue opens, some opposition groups boycott gathering

'We signed this agreement to rebuild Chad'

N'DJAMENA, Chad: Delayed talks on Chad's future that the ruling junta says are a "decisive moment" opened Saturday, even as some opposition groups boycott the gathering. More than 1,400 delegates from the military government, civil society, opposition parties, trade unions and rebel groups gathered in N'Djamena for the "national dialogue" that is scheduled to last three weeks. Junta chief General Mahamat Idriss Deby described the forum, his brainchild, as a "decisive moment in history of our country" after arriving in military dress surrounded by tight security to open the forum. Earlier, he had first inaugurated a statue symbolising national unity at the January 15 palace in the capital N'Djamena before reviewing an honour guard, an AFP journalist at the scene saw.



N'DJAMENA, Chad: Chad's transitional President Mahamat Idriss Deby (C) inaugurates the statue of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation at the January 15 Palace on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the dialogue, in N'Djamena, Chad, on August 20, 2022. — AFP

Decisions would be legally binding

"This dialogue should allow us definitively to put recourse to arms behind us," said government spokesman Abderamane Koulamallah. Deby in midweek signed a decree saying the forum would make "sovereign" decisions which would be legally binding and that he would act as guarantor.

The junta head took power in April 2021 at the age of just 37 after his father, who ruled for 30 years, was killed during a military operation against rebels. The military leader says the talks should open the way to "free and democratic" elections after an 18-month rule by the junta—a deadline that France, the African Union (AU) and others have urged him to uphold.

The dialogue, which should have begun in February, was hit by repeated delays as Chad's numerous rebel groups, meeting in Qatar, squabbled over whether to attend. In the end, around 40 groups on August 8 signed up to a deal that included a ceasefire and guarantee of safe passage.

How to achieve lasting peace, reform state institutions and grant fundamental freedoms to all topped the agenda. Committees must also draw up a new constitu-

tion that will be put to a referendum. While a number of opposition groups appeared ready to give the forum a chance, some groups did not attend.

'Skewed in advance'

The Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) boycotted the event which it considers to be "skewed in advance" towards the military junta. FACT is a key opposition group which did not sign the peace accord and which triggered the offensive in the northeast last year that ended in the death in combat of Deby's father Idriss Deby.

Wakit Tamma, a large coalition of opposition parties and civil society groups, is also refusing to take part, accusing the junta of "human rights violations". Forum opponents are also upset at an indication Deby may decide to stand as president having initially pledged not to do so on assuming power as junta chief.

Succes Masra, leader of the Transformers party,

which is part of the Wakit Tamma coalition, on Saturday called for civil resistance at a meeting in N'Djamena attended by several hundred supporters which drew a large police presence. After Saturday's preliminaries, actual dialogue is set to start on Sunday or Monday.

'Rebuild Chad'

On Thursday, two exiled rebel leaders, Timan Erdimi and Mahamat Nouri of the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), a former defence minister, returned to Chad to participate in the forum. "We signed this agreement to rebuild Chad," Erdimi, the head of the Union of Resistance Forces (URF), told AFP. Chad, one of the world's poorest countries, has endured repeated uprisings and unrest since independence from France in 1960. The talks face major challenges according to observers: Time pressure and the absence of two of the biggest rebel groups. — AFP

13 dead as Somali forces battle Al-Shabaab

MOGADISHU, Somalia: At least 13 civilians have been killed and dozens wounded in an Islamist militant attack on a hotel in the Somali capital, officials said Saturday, as security forces battled gunmen barricaded inside many hours after the siege began.

Fighters from the Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Shabaab stormed the Hayat Hotel in Mogadishu on Friday evening in a hail of gunfire and bomb blasts. Scores of people were trapped inside but officials said many including children have since been rescued.



MOGADISHU, Somalia: A security officer gestures as he and colleagues patrol at the site of explosions in Mogadishu on August 20, 2022 — AFP

Sporadic gunfire and loud explosions could be heard into Saturday afternoon, but details remain difficult to verify in the chaos. It is the biggest attack in Mogadishu since Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in May after many months of political instability.

Al-Shabaab, which has been waging a deadly insurgency for 15 years against the fragile government in the Horn of Africa nation, has claimed responsibility. "We are getting information about five more victims confirmed dead and that makes 13 the overall number

of civilians killed by the terrorists," security commander Mohamed Abdikadir told AFP.

"The security forces rescued dozens of civilians including children who were trapped in the building," Police officer Ibrahim Duale confirmed that more than 10 people had been killed, but said updated information would be released once the siege had ended. "The security forces will announce any moment that the siege is over, it took a long time because of the complexity of the rescue mission," Duale told AFP. The director of Mogadishu's main trauma hospital, Mohamed Abdirahman Jama, said the facility was treating at least 40 people wounded in the hotel attack and a separate mortar strike on another area of the capital.

Mortar attack injures newly-weds

Dozens of people gathered outside the four-storey hotel to discover the fate of loved ones. "We have been looking for a relative of mine who was trapped inside the hotel, she was confirmed dead together with six other people, two of them I know," said an anxious Muudey Ali.

There has been no official comment from the government, although East Africa grouping IGAD and Turkey, which has a military base in Somalia, both issued strong condemnations. In another incident, a volley of mortar shells hit the seafloor neighbourhood of Hamar Jajab, district commissioner Mucawiye Muddey told AFP.

"Among those critically wounded are a newlywed bride and her groom and a family of three children, a mother and their father," he said. There was no immediate claim for that attack. Witnesses had reported at least two powerful explosions on Friday as gunmen stormed the hotel, a popular spot for government officials in a bustling area on the airport road.

Police spokesman Abdifatah Adan Hassan had told reporters Friday the initial blast was caused by a suicide bomber who forced his way into the hotel with other gunmen. Witnesses said a second blast occurred just a few minutes later, inflicting more casualties as rescuers, security forces and civilians rushed to the scene. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility in a brief statement on a pro-Shabaab website, saying its fighters were carrying out "random shooting" inside the hotel. Its spokesman Abdiaziz Abu-Musab told the group's Andalus radio Saturday that its forces were still in control of the building and that they had "inflicted heavy casualties".

Al-Shabaab fighters have carried out several attacks in Somalia since Mohamud took office and have also launched strikes on the Ethiopia border, raising concerns about a possible new strategy. Earlier this week, the United States announced its forces had killed 13 Al-Shabaab operatives in an air strike, the latest since US President Joe Biden ordered the re-establishment of a US troop presence in Somalia, reversing a decision by his predecessor Donald Trump. — AFP

Under a 2011 UN Security Council resolution, 135 Taliban officials are subject to sanctions that include asset freezes and travel bans. But 13 of them were granted exemptions from the travel ban to allow them to meet officials from other countries abroad.

In June, the 15-member UN Security Council's Afghanistan Sanctions Committee removed two Taliban education ministers from the exemption list over the regime's curtailment of women's rights. At the same time, they renewed the exemption for the others until August 19, plus a further month if no member objected. Ireland objected this week, according to diplomatic sources. China and Russia have called for an extension, while the United States has sought a

Algeria fires contained but residents leave

ALGIERS, Algeria: Wildfires which killed at least 38 people across northern Algeria have been largely contained, firefighters said Friday, but new blazes forced further evacuations and the closure of some roads near the Tunisian border.

Fierce fires have become an annual fixture in Algeria's parched forests where climate change is exacerbating a long-running drought. "We are currently fighting 11 fires," the civil defence's Colonel Boualem Boughlef told an evening news broadcast.

He said more than 1,000 families had been evacuated since Wednesday. Fire service spokesman Colonel Farouk Achour said on Friday morning that all the fires had been "completely brought under control", but the service later tweeted that fires were burning in the far northeastern regions of El Tarf and Skikda.

State television showed images of an army firefighting aircraft over El Tarf, and police said several highways in the area had been closed. Images on social media showed people evacuating homes near a forest blaze in the El Kala area, which had seen devastating fires on Thursday.

El Tarf residents were counting their losses, including the charred remains of farm animals burned alive as flames swept through the area. The fire "didn't spare anything", said one farmer, Hamdi Gemidi, 40, who walked in rubber sandals on the ash-covered earth where the carcasses of what appeared to be sheep lay.



EL TARF, Algeria: Algerian farmer Hamdi Gemidi checks his charred animals at his farm on the outskirts of the city of el-Tarf. Algerian firefighters were today battling a string of blazes, fanned by drought and a blistering heat-wave, that have killed at least 38 people. — AFP

Thai nightclub fire death toll reaches 20

BANGKOK: The death toll from a Thai nightclub inferno has risen to 20, health officials said, as victims continue to receive medical treatment. The blaze broke out August 5 at Mountain B Club in Chonburi province—roughly 150 kilometres (93 miles) southeast of Bangkok. Authorities found 13 charred bodies inside the venue.

Seven others have since died from their injuries, with the latest fatality a 50-year-old man, Chonburi provincial public health office said. All the victims were Thai nationals. There are 25 injured who are still receiving medical treatment in hospitals, with nine on ventilators, the local health authority said.

Flammable acoustic foam on the walls of the club accelerated the blaze and it took firefighters more than three hours to bring it under control. A Chonburi province senior police officer confirmed Saturday that the club owners, a father and son, have been charged with causing death through recklessness and operating a pub without a licence. "They could face more charges related to building safety and social security of employees," he told AFP. Both have been released on bail by the local court, he said. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha has ordered an investigation into the tragedy.

Thailand's lax approach to health and safety regulations—particularly in its bars and nightclubs—has long raised concerns. A huge fire erupted at a New Year's Eve party at Bangkok's swanky Santika club in 2009, killing 67 people and injuring more than 200. The Santika owner was jailed for three years over the blaze, which began when fireworks were set off as a rock band called Burn played on stage. More recently, four people died in a fire caused by an electrical fault at a club on the holiday island of Phuket in 2012. — AFP

"This is our livelihood... We have nowhere to go and nothing to make a living from." Ghazala, 81, said she had been rescued along with a few animals after flames came dangerously close to her house. "I don't know where to go now. Should I stay in the fields, forests or mountains?" she asked, on the verge of tears. "I really don't know where I should go."

'Arsonists' arrested

Since the beginning of June, some 1,240 blazes have destroyed 5,345 hectares (13,200 acres) of forests and other woodland, Colonel Boughlef said. The justice ministry launched an inquiry after Interior Minister Kamel Beldjoud suggested some of this year's blazes were started deliberately, and authorities on Thursday announced four arrests of suspected arsonists.

If found guilty, they could face between 10 years and life in jail. But officials have also been accused of a lack of preparation, with few firefighting aircraft available despite record casualties in last year's blazes and a cash windfall from gas exports with global energy prices soaring.

Authorities said they deployed more than 1,700 firefighters over Wednesday and Thursday. The dead included more than 10 children and a similar number of firefighters, according to multiple sources including local journalists and the fire service. Most were in the El Tarf region near Algeria's eastern border with Tunisia, an area which was sweltering earlier this week in 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit) heat. Algerians both at home and in the diaspora have mobilised to collect clothing, medicines and food to help those affected. Late on Thursday, dozens of trucks carrying humanitarian aid from various cities arrived in El Tarf, regional authorities said. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell also offered support to Algerians "hard-hit by the terrible fires". — AFP

UN to end travel ban exemptions for Taliban officials

UNITED NATIONS, United States: The United Nations is set to end travel ban exemptions for 13 Taliban officials Friday, pending any deal by Security Council members on a possible extension, diplomats told AFP.

drawal from Afghanistan. A spokesperson for the Chinese mission at the UN, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council, this week called the Western position linking the travel ban to human rights "counterproductive."

The exemptions are "needed as much as ever," the spokesperson said, adding that if reimposing a travel ban is all other members of the Council want to do, "clearly they have learned no lessons at all."

Despite their promises to be more flexible after they seized power in August last year, the Taliban have largely reverted to the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.—AFP

They were instrumental in negotiations with the US government of then-president Donald Trump which led to a deal in 2020 paving the way for America's with-

SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 2022

Business

Britain hit by another rail stoppage as strikes roll on

Soaring food and energy prices hurt millions

LONDON: Railway staff in Britain on Saturday staged the latest in a series of strikes, the second in three days, as decades-high inflation hit salaries and prompted walkouts across various industries. The stoppage by tens of thousands of workers disrupted weekend leisure travel with only around one in five trains set to run and some areas having no services.

It comes during a summer of industrial action across Britain, with staff in various sectors pushing for pay rises and better working conditions. "We cannot tolerate being bullied or hoodwinked into accepting a raw deal for our members," said Mick Lynch, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), which is among those striking. "The government needs to stop their interference in these disputes so the employers can come to a negotiated settlement with us."

He warned that further walkouts were likely unless a compromise could be reached over pay rises and working terms and conditions. However, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the unions' "coordinated approach" showed they were "hell-bent on causing as much misery as possible".

Saturday's stoppage, set to hit football and cricket fans headed to matches as well as festival-goers, tourists and holidaymakers, will spill over into Sunday morning. It follows a similar walkout Thursday, and a strike across London's transport system on Friday.

Official data Wednesday showed UK inflation at a 40-year-high above 10 percent, as soaring food and energy prices hurt millions. The Bank of England has forecast inflation to top 13 percent this year, tipping the British economy into a deep and long recession. The rail strikes have divided opinion, with some voicing frustration but others supporting the workers.

"I've got all the sympathy in the world for them,"

recruitment consultant Greg Ellwood, 26, told AFP this week at an unusually quiet Euston station in London. "Everyone likes to try and divide people, but this is something I think people should stick to."

Public transport workers in London held fresh strikes Friday over pay and conditions, cutting services on almost all underground and overground rail lines that link up the UK capital. The latest walkout comes during a summer of industrial action across Britain, with workers in various sectors pushing for pay rises in line with decades-high inflation and the soaring cost of living.

A spokesperson for Transport for London, responsible for most of the capital's network, told AFP there were "almost no tube (Underground) services" with only a couple of lines functioning with "very reduced services". Members of the RMT transport workers union, which represents a majority of the workforce, called Friday's strike over job cuts, pension security, pay and changes to working practices.

Passengers outside the closed Blackhorse Road underground station expressed frustration at long detours or costly taxi rides they would have to take.

"I'm not happy at all about this strike. I didn't think much about what they're claiming. I'm more focused about how I'm going to get to work now," said Arlene Morson, a 52-year-old sales consultant.

"It's happening almost every week now, something has gone wrong," said Greg Skalski, a 43-year-old construction worker, adding he had little sympathy given that train drivers earn higher than average salaries. French finance worker Joachim, 21, was more relaxed, saying: "When I look at France and the number of strikes—here the metro closes for one day and everyone talks about it!"

The strike action comes after nationwide rail strikes on Thursday hit the majority of services, as



LONDON: A lone commuter walks at Waterloo Station in London 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

union members have rejected an eight percent pay rise offer that is below inflation.

There will be further nationwide rail strikes on Saturday. The RMT has refused to put an end date on the industrial action.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, an opposition Labour politician, told Sky News he did not back strike action but understood why transport workers are "frustrated and worried", saying the government "shouldn't be punishing hardworking transport workers." The government has taken a tough line on

strikes, vowing not to participate in talks. Transport minister Grant Shapps told Sky News that ministers want to push through modernization that the RMT union opposes, including on Sunday working.

He complained that unions were blocking a pay offer from Network Rail, which manages the rail network, that would increase salaries by eight percent over two years without consulting members.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer tweeted that "Shapps could resolve these strikes by getting round the table and doing his job." —AFP

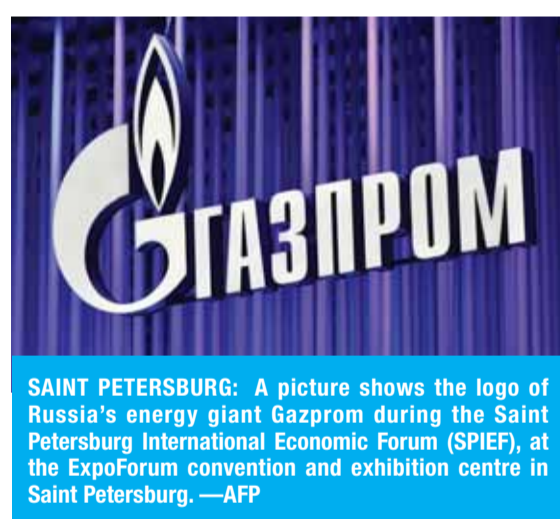
Europe's gas prices soar on Nord Stream closure

LONDON: European gas prices soared to a new record high at the close of trading on Friday after Russia's Gazprom announced that the Nord Stream pipeline would be closed for maintenance at the end of the month. The Dutch TTF Gas Futures contract jumped to a closing high of 257.40 euros (\$258.30) amid fears of winter energy shortages after Gazprom said deliveries via the Nord Stream pipeline would be halted from August 31 to September 2 due to maintenance work. Russian gas deliveries to Europe through the Nord Stream pipeline will cease from August 31 to September 2 for "maintenance". Russian energy giant Gazprom said Friday, raising the prospect of energy shortages in Europe.

"It is necessary to carry out maintenance every 1,000 hours" of operation, Gazprom said in a statement. "On August 31, 2022, the only Trent 60 gas compressor unit will be stopped for three days for maintenance" involving technicians from Germany's Siemens, Gazprom said.

As a result, "gas transportation through the Nord Stream pipeline will be suspended for three days".

At the end of this period, deliveries will be restored to a flow of 33 million cubic meters of gas per day, Gazprom said. News of the decision risks reviving fears of shortages in Europe, which has already accused Moscow of energy blackmail. Since Western countries imposed sanctions on Moscow after it launched its offensive against



SAINT PETERSBURG: A picture shows the logo of Russia's energy giant Gazprom during the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), at the ExpoForum convention and exhibition centre in Saint Petersburg. —AFP

Ukraine, Moscow has repeatedly cut gas deliveries to Europe, which is heavily dependent on Russian supplies. The unscheduled maintenance order on the line, which runs under the Baltic Sea to Germany, deepens an energy stand-off between Moscow and Brussels that has already helped send inflation surging in Europe and raised the risk of rationing and recession.

Gazprom said the three-day shutdown was due to the pipeline's only remaining gas compressor requiring maintenance. The move will bring further disruption in the region, particularly for Germany, which depends largely on Russian energy to power its industry. The announcement came hours after news broke that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz would head to Canada next week for a three-day trip aimed at deepening energy ties between the two G7 countries in what is believed to be the first Canada-only trip by a German chancellor. —AFP

Its Consumer Confidence Index fell three points in August to -44, the lowest level since records began in 1974. The Bank of England expects the UK economy to fall into recession by the end of the year as consumers struggle with soaring energy and food prices. British inflation stands above 10 percent, the highest level in 40 years, triggering big rises in BoE interest rates that in turn are putting further strain on consumers.

Soaring interest payments

The ONS on Friday added that interest payments on UK government debt surged more than 63 percent in July from a year earlier to £5.8 billion (\$7 billion). "Since mid-2021, the cost of servicing central government debt has increased considerably," it said.

Sam Miley, senior economist at the Centre for Economics and Business Research, said ballooning interest payments reflected "the growing size of net public debt, as well as the mounting inflationary environment". Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, the favorite to replace under-fire Boris Johnson after he steps down as prime minister next month, has pledged to cut taxes should she be voted into the top job by Conservative party members. "The balance of risks to public finances has clearly shifted to the downside," Michal Stelmach, senior economist at KPMG UK, said following Friday's data. —AFP

Fully self-driving cars could be on UK by 2025

LONDON: Fully self-driving cars could be on UK roads by 2025, while some vehicles that have self-driving features could be cleared for use by as early as next year. Under the £100 million UK government plan, the fledgling industry could become a sector worth £42 billion and employ 38,000 people. New legislation includes £34m to be spent on safety developments and will allow the widespread roll-out of the vehicles by 2025. A further £20 million will be used to help launch commercial self-driving services such as grocery deliveries and passenger shuttle pods. "The benefits of self-driving vehicles have the potential to be huge," said Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

"Not only can they improve people's access to education and other vital services, but the industry itself can create tens of thousands of job opportunities throughout the country."

"Most importantly, they're expected to make our roads safer by reducing the dangers of driver error in road collisions. "We want the UK to be at the forefront of developing and using this fantastic technology, and that is why we are investing millions in vital research into safety and setting the legislation to ensure we gain the full benefits that this technology promises."

The government said self-driving vehicles for use on motorways could be on sale within the next year,



Self-driving tech is being tested around the world, such as Google's Waymo in the US

but these would still require a valid driving license so drivers could use the vehicle on other roads. Other self-driving vehicles, such as those used for public transport or deliveries - which the government wants on roads by 2025 - could be used without a driving license, as they would be completely autonomous.

"It is still quite a big leap from assisted driving, where the driver is still in control, to self-driving, where the car takes control," said Automobile Association president Edmund King. "It is important that the government does study how these vehicles would interact with other road users on different roads and changing weather conditions. "However the ultimate prize, in terms of saving thousands of lives and improving the mobility of the elderly and the less mobile, is well worth pursuing." Further into the future, self-driving cars could offer on-demand trips and help co-ordinate chore travel such as medical appointments or the school run. —Agencies

UK retail sales in surprise rebound

LONDON: British retail sales surprisingly rose overall in July but consumer confidence is at a record-low level as the UK heads towards recession under a new leader, data showed Friday.

Sales by volume gained 0.3 percent last month following a slight drop in June, the Office for National Statistics said, while analysts' consensus had been for another fall. Online purchases "were boosted by a range of offers and promotions", said Darren Morgan, ONS director of economic statistics.

"However, fuel sales fell with some evidence suggesting the very hot weather meant fewer people travelling." Morgan added that another fall in sales of clothing and household goods indicated "consumers are cutting back due to increased prices and concerns around affordability and cost of living". Separate data Friday showed UK consumer confidence at a record low.

"With headline after headline revealing record inflation eroding household buying power, the strain on the personal finances of many in the UK is alarming," said Joe Staton, client strategy director at GfK.

Greenland treads softly on tourism as icebergs melt

ILULISSAT, Denmark: As tourists flock to Greenland to take in its breathtaking icebergs and natural beauty, authorities are mulling ways to control crowds to protect the fragile environment, already threatened by global warming. "It's a dream destination," said Yves Gleyze, a veteran off-the-beaten-track French tourist in his 60s as he arrived at the airport in Ilulissat.

Visitors to the third-biggest town in the Danish autonomous territory are met by a rugged, austere landscape of grey rock and sparse vegetation.

But mesmerizing views of massive icebergs come into view after just a short drive. Breaking off from the Ilulissat glacier in the neighboring fjord, the majestic blocks of ice drift slowly by in Disko Bay, the occasional whale making an appearance. The post-card views attracted 50,000 tourists in 2021, more than 10 times the town's population. More than half make only a short pit stop during an Arctic cruise.

Numbers are expected to swell with the opening of an international airport in the next two years, a welcome boost to the island's revenues but also a



ILULISSAT, Denmark: In this file photo taken on June 29, 2022 visitors to the Icefjord Centre (Kangiata Illorsua) in Greenland walk along the boardwalk taking them to the icebergs and glacier in Ilulissat, western Greenland. —AFP

challenge, given the delicate — and melting — ecosystem.

In the past 40 years, the Arctic has warmed nearly four times faster than the rest of the planet, according to a recent scientific study. "We can see changes every day caused by climate change: the icebergs are getting smaller, the glacier is retreating," said mayor Palle Jeremiassen. Thawing permafrost is also threatening the stability of some buildings and infrastructure. —AFP

Business

Germany's Scholz denies role in \$48 million tax fraud probe

The grilling in Hamburg comes as Scholz faces dismal popularity ratings

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Friday he believed he had been exonerated after being grilled by a committee on his potential role in a huge tax fraud scam that cost the government billions.

Scholz had testified for the second time to the parliamentary committee in Hamburg, which is probing whether local political figures helped a bank to avoid paying back falsely claimed tax rebates. Scholz was the mayor of Hamburg from 2011 to 2018 and has lately been repeatedly forced to beat back allegations he was involved in the decision to let the bank off the hook. The hearing on Friday had produced a "clear conclusion", Scholz said in a closing statement to the press: "There is nothing there. There was no influence." Scholz had answered questions for around three and a half hours-less time than expected-with the chancellor suggesting the relatively speedy finish "perhaps speaks for the fact that everything is now on the table".

The parliamentary committee is probing why local finance authorities in 2016 dropped a bid to claw back 47 million euros (\$48 million) in taxes from private bank M M Warburg over so-called cum-ex trades. Arriving at the hearing, the chancellor had eyed the room with a grim expression before reiterating his innocence, declaring: "I had no influence on the Warburg tax proceedings."



HAMBURG: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz appears before the Parliamentary Investigation Committee on the CumEx Tax Money Affair, at the city hall in Hamburg, northern Germany, on August 19, 2022. — AFP

First exposed in 2017, the "cum-ex" scandal involved numerous participants swiftly exchanging company shares amongst themselves around dividend day to claim multiple tax rebates on a single payout. The scam has seen dozens of people indicted in Germany, including bankers, stock traders, lawyers and financial consultants.

Warburg eventually had to pay back tens of mil-

lions of euros under pressure from the federal government under then chancellor Angela Merkel.

Dismal ratings

The grilling in Hamburg came with Scholz facing dismal popularity ratings after his first six months in office were tarnished by criticism over his perceived weak response to the war in Ukraine. More recently, the chancellor has struggled to reassure Germans over possible energy shortages this winter and the very real prospect of a recession in Europe's biggest economy. Scholz also this week faced a backlash over his failure to immediately condemn comments on the Holocaust made in Berlin by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas.

The chancellor appeared calm and confident at the hearing, standing by statements he made in his previous testimony. He described allegations of political influence in the Warburg case as "false and recognizably not supported by anything or anyone".

Some of the committee's questions concerned conversations Scholz is alleged to have had in 2016 with Christian Olearius, then head of Warburg bank. Critics have accused Scholz of making contradictory statements on his contacts with Olearius, initially admitting he had met the banker before later appearing to deny it.

'Lapses of memory'

The chancellor insisted he had no specific memories of any meetings with Olearius, pointing out that he had held a huge number of meetings with business figures during his time in Hamburg.

"There is not the slightest hint anywhere" of anything untoward being agreed in such meetings, he said, insisting he always behaved "correctly". Scholz also denied exerting any influence "before or after the meetings" and said the city of Hamburg had suffered "no financial damage in this matter".

Friedrich Merz, the leader of the opposition conservatives, told the Handelsblatt daily he did "not believe a word the chancellor says". "There is hardly anyone in Germany who believes Olaf Scholz's many lapses of memory," he said.

Johannes Kahrs, a former MP with Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), is also under investigation as part of the Hamburg probe. According to German media, investigators recently found around 200,000 euros in cash in a bank safe deposit box belonging to Kahrs, though it is unclear whether the find has anything to do with the cum-ex scandal.

Asked about the cash on Friday, Scholz said he knew "nothing about the safe deposit box, its contents or its origin". — AFP

More US rate hikes coming, pace will slow 'at some point'

WASHINGTON: US central bankers remain committed to raising interest rates further to quell rising prices, but agreed it would be appropriate to slow the pace of the hikes "at some point," the Federal Reserve said. The central bank has raised the benchmark borrowing rate four times this year, including two massive three-quarter-point increases in June and July as it tries to cool demand to lower prices that have surged at the fastest pace in more than 40 years.

The aggressive moves took on more urgency after US annual inflation spiked to 9.1 percent in June.

In the minutes of the July policy meeting, which produced a second massive rate increase of 75 basis points, Fed officials said it will take some time to bring "unacceptably high" inflation back down near the two percent goal. Policymakers are trying to tread a narrow path and avoid pushing the world's largest economy into recession, and many officials at the meeting cautioned that there is a "risk" the Fed could go too far.

Since the last Fed meeting, financial markets have been cheered by hopes that a slowing economy will allow the central bank to dial back or even halt the rate hikes, especially after comments from Fed Chair Jerome Powell, who signaled that the rapid increases eventually would give way to more normal steps. But Fed officials have tried to dispel some of that excess optimism, stressing in recent speeches that the central bank is committed to pursuing its battle on inflation-a message echoed in the minutes.

And economists see no suggestion of a pivot from the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market

Committee (FOMC) any time soon. After the benchmark rate was slashed to zero at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, it now sits in a range of 2.25 to 2.5 percent.

"Even if the FOMC decides to scale back its rate hike to 50bps on September 21, we look for another 125bps increase in the fed funds rate by year-end," said Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics.

And the central bankers said even when the rates hit a "sufficiently restrictive level," they may keep them there for some time to ensure that inflation falls.

Signs of easing?

There have been some positive signs in the economic data, as consumer inflation slowed in July to 8.5 percent, and soaring gas prices, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have fallen in recent weeks.

FOMC members noted the recent decline as well as some signs that supply constraints have eased, which also should work to bring down prices. However, they said falling oil prices "cannot be relied on" to lower overall inflation, and instead, slowing demand will be a key factor in curbing price pressures, the minutes said. Some officials warned against "complacency."

Still, the rapid, aggressive moves by the central bank have started to have an impact, and while officials say the US economy should continue to expand in the second half of the year, "many expected that growth in economic activity would be at a below-trend pace," the minutes said.

While the labor market remains strong, many noted "some tentative signs" that job conditions have started to soften. Last month, the world's largest economy still had nearly two job openings for every unemployed person in the labor force.

Meanwhile, American consumers have continued to spend despite high prices, drawing on a stockpile of savings, though data indicate a shift towards services and away from cars and other big-ticket items, while rising mortgage rates have started to slow activity in the housing sector. — AFP



A demonstrator holds a Greek flag during a 2017 anti-austerity protest in Athens in this file photo.—AFP

EU fiscal oversight of Greece ends after 12 years

ATHENS: Greece on Saturday concluded 12 years of European Union fiscal surveillance that was imposed in return for bailouts after a crushing debt crisis. In November 2009, Athens revealed a sharp rise in its public deficit that eventually led to a financial crisis across the eurozone and wreaked havoc on Greek finances for a decade.

In exchange for bailout cash of 289 billion euros and to stop Greece from crashing out of the eurozone, a "troika", made up of the International Monetary Fund, EU and the European Central Bank, demanded across-the-board reforms from Athens. These included deep state spending and salary cuts, tax hikes, privatizations and other sweeping reforms aimed at righting public finances.

The economy contracted by more than a quarter, unemployment spiked to almost 28 percent and skilled professionals emigrated in droves. "A cycle of 12 years which brought pain to citizens, led to economic stagnation and divided society," has ended, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said.

"A new horizon filled with growth, unity and prosperity emerges for all," he said. "The Greece of today

is a different Greece. "We have recorded strong growth and a significant slide in unemployment of three percent since last year and 5 percent since 2019," he added.

Ending the oversight will strengthen Greece's international market position by increasing its attractiveness to investors. Athens will also now have greater control over its domestic economic policy. "The end of enhanced surveillance for Greece also marks the symbolic conclusion of the most challenging period the euro area has experienced," Paolo Gentiloni, the European Commissioner for Economy, said in a statement.

"The sovereign debt crisis that defined the first years of the previous decade was a steep learning curve for our Union. "Our strong collective response to the pandemic indicated that Europe had learned the lessons of that crisis. We must show the same solidarity and unity as we navigate the troubled waters our economies are now entering."

Greece-like fellow bailed-out EU members Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Ireland-will still be monitored by its creditors while paying back its debts.

In Greece's case, that will take another two generations, with the last loans due for repayment in 2070.

According to European Commission projections, the Greek economy will grow by 4 percent this year, much higher than the eurozone average of 2.6 percent. However, Greece's unemployment rate is one of the highest in the monetary union, its minimum wage one of the lowest and the country's debt is 180 percent of gross domestic product. — AFP

Global stocks mostly fall amid central bank concerns

WASHINGTON: European and US stocks mostly fell Friday, with investors focused firmly on central bank interest rate hikes as the US dollar rallied. After slumping through the first half of 2022 amid concerns over central bank tightening, stocks have done better since the end of June as investors bet on a pivot by the Federal Reserve sometime in the near future.

But there is considerable uncertainty about when such a shift will happen, as Fed officials have consistently repeated the message that they are not done with rate hikes as they battle to douse red-hot inflation. "Stocks will most likely struggle for direction for the rest of the summer as Wall Street is still uncertain with how aggressive the Fed will be in September," said OANDA trading platform analyst Edward Moya.

In Europe, London's blue-chip FTSE-100 index just barely managed to stay in the green, but Paris and Frankfurt tumbled around one percent.

Wall Street's three main indices closed lower, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite slumping two percent. The losses in New York resulted in the S&P 500's first weekly decline after four straight weeks of gains.

Patrick O'Hare, analyst at Briefing.com, said the

recent rally has been driven by the market "embracing a belief that the Fed won't have to get overly restrictive with its monetary policy before ultimately shifting to an easing stance."

The gains have come in the face of a number of problems that have caused unease on trading floors, including China-US tensions, the Ukraine war, supply chain snarls and extreme weather across much of the northern hemisphere. Data this week showing British inflation had jumped into the double digits, as well as German producer price inflation surging to 37 percent on higher energy costs, also dampened hopes for a shift in monetary policy away from aggressive tightening.

"It just reminds people that central banks' policies have to be hawkish still," said Karl Haeling of LBBW. "It was really the inflation data both out of the UK and Germany that really gave everything the bearish push."

The dollar meanwhile rose sharply against its main rivals, while oil prices steadied as traders assessed the risk of a possible global recession. European gas prices reached a fresh record-high closing price as the Ukraine war impacts supplies. Elsewhere, bitcoin slumped some nine percent as investors shunned risky assets. The minutes of the Fed's latest policy meeting made clear that more rate hikes are in the cards.

All eyes are now on next week's central banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell the star attraction. He is due to speak August 26. At Jackson Hole "one of the key things that people look at is to what extent does Powell sort of repeat the message presented in the minutes," Haeling said.—AFP



CUPERTINO, United States: In this file photo taken on September 10, 2019 the apple logo is projected on a screen before the start of a product launch event at Apple's headquarters in Cupertino, California. —AFP

Apple warns of flaw that lets hackers into iPhones, Macs

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple is warning of a flaw that is allowing hackers to seize control of iPhones, iPads and Mac computers, and is urging users to install emergency software updates. Patches were released Thursday and Wednesday by the tech titan to fix what it described as a vulnerability hackers already knew about and may be taking advantage of.

"Apple is aware of a report that this issue may have been actively exploited," the Silicon Valley-based company said. Apple did not disclose whether it had information regarding the extent to which the issue has been exploited. The technical description indicated that a hacker could use the flaw to take control of devices, accessing any of its data or capabilities. Patches were released for iPhones, iPads and Mac computers running on operating systems with the vulnerability. —AFP

Talks with Sri Lanka to resume next week: IMF

COLOMBO: The IMF said Friday a team will travel to Sri Lanka next week to resume aid talks that were interrupted amid the unrest that led to the resignation of the nation's president. The island nation defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April and is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund after months of food, fuel and medicine shortages.

Amid runaway inflation, the country's central bank warned Thursday that the economy could suffer a record contraction of more than eight percent this year with inflation peaking at 65 percent. Staff from the Washington-based crisis lender plan to visit Colombo during August 24-31 "to continue discussions with the Sri Lankan authorities on economic and financial reforms and policies," the IMF said in a statement.

"The objective is to make progress towards reaching a staff-level agreement" on a funding package "in the near term," the IMF said. However, the country's public debt is "unsustainable," which means any IMF loan program "would require adequate assurances by Sri Lanka's creditors that debt sustainability will be restored." Formal discussions on a new package for the cash-strapped nation began in June but were thrown off course by the political upheaval that forced now ex-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country, amid dramatic scenes of protesters occupying the presidential palace.

Rajapaksa is accused of mismanaging the island nation's economy to a point where it has run out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, leading to severe hardships for its 22 million people, with four out of five Sri Lankans skipping meals. — AFP

Business

Chinese city dims lights in heatwave power crunch

Banks to repay more customers after protests

BEIJING: A provincial capital in southwest China has dimmed outdoor advertisements, subway lighting and building signs to save energy, official announcements said, as the area battles a power crunch triggered by record-high temperatures. The mercury has soared beyond 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in Sichuan province this week, fuelling massive demand for air conditioning and drying up reservoirs in a region reliant on dams for most of its electricity.

Factories including a joint venture with Japanese car giant Toyota in provincial capital Chengdu have been forced to halt work, while millions in another city Dazhou grappled with rolling power cuts.

"Hot and muggy weather has caused the city's electricity supply for production and daily life to be pushed to its limit," Chengdu's urban management authorities said in a notice on social media Thursday.

Faced with a "most severe situation", the city-home to over 20 million people-ordered landscape illumination and outdoor advertising lights to be switched off in notices issued Tuesday, the statement said. Building name signs will also be darkened.

The Chengdu metro said in a video on China's Twitter-like platform Weibo that it would also turn off advertisement lights and "optimize" the temperature in stations to save energy.

Photos circulating on Weibo showed dimmed lights on metro platforms, walkways and in malls, with commuters walking in partial darkness. The searing heat is also drying up the critical Yangtze River, with water flow on its main trunk about 50 percent lower than the average over the last five years, state media outlet China News Service reported Thursday.

Sichuan's power woes could have ripple effects on the wider Chinese economy-the province is a key

supplier of energy generated by hydropower to eastern industrial powerhouses including Jiangsu and Zhejiang. China is battling extreme weather on several fronts, with 23 people killed and eight still missing after a flash flood in the northwest of the country on Thursday sparked by torrential rains.

Weather authorities in the eastern Jiangsu province warned drivers of tire puncture risks on Friday as the surface temperature of some roads was poised to hit 68 degrees Celsius.

The China Meteorological Administration earlier said the nation was going through its longest period of sustained high temperatures since records began in 1961. Scientists say extreme weather across the world has become more frequent due to climate change and that urgent global cooperation is needed to slow an impending disaster.

The world's two largest greenhouse gas emitters are the United States and China.

But this month Beijing announced it was freezing its cooperation with Washington on global warming in protest at a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.

Meanwhile, Chinese regulators on Friday offered repayments to more customers of rural banks whose withdrawals were frozen, in the ongoing saga of one of the country's biggest-ever banking scandals that triggered rare mass protests. China's rural banking sector has been hit hard by Beijing's efforts to rein in a property bubble and spiraling debt, in a financial crackdown that has had ripple effects across the world's second-largest economy. Four banks in Henan province froze cash withdrawals in mid-April as regulators cracked down on mismanagement, locking hundreds of thousands of customers out from their funds and sparking sporadic protests.



CHENGDU, China: This photo taken on August 17, 2022 shows people walking on a business area which is dimmed to save energy in Chengdu, in China's southwestern Sichuan province. —AFP

The provincial banking regulator in mid-July said individual customers with deposits of up to 50,000 yuan (\$7,341) would get their money back, after one of the largest protests erupted into violence.

Regulators have since been gradually offering repayments to more customers with deposits of higher value. On Friday, the Henan banking and insurance regulator promised to repay those who had deposited between 350,000 to 400,000 yuan (\$51,300 to \$58,600), saying in a statement that this group would begin receiving it on August 22.

The statement added that "repayments of (deposit amounts) under 350,000 will continue to be paid", suggesting that not all customers with smaller bank balances had received their money yet. Authorities have named the four banks as well as

another rural bank in nearby Anhui province as involved in a scheme to defraud investors, and launched a police investigation. The Henan banking scandal has dealt an unprecedented blow to public confidence in China's financial system owing to the size and scale of the fraud, analysts say, with the banks involved allegedly operating illegally for more than a decade.

Chinese authorities are desperate to avoid disruptions to social stability just months away from a major congress of the ruling Communist Party. A July 10 mass demonstration in Henan's provincial capital Zhengzhou was violently quashed, with demonstrators forced onto buses by police and beaten, according to eyewitness accounts given to AFP and verified photos on social media. —AFP

Taiba Market opens second outlet in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Taiba Market, the pioneer in 'proximity retailing' in the country opened their second store in Kuwait Al-Surra area on 17 August, by top management of IFA Food Group in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The new venue, which is located on Street 10 of Block 3 in Surra area, provides easy and convenient access to customers, as it is located in the basement of the Dakakeen building, which has ample car parking space right in front. The new branch is spread across 500 square meters of retail space and displays over 6,000 products under 17 different retail departments.

Since their first retail outlet opened at Sulaibikhat in February of this year, Taiba Market's innovative 'proximity' retail format, which falls midway between that of an 'Express' store and a Supermarket, has grown in popularity among shoppers. Though initially aimed at the young modern shopper, today this retail format of 'get-in, get-it, get-out' shopping is proving attractive to shoppers of all ages and nationalities.

Speaking at the launch of their second store in Kuwait, CEO of Taiba Market, Saleh Al-Tunaiib said, "Although we initially conceived this concept of retailing to mainly attract the modern customers who are always on the go and looking for easy and quick purchases that simplifies their shopping experience, today this concept has caught on with shoppers from different age groups."

He added, "We are also extremely proud that this innovative store format is proving so successful, as it is entirely homegrown; it was conceived, designed and implemented right here in Kuwait. We would love to see Taiba Market scale very fast in Kuwait."

The store provides more products than a neighborhood or 'Express' store, while being smaller



than a super- or hyper-market. The 'proximity' retail format of offering a wide range of products in a relatively smaller space, not only allows shoppers to find their products easily and quickly, it also avoids the 'check-out' rush witnessed in larger retail outlets.

Interacting with media at the launch of their second store, Taiba Market's Chief Operating Officer, Remesh Anandadas said "We are very proud of this new store format, which allows us to provide shoppers with a wide variety of products that range from ultra-fresh produce to frozen items, and from groceries to essential household items, within a convenient shopping space that makes for a hassle-free shopping experience."

He went on to add, "The popularity of our first store in Sulaibikhat has provided us with the impe-



ment to open this second store here in Surra, and hopefully more branches in all other governorates of Kuwait in the immediate future."

Chad: Poverty, oil and volatility

N'DJAMENA, Chad: A much-delayed national forum opens in Chad on Saturday that the ruling junta showcases as a chance for reconciliation and the way to new elections. The impoverished Sahel country has been ruled by a group of generals since its veteran leader, Idriss Deby Itno, was killed in April last year during an operation against rebels.

Landlocked and arid

Stretching from the Sahara desert of the mountainous north bordering Libya to fertile lowlands in the south, landlocked Chad is three times bigger than California. It is home to around 16 million people, of which just over half are Muslim. Chad hosts more than one million displaced people, including 580,000 refugees from conflicts in neighboring countries, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The country faces major threats from climate change, which the World Bank says has led to accelerated desertification and the shrinking of Lake Chad.

Multiple frontlines

Chad faces military challenges on most of its borders. In the west, in the region of Lake Chad, the army has been fighting the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram since 2015.

Eastern Chad, on the border with Sudan, has seen conflicts between different ethnic groups. Northern Chad is also unstable, sparsely populated and difficult to control. Several Chadian rebel groups have set up their base in neighboring southern Libya.

Despite these problems, Chad's armed forces are considered by many analysts to be the most effective in the Sahel. The country is a key member of two regional anti-jihadist coalitions and is a close ally of France, whose base at N'Djamena is also the headquarters of its Barkhane mission in the Sahel.

Violent history

Chad has seen a succession of coups and rebellions since independence from France in 1960. It was wracked by civil war for three decades and has been invaded several times by Libya. Deby took power in 1990 after ousting Hissene Habre, whom he had served as army chief. Habre, dubbed "Africa's Pinochet", was sentenced by a special African court to life in jail in 2017 for crimes against humanity and died in 2021. More than 40,000 people are thought to have been murdered during his rule.

In April 2021, shortly after winning a sixth term in office, Deby was killed during operations to crush rebels in the north of the country. He was succeeded by his 37-year-old son Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, now the transitional president. His junta vowed to hold "free and democratic elections" within 18 months after staging a proposed nationwide "dialogue".

After repeated delays, the forum is due to start on Saturday. Dozens of armed opposition groups have vowed to attend, but two of the largest rebel organizations, as well as a major political coalition, have said they will boycott.

In 2003 Chad began to export oil to an Atlantic terminal through a pipeline built across neighbouring Cameroon. Its economy has become very dependent on oil, although in relative terms it a modest producer, with 47 million barrels in 2021 according to the Chadian Observatory of Public Finance. —AFP

Fuel price hikes, scarce rice add to hardship in Myanmar

YONGON: Dozens of people queue under monsoon drizzle for subsidized cooking oil in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, waiting for one of the many commodities that have become scarce as economic misery strikes the city. The country's economy tanked following a military coup last year and has been further rattled by the junta's attempts to seize foreign exchange as well as erratic rules governing businesses and imports.

Living standards are being hammered by global commodity price spikes sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, leaving many struggling to get by and relying on subsidies or charity to put food on the table. "People can't spend much of their income on food because of higher commodity prices," said 55-year-old housewife Khin Khin Than as she waited to fill her plastic bottle with oil sold by a local association.

The market price for roughly 1.6 kilograms of oil has rocketed to 9,000 kyat (\$4.25) from 5,000 kyat, she said. "If only one person is working, a family won't have much money left for food."

In July the World Bank said about 40 percent of the population were living under the national poverty line. Consumer Price Index inflation hit 17.3 percent year-on-year in March, it added. The price of rice has also shot up thanks to increased transport costs and as the military and anti-junta fighters turn



YANGON, Myanmar: This photo taken on August 17, 2022, shows people waiting in a queue to receive free meal along a street in Yangon. —AFP

swathes of the country into battlegrounds. Even the state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper carries almost daily reports on the rising cost of rice, eggs, vegetables, bus travel and rent.

Last week the price of a liter of diesel jumped by around six US cents overnight, state media reported, to a high of 2,440 kyat (\$1.15) per liter.

On the day before last year's coup, customers in Yangon were paying 695 kyat at the pump in Yangon according to industry figures. This week the junta announced it had formed a steering committee to purchase fuel from ally Russia, but gave no details on when or how this would begin.

Many people are relying on charity to make ends

meet. "If we cook at home, there is no electricity, rice is expensive to buy," said Lay Lay, 68, one of hundreds queuing at a monastery for a free meal of curry and rice. "Cooking costs are too high for someone who is retired."

Ashin Ottamasiri, who supervises the distribution, said his monastery is giving out coupons to 500 people every day for food the monks cook using ingredients donated to them. "But some days there are more than 600 people," he said. "If we run out of rice and curry, we give cakes, snacks and fruits." "I can't give shelter for many people but I can share food so people will have meals like I do." —AFP



Visitors arrive at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures' new exhibit 'Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898-1971,' during the press preview in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



A display at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures' new exhibit 'Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898-1971'.



Visitors explore the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures' new exhibit 'Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898-1971'.

ACADEMY UNEARTH'S LONG-LOST 'RACE FILMS' IN BLACK CINEMA EXHIBITION

Long before Denzel Washington, Spike Lee or even Sidney Poitier, generations of pioneering and revolutionary Black US filmmakers played a key role in shaping early American cinema and dispelling pejorative stereotypes, a major new Hollywood exhibition argues. "Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898-1971," opening at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles on Sunday, charts key moments in Black film history that were either ignored by mainstream Hollywood studios and audiences in their day, or have been long forgotten. Starting with a recently re-discovered 1898 reel of two Black vaudeville performers embracing, the exhibition tells the largely unknown history of "race films" — hundreds of pre-1960s independent movies made with Black casts specifically for Black audiences, at a time when theaters were racially segregated.

"Are you ready for the secret? That we Black folks have always been present in American film, right from the start," said Oscar-nominated filmmaker Ava DuVernay, at a press preview this week. "Present not as caricatures and stereotypes, but as creators and producers and innovators and eager audiences. She added: "We should have seen it long before now. But this is the day it begins." "Regeneration" is only the second major temporary exhibit to be presented at the Academy Museum, which was opened by the organization behind the Oscars last September after years of delays. It displays Poitier's historic Oscar-loaned by his widow, from his 1964 best actor win for "Lilies of the Field" — as well as tap shoes worn by the Nicholas Brothers, a trumpet played by Louis Armstrong, and a costume worn by Sammy Davis Jr in "Porgy and Bess." Planning for the exhibition began back in 2016, as curators delved into the

Academy's extensive archives, and found early promotional posters for movies with blurbs boasting of "An All-Negro Cast" and a "Stupendous All-Star Negro Motion Picture." "I was surprised because I did not know about these films before we started to work on this exhibition," co-curator Doris Berger told AFP. "I asked myself 'why don't we know about this? We should know about this!' They are really exciting films and great proof that African-American performers had roles in all characters, and there were many story lines. "And plus, they just look really cool!"

'Harlem on the Prairie'
Audiences can watch carefully restored footage of these movies, now known as "race films," including a Western-musical called "Harlem on the Prairie," gangster flick "Dark Manhattan," and horror-comedy "Mr Washington Goes To Town." Many

others have been lost forever, though their posters serve as "a sort of an imprint that they existed," said co-curator Rhea Combs. While mainstream Hollywood cast Black actors at the time as "butlers and mummies, in supporting roles," this independent genre saw minority performers play "lawyers, and doctors, and nurses, and cowboys," said Berger. "So this is proof that (Hollywood) could have been so much richer and more exciting." The gallery ends with the early 1970s rise of the Blaxploitation genre, pioneered by Melvin Van Peebles who, like Poitier, died months before the exhibition could open. "I hope that they would be very proud of this exhibition," Combs told AFP.

'Overdue'
The exhibition is a major event for the Academy, which in recent years has had to navigate accusations of a lack of racial

diversity in its ranks. The group was also pummeled with criticism for a dearth of Black Oscar nominees during the #OscarsSoWhite movement, which emerged in 2015. It has since fulfilled a pledge to double the number of women and minority members by 2020. In addition to educating the public at large, the works unearthed by "Regeneration" have even surprised leading contemporary Black filmmakers. "I was more than surprised... I didn't know about this," said director Charles Burnett. "If I knew about this - about the actresses, and things like that - I would have had a different whole notion and probably approach to film." DuVernay added: "This work had to happen. It's overdue. It's important, it's crucial work." This exhibition showcases the generations of Black artists [on] whose shoulders we stand. — AFP

Baldwin expects no charges over fatal movie set accident

US actor Alec Baldwin said he does not believe anyone will be criminally charged over the fatal shooting on the set of Western film "Rust," telling CNN he has hired a private investigator to assess culpability for the tragedy. Cinematographer Halyna Hutchins died



US actor Alec Baldwin

after being hit by a live round that came from a gun Baldwin was holding as he rehearsed on the New Mexico set of the low-budget movie last October. A criminal investigation into the shooting is still ongoing, and prosecutors have not yet ruled out charges against those involved. "I sincerely believe... (investigators are) going to say that this was an accident. It's tragic," said Baldwin in a rare interview about the episode, a portion of which was aired Friday. Baldwin told CNN he had replayed the events leading up to the shooting over and over for the past 10 months. While insisting he does not want to "condemn" Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the film set's armorer and props assistant, Baldwin pointed the finger of blame at her and assistant director Dave Halls, who handed him the gun moments before the shooting. "Someone put a live bullet in the gun who should have known better," Baldwin said. "That was (Gutierrez-Reed's) job. Her job was to look at the ammunition and put in the dummy round or the blank round, and there wasn't supposed to be any live rounds on the set. "There are two

people who didn't do what they were supposed to do," he added. "I'm not sitting there saying I want them to, you know, go to prison, or I want their lives to be hell. "I don't want that, but I want everybody to know that those are the two people that are responsible for what happened."

Multiple lawsuits

Baldwin, who was both the star and a producer of "Rust," has been the subject of a number of civil lawsuits over the shooting, including from Hutchins's family. He has previously said he was told the gun contained no live ammunition, had been instructed by Hutchins to point the gun in her direction, and did not pull the trigger. But a recent FBI forensic report concluded that the gun could not have been fired "without a pull of the trigger." Meanwhile, Gutierrez-Reed has sued the film's ammunition supplier, accusing him of leaving real bullets among the dummy cartridges. On Thursday, her lawyer criticized the FBI for failing to carry out DNA or fingerprint testing to establish who had handled the live rounds found on set. "It is inconceivable that the sheriff would not seek answers to this fundamental question and it raises a serious problem with the entire investigation," said a statement from Jason Bowles. Following Baldwin's latest interview, lawyers for both Gutierrez-Reed and Halls told CNN that the actor was trying to deflect blame away from himself. Baldwin also used the CNN interview to address former US President Donald Trump's public intimation that he could have killed Hutchins on purpose. Trump last year told a podcast that Baldwin - who frequently impersonated and ridiculed the president on "Saturday Night Live" - was a "troubled guy," suggesting that "maybe he loaded" the gun. Baldwin told CNN he was consequently worried that some of Trump's supporters would "come and kill me." "Here was Trump, who instructed people to commit acts of violence, and he was pointing the finger at me and saying I was responsible for the death," said Baldwin. "There is just this torrent of people attacking me who don't know the facts." — AFP



Royal Sunar (2nd right), a Hong Kong-born Nepali, speaks to participants while playing kabaddi, a tag-wrestling sport popular in South Asia which involves players trying to tag an opponent on the rival's side before making it back to their own half, in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



Participants play kabaddi.

Ancient Indian sport builds bridges across cultures in Hong Kong

Overlooked by high-rises on the outskirts of Hong Kong, a group of students practice body-slam tackles and vicious ankle-wrenches at weekly training for an unlikely sport: the ancient Indian game of kabaddi. Though its professional league has a huge following in India and surrounding nations, kabaddi-a highly physical game where the object is to tag the rival team, often by brute force-is relatively unknown outside the region. But eight years ago two Chinese anthropologists set up a Hong Kong team to encourage integration in a city which, despite its status as an international hub, can be less than inclusive, especially when it comes to non-white and non-Chinese residents. "We often hear Hong Kong is Asia's world city but we really don't have much chance to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds," Wyman Tang, one of the anthropologists, told AFP. "We live in the same neighborhood, but it's like we are living in a parallel world." Their project-Kabaddi United Hong Kong (KUHK) - began as a one-off workshop at a local university. It has now spread to nearly 80 schools and social organizations and has had more than 8,000 participants. Royal Sunar, a coach at KUHK, was shocked to find the game of his childhood being taught in Hong Kong. "Kabaddi was one of my interests," said the Hong Kong-born Nepali. "Somehow local Chinese people also like the sport."

'Emotional connection'

Kabaddi is said to date back 5,000 years with roots in Indian mythology, although similar versions of the game have appeared throughout Asia over the centuries, including in Iran, which also claims to be its birthplace. Teams collect points by sending a "raider" to the rival side, who tries to quickly tag an opponent

and then run back to their own half. Defending teams try to prevent the raider escaping, which often involves full-team pile-ons. Nepali immigrant Rojit Sharma joined KUHK in 2019. For him, kabaddi offered a gateway to making Chinese friends for the first time, and to practice Cantonese. "(There is) an emotional connection in kabaddi because we hold hands and then we know more about each other," he said. But the 22-year-old said that off the

home to many South Asians was one of the first to go into lockdown, a senior health official sparked anger by suggesting ethnic minority residents might be spreading the virus because "they like to share food, smoke, drink alcohol and chat together". Critics pointed out that the same could easily be said of Cantonese culture-or the many raucous bars filled with white-collar "expat" foreign workers. Mahtani partly blames the issue on the education sys-



Participants play kabaddi, a tag-wrestling sport popular in South Asia which involves players trying to tag an opponent on the rival's side before making it back to their own half, in Hong Kong.

pitch, ethnic minorities in Hong Kong have to fight to be recognized as "local". He is no stranger to blatant discrimination. "When I arrived in Hong Kong, whenever I would travel on public buses or public transport, and when I'd try to sit down, the person next to the seat would just move away," he told AFP.

'Color sensitive'

Advocacy groups say his experience is the norm. "I think there are significant issues in Hong Kong related to race," said Shalini Mahtani, the CEO of one such group, the Zubin Foundation. She said South Asians face daily discrimination in Hong Kong, giving examples of people being told their skin is too dark at job interviews or being blocked from renting apartments. "They are the wrong color in a place that is very color sensitive," she added. The coronavirus pandemic has deepened discrimination. When an area of the city

term. "The truth is many Hong Kong Chinese will never have had the experience of engaging with ethnic minorities," she said.

'Team spirit'

That was true for Christy Tai, a final-year university student, until she joined her kabaddi group after trying it out and liking its "team spirit". She said sport is a good way to get over language barriers. "We need to talk to each member in the team... When we talk, we cannot only talk about a sport, but we talk about our life, our habits, or whatever," she said. Hong Kong still has a long way to go to begin a professional kabaddi league, but founder Tang is pleased how much the game has caught on in the city. "As long as you follow the same sets of rules, then you can enjoy the game," Tang said. — AFP



This file photo shows buildings at the Bonanza Creek Ranch film set where a crew member was fatally shot during production of the western film 'Rust' in Santa Fe, New Mexico. US actor Alec Baldwin said he does not believe anyone will be criminally charged over the fatal shooting on the set of Western film 'Rust,' telling CNN he has hired a private investigator to assess culpability for the tragedy. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Photo shows plastic food samples in preparation for an exhibition hosted by Japan's Iwasaki Group in Tokyo. From the 'leaning tower of pizza' to a fish slicing and cooking itself and a dragon emerging from a dragon fruit, Japanese artisans' quirky plastic food sculptures went on display this week at an exhibition in Tokyo. - AFP photos



Photo shows a plastic food sample in preparation for an exhibition hosted by Japan's Iwasaki Group in Tokyo.



This photo shows plastic food samples at an Iwasaki Group factory in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture.

Truly tasteless: Japan's plastic food artists get creative

From the "leaning tower of pizza" to a fish slicing and cooking itself and a dragon emerging from a dragon fruit, Japanese artisans' quirky plastic food sculptures went on display this week at an exhibition in Tokyo. The models were made with the same painstaking detail as the rock-solid noodle soups and crispy-looking plastic snacks that have long been displayed outside Japanese restaurants where they are called "shokuhin sampuru", or "sample food products".

Sampuru are common outside ramen shops and family restaurants across Japan a century after stores began using wax models to advertise their menu to a growing middle class. "Normally we have to follow orders from clients. We take their

views on board when we're making items," plastic food artist Shinichiro Hatasa, 57, told AFP. But when dreaming up fun designs, "you can use your imagination. How it ends up is totally up to you," he said. For the exhibition, Hatasa crafted an ear of corn leisurely sunbathing on a beach.

Other creations on display included a deep-fried shrimp with four breaded legs roaming like a tiger on a mountain of shredded cabbage and a Tetris game made of chicken. A Japanese breakfast dish of fermented soybeans called natto appeared to spiral in the air, resembling a powerful cyclone-nicknamed, naturally, a "nattornado". Around 60 sculptures were on display, some silly but others designed

to showcase the artists' formidable skills. "They are not real, but they look so real. It's wonderful," said exhibition attendee Reiko Ichimaru.

'Burgers are for beginners'

All the models were handmade by specialists at Iwasaki Group, Japan's leading maker of "sampuru", which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. At an Iwasaki factory in Yokohama near Tokyo, artisans first take moulds of ingredients from actual meals cooked by the firm's restaurant clients. Then they begin the meticulous work of decorating the samples to look as realistic as possible, from moisture droplets on chilled glass to subtle bruises on a fruit's surface.

"Fresh things are more difficult to make. Fresh vegetables, fresh fish. Cooked items are easier," because the colors are less complicated, factory head Hiroaki Miyazawa, 44, told AFP. "Hamburger patties are for beginners," he added. Fake food is a multi-million-dollar market in Japan, but sampuru production has been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, which reduced demand for dining out. Sampuru makers hope more tourists will soon be allowed into the country to boost the restaurant industry, but they are also putting their unique skills to use elsewhere.

For example, Iwasaki artisans have made replica bananas at different degrees of ripeness for factories to use to train new employees. Orders have also come in from IT sales merchants, who



Plastic food samples are pictured at an Iwasaki Group factory in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture.

want to use mock 5G wi-fi routers in their presentations. Meanwhile, at the exhibition, the more original offerings are delighting children and adults alike. "I think the number of restaurants using

plastic food displays is decreasing," said Yutaka Nishio, 52. "It's interesting to preserve this as art. It's really great." — AFP



Workers create plastic food samples at an Iwasaki Group factory in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture.



Thousands gather to fete S Africa's new Zulu king

Thousands of people gathered at the Zulu royal palace in South Africa on Saturday for the coronation of a new king in the country's richest and most influential traditional monarchy. Misuzulu Zulu, 47, is set to succeed his father, Goodwill Zwelithini, who died in March last year after 50 years in charge but a bitter succession dispute threatens to overshadow the ceremony. Although the title of king does not bestow executive power, the monarchs wield great moral influence over more than 11 million Zulus, who make up nearly a fifth of South Africa's population.

Men and women in colorful traditional outfits assembled outside the marble palace on the hills of Nongoma, a small

town in the southeastern province of KwaZulu-Natal, the Zulu heartland. Tens of thousands more were expected to arrive throughout the day to honour the new sovereign. "Today the king will be acknowledged by the whole Zulu Nation," Misuzulu's sister, Princess Ntandoyesizwe Zulu, 46, told AFP. Yet, an acrimonious family dispute over the throne raged. On Saturday, a court in Pietermaritzburg was to hear an urgent application by a branch of the royal family to block all ceremonies.

Coronation rites

In Nongoma, lines of Zulu warriors, known as amaButhos and holding spears and shields of animal skin, marched into the palace grounds. Women—some bare-chested, others in pleated skirts and beaded belts or draped with fabrics bearing the effigy of the sovereign—sang and danced. On Friday night, Misuzulu entered the palace's "cattle kraal" where he took part in a secret rite designed to present the new monarch to his ancestors.

Only select members of the royal family and amaButhos were allowed in the enclosure which is protected from curious eyes by a thick fence of tree trunks. "It's a holy place, we can't reveal to the world what is happening there,"



Members of the Zulu Royal House sing and chant as they wait for the arrival of the new King Prince Misuzulu kaZwelithini at the Kwakhangelamankengane Royal Palace at Kwa-Nongoma some 300 kilometres north of Durban, on August 19, 2022. — AFP photos

said Muntomuhle Mcambi, 34, an amaButho. Earlier this week, the soon-to-be king also killed a lion at a nearby reserve - in one of the last steps before the coronation.

Family spat

His path to the crown has not been

smooth. King Zwelithini left six wives and at least 28 children when he died last year. Misuzulu is the first son of Zwelithini's third wife, who he designated as regent in his will. But the queen died suddenly a month later, leaving a will naming Misuzulu as the next king—a development that did not go down well

with other branches of the family. Queen Sibongile Dlamini, the late king's first wife, has backed her son Prince Simakade Zulu as the rightful heir.

Some of the late king's brothers have put forward a third prince as their candidate for the throne. Queen Sibongile's legal bid to challenge the succession was revived Friday as she was granted the right to appeal a previous unfavorable ruling. On Saturday, two of her daughters filed an urgent application to stop all rituals pending the appeal. "Those who are Zulu and know the traditions, know who is the king," said Themba Fakazi, an adviser to the previous ruler who supports Misuzulu.

The next Zulu monarch will inherit a fortune and tap into a rich seam of income. Zwelithini received some 71 million rand (\$4.2 million) a year from the government and owned several palaces and other properties. A royal trust manages almost three million hectares (7.4 million acres) of land—an area about the size of Belgium. President Cyril Ramaphosa, who in March recognized Misuzulu as the rightful king, is to formally certify the crowning at a ceremony in the coming months. — AFP



Amabutho (Zulu Regiments) sing and chant the praises of the new King as they wait for the arrival of the new King Prince Misuzulu kaZwelithini at the Kwakhangelamankengane Royal Palace at Kwa-Nongoma some 300 kilometres north of Durban.



A woman wears a cloth reflecting the face of the new king Prince Misuzulu kaZwelithini as Amabutho (Zulu regiments) sing chant slogans in his praise.

Lifestyle | Features



A trainer teaches a young girl how to skate in a skate park as part of a weekly training of the group Ethiopian Girls Skate, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Girls Skate is an initiative that promotes skateboarding among girls of different social background in order to improve their mental health and empower them. - AFP photos



A girl skates in a skate park as part of a weekly training of the group Ethiopian Girls Skate, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



A trainer teaches a young girl how to skate in a skate park as part of a weekly training of the group Ethiopian Girls Skate, in Addis Ababa.



Participants of the group Ethiopian Girls Skate pose for a group photo in a skate park in Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian girls break taboos and find joy in skateboarding

Dressed in jeans, sweatpants and abayas, dozens of Ethiopian schoolgirls practice the art of nailing a landing and finding their balance—and their confidence—as they zip across a skatepark in Addis Ababa. Some gingerly slide forward a few meters, holding a friend's hand for support, while others zoom across ramps and concrete bumps at full speed. Members of Ethiopian Girl Skaters, an all-female group set up by skateboarders Sosina Challa and Micky Asfaw, the girls—some as young as six—are pushing back against gender stereotypes and having fun doing it. Challa, 24, told AFP she set

up the organization to empower young women, who often struggle to take up extreme sports because of a commonly-held belief in Ethiopia that “girls should stay home and help their parents”. Since she co-founded the group in December 2020, she and the other mentors in the organization have taught more than 150 girls how to skate. Hanna Bless, a 22-year-old stylist who started skateboarding two years ago, told AFP: “It’s not really common for a girl to start skating because people don’t support you. “But somebody had to be the first, some group had to start and we were the first one and

I feel honored to be part of that,” she added. Although Ethiopia is home to many skateboarding groups, they are largely dominated by male skaters. With time, the women skateboarders have learned to cope not just with the inevitable bruises the sport brings but also the criticism from naysayers. Iman Mahamud, 17, told AFP that after 18 months of lessons, she no longer cared about “what people say about me being a girl and doing such stuff”. “It helped me defeat my fears,” she said. “I just enjoy it. It makes me happy.” — AFP



Royal Observatory Greenwich: Historic, scientific monument

The Royal Observatory in Greenwich, United Kingdom, is a historic and scientific monument visited by people from across the globe. Commissioned in 1676 during the reign of King Charles II, the observatory is situated on a hill in Greenwich Park southeast of London and

overlooking the River Thames to the north. The building's main observatory the Flamsteed House has the third oldest red-colored time ball and used to tell time. In 1855, the first electric clock in the world was installed and with the device, the Greenwich was born. Behind the Flamsteed House, a separate ward is built with a huge iron dome constructed in 1893. This facility housed once the largest telescope in the world designed by astronomer Sir Howard Grubb. Despite becoming less important in the field of astronomy, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich maintains its status as one of the most important historical and scientific monuments from the 18 and 19 centuries. — KUNA



'Sultan of Students': Morocco social event honoring Quran memorizers

Dating back to the 17th century, “Sultan of the Students” Moroccan social event played a key role in proliferating the memorization of the Holy Quran. Towns and cities in Morocco still commemorate those achieving full memorization of the Quran, bestowing the title of “Sultan of Students” to those dedicated students of knowledge. — KUNA



Sports

South Africa inflict England's first defeat of 'Bazball' era

South Africa rout England with crushing innings and 12 runs

News in brief

Rayo Vallecano defeat Espanyol

MADRID: Rayo Vallecano beat Espanyol 2-0 as both sides ended with 10 men in a bad-tempered game in Spain's La Liga on Friday, as Rayo went provisionally top on four points from two games. Madrid outfit Rayo held Barcelona to a stalemate at the Nou Camp last week, and on Friday Andoni Iraola's high energy side took all three points from Barca's city-rivals. Isi Palazon smacked home the opener from outside the box on 40 minutes, while Senegalese midfielder Pathe Ciss tapped home from a corner on the hour to make it 2-0. Rayo defender Florian Lejeune was sent off after just 16 minutes after a second yellow card in two minutes, while Espanyol defender Sergio Gomez was red carded for a violent foul on the half hour. Promoted Real Valladolid were just minutes from a first win over Sevilla in 10 years but had to settle for a 1-1 draw. Anuar gave Valladolid an 80th-minute lead but Karim Rekik equalised six minutes later.

Chinese football crackdown

BEIJING: Chinese football authorities have vowed to crack down on match-fixing after suspicions surrounding several clubs, state media reported on Friday. China wants to become a superpower in the sport but match-fixing and corruption have long plagued its football leagues, with major scandals in the 2000s implicating national team players and senior officials. The Chinese Football Association (CFA) summoned clubs in the top-tier Super League and other professional teams to warn against "ugly phenomena", the Communist Party-owned Beijing Youth Daily said. The CFA said at the meeting that it had received reports of clubs involved in illegal betting and was working with police to "investigate and jointly crack down", the newspaper said. It did not say which clubs or how many. Fears of foul play in Chinese football were sparked anew after what state-run China Daily described as "farfetched scenes" at an under-15 match in southern Guangdong province in early August.

United, Casemiro seal deal

LONDON: Manchester United said they have agreed to sign Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro in a deal worth up to a reported £60 million (\$70 million). United manager Erik ten Hag has been desperate to land a defensive midfielder since taking charge at Old Trafford and has finally settled for Casemiro after failing to sign Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong. Troubled United, who sit bottom of the Premier League after embarrassing defeats against Brighton and Brentford, are set to pay an initial £50 million. The overall fee would rise by another £10 million if certain clauses in the contract are met. Casemiro has been offered a four-year contract with the option of a further 12-month extension, with the transfer subject to the agreement of personal terms. The 30-year-old joined Real from Sao Paulo in 2013 and has been a key figure in midfield for the Spanish club, winning five Champions League titles.

Sargent double fires Norwich

LONDON: Josh Sargent struck twice in the second half as Norwich beat Millwall 2-0 on Friday to maintain their revival after a poor start to the Championship season. Dean Smith's side sat bottom of the second tier table after failing to win any of their first three games following last season's relegation from the Premier League. But the Canaries got off the mark as USA forward Sargent scored in their win against Huddersfield on Tuesday. And Sargent was back on the scoreline at Carrow Road to seal Norwich's second successive victory as they climbed into the top six ahead of this weekend's other fixtures. After a limp first half display, Norwich raised their tempo after the interval and took the lead with a well-worked goal in the 50th minute.

MotoGP eyes F1-style sprints

SPIELBERG: MotoGP is to follow Formula One's lead and introduce Saturday sprints to race weekends next year, the sport's governing body FIM announced on Saturday. In contrast to F1, which is staging only three sprints this campaign, MotoGP plans to hold one on the eve of every grand prix throughout 2023. And in another marked difference, the sprint, half the normal race distance with half the points on offer, will not serve to shape the grid for the following day's grand prix. With its arrival a rider who wins the sprint and the race itself can collect 37 points—as opposed to the 25 on offer at the moment. "It's time to give (MotoGP) more exposure not only on television but also to the fans," FIM president Jorge Viegas told a press conference at this weekend's Austrian MotoGP in Spielberg. — From AFP

LONDON: South Africa inflicted England's first defeat of the 'Bazball' era as they won the first Test by a crushing innings and 12 runs with more than two days to spare at Lord's on Friday. England were dismissed for 149 in their second innings before tea on the third day, with the Proteas effectively winning the game in six sessions after most of Wednesday's first day was lost to rain.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj struck twice before fast bowler Anrich Nortje followed up with a superb spell of three wickets for no runs in 10 balls as the visitors, leaders of the World Test Championship table, took a 1-0 lead in a three-match series. England had won all four of their previous Tests under a new leadership of captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum, after whom 'Bazball' is named. Each of those wins, however, came after batting aggressively in the fourth innings, rather than having to set a total and before this match South Africa captain Dean Elgar questioned whether a policy of all-out attack would work against his formidable bowling line-up.

But although former captain Andrew Strauss said England had folded like a "deck of cards" it wasn't until Stokes joined forces with Stuart Broad, who hooked Nortje for six, during a seventh-wicket stand of 55 that they batted in 'Bazball' style. England's top order were simply overpowered on a sunny day dur-

ing an innings that lasted just three hours and was finished inside 38 overs.

'Angry Nortje'

"Anrich Nortje's spell just broke the back of the England innings," said Elgar at the presentation ceremony. "He ran in with a lot of intent and anger... I'm sure it wasn't nice to face." South Africa now have a couple of extra days rest before the second Test at Old Trafford starts on Thursday, with Elgar adding: "We'll enjoy tonight, I'm sure. It is Friday after all." Stokes, who took over as skipper from Joe Root with England having won just one of their 17 previous Tests, said it would be "silly" for him to be anything other than disappointed.

"We know, when we perform to our capabilities, we can put in some incredible performances, like everyone's been able to see in the four games before this one. "This isn't a wake-up call or anything like that, just unfortunately we weren't able to execute in the way we wanted to play this week and South Africa were better than us," the all-rounder added. Maharaj, who didn't bowl at all in England's meagre first innings 165, sparked Saturday's slump by removing Zak Crawley and Ollie Pope during a remarkable pre-lunch spell of 2-6 in three overs.

Maharaj, brought on as early as the seventh over in a tactical coup by Elgar, struck with just his third

ball when he had Crawley lbw for 13 after the struggling opener missed a sweep. Pope, whose 73 was the lone fifty of England's first innings, was then lbw to Maharaj off the last ball of the session. England, 38-2 at lunch, were 57-3 soon afterwards when paceman Lungi Ngidi had star batsman Joe Root caught in the slips by Aiden Markram for six.

Jonny Bairstow came into this match having scored four hundreds in as many Tests only to be caught behind for 18 off express quick Nortje on Friday. Left-handed opener Alex Lees, dropped on four, had ground out an unconvincing 35, fell in similar fashion. Two balls later, England's 86-5 became 86-6 when Ben Foakes was dismissed for a duck, a careless waft outside off stump presenting opposing gloveman Verreynne with another simple chance.

But fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, who took an excellent 5-52 in the first innings, got Broad with a clever slower ball the tailender chipped to Elgar at mid-off to end an entertaining 35 - the joint top score of the innings. England then lost two wickets in two balls, Matthew Poits bowled by Marco Jansen before Stokes (20) was brilliantly caught in the deep by Maharaj off player of the match Rabada. Towering left-arm quick Jansen, who earlier on Friday made 48 in South Africa's 326, wrapped up the match emphatically by clean bowling last man James Anderson. — AFP

NZ level series; Southee, Bolt demolish order

BRIDGETOWN: Tim Southee and Trent Boult combined to demolish the West Indies top-order batting as New Zealand scored a series-leveling victory in the second One-Day International of a three-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Friday. After Finn Allen's 96 anchored the Black Caps to 212 off 48.2 overs batting first on another challenging pitch, Southee and Bolt claimed three wickets apiece as the home side limped to 63 for seven off 22.4 overs when a second heavy shower resulted in a prolonged delay to the day/night fixture.

Set a revised target of 212 off 41 overs on the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern scoring method, Yannic Cariah's 52 in his debut ODI innings and a swash-buckling 49 off 31 balls by Alzarri Joseph gave the tourists a fright in a frenetic 85-run ninth-wicket partnership. However Southee was summoned by stand-in captain Tom Latham and he responded immediately by bowling Joseph while Allen completed an excellent boundary catch to end Cariah's effort as the West Indies were eventually dismissed for 161 off 35.3 overs to lose by 50 runs and set the stage for the series decider on Sunday.

Southee's final figures were four for 19 while Boult's six-over spell at the start of the innings earned him three for 18. Earlier, opening batsman Allen's effort off 117 balls with seven fours and three



BRIDGETOWN: Kevin Sinclair of West Indies celebrates the dismissal of Daryl Mitchell of New Zealand during the 2nd ODI match between West Indies and New Zealand at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados, on August 19, 2022. — AFP

sixes was one of just four double-figure innings as the Black Caps, beaten in the first match by five wickets at the same venue two days earlier, were again found wanting against the home side's combination of spin and pace.

"I've always known I've got the grit in me but I never showed it. Showing now that I can do it is good," said Allen on receiving the 'Man of the Match' award. "The wickets haven't been batting-friendly but I have enjoyed the challenge." In just his second ODI, off-spinner Kevin Sinclair claimed four for 41, including the last three wickets, terminating a last-wicket stand of 31 between Mitchell Santner

and Boult with a catch off his own bowling to dismiss Boult.

Former captain Jason Holder set the tone for the innings with an excellent opening spell, the fast-medium bowler snaring two early wickets and then returning to end Allen's quest for the hundred in finishing with three for 24 off nine overs. "It's disappointing to lose so many wickets in the powerplay," said West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran in reflecting on the opening period of his team's reply when they slumped to 27 for six. "Just one good partnership in the top order might have been enough to see us home." — AFP



Hayat praises Kuwait sports delegation

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: A member of Kuwait Olympic Committee and Chairwoman of Women Sports Committee Fatima Hayat lauded the results achieved by Kuwait sports delegation at the 5th Islamic Games that was held in Konya, Turkey during which Kuwait athletes won 16

medals (5 gold, 9 silver and 2 bronze). Kuwait delegation participated in 10 games (Archery, Shooting, Athletics, Cycling, Judo, Karate, Swimming, Kick Boxing, Taekwondo and Table Tennis) with 68 athletes and performed very well.

Kuwait took the 11th position out of 54 participating countries, and was second in the gulf. This is Kuwait's third participation in the Islamic solidarity games, and is considered one of the most successful ever. Fatima Hayat congratulated all athletes and Kuwait people for this significant achievement, and asked sports officials for more attention to the individual sports following the great results that were made in the Gulf and Islamic solidarity games.



Medvedev returns to final 4 in Cincinnati; Rybakina out

CINCINNATI: Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to a semi-final showdown after both dismissed American opponents at the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters on Friday. Top seed Medvedev fired 18 aces among 30 winners in a 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 defeat of Taylor Fritz in their Friday quarter-final. Tsitsipas, semi-finalist at the last two editions, weathered a brief first-set rain interruption on the way to his 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3, defeat of John Isner, playing here for the 15th time at age 37 and the oldest quarter-finalist since 1969.

In the bottom half of the draw, Croat Borna Coric crushed Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-4 to set up a semi-final against Britain's Cameron Norrie, who had to work for more than three hours for a 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 defeat of Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz. The tight battle ended just before midnight as Norrie completed what he called one of his best career wins.

He stumbled leading a set and 4-1 as Alcaraz pushed back, winning the second set to level the match. "I was thinking too much about the finish line," the winner said. "I got tight and he raised his level. "I had to take my time or the match could have gotten away from me...I managed to turn it around." Greek fourth seed Tsitsipas was relieved to have passed his examination by Isner. "It's never easy to play him, due to all his variations of play," Tsitsipas said. "The most important thing is to stay patient."

"The match came down to a few points. I was able to hang in there and make one more ball - he didn't give me a lot to work with." Tsitsipas added: "Against Medvedev, I need to be concentrated and approach my game in a precise manner. "I will let my tennis do the talking." Medvedev, the 2019 tournament winner, strengthened his grip on the world number one ranking at the last major tune-up prior to the US Open, earning his victory over 11th seed Fritz in one hour, 40 minutes. "The second set was much better than the first," Medvedev said. "Taylor is a great player, from the baseline he didn't give you much space. "He was hitting the ball strong, making a lot of good points. "But I'm happy with my level. If I can continue to play this way and raise my level during matches I can beat anybody," added Medvedev, who leads semi-final opponent Tsitsipas 7-2 in head-to-head meetings. — AFP

Sports

Liverpool's clash threatens more misery for Man United

Erik ten Hag off to a worst start

MANCHESTER: Rooted to the bottom of the Premier League for the first time in 30 years, Manchester United's disastrous start to the season on and off the field could still get worse when they face Jurgen Klopp's men four points adrift of defending champions Manchester City. However, Liverpool's woes of an early season injury crisis and the absence of Darwin Nunez due to his ill-discipline that cost the Uruguayan a red card on his home debut, pale into insignificance compared to United's troubles.

Liverpool's title hopes have already been hit by draws against Fulham and Crystal Palace to leave Jurgen Klopp's men four points adrift of defending champions Manchester City. However, Liverpool's woes of an early season injury crisis and the absence of Darwin Nunez due to his ill-discipline that cost the Uruguayan a red card on his home debut, pale into insignificance compared to United's troubles.

Erik ten Hag is off to the worst start of any United manager for over 100 years after a 4-0 humbling at the hands of Brentford followed Brighton's first ever win at Old Trafford on the opening weekend of the

season. A large-scale protest by United fans is planned before kick-off aimed at the club's owners, the Glazer family. "A fish rots from the head," said the Manchester United Supporters Trust this week with pressure rising on the Americans to consider selling the club. Elon Musk joked he was buying the Red Devils this week, while Britain's richest man Jim Ratcliffe has signaled his interest.

The lack of a coordinated transfer strategy has left Ten Hag to work with largely the same squad that suffered 5-0 and 4-0 thrashings at the hands of Liverpool in their two meetings last season. Ten Hag, though, also has questions to ask after pushing for the signing of Lisandro Martinez from his old club Ajax despite the Argentine centre-back's diminutive frame seemingly being unsuited to the rigors of the Premier League.

Martinez was hauled off at half-time against Brentford with United already trailing 4-0, but Ten Hag conceded afterwards all 11 of his starting line-up could have been replaced. Brentford players covered 13.8

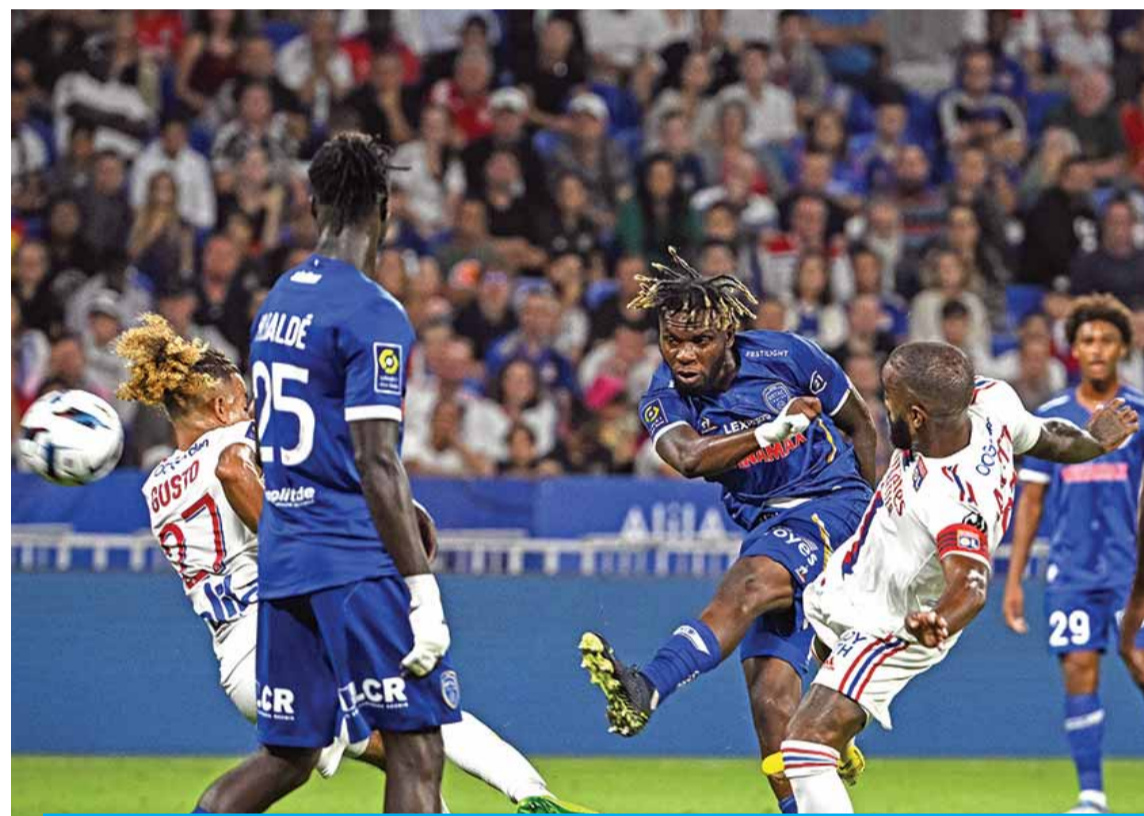
kilometers more in that match and Ten Hag reportedly responded by cancelling a planned day off to make his squad run that distance the day after defeat last Saturday. But it is on the pitch he needs a response with Liverpool also wounded for their trip to Manchester.

Newcastle test for City

City's transformation into the dominant club in English football over the past decade thanks to the flow of investment from Abu Dhabi appeared the blueprint for Newcastle to follow under the ownership of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund. But Newcastle's first summer transfer window under the new regime has been surprisingly quiet with Nick Pope and Sven Botman the only new faces at St James' Park. They have still enjoyed a strong start to the season with four points from their first two games, but City's visit will give an early indication as to how seriously the Magpies could challenge for a top-four finish.

No money for Rodgers

Leicester are the only Premier League club yet to spend any money in the window and manager Brendan Rodgers is not expecting that to change due to the state of the club's finances. "I spent my summer holidays convincing players to come but when I come back the reality of the situation is there and we are unable to follow through with it," said Rodgers on Thursday. "I don't run the finances of the club. I run the football department and if they say we can't sign a player I trust the club that it's the case." The Foxes long-serving captain Kasper Schmeichel joined Nice earlier this month and more key players could still leave with Wesley Fofana a target for Chelsea, while Newcastle have had bids rejected for James Maddison. After just one point from their opening two games, Leicester badly need a win when Southampton visit on Saturday to lift the mood around the King Power ahead of a tough run of fixtures that includes trips to Chelsea and Tottenham in their next five games.— AFP



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Troyes' Malian midfielder Romingue Kouame (center) kicks the ball past Lyon's French forward Alexandre Lacazette (right) during the French L1 football on August 19, 2022. — AFP

Tete shines as Lyon ease past Troyes 4-1

PARIS: Brazilian attacker Tete scored twice as Lyon beat Troyes 4-1 on Friday to move up to second place in Ligue 1. Tete's efforts came in the second-half after goals from ex-Arsenal attacker Alexandre Lacazette and defender Nicolas Tagliafico as they go behind champions Paris Saint-Germain on points difference. Florian Tardieu converted a penalty for Troyes, who remain bottom of the table and are winless so far this term. Despite the victory, Lyon coach Peter Bosz was frustrated that his team only stamped their authority on the game after the interval.

"Potential is one thing but demonstrating it on the pitch is another thing. Potential means nothing," he said. Lyon were playing their first game in a fortnight after last weekend's match at Lorient was postponed due to an unplayable surface in Brittany. Bruno Irlles' Troyes were looking for their maiden win of the season after conceding six goals in their first two fixtures. Lacazette opened the scoring with his quickest goal for Lyon after two minutes and nine seconds.

Troyes captain and France World Cup winner

Adil Rami made a hash of a pass back to his goalkeeper and Lacazette coolly side-footed home. The visitors were then handed a chance to equalize as Lyon left-back Tagliafico fouled Thierno Balde in the box. Midfielder Tardieu then stepped to make it 1-1 with 38 minutes on the clock, his 12th spot kick in the league since joining Troyes in 2019. Three minutes later Lacazette had a chance to restore his side's lead but he fired straight at goalkeeper Gauthier Gallon and the teams were all-square at the break.

Two in two

After the interval Lyon retook the lead thanks to two goals in as many minutes. Tagliafico made up for his earlier error after 47 minutes and then Tete made it 3-1 from a rebound shortly after. Tete, who joined Lyon from Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk earlier this year, claimed his second of the game and secured all three points firing hom from outside the box with quarter of an hour remaining.

On Saturday, Marseille hosted Nantes in the pick of the matches. Former Inter Milan midfielder Alexis Sanchez could make his home debut for the 1993 Champions League winners. On Sunday, Christophe Galtier takes Paris Saint-Germain back to his former club, Lille. Kylian Mbappe will be the focus of attention after having a penalty saved and failing to persuade Neymar to give him the ball when PSG were awarded another spot kick in last weekend's win over Montpellier.— AFP

Barca looking for 'patience' despite spending spree

MADRID: Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez called for "patience" after his side's draw with Rayo Vallecano in their season opener, but will know the team are expected to challenge for the La Liga title this season after a raft of high-profile signings. Barca struggled in front of goal in the disappointing stalemate at the Camp Nou last weekend and face a tricky trip to Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Andreas Christensen all made their debuts from the start against Rayo and Franck Kessie made his first competitive appearance for the club as a substitute. Barcelona, who have struggled financially in the last two years, are also waiting to be able to register France defender Jules Kounde after his arrival from Sevilla.

But Xavi has called for calm from supporters as he looks to bed in the new players. "I understand the disappointment, the expectations are really high," Xavi said after the Rayo game. "We will have to analyse the game, improve and continue to believe in the style of play. "Rayo defended well. It was harder for us to create than usual. "It's a shame because we wanted to show the fans that we are on the right track. It is disappointing, but we ask for patience and for people to believe in this team."

Xavi helped turn the Catalan giants' fortunes around last season, leading them to a second-placed finish after taking over with their top-four hopes in doubt. Barca still ended 13 points adrift of champions Real Madrid, who started their title defence with a come-from-behind victory at Almeria. Carlo Ancelotti's Champions League winners play their second straight away game, taking on Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Real trailed newly-promoted Almeria for much of their first match of the campaign until Lucas Vazquez's equaliser, before David Alaba came off the bench to score the winner with his first touch from a free-kick. The most impressive performance from one of the title hopefuls came from Atletico Madrid. Alvaro Morata scored twice in a comfortable 3-0 win at Getafe as Diego Simeone's side, who won the title in 2021, laid down an early marker.

The Spain striker, who spent the past two seasons on loan at Juventus, has been linked with a possible move away from the Estadio Metropolitan, with Manchester United reportedly interested. "Everyone at the club hopes he continues," said Simeone. "He is working very well, in an extraordinary way. I think that all footballers need to have confidence to do important things. "He came back with great humility and wanting to work." Atletico host Villarreal, who also won 3-0 last weekend against Real Valladolid, on Sunday.— AFP



Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel

Chelsea boss Tuchel given one-game ban after Spurs red card

LONDON: Thomas Tuchel has been given a one-match suspension and fined £35,000 (\$41,000) after the Chelsea manager was sent off following his furious clash with Tottenham boss Antonio Conte, the Football Association (FA) said on Friday. Tuchel's touchline ban has been suspended temporarily, pending the full written reasons for the decision, allowing the German to take his place in the dugout for Sunday's Premier League clash at Leeds.

Conte has been fined £15,000 after both managers admitted improper conduct following a pair of angry exchanges during last Sunday's stormy 2-2 draw at Stamford Bridge. Tuchel and Conte were booked after they first squared up to each other when the Italian celebrated Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's equaliser close to the Chelsea technical area. Then, after Harry Kane headed Tottenham's second equaliser deep into stoppage-time, Tuchel shook hands with Conte at the final whistle in such an aggressive way that it drew a fiery response from his counterpart.

The feuding bosses had to be separated by players and coaching staff, but were both sent off by referee Anthony Taylor. "An independent regulatory commission has today ordered that Thomas Tuchel be fined £35,000 and banned from the touchline for one match, and Antonio Conte be fined £15,000 after they respectively breached FA Rule E3," the FA said.

"Thomas Tuchel and Antonio Conte admitted that their behavior after the final whistle of the Premier League game between Chelsea FC and Tottenham Hotspur FC on Sunday, August 14 2022 was improper, and both managers requested a paper hearing. "These sanctions are subject to appeal, and Thomas Tuchel's one-match touchline ban has been suspended temporarily pending the independent regulatory commission's written reasons for its decision that will be made available in due course."— AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Khalidiya	24848075
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Kaifan	24849807
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

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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

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LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Eric Dier (center) rises above Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Daniel Podence (right) to head the ball during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Wolverhampton Wanderers on August 20, 2022. — AFP

Kane takes Tottenham top as unsettled Leicester lose again

Fulham remain unbeaten on their return to top flight

LONDON: Harry Kane's 250th Tottenham goal took Spurs to the top of the Premier League with a 1-0 win over Wolves on Saturday as a 2-1 defeat to Southampton compounded Leicester's miserable start to the season. If anyone is to rival Manchester City and Liverpool in the title race, Tottenham look well set after backing Antonio Conte heavily in the transfer market in his first full season in charge. After a strong end to last season to snatch a place in the Champions League from north London rivals Arsenal, Tottenham have already taken seven more points than they got from their respective fixtures last season in the first three games of the new campaign.

However, Conte was still displeased with a sloppy first-half performance that could have been punished against more potent opponents. New signings Goncalo Guedes and Matheus Nunes impressed for Wolves, but they have scored just once in three

games this season as Guedes, Ruben Neves and Daniel Podence were guilty of failing to hit the target. Spurs improved markedly after the break and got their reward when Kane bulleted home a header after Ivan Perisic flicked on Son Heung-min's corner.

Kane's 185th Premier League goal also set a record for the most scored by anyone for a single club, edging ahead of Sergio Aguero's 184 for Manchester City. "I said that if we repeat the same results as last season we stay after three games with zero points," said Conte. "Instead to get seven points showed that this team is improving in many aspects." Arsenal can leapfrog their local rivals to top spot later on Saturday as the Gunners aim to keep their 100 percent record going away to Bournemouth.

Fofana left out for Leicester

At the other end of the table, Manchester United

remain ahead of their huge clash against Liverpool on Monday. But Leicester are only one point better off after Che Adams came off the bench to score twice and further darken the mood around the King Power. Wesley Fofana was left out of Brendan Rodgers' squad as the Frenchman seeks to force through a move to Chelsea.

Leicester are the only Premier League club yet to spend any money in the transfer window, but may have to in the final 10 days of the window to ward off a difficult season. James Maddison's free-kick had put the Foxes in front, but Adams twice pounced on poor defending in the absence of Fofana to give Southampton their first win of the season. The pressure is also back on Aston Villa manager Steven Gerrard after his side threw away a perfect start to lose 3-1 at Crystal Palace.

Ollie Watkins opened the scoring for the visitors at Selhurst Park after five minutes, but Wilfried Zaha

quickly leveled. Zaha then put Palace in front at the second attempt after his penalty was saved by Emiliano Martinez. Jean-Philippe Mateta made the points safe 19 minutes from time. Fulham remain unbeaten on their return to the top flight as Aleksandar Mitrovic's powerful header won a thrilling west London derby against Brentford 3-2.

The home side stormed into a two-goal lead thanks to Bobby Decordova-Reid and Joao Palhinha, but for the second time this season Brentford fought back from 2-0 down through Christian Norgaard and Ivan Toney. Mitrovic had the final say, though, when he rose highest to meet Kevin Mbabu's cross to send Marco Silva's men into fourth. Everton secured their first point of the season thanks to Demarai Gray's late equalizer to cancel out Brennan Johnson's goal for free-spending Nottingham Forest in a 1-1 draw at Goodison Park. — AFP

Qatar buses feel the WCup heat in tournament test

DOHA: World Cup organizers on Thursday sent 1,300 buses onto the streets of Doha in a test of what they have called one of the most elaborate transport operations ever mounted for an international event. With more than one million people expected to descend on the tiny Gulf state for the tournament, the government is taking no chances with their multi-billion dollar preparations.

And getting the football hordes around the city and between the eight stadiums promises to be one of the biggest challenges. "This is the most complex transport operations ever mounted for a major sporting event," said Ahmad al Obaidly, chief operating officer of Mowasalat, which operates Qatar's bus and taxi services. In the first scrutiny of their years of preparations, organizers mimicked the schedule for the busiest days of the tournament when about 300,000 fans could be in Doha at the same time.

Amid sweltering summer heat, hundreds of air conditioned but mainly empty buses went out to stadiums, metro stations and pickup points. At the Al Wakra metro station in the Doha suburbs, more than 1,000 Mowasalat drivers pretended to be fans to be ferried to the Al Janoub stadium five kilometers away. The Al Bayt stadium, where the opening game will be held on November 20, does not have its own metro station.

Hundreds of buses without passengers plied the 25 kilometers (15 miles) to the nearest station in the



DOHA: Photo shows a view of some of the 1300 buses operated by Mowasalat Qatar—the official land transport provider in the gulf emirate—during a test run in Doha amidst preparations ahead of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. — AFP

new city of Lusail, as they will when they take England and US fans to their match. The buses even made the return journey after midnight to copy conditions for the Group B late night game. "We want to make sure our plans are going in the right direction," said Thani Al Zarraa, mobility operations director for the Qatar organizers.

Obaidly said 3,000 buses had been purchased and there would be more than 4,000 on the streets for the World Cup. The company has also doubled its number of drivers to 14,000 for the event. Most have been brought in from South Asia and Africa. They have been trained in "defensive driving" to avoid on-the-road hazards and there are "contingency plans" for troublesome spectators, the executive said. — AFP

Bremen's comeback inflicts 'brutal' defeat on Dortmund

BERLIN: Werder Bremen fought back from two goals down in the 89th minute to claim a remarkable 3-2 victory at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, with Scottish forward Oliver Burke scoring the winner. Dortmund coach Edin Terzic said his side did not deserve to win but should have held on to their late lead. "We're talking about a deserved defeat," Terzic told AFP subsidiary SID. "Still, it's brutally frustrating when you're 2-0 up until the 88th minute. We had to defend a lot and allowed many chances. "Despite a weak performance, you have to win the game."

Speaking after the game, visibly shaken Dortmund captain Marco Reus said he had "no idea how that could happen". Bremen coach Ole Werner was unable to explain his side's miraculous comeback. "The last minutes were pure emotion — it was madness. It can't be explained rationally," he said. Burke, who also scored in the fifth minute of injury time to see Bremen pick up a point at home to Stuttgart last Saturday, repeated the feat by outrunning Dortmund debutant Niklas Sule to hammer a shot past goalkeeper Gregor Kobel and give the visitors all three points.

With Dortmund nursing a comfortable 2-0 lead in the dying stages of the match, Bremen pulled one back through defender Lee Buchanan in the 89th minute, with the Englishman pouncing on a poor clearance. Dortmund suddenly appeared rattled and conceded an equaliser just three minutes later as Niklas Schmidt netted.



DORTMUND: Dortmund's German midfielder Marius Wolf (Bottom) and Bremen's Scottish midfielder Oliver Burke vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match on August 20, 2022. — AFP

Bremen-born Dortmund midfielder Julian Brandt had scored the opener in first-half injury time. Making his first start of the Bundesliga season, Brandt dribbled the ball in from the right wing to the edge of the penalty area before unleashing a curling shot into the bottom corner. Portuguese wing-back Raphael Guerreiro scored in the 77th minute to give Dortmund what looked like a comfortable lead. The loss ends Dortmund's unbeaten start to the season and Terzic's nine-match winning streak. Bayer Leverkusen's nightmare start to the campaign continued with a 3-0 home loss to Hoffenheim. Tipped as an outside chance for the title before the season, Leverkusen now sit bottom of the table after three losses, alongside a first-round elimination from the German Cup. Freiburg's strong start continued with a 1-0 win at local rivals Stuttgart. — AFP