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All Kuwaitis over 21 eligible to vote in Assembly election

Citizens have the right to change constituencies, contest exclusion from voter lists

KUWAIT: Every Kuwaiti citizen who is over 21 years of age is eligible to vote in the 2022 National Assembly elections, an interior ministry official said on Monday. Head of the elections affairs committee Col Ahmad Al-Hajri told KUNA that eligible voters using their civil ID cards can cast their ballots in the constituencies corresponding to the address specified in the document.

All eligible voters can verify their voting registration at their local police sta-

tions corresponding to their residential address on the civil ID cards, Hajri affirmed. The official said voters have the right to contest the inclusion of their names in the voting list in certain constituencies and they can also change their constituencies by submitting a request to the election affairs department. Those excluded from the voters' list can also contest the procedure legally, Hajri added.

The official indicated that on Election Day, voters need to bring their citizenship

and civil ID cards to complete their voting process. Those who have lost their citizenship cards should head to the department of citizenship and travel documents to obtain a 'to whom it may concern' paper to enable them to vote on Election Day, Hajri explained. The Cabinet recently approved voting using civil ID cards, and also added new areas in four constituencies.

The requirement to use only civil IDs for voters to prove their place of residence is a major change in Kuwaiti elec-

tions, which in the past depended on electoral rolls prepared by the interior ministry and updated every year in February. The use of electoral rolls had allegedly allowed candidates to illegally move voters from one district to another to dramatically boost their chances of winning a seat in the National Assembly. Such allegations were widely made in the local media and on social media, where the names of the alleged culprits were published without evidence. — Agencies



Col Ahmad Al-Hajri

News in brief

Sisi hosts 5-state Arab summit

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi hosted a five-nation Arab summit on Monday with the Ukraine war-related energy and food crisis on the agenda, a government newspaper said. Sisi, Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi and the kings of Jordan and Bahrain, King Abdullah II and King Hamad, respectively, met in El-Alamein, northwest of Cairo on the Mediterranean coast, Al-Ahram said. Al-Ahram said the dispute pitting Egypt and Sudan against Ethiopia over its Renaissance Dam on the Nile was also up for discussion, as well as the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Libya, and the latest Zionist-Gaza round of fighting earlier this month. — AFP

Finnish PM drug test negative

HELSINKI: Finland's prime minister received a negative result in a drug test which she took to "clear up suspicions" after a video of the 36-year-old partying sparked criticism, her office said Monday. Marin's urine sample was tested for the presence of various drugs, such as cocaine, amphetamine, cannabis and opioids. A video leaked last week showed Marin dancing and partying with a group of friends and celebrities that created controversy across the world. Some interpreted comments heard on the video as referring to narcotics, something heavily debated on social media and strongly denied by the prime minister. — AFP

Fauci to step down in Dec

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's COVID advisor Anthony Fauci, America's top infectious disease expert who became the face of the country's fight against the pandemic, announced Monday that he will step down in December. Fauci said in a statement he would be leaving both his position as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and that of chief medical advisor to Biden - though he added: "I am not retiring." — AFP

Bull races through Zionist bank

TEL AVIV: Employees of a Zionist bank were sent fleeing down the corridors on Monday, as a bull charged through the financial institution. The incident at a Bank Leumi branch in an industrial zone in Lod, southeast of Tel Aviv, got underway in the carpark. The bull with a rope trailing from its neck hurtled past parked cars before entering the bank, provoking panic among employees. — AFP

Philippine schools reopen after more than two years

MANILA: Millions of children in the Philippines returned to school as the academic year started on Monday, with many taking their seats in classrooms for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The Philippines is one of the last countries in the world to resume full-time, in-person lessons-sparking warnings that the prolonged closure of classrooms had worsened an education crisis in the country.

Children in masks and uniforms lined up for a temperature check and squirt of hand sanitizer in support of Pedro Guevara Elementary School in Manila, which had shut classrooms since March 2020. The school has adopted a hybrid system of in-person and remote learning as it transitions its nearly 6,000 students back to face-to-face classes by November - a deadline set by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr soon after he took office two months ago.

Continued on Page 6



MANILA: Students attend a flag-raising ceremony before singing the national anthem on the first day of in-person classes after years-long COVID-19 lockdowns at Pedro Guevara Elementary School on Aug 22, 2022. — AFP

UAE ambassador to return to Iran after six years

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates said Sunday that its ambassador to Tehran would resume duties within days, six years after ties were downgraded in support of Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Saif Mohammed Al-Zaabi "will resume his duties at the UAE embassy in the Islamic republic of Iran in the coming days to contribute to further advancing bilateral relations", the Emirati foreign ministry said

in a statement. The move seeks to "achieve the common interests of the two countries and the wider region", it added.

With Middle East political alignments shifting, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash in mid-July called for an easing of regional tensions and signaled the ambassador's possible return. The UAE scaled back its ties with the Islamic republic in 2016, in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, after Iranian protesters attacked the kingdom's diplomatic missions in Iran following Riyadh's execution of Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Other Arab Gulf countries including Kuwait made similar moves. Iran said earlier this month that Kuwait had sent its first ambassador to Tehran since 2016. In July, the Emirati and Iranian foreign minis-

ters held a telephone conversation and discussed boosting ties, UAE state media reported at the time. The oil-rich UAE has previously said that Arab Gulf states should take part in "collective diplomacy" to reach an agreement with Iran, which has been in talks with Western powers on reviving a 2015 nuclear deal. On Tuesday, the European Union and United States said they were studying Iran's response to a "final" draft of such an agreement.

In 2020, the UAE established diplomatic relations with the Zionist entity, a move which Tehran condemned. But Abu Dhabi has been pursuing a policy of rapprochement with former regional rivals including Qatar and Turkey as well as Iran, with which it had maintained strong economic ties despite the diplomatic downgrade. — AFP

Khan arrest a 'red line': Opposition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan opposition leaders warned Monday that authorities would cross a "red line" if they arrested former prime minister Imran Khan after he was reported under the anti-terrorism act for comments he made about the judiciary. Since being ousted by a vote of no confidence in April, Khan has held mass rallies across the country, warning state institutions including the military not to back the coalition government led by his long-time political rival Shehbaz Sharif.

Hundreds of people gathered outside Khan's house Monday - ostensibly to prevent police from reaching him - but the former leader has been fighting a raft of charges for months and has so far not been arrested. "Wherever you are, reach Bani Gala today and show solidarity with Imran Khan," tweeted former information minister Fawad Chaudhry, referring to Khan's home. "Imran Khan is our red line."

A First Information Report was filed with police Sunday - the first step of a process that could lead to formal charges and arrest. Lawyers for Khan preemptively applied for pre-arrest bail at the Islamabad High Court Monday, which was granted until at least Thursday. There was a low-key police presence outside Khan's residence Monday, with around 500 party supporters

Continued on Page 6



ISLAMABAD: Supporters of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan shout slogans as they gather outside his residence on Aug 22, 2022. — AFP

Local

People skeptical over 'park and ride' app to reduce traffic jams

Call to widen roads, launch metro to ease congestions, save time

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: A proposal to use a new application where drivers can park their cars in designated areas and use buses to take them to their destination was sent on Sunday by member of Kuwait Municipality Aliya Al-Farsi. Kuwait Times spoke with citizens and residents to gauge their opinions.

Citizen Talal Al-Fadhli told Kuwait Times that this proposal is unrealistic. "We do not have a culture of public transportation in the country. Kuwaiti people in particular are financially well off and will choose their comfort and freedom in reaching their destinations by car. There are several ways to reduce traffic congestions. It is known that citizens of Gulf countries choose air-conditioned transport like taxis or private drivers while traveling. They can choose the train to see the beauty of nature, but the situation is different in Kuwait," he said.

"To avoid traffic congestions, they should build new bridges between areas or over the sea. It is also possible to make the roads wider, and there are other more radical solutions to resolve the traffic crisis. As a Kuwaiti, I like to choose my comfort," Fadhli added. "I think the age to issue driving licenses should be raised, as the age of 18 makes many parents buy cars for students, which causes traffic congestion. It is more appropriate to provide public transportation for students to reduce the number of cars on the roads," Fadhli explained.

As for citizen Adnan Al-Enzi, the project will not offer good solutions to people, claiming the proposal is totally commercial. "The suggested services will only be in six areas, and they are all far from workplaces. I believe this proposal is commercialized as it mentions commercial spaces to be rented, mostly to restaurants and cafes to get the best ben-



KUWAIT: Heavy traffic on Fourth Ring Road. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

efits," he said. Enzi believes the government should work on metros to make the proposal more realistic. "Metros will provide shade for people to wait for long hours away from the heat. Also, it is more efficient, as people can reach work faster."

But resident Redha Razi found the idea as perfect. "The proposal will provide a suitable place to wait instead of a typical bus stop. I hope they provide suitable timing for buses to go to work. I agree because it will save time and effort of driv-

ing long distances back and forth," he said. Razi told Kuwait Times the proposal is targeting Kuwaiti areas, hoping it will cover more areas, making residents invest their time in other activities instead of wasting time fighting with other drivers on the streets.

The proposal consists of multistorey parking lots and special parking spaces for high-quality buses where drivers can park their cars and take the bus to their destination. The project will

improve the public transport system and road traffic and cut environmental pollution. The service will be provided in Khaldiya, Adailiya, Jabriya, South Sabahiya, West Abu Fatira, and Jahra, with the possibility of further expanding the service in the future. The request comes after increasing concerns over Kuwait's rapid urban development, which puts pressure on institutions, resulting in increased traffic, increased accidents and an increase in air pollution.

Protecting our young cells

local spotlight



By Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

Biologists, who study living things, most important of which is the cell, say the living cell is more sensitive to damage while growing, but the mature cell is hard to damage, while both young and mature cells can be repaired by treatment. For me, as a specialist in radiological treatment of cancer, I know this information is true and accurate. Medicinal radiation does not kill mature cells; rather it stops the growth of developing cells, and they are the young cells that are easily destroyed.

As a creation is an integrated unit, what applies to cells does so for the rest of the structures of the creation, no matter how much they are apart. We are living in a universe whose doctrines are by one Creator.

The first editor-in-chief of Al-Arabi magazine Dr Ahmad Zaki said: "The eye is created because there is the sun. If it was not for the sun, there would not be a need for an eye." What applies to physical bonding also applies to non-organic bonding, as young cells get damaged with little harm. Young souls also get damaged with little harm.

Youth in any society are most affected with the spread of corruption and nepotism, as through youth, and they are the developing cells, negative influences can be planted. Also, negative influences can be prevented by preventing discrimination at work, except over diligence, so a society like that of Japan can be created. Their youth did not see wasta or nepotism, so Japan, with the leadership of its people, became a country that deserves to be commended.

On the other hand, negative influences can be spread, as there are examples of nepotism and wasta in all aspects of life, so a society, like the case is in Kuwait today, can be created with its youth full of negativity, to a point that they absolutely believe in wasta, and work and improvisation are no longer means of evaluation with many of them. So we are the result of what we plant in the nation's youth.

If our seniors believe in positive influences, and believe that what they practice in negativities is the killer element and the destructive radiation for our youth, we may succeed in reducing the levels of negativities that are destroying our youth today, and will of course destroy our society tomorrow.

We see members of our nation's Assembly, and they are mature cells, alongside our youth in front of ministers' offices to give them the first negative doses and the first lessons in wasta and nepotism, so that their minds and cells that are basically sensitive to damage are destroyed.

Will these negative waves end during the coming elections? And will those who respect work and dedicate their time to supervision and legislation and stay away from planting nepotism and discrimination in our society enter parliament? Questions every good citizen is hoping the answers for is "yes". We are all waiting for the results of the next National Assembly, which will reflect our people's belief in new changes. If our people succeed in its utilization, we will find a different generation that trusts justice and seeks to develop their country in a positive environment that restores our youth's confidence.

Govt: Development projects should not encounter snags

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday emphasized the importance of a number of planned development projects that should come to fruition shortly, saying these initiatives need to proceed without any glitches. Chief among these initiatives are major residential projects currently in the works, which aim to meet the housing needs of Kuwaiti nationals, the Cabinet underlined in its weekly meeting. The meeting, chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, tasked the Public Authority for Housing Welfare with overseeing the completion of the projects.

The Cabinet also referred a draft law on an agreement allowing the transit passage of armed forces between Kuwait and the Republic of Kosovo to HH the Amir, pending its passage through parliament, as per a suggestion by the legal affairs committee headed by Justice Minister Jamal Al-Jalawi. The Cabinet then approved a slew of bilateral deals, including a joint committee for cooperation between Kuwait and Sierra Leone, in addition to an aviation services deal with the Dominican Republic



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah heads the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday. — KUNA

and a memorandum of understating (MoU) with Saudi Arabia over the promotion of direct investment and a separate one on educational cooperation and scientific research.

Other deals approved by the Cabinet include an agreement between Kuwait and Cyprus on the prevention of theft, clandestine excavation and illicit import and export of cultural property, in addition to an environmental cooperation deal with Turkey.

An aviation services agreement with Colombia and an MoU between the anti-corruption watchdogs of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were also among the deals given the thumbs up by the Cabinet, while a decree on assigning the new board members of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) was approved. The Cabinet also discussed current developments on both the local and international levels. — KUNA

New Kuwaiti envoys to Qatar, China present credentials

KUWAIT: Khaled Al-Mutairi presented his credentials as new Ambassador of Kuwait to Qatar to Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani on Monday. In a phone call to KUNA after his meeting with the Qatari minister, Mutairi praised the historic and strategic relations binding Kuwait and Qatar, pointing out the keenness of the wise leaderships in both countries to strengthen ties at all levels. He said the Qatari foreign minister praised as exemplary the relations between his country and Kuwait, affirming the desire of both sides to deepen cooperation.

New Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sadiq Marafi presented on Monday his credentials to Deputy Director-General of the Protocol



DOHA: New Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Khaled Al-Mutairi presents his credentials to Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Li Chiang. In a statement to KUNA after handing over his credentials, Marafi praised the historic and strategic relations bounding Kuwait and China.

He stressed the importance of continuing to develop friendly Kuwaiti-Chinese relations, as



BEIJING: New Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sadiq Marafi presents his credentials to Deputy Director-General of the Protocol Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Li Chiang.

well as strengthening the existing strategic partnership and political dialogue on international and Middle Eastern issues of common interest. During the meeting, Marafi conveyed the greetings of Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. — KUNA

Customs seizes 10 kg of cannabis hidden inside electric grill

KUWAIT: Customs officers seized more than 10 kilos of cannabis from an electric grill hidden in the bag of a passenger coming from Iraq at the Abdaly border. During the regular inspection of passengers coming to Kuwait after the arrival of a transport bus from Iraq, the luggage of one of the passengers was suspected after it was passed through the baggage detector. An electric grill was found inside the bag, and after dismantling it, large quantities of coils were found professionally hidden inside it. They turned out to be cannabis, estimated at more than 10 kilos. Necessary action was taken and the contraband and the suspect were transferred to the drug enforcement department of the



ministry of interior.

Meanwhile, the Director General of Customs Sulaiman Al-Fahad honored customs inspectors for their excellence in their work performance. Fahad honored a number of employees of the General Administration of Customs at the Department of



Land Customs at Abdaly border for their excellence in work. He thanked them for their distinctive efforts in protecting the country and people, and urged them to maintain their level of work, stressing that customs men are the first line of defense against all those who want to harm the country.

Local

Indian Embassy releases book on diplomatic response to COVID-19

Ambassador hails Indo-Kuwait cooperation in the fight against the pandemic



KUWAIT: (Left) Indian Ambassador Sibi George, Joice Sibi and Indian Embassy officials during the release of the monograph 'Indian Diplomacy and COVID Response' at the Embassy auditorium on Sunday. (Right) George poses for a group photo with members of the executive committees of ICSG, IDF, IBPC and IIT-IIM Alumni Association.

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy released a monograph titled 'Indian Diplomacy and COVID Response' published by Indian Council of World Affairs at an event held at the Embassy auditorium on Sunday. The event was held under the aegis of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' marking the 75th anniversary of India's independence and 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and India.

"The purpose of this book is to present the diplomatic response by India's Ministry of External Affairs and its missions abroad to the COVID-19 challenge," said Indian Ambassador Sibi George while delivering his opening remarks on the occasion. The book looks at how the ministry and its missions managed within the existing resources by adopting a matrix-structure and assigned specific pandemic-related roles over and above their normal responsibilities.

"The COVID pandemic has been the greatest shock to the international system since World War II. It was a health catastrophe that delivered an

enormous economic shock. The Ministry of External Affairs of India and its missions abroad were faced with an unprecedented situation. India being a country with global presence and global interests and with a major diaspora, disruptions caused by the pandemic have had a significant and continuing effect," he said.

Joint cooperation

Speaking specifically about Kuwait, the ambassador said: "Our cooperation in the fight against the pandemic is the best example of what a traditional partnership of two friendly countries - India and Kuwait - can do when faced with exceptional challenges, which is to help each other unconditionally in times of need."

George recollected the joint cooperation shown by India and Kuwait in the fight against the pandemic including the visit of an Indian emergency medical team to Kuwait and shipment of oxygen cylinders and liquid medical oxygen tankers to India from Kuwait with the personal engagement of the leadership of the two countries and the support of the Indian diaspora in Kuwait.

"A lot of coordination and efforts with Kuwaiti authorities and Indian authorities were put in 24/7 by the embassy team, which yielded positive results," the ambassador said.

"When we look back today, the role played by our medical professionals in Kuwait, our doctors and our nurses and other medical staff always stand out. Our medical professionals in particular have toiled hard for over two years; they worked selflessly to protect our lives and that of our loved ones. And while doing this they were putting their own lives and that of their family members at risk," the ambassador said, urging the audience to stand for a moment and pay respect to the medical professionals and others who lost their lives in their efforts to save lives during the pandemic.

Role of community hailed

He said the diaspora displayed its unity in its fullness during the pandemic, when all Indians joined hands with the embassy to help each other, transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversities. "I would like to also mention the role played by the Indian Community Support Group

(ICSG) that the embassy set up along with the Indian Business and Professional Network (IBPC), Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), IIT IIM Alumni Association and business and industry units like NBTC and AIRTEC," he said.

George urged the community to maintain the spirit of unity in all its future endeavors during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' that is being celebrated currently and also during the 'AmritKaal', as India heads towards the centenary of its independence.

"Ten years, 15 years, 20 years down the line when history is written and next generations study about this COVID-19 era, they will remember our community in Kuwait not as victims, but as path-breakers in the way we faced the COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges with unity, unmatched fortitude and bravery," George concluded.

The ambassador felicitated members of the executive committee of ICSG, IDF, IBPC, IIT-IIM Alumni Association and a few major business firms for the role played by them to support the community during the pandemic and supply of oxygen to India.

CITRA management replaced and sent to anticorruption body

KUWAIT: After technical, financial and managerial observations made by the Audit Bureau, Minister of Communication Rana Al-Fares issued a decision to terminate the current management of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and replace it with a new management headed by engineer Omar Al-Omar.

"Dr Fares requested to terminate the positions of the current management of the communications authority after reports by the Audit Bureau and after judicial cases were filed against the authority," sources said. An investigative committee had been formed by Fares to investigate the authority's activities. The committee found violations exist and an undisciplined environment had been fostered, which

resulted in not following regulations, decisions and laws.

"All reports and violations are now being sent to the anti-corruption authority (Nazaha) for further procedures," sources added. The decision hired a new management consisting of experienced professionals of no less than four years in the field. Fares announced the names of the new board members, as follows: Omar Saud Al-Omar as chairman; Abdullah Khaled Al-Ajmi as his deputy, Mohammad Abdulaziz Al-Rashed as member; Rana Muayad Al-Rushaid as member; Shaimaa Nabil Al-Turkait as member; Waleed Eissa Al-Hasawi as member and Fahad Ali Al-Zumaei as member.



Omar Al-Omar

ensure long term development, which will maintain the advanced levels that local and global medical institutions have reached," the ministry said. This is based on the importance of giving opportunities to young staff, who proved to be capable of being excellent professionals, in accordance to indications of their capabilities to follow the managerial styles that fit the plans and goals of the ministry and the levels it aspires to reach.

The ministry clarified that requirements for hiring focused on professional excellence and strict adherence to work, as well as their personal drive. This will put the ministry's plan to improve the quality of medical service as well as reach the best targeted results. The ministry expressed its appreciation to the previous heads of departments and their efforts to improve the medical service.

Kabeer and Jahra. The distribution process is underway for the rest of the schools in educational areas for students before the start of the new school year.

With regards to school furniture, he said more than six contracts for school furniture have been signed. Part of these contracts have been supplied, and the entire quantity will be supplied in the coming days. The needs of the new schools expected to be opened will also be provided, and their number ranges from 11 to 16 schools. The new furniture will be distributed to operating schools that have a need due to the increase in the number of students, or to replace damaged furniture.

As for service contracts for guarding and cleaning, Mutairi indicated that the signing of all security contracts for schools of all educational districts has been completed, with the exception of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational area, which will be signed in the coming days. With regards to cleaning contracts, he indicated that contracts have been signed for all educational districts except for the Capital educational area, and they will also be signed in the coming days. Mutairi praised the efforts of all employees in the administration to complete the requirements of schools to prepare for the new academic year.

Young medical staff to be hired at MoH

KUWAIT: A ministerial decision to name the heads of departments was issued by Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, in an effort to incorporate young blood in all medical facilities in both the public and private sectors on a two-year contract. "The staff will consist of a majority of female employees, or 60 percent of the staff, with a turnover of 45 percent from the previous staff. The change is in line to bring in young national blood to the staff," the decision said.

"We aim to prepare a new generation that will

Books distributed, contracts signed for furniture, workers

KUWAIT: The Director of the Supply and Stores Department at the Ministry of Education Matrouk Al-Mutairi confirmed the process of preparing for the provision of school requirements, including textbooks, furniture and staff, is in full swing, before the start of the new school year. Regarding school budgets, he explained that textbooks have begun to gradually reach the Department of Supplies and Stores for distribution to schools.

Regarding the distribution of books for the educational stages in various educational regions, Mutairi said that the distribution of books for the primary stage has been completed for the Capital, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Jahra and Hawally governorates. For the intermediate stage, books were distributed to schools in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Capital, Jahra and Hawally, and for the secondary stage, books were distributed to the Capital, Mubarak Al-

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News in brief

Afya cards to be handed during evening at 7 medical centers

KUWAIT: Afya insurance cards' distribution has been extended during the evening period at seven health centers from 4:00 pm until 8:00 pm from Tuesday, the ministry of health announced. "The medical centers that will be operating at night include Rawda Medical Center, Abdulrahman Abdulmaghni and Mirza Al-Ahqaqi in Capital governorate, Mahmoud Haidar Center in Hawally governorate, Andalus and Riggae in Farwaniya governorate, Adan in Ahmadi governorate and Qasr health center in Jahra governorate," head of medical Insurance department at the ministry of health Dr Ahmad Al-Husaini announced. The ministry announced in July that Afya insurance cards will be distributed to retirees at 44 medical centers in the country during official working hours until September 15. —KUNA

Municipality removes underground nightclub

KUWAIT: A farmhouse (jakhoor) on state grounds was removed by Ahmadi Municipality's hygiene and public works department on Monday morning. "The violating jakhoor, which was not licensed, was discovered by an inspection squad, and upon further investigation, they discovered it had a ballroom used for parties and special events," sources told Kuwait Times. After legal procedures were taken, the Municipality immediately removed the violating jakhoor.



المؤسسة العامة للرعاية السكنية
Public Authority for Housing Welfare

PAHW raises priority for allocation for South Saad Al-Abdullah project

KUWAIT: Deputy Director General for Applications and Privatization Affairs at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare Fatima Naqi announced on Monday the raising of historical priority of allocation for plots for the South Saad Al-Abdullah project until Dec 31, 2003 and earlier. In a press release, Naqi called on citizens who have housing applications until the abovementioned date and who want an allocation on the project to apply through the government Sahel application or the institution's electronic platform from Thursday. She pointed out a special team for the government application Sahel from PAHW will be present in the lobby of PAHW headquarters to answer citizens' inquiries and guide them on how to use the services provided through the application during the official working hours from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. —KUNA

Iran to begin development of offshore Esfandiar oilfield

TEHRAN: A senior executive of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company said his country planned to start developing the offshore Esfandiar oilfield in Iran that is connected to a Saudi oilfield, Iran's Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday. Alireza Mehdizadeh, the company's CEO, said Saturday the first phase of the development project in the Esfandiar field in Iran, which is connected to Saudi Arabia's Lulu field, will be implemented in the next three years, according to the report. "The design, construction and installation of a well platform and the drilling of four production wells have been proposed in the first phase," he was quoted by the Oil Ministry's news service Shana as saying. Mehdizadeh added that the production fluids from Esfandiar will be processed at the nearby offshore platform of Abouzar before being transferred to Khark Island, a key Iranian oil export terminal. Esfandiar, located 95 km southwest of the Iranian island of Khark, is estimated to have more than 500 million barrels of in-situ reserves, according to Tasnim. —Xinhua

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Cyclists ride at dawn by the seaside, as the temperature is moderate early in the morning. —Xinhua

Science Club announces winners of science and engineering competition

KUWAIT: Kuwait Science Club announced the winners of the eighth Kuwait Science and Engineering Competition, which resulted in the victory of 10 scientific projects by 16 students out of 54 scientific projects submitted by 94 students belonging to 35 middle and secondary schools. In a press statement on Monday, the Chairman of the Club Talal Al-Kharafi, expressed his great happiness at the success of the eighth Kuwait Science and Engineering Competition, which is one of the main events of the National Program for the Welfare of Young Researchers and Innovators launched by Talal Al-Kharafi since 2015.



Talal Al-Kharafi

Kharafi said the success of the competition came as a result of concerted efforts between the club, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the ministry of education and all institutions concerned with scientific research, including Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, in addition to a team of Kuwaiti youth volunteers. He added that participants have completed innovative projects based on the methodology of scientific research, pointing out that these competitions and exhibitions encourage them to do more to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The first place in the first group, which includes the fields of social and behavioral sciences, biochemistry, chemistry, microbiology, physics and astronomy, was won by student Dana Al-Azmi from Riqqa Secondary School for Girls for the project 'Safe shopping in the light of coronavirus'. In second place in that group was Najat Al-Rifai from Al-Qadisiya Middle School for Girls for the project 'Amazing chitosan', while the third place went to students Zeina Al-Shamlan and Asayel Al-Ajmi from Al-Rawda Secondary School for Girls for the project 'Removal of radioactive materials and uranium from groundwater using an ion exchanger'.

The first place in the second group, which includes the fields of earth, environmental and materials sciences and plant sciences, was won by students Fawzia Tayeb and Nabihah Abdullah from the Algiers Secondary School for Girls for the project 'Soil and climate of the future', while second place was won by students Aisha Al-Enezi and Farah Al-Mutairi from Shaimaa bint Al-Harith Middle School for Girls for the project 'The wasted treasure'.

The first place in the third group, which includes the fields of computational biology, bioinformatics, physical energy, engineering mechanics and environmental engineering, was won by students Fatima Al-Haddad and Farah Al-Asbah from Maria Al-Qibtiyya High School for

Kuwait sends aid to Sudan; 100 rickshaws distributed in Yemen

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society on Sunday delivered urgent aid to Sudan as flash floods triggered by torrential rains continued to sweep through villages and homes across the African nation. Kuwait is committed to international efforts aiming to "alleviate the misery" of the



KUWAIT: Students attend an event to announce the winners of Kuwait Science Club's eighth Kuwait Science and Engineering Competition. —KUNA



Girls for the project 'Silent killer'. In the second place in that group, students Ghannam Al-Ghannam and Fadhel Karam from the Academy of Joint Talent for Boys won for the project 'Controlling and tracking car emissions electronically', while the third place was won by student Ali Malak from Mullah Hassan Al-Kandari Middle School for Boys for the project 'Plastic fuel'.

In the fourth and final group, which includes the fields of biomedical engineering, embedded

systems, chemical energy, robotics, intelligent machines and systems software, the first place was won by students Bandar Al-Hajri and Mohammed Al-Zoubi from the Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Religious Institute and Secondary School for Boys for the project 'Portable respirator'. The second place was won by students Mazyad Abu Shiba and Mohamed Abu Zalouf from the Academy of Joint Talent for Boys for the project 'Oxygen'. —KUNA

Sudanese people, KRCS Secretary-General Dr Maha Al-Barjas told KUNA, saying the venerable Kuwaiti charity has already sent a team to Sudan to aid those whose lives were upended by the deluge.

On those affected by the heavy downpour, she said they were in dire need of urgent aid that runs the gamut from food and healthcare to sanitation, expressing her grief over the widespread destruction the floods have caused. Torrential rain has lashed much of Sudan since the start of August, killing scores of people and overwhelming thousands of villages, with homes swept away and residents left stranded.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Relief Society handed out

100 autorickshaws to families of those with special needs and the most destitute in three Yemeni governorates. In a press statement on Sunday, Abdullah Al-Bakri, Marib's acting governor, thanked the Kuwaiti leadership and people for the continuous "impactful" and "humanitarian" projects meant to provide poor families with a stable source of income.

Last week, the society dispensed 200 tillers to farmers in four Yemeni governorates, namely Hodeida, Lahj, Taiz and Abyan. The aforementioned support is part of the "Kuwait by your side" campaign that has been taking place in Yemen for the last eight years. —KUNA



US governor visits Taiwan after China drills

Stakes are high for Angola's ruling party as it faces tight poll test

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MOGADISHU, Somalia: Bodies of the alleged attackers are seen on the ground inside the compound of the Hayat Hotel in Mogadishu on August 21, 2022. The death toll from a devastating 30-hour siege by Al-Shabaab jihadists at a hotel in Somalia's capital Mogadishu has climbed to 21. —AFP

Somalia PM vows accountability over siege

30-hour siege was the deadliest attack in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU, Somalia: Somalia's prime minister pledged that the government will be held accountable over the deadly Mogadishu hotel siege by Al-Shabaab jihadists whom he branded "children of hell". Hamza Abdi Barre also called on Somalis to unite in the fight against the Al-Qaeda-linked group which has been waging a bloody insurgency in the impoverished Horn of Africa nation for more than 15 years.

"There will be accountability in the government... anyone who neglected the responsibility he was entrusted with will be held accountable," Barre told reporters late Sunday. He was speaking after visiting a hospital treating wounded victims of the bomb and gun attack on the Hayat Hotel that the health ministry says claimed the lives of 21 people and wounded 117.

The 30-hour siege was the deadliest attack in Mogadishu since the new President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected in May after a protracted political crisis. Police said more than 100 people, including women and children, had been rescued during the siege, which began on Friday evening and finally ended around midnight Saturday after security forces bombarded the hotel.

"There is only one of two choices here, we either allow Al-Shabaab—the children of hell—to live, or we live. We cannot live together," said Barre, who was appointed prime minister in June. "I call on the Somali people to unite to fight against the enemy... so that what they did now will never happen again. 'The fight against them has already started taking place around several locations," he said, without elaborating.

Zelensky warns Russia against putting Ukraine soldiers on trial

KYIV: Russia might take the provocative step of putting Ukrainian soldiers on trial as Kyiv marks 31 years of independence for the war-ravaged country next week, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Sunday. Zelensky cited media reports that Russia was preparing to put Ukrainian fighters captured during the siege of Mariupol on a public trial to coincide with the independence anniversary Wednesday. Ukraine's Independence Day, August 24, will also mark six months since Russia invaded the former Soviet republic, in a devastating war that has cost thousands of lives.

"If this despicable court takes place, if our people are brought into these settings in violation of all agreements, all international rules, there will be abuse," Zelensky warned in an evening address. "This will be the line beyond which no negotiations are possible."

The capital Kyiv has already announced a ban on public gatherings. Kharkiv too, declared a curfew around the holiday. Zelensky was returning to a subject he had already raised in the previous night's remarks.

"Russia could try to do something particularly disgusting, particularly cruel," he warned late Saturday.

US, S Korea begin biggest joint military drills

SEOUL: The United States and South Korea began their biggest combined military drills since 2018 on Monday, Seoul said—a move likely to enrage North Korea, which has been ramping up its nuclear threats.

Washington is Seoul's key security ally and stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to protect it from its nuclear-armed neighbour. The two countries have long carried out joint exercises, which they insist are purely defensive but North Korea sees them as a rehearsal for invasion.

The Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise marks the resumption of large-scale training sessions after

'Abandon Al-Shabaab'
The Hayat was a favoured meeting spot for government officials and scores of people were inside when a suicide bomber triggered a massive blast, forcing his way onto the premises along with heavily-armed gunmen.

Minutes later, a second explosion struck as rescuers, security forces and civilians rushed to help the injured, witnesses said. Al-Shabaab has carried out several attacks in the mainly Muslim country since Mohamud took office, and last month launched an incursion into neighbouring Ethiopia and raided a military base on the border. Former Al-Shabaab commander Mukhtar Robow, who is now religion minister in Barre's cabinet, condemned the attack and called on fighters to abandon the group.

"I call on them to repent... I say to them 'you know that this is not right so repent and abandon (Al-Shabaab) and God willing you will survive,'" he said. "Society everywhere should know that their interest lies in uniting to fight against them," he added. Somalia's allies, including the United States, Britain, the European Union and Turkey, as well as the UN, strongly condemned the attack, as did ATMIS, the African Union force tasked with helping Somali forces take over primary responsibility for security by the end of 2024.

Earlier this month, Washington announced its forces had killed 13 Al-Shabaab operatives in an air strike, the latest since President Joe Biden ordered the re-establishment of a US troop presence in Somalia.

"One of the key objectives of the enemy is to humiliate us," and "to sow despondency, fear and conflict". But he added: "We have to be strong enough to resist all provocation" and "make the occupiers pay for their terror".

'Be vigilant'
A presidential adviser, Mykhaylo Podolyak, said Russia could intensify its bombing campaign. "Russia is an archaic state that links its actions to certain dates, it's an obsession of sorts," the Interfax-Ukraine news agency quoted him as saying. "They hate us and will try to increase... the number of bombings of our cities including Kyiv with cruise missiles," Podolyak added. Kyiv authorities on Sunday banned public gatherings from August 22 to August 25.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, the regional governor announced a curfew from the evening of August 23 to the morning of August 25. "We will not allow any provocation by the enemy. Be as vigilant as possible during our independence holiday," Oleg Synegebov wrote on Telegram. Kharkiv has been under regular Russian bombardment for weeks and on Sunday emergency services said a woman was killed and two other civilians were wounded in overnight strikes. Four civilians were reported killed by Russian fire in Donetsk, said the region's pro-Kyiv governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko. Five cruise missiles were fired at Odessa from the Black Sea, a regional administration spokesman said. Two were shot down by air defences and three hit a silo without causing injury. —AFP

they were scaled back due to COVID-19 and a bout of failed diplomacy with Pyongyang. "The significance of this joint exercise is rebuilding the South Korea-US alliance and solidifying the combined defence posture by normalising... combined exercises and field training," the defence ministry said.

Details of the drills that run from August 22 to September 1 have not been released, but they usually include field exercises involving aircraft, warships and tanks—with tens of thousands of troops. During a meeting last week, the allies agreed to "expanding the scope and scale of combined military exercises and training," noting the increased volume of North Korean missile tests.

This will start "with Ulchi Freedom Shield... to bolster combined readiness," they said in a joint statement. Analysts say North Korea may use the drills as a reason to conduct more weapons tests. Earlier this month, Pyongyang warned it would "wipe out" Seoul authorities, who it blamed for a recent Covid-19 outbreak in the isolated country. —AFP

reversing a decision by his predecessor Donald Trump.

The Islamist militants, who espouse a strict version of sharia or Islamic law, were driven out of Mogadishu by an African Union force in 2011. But they still control swathes of countryside and retain the ability to launch deadly strikes, often hitting hotels and restaurants as well as military and political targets.

The deadliest attack occurred in October 2017

when a truck packed with explosives blew up in Mogadishu, killing 512 people. The Hayat Hotel assault was reminiscent of deadly sieges in neighbouring Kenya, one of the contributors to the AU force.

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a four-day siege at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi in September 2013 that killed 67 people and an hours-long attack on an upmarket hotel complex in the city in 2019 that claimed the lives of 21 people. —AFP

SALE OF 80% OF THE SHARES OF ARABTEC ENGINEERING SERVICES L.L.C.

Announcement issued by the Dubai Courts, Ninth Commercial Circuit, Bankruptcy Procedures, regarding Bankruptcy Procedures Case No.4/2021 - Arabtec Holding PJSC

The Ninth Commercial Circuit - Bankruptcy Procedures of the Dubai Courts announces start of the sale process for 80% of the share capital of Arabtec Engineering Services L.L.C. (the "Company"), owned by Arabtec Holding Company PJSC, through a tender.

The Company provides services related to Micro-tunnelling, Road Contracting and service lines, Coring and ditching, Storm water drainage networks, Sewerage networks & lifting, and Booster pumping stations.

Note that the Company's remaining 20% of share capital is not offered for sale and is owned by Zuzu Investments Limited.

Accordingly, parties interested to acquire 80% of the shares of Arabtec Engineering Services (LLC) should submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Trustee of the Bankruptcy Procedures' Case through email to: intrafinance@intra.ae & bankruptcy@intra.ae not later than five [5] working days from the date of publishing this advertisement, bearing in mind that the minimum selling price for 80% shares of Arabtec Engineering Services L.L.C. is 49.6 million UAE Dirhams (AED).

Expressions of Interest sent will not be evaluated unless they are accompanied by the following requirements:

- Sufficient documents related to the interested party and its ultimate beneficial owner as required to enable standard 'Know Your customer' checks to be carried out in respect of the interested party and its ultimate beneficial owner.
- A letter of support from a bank, shareholder or related entity of the bidder confirming indicative support to the bidder to fund the acquisition, or otherwise confirming the source of funds which would fund the bidder's acquisition; and
- Contact details for the interested party, and its advisors if any, (including e-mail address, telephone number and physical address).

Upon receipt of an Expression of Interest which satisfies the above criteria, the Trustee will send the bidder a Non-disclosure Agreement and, once such Non-disclosure Agreement is signed, formal Bidding Instructions, including the timetable for the tender process, and related information about Arabtec Engineering Services L.L.C. will be provided to the bidders.

The Management of the sale process, including any changes thereto, shall be subject to the discretion of the Court and the Trustee.

International

Stakes are high for Angola's ruling party as it faces tight poll test

'There is a lot of expectation within society'

LUANDA, Angola: Millions of Angolans will vote on Wednesday in polls expected to be the most competitive since the country's first multiparty vote in 1992 but with electoral fraud a concern among voters. A youthful and largely poor electorate will decide whether to continue with the liberation movement that has ruled since independence or embrace change with the opposition led by a charismatic coalition-builder.



Dead people registered to vote

Eight political parties are standing, but the real contest is between the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and its long-standing rival and former rebel movement the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Stakes are high for MPLA now led by incumbent President Joao Lourenco, who was first elected in 2017 and is seeking a second term.

Many Angolans are weary of the party that has held power since the country won independence from colonial power Portugal in 1975.

Despite the oil wealth that benefited the former president, late Jose Eduardo dos Santos and his family, many of Angola's 33 million people live in poverty and seek change.

"There is a lot of expectation within society," said Claudio Silva, a political commentator in the capital Luanda. "People are very excited because there is a prospect for actual change."

For many, the face of change is UNITA leader Adalberto Costa Junior, nicknamed "ACJ", who has reinvented the opposition since taking the helm in 2019 promising a better future.

A talented orator, Costa Junior has captivated

young urban voters with pledges to reform government and tackle poverty and corruption.

He broadened the party's base with an untraditional, collaborative approach, building a coalition with other opposition groups.

Young voters

Young people aged 10-24 make up 33 percent of population, according to UN data. Their concerns differ from older voters, while voters born after Angola's civil war ended in 2002 do not feel an allegiance to the MPLA, said Augusto Santana, an electoral observation specialist.

"They are looking for better education, jobs and living conditions," Santana said. "They want to experience something different." The MPLA will likely capitalise on Sunday's repatriation of the body of dos Santos, the late longtime president who died in Spain last month, to trumpet its liberation credentials, said Marisa Lourenco, an independent political analyst.

Dos Santos, whose family has faced corruption allegations following his death, has a mixed legacy meaning his repatriation is unlikely to have a "major impact" on the outcome, Lourenco said.

"Many Angolans loved President dos Santos... He made mistakes, yes, but what person doesn't?" MPLA activist Simao Hemenegildo dos Santos, not a relation, said as he attended a small campaign party with barbecue and beers near Luanda's waterfront.

Tight, but fair?

While the MPLA remains the favourite, analysts and opinion polls predict a tight race. Yet the opposition and parts of the public are already questioning whether it will be fair.

Social media has been rife with claims of dead people registered to vote, Silva said.

On Thursday, Lourenco rebuffed opposition criticism of the electoral commission, which is mostly led by MPLA appointees.

"If they are saying that the electoral process and the National Electoral Commission are discredited, why do they want to participate?" Lourenco told supporters at a rally. Foreign election observers



LUANDA, Angola: Women gather in a street in the popular neighbourhood of Viana in Luanda. Angolans will head to the polls on August 24, 2022 to vote in general elections. — AFP

have arrived in recent weeks.

'Revolution on their hands'

For many Angolans struggling to survive, the stakes are high.

In Viana a poor suburb southeast of Luanda, MPLA and UNITA flags vie for space on street lamp posts.

Activists in pickups adorned with campaign banners make a last dash to rally support through the dusty alleys lined with small cinderblock houses.

Most of those AFP spoke to here support the opposition. "The MPLA has been in power for 40 years, the population sees nothing, yet our country is rich. It's a shame, we're abandoned," said Mateos

Lima, a 51-year-old civil engineering technician.

On taking power Lourenco, inheriting an oil-dependent economy in recession, launched ambitious reforms to diversify revenue and privatise state-owned firms.

But many are yet to see the benefits, with almost half the population living on less than \$2 a day. "The MPLA have to do a lot better, they have to tackle poverty... create jobs... deliver better services-if they don't they'll have a revolution on their hands," said Cristina Roque, an independent political analyst specialising in Angola.

Whoever wins, fixing social and economic woes will be a battle without quick fixes, analysts say. "The next five years are going to be painful, regardless of who takes power," said Roque. — AFP

Iran slams US for delaying nuke proposals

TEHRAN: Iran on Monday criticised the US for what it said was a slow response to proposals aimed at restoring the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and major powers. The United States and the European Union have been studying Iran's response to a "final" draft agreement on reviving the landmark accord for the past week.

"What is important is the delay by the US side for issuing its response," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said. "We acted in this regard in a timely manner and always showed that we are responsible," he told reporters in Tehran.

"The US government is responsible for the current situation, and if it shows its political determination in action seriously and alongside promise and comment, acts responsibly, we can move toward the next stage."

Since taking office in 2021, President Joe Biden has sought to return the US to the deal that was unilaterally abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump in 2018. Talks on reviving the accord started in April 2021, and took a pause following the election of ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi as Iran's president in June that year, before resuming in November. The 2015 agreement between Iran and six world powers-Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States-gave the Islamic republic sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme. The deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was designed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon-something it has always denied wanting to do. The British, French, German and US leaders spoke about the Iran nuclear issue during a phone conversation on Sunday, according to a White House statement.

They "discussed ongoing negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme, the need to strengthen support for partners in the Middle East region, and joint efforts to deter and constrain Iran's destabilising regional activities," the statement said. — AFP

Swiss glaciers shrink in half since 1931

GENEVA, Switzerland: Swiss glaciers have shed half their volume since 1931, Swiss researchers said Monday, following the first reconstruction of the country's ice loss in the 20th century. Rapid glacier melt in the Alps and elsewhere, which scientists say is driven by climate change, has been increasingly closely monitored since the early 2000s. However, until now there has been little insight into how glaciers changed prior to that during the 20th century, with only a handful of individual glaciers tracked over time, and with different models for estimating their volume.

But Swiss researchers from the ETH Zurich technical university and the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL say they had now reconstructed the topography of all Swiss glaciers in 1931, making it possible to show how they have evolved.

"Based on these reconstructions and comparisons with data from the 2000s, the researchers conclude that the glacier volume halved between 1931 and 2016," they said in a statement. Their study, published in the scientific journal *The Cryosphere*, used material from the Terra image archive, which covers about 86 percent of Switzerland's glacierised area, analysing around 21,700 photographs taken between 1916 and 1947.

For their reconstruction, the glaciologists used so-called stereophotogrammetry—a technique used to determine the nature, shape and position of any object on the basis of image pairs. "If we know the surface topography of a glacier at two different points in time, we can calculate the difference in ice volume," lead study author Erik Schytt Mannerfelt said

in the statement.

The researchers presented side-by-side picture pairs showing the same spot nearly a century apart, indicating the dramatic change that has taken place. The Fiescher Glacier, for instance, resembled a massive sea of ice in 1928, but in 2021, a few tiny specks of white were all that remained on the lush green mountainside.

Since the images used for the reconstruction were taken in different years, the study used the mean year 1931 as a reference and reconstructed the surface topography of all glaciers for that year, the statement said.

In their statement, the researchers stressed that glaciers did not continuously recede over the past century, pointing out that there was even sporadic mass glacier growth in the 1920s and 1980s. But while there may have been growth over short-term periods, Daniel Farinotti, a glaciology professor at ETH Zurich and WSL and co-author of the study, said it was "important to keep the big picture in mind."

"Our comparison between the years 1931 and 2016 clearly shows that there was significant glacial retreat during this period," he said in the statement. And the total glacier volume is decreasing at an ever faster rate.

While Swiss glaciers lost half their volume in the 85 years leading up to 2016, the Swiss glacier monitoring network, GLAMOS indicates that they lost a further 12 percent in the following six years alone. Farinotti said the evidence was clear: "Glacier retreat is accelerating." — AFP



GLETSCHE, Switzerland: Combination of two photographs created on August 22, 2022, shows (top) the Rhone Glacier, near Gletsch, with a part covered with insulating foam to prevent it from melting due to global warming and (bottom) the same location on July 8, 2022. — AFP

Philippine schools reopen after more...

Continued from Page 1

Grade six student Sophia Macahilig said she was "excited" to meet her classmates and teachers after two years of Zoom lessons. "We used to have fun and now I can have fun again," 11-year-old Macahilig told AFP. But many students have a lot of catching up to do. Even before the pandemic, nine out of 10 Filipino children could "not read a simple text with comprehension" by age 10, the World Bank and other agencies said in a recent report. Only 10 countries were worse off, including Afghanistan, Laos, Chad and Yemen.

After Philippine schools closed, a "blended learning" program involving online classes, printed mate-

rials and lessons broadcast on television and social media was introduced. As face-to-face classes resume, old problems persist: Large class sizes, outdated teaching methods, poverty, and lack of basic infrastructure - such as toilets - have been blamed for contributing to the education crisis.

Pedro Guevara science teacher Ethel Tumanan, 32, said she was worried that students had missed out on valuable learning over the past two years. "As a teacher, we really prefer face-to-face, at least we are the ones who can gauge and assess where our pupils are at." In the lead-up to the reopening of classrooms, the government has been ramping up a vaccination drive and will provide students with free public transport until the end of the calendar year.

On Saturday, the government began handing out cash aid to students and parents struggling to cover expenses, leading to chaotic scenes outside distribution centers. In the city of Zamboanga, 29 people were injured when several thousand tried to push through the gate of a high school. — AFP

Khan arrest a 'red line'...

Continued from Page 1

gathered in the affluent suburb of Bani Gala. Muhammad Ayub said he had travelled overnight from Peshawar in the northwest to show support for Khan. "We will protest and will block roads if Khan is arrested," he told AFP. In a statement, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) said the latest accusations against him were "frivolous." "We have serious reservations on this politically motivated move which leads towards further instability in the country," it said.

On Saturday he criticized a magistrate responsible for keeping a PTI official in police custody, after party leaders say he was tortured in detention. Khan's main goal is an early general election - the next one must be

held before October next year - but the government has shown no sign of wanting to go to the polls as it grapples with major economic problems.

Khan swept into power in 2018 thanks to an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of the country's two major parties, with the former cricket star promising to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism. But under his rule the country's economy went into free fall, and the International Monetary Fund suspended a \$6 billion loan program that the new government has only just gotten back on track. Khan also lost the support of the military.

Political Analyst Hassan Askari Rizvi told AFP that filing the latest case against Khan was not symbolic, but rather a genuine attempt to stifle him. "The government is using the state institutions to malign the opposition," he said, adding ordinary Pakistanis were being hurt by the political wrangling. "The only thing left for the ruling party and the opposition is to malign each other. In the current situation, the real priority should be the economy so that the common man can get some relief." — AFP

International

Kenya's Odinga mounts top court challenge to presidential poll result

Dozens of boxes of evidence were unloaded from a truck outside the court

NAIROBI, Kenya: Kenya's defeated presidential candidate Raila Odinga filed a petition to the country's top court on Monday challenging the result of the August 9 election that handed victory to his rival William Ruto. Odinga, a veteran opposition leader who ran with the backing of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the ruling party, has rejected the outcome of the poll, branding it a "travesty."

He narrowly lost to Ruto by around 230,000 votes—less than two percentage points. The 77-year-old politician filed a physical copy of the petition with barely an hour to go before the court's 2 pm (1100 GMT) deadline for accepting the case. An online copy was filed earlier in the day, according to a member of his legal team.



'We have made a good case'

Hundreds of supporters cheered as dozens of boxes of evidence were unloaded from a truck outside the court. "We have hopes that we have made a good case and will win," Daniel Maanzo, a member of Odinga's legal team, told AFP.

Although polling day passed off peacefully, the announcement of the results a week ago sparked angry protests in some Odinga strongholds and there are fears that a drawn-out dispute may lead to violence in a country with a history of post-poll unrest.

Since 2002, every presidential election in Kenya has triggered a dispute, with this year's outcome also causing a rift within the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) which oversaw the poll.

Odinga, who was making his fifth bid for the top



NAIROBI, Kenya: Kenya's Azimio La Umoja Party (One Kenya Coalition Party) presidential candidate Raila Odinga waves to supporters as he drives past Kenyan Police officers outside the Milimani High Court in Nairobi on August 22, 2022. — AFP

job, said last week that the figures announced by the IEBC were "null and void and must be quashed by a court of law". According to a copy of the 72-page petition seen by AFP, Odinga's team alleges that IEBC chairman Wafula Chebukati failed to tally around 140,000 votes.

As a result, Ruto "did not meet the constitutional threshold of 50% plus 1 of the valid votes cast"—a requirement for him to be declared the winner. Judges now have 14 days to issue a ruling. If they order an annulment, a new vote must be held within 60 days.

of global authoritarianism," she told Holcomb. "Taiwan has been confronted by military threats from China in and around the Taiwan Strait. At this moment democratic allies must stand together and boost cooperation across all areas," she said.

Holcomb said the United States and Taiwan "share so many common values and interests and goals". "We will continue to seek to build a strategic partnership with you," he said. Holcomb is also expected to meet representatives of Taiwan's world-leading semiconductor industry before leaving on Wednesday for South Korea.

Alongside South Korea, Taiwan makes some of the world's smallest and most advanced computer chips—a commodity that is vital for electronics but in short supply worldwide. The United States is keen to encourage Taiwanese companies to build chip foundries on American soil to diversify supply chains, something Tsai also referenced on Monday.

"Taiwan is willing and able to strengthen cooperation with democratic partners in building sustainable supply chain for democracy chips," she said. Holcomb's visit comes on the heels of the announcement of trade talks between Washington and Taipei in the coming months as a senior US diplomat warned Beijing would continue to put pressure on Taiwan.

China has lashed out at the plans for business talks with Washington—though it also has multiple trade deals of its own with Taiwan, signed during years when their relations were warmer. — AFP

US governor visits Taiwan after China drills

TAIPEI: A US state governor met Taiwan's president Monday, days after Washington announced trade talks with Taipei in a show of support following China's military threats towards the self-ruled island. Eric Holcomb, the Republican governor of Indiana, landed in Taipei on Sunday for an "economic development trip".

US-China tensions have risen since Beijing staged huge military drills in retaliation for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan earlier this month. Taiwan lives under constant threat of an invasion by China, which claims the democratic island as part of its territory to be seized one day-by force if necessary.

Beijing lashes out at any diplomatic action that might lend Taiwan legitimacy and has responded with growing fury to visits by Western officials and politicians. In her meeting with Holcomb on Monday, President Tsai Ing-wen directly referenced Beijing's drills and called for like-minded countries to continue supporting Taiwan.

"Presently we are facing the continued expansion



TAIPEI, Taiwan: Handout picture shows Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen (2nd R) greeting a US delegation led by Eric Holcomb (R), the Republican governor of the US state of Indiana, at the Presidential Office in Taipei. — AFP

Indian police arrest 'Robin Hood' thief

NEW DELHI: Police in the Indian capital Delhi said Monday that they had arrested a "Robin Hood" gang leader of 25 merry men who robbed the rich

and gave some of the proceeds—but not all—to the poor. Wasim Akram, 27, alias Lambu ("Lofty") and his outfit robbed "big houses in posh areas in Delhi", stealing cash and jewellery and giving some of the loot to the financially deprived, police said.

"Due to this trait, he has got many followers in the area. These sources give him immediate information about the movement of police so as to enable him to escape," Delhi police said in a statement on Sunday.

The "notorious absconding history sheeter"—an Indian English term meaning a habitual criminal—

'We want justice'

Odinga supporters began gathering outside the court hours before his arrival, blowing whistles and waving placards reading "Electoral Justice Now!" and "We want justice now". "Odinga must win so that we get the 6,000 shillings (\$50) promised in his manifesto," said one man, wearing a crown made with plants who was referring to a monthly cash handout for vulnerable households.

Another man—armed with a Bible and wearing huge green glasses—knelt down in prayer as police guarded

S Lanka new govt faces international censure over arrests

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's new government came under international censure Monday over the use of tough anti-terror laws to detain protesters who forced Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down from the presidency last month.

Three student activists arrested last week during the first anti-government rally after the end of a state of emergency were being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), authorities said late Sunday, including student leader Wasantha Mudalige.

The PTA allows suspects to be detained for 90 days without judicial review. "Using laws that don't conform with international human rights standards - like the PTA - erodes democracy in Sri Lanka," said US ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung.

"We encourage the government to uphold the rights of the people to express their views," she tweeted. The European Union said it was "concerned" by the development, with the EU office in Colombo tweeting that there had been a "de-facto moratorium of the use of #PTA".

Another 13 demonstrators arrested at Thursday's protest have either been released on bail or are being held under normal procedures. UK-based rights group Amnesty International said the use of anti-terror laws against peaceful protesters was a sign authorities were "unwilling to withstand any form of criticism and are systematically stifling dissenting voices".

"Charges of terrorism do not commensurate with any offences the protesters are alleged to have committed," said its South Asia Director Yamini Mishra. "Time and time again, the Act has been used as a tool to silence government critics, journalists and minorities."

An unprecedented economic collapse sparked often huge anti-government rallies in Sri Lanka this year, after the country ran out of foreign currency to finance imports, leaving its 22 million people enduring chronic shortages of essential goods, rolling blackouts and spiralling inflation.

The government imposed a state of emergency that gave security forces sweeping detention powers, but the ordinance lapsed last week. Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in mid-April and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a possible bailout. — AFP

the court premises. Judges are also expected to consider other challenges against the result, with a court clerk telling reporters the tribunal had already received two petitions filed by a voter and a non-profit organisation.

The IEBC was under heavy pressure to deliver a clean vote after facing sharp criticism over its handling of the August 2017 election, which was also challenged by Odinga. The court annulled that election in a first for Africa and ordered a re-run which was boycotted by Odinga. Dozens of people died during a police crackdown on protests. In a shock development shortly before the results of this year's poll were announced, four of the IEBC's seven commissioners accused chairman Chebukati of running an "opaque" operation and later said the numbers did not add up.

Chebukati dismissed the claims, insisting he had carried out his duties according to the law of the land despite "intimidation and harassment".

Divided opinion

Legal experts are divided on whether Chebukati needed the commissioners' backing to announce the results, with constitutional lawyer Charles Kanjama telling AFP there was "some ambiguity" surrounding the issue. Odinga has previously said he was cheated of victory in the 2007, 2013 and 2017 elections, and the poll's aftermath is being keenly watched as a test of democratic maturity in the East African powerhouse.

On the campaign trail, both frontrunners pledged to resolve any disputes in court rather than on the streets. Since the results were declared, Odinga has commended his supporters for "remaining calm" while Ruto has taken a conciliatory tone and promised to "work with all leaders". Kenya's worst electoral violence occurred after the 2007 vote, when more than 1,100 people died in politically motivated clashes involving rival tribes. If the Supreme Court upholds the results, Ruto will become Kenya's fifth president since independence from Britain in 1963, taking over the reins of a country battling surging inflation, high unemployment and a crippling drought. — AFP



Jimmy Lai

HK media tycoon Jimmy Lai to face no-jury trial

HONG KONG, China: Jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai will face a no-jury court when he goes on trial under a new Beijing-imposed national security law, AFP has learned. Hong Kong Secretary for Justice Paul Lam has ordered the trial to be heard by three judges handpicked by the government to try national security cases in the latest move away from the city's trial-by-jury tradition.

A copy of the order, seen by AFP, cited the "involvement of foreign elements" in the case, the "personal safety of jurors and their family members" and the "risk of perverting the course of justice if the trial is conducted with a jury".

Trial by jury has been used by Hong Kong's common law legal system for 177 years but legislation imposed by China in 2020 to curb dissent allows cases to be heard by dedicated national security judges. So far authorities have rejected jury trials for all three major cases that have made it to the High Court, where defendants can face up to life in prison.

Lai, 74, is one of Hong Kong's best known democracy activists and is openly loathed by Beijing. For years his Apple Daily tabloid newspaper was scathing in its criticism of China's Communist Party and openly supportive of democracy.

It collapsed last year after its funds were frozen under the new security law and many of its senior staff, including Lai, were charged with "collusion with foreign forces", one of the new national security crimes. On Monday, prosecutor Anthony Chau informed the court that six Apple Daily executives have indicated that they plan to plead guilty.

A guilty plea usually entitles defendants to a sentence reduction. Two other activists linked to the case have already pleaded guilty and been convicted on the same charge. Lai, who is currently serving a protest-related sentence, plans to plead not guilty, meaning a full trial is expected towards the end of the year or early next year, the court heard.

Last week AFP reported that the largest national security trial to date—that of 47 prominent democracy activists—will also be heard without a jury, citing a similar order from the justice ministry.

China says its security law has restored stability after huge and sometimes violent democracy protests rocked Hong Kong in 2019. Critics say it has criminalised dissent and eviscerated Hong Kong's freedoms.

Last month a UN watchdog said the "overly broad interpretation of and arbitrary application" of the security law had led to deteriorating freedoms and it called for the law to be repealed. — AFP

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2022

Business

CMA Kuwait becomes a member of Global Financial Innovation Network

CMA focuses on adopting innovation, exploiting modern technologies

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has become a member of the Global Financial Innovation Network (GFIN), an international network that seeks to support financial innovation for the benefit of consumers, acts as a regulatory tool and focuses on emerging technology.

The Network acts as a monitoring tool and focuses on emerging technology. It also aims to support financial innovation, and establish a framework for cooperation between regulatory agencies and relevant institutions that support innovation to exchange experiences and innovation methodologies. It also seeks to expand the scope of work of innovation service, product and business providers at the international level, in addition to sharing knowledge and policies. The network is committed

to providing financial integrity, financial inclusion and financial stability through innovation in financial services.

The Authority's accession to the network comes after receiving an invitation from the former Mayor of the City of London Lord William Russell, and the British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, during their visit to Kuwait in October 2021 to join the network and benefit from its services as the authority seeks in turn to keep pace with modern innovations in financial services and technological development, which is rapidly changing the economic and financial landscape, and adopting technology that matches the requirements of market development and diversification of its tools, which is one of the most important objectives of the Authority.

The Authority's membership within the Global Financial Innovation Network is consistent with its



eleventh strategic objective within its current strategy (2018 - 2019 / 2022 - 2023), which provides for promoting local, regional and international cooperation, gaining experience and exchanging information, as well as enhancing the implementation of the financial technology regulation project.

The Authority's next strategy (2023 - 2024 / 2026 - 2027) includes a focus on adopting innovation and exploiting modern technologies in performing the Authority's roles positively on the

national economy on the one hand, and the money market on the other.

The Network was established in January 2019 by a group of financial regulators and related organizations in the United Kingdom with the aim of creating a global regulatory environment for innovation, and its membership includes 68 regulatory institutions and seven entities as observers, most notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



SLOVIANSK, Ukraine: In this file photo taken on May 11, 2022 residents queue to enter a pharmacy in Sloviansk, eastern Ukraine, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Ukraine war pulls rug out from under economy rebound

KYIV: This year was supposed to confirm the world economy's comeback from the COVID pandemic crisis. Instead, the six-month-old war in Ukraine has sparked fears of recession.

Two 'small' economies rattle world

"Six short months ago the macro landscape was markedly different from today," the financial data firm S&P Global said in a recent report. Both the United States and eurozone economies were expected to see strong growth, and elevated inflation levels were seen by policymakers and markets as transitory. "Things have changed, and not for the better," added S&P Global. Global growth forecasts have been repeatedly cut, with the International Monetary Fund now expecting a 3.2 percent expansion compared to nearly five percent earlier.

Russia and Ukraine together account for just two percent of global output and trade, according to the OECD. But Russia is a major exporter of oil, gas and agricultural goods, while many developing countries rely heavily on grain from Ukraine, one of the breadbaskets of the world.

The war has disrupted those shipments, causing energy and food prices to surge worldwide. Inflation has soared everywhere, prompting central banks to aggressively hike rates—a move that usually tames prices but slows economic activity.

Prices soar everywhere

In Tunis, "low-income people are living a nightmare", said Naima Degaoui, a 70-year-old former nurse. "Prices on almost everything are rising: peaches, apricots, peppers for which the prices have quadrupled, red meat," she added. Some 11,000 kilometers (6,800 miles) away in the Chilean city of Valparaiso, 33-year-old social worker Nayib Pineira said "everything is much more expensive".

He said local gasoline prices have risen to 1,300 pesos per liter (1.42 euros per liter, \$5.50 per US gallon) — "nearly what Europeans pay, but with a European salary". In Europe, natural gas prices have soared as Russia has slashed deliveries to countries that oppose the war.

Oil prices have jumped, too. The rise in energy prices has increased the costs of making and ship-

ping an array of goods. Energy-intensive sectors such as the chemicals and metals industries have been particularly hard hit, especially in Germany which had become extremely dependent upon cheap Russian natural gas.

Policymakers scramble to control situation

Faced with surging inflation, developed nations have reverted to supporting their economies just when they were hoping to wean them off aid provided to help with COVID lockdowns. With support for heating costs, cuts to gasoline taxes, price caps and windfall taxes on oil companies, European nations have pulled out the stops to cushion the blow to consumers from higher energy costs.

In the United States, Congress passed a \$370 billion investment package called the Inflation Reduction Act that aims to contain health care costs and promote alternative energies. Central banks, meanwhile, are expected to continue their aggressive interest rate hikes. Stock markets have been spooked by the monetary tightening, with the S&P 500 index suffering its worst half-year performance in 14 years.

Global slowdown... then recession?

There is precious little optimism right now: US consumer confidence is nearly at a record low, while that for German investors is at a two-year low point. The Chinese property market is in a severe crisis, adding to problems caused by strict COVID lockdowns. In Europe, there are worries that if Russia reduces gas deliveries even further there could be shortages and rationing during the coming winter.

Coupled with the tightening of monetary policy underway by central banks, fears have been rising of a global recession, although the main forecasters have so far discounted this possibility.

That is because there are also signs of resilience in the global economy. The labor markets in both Europe and the United States remain strong. The Biden administration has pointed to the strength of the US jobs market to argue that the US economy is not in recession despite two consecutive quarters of economic contraction.

The mixed signals prompted analysts at HSBC to compare the situation to the thought experiment by Nobel Prize-winning Austrian physicist Erwin Schrodinger to resolve a quantum paradox in which two states are simultaneously possible. "In the same way that Erwin Schrodinger's cat was both dead and alive at the same time, the global economy may be both in a recession and not-at least not yet," they wrote. —AFP

Bulgaria seeks Gazprom talks to resume deliveries

SOFIA: Bulgaria's government announced Monday that it would seek talks with Russian energy giant Gazprom to resume deliveries of natural gas ahead of the winter season.

Gazprom cut deliveries to Bulgaria in late April after the EU member's previous centrist government refused to pay in rubles. President Vladimir Putin decided that Russia would no longer accept gas payments in currencies other than the ruble in retaliation for the West's economic sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

Bulgaria is almost totally dependent on Russia for its annual consumption of 3.0 billion cubic meters of natural gas, and has been scrambling to secure alternative deliveries since the cut. "In practice, it is now inevitable to negotiate with Gazprom Export to resume deliveries," interim energy minister Rosen Hristov told a press conference.

"We obviously have to turn to them... Gazprom Export right now becomes an absolutely valid option,"

he added. While the European Union has imposed a ban on most Russian oil imports and a coal embargo, it has avoided sanctions on gas as the bloc is highly reliant on Russian supplies of the fossil fuel.

The previous government of Prime Minister Kiril Petkov sped up the completion of a new gas interconnector with neighboring Greece to bring in from October as much as 1.0 billion cubic meters of gas on a contract from Azerbaijan. It also negotiated single shipments of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States. But deliveries have so far been only fully secured for September and only partially for October, Hristov said, days after turning down an offer for more US shipments of LNG over failure to secure re-gasification slots at terminals in Greece and Turkey.

With deliveries uncertain and prices soaring, industry groups have urged the interim government to resume negotiations with Gazprom. Hristov said last week that talks with Gazprom were a last-resort option and would only concern an eventual resumption of deliveries on Bulgaria's current contract, which lasts until year-end. Bulgaria will hold a general election on October 2 and Hristov said it would be up to the new cabinet to decide if it wants to negotiate a new contract with Gazprom.

"The talks with Gazprom Export will be extremely hard," Hristov said Monday, adding that he would need "political backing" for them and that people should not expect a quick outcome. — AFP



Shanghai's Bund to go dark as heatwave prompts power cuts

SHANGHAI: Shanghai will switch off decorative lights along its famed Bund riverfront for two days from Monday, city authorities said, in response to a nationwide heatwave that has sent power demands soaring. Multiple provinces have announced power cuts to cope with a surge in demand, driven partly by people cranking up the air conditioning to cope with temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

China has been hit by extreme weather this summer, including record temperatures, flash floods and droughts—phenomena that scientists have warned are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change. To save power, Shanghai authorities said in a notice Sunday that they would switch off "landscape lighting" at the Bund, the city's most famous landmark.

Ornamental lights, billboards and video screens on both sides of the Huangpu River would be turned off on Monday and Tuesday, according to the notice. The heatwave has reduced stretches of the Yangtze River, China's most vital inland waterway, to unprecedented drought levels, according to official data.

That has resulted in high pressure on hydroelectric

plants that supply power to some of the country's key economic zones. In the southwestern megacity of Chongqing, home to 31 million, authorities on Monday declared that all shopping malls must only operate between 4:00pm and 9:00pm daily to cut power costs until the "temperature and supply-demand situation" changes.

The city last week announced industrial power cuts lasting until Wednesday and reduced scenic lighting at tourist attractions.

In neighboring Sichuan, authorities on Sunday extended industrial power cuts and activated their highest level of emergency response to deal with the heatwave. "Since July this year, the province has faced the most extreme high temperatures, the lowest rainfall in the corresponding period in history... (and) the highest power load in history," local authorities said.

Some of the world's biggest automakers—including Japanese giant Toyota and Elon Musk's Tesla—operate factories in Sichuan. The province is also home to parts manufacturers that are crucial to global auto supply chains.

Many major factories were forced to halt work because of the Sichuan power cuts, which were supposed to end on Saturday but were extended to Thursday, Chinese news outlet Caixin reported.

Analysts have warned that Sichuan's power woes could have ripple effects on the wider Chinese economy and international supply chains. Hydropower generated in the province supplies domestic consumers and factories, but also industrial powerhouse provinces Jiangsu and Zhejiang. — AFP

Business



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Supervisors talk at the construction site for a school, part of the Iraq-China "oil for construction" deal, in the Sumer neighborhood of Nasiriyah city, in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar province. — AFP



ARBIL, Iraq: Iraqi Kurds attend Chinese language lessons in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's northern Kurdish autonomous region, on July 20, 2022. — AFP

China cements influence in Iraq through oil, infrastructure deals

Beijing had 'actively participated in the reconstruction of Iraq's economy'

BAGHDAD: China has gained a major foothold in oil-rich Iraq, shaking up Western domination in fields from energy to construction, even as some warn that infrastructure projects could leave Baghdad in debt. After decades of conflict, Iraq is "badly in need of foreign investment, and specifically investment in energy sector infrastructure", said John Calabrese of the Middle East Institute in Washington.

China, with its soaring energy needs, has stepped in to fill that gap, and is expanding its presence in Iraq under a 2019 "oil for construction" deal. Beijing has become one of the largest importers of Iraqi crude, and in 2021 accounted for 44 percent of Iraq's oil exports, according to prime ministerial adviser Muzhar Saleh. And state firm PetroChina has partnered with France's TotalEnergies and Malaysia's Petronas to exploit the Halfaya oilfield in southern Iraq. "China is just getting started," ambassador Cui Wei told journalists in a recent videoconference.

But Beijing is interested in more than just Iraq's trade potential, Calabrese said. Beyond the "obvious commercial incentives" are China's ambitions to "deeply trench itself in a country and a region that the West, and especially the United States, has dominated," he said.

Belt and Road

Iraq is among the many partners in China's vast "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative, which Western leaders say risks saddling poorer countries with debt. Baghdad is an "important cooperation part-



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Laborers work on the construction site for a school, part of the Iraq-China "oil for construction" deal, in the Sumer neighborhood of Nasiriyah city, in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar province, on July 20, 2022. — AFP

ner" in the project, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman told AFP, adding that Beijing had "actively participated in the reconstruction of Iraq's economy".

Between 2013 and this year, Iraq was "the third most important" Belt and Road Initiative partner "for energy engagement", according to a paper by Christoph Nedopil of the Green Finance and Development Center at Fudan University, Shanghai.

Under the 2019 "oil for construction" deal, building projects in Iraq are funded by the sale of 100,000 barrels per day of Iraqi oil to China.

One aspect of the agreement, inked while former Iraqi premier Adel Abdel Mahdi visited Beijing, was a deal to build Iraqi schools. Two Chinese partners were tapped to carry out the construction—PowerChina and Sinotech—with 8,000 education facilities to eventually

be built. Work has also begun on an airport in the southern city of Nasiriyah, built by the China State Construction Engineering Corp.

Mandarin classes

Under such projects, Chinese firms must work with local contractors that "provide manpower and raw materials", said Haider Majid, an Iraqi government spokesman. But Yesar al-Maleki, an analyst for the Middle East Economic Survey, said there was "a big question mark" over how the Iraqi contractors are selected.

"Many of these companies are rumored to be politically connected, and this is how they got the contracts," he told AFP. Iraqi contractors could abuse the initiative for "useless projects", he said, warning that Iraq could end up in a "death trap" of debt.

As China's influence in Iraq grows, more and more Iraqis have also been taking their business to China.

Banking on this, the Iraqi-Chinese Friendship Association in Baghdad has begun offering classes in Mandarin. "When I returned to Iraq from China, I found that a lot of people wanted to learn the language," said 25-year-old teacher Sajjad al-Kazzaz.

The majority of his students are businessmen, like Laith Ahmed, who imports electronics from China.

Ahmed cited challenges communicating with Chinese traders, "most of whom do not speak English", but said that this hadn't stood in the way of business. "Chinese products have flooded the Iraqi market," Ahmed said. — AFP



UAE investments in Egypt jump to \$1.9bn in 6 months

ABU DHABI: The UAE more than doubled its investments in Egypt during the first half of the 2021-2022 fiscal year, after a series of government-backed initiatives and forays by private companies.

The value of Emirati investments in Egypt, the Arab world's third-largest economy, rose to \$1.9 billion in the first six months of the fiscal year, up by about 169 per cent from \$712.6m in the same period a year ago, Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics said in a statement on its website. The value of trade between the two countries increased 1.4 per cent year-on-year to \$1.2bn during the first quarter of 2022, the government agency said.

On Sunday, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed held talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi during a visit to the country where they discussed bilateral co-operation and opportunities to grow the strategic partnership between the two countries, especially in the economic and development fields. The UAE has been boosting its investments in Egypt, a market of more than 103 million people, through a series of deals spanning sectors from ports to energy.

The UAE and Egypt already share a historically strong economic relationship. The countries, along with Jordan and Bahrain, signed the Industrial Partnership for Sustainable Economic Development this year to boost sustainable industrial growth and explore opportunities for joint investment in priority sectors. The industrial partnership is expected to boost the gross domestic product of the member countries by \$809 billion.

In December 2021, Abu Dhabi's holding company ADQ opened a new office in Cairo as it seeks to increase its investment in the country. It aims to accel-

erate Egypt's economic development through joint strategic investment projects, specialized funds and investment tools in key sectors such as health care and pharmaceuticals, utilities, food and agriculture, real estate and financial services, ADQ said at the time. Top Egyptian exports to the UAE in the first quarter of 2022 included natural pearls and precious stones (\$351.6 million), machinery, electronic devices and parts (\$64.1 million), fruits (\$29.4 million), clothes (\$24.9 million), and vegetables and plants (\$19.7 million), Egypt's statistics agency has said.

The UAE's top exports to Egypt during the period included plastics and by-products (\$144.9 million), natural pearls and precious stones (\$77.5 million), fuels, mineral oils and their distillates (\$67.6 million), iron and steel (\$53.4 million), and seafood (\$45.7 million). — Agencies

Adidas CEO Rorsted to stand down in 2023

FRANKFURT: Adidas will get a new CEO "during the course of 2023" as it seeks to emerge from the turbulence of Covid-19 lockdowns and other challenges, the German sportswear giant said on Monday. Current CEO Kasper Rorsted will remain in post "until a successor has been appointed" to help "ensure a smooth transition at the helm of the company", Adidas said in a statement.

"After three challenging years that were marked by the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, it is now the right time to initiate a CEO transition and pave the way for a restart," said Thomas Rabe, chairman of the Adidas supervisory board. The transition was "mutually agreed upon", according to the company's statement. — AFP

Iran stock exchange suspends largest steel-maker

TEHRAN: Tehran's stock exchange has suspended Iran's largest steel-maker from trading following a parliamentary report alleging corruption to the tune of \$3 billion, local media reported.

Trading of the Mobarakeh Steel Company's stocks has been suspended "due to uncertainties about the transparency of information", said the Tehran bourse's chief executive Mahmood Goudarzi, quoted by the Fars news agency. Trading in the company will not resume "until the necessary information is clearly obtained", he said, according to the news report late Saturday.

Located in central Isfahan province, Mobarakeh plays a major role in Iran's economy and is the owner of local football team Sepahan. The firm and several of its subsidiaries are subject to US Treasury Department sanctions. Fars said the decision came days after the release of a 295-page parliamentary report alleging widespread corruption among the firm's senior management between 2018 and 2021.

US stocks retreat ahead of key Fed message

NEW YORK: US equities continued to slide early Monday with all eyes on this week's annual gathering of central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming where Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is expected to lay out his view on interest rate hikes.

In recent weeks, signs of easing price pressures and a slowing economy, among other factors, have caused financial markets to become optimistic the Fed will dial back or even pause rate increases—and possibly begin to cut next year. The optimism comes, however, despite officials' repeat warnings that rates will continue to rise, even though annual inflation slowed in July as oil prices fell. "Last month, inflation was good, but it was only one month," said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital. "I think the investors are worrying a little bit about the Jackson Hole meetings and that we could hear a more hawkish Fed." About 25 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 1.3 percent at 33,285.62. The broad-based S&P 500 declined 1.4 percent to 4,168.38, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index fell 1.6 percent to 12,501.06. Investors edged away from speculative investments, dumping shares in movie theater meme stock AMC, which fell 34 percent.

Eurozone equities also tanked as spiking natural gas prices sparked fears that winter energy shortages could spark recession, helping push the euro back under parity against the greenback.

The report accuses the company of 90 counts of wrongdoings including fraud and influence-peddling, amounting to a total of around \$3 billion, Fars said. According to the parliamentary report, which was published by several local media outlets, the firm paid huge sums of money to officials at government institutions and other influential bodies. They included figures at the intelligence and industry ministries and provincial governors' offices, as well as the judiciary, the police, state broadcaster IRIB, members of parliament and clerics. In January last year, conservative Iranian lawmakers voted to launch an investigation into Mobarakeh's affairs to examine issues including "the reasons for its decrease in export volume, illegal appointments, the payment of exorbitant salaries and the signing of ambiguous contracts", the parliamentary report said.

The report also accuses officials from the government of former moderate president Hassan Rouhani of appointing Mobarakeh's managerial team and board members. Fars said the parliamentary report had been referred to the judiciary for further investigation, but judicial authorities have not yet announced whether a probe has been opened. In June Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in major state policies, called on the judiciary to "seriously" fight corruption. Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Iran 150 out of 180 countries. — AFP

Oil dipped on speculation over an Iran nuclear deal that could ease a supply crunch caused by producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine. All eyes are on this week's symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where Fed boss Jerome Powell will deliver a speech that traders will follow for an idea about the US central bank's next moves.

'Critical moment'

Stocks "began Monday in downbeat mood ahead of what could prove to be a critical moment for markets at the end of this week", said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. "The Jackson Hole summit of central bankers and finance ministers is widely expected to see Powell take to the floor—and puncture optimism which has built up over hopes the Fed may be nearing the point at which it pivots away from rate hikes."

A dip in price rises and signs of economic slowdown had raised hopes policymakers would ease up—and possibly cut rates next year—after two successive, 75-basis-point hikes, helping equities rally globally. But that optimism has slowly been eroded in recent weeks as Fed officials, including Powell, have warned that the battle against inflation was far from won, particularly as the jobs market remained resilient. The euro is under additional pressure after Russia's Gazprom said late Friday that the Nord Stream pipeline would be closed for maintenance at the end of the month, cutting Europe's daily gas deliveries.

As a result, Europe's Dutch TTF Gas Futures contract soared on Monday to record 293 euros per megawatt hour, not far from record highs hit after Russia launched its assault on Ukraine. "European gas prices pushed higher again ... on renewed concerns about flows through Nord Stream 1," Rabobank analyst Jane Foley told AFP. "This focussed attention on recessionary risk for the eurozone. — AFP

Business

Markets looking for clarity but tuning out Fed message

All eyes on Fed policymakers' meeting amid spiraling inflation

WASHINGTON: US central bankers have been hammering home a single message: Interest rates will rise until inflation begins to come down. But financial markets keep hoping to hear a different tune, one indicating the pace of rate hikes will slow.

All eyes will be on this week's annual gathering of policymakers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming to hear Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell explain his stance—again—with market watchers hoping to get something more to their liking. The Fed could be a victim of its own success.

After keeping the benchmark borrowing rate at zero throughout the pandemic, the steep spike in prices, which surged to a 40-year high following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, prompted the central bank to take aggressive action. In the battle to contain red-hot inflation, which topped nine percent in June, the Fed has hiked rates four times, including massive, three-quarter point increases in June and July—steep moves unheard of since the early 1980s.

But in recent weeks signs of easing price pressures and a slowing economy, along with falling energy costs and indications global supply chain snarls have lessened, caused financial markets to become optimistic the Fed will dial back or even pause rate increases—and even begin to cut next year.

Stocks on Wall Street have risen for four straight weeks, despite a string of officials repeating the message that rates will continue to rise, even though annual inflation slowed in July as oil prices fell.

While the annual gathering often becomes a place for global central bankers to signal shifting policy, Powell is expected to repeat that message

Friday—though he may acknowledge that a slow-down will come later in the year. "It does seem like what we've heard from Powell so far suggests there's quite a high bar for them to transition from aggressive hikes" to a slower pace of 25 basis point steps, said Jonathan Millar of Barclays.

Millar, who served as a Fed economist and forecaster under four central bank chiefs, told AFP that markets are looking further ahead, anticipating the rate hikes will be successful in slowing inflation.

But for policymakers "One thing they definitely want to communicate is that they remain very much focused on issues with price stability and that they will react very cautiously to any signs of improvements in the inflation data."

That means indications prices are coming down more broadly, not just because of falling oil.

Managing the market's expectations "is really job one," Millar said. "They have to enforce that credibility." But like other economists he believes the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) at its September meeting will step down to a 0.5 percentage point increase, taking the range of the key lending rate up to 2.75 to 3.0 percent, to be followed up with quarter-point hikes in November and December

Walking a narrow line

Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics said the dilemma for Powell is to recognize the progress towards achieving a soft landing—bringing inflation back down towards the two percent target, without derailing economic growth—while confirming the Fed's resolve.

He "continues to have to walk kind of a narrow line," she told AFP. "You don't want to be too pes-



WASHINGTON: Financial markets keep hoping to hear a different tune, one indicating the pace of rate hikes will slow.

simistic." And with housing prices and sales cooling from their torrid pace along with other encouraging data "he has the wind at his back."

But she said, "The message he really has to give is that we're still going to be looking to raise rates to restrictive level to really make sure inflation is still our number one priority." The annual

monetary policy symposium hosted by the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank runs August 25-27. It often is a place for officials from around the world to come to discuss policy changes in the works, but so far no major global central bank chief has confirmed they speak at the event other than Powell. —AFP

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for three months with a rate of return at 2.625 percent.

Musk raises price of Tesla's full self-driving technology

SAN FRANCISCO: The price of Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) software will rise to \$15,000, the electric car maker's chief executive, Elon Musk, has said. The world's richest person tweeted on Sunday night that price would increase from \$12,000 in North America from September 5 after the release of version FSD Beta 10.69.2 for its driver assistance system.

Musk said the current price would be honored for orders made before September 5 but delivered later.

"FSD Beta 10.69 started rolling out to Tesla owners last night," he tweeted. "This build is a big step forward! 10.69.1 probably end of week with wider release. 10.69.2 in a few weeks should be good enough to provide to all FSD Beta participants."

FSD is also available on subscription for \$199 a month but Musk did not mention any alteration to the cost of that. It was also not stated whether the price rises would be across global markets.

This is the second FSD price rise this year, after it increased from \$10,000 to \$12,000 in January.

The current FSD offers auto lane changes, navigation on autopilot, autopark and smart summon, whereby the driver can use their phone to call the car and have it drive itself to their location without a driver. Traffic light and stop-sign control allows the car to detect and react to traffic signals. Autosteer on city streets is "coming soon", Tesla's website says.

Despite the advancements in technology, Tesla's FSD does not make its cars fully autonomous. "The currently enabled features require active driver supervision and do not make the vehicle autonomous," Tesla said on its website.

"The activation and use of these features are dependent on achieving reliability far in excess of human drivers as demonstrated by billions of miles of experience, as well as regulatory approval, which may take longer in some jurisdictions."

Tesla's FSD has sparked safety concerns and scrutiny from regulators. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has been investigating a number of accidents in which it suspects Tesla's autopilot was being used. Since 2016, the NHTSA has sent teams to 39 crashes in which self-driving systems are suspected of having been in use, according to agency documents. Of those, 30 involved Teslas, including crashes that caused 19 deaths.

Earlier this month it was revealed that the NHTSA was investigating more than 750 complaints about Teslas braking for no reason. Last week, a BMW test car with autonomous-steering capability swerved out of its lane into oncoming traffic, killing one person and seriously injuring nine in Germany.

"The vehicle has a level 2 driving assistance system that is already incorporated in production vehicles today and which can support the driver on demand," BMW said. —Agencies



Jazeera Airways announces flights for FIFA World Cup 2022

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways on Monday announced it has joined the flight shuttle program for the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. The airline has formed an agreement with Qatar Airways and local authorities to fly football supporters from Kuwait to Hamad International Airport, Doha on match days.

For group matches commencing on November 21st, Jazeera will operate six flights a day to ensure

fans get to Doha around four hours before kick-off and leave back to Kuwait around four hours after the final whistle. For the knock-out stages, four flights a day will be operated and three for the final match on December 18th.

Commenting on the shuttle service, Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We are excited to be able to offer flights for fans from Kuwait to the World Cup. This is a once in a lifetime event for us to have a World Cup on our doorstep and demand is expected to be high for all flights. We are very grateful to Akbar Al-Baker, Group Chief Executive Qatar Airways, for enabling these shuttle flights and we are confident that the tournament will be a great success for Qatar."

Bookings will be open for all flights to the tourna-

ment at jazeeraairways.com or on the Jazeera App. Tickets will go on sale in early September following approval of the flight schedules by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority. Fans travelling to Doha must be in possession of a match day ticket and have signed up for the Hayya Card entry system into Qatar. Passengers on shuttle flights will fly out and return within a 24-hour period and do not need accommodation.



Rohit Ramachandran

Oil, gems, war and graft: Five things to know about Angola

LUANDA: The southern African nation of Angola is awash with oil yet remains one of the poorest countries in the world. As President Joao Lourenco seeks a second term in the upcoming August 24 election, here are five things to know about the country of 33 million people, which is almost twice as big as the US state of Texas.

Three decades of civil war

Angola gained independence from Portugal in 1975 after a bitter war involving several different nationalist groups. The pro-Soviet People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), to whom incumbent president Lourenco belongs, has been in power since independence.

It fought a long civil war against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) which only ended in 2002.

By the time the conflict ended and the army signed a ceasefire accord after UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed in 2002, an estimated half a million people were dead.

From autocrat to anti-graft drive

Jose Eduardo dos Santos came to power following the death of post-independence leader Agostinho Neto in 1979. He ruled with an iron fist for 38 years, dominating every part of society.

His opponents were critical of his grip on the country and its economy and many major businesses were run by dos Santos family members or friends. His successor Lourenco, elected in 2017, unleashed an anti-corruption drive that targeted dos Santos' family. He fired Isabel dos Santos, the former president's eldest daughter and Africa's richest woman, according to Forbes, who is accused of corruption. Dos Santos' son Jose Filomeno, was sentenced in 2020 to five years in prison for embezzling the sovereign wealth fund he managed up to



LUANDA, Angola: Brides maids gather along the promenade in Luanda on August 21, 2022. —AFP

2018. Lourenco's government says it has recovered nearly 10 billion euros of stolen public assets during its sweep. Dos Santos died on July 8, 2022.

Oil and diamonds

Angola, after Nigeria, is sub-Saharan Africa's number two oil exporter, but only produces a fifth of its needs in refined products. Oil accounts for nearly 95 percent of Angola's exports, according to the World Bank. In the decade that followed the civil war, Angola registered double-digit growth, thanks to its oil wealth.

But the collapse in the price of crude plunged Angola into a severe economic crisis in 2014.

Lourenco has launched a program aimed at weaning the country off its dependence on oil and he has initiated privatizations. Angola is also one of the world's biggest diamond producers.

Despite its oil wealth, nearly half of the population lived below the poverty line of \$1.9 per day in

2020, according to the World Bank.

Key province

Angola's Cabinda province is separated from the rest of the country by a narrow strip of territory between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo-Brazzaville and produces three-fifths of Angola's oil. The enclave has been rocked by a separatist insurgency since it officially became part of Angola at independence.

Song and dance

Angolan singer-songwriter Bonga, who has spent most of his life in exile, wrote the 1974 song "Sodade", which was immortalized by Cape Verdean diva Cesaria Evora. A defender of traditional Angolan song and dance like semba and rebeta, he has made nearly 40 albums, while also playing for Lisbon's soccer team Benfica and holding Portugal's 400-metre athletics record. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Dogs await to be adopted at a shelter belonging to the animal welfare organisation SIMBA Animal Aid Cyprus.



Dog's life in Cyprus as man's best friend dumped

Dog shelters in Cyprus are overflowing in what some volunteers are calling a crisis caused by the abandonment of canines adopted during COVID as well as complications arising from Brexit. "Shelters are filled to the brim," said Monica Mitsidou of Dog Rescue Cyprus. Dog adoptions were made by many people "when they shouldn't have" during the Covid-19 pandemic, Mitsidou told the Cyprus News Agency, calling the situation "unprecedented".

During Cyprus' toughest restrictions aimed at halting the spread of the coronavirus in 2020 and early 2021, dog-walking was one of the few reasons people were allowed to leave their homes. Evita Charalambous, a volunteer at PAWS (Cyprus Association for the Protection and Care of Animals), blamed "the economic situation" and Brexit for fewer adoptions, saying Cyprus was facing a "massive problem".

But she also said people were failing to neuter their dogs, and pointed to difficulties finding pet-friendly apartments. Volunteers say demand for Cypriot dog adoptions has plummeted, particularly in Britain, which is usually a top destination for pooches from the eastern Mediterranean island. "Brexit affected us tremendously," said Constantina Constantinou, a volunteer at non-profit Saving Pound Dogs Cyprus (SPDC).

"The bureaucracy is much more complicated," she told AFP, and the dogs' travel costs have also increased sharply, making it "much more difficult" for Britons to take in dogs from EU member Cyprus. More than 3,000 dogs are estimated to be housed in shelters across Cyprus. On the outskirts of the capital Nicosia, a husky with a purple-and-black collar stared out from its pen at a sanctuary run by SPDC, as other dogs nearby barked or pawed the ground.



Andreas Tsavellas of the animal welfare organization SIMBA Animal Aid Cyprus play with dogs awaiting to be adopted at a shelter in Kokkinotrimithia.

'Not the solution'
At another shelter outside Nicosia, run by Simba Animal Aid Cyprus, several dogs played together in a large pen, while others sought shady refuge from the summer heat or lapped up water from a bucket. Simba's Andreas Tsavellas, 43, said the number of strays "is always on the rise" due to "the economic crisis and other factors". "We receive five to 20 dogs a week-found as strays in the streets by the municipalities and then brought to us," he told AFP.

But he played down the idea that people adopted dogs during the height of COVID-19 restrictions as an excuse to go out, saying: "We haven't got enough data to prove that." "We've always had cases of abandonment, not only during the pandemic," he said. Volunteers have called on authorities to enforce legislation on animal welfare and to curb illegal breeding and dumping, often by hunters. "The government must take serious decisions... and take action to make neutering (dogs) a law," said SPDC's Constantinou, adding that more checks

were needed around importing canines. Others said the current dog dilemma highlighted a different issue. "Sending (dogs) abroad was not the solution," Charalambous from PAWS told the Cyprus News Agency. "We were essentially sweeping the problem under the rug." — AFP



Dogs await to be adopted at a shelter belonging to the animal welfare organisation SIMBA Animal Aid Cyprus in Kokkinotrimithia, some 20 kilometers away from the capital Nicosia. — AFP photos



Dogs await to be adopted at a shelter belonging to the animal welfare organisation SIMBA Animal Aid Cyprus.

Poaching, horn trade declining but rhinos still threatened

The rhino's survival remains in grave danger despite COVID-related drops in poaching and the illegal trade in their horns, a conservation body said on Monday. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said that poaching was still "an acute threat" to the survival of the species. A total of 2,707 rhinos were poached in Africa between 2018 and 2021, according to the IUCN, the vast majority of which were killed in South Africa, mainly in the Kruger National Park. South Africa is home to nearly 80 percent of the world's rhinos.

Rhino poaching rates in Africa have declined from a peak of 5.3 percent of the total population in 2015 to 2.3 percent in 2021, the Swiss-based organization said. "The overall decline in poaching of rhinos is encouraging, yet this remains an acute threat to the survival of these iconic animals," said Sam Ferreira, scientific officer with the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group. He told AFP there was no formal analysis into why poaching rates were declining. "A number of factors could lead to this slowing, including improved local cooperation in law enforcement, international collaboration between range and consumer states, as well as changes in the demand for rhino horn", said Ferreira.

2020 blip

The IUCN said 2020 was an abnormal year, with lockdowns and restrictions due to the COVID pandemic seeing several African countries witnessing dramatically-reduced poaching rates. South Africa lost 394 rhinos to poaching in 2020, while Kenya recorded no rhino poaching at all that year, it said. However, as COVID-19 travel restrictions were lifted, some countries reported new increases in poaching activities: 451 rhinos were poached in South Africa and six in Kenya.

"These numbers are still significantly lower than during the peak in 2015, when South Africa alone lost 1,175 rhinos to poaching," IUCN said. The rhino population in Africa has fallen by 1.6 percent annually, from 23,562 in 2018 to 22,137 at the end of last year.

IUCN said the number of white rhinos—which it classifies as vulnerable on its Red List of Threatened Species—declined by almost 12 percent from 18,067 to 15,942 during this period. However, the number of black rhinos—deemed critically-endangered—rose by 12 percent to 6,195.

"It is essential to continue active population management and anti-poaching activities for all subspecies across different range states," the IUCN said. Data also suggests that, on average, between 575 and 923 rhino horns entered illegal trade markets each year between 2018 and 2020, compared to approximately 2,378 per year between 2016 and 2017. However, in 2019, before the pandemic, the reported seized weight of illegal rhino specimens reached its highest point of the decade, possibly due to increased regulations and law enforcement efforts.

Javan, Sumatran rhinos

IUCN said the numbers of one-horned rhino, found mainly in India and Nepal, and the critically-endangered Javan rhino, had increased since 2017. Their numbers in India and Nepal increased from an estimated 3,588 in 2018 to 4,014 at the end of 2021, it said. This was "thanks to conservation efforts, including strengthened law enforcement", it added.

The population of Javan rhinos increased from between 65 and 68 individuals in 2018 to 76 at the end of 2021. But the number of Sumatran rhinos fell to an estimated 34 to 47 in 2021, compared with between 40 and 78 individuals in 2018. The IUCN classifies the Sumatran rhino, the smallest of all rhino species, as critically endangered.

The World Wild Fund for Nature estimates that fewer than 80 Sumatran rhinos remain in the world, mainly in Indonesia on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. The IUCN report said 11 rhino poaching incidents were recorded in Asia — 10 in India and one in Nepal—since the beginning of 2018, all of which involved greater one-horned rhinos. — AFP

Anime 'Dragon Ball' roars to top of N American box office

Computer-animated martial arts film "Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero," the 21st in the Japanese franchise, seized control of the North American box office this weekend with an estimated take of \$20.1 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.



That impressive result for the film from Crunchyroll—which called it the best global opening ever for an anime movie—proved a bright spot in a tepid August, easily outshining the \$11.6 million take of another new release, Universal's "Beast." "This is another outstanding Crunchyroll anime opening," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. He said

Crunchyroll, 95 percent owned by Sony, now "dominates the genre." Gross rated "Beast," meantime, as having only a "fair opening" for the Friday-through-Sunday period—at least "for an action adventure film featuring a beast."

The beast, in this case, is a huge rogue lion that pursues a recently widowed man (Idris Elba) and his daughters when they go on safari. Iceland's Baltasar Kormakur directs. Sony's action-thriller "Bullet Train," which topped the box office the last two weekends, slid to third at \$8 million. Brad Pitt plays a paid assassin on a train seemingly loaded with them.

In fourth was the still high-flying "Top Gun: Maverick," which took in a substantial \$5.9 million in its 13th week out. The Tom Cruise vehicle has pulled in \$683 million domestically and \$703 million overseas. And in fifth, down three spots from last weekend, was Warner Bros.' animation "DC League of Super-Pets," at \$5.8 million. August is always slow at the box office, "but with no big releases during the last two weeks, business has dropped more than normal, to roughly -40 percent below August 2019," Gross said, "and that's how it will continue until October."

Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were: "Thor: Love and Thunder" (\$4 million) "Nope" (\$3.6 million) "Minions: The Rise of Gru" (\$3.5 million) "Where the Crawdads Sing" (\$3.2 million) "Bodies Bodies Bodies" (\$2.4 million) — AFP

British cinema chain mulls US bankruptcy filing

British-based cinema chain Cineworld confirmed Monday that a US bankruptcy filing is among options for the debt-laden group, which has been slammed by dwindling audience numbers. The group, which operates hundreds of cinemas mainly in the United States, revealed last week that it was "evaluating various strategic options" to boost liquidity and potentially restructure, with demand below expectations since reopening from the pandemic.

Cineworld said in an update on Monday that those options "include a possible voluntary Chapter 11 filing in the United States and associated ancillary proceedings in other jurisdictions". The London-listed group added it was holding talks with "many of its major stakeholders including its secured lenders". A Chapter 11 filing "would be expected to allow the

group to access near-term liquidity and support the orderly implementation of" debt reduction, it noted.

Cineworld would maintain its normal operations with "no significant impact" on staff, under such an outcome. However, it also warned of a "very significant dilution of existing equity interests". Further announcements would be made when appropriate, it added. Cineworld's share price has collapsed since the start of this year to stand at just three pence on Monday. Analysts argue that its 2018 takeover of American peer Regal left it saddled with too much debt.

The chain, whose second biggest market is Britain, was then hit hard by pandemic fallout and the booming popularity of streaming. "Cineworld's problems stem from an overly aggressive growth strategy which relied on using huge amounts of debt to buy US chain Regal," said AJ Bell analyst Russ Mould. "This may have made Cineworld one of the largest cinema operators in the world, but bigger isn't necessarily better—and the pandemic swiftly exposed the company's strained balance sheet." — AFP



Pedestrians walk past the entrance of a Cineworld cinema in London. — AFP

ROYAL REBEL ELEVATED TO 'SAINT': DIANA 25 YEARS AFTER DEATH

From her engagement to Prince Charles as a shy teenager to her roles as doting mother, humanitarian and global celebrity, Diana's turbulent 36-year life still captivates people around the world. Young, beautiful and fun, she seemed refreshingly informal when she married the heir to the throne in 1981 aged 20, after what the media portrayed as a fairytale romance.



In this file photo taken on January 27, 1988 Princess of Wales Diana poses, during her visit to the Footscray Park in suburb of Melbourne.

But the acrimonious breakdown of her marriage to Charles, with salacious details filling the tabloids, tipped the monarchy into perpetual crisis while driving her to self-harm. In an extraordinary 1995 interview, she spoke out candidly about her husband's affair with Camilla Parker Bowles and her own infidelity. Stripping the monarchy of its mystique and casting doubt on Charles's ability to be king, the interview drew horror in parts of the British establishment.

In recent years, her image has shifted as her sons fiercely defend her memory and use her purported mistreatment by the press in their own battles with media outlets. "Now she is the sainted figure and they have elevated her as such, because they have talked repeatedly of how she was hounded to her death by the media," said royal historian and author Ed Owens. A recent



This file photo taken on July 29, 1981 shows European Royal Families who attended the wedding of Prince Charles (center right) and Lady Diana (center left) the Princess of Wales. — AFP photos

Hollywood film and popular Netflix series "The Crown" have presented fictionalized accounts sympathetic to Diana, reviving interest in her life and style. "I think 'The Crown' is going to do much when it returns to our screens this autumn to embellish that idea of a human tragedy, again a saintly figure," Owens added.

Inner turmoil

Born on July 1, 1961, Diana hailed from the aristocratic Spencer family with close ties to the monarchy: her father worked for king George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. She grew up with three siblings, in a childhood marred by the bitter break-up of her parents. She left school at 16 with no qualifications and went to finishing school in Switzerland, before getting a job in a nursery in London. From the moment she was linked to Charles, however, her life changed. The prince was under increasing pressure to find a bride, and proposed at the age of 32.

Diana said they only met 13 times before their wedding. Heir to the throne

Prince William was born the following year, followed by Prince Harry two years later. Robert Hardman, a former royal reporter and author of "Queen of Our Times: The Life of Queen Elizabeth II", described Diana as an "absolutely devoted mum".

"She gave them both the same sort of support, attention, encouragement, indulgence," he said. Diana also possessed a strong empathy and sense of style, and rode a wave of popular enthusiasm for the monarchy. She used her position to champion marginalized groups, shaking hands with patients with AIDS and leprosy, who were viewed as pariahs at the time. But privately she was plagued by bulimia and fears her husband did not love her and the rest of the royal family did not care.

'Fear, paranoia and isolation'

Rumors the marriage was in trouble broke in 1992, after biographer Andrew Morton lifted the lid on Diana's misery with a revelatory book, based on audio tapes made by the princess in response

to his questions via a mutual friend. That year ended with the bombshell announcement that the royal couple would separate.

The scandal deepened with further recriminations and allegations appearing in the media, before first Charles and then Diana admitted to being unfaithful. In her controversial 1995 interview with the BBC's "Panorama" program, Diana admitted her affair with army officer James Hewitt, but also criticized the royals and questioned her husband's ability to be king.

The BBC has since admitted the interview was obtained through deception, and has pledged not to air it in full again. William has slammed the broadcaster's methods for fuelling Diana's "fear, paranoia and isolation" in her final years. At the time, Queen Elizabeth publicly expressed her sadness and wrote to both Charles and Diana urging them to seek a divorce. On August 28, 1996, the divorce was granted and Diana was stripped of the title "royal highness". The fairytale was over.

'Queen of people's hearts'

Still bearing the title Diana, Princess of Wales, she remained in the public eye. She had a summer fling with Dodi Fayed, son of Egyptian tycoon Mohamed Al-Fayed, who was killed in the same crash that took Diana's life on August 31, 1997, as their car was pursued by paparazzi through Paris. The outpouring of public grief was immense.

Tons of flowers were left outside her Kensington Palace home, and more than a million people lined the streets of London to pay their last respects at her funeral. Much popular anger over her death was directed at the royal family, fuelled by the queen's initial refusal to return from Scotland to greet the crowds, and there was a surge of republicanism. A quarter-century later, public support for the monarchy appears renewed.

Charles has largely been rehabilitated, while Camilla is to become his Queen Consort. But she is unlikely to ever match the popularity of Diana, the self-styled "queen of people's hearts". — AFP



This file photo taken on August 31, 1997 shows the wreckage of Princess Diana's car in the Alma tunnel of Paris.



In this file photo taken on September 6, 1997 Prince William walks with his head bowed behind the coffin of his mother Diana, Princess of Wales draped in the Royal Standard, on its way to London's Westminster Abbey for the funeral ceremony.



In this file photo taken on September 6, 1997, the coffin of Diana, Princess of Wales, is carried inside Westminster Abbey for her funeral service following her tragic death in a Paris car crash.



In this file photo taken on September 2, 1997 floral tributes continue to arrive at the paved area in front of Kensington Palace.

Diana's death: Week of grief that shook UK monarchy

Twenty-five years ago on August 31, 1997, Britain's Diana, Princess of Wales, died in a high-speed car crash in Paris. For the next week leading up to her spectacular funeral, Britain was plunged into an unprecedented outpouring of popular grief that jolted the monarchy, which was seen by some as out of touch with the moment. Here is how the week unfolded:

High-speed crash

Divorced for the past year from heir to the throne Prince Charles, 36-year-old Diana and her wealthy new lover, Egyptian playboy Dodi Fayed, are stalked by press photographers over their summer holiday in the Mediterranean. They arrive in Paris in the afternoon of August 30 and dine that evening at the Hotel Ritz, owned by Fayed's father Mohamed Al-Fayed. They try to leave discreetly from a back entrance shortly after midnight, in a Mercedes.

Chased by paparazzi on motorcycles, the car careens at high speed into a pillar in an underpass near the Eiffel Tower on the north bank of the River Seine. Fayed and their chauffeur Henri Paul, who had a high level of alcohol in his blood, die instantly. Their bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones is seriously injured. Rescue workers pull Diana out alive from the twisted wreckage of the Mercedes.

Seven photographers are arrested. Photographs of the crash are offered to newspapers for vast fortunes. Diana is taken to Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital where at 4:00 am (0200 GMT) she dies of massive chest injuries after two hours of desperate surgery. The royal family are officially informed. Queen Elizabeth II, her husband Prince Philip, Charles and

the couple's two children, Prince William, 15, and Prince Harry, 12, are holidaying at Balmoral, the monarch's private summer residence in Scotland.

'People's princess'

Britain awakes in mourning. Tearful Londoners start to lay flowers in front of Buckingham Palace and Kensington Palace, the princess's residence. Tony Blair, the new Labor prime minister, pays an emotional homage to "the people's princess". The royal family, as usual, goes to church on Sunday morning. Diana is not mentioned in the service,

call for a tribute worthy of their "queen of hearts".

Royal silence

Anger mounts at the silence of the royal family, who are still holed up in the Scottish Highlands. Newspapers vent fury that the British flag is not flying at half-mast over Buckingham Palace and call on Queen Elizabeth to return to London and address her subjects. The Sun tabloid asks: "Where is our Queen? Where is our flag?". It says not flying the flag is a "stark insult to Diana's memory".



In this file photo taken on September 6, 1997 Prince Charles, Prince Harry, Earl Spencer, brother of the Princess of Wales the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince William, watch as the coffin of the Princess of Wales is carried into Westminster Abbey.

for fear of upsetting her children.

The family clash over how to treat Diana in death, as she was no longer an official royal. Charles insists on using the royal plane to collect her body in person, against the initial wishes of Queen Elizabeth.

The press is the first to be accused. Diana's brother, Earl Charles Spencer, says newspapers have blood on their hands. Rattled, the British tabloid press tries to minimize the damage over the coming days. It lionises Diana and turns its attention on the royals. "Born a Lady. Became our Princess. Died a Saint," writes the Daily Mirror.

Popular grief

The popular fervor grows. Well-wishers queue for up to 11 hours to sign the books of condolence. Organizing the funeral proves complex. Since her divorce, Diana was no longer known as "Her Royal Highness" and did not have the right to a state funeral, although she still had the title of princess. But Britons

when the monarch is in residence, flying the sovereign's personal flag, which never flies at half-mast. Eventually, the royals leave the sanctuary of Balmoral. When the queen and Philip later visit the flowers outside Buckingham Palace, they are applauded. There is huge relief in royal circles.

Elizabeth pays homage to her former daughter-in-law in a live televised speech on September 5. "If they (the royals) fail to heed her lesson, they will bury not just Diana on Saturday-but their future too," The Guardian broadsheet warns, as nearly a quarter of Britons call for the abolition of the monarchy in a poll.

The next day, nearly a million people line the streets to watch the funeral procession pass in a deep silence punctuated by sobs, cries and tolling bells. When the cortege passes Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth publicly bows her head.—AFP

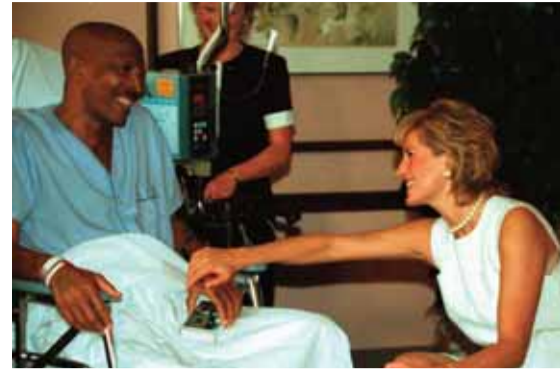
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In this file photo taken on October 5, 1990 Britain's Princess Diana arrives to visit First Lady Barbara Bush (not seen) at the White House.



In this file photo taken on February 11, 1992 Diana, Princess of Wales poses for pictures at the 17th century Taj Mahal, on the second day of the royal couple's six-day visit.



In this file photo taken on June 6, 1996 Princess Diana (right) meets with John Collins, a 51-year-old lung cancer patient while touring Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Hospice- Palliative Care Unit in Chicago.



In this file photo taken on November 13, 1992 Diana, Princess of Wales, (left) listens to a young handicapped boy during her visit to a home for handicapped in Paris.

Tourists, Brits hail 'icon' Diana, 25 years after death

For tourists like Tori McCumiskey visiting Queen Elizabeth II's hometown of Windsor, Diana remains a royal "icon" who broke through the stuffy palace gates, a quarter-century on from her death. Standing on the quaint cobbled streets of the town west of London, McCumiskey told AFP that it still gave her "goosebumps" recalling the tragedy, despite the passing of so many years. The queen has lived in nearby Windsor Castle since the pandemic began, and the town is a must-see for royal fans from around the world.

Diana memorabilia is still hot property, with shops packed full of teacups, tins, thimbles, bells, postcards, silver spoons and even tartan in the likeness of Prince Charles' first wife. Everyone in the town remembers where they were on August 31, 1997, when the princess of Wales died at the age of 36 in a Paris car accident.



In this file photo taken on March 17, 1997 South African President Nelson Mandela (left) and Princess Diana speak with the press after meeting in the Mandela's home, Goldendale, in Cape Town, South Africa.

"I was walking through a shopping mall in Australia and I heard over the loud speakers. I just couldn't believe it," recalled McCumiskey. The 52-year-old Australian, who describes herself as a

"staunch royalist", praised Diana's ability to connect with people across class divides. "People saw her as a not quite so stuffy royal, and that she was easily approachable," she said, proudly remembering that she met the princess at a polo tournament in Melbourne in the 1980s.

'You can't forget'

"She is beautiful and she did so many charity works and she is a down-to-earth person," said Muthucumara Samy Kesavan, manager of Windsor's House of Gifts souvenir shop. Situated at the foot of the castle, it sells many items bearing the image of the princess—from magnets to replicas of the invitation card for the 1981 wedding of Charles and Diana, who was then just 20 years old. Sales "are steady", he said. "People always ask me for her. She is still very popular."

Kesavan recalled that he was working at a petrol station in central London the night that Diana died. "We usually close at night, but here we stayed open because people came to buy flowers. It's something you can't forget." Aaron Perks, meanwhile, was at a motorbike rally that day.

"I woke up from a heavy night drinking with my friends and it was all over the campsite that she passed away", said the 55-year-old Englishman, who had come to Windsor with his nieces and nephews. "And then in every newspaper, in every petrol station we went to on the way home: 'Diana is dead'."

Anna Szymnaczk, a 48-year-old Polish woman, confided that she had cried in front of her television watching the coverage. "She was a normal person, she liked people," Szymnaczk added.

'Icon'

In central London, Amelia Irving and her children posed for a photograph in front of a bronze statue of Diana, unveiled last year in the gardens of her former Kensington Palace residence by her sons William and Harry. It was a rare joint appearance by the now-feuding brothers. "I wanted to come to London for the Jubilee (in June) but unfortunately I caught Covid just days before," the 47-year-old American lamented.

"I wanted to see the new statue. I think it's a good thing they put it here." Heike Schuler, a 73-year-old German tourist visiting London for the first time, believes that the Diana phenomenon, burnished by Netflix series "The Crown", will stand the test of time. —AFP

Crises threaten UK monarchy's image 25 years after Diana's death

The royal family's perceived botched response to Diana's death sparked a gradual and largely successful shift in its image management, but recent crises have renewed questions about that modernization effort. The death of the princess of Wales on August 31, 1997, prompted an outpouring of national grief that senior royals, including Queen Elizabeth II and her son Prince Charles, initially seemed out of step with.



In this file photo taken on November 5, 1989, Prince and Princess of Wales watch Indonesian tribal dancers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

remoulding. "Diana's death is this whirlwind moment, which requires the monarchy to reorientate its public image, to embrace a more modern, expressive kind of celebrity image as a way of appealing to audiences," royal historian Ed Owens told AFP. Noting "that story lives on through her sons", he sees particular peril in Harry's apparent estrangement, the queen's recent handling of scandal-tarred Andrew and heir Charles' looming reign. "I think there are troubled times ahead," Owens predicted.

'Rehabilitated'

In the immediate aftermath of Diana's death, the queen and Charles, whose divorce from Diana had been finalized the previous year, remained for days at Balmoral Castle, their remote Scottish residence, making no public statements. Fuelled by other missteps, a media-driven narrative took hold that the family were out of touch at a moment of national significance.

Royal commentators disagree on how fair this criticism was, noting the family's priorities were supporting William and Harry over the sudden loss of their mother as well as organizing an elaborate funeral service. Nonetheless, Buckingham Palace's press operation was gradually revamped, with more PR-savvy people brought in.

Robert Hardman, author of this year's "Queen of Our Times: The Life of Elizabeth II", argued it was a measured "evolution" as the 24-hour news cycle ramped up and then social media arrived. "Monarchy is not like a brand of

cereal, it doesn't relaunch," he cautioned. "It changes slowly, imperceptibly, but firmly for a reason (and) there was definitely a sense in those years that things needed to change. But you don't suddenly tear the whole thing up."

The shift offered a more "human" image of the queen, who had been reported as being more concerned about her dogs and horses than her subjects. Charles, mocked as haughty and stiff, underwent an expensive image makeover, according to royal insiders. William and Harry were key, emerging as Diana-esque "princes of feeling" supported by their father, said Owens. "His image is very carefully rehabilitated around this idea that he is a loving father to two sons both touched by this tragedy of their mother's death," he added.

'Great mistake'

Hardman said today, instead of a past palace strategy to "stick our heads down and see how this pans out", it generally responds swiftly-and assertively-to unfolding controversies. He pointed to its deftly-deployed line last year that "recollections may vary" following sensational claims from Meghan and Harry that she faced racism within the family. But for other royal observers, the couple's 2020 departure to America-dubbed "Megxit"—requires more than damage-limitation PR, with Harry leaving "a huge hole" in the institution, Owens said.

"Meghan also embodied some of the virtues that Diana had sought to project as well, in terms of emotion and being in touch... with the lives of people in the developing world," he noted. Meanwhile, the queen's response to the scandal that has engulfed Andrew-rumored to be her favorite son-has echoes of Diana-era errors, with Owens branding it the 96-year-old's "great mistake" of recent decades.

In February, Andrew settled a sexual abuse lawsuit in the US with an Epstein victim. A month later the queen drew widespread criticism after letting him accompany her to a very public thanksgiving service for late husband Prince Philip. "The Andrew debacle would suggest that the queen possibly hasn't learned from the late 1990s as well as she might have done," said Owens. "She should've been more responsive to public opinion in keeping Andrew out."

The royal historian sees plenty of similar "pitfalls" ahead in the imminent reign of Charles, who has faced several scandals over fundraising for his charities in addition to longstanding concerns over political interventions. In contrast to the queen, Charles lacks "subtlety" said Owens. "So you've got problems here." — AFP



In this file photo taken on September 6, 1997 Former husband of Diana, Prince Charles (right) and their two sons Harry (center) and William (left) wait in front of the Westminster Abbey in London after the funeral ceremony of Princess of Wales.



In this file photo taken on August 19, 1995 Prince Charles (right), Princess Diana (left) and their children William (second right) and Harry (second left) watch the march past on a dais on the mall as part of the commemorations of VJ Day.



In this file photo taken on April 19, 2016 Britain's Prince Harry (left) and Prince William, Duke of Cambridge try out light sabres during a tour of the Star Wars sets at Pinewood studios in Iver Heath, west of London.

Once-close royal brothers William and Harry now estranged

A quarter-century on from the death of their mother, Princess Diana, Princes William and Harry are struggling to maintain their once-close relationship. "Harry and Wills are barely on speaking terms after Megxit," The Sun tabloid reported this month, referring to Harry and wife Meghan Markle's decision to quit frontline royal roles in 2020 and move to the United States. As William has turned 40, the elder brother has embraced the royal establishment and taken on more duties, while the younger "spare" prince, aged 37, has rejected traditions for a life in California. "I suspect... that rift is very deep," royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams told the Daily Mail. Things used to be so different.

After Diana died from car crash injuries at 36, the boys touched the world walking behind her coffin. William was 15 while Harry was just 12. Both attended Eton boarding school and Harry pursued military training, while William went to university. They appeared to share a close bond as William married long-term girlfriend Kate Middleton in 2011 and started a family. "This idyllic sort of brotherly relationship that they projected... did much to put the monarchy back on track," royal historian and author Ed Owens told AFP.

But following Harry's 2018 marriage to Meghan, relations have become strained. He told a 2019 interview that he and his brother were "on different paths". A year later, Harry and Meghan sensationally announced their move to

the US. The couple's subsequent explosive Oprah Winfrey interview in March 2021 saw Meghan publicly claim Kate had made her cry. The most damaging claim, however, was that an unnamed royal had speculated about the skin color of mixed-race Meghan's future child. William reacted later by telling a journalist that the royals were "very much not" a racist family.

'No interaction'

Both brothers have an enduring dislike for Britain's tabloid press after their mother's death. Harry told Winfrey he left the UK to prevent "history repeating itself", likening Meghan's treatment by reporters and photographers to Diana's hounding. But their shared disdain for large parts of the media has done little to unite them during their current estrangement. They appeared to barely speak to each other as they jointly unveiled a statue of their mother outside Kensington Palace in July 2021. During Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022, they sat far apart at a church service. The Daily Telegraph wrote that "there has been no interaction whatsoever", citing William's grievances over the Oprah interview. Harry and Meghan are set to visit the UK again in September—just three months since their last visit—when they will stay on the queen's Windsor estate, close to William's new family home there. But British newspapers say there are no plans for the brothers to meet. Former royal correspondent Robert Hardman raised the possibility of reconciliation, however.

"Obviously they are estranged but they are brothers, this is a family," the author of this year's "Queen of Our Times: The Life of Queen Elizabeth II" told AFP. He praised Harry and Meghan's "dignified role" when they came back to Britain for the Jubilee and visited the queen. "To me, that looks like a move towards semi-regular trips back to the UK," he said. "And each time that happens, things just gradually become less fraught." —AFP



In this file photo taken on September 4, 1997, candles, flowers and other tributes line the steps of the British Embassy in Washington, DC, in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales.

There was eventually an acknowledgement missteps were made and that the family needed to turn the page on a damaging decade of divorces, family infighting and scandals that had dented their public standing. A quarter-century on, the monarchy now has a far more nimble PR operation, adept at social media and rapid-response while still able to stage grand events like June's Platinum Jubilee celebrations with aplomb.

However, recent controversies—notably Prince Andrew's links to billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle quitting frontline royal duties—have cast doubts on the monarchy's



In this file photo taken on September 6, 1997 the hearse carrying the coffin of Diana, Princess of Wales takes her on her final journey to the Althorpe family home in Northamptonshire where she will be buried on a small island on a lake in the grounds of the estate.

Sports

Coric upsets Tsitsipas to win Cincinnati Masters

Sweet Caroline: Garcia downs Kvitova to claim Cincinnati crown

CINCINNATI: Borna Coric, who only returned in March after missing a year with a shoulder injury, dominated fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas on Sunday to win the ATP Cincinnati Masters. The world number 152 from Croatia dispatched the Greek star 7-6 (7/0), 6-2 to become the lowest-ranked player to ever lift a Masters trophy. "I have no words, to be honest. It's just an unbelievable feeling," the winner said. "I'm just gonna enjoy this. "I thought I could play well. I was training hard, and I knew I could play good tennis, but to play this level of tennis - I was just not aware. "I'm just super happy, obviously."

Coric lost his only previous final at this level, going down to Novak Djokovic in Shanghai four years ago. On Sunday, Coric replaced 143rd-ranked Spaniard Roberto Carretero, the 1996 Hamburg champion, as the lowest-rated Masters trophy lifter. "It's been very stressful for my body this whole week," the Croat said. "I came into the tournament with many, many (training) sessions. "I played five matches now in a row. So I need to rest for a couple of days. I need to recover and just get ready for the US Open." Coric came back from an early deficit, trailing Tsitsipas 4-1 before turning the corner and sweeping the tiebreaker to love.

Momentum shifted further in the second set for the Croat, who was supported by a few fans wearing the national colors. "I realized that I needed to be more aggressive," Coric said. "He's an unbelievable player, and he's not gonna miss on my solid balls." "I said to myself, 'I have nothing to lose. If I continue like this, I'm going to lose anyway, for sure.'" He was also playing very, very well, putting the pressure on me." Coric fired seven aces and saved three of four break points in a two-hour victory.

Coric improved to 2-1 all-time against Tsitsipas, having retired from their first meeting in Rome in 2018 and won in the third round of the 2020 US Open in a fifth-set tiebreaker. "You've kicked my ass the last couple of times," Tsitsipas said to Coric in the trophy ceremony. Then he praised Coric's title run at Cincinnati,

which included victories over Rafael Nadal, Britain's Cameron Norrie and Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime. "You've proved yourself over and over again," Tsitsipas said.

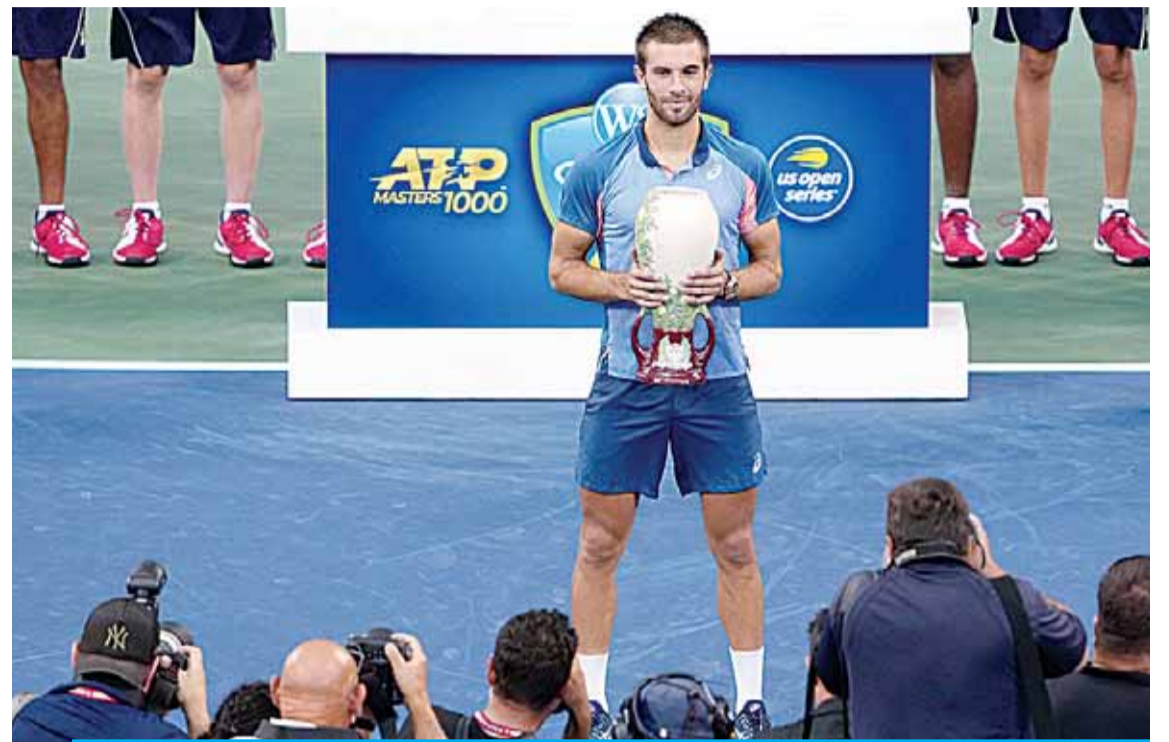
"It was an incredible comeback from injury. You are proving that you are up there with us." Tsitsipas said he is still seeking a first title on outdoor hardcourt losing six finals played on cement. "It kind of sucks," the Greek said. "I still hope to come back here and win it one day. "I was definitely not choking-I just played robots every time in finals." Ominous clouds unleashed rain over the area shortly after the trophy ceremony was completed. There were storm delays much of the week at the Midwest event, the last major tuneup for the US Open, which begins on August 29.

Sweet Caroline

Meanwhile, qualifier Caroline Garcia completed a dream week on Sunday at the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters with a 6-2, 6-4 title defeat of Petra Kvitova. The French winner claimed her third Masters-level title - her 10th overall - after winning Wuhan and Beijing in a Chinese double five years ago. Garcia followed the extraordinary template of Emma Raducanu, who won the US Open 11 months ago as a qualifier. Number 35 Garcia, who fell on her back after clinching victory, maintained her lead on the Tour with a 27th match victory since June.

"Pure joy, just happiness," she said. "Every single win is very important. It's always very hard to describe. "It doesn't happen so often and you have to really enjoy it. I'm grateful for this great week of tennis, and to win another title, it's very special." She said expectations were low when she arrived for the qualification rounds. "I was not that confident when I arrived, qualifiers were tough matches. I was really happy to be through and play in the main draw," she said.

"Every match was a new challenge. I had to be focused on myself, on my game, what can I do, how I can be more aggressive, how can I improve. "Just one day at a time I ended up here today on



OHIO: Borna Coric of Croatia celebrates after defeating Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece in their Men's Singles Final match on day nine of the Western & Southern Open on August 21, 2022. —AFP

the final and now lifting the trophy." Kvitova, a double Wimbledon champion, was playing the 40th final of her career and looking for a 30th title. Garcia set up match point against an opponent who needed off-court medical treatment by sending over her 11th ace of the afternoon. The end came on the next point as Kvitova returned long.

"It was definitely not the result I wanted, but if someone had told me I would be in the final I would be very happy," said Kvitova. "I have to see the positive things: I could have been out in my first match. I have to be proud of the 40th final of my career. "I didn't win the bigger trophy, but she really played very, very well. "Caroline just, when

she was down, she just served aces. She deserved to win." She added: "The big question right now is with my health (fitness), how everything will be in a couple of days, but still having a (practice) week before US Open will help me, I hope."

Garcia repeated a victory over Kvitova from here seven years ago: she upset three top-10 players her season ace total to 286 with the victory in 96 minutes. She is the fourth French player since 1980 with 10 or more WTA-level titles after Amelie Mauresmo (25), Mary Pierce (18) and Julie Halard (12). Garcia saved all eight break points she faced while breaking Kvitova three times. —AFP

News in brief

Ruthless Urawa smash Pathum

SAITAMA: Two-time continental kings Urawa Reds thrashed Thailand's BG Pathum United 4-0 on Monday to set up an Asian Champions League semi-final against Jeonbuk Motors. Pathum were playing in the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time, but in front of Urawa's vociferous fans in Saitama they were never really in it. Swedish forward David Moberg Karlsson rifled in after 32 minutes to put Japanese outfit Urawa on their way and 10 minutes later it was 2-0 thanks to Takuya Iwanami. It was more of the same in the second half as Pathum fell apart. Yoshio Koizumi fired into the bottom corner and Takahiro Akimoto hit a fourth with a powerful effort into the top corner. Like Jeonbuk, Urawa are chasing a hat-trick of Asian titles, having won Asia's top club competition in 2007 and 2017. The two clash on Thursday in another one-legged affair in Saitama.

Pakistan edge Dutch in ODI

ROTTERDAM: Captain Babar Azam and fast bowler Naseem Shah starred as Pakistan edged the Netherlands by just nine runs in the third and final one-day international in Rotterdam on Sunday. The Netherlands were all out for 197 in the last over in which they had needed 14 runs for a first-ever victory over Pakistan. Tight bowling had restricted Pakistan to 206 all out with captain Azam top scoring with 91. In reply, Tom Cooper (62) and Vikramjit Singh (50) top scored for the Dutch but teenage fast bowler Shah, with 5-33, proved key as Pakistan swept the series 3-0. Azam praised his players after the match, saying "we are happy as a team, all credit to the boys." He in particular praised 19-year-old Naseem, saying he "bowled very well with the new ball and in the death overs." Naseem's performance was particularly significant, coming just a day after Pakistan's pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi was ruled out of next week's Asia Cup through injury.

'I let myself down': Joshua

JEDDAH: Anthony Joshua has admitted "I let myself down" after the British heavyweight's antics following his crushing defeat to Oleksandr Usyk in their world-title showdown in Saudi Arabia were heavily criticized. Joshua hurled two of Usyk's belts to the floor and stormed out of the ring in a fit of pique in Jeddah, then returned moments later to deliver a rambling speech peppered with expletives. The 32-year-old's career appears at a crossroads after Sunday's second successive defeat to the unbeaten Ukrainian and he came under fire for his emotional post-fight reaction. Writing on Twitter, Joshua hailed Usyk as "a class act", adding: "Yesterday I had to mentally take myself into a dark place to compete for the championship belts! "I had two fights, one with Usyk and one with my emotions, and both got the better of me."

Cantlay defends BMW title in first repeat playoff win

WASHINGTON: Defending FedEx Cup playoff champion Patrick Cantlay won his second consecutive BMW Championship on Sunday, becoming the first player to successfully defend a PGA Tour playoff title. World number four Cantlay recovered from a two-stroke deficit on the back nine to defeat US compatriot Scott Stallings thanks to a key break and clutch putting. Cantlay fired a two-under par 69 to finish 72 holes at Wilmington Country Club in Delaware on 14-under 270 and edge Stallings by a stroke. "I played a lot of great golf this week and I'm happy to come out of here with a win," Cantlay said.

Stallings shared the lead with Cantlay when he dropped his approach nine feet from the cup at 18, but Stallings missed the pressure-packed birdie putt and settled for a closing par. Cantlay, meanwhile, had his tee shot at 17 bounce out of the rough and onto the fairway. He pitched the ball to six feet and sank the clutch birdie putt to seize the lead.

At 18, Cantlay blasted out of a bunker to 46 feet, then lipped out his birdie putt and tapped in

Lueckenkemper strikes again to help Germany top Euro medals table

MUNICH: Newly-crowned European 100m champion Gina Lueckenkemper won a second gold as she spearheaded Germany to a decisive victory in the women's 4x100m relay in Munich on Sunday. The end of seven breathtaking days of top-quality track and field could not have been better scripted as the German quartet motored to victory in 42.34 seconds in the final event.

Status Quo's 'Rockin' all over the world' blasted over the tannoy as a packed-out Olympic Stadium went wild as Lueckenkemper celebrated with teammates Alexandra Burghardt, already a silver medalist in the two-woman bobsleigh at this year's Winter Olympics, Lisa Mayer and Rebekka Haase. The fancied British quartet, featuring 200m silver medallist Dina Asher-Smith on anchor, didn't get the baton past the first leg thanks to a botched handover.

The Germans did, and swiftly, their gold ensuring the host country topped the overall athletics medals table with seven golds, seven silvers and two bronzes. Britain finished second with six golds, six silvers and eight bronzes. "If someone would have told me before the championships that I would come home with two gold medals, I would have said they're crazy," said Lueckenkemper. Anchor leg Haase added: "Gina

Antonsen crashes out at badminton worlds

TOKYO: Third-seeded Anders Antonsen crashed out in the first round of badminton's world championships in Tokyo on Monday but top-ranked fellow Dane Viktor Axelsen was a ruthless winner. The 2019 world silver-medalist Antonsen fell behind early and never managed to get a foothold in a 21-15, 21-19 loss to

for par and the historic triumph. "I hit a lot of solid shots and then I got a couple of good breaks," said Cantlay. "On 17, that break is something I'm not expecting and it was really big for me to take advantage of it." Cantlay could also become the first to repeat as FedEx Cup champion next week in the season-ending Tour Championship in Atlanta.

World number one Scottie Scheffler, who shared third with Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele on 273, topped the season points chase will start next week at East Lake at 10-under par with a two-stroke lead over Cantlay. The reigning Masters champion will also have a staggered margin over the rest of a 30-player field chasing the FedEx Cup playoff title Cantlay hopes to defend. "I made a lot of clutch 5- and 4-footers today-putter felt really good," Cantlay said. "I was pretty solid and I'll carry that into next week."

Cantlay, 30, won his eighth career PGA title and second of the year after sharing the Zurich Classic pairs title with pal Schauffele. South Korean Lee Kyoung-hoon shot 65 to share fifth on 274 with Canada's Corey Conners and Australia's Adam Scott. Scott, the 2013 Masters champion, blasted out of a bunker at 18 and parred the last to shoot 71 and reach the Tour Championship, denying Ireland's Shane Lowry a spot.

Lee was 31st in points last year to miss Atlanta, what he called "a really cruel spot." "Lot of pressure this week," Lee said. "I wanted to make the

always told us that she has a gold medal and that she wanted one more medal tonight. One more, so we made it."

'Do the maths!'

The men's 4x100m relay was missing Italy's Olympic and European 100m champion Marcell Jacobs. The Italian quartet, whom Jacobs led to Olympic gold in last year's Tokyo Games, was deprived of a place after Turkey were reinstated after being impeded in the heats. It was left to a strong British foursome to claim gold in a championship record of 37.67sec, smashing the previous best of 37.94 set by France in Split in 1990.

Jeremiah Azu, bronze medalist in the 100m, led off, handing over to Zharnel Hughes, the 200m champion and 100m silver medalist. Jona Efoloko ran the second bend before handing over to Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake, the 200m silver medalist putting home for a comprehensive victory. "Zharnel has got three medals, Jona has now got one, Jeremiah has got two, and I've got two - just do the maths!" beamed Mitchell-Blake.

Garcia trumps Wightman

In another night of top-notch performances, reigning world indoor champion Mariano Garcia of Spain held off Britain's Jake Wightman to win the men's 800m. Garcia clocked a personal best of 1min 44.85sec for gold, world 1500m champion Wightman taking silver in 1:44.91. "I was feeling strong and I knew I could fight for a place on that podium so I decided to go for it," said Garcia. Wightman had stepped down to the

Japan's Kenta Nishimoto. The 25-year-old Antonsen was playing his first competitive match in three months after pulling an abdominal muscle in May and said it "felt a bit strange just to suddenly be on court again".

"I felt like I played better and better and it was a shame that I didn't make the comeback in the second game, I was so close," said Antonsen, who had fended off four match points. "It's my first match in a long time so I just need to get back to competition. Today was the beginning." Axelsen lived up to his billing as the world's number one with a straightforward 21-16, 21-12



WILMINGTON: Patrick Cantlay of the United States plays his shot from the 18th tee during the final round of the BMW Championship at Wilmington Country Club on August 21, 2022. —AFP

top 30 but my goal was to never think about my position and play my best." Moving into top-30 spots to qualify for Atlanta this week were Scott, Lee, Stallings and American Aaron Wise while those knocked out were Americans JJ Spaun, Kevin Kisner and Davis Riley and South Korea Kim Joo-hyung. —AFP



MUNICH: Germany's Gina Lueckenkemper reacts after the women's 4x100m Relay final during the European Athletics Championships on August 21, 2022. —AFP

800m after surprising Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen who did a 1,500-5,000m double in Munich-for 1,500m gold in last month's world championships in Oregon.

"I was not quite close enough in the last straight and it is tough when you are not that close with strong opponents," said the Briton. "I did not manage to stay strong enough to pass Garcia. This is a tough race with lots of tactics." There was a second title for war-torn Ukraine as world indoor champion Yaroslava Mahuchikh triumphed in the women's high jump. Mahuchikh, who fled her native country on a three-day odyssey by car to get to the world indoors in Belgrade in March, managed a best of 1.95 metres. —AFP

win over Malaysia's Daren Liew.

Axelsen was pleased to safely negotiate his way past the world number 29. "Every first round is always tricky. Daren is an experienced opponent, he's a really good player when he plays well," said Axelsen. "I really had to step up in big parts of the game today and I'm really happy about how I managed to deal with everything." China's Shi Yuqi returned to action for the first time in 10 months after serving a ban and beat Azerbaijan's Ade Resky Dwicahyo 22-20, 21-10. —AFP

Sports

Bennacer saves point for Milan as Kvaratskhelia shines in Napoli win

Empoli hold Fiorentina to a goalless draw

MILAN: AC Milan came away from a tough Serie A encounter at Atalanta with a hard-earned 1-1 draw on Sunday, while Napoli's new boy Khvicha Kvaratskhelia starred in a 4-0 thumping of promoted Monza. Ismael Bennacer made sure that champions Milan came away from the Gewiss Stadium with a deserved point with a well-placed curling effort midway through the second half. "I think we could have done more. We tried to win this match," said Bennacer to DAZN. "They were well drilled and it was hard for us to find spaces. But when you can't win it's important that you don't lose. And we didn't lose."

Stefano Pioli's side had been trailing to Ruslan Malinovskyi's deflected opener in a typically feisty encounter between local Lombardy rivals which left both on four points from their first two games of the season. Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini had criticized Malinovskyi in the lead up to the match, saying the club should look for a player "who scores more than six goals a season".

The Ukraine midfielder responded in trademark fashion in the 29th minute. Known for his powerful shot, Malinovskyi lined up one of his rockets and unleashed an effort which deflected off Pierre Kalulu's knee and left Mike Maignan with no chance. Milan should have been level before Bennacer struck, with Kalulu somehow sending a free header over the bar from six yards and Rafael Leao's powerful drive just swerving wide early in the second half.

Sandro Tonali then missed a golden opportunity to score on the hour after being put through by Charles De Ketelaere and failing to beat Juan Musso. However eight minutes later Bennacer equalized for Milan, capitalizing on a dozing home defence who didn't react quickly enough to the ball bouncing back in off

the corner flag to cut inside and whip home an angled drive. That was it for action in Bergamo as neither side managed to fashion another genuine chance from the final 20 minutes.

Kvaratskhelia conquers Naples

Kvaratskhelia struck in each half of a stroll at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona as Napoli made it two wins from as many games, with Victor Osimhen netting the hosts' second on the stroke of half-time and Kim Min-jae heading home his first goal for the club late on. It was another exciting display from Kvaratskhelia who has been an instant hit in Naples, the Georgia winger already scoring three times and setting up another since arriving from Rubin Kazan last month. "He has quality and plenty of options because he can shoot with both feet and go past players," said coach Luciano Spalletti to DAZN.

His two strikes on Sunday were both touches of class, opening the scoring in the 35th minute with an unstoppable curling shot which thumped in off the post before adding Napoli's third just after the hour mark by gliding past Valentin Antov and placing a perfect low shot into the bottom corner. Spalletti's side have racked up nine goals to go with their maximum points tally, not the start fans were expecting before the season began.

Supporters had been angry about the way Napoli's league title challenge collapsed at the tail end of the last campaign and frustration only grew as popular players were sold or allowed to leave as free agents. However Kvaratskhelia's sparkling displays and the quick-fire signings of Giovanni Simeone, Tanguy Ndombele and Giacomo Raspadori over the last three days have completely changed the mood in a football mad city.



BERGAMO: AC Milan's French forward Olivier Giroud (top) goes for a header during the Italian Serie A football match between Atalanta and AC Milan on August 21, 2022. —AFP

It was a nightmare evening for Monza however, who have zero points and lost starting centre-back Andrea Ranocchia to an ankle injury which coach Giovanni Stroppa said was "very serious". Empoli and Fiorentina held each other to a goalless draw which

finished after 10 minutes of added time due to referee Matteo Marchetti having to swap with fourth official Juan Luca Sacchi after injuring his calf. Bologna drew 1-1 with Verona with goals from Marko Arnautovic and Thomas Henry respectively. —AFP

African players in Europe: Vieira hails 'fantastic' Zaha

PARIS: Crystal Palace star Wilfried Zaha raised his Premier League goal tally to three this season with a brace in a 3-1 victory over Aston Villa at the weekend. The Ivory Coast international was hailed by manager Patrick Vieira, a 1998 World Cup winner with France, after adding to his goal at Liverpool five days earlier. "He got his fire inside him that I don't want him to lose because that makes him the great player that he is. He had a fantastic game," said Vieira. Here, AFP Sport highlights African headline-makers in the major European leagues at the weekend:

Wilfried Zaha (Crystal Palace)

Zaha cancelled out Ollie Watkins' early strike for Villa before putting Palace ahead by finishing the rebound after his second-half penalty was saved. He was also involved in the build-up to Jean-Philippe Mateta's goal.

Edouard Mendy, Kalidou Koulibaly (Chelsea)

The Senegal duo endured a disastrous time as

Chelsea were shocked 3-0 at Leeds. Goalkeeper Mendy took too long to clear a Thiago Silva back-pass and was caught in possession trying to turn away from Brenden Aaronson, who tapped into the empty net. Koulibaly was red-carded on 84 minutes for a needless second booking.

Pathe Ciss (Rayo Vallecano)

Senegalese midfielder Ciss scored his side's second goal in a 2-0 victory at Espanyol. The 28-year-old, who is yet to make an international appearance, played the majority of his career in the Portuguese and Spanish second tiers before joining Rayo last season.

Victor Osimhen (Napoli)

Nigerian Osimhen netted his second goal in as many games as Napoli thumped promoted Monza 4-0 to maintain a fast start to the campaign. With the match creeping into first-half stoppage time and the hosts a goal ahead, Osimhen latched on to a pass from Cameroon international Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa and surged towards goal before drilling home.

Ismael Bennacer (AC Milan)

Bennacer opened his account for the season with the leveller in a hard-fought 1-1 draw for champions Milan at Atalanta. The Algeria international took

advantage of a napping Atalanta defence to cut inside into the area and crash home a curling shot.

Sadio Mane (Bayern Munich)

Senegalese Mane scored two goals and had another one chalked off for handball in a 7-0 demolition of Bochum. Mane now has four goals in four games for Bayern and finished the round joint top of the Bundesliga scoring charts.

Achraf Hakimi (Paris Saint-Germain)

Paris Saint-Germain continued their rampant start to the season with a 7-1 victory at Lille. Moroccan defender Hakimi surged into the box on 39 minutes, shrugged off Ismaily's challenge to reach a Neymar pass and slid the ball past goalkeeper Leo Jardim to net PSG's goal.

Saif-Eddine Khaoui (Clermont)

Tunisian Khaoui scored the only goal as Clermont continued their strong start with a 1-0 win over struggling Nice to climb to fifth in Ligue 1. In the fifth minute, Neto Borges crossed and Nice defender Jordan Lotomba jumped to head the ball but missed and distracted centre-back Dante, who swung a wild boot at the ball, deflecting it to Khaoui, just in front of the penalty spot. The Tunisian coolly rolled a shot inside the far post. —AFP

Latham leads NZ to maiden ODI series win in West Indies

BRIDGETOWN: Stand-in captain Tom Latham top-scored with 69 to lead New Zealand to a series-clinching five-wicket victory over the West Indies in the third and final one-day international series in Barbados on Sunday. Kyle Mayers' second one-day century and a blistering 91 by captain Nicholas Pooran took the hosts to 301 for eight in their 50 overs.

But the Black Caps made light of an imposing target as four of the first five in their batting order scored half-centuries to reach 307 for five off 47.1 overs and underline their status as the top-ranked nation in the 50-over format. New Zealand's come-from-behind 2-1 win over the three matches was their first ODI series success in the Caribbean. It followed their 2-1 Twenty20 series triumph the previous week in Jamaica.

In the absence of injured regular captain Kane Williamson, Latham led the New Zealand effort and enjoyed a 120-run fourth-wicket partnership with Daryl Mitchell, who made 63, which tilted the contest in favor of the touring side. "It's nice to come here, where other teams have struggled in the past, and get the series win," said player-of-the-match Latham. "It was a better wicket today and we knew the target. I am just happy to be able to make a contribution." Opener Martin Guptill with 57 and Devon Conway, who plundered 56, also played key roles in the chase.

The West Indies cause was not helped by heavy dew on the outfield after dusk which required the ball to be changed four times during New Zealand's innings and made it difficult for the home bowlers. For the West Indies, Mayers' 105 off 110 balls with 12 fours and three sixes dominated an opening stand of 173 with Shai Hope, who made 51. But it was Pooran's explosive 55-ball contribution, with nine sixes and four fours, that enabled the hosts to get beyond the 300-run mark.

"We missed our chance to take the series in that second game and paid the price here," said a downbeat Pooran. "We have a special bunch of guys here and I believe we will get better." New Zealand spinner Mitchell Santner, who



BRIDGETOWN: New Zealand team with the trophy after winning the 3rd and final ODI match between West Indies and New Zealand at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados, on August 21, 2022. —AFP

was named player of the series, claimed two for 38 in a containing 10-over spell while left-arm swing bowler Trent Boult was the leading wicket-taker with three for 53. Jason Holder was the pick of the West Indies bowlers with two for 37 in seven overs. —AFP

In-form strikers take Celtic 2 points clear of Rangers

GLASGOW: Kyogo Furuhashi and Giorgos Giakoumakis were again on target as Celtic moved two points clear at the top of the Scottish Premiership with a 2-0 win over Hearts on Sunday. The Hoops were far from their best, but did enough to extend their perfect start to the season after four games thanks to their prolific strikers. Once again Giakoumakis had to make do with a place on the bench, but scored for the second consecutive game as a substitute, while Furuhashi netted for the third straight game.

"Some of our service wasn't great today in the final third but we know if we get the ball into those areas that both of them are very good finishers," said Celtic boss Ange Postecoglou. "They have got a real presence in the box in different ways, different styles." Hearts' focus appeared to be on overturning a 2-1 deficit in Thursday's Europa League qualifier against Swiss champions FC Zurich as manager Robbie Neilson left a number of key players on the bench.

But they stayed in the game until late red cards for Alex Cochrane and Tony Sibbick. "It was okay, but it wasn't probably as free-flowing as I'd like a game of football to be," added Postecoglou. "It felt like it was stop-start a lot and not a lot of consistent tempo in the game. Some of it was our doing but just one of those games where it just didn't feel like we could open up and play our football." Celtic looked set for a comfortable afternoon when Furuhashi turned in Daizen Maeda's cross on 13 minutes.

However, the champions found more goalscoring chances hard to come by and Josh Ginnelly should have levelled for the visitors when he dragged wide with just Joe Hart to beat. Hearts' resistance was broken when Cochrane and Sibbick saw second bookings in the final few minutes for bringing down Liel Abada. Celtic made their numerical advantage count with the last kick off the game as Giakoumakis stretched to turn home Josip Juranovic's low cross. Victory takes Celtic back above Rangers, who dropped their first points of the season in an eventful 2-2 draw at Hibs on Saturday. —AFP

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SAN SEBASTIAN: Barcelona's Ivorian midfielder Franck Kessie (left) vies with Real Sociedad's French defender Robin Le Normand (center) during the Spanish League football match between Real Sociedad and FC Barcelona on August 21, 2022. —AFP

Lewandowski's first Barca goals see off Real Sociedad

Villarreal moved to the top, beat Atletico Madrid

MADRID: Robert Lewandowski got off the mark for Barcelona with a double as Ansu Fati starred as a substitute in a 4-1 victory over Real Sociedad on Sunday, while Villarreal won at Atletico Madrid. Poland striker Lewandowski, celebrating his 34th birthday, put Barca ahead inside 50 seconds before Alexander Isak leveled for La Real in San Sebastian. But Fati came off the bench to create goals for Ousmane Dembele and Lewandowski, before completing the scoring himself.

Barca's first win of the season followed a disappointing goalless draw at home to Rayo Vallecano on the opening weekend. Coach Xavi had called for "patience" from supporters after a summer spending spree which saw Lewandowski, Raphinha, Andreas Christensen and Franck Kessie all move to the Camp Nou. That quartet all made their debuts against Rayo, but France defender Jules Kounde is still to be registered by the club after his transfer from Sevilla as they look to overcome financial problems.

The visitors made a dream start on Sunday, though, as 18-year-old full-back Alejandro Balde raced clear and sent in a low cross which was tapped home by Lewandowski. He scored 344 goals during a trophy-

laden eight-year spell at Bayern Munich before leaving for 45 million euros in July. But the home side hit back in the sixth minute, as Frenkie de Jong lost the ball in midfield and Isak raced clear before lofting the ball into the net.

Sociedad were proving a tough nut to crack for Barca, but the game changed when Fati was sent on in the 64th minute. The 19-year-old's brilliant backheel teed up Dembele to drill a left-footed strike into the bottom corner just two minutes later, before another clever touch found Lewandowski to score. Fati, who endured two injury-plagued seasons after breaking into the first team in 2019/20, got a goal himself late on as he collected Lewandowski's volleyed flick and slotted in.

Villarreal down Atletico

Earlier, Villarreal moved to the top of the fledgling table as second-half goals from Yeremy Pino and Gerard Moreno secured a 2-0 victory at Atletico. Unai Emery's men opened their season with an impressive 3-0 win at Real Valladolid last weekend but the scalp of Atletico will raise hopes of a possible

challenge for Champions League qualification. The result was a reality check for the capital side, though, who had also started the campaign with a 3-0 success at Getafe.

Villarreal, who reached last season's Champions League semi-finals, are one of four teams with two wins from two matches and edged above reigning champions Real Madrid on goal difference. The away side made a fast start at the Estadio Metropolitano, with Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak forced into fine saves from Giovanni Lo Celso and Etienne Capoue. Moreno thought he had given Villarreal a half-time lead, but his effort was ruled out for a handball.

Matheus Cunha was introduced midway through the second period by home coach Diego Simeone in place of Alvaro Morata and almost broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute, only to be denied by keeper Geronimo Rulli. Teenage winger Pino instead put Villarreal in front just a minute later, capitalizing on a poor clearance to fire a fine low shot into the bottom corner. Atletico's Nahuel Molina was sent off deep into injury-time and Moreno netted in the 97th minute to send Villarreal top. —AFP

Spanish La Liga Table

Spanish La Liga standings after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Villarreal	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Real Betis	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Osasuna	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Barcelona	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Rayo Vallecano	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Athletic Bilbao	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Atletico Madrid	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Valencia	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Real Sociedad	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Sevilla	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Real Mallorca	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Espanyol	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Celta Vigo	2	0	1	1	3	6	1
Valladolid	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Almeria	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Girona	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Cadiz	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Elche	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Getafe	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Mbappe scores in record time: Ligue 1 hits red cards high

PARIS: Hat-trick star Kylian Mbappe matched one Ligue 1 record by scoring after just eight seconds in Lille to set Paris Saint-Germain on their way to a 7-1 victory on Sunday, while the division hit a modern high with 11 red cards in one weekend. Mbappe equalled a 30-year-old record when he burst into space, collected a pass from Lionel Messi and surprised Lille goalkeeper Leo Jardim with a lob to score his second league goal of the season.

The goal matched Michel Rio's strike for Caen against Cannes on February 15, 1992, although statisticians MisterChip calculated that Rio was slightly faster, scoring after 7.9sec to Mbappe's 8.3. Mbappe then hit a post when facing an open goal, but Messi, Achraf Hakimi and Neymar all scored before half-time as PSG tore apart the only other club to win the French title in the last five seasons. Stories of tensions between two of PSG's superstars, Mbappe and Neymar, had swirled around the club this week but the Brazilian scored twice and Mbappe three times. "It's a real satisfaction to see them happy on the field, playing for each other," PSG coach Christophe Galtier said. "Obviously there is talent, and when this talent comes together, it makes for a very enjoyable match." Neymar added a fifth early in the second half.

After Jonathan Bamba replied for Lille, Mbappe struck twice, set up both times by Neymar. The match ended a weekend when French football saw red, as referees applied a new "firmness order". After Vanderson of Monaco and Samuel Gigot of Marseille were sent off on Saturday, there



NORD: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe scores his team's first goal during the French L1 football match between Lille OSC and Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) on August 21, 2022. —AFP

were nine more reds on Sunday, setting a single-round high in Ligue 1 for the last 30 years, according to statistics company Opta. There were also seven reds in Ligue 2, three of them for Saint-Etienne as they lost 6-0 at home to Le Havre.

The last two reds on Sunday came in Rennes, where, despite a warning from their coach, Ajaccio finished with 10 men as Lesley Ugochukwu, who had only come on for Ajaccio five minutes earlier, was shown red in added time. "Seeing the matches earlier in the day, I had the feeling that the referees had received firm instructions. I warned my players," said Ajaccio coach Olivier Pantaloni.

French Ligue 1 Table

French Ligue 1 table ahead of Sunday's late match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Lens	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Marseille	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Paris SG	2	2	0	0	10	2	6
Lyon	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Clermont	3	2	0	1	5	7	6
Toulouse	3	1	2	0	6	3	5
Lille	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Brest	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
Lorient	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Rennes	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Auxerre	3	1	1	1	5	7	4
Monaco	3	1	1	1	4	6	4
Montpellier	3	1	0	2	6	9	3
Strasbourg	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Nantes	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Nice	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Angers	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Ajaccio	3	0	1	2	2	4	1
Reims	3	0	1	2	4	9	1
Troyes	3	0	0	3	3	10	0

Hosts Rennes, who won 2-1, lost back-up goalkeeper Romain Salin to two yellow cards in quick succession for arguing from the touchline. "The spectacle was perhaps more the red cards than the play this afternoon," complained Rennes coach Bruno Genesio. "It's a bit weird. It is regrettable. Because it distorts the matches." In Clermont, Saif-Eddine Khaoui scored the only goal against struggling Nice in the fifth minute. The visitors, who have not won this season, lost Mario Lemina in the 80th minute and Jean-Clair Todibo two minutes later. —AFP

Saudi eyes Olympics

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia sees hosting an Olympics as its "ultimate goal" in a growing sports portfolio, its sports minister told AFP, while rejecting criticism of the kingdom over its rights record. Investing in sport is part of a multi-pronged strategy approved six years ago to diversify the oil-reliant economy, under de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 36.

Sports Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal spoke to AFP in the Red Sea city of Jeddah ahead of the heavyweight boxing clash in which Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk beat Anthony Joshua of Britain in the early hours of Sunday. In 2034, the capital Riyadh will host the Asian Games, a large-scale multi-sports event that Prince Abdulaziz said could foreshadow a bid for the Summer Olympics.

"Our main focus now is the 2034 (Asian Games)," which will take place two years after Brisbane, Australia hosts the 2032 Summer Games, he said. "We're open to discuss with the IOC about this (Olympics) for the future. I think Saudi Arabia has showcased that we can host such events". He added: "Definitely, the Olympics would be an ultimate goal for us... But we're open to that and I think we can."

Prince Abdulaziz argued criticism is off the mark and pointed to signs of change in the country. "We're progressing, we're moving towards a better society, we're moving towards a better quality of life, a better country, for the future," he said. "And the facts show that hosting these events benefit our people and benefit these changes that are happening and benefits living in Saudi."

A 2019 fight featuring Joshua, who reclaimed his world heavyweight crown from Andy Ruiz, marked the first time a world heavyweight title fight had been staged in Saudi Arabia. Last year the kingdom joined the F1 circuit, and the state Public Investment Fund is bankrolling LIV Golf, which has lured a swathe of top players with hefty signing bonuses and \$25-million purses, creating a schism in the sport. —AFP