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Expatriate issues to take centerstage after election

Calls to tax remittances, raise residency fees, curb visit visas, cut expat numbers

Kuwait Amir receives letter from Qatari Amir

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a letter from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani directed to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The letter touched on bilateral ties between the two countries and latest global and regional developments. Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani handed the letter to HH the Crown Prince. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Political powers have agreed to prioritize a roadmap to work with the government after the upcoming National Assembly elections on issues that are currently being discussed in the political arena in Kuwait. Informed sources told Kuwait Times issues regarding expatriates in Kuwait will take precedence, especially those that have been assigned to the parliament but have not yet been addressed, including imposing fees on remittances by residents, reviewing health fees of expatriates and directing them for treatment to the private sector by next year, as well as implementing a plan on demographics in the form of a new residency law.

These issues should be discussed in the initial parliamentary sessions of the next National Assembly, so the government can have time to review them and issue regulations to be implemented before the middle of next year, the sources said. They pointed out that all political forces are convinced on imposing fees on remittances, and believe that the government's justifications for refusal previously are not justified, especially since other Gulf

countries applied this law without any negative repercussions. Moreover, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry is no longer strongly opposed to this law and expressed willingness to participate in discussions.

The sources indicated that the political forces agreed that the demographic structure will be at the top of the upcoming Assembly's priorities, through demands to reduce the number of expatriates in Kuwait with specific dates and practical procedures and replace them with Kuwaitis, and not according to what private companies desire.

A company that does not appoint Kuwaitis should pay fines for every expatriate it appoints, as well as preventing it from participating in government tenders, a procedure that is applied in neighboring Gulf countries that brought results. The sources stressed the political forces believe that the expatriate labor force in Kuwait has reached three million, which is a very large number that is much greater than the needs of the Kuwaiti market, which constitutes a burden on public services and

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News in brief

Expat hangs self in Fahaheel

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force reported an expatriate hanged himself from the window of a building in Fahaheel on Tuesday afternoon. Firefighters recovered the body, which was hanging from the fourth floor, and handed it over to forensics personnel.

Fire at 360 Mall controlled

KUWAIT: Fire brigades controlled a fire that broke out in part of the cladding of the new expansion of 360 Mall on Tuesday afternoon, Kuwait Fire Force said. It added that inspections were underway to find out the causes of the fire.

Qatar announces solar projects

DOHA: Gas-rich Qatar on Tuesday announced two major solar projects that will more than double its energy output from the renewable source within two years. The new plants at Mesaieed and Ras Laffan will take Qatar's solar output to 1.67 gigawatts by the end of 2024, Qatar Energy said in a statement. — AFP

BJP lawmaker arrested

NEW DELHI: Indian police arrested a ruling Bharatiya Janata Party lawmaker on Tuesday for making derogatory comments against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Raja Singh's words sparked outrage in Hyderabad, where hundreds of people gathered on Monday night to demand the state politician be taken into custody. — AFP

Euro hits new 20-year low

LONDON: The euro dived to a new two-decade low against the dollar and European stock markets fell Tuesday as weak economic data raised fears of recession amid an energy crunch. The single currency tumbled to \$0.9901, but later clawed back losses to return above parity with the dollar in afternoon trading as the greenback was hit by poor US economic data. — AFP (See Page 10)

New guidelines for taxis issued

KUWAIT: The General Directorate of Traffic has issued instructions to roaming and call taxi companies and offices to affix a taxi permit in Arabic and English in a clear place behind the driver's seat (on both sides) with the company's information and the driver's phone number. Taxis should operate the meter and light the taxi sign in the absence of passengers.

Call taxi drivers cannot pick up passengers from the street, while both roaming and call taxis cannot pick up passengers from Kuwait International Airport. Taxis also cannot pick up passengers from highways or main roads. Taxis can only transport passengers and it is not permissible to transport goods or food.

The General Directorate of Traffic stressed the need for taxi drivers to comply with these instructions, warning any taxi driver who violates the instructions and the traffic law will be held accountable.

8 more silos collapse at Beirut port

BEIRUT: Eight more grain silos at Beirut port toppled Tuesday, succumbing to damage from a devastating 2020 explosion in the third such collapse in a month, AFP correspondents reported. A cloud of dust rose over the port after the collapse, which brought down the last of the northern block of silos that was more heavily damaged in the blast and where a fire had been burning since last month.

The remaining southern block is more stable and not at imminent risk

of collapse, said French civil engineer Emmanuel Durand, who has installed sensors on the silos. Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Tuesday sent a letter to Public Works Minister Ali Hamieh, requesting the preservation of the southern block as a memorial site. The silos had absorbed much of the impact of the massive explosion of haphazardly stored ammonium nitrate fertilizer that killed more than 200 people on Aug 4, 2020.

Only 12 of the original 48 silos are still standing, all of them in the southern block, Durand said. A fire has been burning in the silos for more than a month, as remaining grain stocks ferment in the summer heat. The complex has come to symbolize the tragic blast, but also state

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Najib sent to jail for 12 yrs in 1MDB scandal

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's highest court Tuesday upheld former prime minister Najib Razak's 12-year jail sentence for corruption in the 1MDB financial scandal, a decision analysts said could slam the door to a political comeback. Najib's daughter-in-law Nur Sharmila Shaheen said the family was told he was sent to Kajang Prison, located south of the capital

Kuala Lumpur. "My father-in-law asked us to take care of the family. He remained strong and calm," she said.

Federal Court chief justice Maimun Tuan Mat, speaking on behalf of a five-judge panel, said the tribunal found Najib's "complaints as contained in the petition of appeal devoid of any merit". "On the totality of the evidence, we find the conviction of the appellant on all seven charges safe. We also find that the sentence imposed is not manifestly excessive," she added. The appeals are "unanimously dismissed and the conviction and sentence are affirmed", Maimun said.

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KUWAIT: Taxis are seen on the streets in this illustrative file photo. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



BEIRUT: This grab from footage shot on Aug 23, 2022 shows the collapse of the northern section of grain silos at the port of Beirut. — AFP



PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia: Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak greets supporters as he walks out during a break in his trial at the federal court on Aug 23, 2022. — AFP

Local

Development on track as raft of landmark projects in works

Bid to turn Kuwait into financial hub as part of 2035 vision



Building of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs



New Maternity Hospital

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: From a perspective of keeping pace with Kuwait's New Kuwait 2035 vision that aims to make the country a financial and commercial center, the Ministry of Public Works is striving to accelerate local projects to contribute to the country's development, with a large number of projects for citizens and residents.

To learn more about the ministry's projects, Kuwait Times spoke with Khadija Al-Mutairi, head of the planning and follow-up office at the construction projects affairs sector at the ministry of public works. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: What are the most prominent projects of the ministry of public works?

Khadija Al-Mutairi: The most prominent projects of the construction affairs sector, which contributes to making Kuwait a financial and commercial center attractive to investment, is the new maternity hospital project, which is one of the projects in the development plan. It is being implemented to achieve a high quality of healthcare through specialized health programs for citizens and residents according to international standards and by increasing capacity of hospitals.

The maternity hospital is considered one of the most environmentally-friendly projects designed according to the latest international regulations and codes. The children's hospital is also being designed in a way to achieve the best healthcare through high-quality services and by increasing the capacity of government hospitals. The development of the Arabian Gulf Street waterfront is also one of the important projects that is being designed over an area of 1.8 km.

KT: How many projects were delivered during the past five years in various sectors?

Mutairi: In the construction project affairs sector, nine projects were delivered, which are the project of the Governmental Center for Tests and Quality Control (date of initial receipt 7/2/2018), expropriation management project (initial receipt date 16/8/2018), the project of the Governmental Center for Tests and Quality Control (initial receipt 7/2/2018), Public Authority for



Khadija Al-Mutairi

Civil Information project in Ahmadi (initial receipt date 24/10/2019), the project of the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties (date of initial receipt 13/8/2020), the project of the Ministry of Awqaf (date of initial (partial) receipt 7/10/2020), Hawally Courts Project (initial receipt date is 17/12/2020), project of the central market of the suburb of Granada (date of initial receipt 10/11/2021) and the Criminal Investigations Project (initial receipt date 11/11/2021).

KT: What are the percentages of project completion in the construction projects affairs sector?

Mutairi: According to our reports for May 2022, the percentage of our construction projects affairs sectors that is under implementation are the Ministry of Awqaf (completion of 91.73 percent), 89 percent of the Institute of Judicial Studies, 48 percent of the General Department of Criminal Evidence, 78 percent of furnishing the Palace Affairs Building, 72 percent of the new maternity hospital, 57 percent of five commercial centers affiliated to the ministry of commerce and industry, 98 percent of juvenile care homes, 99 percent of the General Administration of Facilities Security Building, 86 percent of Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate building, 98 percent of the National Security Agency building and 13 percent of the General Administration of Financial and Administrative Affairs building of the ministry of interior.

KT: Are there projects that have been delivered to beneficiaries this year?

Mutairi: A project of the Institute of

Judicial Studies is being handed over to the beneficiary. The initial receipt certificate issuance of the National Security Agency project is underway. As for the project of five commercial centers affiliated to the ministry of commerce, we are in the process of handing over two buildings in Dhahr and Hawally.

KT: How many projects are still in the design stages and what are they?

Mutairi: There are 20 projects in the design stages according to our report of May 2022 - Institutes of Music Studies and Dramatic Arts, schools of special education, Correctional Institutions Complex, General Department of Investigations, General Administration of Information Systems, completing the expansion of the headquarters of the Civil Information, children's hospital, family court of the Capital governorate and the completion of the design of the car park building, Investment Promotion Authority, Safat Post Office, family court of Jahra Governorate, Funaitees Center, Farwaniya Cultural Center, building of the General Authority for the Holy Quran and Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah, Building of the office of the minister of state for National Assembly affairs, the Holy Quran Printing House, Volunteer Work Center, the new northern building of the Audit Bureau, maintenance of Hawally governorate buildings, other constructions, roads and networks.

KT: Are there any projects that have been implemented in the current year?

Mutairi: In the construction projects affairs sector, we have only one project that is about to be implemented which started in 2021 - the building of the General Administration of Financial and Administrative Affairs of the ministry of interior, whose commencement date was 18/5/2021.

KT: Did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the performance of projects during the current or last period?

Mutairi: The pandemic negatively impacted all projects since March 2020, so the ministry of public works had to take many early measures with the aim of protecting individuals first, because their safety is a priority that should not be compromised, as well as the continuation of work on projects, according to



General Administration of Facilities Security Building



General Administration of Financial and Administrative Affairs Building

the prevalent circumstances and available capabilities. It was necessary to continue field visits to support work teams at projects and follow up work to ensure contractors' commitment to completing projects according to the scheduled timeline.

KT: What is the mechanism used to assign projects to engineers?

Mutairi: The projects are assigned to engineers based on the decisions and regulations issued, which are decided by the contract engineer and the assistant undersecretary for the concerned sector. They select the supervising engineer, the project engineer, and their deputies. On the other hand, there is still an ongoing

study on the mechanism for selecting the supervising engineer, project engineer and their deputies.

KT: How do you keep up with the modern variables and specifications, including smart and environmentally friendly buildings?

Mutairi: Our design departments and consultants in the construction projects affairs sector in the ministry of public works are keen that these are within the specifications, as they are emphasized in our contracts with consulting offices for projects. We are focusing on buildings that are environment-friendly, such as the Expropriation Management Project.



Juvenile Nursing Home Building



National Security Building



General Administration of Criminal Evidence Building

Disabled committee to return to ministry of social affairs

KUWAIT: The committee for disabled people is going to be transferred from the ministry of health to the ministry of social affairs during the next meeting of the Cabinet. "The justification for the transfer is that there are many departments in the ministry of social affairs that relate to the specialty of the committee of disabled people, unlike the ministry of

health," sources told Kuwait Times.

The committee is currently preparing a list of names of disabled patients. "There are people who have abused the benefits disabled patients receive. Therefore, all names that are proven to not meet the regulations set to be considered as disabled will have legal procedures taken against them," sources added.



KUWAIT: Ministry of commerce and industry inspectors cited a store in Rai for selling goods with immoral symbols and colors. Legal actions were taken.

6 candidates in illegal byelections turn themselves in

KUWAIT: After the names of 100 accused participants in illegal byelections were announced, six candidates from the second electoral district turned themselves in to the authorities. "The candidates are now under arrest, and are now awaiting their turn in front of the public prosecutor this week," sources told Kuwait Times. Their names were discovered inside seized ballot boxes, as well as after further investigations of organizers of illegal byelections.

Local

Information ministry holds open house with media companies

Discussion part of ministry's 2021-26 strategy to boost cooperation



KUWAIT: Local media representatives participate in a discussion with the ministry of information on Monday. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Mohammed bin Naji



Lafi Al-Subaei

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The ministry of information held a discussion on Monday with local media in order to boost cooperation and understanding between the public sector and the private sector as part of their strategy for 2021-2026. Representing the ministry was Undersecretary Mohammed bin Naji and Assistant Undersecretary for the Press, Publishing and Publications Sector Lafi Al-Subaei, who briefed the audience about the ministry's strategy. In attendance were representatives of media companies in Kuwait, who after the briefing, made inquiries and discussed important issues within the industry.

Bin Naji expressed the importance of this discussion. "We want to discuss all issues and considerations so we can improve, especially when it comes to the upcoming National Assembly elections," he said. Subaei said: "We are very keen on this responsibility as managers across all departments, but lately our responsibilities increased, so a combined goal is necessary as the responsibilities do not only fall on us as managers only, but as citizens of this country."

Strategy

"The strategy was planned with the cooperation of media experts in both sectors to ensure the best

outcome. Through this professional strategy, our hope is to overcome all obstacles that hinder our work and our communication with the public," bin Naji explained. He also stressed on the media's responsibilities "The media is a powerful aspect of society in shaping public opinion, so we must cooperate to deter rumors from spreading and ensure all our news comes from an official source," he said.

"The public wants beneficial content that helps improve their awareness and increase their knowledge," bin Naji added. On official sources, Subaei said: "We are planning to provide a centralized media program that will combine all news concerning the ministries that will all be obliged to send the latest official news to all media outlets in Kuwait."

Cooperation

The talks also expressed the importance of having a capable and adept workforce that is able to collaborate, as it can affect the country as a whole. "It is important that we enhance the media in a professional way through hiring capable employees based on specific criteria, and we are ready to cooperate with all media companies to establish training workshops so that we ensure the highest standards of media are being met," explained bin Naji.

"Most of our work is with private media compa-

nies, including providing permits to events, publications, television and cyber journalism. We understand journalism must have its freedom to thrive, but we all also have our own responsibilities to safeguard the reputation of the country, especially since cyber journalism is now the main front for Kuwait's image to the world," Subaei noted. "Criticism is an important part of development, so we want to ensure that all criticism is constructive and focuses on the improvement of all factors that lead us to a better path. However, we insist that we will resist all destructive criticism that hinders the image of our nation as a whole," he added.

The upcoming National Assembly election will prove to be a test of the cooperation between the two sectors, and to that extent, Subaei said: "Our true challenge is to reflect and preserve the democratic process in Kuwait. We aim to preserve Kuwait's historic reputation as a democratic country, so we must ensure that it is not being abused because of personal interests. So through our own responsibilities, we can ensure that the abuses cease."

Bin Naji also expressed plans concerning the establishment of a media city. "We have all the plans from current and previous ministries, and we are going to study them all in order to ensure that the

best plan is executed for the Media City project, which we expect to accomplish within the next five years," he said.

Expats

Concerning the Kuwaitization of the workforce and the importance of expatriate workers in the country, bin Naji said: "The media sector is not a sector for one specific nationality. I have personally worked with many expats who are all an important addition to the work behind the scenes. Currently, we need their talents, especially since there are not many nationals who can occupy the positions they hold. They have had an honorable history in working in this field and we are excited to cooperate with them where they are needed."

The discussion is part of the ministry's 2021-26 strategy, which aims to create knowledgeable material that incorporates heritage and modernity. It also aims to promote diversity and document a national memory which will be culturally engaging locally and internationally. The conference aimed to increase discussions between the two sectors and improve their facilities, in order to have them operate according to the latest technologies to keep up with global trends so that Kuwait's national identity is competitive across the world.



KUWAIT: Deputy Premier, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah swore in a student officer who has a fire engineering diploma at Kuwait Fire Force in the presence of KFF Chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad, Deputy Chief for Manpower Maj Gen Mohammad Ibrahim and Director of the Training Department Col Abdullah Ahmad.



KUWAIT: National Guard Undersecretary Lt Gen Hashim Al-Rifae received Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Special Security Affairs Maj Gen Abdullah Saffah Abdulkareem, in the presence of Assistant for Operations and Training Maj Gen Faleh Shujaa, Assistant for Administrative Back-up Brig Essam Nayef and Director of the Deputy Chief of National Guard's office Ahmad Abdullatif. Issues of mutual interest were discussed.



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Director of Strategic Planning and Public Awareness at the Public Authority for Sport Suad Hakem, Head of General Sports Awareness and Special Needs Mushani Al-Dhafeeri, Head of Sports Yards Abdelaziz Al-Asousi and Public Relations Representative Mariam Al-Naibari. Issues of mutual interest were discussed, as well as new ideas and their implementation.

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local spotlight

Expect the unexpected!

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

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“What was absent from minds is that the right is attached to duty, and people are the ones who create their own charter and their new social and political order when they change what is within.” - Malik bin Nabi

We read in the news during the past few days about several issues related to the elections of the next National Assembly, expected to be on Sept 29, including the issue of byelections, in which the government action was obviously decisive and judicial action was taken against one of the tribes as some of its members were accused of organizing such elections. It is clear that the rest of the tribes whose members intended to organize similar byelections changed their minds after the government's seriousness on implementing the law became clear. It is ironic that the byelections law is a parliamentary product and a law in its regard was passed by the National Assembly, and I learnt at the time that the government was not enthusiastic towards this law!

The electoral lists issue also dropped a good number of voters including former politicians based on judicial rulings that sparked controversy among the public, and much of this controversy still exists. As the case is with any elections, these matters became a “winning horse” for candidates’ campaigns. There are candidates, some of whom are running for the first time, whose statements are characterized with the voters’ lists and banning of several former politicians. Many former MPs also used such issues in their promises in case they return to parliament, although several of them were in previous parliaments which did not seriously discuss the issue of election lists, and I do not know whether that was against the wishes of former MPs due to rules of bringing forward or delaying proposals or what?!

Also in the local news was the announcement of former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and his candidacy for the upcoming elections after boycotting all previous elections since the annulment of the Feb 2012 Assembly. He had heated statements against the one-man one-vote rule, but I do not know the rule on which the seasoned parliamentarian based his convictions to become a candidate in elections that has the one-vote rule, if there was not a major change in the general situation related to elections!

It is true that there are new characteristics at the local level, but the core of elections did not change, and of course, I agree that “politics is the art of the possible”. The rule of this principle is fixed and stands change according to varying situations, so it is highly possible to understand the stand of Saadoun, but he did not present any justification for changing his stance and running in elections of which he was the biggest critic and the way voting is done in them!

There are talks about the intention of Saadoun to seek the speakership of the next parliament, and this was clear in the statements of many candidates expected to win, and maybe the most important is the statement of candidate and former opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri in support of Saadoun running for speaker. This means he made two announcements at the same time - the first is that he will not be a candidate for the speakership and the second is supporting Saadoun's candidacy.

I think Saadoun relied on the statement that the government will not interfere in the speakership elections, so his calculations are that his chances of winning will be easier, but I believe that his candidacy in case former speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem is present as a candidate for the same post will not be easy (Ghanem has not declared his candidacy for the National Assembly elections so far). So, the situation for both Ghanem and Saadoun is very difficult, and I believe the coming days are full of news that may decide the issue of the speakership, most important of which is that the elections are very difficult to start with, and the third constituency, where Saadoun has decided to run, will not have a rosy road.

Also for the other candidate, the second constituency's characteristics will change in case he announces his candidacy there. It is clear that matters are not as used to be in elections, especially after the approval of voting with the civil ID, but in case Ghanem does not run and Saadoun succeeds in the third constituency, then he may get the speakership by acclamation.

Politics has quicksands and does not settle on one ground, while elections sometimes have violent storms that uproot plants. I think the next elections will have heavy surprises and neither Ghanem nor Saadoun may reach the parliament itself and the speakership, as elections are according to the one-vote system, changed to vote according to the civil ID, and here I remember the famous traffic rule: Expect the unexpected!

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Boats are moored at the Souq Sharq marina. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain continues strategic partnership with MoI on drug abuse awareness

Exhibition at Avenues mall showcases anti-drug efforts of four departments



KUWAIT: Brig Gen Tawhid Al-Kandari and Nawaf Al-Gharabally with Zain and MoI officials.



The exhibition at The Avenues mall.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announces the continuation of its strategic partnership with the Ministry of Interior's General Department of Public Relations and Security Media, through which both partners jointly organized a special Drug Abuse Awareness Exhibition from August 23-26 at the Avenues mall - Phase 2. The event aims at showcasing the tremendous efforts exerted by the government in combating drug abuse in the community.

Zain participated in the exhibition's opening ceremony, attended by Director General of the Ministry of Interior's General Department of Public Relations and Security Media Brigadier-General Tawhid Al-Kandari, Zain Group Chief Technology Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally, as well as Zain's executive management, government officials, and community members. The joint collaboration of this exhibition comes in continuation of the extended strategic partnership between Zain and MOI throughout the recent years. The two partners collaborated on many projects to raise community awareness about the most crucial social issues, including drug abuse that especially affects young people.

The event aims at introducing visitors, especial-

ly young people and parents, to the various types of illicit drugs, the dangers of abusing them, and how to play a role in preventing their spread in society. The event featured many activities and interactive exercises that delivered a positive message in a creative way.

The exhibition featured the participation of the General Department of Investigations, the General Department of Forensic Evidence, Criminal Security - Anti-drug Unit, and the Addiction Treatment Center of the Ministry of Health. Each department introduced visitors to its roles and responsibilities in combating the spread of drugs, the steps taken when abuse is detected, and how to properly guide addicts towards the road of rehabilitation and recovery, ultimately helping them become productive members of society. The Kuwait Cartoon Society also participated in the event, showcasing the role of Kuwaiti artists in utilizing their creativity and platforms to tackle this issue.

Zain's role in this initiative does not stop at this exhibition. The company also launched a comprehensive social media campaign on its official channels, titled #CloserThanYouThink, to share the latest official drug-related statistics from MOI, and introduce the public to the dedicated emergency

line (1884141) available to receive reports of drug abuse with utmost confidentiality.

Zain's presence in this campaign comes as part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, through which the company renews its collaboration with government institutions, including MOI, to shoulder programs and initiatives that serve all segments of the community and contribute to the progress and wellbeing of the nation.

Zain will continue to find ways to serve the community as to foster a better world and be a productive member of the society, being a leader in the Kuwaiti private sector. The company is proud to be one of the first organizations to partner with the Ministry of Interior to make this event a success and contribute to saving lives.

The General Administration for Drug Control makes unrelenting efforts to reduce demand and address all crimes related to abuse of drugs, illicit substances, and alcohol in Kuwait. The department coordinates with local and international authorities, while conducting the necessary research and investigation to detect such crimes, track down and arrest perpetrators, and collect evidence necessary to incriminate them.

Kuwait Airways honors outstanding high school students

KUWAIT: As part of its tireless mission to support and promote the educational sector in the country, Kuwait Airways held a ceremony to honor outstanding high school students for the academic year 2021/ 2022, in the presence of KAC's Chief Support Officer Mohammad Al-Fawaz and the Director of Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Education Mariam Al-Anezi.

While addressing the ceremony, Fawaz stated: “Kuwait Airways is honored and proud to be an integral part of this event, as it supports and encourages youth, their development and skills and participates diligently to promote and honor them in their achievements. Hence, Kuwait Airways firmly believes it is essential to support and motivate these students, as well as put our trust in them for building the future of our beloved Kuwait. In addition, the company takes great interest in the educational



sector, through continuous participation in events and occasions that specifically pertain to this aspect, which is one of the main elements, within its social responsibility programs, that the Blue Bird focuses in raising the prominence of our beloved country to extensive horizons.”

Fawaz added: “We acknowledge the parents of these students for this outstanding achievement and their efforts and motivation to the students, which has been accomplished by the grace of God and

thanks to the determination and commitment in rendering every support and attention to their academics to reach the highest acclaim. This accomplishment is a deserved victory for everyone, and we are proud of the efforts and wish the students all success in the next stage in their continued educational journey.” Fawaz concluded his statement and thanked the participants for their presence, while extending good wishes in their efforts for the progress of the beloved country of Kuwait.





Term-limit row leaves Thai PM facing calls to quit

Channel migrant crossings hit new 24-hour record



BAGHDAD: Supporters of Iraqi Muslim Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr dance during a protest outside the headquarters of the Supreme Judicial Council, Iraq's highest judicial body, in Baghdad. —AFP

Sadr supporters launch sit-in

'Judicial system is being blackmailed or maybe it's corrupt too'

BAGHDAD, Iraq: Several hundred supporters of Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr launched a sit-in outside Iraq's top judicial body on Tuesday, ratcheting up tensions in a showdown with a rival Shiite alliance.

Caretaker Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi cut short a visit to Egypt, where he had been due to take part in a five-nation summit, to return home to monitor developments.

Kadhemi "called on all political parties to calm down and to take advantage of the opportunity for national dialogue to get the country out of its current crisis", a statement from his office said.

The standoff between rival Shiite factions has triggered an intensifying war of words, but so far no violence. The Sadrist, who have already been camped outside parliament for the past three weeks, pitched tents outside the gates of the judicial body's Baghdad headquarters. AFP correspondents reported.

They carried placards demanding the dissolution of parliament and new elections, 10 months after an inconclusive poll failed to deliver a majority government.

Even though his political bloc has taken part in previous administrations, securing top jobs in government ministries, Sadr himself has managed to keep above the political fray and is lionised by his supporters as an outsider dedicated to the fight against a corrupt elite.

"We want to stamp out corruption," said Abu Karar al-Alyawi, a Sadr supporter among those demonstrating on Tuesday. "The judicial system is being blackmailed or maybe it's corrupt too."

On August 10, Sadr gave the Supreme Judicial Council one week to dissolve parliament to end the political deadlock but the council ruled that it lacked

the authority to do so. In the face of Tuesday's protest, the council announced it was suspending work until further notice.

Talks boycotted by Sadrists
Police deployed in numbers around the headquarters, which unlike parliament, lies outside Baghdad's high-security Green Zone government

and diplomatic compound.

Sadr's opponents in the so-called Coordination Framework, who have been holding a sit-in of their own just outside the Green Zone, want a transitional government before new polls are held.

They include former paramilitaries of the Tehran-backed Hashed al-Shaabi network, and the party of ex-prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, a longtime Sadr foe. Last week, the prime minister convened crisis talks with party leaders, but they were boycotted by the Sadrists. Since the aftermath of the US-led invasion of 2003, Iraq has been governed under a sectarian power-sharing system that reserves the premiership for the country's Shiite majority community. The Sadrists insist that after emerging from 2021 elections as the largest bloc in parliament, the constitution be amended to give it the right to nominate the prime minister, something their opponents strongly oppose.

The persistent failure of the rival Shiite factions to form a government in a country blighted by ailing infrastructure and crumbling public services has sparked mounting public frustration.

Iraqis grown used to daily power cuts lasting much of the day now also face water shortages as drought ravages swathes of the country. Despite its oil wealth, many Iraqis are mired in poverty, and some 35 percent of young people are unemployed, according to the United Nations. —AFP

The FSB said the perpetrator had rented an apartment in the same building as Dugina and followed her in a car, suggesting that Dugina was the intended victim. However, Russian media reported that Dugin and his daughter had had a last-minute change of plans, with Dugina driving her father's car.

Like father, like daughter
The US Department of State said in a Monday press briefing that it "condemns" targeting civilians while stating that Ukraine had denied any involvement. "I have no doubt that the Russians will investigate this. I also have no doubt that the Russians will put forward certain conclusions," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

Russia's foreign ministry said Washington's reaction "discredits the international activity" of the United States. "Washington has no moral right... to judge human rights in remote parts of the world, since the murder of a journalist is not even commented on from this angle," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on social media.

Dugin, 60, gained prominence in the 1990s in the intellectual chaos that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union. He had been an anti-communist dissident in the last years of Soviet rule. He co-founded the opposition National Bolshevik Party but quit it to set up the Eurasian party which calls for Russia to reclaim its former territories and create an empire spanning from Europe to Asia.

Dugin backed Russia's much-criticised 2014 annexation of Crimea, following which he called for a wider attack on Ukraine. He was then put on a Western sanctions list.

A regular on Russian television, the heavily bearded

dents beginning with Ronald Reagan, 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.

But he added: "I am not retiring." Instead Fauci, who had said he would leave by the end of Biden's current term, said he now intended to "pursue the next chapter of my career." Biden extended his "deepest thanks" to Fauci in a White House statement, adding that the country is "stronger, more resilient, and healthier because of him."

Fauci has helmed the United States' response to infectious disease outbreaks since the 1980s, from HIV/AIDS to COVID. When the coronavirus first spread globally from China in 2020, he became a credible source of reliable information, reassuring the public with his calm and professorial demeanor during frequent media appearances.

His straight-talking approach won him legions of fans, who bought T-shirts and bobbleheads in his likeness and made cocktails named after him. "I will always



Premier cut short visit to Egypt

Hundreds mourn Dugina killed in car bomb

MOSCOW: Hundreds gathered Tuesday for the Moscow funeral of Daria Dugina, the daughter of a prominent ultranationalist intellectual, who was killed in a car bombing that Russia blames on Ukraine. Alexander Dugin—a vocal supporter of the Kremlin's military campaign who has claimed to be close to President Vladimir Putin—may have been the intended target of the attack that killed his 29-year-old daughter. Ukraine denies any involvement.

Mourners—many carrying flowers—paid their respects at a hall in Moscow's Ostankino TV centre where her black-and-white portrait was displayed over an open casket. Dugin and his wife, both dressed in black, sat next to their daughter's coffin.

"She died for the people, for Russia, at the front. The front-it is here," Dugin said at the ceremony. Dugina was killed Saturday when a bomb placed in her car went off as she drove on a highway outside Moscow.

Moscow says Ukrainian intelligence was behind the attack—a claim dismissed by Kyiv. Russia's powerful FSB security agency said Monday it had "solved" the crime—just two days after the incident—naming a Ukrainian woman as Dugina's attacker.

Anthony Fauci to step down in December

WASHINGTON: Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert who became the face of America's fight against COVID-19, announced Monday he will leave government service after more than 50 years in December, stepping down as advisor to President Joe Biden.

In the chaotic early days of the pandemic, Fauci became the nation's most trusted expert on COVID—but his clashes with former president Donald Trump over the virus response drew anger from the right, and he now lives with security protection following death threats against his family.

The 81-year-old, who has served under seven presi-



MOSCOW, Russia: Russian state Duma Chairman of the International Affairs Committee and the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) Leonid Slutsky (R) attends the farewell ceremony of the Russian journalist Daria Dugina, who was killed in a car bomb explosion. —AFP

intellectual with the air of a prophet claimed he had an ideological influence on Putin. Putin has become increasingly hostile towards the West, and some see Dugin's hand in this, calling him "Putin's Rasputin" or "Putin's brain".

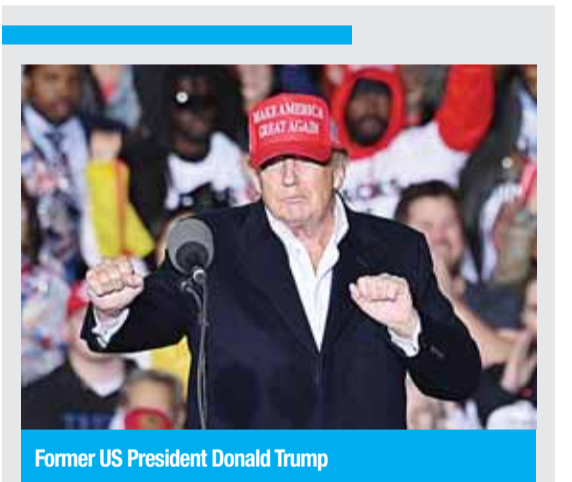
While Putin has never publicly supported him, on Monday the Kremlin released a message of condolences from the president, denouncing the "vile crime" that had led to Dugina's death.

Putin posthumously awarded Dugina the "Order of Courage". The medal was displayed near her coffin on the day of the funeral. Dugina followed in her father's footsteps, becoming a well-known media personality who worked for pro-Kremlin television channels including Russia Today and Tsargrad. —AFP



Dr Anthony Fauci

be grateful that we had a once-in-a-century public health leader to guide us through a once-in-a-century pandemic," tweeted former president Barack Obama upon news Fauci was stepping down. —AFP



Former US President Donald Trump

Trump demands FBI seized materials get independent vetting

WASHINGTON: Former US president Donald Trump filed a lawsuit Monday urging a court to name an independent party to screen files that the FBI seized from his Florida home for materials protected by personal privilege.

Claiming in a court filing that he had been targeted for political reasons, Trump demanded that a "special master" be named to review the more than two dozen boxes of files taken in the unprecedented August 8 raid.

The special master—who would not act at the direction of the Justice Department, which ordered the raid—would evaluate the documents and determine which ones Trump could retain as "privileged," or protected from use in investigations.

"The Mar-a-Lago break-in, search and seizure was illegal and unconstitutional, and we are taking all actions necessary to get the documents back," Trump said in a statement. "They took documents covered by attorney-client and executive privilege," he added. The FBI warrant indicated that Trump was suspected of illegally taking highly classified documents and official records of his administration from the White House that he did not have the right to possess and had refused to turn over.

Besides potentially violating laws governing highly sensitive records, the department indicated the materials were also important in unspecified ongoing federal investigations. Investigations that could involve the former president included the broad probe into the January 6, 2021 attack on Congress by Trump supporters, and an overlapping investigation into efforts by his backers to tamper with the 2020 presidential election.

Naming a special master could potentially block investigators' access to the documents, especially if he or she accepts Trump's claims that most were privileged. In addition, it could interfere if the Justice Department is considering charging Trump with obstructing their investigations by refusing to hand over the documents.

The lawsuit was not filed in the federal court in Fort Lauderdale, Florida where the original warrant was issued, but in more distant Fort Pierce, where the sole judge is a Trump appointee.

In the lawsuit Trump suggested the FBI raid was politically motivated. "The government has long treated president Donald J. Trump unfairly," it said. Trump "is the clear frontrunner in the 2024 Republican Presidential Primary and in the 2024 General Election, should he decide to run," it said. Law enforcement "cannot be used as a weapon for political purposes," it added. —AFP

International

Children in war-torn Yemen skip class to survive 'misery'

Conflict has fuelled displacement and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine

TAEZ, Yemen: Yemen's new school year is underway, but Midian Aoud skips class and washes cars to support his family in its struggle to survive the "misery" of poverty exacerbated by war. The 12-year-old lives in Taz, a besieged city in the grinding conflict between Iran-backed Huthi rebels and government forces supported by a Saudi-led military coalition.

"My friends are studying and I am not. They are in seventh grade. I dropped out of school to help my parents and support my family," Midian, dressed in a torn T-shirt, told AFP. After washing cars, Midian goes to help his father, Adnan Aoud, a shoemaker who says his decision not to send his son to school was difficult but unavoidable as the extra income was needed just to feed the family.

"To study, you need books, notebooks and pens. I wanted to provide for my children and send them to



"We are in total misery"

school, but I couldn't." Adnan told AFP. "We are in total misery." The father said he himself was also unable to attend school in a country that was already one of the poorest in the Middle East even before the war that has ravaged it for eight years.

'Illiterate'

"My children and I are illiterate. I wanted my son to do better than me, but he'll become a shoemaker too," said Adnan. "This isn't a life!" Yemen's economy was already in crisis before the conflict started in 2014, when the Huthis seized the capital Sanaa.

Since 2015, when the Saudi-led coalition intervened, the war has killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly, the UN says. The conflict has fuelled displacement, the spread of disease and collapse of infrastructure, and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine.

A UN-brokered truce that came into effect on April 2 and has twice been renewed provided respite from violence for much of the country and alleviated some of the suffering. The UN children's agency UNICEF said the Arabian Peninsula country is facing a "severe education crisis".

"The conflict and frequent interruptions to



HODEIDAHA, Yemen: Children attend classes outdoors amidst the rubble of their destroyed school on the first day of the new academic year in Yemen's war-torn western province of Hodeida. — AFP

schooling... have a profound impact on learning as well as intellectual and emotional development," the agency told AFP. The war and the education crisis were damaging the mental health of 10.6 million children, UNICEF said.

The UN agency estimates that more than two million children have dropped out of Yemen's schools, an increase of nearly half-a-million since 2015. UNICEF says displacement, security risks, teacher shortages and decaying infrastructure worsened the problem, with at least one in four schools unusable due to the conflict.

Dangers abound

In Taz, schools reopened this month with more

gangs behind the crossings. Rights groups have said the legislation also runs the risk of criminalising migrants seeking asylum from violence and persecution in their homelands.

The UK signed a partnership deal with Rwanda earlier this year to send some migrants to the African country for resettlement. But deportation flights have been stymied by a series of legal challenges in the UK courts and at the European Court of Human Rights.

The first flight in June was due to see some 130 asylum seekers sent to the Rwandan capital Kigali, but the numbers were whittled down to zero because of court action. Groups representing asylum seekers are due to challenge the legality of the policy in court from next month.

The UK government has defended the policy as necessary because the costs involved in processing asylum claims and housing migrants are too high. It is also looking at changing human rights legislation to make it easier to deport asylum seekers deemed to have entered the UK illegally.

Both Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, who are vying to succeed Boris Johnson as prime minister after his resignation, have backed the Rwanda scheme. With predictions some 60,000 people could cross this year, Truss said she would extend the plan.

Sunak said he would do "whatever it takes" to

make it work. But British MPs have questioned the deterrent effect of the deportation plan, saying there was "no clear evidence" it would stop crossings. Since Home Secretary Priti Patel signed the deal with Rwanda four months ago, more than 17,400 people have crossed the Channel in small boats.

Lawmakers instead called for closer cooperation

with the UK's European neighbours, including intelligence sharing, to tackle criminal gangs. Parliament's Home Affairs committee said a total of 48,450 applications for asylum were made in 2021 — similar to every year since 2014.

The MPs blamed the backlog of more than 125,000 cases on "antiquated IT systems, high staff turnover and too few staff". — AFP

way to school. Some have been hit while they were inside the school bus," she told AFP. Taz, which is surrounded by mountains, is one of the cities hardest hit by Yemen's war.

So far, in spite of UN-sponsored talks, there has been no progress made on opening the main roads leading into Yemen's third city. The siege has complicated the delivery of humanitarian aid and added to transportation costs since goods have to be taken on longer routes, denying many Yemenis access to basic services.

Malak Faisal says goodbye to her mother every day in case she doesn't make it back alive. "We are in danger every day going to school. The Huthis' missiles and snipers don't spare anyone." — AFP

Channel migrant crossings hit new 24-hour record

LONDON: The number of people crossing the Channel to the UK from northern France in small boats has hit a new high, the government in London said on Tuesday. Some 1,295 people were detected on Monday, beating the previous single-day record of 1,185 on November 11, 2021, the Ministry of Defence said.

So far this year there have been some 22,670 crossings. At the same point in 2021, nearly 12,500 were intercepted making the journey. Last year, the UK authorities brought ashore a total of 28,526 people as they tried to cross the busy shipping lane.

The issue has caused a major political headache for the UK government, which promised tighter border controls after leaving the European Union. Tensions have risen between London and Paris, with the UK government accusing France of not doing enough to stop the crossings.

To try to address the issue, immigration laws have been tightened to target people-smuggling



DUNGENESS, United Kingdom: File photo shows a British police officer stands guard on the beach of Dungeness, on the southeast coast of England, as Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) members help migrants to disembark from one of their lifeboats after they were picked up at sea. — AFP

make it work. But British MPs have questioned the deterrent effect of the deportation plan, saying there was "no clear evidence" it would stop crossings. Since Home Secretary Priti Patel signed the deal with Rwanda four months ago, more than 17,400 people have crossed the Channel in small boats.

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The MPs blamed the backlog of more than 125,000 cases on "antiquated IT systems, high staff turnover and too few staff". — AFP

Expatriate issues to take centerstage...

Continued from Page 1

threatens security, and is not useful for achieving real economic development. The sources said the political forces will form a lobby to pressure the government to reduce the number of new arrivals, indicating that some of the communities that are currently bloated will be reduced by cutting the number of new arrivals. Only specialized workers will be hired from these countries and work permits of those who are laid off will not be renewed, in order to force them to leave. Security campaigns against residency violators will be continuous and daily, in addition to

increasing residency fees and curbing visit visas. Only those whose salaries are high will be allowed to bring their families, the sources added.

The sources said the political factions that represent Islamist, liberal and independent segments of the Kuwaiti society agreed that these issues will be at the forefront of their campaigns in order for those elected to agree to put forward to the government proposals to be discussed in parliamentary committees and approved by laws.

They stressed the government should be aware that these laws are necessary popular demands, which they have no choice but to approve and pass, after these issues had been the subject of government hesitation or complacency in the past. The sources told Kuwait Times that these issues include all matters regarding the economy, education and employment, among other issues that concern Kuwaiti citizens.

who lost her sister in the explosion. "We must preserve the southern block of silos" as a memorial. Fodoulain said, echoing the demands of many blast victim relatives. Relatives had called for a sit-in near the port on Tuesday afternoon.

Hamieh announced last week that the government had agreed to reserve 25,000 sq m of the port to build new grain silos. This is larger than the current complex which occupies a space of 21,000 sq m. Hamieh said funding would come from international donors as well as the government, which has been bankrupted by a crushing financial crisis. — AFP

Najib sent to jail for 12 yrs...

Continued from Page 1

The 69-year-old former prime minister looked somber and dejected, seated by his wife Rosmah and two children as the verdict was read. Journalists who were in an adjacent room watching the proceedings through video link saw Najib surrounded by family members, friends and party mates before the connection was cut off.

Outside the court, teary-eyed family members and supporters hugged each other. Earlier in the day when Najib arrived in court, around 300 supporters mobbed his car chanting "bossku" - "my boss" in Malay - a rallying cry among his defenders. Just before the verdict was read, Najib, who had said he received an unfair trial, made an impassioned plea asking for a two-month adjournment so he can adequately prepare for a defense. During a break in the proceedings, he spoke to supporters, telling them "if I am guilty, please forgive me".

Najib is the UK-educated son of one of Malaysia's founding fathers who had been groomed for the prime minister's post from a young age. The final ruling on the jail sentence also came four years after his long-ruling party's shock election defeat in 2018, during which allegations he and his friends embezzled billions of dollars from state fund IMDB were key campaign issues.

A lower court in July 2020 found Najib guilty of abuse of power, money laundering and criminal breach of trust over the transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10 million) from SRC International, a former unit of state fund IMDB, to his personal bank account.

An appellate court in December denied his appeal, prompting him to go to the Federal Court for a final recourse.

Some analysts said the decision will likely derail any plans by Najib for a political comeback. "Under Malaysian law, Najib cannot stand for this election and the next election (if found guilty)," James Chin, a professor of Asian studies at the University of Tasmania, told AFP before the verdict was announced. "Obviously, his political career is gone."

There has been speculation that polls may be held this year, though elections are not due until Sept 2023. But Oh Ei Sun, principal adviser for think-tank Pacific Research Center of Malaysia, said one way out for Najib is to get the king's pardon. "He could still apply for clemency (from the king)," he told AFP. "And if pardoned, as many expect, he could easily mount a comeback as his feudalistically minded supporters are numerous in number."

Oh said, however, that the current Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob - who belongs to the same United Malays National Organization party - must recommend a pardon. Najib and his ruling party were voted out in 2018 following allegations of their involvement in a multibillion-dollar financial scandal at IMDB. He and his associates were accused of stealing billions of dollars from the country's investment vehicle and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to pricey art. — AFP

8 more silos collapse at...

Continued from Page 1

negligence and corruption, which many Lebanese blame for the explosion.

"We hold authorities responsible for what happened with the silos," said Mariana Fodoulain,

International

Term-limit row leaves Thai premier facing calls to quit

Many observers think court will rule in Prayut's favour

BANGKOK: A legal showdown that could oust embattled Thai Prime Minister Prayut Cha-O-Cha reaches the country's constitutional court this week, threatening fresh political turmoil for the kingdom just months before national elections.

The former general has clung to office through major anti-government protests in 2020, a bruising pandemic, a faltering economy and scores of political near-misses—but now the very constitution whose design he oversaw is being used against him.



'Let the court decide'

court to rule on when Prayut's term ends, and on Wednesday, the judges are expected to say whether they will consider the case. If it accepts the case, the court could suspend Prayut from office.

The former general—who has held on to power with a tenacity few anticipated—appears unruffled by the latest drama. "Let the court decide," he told opponents before he appeared outside parliament, brandishing a "rock on" hand sign at bemused reporters.

The court has played a key role at important moments in the upheavals that have convulsed Thai politics over the last 20 years, cancelling general election results in 2006 and 2014. "I would not be surprised if the verdict of the Constitutional Court would be in favour of Prayut," political analyst Napisa Waitookiat at Naresuan University told AFP.

Such a decision, anticipated by many, could see him remain prime minister until 2025 or 2027 — if he and his Palang Pracharat party can win re-election.

Stagnation

The kingdom is experiencing one of the lowest growth rates in the region, with the resumption of international tourism failing to lift the economy from the doldrums. "Uncle Tu", as Prayut is known, has never enjoyed widespread popularity, and Thailand's years-long economic battering has only exacerbated a public sense of stagnation.

Earlier this year, the kingdom's royalist-military elite were spooked when Chadchart Sittipunt, an ex-minister of the opposition Pheu Thai party, won a landslide victory in the Bangkok governor election. With a general election due by March next year, the prime minister's dismal popularity—with the candidate linked to him taking only eight percent of votes—is setting off alarm bells for his own MPs.

"If you see the behaviour of these politicians, they

Opponents of the 68-year-old—who seized control in a coup—are agitating for his removal under rules limiting a prime minister to a maximum of eight years in office, a threshold they say he will reach Wednesday. While the outcome is uncertain, many observers think the court will rule in Prayut's favour.

Prayut's adversaries say his term started when he took power in the coup in May 2014, the latest of the more than a dozen military putches to upend Thai politics since the birth of democracy in 1932. But supporters say he has been the premier from 2017 — when the current army-drafted constitution was implemented—or in 2019, when he controversially won much-delayed national polls.

Opposition parties have asked the constitutional



BANGKOK, Thailand: Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha (C) leaves after his weekly cabinet meeting at the Government House in Bangkok on August 23, 2022. — AFP

are not paying attention to the government now. They are more concerned about the next election," political analyst Waitookiat said. A recent National Institute of Development Administration survey found two-thirds of 1,300 people polled wanted Prayut gone immediately.

Protesters are expected to hit the streets from Tuesday evening demanding Prayut quit, and police have already placed shipping containers to protect streets around government buildings. But Prayut rode out months of street protests in Bangkok in 2020 and has survived four no-confidence motions in parliament. Many believe he is determined to stay on to host the

high-profile APEC summit in Bangkok in November.

'Tyrant'

At a small gathering Sunday, students and anti-government groups promised action against the "tyrant" Prayut and in a statement urged people to "view the upcoming election as a turning point in our fight".

"Ball", a student who gave only his nickname, said he believed Prayut would likely continue as prime minister, backed by the courts—and Thais may take to the streets once again. "During the past eight years, nothing has improved in this country, and people are almost at their breaking point," he said. — AFP



UKHIA, Bangladesh: File photo shows a Rohingya refugee woman teaches language at a school in Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhia. — AFP

Rohingya sing Myanmar anthem after exodus

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh: Every morning in his refugee camp school, Mohammad Yusuf sings the national anthem of Myanmar, the country whose army forced his family to flee and is accused of killing thousands of his people.

Yusuf, now 15, is one of hundreds of thousands of mostly Muslim ethnic Rohingya who escaped into Bangladesh after the Myanmar military launched a brutal offensive five years ago on Thursday.

For nearly half a decade, he and the vast numbers of other refugee children in the network of squalid camps received little or no schooling, with Dhaka fearing that education would represent an acceptance that the Rohingya were not going home any time soon.

That hope seems more distant than ever since the military coup in Myanmar last year, and last month authorities finally allowed UNICEF to scale up its schools programme to cover 130,000 children, and eventually all of those in the camps.

But the host country still wants the refugees to go back: tuition is in Burmese and the schools follow the Myanmar curriculum, also singing the country's national anthem before classes start each day.

The Rohingya have long been seen as reviled foreigners by some in Myanmar, a largely Buddhist country whose government is being accused in the UN's top court of trying to wipe out the people, but Yusuf embraces the song, seeing it as a symbol of defiance and a future return. "Myanmar is my homeland," he told AFP. "The country did no harm to us. Its powerful people did. My young sister died there. Our people were slaughtered. "Still it is my country and I will love it till the end," Yusuf said.

'Ticking bombs'

The denial of education for years is a powerful symbol of Bangladesh's ambivalence towards the refugee presence, some of whom have been relocated to a remote, flood-prone and previously uninhabited island. "This curricula reminds them they belong to Myanmar where they will go back some day," deputy refugee commissioner Shamsud Douza told AFP. But when that might happen remains unclear, and visiting UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said this month that conditions were "not right for returns".

Repatriation could only happen "when safe and sustainable conditions exist in Myanmar", she added. She dismissed the suggestion that the Rohingya camps could become a "new Gaza", but Dhaka is now increasingly aware of the risks that a large, long-term and deprived refugee population could present.

Around 50 percent of the almost one million people in the camps are under 18. The government "thought

educating the Rohingya would give a signal to Myanmar (Bangladesh) would eventually absorb the Muslim minority", said Mahfuzur Rahman, a former Bangladeshi general who was in office during the exodus. Now Dhaka has "realised" it needs a longer-term plan, he said, not least because of the risk of having a generation of young men with no education in the camps. Already security in the camps is a major problem due to the presence of criminal gangs smuggling amphetamines across the border. In the last five years there have been more than 100 murders.

Armed insurgent groups also operate. They have gunned down dozens of community leaders and are always on the lookout for bored young men. Young people with no prospects—they are not allowed to leave the camps—also provide rich pickings for human traffickers who promise a boat ride leading to a better life elsewhere.—AFP

Taiwanese remain resolve to defend nation: Tsai

TAIPEI, Taiwan: President Tsai Ing-wen said Tuesday that Taiwanese people remained resolved to defend the island following China's huge military drills. Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have risen to their highest in years since Beijing staged unprecedented drills in retaliation for US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei earlier this month.

Tsai made the remarks when meeting a visiting delegation of US scholars on the 64th anniversary of a Chinese artillery attack known as the "823 bombardment".

"That battle to protect our homeland showed the world that no threat of any kind could shake the Taiwanese people's resolve to defend their nation — not in the past, not now, and not in the future," Tsai said. China's army fired 470,000 shells at Kinmen Islands and nearby islets in 1958, killing 618 people in an attack that lasted 44 days.

Taiwan lives under constant threat of an invasion by China, which claims the self-ruled democracy 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 anger to visits by Western officials and politicians. For a week after Pelosi's visit, it sent warships, ballistic missiles and fighter jets into the waters and skies around Taiwan.

Taiwan has accused China of using the visit as an excuse to kickstart drills that could serve as rehearsal for an invasion. — AFP

UK spies accused over arrest of Indian blogger

LONDON, United Kingdom: Human rights groups on Tuesday said UK intelligence agencies may have shared information with India that led to the arrest and torture of a Sikh blogger from Scotland, Jagtar Singh Johal has been held in detention in India for more than four years.

He is accused of being part of a terror plot against right-wing Hindu leaders and has been charged with conspiracy to murder. "Our investigators have uncovered critical information that in 2017, the UK government may have authorised MI5 and MI6 to share information about UK citizen Jagtar Singh Johal," two organisations, Reprieve and Redress, said in a joint statement.

They claimed this tip off "led to his unlawful arrest and torture in India". Johal, from Dumbarton in west Scotland, has filed a legal claim against the UK government and is being represented by British law firm Leigh Day. He is asking for a public apology and redress from the government.

Electric shocks

Reprieve and Redress said Johal was abducted in 2017 with a sack over his head while in India for his wedding. He was held incommunicado for 10 days and tortured with electric shocks to his ear lobes, nipples and genitals until he signed a "false confession".



QUEZON CITY, Philippines: Students wearing face masks and accompanied by their parents queue up in front of the school gate during the opening of classes at a school in Quezon City, suburban Manila on August 22, 2022. — AFP

Storm forces Philippine schools to shut

MANILA, Philippines: Schools were ordered shut across the northern Philippines Tuesday—a day after many resumed in-person learning for the first time since COVID-19 hit—as torrential rain and strong winds pounded the main island of the archipelago.

Severe tropical storm Ma-on struck the northeast coast of Luzon around mid-morning, raking the largely agricultural region with gusts of up to 185 kilometres (115 miles) an hour, the state weather service said.

Two people were injured by falling trees in the mountainous province of Cagayan where intense rain caused the main river and its tributaries to swell overnight, provincial disaster official Ruelie Rasping said. "We're currently being hit by strong winds and heavy rain. The Cagayan river is rising," Rasping told

AFP. The provincial capital Tuguegarao was drenched with 98 millimetres (3.9 inches) of "torrential" rain over a three-hour period after the storm made landfall, an official at the state weather bureau told AFP.

Ma-on was expected to sweep in a northwest direction across the country and head out over the South China Sea late Tuesday or early Wednesday. Some low-lying areas of the capital Manila were left in knee-deep floodwater, as the storm intensified the southwest monsoon.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr suspended classes and work in government offices in the national capital region and surrounding provinces until Wednesday, his spokeswoman said. It followed similar orders issued by provinces in Ma-on's path.

The Philippines, ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change, is hit by an average of 20 storms every year. Ma-on was the first significant one since April when tropical storm Megi unleashed landslides and flooding that killed more than 200 people mostly on the central island of Leyte.

Ma-on struck a day after the Philippines reopened classrooms for face-to-face lessons, more than two years after the pandemic hit. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2022

Business

Saudi says OPEC+ has 'means' to deal with oil price volatility

Production cut remains an option, says Prince Abdulaziz

RIYADH: OPEC leader Saudi Arabia's energy minister said that the oil cartel and its allies have the means to deal with market challenges — including by "cutting production". "OPEC+ has the commitment, the flexibility, and the means within the existing mechanisms... to deal with such challenges including cutting production at any time," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said in an interview with Bloomberg, according to Saudi state news agency SPA.

The Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) consists of 13 members.

OPEC and 10 allies led by Russia — a group known as OPEC+ — agreed last month to raise production by 100,000 bpd in September following Western calls for more output after Russia's war in Ukraine and a post-pandemic surge in demand sent crude prices soaring. They had agreed to increases of almost 650,000 bpd in July and August, but the cartel has struggled to meet its quotas.

Oil prices have dropped from a peak in June due to growing supplies as well as concerns over the deteriorating economic outlook. "Volatility and thin

liquidity send erroneous signals to markets at times when clarity is most needed," said Prince Abdulaziz.

He warned that a "vicious circle" was being "amplified by the flow of unsubstantiated stories about demand destruction, recurring news about the return of large volumes of supply, and ambiguity and uncertainty about the potential impacts of price caps, embargoes, and sanctions."

OPEC raised production by 162,000 barrels in July to a total of 28.8 million bpd, with most of the output coming from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, according to its monthly report. "In OPEC+ we have experienced a much more challenging environment in the past and we have emerged stronger and more cohesive than ever," said Prince Abdulaziz.

"Soon we will start working on a new agreement beyond 2022", he added. Brent was trading 0.7 per cent higher at \$97.16 a barrel at 8.08am UAE time on Tuesday. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was down 0.59 per cent at \$90.23 a barrel. "Witnessing this recent harmful volatility disturb the basic functions of the market



RIYADH: Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman says the OPEC and its allies have the means to deal with market challenges including by "cutting production".

and undermine the stability of oil markets will only strengthen our resolve," Prince Abdulaziz said.

The "extreme volatility" and the "thin liquidity"

prevailing in the oil market have also adversely affected the smooth operations of the industry and led to increased risks and uncertainty, he said.

A thin liquidity refers to a market characterized by a smaller number of buyers and sellers but a high price volatility. These factors have undermined the market's "essential function of efficient price discovery and have made the cost of hedging and managing risks for physical users prohibitive," he said. It has also negatively affected commodities, creating new types of risks and insecurities.

"This vicious circle is amplified by the flow of unsubstantiated stories about demand destruction ... return of large volumes of supply ... and uncertainty about the potential impacts of price caps, embargoes and sanctions," Prince Abdulaziz said.

Volatility is detrimental because "without sufficient liquidity, markets can't reflect the realities of the physical fundamentals in a meaningful way and can give a false sense of security at times when spare capacity is severely limited and the risk of severe disruptions remains high," he added. —Agencies

Germany's Scholz looks to Canada as energy supplier

MONTREAL: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Canada to firm up access to new energy supplies as his country moves to quickly end its reliance on Russian oil and gas. At a joint news conference in Montreal on the first full day of his three-day visit, Scholz said Germany is rushing construction of liquid natural gas (LNG) ports infrastructure and pipelines to boost imports and is reaching out to other nations, like Canada, to increase their output.

Germany will need more liquid natural gas during its energy transition, he said, adding: "It is indispensable because we want to move away from our dependency of Russian gas supplies."

Scholz is also eyeing future Canadian hydrogen exports. On Tuesday the two leaders, along with a sizeable business delegation, are to tour a proposed site in Newfoundland province for hydrogen production. Trudeau touted Canada as "a reliable supplier of the clean energy that a net-zero (emissions) world requires." But he downplayed the likelihood of direct LNG shipments from Canada to Germany, citing the long distance from Western Canada gas fields to Atlantic ports for shipping overseas.

"We're exploring ways to see if it makes sense to export LNG, and if there's a business case for it to export (LNG) directly to Europe," Trudeau told reporters.



MONTREAL: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) listens as Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during a news conference in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on August 22, 2022. —AFP

In the meantime, he and Scholz hinted at a major hydrogen deal to be announced on Tuesday. "We're moving forward on a range of investments around hydrogen and look forward to speaking about that more tomorrow," Trudeau said. Scholz explained that Germany has bet on hydrogen to help it get to a net-zero economy, and said "Canada will play a tremendously important role in developing green hydrogen

in the future." "It can become one of the big powers in supplying green hydrogen to many industrialized nations," he said, referring to the use of renewables such as wind power to make hydrogen. The two leaders are also scheduled to discuss business opportunities in the automotive and critical minerals mining sectors, and support for Ukraine, including its eventual post-war reconstruction. —AFP

US new home sales fall to six-year low

WASHINGTON: US new home sales fell sharply in July to their lowest rate since early 2016, the government reported Tuesday, as rising lending rates cool demand. Americans reduced their new home purchases by 12.6 percent compared to June, to an annual rate of 511,000, seasonally adjusted, continuing a downward trend, the Commerce Department reported.

The results were far weaker than the consensus among economists, who expected to see a much smaller decline.

After low borrowing costs spurred a boom in homebuying during the pandemic, the sales pace has fallen 29.6 percent from July 2021, the data showed. "July's drop continues the steep downward trend in sales since the start of the year," said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics, noting that "new home sales have fallen below pre-pandemic levels."

Sales last month declined throughout the country by double digits, except in the Northeast.

Mortgage rates have been climbing sharply in recent months as the Federal Reserve cranks up interest rates in its battle against surging inflation. Central bankers hope the aggressive moves will cool overheated demand throughout the economy, including the housing market, where builders have struggled to keep up amid supply snarls and a labor shortage.

Those factors have contributed to a steady climb in home prices, and the median cost of a new home rose to \$439,400 from \$414,900 in June. However, the sales data can be volatile. "These data are wild month-to-month," Shepherdson said. "It's reasonable to assume that the steepest declines in sales are behind us, though they likely will fall a bit further." —AFP



MILAN: Italian sports carmaker Lamborghini has already pre-sold the entire production run to early 2024, its boss told AFP on Tuesday, with luxury goods seemingly unaffected by global economic uncertainty.

Lamborghini has already sold all its cars until 2024

FRANKFURT: Italian sports car maker Lamborghini has already pre-sold the entire production run to early 2024, its boss told AFP on Tuesday, with luxury goods seemingly unaffected by global economic uncertainty. The Volkswagen subsidiary is enjoying "high demand" and has an order book covering the next 18 months, CEO Stephan Winkelmann said.

Wealthy customers are flocking to the brand despite the global financial fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "We have more and more stepping into Lamborghini. Because they trust the brand, they see how beautiful the cars are, how (high) performing they are," Winkelmann said.

The global economy only has to "stay a bit sta-

ble" for that to continue, he added.

The long order times are also the result of a shortage of components, particularly chips needed for new electric models. Lamborghini is planning a hybrid version of each of its models by 2024 and the first fully electric Lamborghini in the second half of the decade.

This is "a lot in just two years" and the company is doing "as much as we can, as fast as we can to keep all the things updated and rolling in a positive way", Winkelmann said.

Lamborghini in early August reported the best half-year in its history with record sales and profits.

The carmaker's operating margin reached 32 percent, while operating profit jumped to 425 million euros on 5,090 cars sold. Fellow luxury carmaker Ferrari also posted record results in the second quarter and raised its annual forecast, with orders at record levels. In late July, the world's top luxury consumer goods group LVMH also reported a jump in sales and profits in the first half of the year despite the uncertain economic environment. —AFP

Musk subpoenas former Twitter chief Jack Dorsey

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk has served former Twitter boss Jack Dorsey with a subpoena in a hunt for material to help him get out of buying the giant social media platform for \$44 billion as agreed.

Records made public on Monday show Dorsey was served with a legal order to give Musk any communications or documents related to the takeover deal inked in April, as well as information touching on false or spam accounts or how Twitter calculates the number of its active users. The subpoena asks for anything Dorsey has on the topics dating back to January of 2019. Tesla boss Musk, the world's wealthiest man, has accused Twitter of fraud, alleging the company misled him about key aspects of its business, particularly the number of accounts that are actually spam or automated "bots" instead of people.

Twitter has stuck by its estimates that bots make up fewer than five percent of users. Twitter also disputed Musk's assertion he has the right to walk away if its bot count is found to be wrong, since he didn't seek information on that topic when he made the buyout offer.

The company accuses Musk of contriving a story to escape a merger agreement that he no longer found attractive. "Musk's counter-claims, based as they are on distortion, misrepresentation, and outright deception, change nothing," Twitter said in a court filing.

Rival lawyers have been serving subpoenas for weeks seeking documents or depositions from a wide range of people connected with the buyout, running Twitter's business, and even with a holding company formed by Musk.

Twitter co-founder Dorsey in November of last year ended his second stint as chief of the company and had voiced support for Musk taking it over. The Twitter deal included a provision that if the deal fell apart, the party breaking the agreement would pay a termination fee of \$1 billion under certain circumstances.

Billions of dollars are at stake, but so is the future of Twitter, which Musk has said should allow any legal speech—an absolutist position that has sparked fears the network could be used to incite violence. The legal fight is gathering speed as preparations have begun for an October trial in Delaware's Chancery Court, which specializes in complex, high-stakes business battles. Twitter has urged shareholders to endorse the deal, setting a vote on the merger for September 13. —AFP



WASHINGTON, US: Combination of pictures created on August 22, 2022 shows Elon Musk (left), and CEO of Twitter Jack Dorsey.

Business



VANTAA, Finland: Expensive cars with Russian plate numbers are pictured in the premium parking area of the Helsinki airport on August 19, 2022, in Vantaa, Finland. — AFP



VANTAA, Finland: Travelers are pictured in the check-in area inside the Terminal 2 of the Helsinki airport on August 19, 2022, in Vantaa, Finland. — AFP

Luxury cars of Russian tourists fill up parking at Helsinki airport

Finland becomes an important transit country for Russian tourists

HELSINKI: Porsches, Bentleys and other luxury cars with Russian license plates are filling up the parking garage at Helsinki's airport as Finland becomes an important transit country for Russian tourists flying to Europe. The European Union shut its airspace to Russian planes after Moscow invaded Ukraine, forcing anyone who wants to travel to Europe to drive across the border or take a circuitous route using non-Western airlines.

Since Russia's COVID-19 restrictions expired in July, there has been a boom in Russian travelers and a rising backlash in Europe against allowing in Russian tourists while the war continues. A quick stroll through the carpark at the Helsinki airport revealed dozens if not hundreds of high-end cars with Russian license plates, including a new Mercedes-Benz S-class sedan and Porsche 911 Turbo S.

"It boggles me," Finnish traveler Jussi Hirvonen said after leaving the garage. "I wish they weren't here before Ukraine's situation is solved." Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told AFP that the Nordic nation has become a "transit country" for Russian

tourists. "Helsinki airport is seeing a lot of Russian tourism at the moment."

Finland wants EU decision

Finland said last week it would limit Russian tourist visas to 10 percent of current volumes as of September 1 due to rising discontent over Russian tourism amid the war in Ukraine. But Russians continue to enter Finland with visas issued by other EU countries in the Schengen borderless travel area for their journeys. "They come here on Schengen visas issued by various different countries and then continue further via Helsinki airport," Haavisto said.

According to a survey conducted by the Finnish border guard in August, around two-thirds of Russians crossing Finland's eastern border do so with a Schengen visa issued by a country other than Finland. "Hungary, Spain, Italy, Austria, Greece and Spain normally issue visas to Russians, and are generally among the top issuing countries each year," border guard official Mert Sasioglu told AFP. Schengen rules do not allow Finland to close the border to specific nationalities, Haavisto said. Such sanctions can only be decided jointly by the EU. "As Finland and the Baltic countries are planning to restrict these visas, it would be good if all EU countries took similar decisions," Haavisto said. This sentiment was shared by many Finns at the airport. "There should be an EU decision to close the border," said Finnish traveler Jussi Hirvonen. Finland intends to raise the issue at the next meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers in the Czech Republic on August 30.

Everybody should travel

After Russia lifted its COVID travel restrictions on July 15, the number of Russian tourists heading to Finland has surged. While the numbers are still well below pre-COVID levels, there were more than 230,000 border crossings in July-up from 125,000 in June. For many Russian travelers, the idea of not being able to travel to Europe is met with disappointment. "Everybody should travel, because when you see how other peaceful countries live then you become more peaceful too," said Pavel Alekhin, a 32-year-old Russian professional athlete on his way to a bike festi-

val in Basel. Russian traveler Vadim van der Berg said the situation is "very difficult" for normal Russians, as many now lack the opportunity to fly for work or studies. "We're all waiting for this to stop and want a normal situation in the whole world, in our country and Ukraine too."

Europe divided

The European Commission acknowledged last week that discussions were underway to see if a "coordinated approach" on Russian visas could be reached. Eastern EU countries Latvia, Lithuania and Poland stopped issuing new tourist visas to Russians shortly after the war started. Estonia has gone a step further and is looking at stopping Russians who have visas delivered by other EU states. But German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has expressed reservations about such restrictions. "This is not the Russian people's war, it is Putin's war," Scholz noted. He said limiting tourist visas would also penalize "all the people who flee Russia because they disagree with the Russian regime". — AFP



Mideast airlines likely to face pilot shortage

DUBAI: The global aviation sector will continue to grapple with a shortage in pilots between 2022 and 2024 as air travel demand surges - with the Middle East one of the first regions to experience the impact, according to a new report. Demand for pilots will outstrip supply in most regions globally, according to a study by consultancy Oliver Wyman.

A regional shortage could start as early as the end of this year, a study by global consultancy Oliver Wyman found. Unless speedy action is taken to mitigate the impact, this could reach a shortage of 3,000 pilots by 2023 and 18,000 by 2032, said the consultancy.

"We expect the Middle East to be the region affected soonest by the shortage outside of North America, driven by a projected sharp increase in air travel demand over the next few years, new players entering the market and big tourism developments happening in the region," Andre Martins, partner and head of India, Middle East and Africa for transportation and services at Oliver Wyman, said. The surge in demand for air travel coincides with a declining supply of pilots in the Middle East region - due to a combination of layoffs during the pandemic, a falling number of newly-certified pilots and retirements.

"If demand for air travel continues to grow, airlines need to accelerate recruiting efforts from other regions where we anticipate less acute shortages, particularly

Latin America and Asia Pacific, to fill gaps," Martins said.

"Failing that, we may see adjustment of schedules into and out of the region, impacting the Middle East's carriers and airport operators." The global aviation industry is expected to be short of nearly 80,000 pilots by 2032, in the absence of a downturn in future demand and despite "strenuous" efforts by the sector to bolster the supply of pilots, the study said.

Boeing recently raised its 20-year global demand forecast for commercial airline pilots and other aviation workers by 3.4 per cent from 2021, as air travel recovers from the pandemic with fleet expected to double during the period. The US plane maker now projects a need for 602,000 pilots globally to safely support the recovery in commercial air travel and staff the world fleet over the next two decades, according to its 2022 Pilot and Technician Outlook, published last month.

About 53,000 new pilots will be needed in the Middle East during the period, according to the outlook. The region's aviation industry has been driven by airlines such as Emirates, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways that are reporting recovery from the pandemic with surging demand for travel.

The global aviation industry is facing a shortage of employees, many of whom were laid off during the pandemic and have moved into other occupations or more flexible work options. Airlines and airports are racing to source recruits to meet the rise in demand, but the labor crunch has led to disruption at airports and capacity cuts at airlines. Emirates, the biggest operator of Airbus A380s and Boeing 777s, held a recruitment roadshow for pilots in the UK earlier this month, as it increases operations in response to a resurgence in travel demand. — Agencies

StatsSA said Tuesday. Between April and June, the jobless rate declined by 0.6 of a percentage point over the first quarter to 33.9 percent of the workforce, the official data agency said. In the first quarter, unemployment fell to 34.5 after 35.3 percent at the end of 2021.

StatsSA said there was a net quarterly gain of 648,000 jobs, with the biggest increases in community and social services, trade, finance and construction. Poverty, inequality and joblessness run high in South Africa, nearly three decades after the end of apartheid.

S Africa jobless rate falls despite floods, outages

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's unemployment rate fell for a second consecutive quarter despite widespread power cuts and devastating floods,

Cyprus says major gas find could boost European supplies

NICOSIA: A new gas discovery off Cyprus could speed up exploitation of untapped resources and help secure supplies to Europe, Cypriot Energy Minister Natasa Pilides said Tuesday. Italian giant Eni and France's TotalEnergies announced on Monday a "significant gas discovery at the Cronos-1 well, in Block 6, offshore Cyprus".

Cyprus's energy ministry said preliminary estimates indicated the reservoir holds about 2.5 trillion cubic feet (70 billion cubic meters) of natural gas. With Russia threatening to cut off gas supplies to the European Union, Nicosia was in talks with Brussels to become part of the bloc's energy plan to reduce reliance on Moscow, Pilides told state radio.

The minister said she had contacted Eni and TotalEnergies to "find ways to optimally exploit this discovery". The gas find was located 165 kilometers (about 100 miles) off the southwest coast of Cyprus. In 2018, Eni discovered the large Calypso-1 gas field in the same block, containing an estimated 4.5 trillion cubic feet of gas.

The Cypriot energy ministry said Monday more drilling had begun in a new well called Zeus-1 in Block 6, where additional quantities of gas could be discovered. Nicosia has granted drilling licenses for seven blocks to the Eni-Total consortium.

The latest discovery adds to three other major gas finds, including at the Aphrodite well in Block 12 of 4.5 trillion cubic feet, licensed to US firm Chevron, Britain's Shell, as well as Zionist Entity partners. Pilides estimated it would take about three years to commercially exploit Aphrodite, with the gas likely to be exported to nearby Egypt. — AFP



A drilling rig is seen off the Cypriot coastal city of Larnaca. — AFP

The country's high unemployment rate has fuelled protests and anti-foreigner sentiment.

Women in particular struggle to find opportunities. Almost one in two working-age women are unemployed and listed as economically inactive compared to about one in three men, StatsSA said.

The female unemployment rate is also higher than the national average at 35.5 percent. "The labor market continues to favor men and shows no signs of making real progress towards improving prospects for women," the agency said in a statement. — AFP



Special needs school Portage signs with SaaS company Bounce

KUWAIT: Bounce, the Middle East's leading early learning SaaS company for school management announced Tuesday that they have been selected by Portage Special Needs Nursery in Kuwait as their preferred partner for their management and communication requirements. Bounce will provide Portage with digital and mobile solutions to support daily operations via attendance, reporting, online payments and communication with parents.

While Bounce is already the preferred software at several nurseries and daycares across the Middle East, it is their first collaboration with a nursery managing children with special needs. Portage Special Needs Nursery is based in Kuwait and cares for and educates 100 young children across two locations. They are a specialized child care center established to further the foundational education and child development requirements of young children with special needs.

Noor Boodai, Founder & CEO, Bounce, "Our mission at Bounce is to ensure that we provide collaborative experiences at preschools and nurseries with our management and communication solutions. Bounce can reduce hours spent on operational activities by 60-70 percent, and it is our privilege to offer Portage Nursery our platform so they can spend more time educating and nurturing their students instead of spending time on manual administrative tasks. We are also very pleased to be able to serve parents of special needs children: by using the Bounce app they will be updated instantaneously about their children's progress and will be able to communicate with school personnel on spot"

"We are excited to work with Bounce to enhance our approach to managing our nursery so we can focus on what we do best - caring for our young students. The team at Bounce has been extremely supportive from day one and we look forward to working closely with them across both our locations in Kuwait", Rima Ibrahim Hasan, Owner, Portage Nursery.

Bounce is the only regional SaaS platform that services the early learning industry. The platform provides owners and managers with full digital control over the operations of the preschool and has a superior user experience - all while maintaining leading nursery management best practices. The platform is also built with the user in mind and can be customized for each country based on language, local payment regulations, media sharing and communication preferences, in a secure and sustainable environment. Since Bounce is a SaaS product and curriculum agnostic, all types of preschools and childcare centers can easily integrate the platform within their establishments.

Business

Euro strikes fresh 20-year low as eurozone economy shrinks again

Data confirm concerns of an impending recession, high inflation and energy crunch

FRANKFURT: The euro dived Tuesday to a new two-decade dollar low and equities wavered, as data highlighted the shrinking eurozone economy and the worsening energy crunch. The single currency, hit also by the US Federal Reserve's rate-hiking plans before this week's hotly-awaited comments from Chair Jerome Powell, tumbled to \$0.9901.

The shared unit had already plunged below parity Monday on recession fears to plumb the lowest levels since 2002, when it came into physical circulation. In the latest blow, S&P Global's closely-watched monthly composite purchasing managers' index (PMI), which measures corporate confidence, languished in August below the key 50-point level. That stoked long-running worries of a protracted economic downturn.

'Overarching threat'

"Eurozone PMIs ... confirm concerns of an impending recession in Europe on the back of high inflation and energy crunch, as they signal declining activity for two months in a row," warned Citi analyst Luis Costa. He added: "The energy crunch remains an overarching threat to economic stability in Europe."

Equities in the region wavered amid stubborn worries that the US Federal Reserve will carry on ramping up interest rates to fight inflation.

Rising US interest rates also push the dollar higher against other currencies. On Tuesday, natural gas prices remain elevated on fears over a temporary halt to Russia's gas deliveries to Europe.

The Dutch TTF Gas Futures contract stood at 274.50 euros per megawatt hour, although this was down slightly from Monday. Gas had spiked to record peaks in March after key producer Russia launched its invasion of neighboring Ukraine. That has sparked surging domestic energy bills, fuelling decades-high inflation that has prompted tighter monetary policy around the world.

'More effective than Kalashnikovs'

"As it has become painfully obvious, natural gas is a much more effective weapon in the hands of Russian politicians than the Kalashnikov in the hands of their soldiers," noted PVM analyst Tamas Varga. This has hit the single currency hard because the bloc relies heavily on imported Russian gas, indicated Societe Generale analyst Kit Juckes.

Fears increased after Russia's Gazprom said Friday that the Nord Stream pipeline would be closed for maintenance at the end of the month, cutting Europe's crucial gas deliveries. "The euro's problem is ... the threat from continued squeezing of gas supplies and the cost of replacing Russian gas," Juckes said.

Asian markets fell again Tuesday as traders grew increasingly jittery over rising US rates. Wall Street fell deep into the red on Monday with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq both off more than two percent. With the Jackson Hole symposium of central bankers and finance chiefs taking place this week, the focus is on what Fed chief Jerome



BERLIN: Eurozone PMIs confirm concerns of an impending recession in Europe on the back of high inflation and energy crunch

Powell says about its plans to tackle prices, with many fearing officials could send the economy into recession.

Oil prices—which have fallen for weeks as

recession worries hit demand expectations—rebounded after Saudi Arabia suggested OPEC and other major producers could cut output citing "volatility" in crude markets. —AFP

Indonesia raises rates for first time since 2018

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank hiked its key interest rate Tuesday for the first time in nearly four years to combat rising inflation stoked by the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. Bank Indonesia raised the policy rate to 3.75 from 3.5 percent, a move that went against the majority of analysts' predictions.

Its two other main rates were also raised by 25 basis points. Rates were hiked for the first time since 2018 to defend against accelerating inflation. Bank Indonesia governor Perry Warjiyo said, with Russia's invasion driving up global energy and food prices and pushing millions into poverty around the world. "The decision to raise the rates was taken as a pre-emptive and forward-looking step to mitigate risks from the hikes in core inflation and expectations of inflation because of the increase in non-subsidized fuel prices and volatile food inflation," Warjiyo told reporters in an online press briefing.

The move came as Jakarta considers raising subsidized fuel prices, a policy that was expected to further stoke inflation already at a seven-year high of 4.94 percent in July and sitting above the central bank's target range of between 2 and 4 percent. With rising energy and food commodity prices, Warjiyo said the central bank expected inflation would go above its target range in 2022 and 2023.

President Joko Widodo came to power in 2014 on a pledge to boost annual growth to seven percent, but the commodities-driven economy has remained stuck in the 5.0 percent range and has fallen below that after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020.

Looking ahead, the outlook for monetary policy is likely more tightening due to the continuing uncertainty in world markets, economists said. "The hawkish commentary from the (Bank Indonesia) press conference increases the risk that the bank will tighten policy further this year," said Gareth Leather, Asia economist from Capital Economics. —AFP

E-commerce giant JD.com posts slowest growth

BEIJING: Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com reported its slowest revenue growth so far in the second quarter, the company said Tuesday, the latest in a series of gloomy numbers as China's economic growth slows. JD.com's results came shortly after tech giant Tencent reported its first drop in quarterly revenue since going public on top of job cuts—while Alibaba saw flat quarterly revenue growth for the first time.

China's major tech companies have been grappling with economic uncertainty, COVID-19 restrictions that have kept consumers jittery, as well as heightened scrutiny from regulators in recent months.

JD.com logged 5.4 percent revenue growth on-year in the second quarter, the company said—the lowest since it went public in 2014. "We were pleased to post topline growth that outpaced the industry during a challenging period," said JD's chief financial officer Sandy Xu in a statement, adding that the company placed an emphasis on financial discipline and operational efficiency.

In the April to June period, sales came in at 267.6 billion yuan (\$40 billion), while the company reported a profit of 4.4 billion yuan after three consecutive quarters of losses.

Many parts of China faced lockdowns and other COVID restrictions in recent months, disrupting

Apple employees fight company's return-to-office order

CUPERTINO: A small group of Apple employees have launched a petition challenging the tech company's September return-to-office order, several US news organizations have reported.

The move follows an internal email from chief executive Tim Cook that said employees should begin to report to the office three days a week, after more than two years of remote and hybrid work, Bloomberg first reported. Cook said employees at all offices around the world would

have to work in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with a third in-office day chosen by specific teams, starting the week of September 5, the companywide letter - reprinted by The Verge - showed.

The letter adds that employees will be able to log into work two days a week remotely and have the option of working remotely for as many as four weeks a year. A group reportedly consisting of Apple employees called "Apple Together" is speaking out against the plans through a petition.

Apple Together argues that "this uniform mandate from senior leadership does not consider the unique demands of each job role nor the diversity of individuals". The petition makes two demands: that "Apple allows each of us to

work directly with our immediate manager to figure out what kind of flexible work arrangements are best for each of us and for Apple [and] these work arrangements should not require higher-level approvals, complex procedures or providing private information".

Apple tried to get employees to return to the office as early as July 2021, but the rise of the Delta coronavirus variant during the summer and autumn put a stop to those plans. The spread of the Omicron variant in the winter also delayed Apple's reopening several times. The company website states it has more than 80,000 employees and Apple Together's letter against "office-bound work" claims to have 1,445 signatures from current and former employees. —Agencies



rupting business activity and adding to consumer worries as the country tried to stamp out the Omicron variant's spread under its strict zero-COVID policy. China's tech industry has also been reeling from a regulatory crackdown that started late 2020, targeting anti-competitive practices and putting an end to a decade of free-wheeling growth.

JD.com, which listed on the Nasdaq in New York in 2014 and made its Hong Kong debut in 2020, has not borne the brunt of Beijing's regulatory clampdown. But there remain concerns

surrounding the company, including the potential that US regulators' may force firms like it to delist.

The US Congress in 2020 passed a law targeting Chinese companies under which the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board must be able to inspect audits of foreign firms listed on US markets.

The law puts Chinese firms at the risk of delisting, and comes at a time when Chinese authorities have expressed reservations about China-based companies listing in the US. —AFP

Consequences of the euro's plunge under dollar parity

PARIS: The euro has hit a fresh two-decade low against the dollar, sinking to \$0.9901 on Tuesday.

Why has the value of the single European currency fallen and what are the consequences?

Strong dollar

As much as the euro is weakening, the dollar is strengthening. That is due to the monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve, which is raising interest rates much more aggressively. This makes dollar-denominated debt more attractive for investors, strengthening demand for dollars.

Meanwhile, the European Central Bank has only just started raising interest rates, and not as aggressively as the Fed. "The ECB is walking on eggshells," said Eric Dor, head of economic research at the IESEG School of Management in Paris.

"It can't let rip on raising interest rates because it is worried about creating a sovereign debt crisis for the most heavily indebted eurozone nations," he

Costlier imports

Nearly half of all goods imported into the eurozone are invoiced in dollars, compared to less than 40 percent in euros, according to the European statistics authority, Eurostat. Oil and gas, for example, are traditionally paid for in dollars, and the price of these two commodities has soared in recent months as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine.

That means more euros are needed to pay for an equivalent amount of goods in dollars. Europeans travelling to United States will feel the weakness of the euro, but US tourists visiting the eurozone will feel relatively rich.

Businesses impact

The effect of the decline in the value of the euro varies, depending on how reliant a business is on foreign trade and energy. "Companies that export outside the euro area benefit from the euro's fall because their prices become more competitive" when converted into dollars, said Philippe Mutricy,



research director at the public-sector bank Bpifrance.

"By contrast, import-orientated businesses are at a disadvantage." In the case of local craftsmen, who are dependent on raw materials and energy, but export little, the weaker euro can lead to a veritable explosion in costs. The biggest winner from

the euro's falling exchange rate are export-orientated sectors such as the aerospace, automobile and luxury goods industries.

Since a weak euro can make eurozone goods and services more competitive abroad, it can soften the blow that rising costs of raw materials have on growth. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Palestinian women sit at a beach coffee shop in Gaza city. — AFP photos



Palestinian women sit at a beach coffee shop in Gaza city.

Gaza women seek outdoors escape on summer nights

From card games to horse rides, women in Gaza are spending their summer nights outdoors to seek solace from daily hardships in the Palestinian enclave. "We wait for the sun to be gone to escape to the sea," said Yusra Hmedat, 43, while playing cards at a beachfront cafe in Gaza City. "Women leave their houses, from the pressures of life, and try to stay out as long as possible," said the civil servant, as she put her cards in order.

Fifteen years into an Zionist-led blockade on Gaza, residents of the densely populated territory endure regular power cuts amid stifling summer heat. One of Hmedat's competitors, Nawal Yassin, said she often returns home at 2:00 am or 3:00 am. "Women try to adapt and overcome the circumstances more than men," said the 66-year-old.

In another cafe northwest of the city, housewife Umm Saeed described her nightly rendezvous as a way of coping with the impact of repeated wars between Palestinian militants and Israel. "We try to overcome the stresses by going out, sharing our concerns and sympathizing with one another," she said. "You see people laughing, but



Palestinian women sit at a beach coffee shop in Gaza city.

from within everyone is devastated, psychologically." Umm Saeed said she spends all of her disposable income at the cafe, amounting to around 15 shekels (\$4.50) a day.

But with Gaza's unemployment rate hitting 47 percent last year, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of

Statistics, such outings are an unaffordable luxury for many. At Al-Shati refugee camp, which overlooks the sea, Faten Abdul Rahman instead sits outside with her daughters and neighbors.

"The majority of women in the camp gather together at the door of their homes because of the poor economic

situation," said Rahman, who relies on social welfare to support her seven children. "The heat is unbearable at home. We spread out a sheet and sit with guests on the beach, which is the only free entertainment," she added.

Switching on fans or air conditioning is often out of the question in Gaza, where residents received an average of 11 hours of electricity a day last month. This plummeted to just five hours on August 7, during the latest bout of fighting between Palestinian militants and Zionist entity, data from the UN humanitarian agency (OCHA) shows.

Feeling human

Women like Umm Jaber Abu Assi minimize their spending by heading to the park, bringing homemade pastries and renting a chair for a shekel. "If we went out to the sea I would need to pay more," she said, as crowds of women and children gathered at the park to the west of Gaza City. "There's a lack of options in Gaza; leaving the house (makes us) feel that we're human," said the 43-year-old, who sometimes faces criticism for getting home after midnight.

"I don't care about the criticism. I walk home with my daughter without being

scared (because) the streets are crowded," she said. For some women, sports such as horse riding are on offer each evening. At a club southwest of Gaza City, 22-year-old Menna Kahil is feeding her horse Ripple.

"I spend most of my time here in the evenings. I'm afraid to go out in the evening in public places alone, for fear of shelling or rocket fire," she said. Such weapons killed at least 49 Gazans in three days of cross-border fighting this month, according to a health ministry toll. Despite riding for a decade, Kahil said she still comes under pressure over her chosen hobby.

"I face a lot of criticism because I'm not veiled when I ride my horse at the sea," she said. "Although it's only natural-even the horses need a change of atmosphere." Outside the sports club, Mervat Al-Ghalayini is playing pickleball, which incorporates elements of badminton, tennis and table tennis. "I love joining anything new," the 41-year-old said enthusiastically. "I work in the morning and practice sports in the evening; I leave the house to go to a place where there's light and people." — AFP



William and Kate quit London for Windsor

Prince William and his wife Kate announced on Monday that they will send all three of their children to the same private school after moving their main home to Windsor. Kensington Palace said that from September third-line Prince George, aged nine, Princess Charlotte, seven, and four-year-old Prince Louis will attend Lambrook School, near Ascot in southern England. The announcement came as the family are shifting their base from their London apartment at Kensington Palace to Adelaide Cottage, in the private Home Park near Windsor Castle, where Queen Elizabeth II lives most of the time.

The family also have a country estate in Norfolk in eastern England and a holiday cottage in Scotland. A royal source said that the royals, formally known as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, wanted to "give their children the 'most

normal' start possible".

"KP (Kensington Palace) can be a little bit of a fishbowl," the source added. "They wanted to be able to give George, Charlotte and Louis a bit more freedom than they have living in central London." Lambrook, is a co-educational private school for children aged four to 13 and its facilities include a nine-hole golf course. At the current annual fees, sending three children there would cost more than £50,000 (\$59,000).

The Times reported the school has "several peacocks" and former pupils included the aristocrat Lord Alfred Douglas, the lover of writer Oscar Wilde. In a royal connection, Queen Victoria used to come and visit two of her grandsons who were pupils there, according to the school's website.

George and Charlotte previously went to a school in west London, Thomas's Battersea. The family said their new school "shares a similar ethos and values". The move announcement comes as William's brother Prince Harry and his wife Meghan plan to stay in Frogmore Cottage, a short distance from Adelaide Cottage at Windsor, while visiting the UK to attend charity events in September. But William and Kate are reportedly not planning to meet them. —AFP

trees, saying his clients had "proactively" installed a drip irrigation system and let certain lawns die.

Others named in the newspaper's investigation included comedian Kevin Hart and former NBA basketball star Dwyane Wade. Famous for its rows of palm trees, Los Angeles has also traditionally been known for its lush, green lawns, often maintained with automatic sprinklers. Residents are increasingly replacing their thirsty lawns with plants native to this desert region, and Las Virgenes spokesman Mike McNutt said he hoped celebrities could set a positive example. "People listen to you, people look at you, people value what you do," he said. "We need you to step up to the plate, to be examples and to be leaders so that other people will follow." — AFP

Kim Kardashian among celebrities flouting US drought rules

Kim Kardashian and celebrity neighbors including Sylvester Stallone have been handed warnings for repeatedly flouting water restrictions at their homes in drought-hit California, the Los Angeles Times reported Monday. Strict water limits imposed as the western United States endures its 23rd successive year of drought, worsened by

human-caused climate change-are in place across swathes of southern California, including the affluent neighborhoods of Calabasas and Hidden Hills.

But more than 2,000 residents of the two glitzy enclaves north of Los Angeles, known for their sprawling green lawns and giant swimming pools, are continuing to breach the limits, often by eye-watering amounts. Celebrity reality stars Kim and Kourtney Kardashian were among repeat offenders in June, the newspaper reported, citing notices obtained via a Public Records Act request. A Hidden Hills home and adjacent lot owned by a trust linked to Kim Kardashian exceeded their water allowance by a combined 232,000 gallons (878,000 liters) for the month, while her sister Kourtney's property in nearby Calabasas was around 100,000 gallons in excess.

"Rocky" star Stallone's \$18-million Hidden Hills property exceeded its June limits by 230,000 gallons, or 533 percent, having been 195,000 gallons over the limit the previous month, it said. Repeat offenders are initially fined hundreds of dollars, but deep-pocketed homeowners who are still not dissuaded can eventually have their supplies physically reduced to a trickle.

Water authorities in Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, covering Calabasas and Hidden Hills, have already installed metal flow restrictor devices at around 20 properties' main shutoff valves, the newspaper reported. A representative for the Kardashians did not immediately respond to AFP request for comment. Stallone's lawyer told the Times that its report "could mischaracterize and misrepresent the situation" at a property sustaining around 500 mature

Study shows dogs get teary-eyed when they reunite with owners

Dog owners know the pure joy of returning home from a long trip to be greeted by their tail-wagging, uncontrollably jumping, face-licking companion. But those ecstatic canines might be shedding more than just fur on your clothes—they might also be tearing-up, according to a new study published Monday in the journal Current Biology. "We had never heard of the discovery that animals shed tears in joyful situations, such as reuniting with their owners," said Takefumi Kikusui, one of authors of the study, which he called a possible "world first."



The scientists measured the amount of tears in the dogs' eyes with the widely-used Schirmer test, which consists of placing a specialized strip under the eyelids. For a baseline reading, they performed the test on dogs during a normal interaction with their owner. When dogs were reunited with their owners after five to seven hours of separation, they "significantly" increased tear production in the ensuing five minutes, the researchers found.

They also discovered that the dogs' volume of tears were higher when they reunited with their owner versus other people the dog is familiar with. According to the researchers, this reaction to tear up is likely linked to the release of oxytocin, nicknamed the "love hormone," due to its connection with bond-building. The scientists then sought to test whether the tears might have an emotional impact on the owners. To do so, they asked the owners to rank various photos of their dogs with and without artificial tears by how much they wanted to care for them. "The dog photos with artificial tears were ranked significantly higher than the normal tearless dog photos," the Japanese research team wrote. "It is possible that the dogs that show teary eyes during interaction with the owner would be cared for by the owner more," hypothesized Kikusui. —AFP



In this file photo Kim Kardashian attends the 2022 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 94th Oscars at the The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, California.





IKEA celebrates goodness and invites everyone to eat good and live better

IKEA's vision is to inspire and enable everyone to live a better everyday life within the limits of the planet. In line with this commitment, IKEA plays an important role to provide affordable and desirable solutions that inspire and enable as many people as possible to live healthier and more sustainably. One of the key focus areas to fulfil this vision is related to sustainable and healthy eating.

"As one of the world's largest food providers, IKEA took a step towards making healthy and sustainable food more affordable and desirable for everyone. By adding more options to the menu in our restaurants that are both more nutritious and delicious, we hope to inspire more healthy and sustainable choices," said Mersad El Aji, Manager of IKEA Kuwait. According to recent sci-



ence research, living in a way that is good for yourself, others and the environment is viewed by 54 percent of people across the world as an important priority. People believe that eating less red meat and more fruits and vegetables is good for both people and the planet. "At IKEA we have already made a meaningful start on this journey. Today,

we have full plant-based and healthier food options on the menu in our restaurants. The recent addition is the plant ball HUVUDROLL; a more sustainable option for the many meatball lovers with only 4 percent of the climate footprint of the traditional meatball, without compromising on taste and texture", added El Aji. "While many people still think that

the biggest barrier to living a healthy and sustainable life is that it's too expensive, at IKEA we believe that healthy and sustainable choices can't be a luxury for the few but should be tasty, exciting and affordable for everyone" he continued.

"The aim of making affordable plant-based food, is to make it affordable and

desirable for all. Not to create a meat replacement, but to offer healthier, more sustainable and delicious food, that everyone could enjoy. At the end of the day, no one will eat something that is not tasty, no matter how sustainable it is. IKEA founder, Ingvar Kamprad, once famously said: 'It's difficult to do business with someone on an empty stomach. "I am inviting everyone to join us at IKEA The Avenues to taste goodness, healthy food and the various recipes rooted within the Swedish cuisine. Good food deserves to be celebrated. It can always help us have a better life. Start the movement with us, eat good to live better!! Mersad El Aji concluded.

'Game of Thrones' prequel becomes HBO's best launch

Nearly 10 million viewers in the United States watched the eagerly-awaited first episode of "House of the Dragon"-the first spin-off to "Game of Thrones", making it HBO's most successful series launch, WarnerMedia said. The original "Thrones", with its unique blend of fantasy, violence, medieval politics and dragons, became a global phenomenon that hooked audiences and won awards, but its 2019 finale was panned by fans

and critics. Set years earlier in the same universe of George R.R. Martin's fantasy books, "House of the Dragon" depicts the glory days of the ancestors of popular "Thrones" characters, such as Daenerys Targaryen. It is based on his book, "Fire and Blood". The show's premiere on Sunday evening drew 9.98 million viewers in the United States across HBO's platform, making it "the largest audience for any new original series in the history of HBO", the television network's owner, WarnerMedia, said in a statement late Monday.

It was also the "largest series launch on HBO Max", its streaming platform, in the United States, Latin America as well as Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the US entertainment giant said. There was "an unprecedented level" of simultaneous streams on the platform, it added. The series has nine episodes and features

Paddy Considine as the kindly King Viserys and Matt Smith as his ambitious brother Prince Daemon.

"Game of Thrones" ran for eight seasons between 2011 and 2019, and other spin-offs are in the works. The HBO show's popularity will likely be measured against "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power", adapted by Amazon Prime Video.

"The Rings of Power" is set 4,000 years before the film trilogy and original books, in a fictional "Second Age"-a historical period sketched out in less detail by Tolkien's writings. Amazon Prime bought the rights for \$250 million almost five years ago. It spent more than \$1 billion for five seasons of the show-each 10 hours long. The first season will launch on September 2.—AFP

Rapper Fetty Wap pleads guilty to drug conspiracy

The rapper Fetty Wap on Monday pleaded guilty to a drug conspiracy charge that alleged he participated in a Long Island-based trafficking ring. The "Trap Queen" rapper born Willie Junior Maxwell II pleaded guilty to distributing and possessing cocaine, the top count against him. He was first arrested last fall on charges that he and other co-conspirators transported, distributed and sold more than 100 kilograms of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and crack cocaine across Long Island and New Jersey between June 2019 and June 2020.

He now faces a five-year mandatory minimum sentence. The plea deal allows him to avoid a potential life behind bars if he had been convicted on all counts.



In this file photo US rapper Fetty Wap poses in the press room during the 2015 MTV Movie Awards in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

The rapper did not request a release on bond and remains in custody awaiting sentencing at a yet-unscheduled date. FBI agents originally arrested Maxwell on October 28, 2021 at the Citi Field baseball stadium in Queens, where he had been scheduled to perform at the Rolling Loud music festival. He gained recognition when his debut single "Trap Queen" reached number two on the US charts in 2015. — AFP



British actor Paddy Considine poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon" premiere at Leicester Square Gardens, in London. — AFP photos



British actor Steve Toussaint poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon" premiere.



English actress Olivia Cooke poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon" premiere.

Bad guys turn good in China 'Minions' movie ending

What's small, yellow, loves bananas and promotes the rule of law? A Minion, at least according to an edited version of the latest animated film featuring supervillain Gru and his army of tiny sidekicks being screened in China. The fifth installment of the lucrative "Despicable Me" franchise, "Minions: The Rise of Gru", premiered in China this month, several weeks after the film opened in United States cinemas.

But while the international version of the kung fu-filled family-friendly romp set in 1970s San Francisco tells the story of how the dastardly Gru cut his teeth as a tween criminal, filmmakers in China are treated to an alternative ending in which the good guys win. A series of subtitled still images inserted into the credits sequence on mainland Chinese screens reassures audiences that police catch Gru's law-breaking mentor Wild Knuckles and lock him up for 20 years after a failed heist.

International viewers simply see Knuckles give police the slip by faking his death earlier in the film's concluding scenes, but in the Chinese version he puts his con artist skills to positive use in prison, where he follows his "love of acting" and sets up a theatrical troupe. As for Gru, he "eventually became one of the good guys", devoted to raising his family, the Chinese ending says.

It is not the first time a popular foreign film has been altered for cinemas in China, where the entertainment industry faces some of the world's strictest censorship rules and is tasked with promoting "healthy" values. David Fincher's 1999 cult classic

"Fight Club" starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton was given similar treatment when Chinese streaming platform Tencent Video in January uploaded a version where police shut down the protagonist's plan to bring down modern civilization.

And the highly anticipated return of US sitcom "Friends" to Chinese streaming platforms in February prompted fury among fans after viewers noticed a LGBTQ plotline was cut. It is unclear if the "Minions" ending was altered due to censors' demands or if producers considered it a more palatable conclusion for the Chinese market.



Universal did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. Social media reaction to the Chinese "Minions" ending was mixed, with one person on the Twitter-like Weibo social media platform saying they had gone to the cinema specifically to see the new ending but was disappointed that it was "just subtitles".—AFP

Sports

England captain Stokes reveals he is taking anxiety medication

Test captain battling with mental health issues

LONDON: England Test captain Ben Stokes has revealed he takes anxiety medication every day to help his battle with mental health issues. Stokes stepped away from cricket last year to focus on his mental health after enduring a series of panic attacks. The 31-year-old's father, Ged, died of brain cancer two years ago and Stokes opted out of his sport for six months as he struggled to come to terms with the loss.

"I never thought I would be on medication to help me for that kind of stuff. I am not embarrassed or ashamed to say it because I needed the help at the time," Stokes said in an Amazon documentary, which will be released on Friday. "But it's not done just because I'm back playing. I still speak to the doc, not as regularly, and I'm still taking medication every day. It's an ongoing process."

Since being appointed England's red-ball captain earlier this year, Stokes and new Test coach Brendon McCullum have overseen their team's impressive revival. But Stokes still finds it hard to cope with international cricket's relentless schedule. In July, the World Cup winner announced he would retire from

one-day internationals due to the "unsustainable" demands of playing all three formats.

Keen to further open the debate about mental health, Stokes allowed himself to be filmed for the documentary even when he was at his lowest ebb. "I find sometimes people are a bit nervous to go into the detail about that kind of stuff with me. It's perceived you can't feel a certain way, that's a sign of weakness to show that you are not mentally feeling great," he told The Telegraph. "People think they can't ask people who have struggled. No. It's fine. I'll happily tell you as much as I possibly can."

Stokes said at the time of his father's death he resented the England cricket hierarchy and pondered if he was "playing for the wrong people" because he had been unable to visit him as much as he wanted during the cancer battle. "So I had a real thing with cricket at the time I took a break. I was really angry at the sport because it was dictating when I could see my dad," Stokes said. Stokes will be in action for England in the second Test against South Africa at Old Trafford on Thursday, with the hosts trailing 1-0 in the three-match series.—AFP



Ben Stokes of England

Tears and team spirit: High-school baseball grips Japan

TOKYO: Japanese baseball star Shohei Ohtani matched a Babe Ruth record this summer in the United States and scooped an award for a top male athlete, but back home, everyone has been glued to the high-school tournament where he started out. August in Japan means blazing heat, syrupy shaved ice and one thing on TV: Koshien, the contest that launched the career of greats like Ohtani, the 2021 American League's Most Valuable Player.

The annual two-week tournament, which held its championship game Monday in which Sendai Ikuei triumphed 8-1 over Shimonoseki Kokusai, was cancelled in 2020 and took place with nearly empty stands last year because of the pandemic. But now that the spectators are back, a festive atmosphere has filled the revered Koshien Stadium in western Japan that gives the teenage showdown its name.

"You can't avoid it in the summer," said Ema Ryan Yamazaki, a filmmaker who directed the 2019 documentary "Koshien: Japan's Field of Dreams". "It's very dramatic, because every game is a knockout. You only have one try, so unexpected things can happen. There are no guarantees," she told AFP. While in Western countries "people love the winners", at Koshien, "it's almost like the cameras prefer the losing team," as they zoom in to broadcast the tears and heartbreak, Yamazaki said.

From cheerleaders and school bands to team jerseys in classic preppy styles, Koshien reflects base-

ball's American origins. But there is much that makes the tournament unique, from its timing in mid-August, when many people visit their hometowns to pay respects to their ancestors, to the tradition of losers scraping up dirt from the ground-not allowed this year because of COVID-19 infection fears.

'Extreme discipline'

Koshien, officially called the All-Japan High School Baseball Championship Tournament, was first held in 1915. A similar contest takes place each spring at the stadium. Thousands of teams compete in the qualifying rounds, but only 49 make it to the summer tournament-one from each of Japan's 47 regions, except Tokyo and Hokkaido, which both send two teams. Koshien is the birthplace of Major League Baseball stars including Ichiro Suzuki, Hideki Matsui and the 28-year-old Ohtani, and it rivals professional baseball for popularity.

Ohtani, the two-way Los Angeles Angels star, matched Ruth's record, set more than 100 years ago, of 10 home runs and 10 pitching wins in the same season this year. And Ohtani was last month named best male athlete at the made-for-television ESPY Awards for top sports performers, beating out luminaries such as NBA championship winner Stephen Curry for the accolade. Young Koshien players hoping to emulate Ohtani face traditions such as marathon practice sessions and games played in punishing temperatures.

But some old ways are changing, said Yamazaki, with more schools abandoning shaving players' heads-once a symbol of the "extreme discipline" and sacrifice required. Koshien also offers a chance for people to show support for students from their region, even if they can't return home that year, according to Yamazaki. "Adults also look and appreciate the purer versions of themselves—the youth giving it their all, for one short summer," she said.—AFP



ST PETERSBURG: Shohei Ohtani #17 of the Los Angeles Angels strikes out in the sixth inning against the Tampa Bay Rays at Tropicana Field on August 22, 2022 in St Petersburg, Florida. — AFP

South Africa look to snap barren run in Australia

ADELAIDE: South Africa recalled scrumhalf Faf de Klerk and winger Warrick Gelant Monday in the only changes to the starting team as they strive to snap a nine-year winless streak in Australia. The world champions head into their clash at Adelaide Oval Saturday on the back of a 35-23 home loss to New Zealand, having stunned the All Blacks 26-10 in their Rugby Championship opener. Australia will also run out after tasting defeat, embarrassed 48-17 by Argentina a week after beating them 41-26. The Wallabies name their team on Thursday. "This is a very important clash for us to set the tone for our Rugby Championship tour and we feel that continuity in selection is important to build momentum in our campaign," said head coach Jacques Nienaber.

De Klerk returns after missing the second All Blacks Test due to concussion and will earn his 40th cap in place of Jaden Hendrikse, while Racing 92 flyer

Gelant takes over from Jesse Kriel. Right wing has been a problem position for the Springboks this season with first choice Cheslin Kolbe breaking his jaw against Wales last month. The Toulon speedster has been ruled out until the final match of the southern hemisphere tournament, against Argentina in Durban on September 24. Kurt-Lee Arendse replaced him for the opening New Zealand Test but was sent off and banned for four internationals. Kriel took over for the second clash, but lasted just 10 minutes before being injured. "Warrick was in good form for the DHL Stormers earlier this season and he has been working hard at training, so we thought it would be good to give him a run on the wing," said Nienaber. "Faf, meanwhile, is back from concussion and his experience will be important in this game."

Nienaber made three changes to the bench, which features five forwards and three backs, with Jaden Hendrikse in for Herschel Jantjies. Elton Jantjies and Frans Steyn will provide cover at the back with Willie le Roux and Jasper Wiese missing out. Australia has not been a happy hunting ground for the Springboks, losing six of the last seven Tests on the Wallabies home territory and drawing the other. They have not won on Australian soil since 2013, but have two chances to break the drought with the Adelaide Test followed a week later by a clash in Sydney.—AFP

Retallick on the verge of return

WELLINGTON: Veteran lock Brodie Retallick is on the verge of returning from a broken cheekbone after being included as a non-playing member of the All Blacks squad for Saturday's home Test against Argentina. Captain Sam Cane heads a 35-man squad for the Test in Christchurch as the All Blacks look to build on their impressive 35-23 win over South Africa in Johannesburg a fortnight ago.

The win over the world champions ended a three-match losing streak to ease some of the pressure on coach Ian Foster going into their third game in The Rugby Championship. Foster was last week given a vote of confidence to take New Zealand to next year's World Cup.

"We saw plenty of desire in the win over South Africa, now we have to continue that against a very strong Argentina side," Foster said on Monday. Retallick, who has played 95 Tests for New Zealand, has been sidelined since suffering the horror injury in New Zealand's series-deciding third Test defeat to Ireland last month. The 31-year-old is available to play for his provincial team this weekend to regain match fitness. "Brodie is ahead of schedule with the likelihood of playing for Hawke's Bay and if that goes well, we will reassess," Foster said.

The All Blacks are definitely without centre Jack Goodhue, who needs surgery on a persistent knee injury. "He has a niggly knee with a lot of swelling, so he will have a tidy-up (operation)," said Foster with the timescale for Goodhue's absence unknown a year before the Rugby World Cup kicks off. It's a cruel blow

for the 27-year-old Goodhue, who had just forced his way back into the New Zealand squad after a year sidelined by a previous knee injury.

All Blacks squad:

Forwards: Sam Cane (capt), Dane Coles, Samisoni Taukei'aho, Codie Taylor, George Bower, Ethan de Groot, Tyrel Lomax, Fletcher Newell, Aidan Ross, Angus Ta'avao, Scott Barrett, Josh Dickson, Brodie Retallick, Tupou Vaa'i, Samuel Whitelock, Shannon Frizell, Akira Ioane, Dalton Papali'i, Ardie Savea, Hoskins Sotutu.



New Zealand's Brodie Retallick

Backs: Finlay Christie, Folau Fakatava, Aaron Smith, Beauden Barrett, Richie Mo'unga, Stephen Perofeta, Braydon Ennor, David Havili, Rieko Ioane, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Quinn Tupaea, Jordie Barrett, Caleb Clarke, Leicester Fainga'anuku, Will Jordan, Sevu Reece.—AFP

Ten Hag: Ronaldo has United future despite Reds axe

LONDON: Erik ten Hag insists Cristiano Ronaldo still has a future at Manchester United after the Portugal star suffered the embarrassment of being dropped for his side's rousing 2-1 win against Liverpool. United looked far more dynamic without Ronaldo as they stunned Liverpool to end a dismal run of two successive defeats at the start of the Premier League season. With the ageing Ronaldo reduced to a substitute appearance in the closing minutes at Old Trafford on Monday, United were finally able to successfully deploy Ten Hag's aggressive game plan.

Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Anthony Elanga formed an attacking triumvirate that gave United the pace and energy they lacked in the 2-1 defeat against Brighton and the subsequent 4-0 humiliation at Brentford. Vindicating Ten Hag's decision to axe Ronaldo and igniting fresh debate about his future, it was Sancho who scored United's opener and Rashford who doubled their lead.

After missing United's pre-season tour due to "family reasons" amid reports he had told the club he wanted to leave, Ronaldo was already unsettled heading into the new season. United's failure to qualify for this season's Champions League convinced Ronaldo he should quit a club without a major trophy since 2017, giving Ten Hag a major headache just weeks after his arrival from Ajax. But, with United insisting Ronaldo is not for sale, the former Real Madrid and Juventus striker has found himself in limbo.

The 37-year-old, who finished as United's top scorer last term, hardly appeared committed to the Ten Hag regime when he walked out of Old Trafford before full-time after being substituted during a pre-season friendly against Rayo Vallecano. A limp substitute appearance in the second half of the Brighton defeat was further evidence of a potential rift between the five-time Ballon d'Or winner and his manager. Ronaldo played the entire 90 minutes of United's loss against Brentford, but he offered little attacking threat in one of the club's worst results in recent memory.

'Difficult decisions'

That left Ten Hag with a major decision to make as he pondered his team for the crucial clash with Liverpool. Dropping Ronaldo and then watching United lose to their arch rivals would have put huge

pressure on Ten Hag.

But the Dutch coach refused to be cowed by the situation as he left out by Ronaldo and England defender Harry Maguire, a bold move that paid dividends as United climbed out of the relegation zone with their first win this season. Now United have won impressively without Ronaldo—surely consigning him to the bench for the immediate future—there could be fresh impetus from the striker and his agent Jorge Mendes to force through a transfer. It is hard to imagine Ronaldo being able to adapt to Ten Hag's high-tempo philosophy in the twilight of his career.

But, publicly at least, Ten Hag is adamant Ronaldo has a part to play in his plans. "I think he can. In his whole career he did it under several managers, in several styles and systems. He always performed so why can't he do this? His age is not an issue," Ten Hag said after the Liverpool game. "We have a squad and we have a way of playing, a style and a game plan. You look at what is the best approach to the game. Today it was those players, Saturday it could be different."

In Ronaldo's absence, United's defiant attitude against Liverpool provided the template for the Ten Hag era. New signing Casemiro, recruited from Real Madrid, epitomises that spirit and Ten Hag wants to see the same from Ronaldo. "We were talking about leadership, today we had leadership on the pitch, he is one as well," Ten Hag said of Casemiro. "Ronaldo has it, so you need some and it is like guidance for young players who didn't achieve the trophies."

Pressed on Ronaldo and Maguire's future, Ten Hag added: "I don't have to mention Harry Maguire and Ronaldo, they are amazing players and they will play a role in the future, the short (term) future as well. "It is always difficult (to leave them out) but I have decisions to make." Whether that olive branch is enough to stop the Ronaldo dilemma from derailing Ten Hag's United revolution remains to be seen.—AFP



Cristiano Ronaldo

Sports

Favela kid Coelho helps make badminton a smash in Brazil

PE teacher used samba dance steps to develop players' footwork

TOKYO: Ygor Coelho grew up avoiding bullets in his Rio favela—now his exploits on the badminton court are inspiring Brazilians to pick up a racquet and try the sport themselves. Coelho learned to play badminton on a dirt court set up by his father and it took him all the way to the Olympics in Rio in 2016 and again five years later in Tokyo.

Now the world number 51 has established himself at badminton's top table and he says more people in his football-mad nation are aiming to follow in his footsteps. "I can see now a lot of kids," the 25-year-old told AFP after taking Indonesian world number six Anthony Sinisuka Ginting to three games before losing in the first round of the world championships in Tokyo on Monday. "They are very motivated to play with the best players in the world. They can see that even though I came from the favelas, they can achieve this dream."

Coelho's PE teacher father Sebastiao Dias de Oliveira started a badminton program in the drug-plagued Chacrinha favela in the late 1990s. He used samba dance steps to develop the players' footwork and his son Ygor progressed quickly after taking up the sport at the age of three. Many of his friends died or got mixed up in drugs but Coelho persevered and became Brazil's first-ever Olympian in badminton at the 2016 Rio Games. Now he lives in Denmark and has trained

in France and Asia—something once unthinkable for a Brazilian badminton player.

Samba magic

Coelho was unable to finish off Ginting when he had him on the ropes on Monday but he said he is "ready to take one step ahead" in his development as he looks towards the 2024 Paris Games. "I hope I can qualify for the Olympics and if I work hard enough I can get out of the pool and try to win an Olympic medal—that's my dream," he said.

Coelho's 13-21, 21-15, 21-12 defeat to Ginting did nothing to dampen his mood, with the good-natured Brazilian even teaching his opponent a few samba steps after the match. Coelho believes samba is the perfect training for badminton and helps develop a player's rhythm and agility. "Dance has a lot of similar things to badminton—we dance on court," he said. "I think it helps me to get rhythm and play at different speeds and movements."

Coelho is also a football fan and "a strong believer" that Brazil will win the World Cup for a sixth time this year in Qatar. But he will be happy if badminton can steal just a fraction of football's limelight back home. "A few years back, when I was at school, people didn't even know it was now people know what it is," he said. "They could see it in Rio at the Olympics and now they can sometimes see it in the news. I can see it developing." —AFP



TOKYO: Ygor Coelho of Brazil hits a return against Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia during their men's singles match on day one of the Badminton World Championships in Tokyo on August 22, 2022. —AFP

Champion Yamaguchi cruises in badminton worlds opener

TOKYO: Reigning women's champion and top seed Akane Yamaguchi cruised through her opening game at the world badminton championships on Tuesday, while men's number one Viktor Axelsen continued his smooth progress. Japan's Yamaguchi beat Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung 21-12, 21-15 in front of an appreciative home crowd in Tokyo to kick off her hunt for a second straight world title.

"I wasn't really nervous but you do get players who lose in the first round and go straight out, so I was really focused on getting the result," said 25-year-old Yamaguchi. "I never felt that I had any breathing space until towards the end of the second game. It was more about dealing with my opponent than me going on the attack." Spain's Carolina Marin, who is aiming to win a record fourth world title in Tokyo, got her campaign off to a steady start with a 21-16, 21-14 win over Canada's Wen Yu Zhang.

Former world number one Marin endured a horror 2021, missing both the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics and the world championships in her hometown of Huelva after suffering an ACL injury. Marin returned to action in April this year but she said Tuesday that she was "not 100 percent yet". "This is the condition that I have right now and I have to play in this condition," said Marin, seeded number five for the competition.

"Let's see how far I can go in this tournament. Of course I want to get a medal here and I want to win, but this is not something I have in my mind." There were also first-round wins for South Korean number three seed An Se-young - 21-18, 21-10 over Vietnam's Thuy Linh Nguyen - and India's Saina Nehwal, who beat Hong Kong's Cheung Ngan Yi 21-



TOKYO: Akane Yamaguchi of Japan returns a shot against Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia during their women's singles match on day two of the Badminton World Championships in Tokyo on August 23, 2022. —AFP



TOKYO: Mother-and-son pair Svetlana Zilberman and Misha Zilberman prepare to receive a serve from Malaysian pair Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing during their mixed doubles event on day two of the Badminton World Championships in Tokyo on August 23, 2022. —AFP

Mum's the word for record-breaking shuttler Zilberman

TOKYO: Mum's the word for 64-year-old badminton braveheart Svetlana Zilberman as she rolls back the years and breaks records alongside her son Misha at the world championships in Tokyo. At 25, Belarus-born Svetlana was considered too old to be picked for the Soviet Union's team for the championships when she was in the prime of her career. Now, almost four decades later, she is playing on the sport's highest stage and became the competition's oldest-ever winner when she and Misha won their first-round mixed doubles match on Monday. "They said I was old when I was 25 - now I am a young woman," Svetlana told AFP on Tuesday.

Svetlana became the oldest player to win a world championship match when she and 33-year-old Misha beat Egypt's Adham Hatem Elgamal and Doha Hany 16-21, 21-18, 21-11. The next player on the list is almost 20 years younger and Svetlana says she may even be back to try to update her record at next year's tournament in Copenhagen. "I'm still not tired from playing, so who knows," she said after she and Misha bowed out of the championships on Tuesday with a 21-6, 21-5 loss to Malaysian number eight seeds Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing.

'No discussion'

The Zilbermans, who both represent Zionist entity, first teamed up as a way for Misha to prepare for his favoured men's singles events. Svetlana coaches her son and she could not find him a suitable partner so she took on the job herself, first appearing together at the world championships in 2009.

Misha says the arrangement keeps them both in shape and he described their first-round victory in Tokyo as "an amazing feeling". "My category is men's singles and we play mixed doubles just to get the feeling, not focusing on the results," he said. "When we can win in mixed, it's a good feeling and we are very happy." Misha says their relationship on court is "like any mixed doubles players", with discussions on how to improve and swing the match in their favor.

Off the court, however, he says "she is my coach, so there is no discussion". World number 47 Misha has appeared in men's singles at the Olympics three times and he finished third at this summer's European championships in Madrid. Approaching his mid-30s, he could be forgiven for turning his thoughts towards retirement. But inspired by his record-breaking mother, he plans to keep playing for the foreseeable future. "My mum never retired, so you can think that about me also," he said. "I don't see myself retiring." —AFP

Showboating Momota thrills home fans at badminton worlds

TOKYO: Showboating Japanese badminton star Kento Momota promised to cool down after being fired up by an adoring home crowd in his first-round win at the world championships in Tokyo on Monday. Second-seeded Momota's career has been in free fall since a car crash more than two years ago which left him badly hurt, but he looked back on top form during a 21-16, 21-14 win over Mexico's Lino Munoz.

Momota rushed out to an early lead and seemed to be enjoying the adulation of the Tokyo crowd, until world number 82 Munoz started to come back into the match. Momota said he had wanted to show the crowd what he could do "a little too much" and promised to "calm down" in his next match. "I scored a point and I heard a little girl behind me shout out 'brilliant,'" said a sheepish Momota after the match.

"I heard that and thought I wanted to do it again, but then I ended up giving away the next point. Next time I'll try and keep my cool." Momota advanced to the next round along with top-ranked Dane Viktor Axelsen, but third-seeded Anders Antonsen crashed out at the first hurdle. The 2019 world silver medalist fell behind early and never managed to get a foothold in a 21-15, 21-19 loss to Japan's Kenta Nishimoto.

The 25-year-old Antonsen was playing his first competitive match in three months after pulling an abdominal muscle 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

19, 21-9. On the men's side, Denmark's Axelsen was pushed hard in the first game of his second-round match against Mark Caljouw of the Netherlands before hitting his stride in a 21-19, 21-10 win.

Axelsen has lost only one match on tour this season and he was again ruthless in putting away Caljouw. "Mark played really well in the first game and made it really hard for me, especially on that far side where the drift is a little bit hard to deal with," said Axelsen. "I'm really happy that I managed to turn it around, it's good to be in the third round and I'm really looking forward to it." Men's number two seed Kento Momota will play India's HS Prannoy on

Wednesday.

China's Shi Yuqi, who is returning from a 10-month ban from the Chinese Badminton Association, continued his comeback with a 21-13, 21-16 second-round win over Denmark's Rasmus Gemke. Shi, a world finalist in 2018, retired during a 2021 match against Momota and was banned by the Chinese Badminton Association for making "inappropriate comments" about his withdrawal. He said he was "trying to prepare myself mentally to get better and better" after beating Gemke. "I'm just taking it one step at a time but I'm hoping to get to the final and win the title," he said. —AFP



Japan's Kento Momota

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 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. Shi, a world finalist in 2018, retired during a 2021 match against Momota and was banned by the Chinese Badminton Association for making "inappropriate comments" about his withdrawal. He said he "felt a bit nervous" as he entered the court to face Dwicahyo but "felt good to be playing again" once he had settled into the match. "It definitely feels a lot different," said the 26-year-old. "When you're playing in training it's a lot different from playing tournaments." Defending champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore also advanced with a 21-12, 21-12 win over Spain's Pablo Abian. —AFP

Sports

Sampdoria hold uninspired Juventus to a goalless draw

Smalling heads Roma past Cremonese after more injury drama



GENOA: Sampdoria's Italian forward Fabio Quagliarella from Italy (right) fights for the ball with Juventus's Brazilian defender Bremer (2nd right) during the Italian Serie A football match between Sampdoria and Juventus at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium on August 22, 2022. —AFP



ROME: AS Roma's British defender Chris Smalling (2nd left) celebrates with his teammates after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Cremonese at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on August 22, 2022. —AFP

ROME: Juventus were held to an uneventful goalless draw by Sampdoria on Monday, while Chris Smalling headed Roma to a 1-0 win over Cremonese to make it two wins from two. Massimiliano Allegri's side were uninspired and failed to create much against a solid Samp at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris in Genoa.

The closest they came to taking the points was when Adrien Rabiot's low strike was correctly ruled out for offside, the France midfielder a starter after his move to Manchester United collapsed in the week. Filip Kostic also forced a save from Emil Audero in stoppage time but that was about it from a team aiming to make a league title charge after finishing way behind champions AC Milan last term.

"The positive thing is that we haven't conceded in two games," Allegri told DAZN. "In the second half we did some good things, we scored a goal and created a great chance at the end... but we've left two points behind here." Juve were missing the injured Angel Di Maria and they lacked the stardust which the Argentina winger brought to the team in their season-opener win over Sassuolo last week.

Their sole decent opportunity in the first half was created by a bursting run in the 15th minute from Juan Cuadrado, who however after robbing Tommaso Augello could only shoot straight at Emil Audero in the Samp goal with Dusan Vlahovic to his right.

Vlahovic barely had a touch in the first 45 minutes beyond kicking the ball onto his own post at a corner and was livid with the Colombian for not passing. The Serb started the second period brighter however, flashing a shot wide and claiming in vain for a penalty when clashing with the excellent Omar Colley.

He thought he had set up Juve's opener when Rabiot met his pass with a perfect low finish, but after awarding the goal referee Rosario Abisso then ruled the goal out for Vlahovic straying offside following after a VAR check. Substitute Fabio Quagliarella almost made it a fairytale ending for Samp when he flashed a snap shot wide with a minute left on the clock, but Audero kept out Kostic's scuffed volley and both sides had to settle for a point.

Smalling saves Roma

England defender Smalling met Lorenzo Pellegrini's corner in the 65th minute with a perfect header to send a wave of relief around a packed Stadio Olimpico and secure a hard-fought win. The 32-year-old dedicated his winner to Wijnaldum, who signed from Paris Saint-Germain earlier this month but fractured his shin in training on Sunday. "We're gutted for him and we hope he's back as soon as possible because he's such a quality addition for us," Smalling told DAZN. Roma, who travel to Juve on Saturday,

have a maximum six points from their first two games after a summer full of optimism following their Europa Conference League triumph last season and an impressive transfer window which also brought in Paulo Dybala.

Already reeling from Wijnaldum's injury, more of that positive feeling was drained when starlet Nicolò Zaniolo had to be taken from the field just before half-time with a left shoulder injury following a thumping tackle from Luka Lochoshvili. Fans were anxious after the exit of the 23-year-old Italy international, who has already suffered serious injuries to both his knees in his short career, but he later said on Instagram he would be back "in three weeks".

Without him, Roma had one less threat against Massimiliano Alvini's stubborn Cremonese, who might be on zero points but will trouble a lot of teams in Serie A if they put in more bold displays like Monday's. Twice Cyril Dessers went close with bicycle kicks and just after the break smashed a superb half-volley against the crossbar. Charles Pickel then nearly snatched a point for Cremonese in stoppage time when his rocket shot fizzed millimeters wide. But Smalling's header across Ionut Radu was just enough to gain the three points and join Inter Milan and Napoli at the top of the table. —AFP

Italian Serie A Table

Italian Serie A table after Monday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Napoli	2	2	0	0	9	2	6
Inter Milan	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Roma	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Juventus	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
AC Milan	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Atalanta	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Fiorentina	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Lazio	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Torino	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Sassuolo	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Spezia	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Bologna	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Empoli	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Salermitana	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Udinese	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Sampdoria	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Hellas Verona	2	0	1	1	3	6	1
Cremonese	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Lecce	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Monza	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Mariupol footballers stay strong

DEMYDIV: As Ukraine's football season kicked off on Tuesday despite the ongoing Russian invasion, players from a Mariupol club are hoping to do their devastated city proud after a dramatic escape from their home. FSC Mariupol are warming up in the tiny village stadium of Demydiv 20 kilometers north of Kyiv - hundreds of kilometres from their base in the strategic port hub on the Sea of Azov. Oleksandr Yaroshenko, the club's president, told AFP that he motivates the team's players by telling them: "You don't just play football. You have to play because we are Mariupol."

Yaroshenko remembers that the club played a friendly two days before the February 24 invasion. Nobody at the time believed Russia would attack. Two days later, the first bombs fell on the city and Russian forces surrounded it within days. When electricity and running water began to be cut off at the beginning of March due to the constant shelling, players and coaches began to converge on the club's base in the city centre.

Yaroshenko, who also owns a medical business, said he volunteered to coordinate medical facilities in the city - which has seen some of the most intense fighting in the past six months of war. Yaroshenko initially asked the players to leave on a club bus - a big black coach with the inscription "Mariupol" above the windshield parked metres from the stadium. But, not wanting to leave their relatives or fearing to come under fire along the way, most of the players refused to flee.



SC Mariupol's president Oleksandr Yaroshenko

Morale boost

Only a week later, the players and their relatives eventually decided to go. "Our aim was to get out of Mariupol. We were not going to be somewhere together," Yaroshenko said. But they only managed to get to Berdyansk, a Russia-occupied town, from where everyone dispersed in different directions, including the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula, Georgia and Poland. FSC Mariupol will be playing in Ukraine's second tier and its first game of the season will be against Lviv club Karpaty in western Ukraine. The city's main club, FC Mariupol, which is in the Premier League, has been allowed to skip the season with a right to return in the next one.

Premier League rival Desna from the northern city of Chernigiv whose stadium was hit by a Russian rocket, received the same exemption. The decision to begin the season reportedly came from President Volodymyr Zelensky himself in order to give the country a morale boost. Matches will be held without spectators due to security reasons, many clubs will play their home games not in their



KYIV: FSC Mariupol's coach reacts during warming-up match against FC Nyva at a tiny Demydiv village stadium 20 kilometers north of Kyiv. —AFP

own cities, but largely in the safer western or central regions.

Against all odds

The war has had a devastating effect on football clubs, particularly smaller and less financially secure ones. Only 10 of FSC Mariupol's players eventually reached their new base in the Kyiv outskirts. The team was completed with young players

from other clubs, including other teams from the war-ravaged Donetsk region. "Now the most important thing is participation," Yaroshenko said of the club's decision to play the season against all odds. "We do not know whether the game that has begun will end or not, whether the championship will end or not." "Today it is more of an ideological team, which is built on the philosophy that this is Mariupol and that we are alive." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

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

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

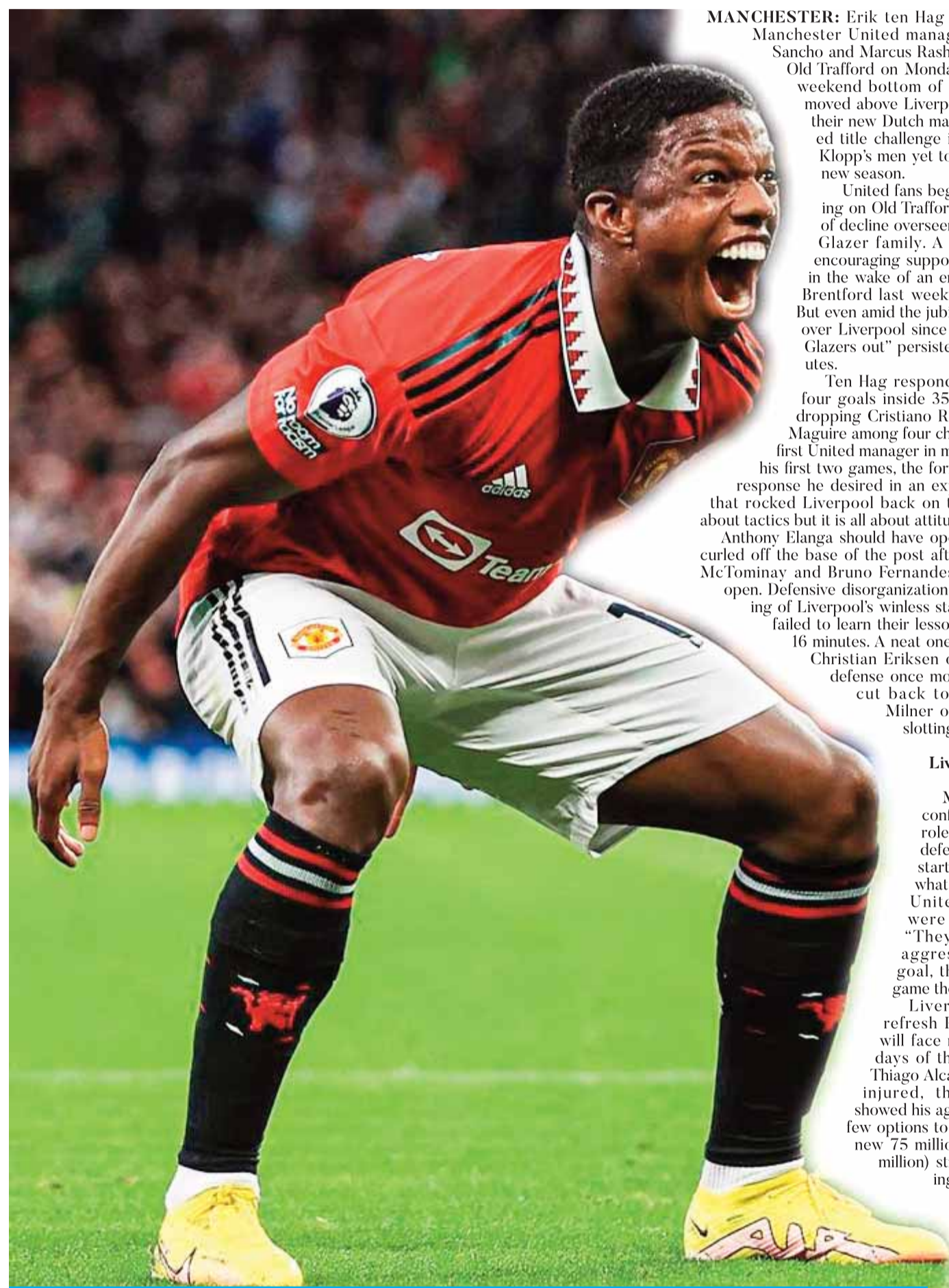
CHANGE OF NAME

I have changed my name MOHAMAD ISHAQ ABDUL HAMID CHOGLA (old name) to MOHAMAD ISHAQ ABDUL HAMID CHOGLA (new name)
Address: At & Post-Nilik, Tal Khed, Dist. Ratnagiri Maharashtra State-415709. (C# 2040)

Ranjit Khiva holder of Passport No. L1435090 do hereby change my name to RANJIT (as Given name) SINGH (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name RANJIT SINGH and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2041) 23-08-2022

Manchester United overpower Liverpool, give Ten Hag lift off

Liverpool's expected title challenge fading fast



Manchester United's Dutch defender Tyrell Malacia during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Liverpool. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag secured his first win as Manchester United manager as goals from Jadon Sancho and Marcus Rashford beat Liverpool 2-1 at Old Trafford on Monday. United had started the weekend bottom of the Premier League, but moved above Liverpool on a massive night for their new Dutch manager. Liverpool's expected title challenge is fading fast with Jurgen Klopp's men yet to win three games into the new season.

United fans began the evening by marching on Old Trafford in protest at the decade of decline overseen by the club's owners, the Glazer family. A social media movement encouraging supporters to boycott the game in the wake of an embarrassing 4-0 defeat at Brentford last weekend failed to materialize. But even amid the jubilation of a first league win over Liverpool since 2018, chants of "we want Glazers out" persisted throughout the 90 minutes.

Ten Hag responded to the concession of four goals inside 35 minutes at Brentford by dropping Cristiano Ronaldo and captain Harry Maguire among four changes. After becoming the first United manager in more than a century to lose his first two games, the former Ajax manager got the response he desired in an explosive opening half hour that rocked Liverpool back on their heels. "We can talk about tactics but it is all about attitude," said Ten Hag.

Anthony Elanga should have opened the scoring when he curled off the base of the post after two passes from Scott McTominay and Bruno Fernandes carved Liverpool wide open. Defensive disorganization has been a repeated failing of Liverpool's winless start to the season and they failed to learn their lesson for the opening goal on 16 minutes. A neat one-two between Elanga and Christian Eriksen opened up the Liverpool defense once more and when the ball was cut back to Sancho, he left James Milner on the floor before coolly slotting home.

Liverpool lacking midfield options

Milner bounced back up to confront Virgil Van Dijk for his role in the goal as the Dutch defender sat off Sancho. "The start of the game was exactly what everyone expected, what United fans expected, they were after us," said Klopp. "They started slightly more aggressive than us. After the goal, they could more play the game they wanted."

Liverpool's reluctance to refresh Klopp's midfield options will face more scrutiny in the final days of the transfer window. With Thiago Alcantara and Naby Keita out injured, the 36-year-old Milner showed his age and Klopp had precious few options to turn to on the bench with new 75 million euro (£64 million, \$77 million) striker Darwin Nunez serving the first of a three-match ban for being sent off on his home debut.

Liverpool's lack of energy in midfield was exposed for United's second goal as Jordan Henderson's poor touch presented

possession to Anthony Martial and his perfect through ball set Rashford free to score his first goal since January. Restoring Rashford's confidence is one of the many tasks that still lie ahead for Ten Hag. But the England attacker looked more like his old self and only a fine save from Alisson low to his left denied Rashford his second and United's third.

"For me it is about my mentality," said Rashford. "When I am happy and feel happy I will play well, score goals and help the team." United goalkeeper David de Gea's error opened the floodgates at Brentford but the Spaniard also played his part in a night of redemption with a point-blank save from Luis Diaz. Mohamed Salah's header set up a grandstand finish 10 minutes from time, but United summoned a steel rarely seen in recent seasons to see out the closing stages and secure a much-needed boost for their new boss. — AFP

Slow start gives Liverpool, Klopp cause for concern

MANCHESTER: Three months ago Liverpool stood on the brink of an unprecedented quadruple of trophies. Three games into the new season, they are yet to win a game. A 2-1 defeat at Old Trafford on Monday saw Jurgen Klopp's men leapfrogged in the fledgling English Premier League table by a Manchester United side that had spent the past week being ridiculed for losing 4-0 at Brentford.

Liverpool's worst start for a decade leaves the Reds already trailing defending champions Manchester City by five points and early leaders Arsenal by seven. "It's not the nicest thing to look at, that's clear," said Klopp on his side slipping to 16th after three games. Of even more concern for the German is that there does not appear a quick fix for the issues that have caused such a slow start.

An early season injury crisis meant Thiago Alcantara, Naby Keita, Ibrahima Konate, Joel Matip and Diogo Jota were among those unavailable for the trip to Old Trafford. Darwin Nunez was also missing after Liverpool's new 75 million euro (£64 million, \$77 million) striker served the first of his three-game ban for the red card he received for headbutting Crystal Palace defender Joachim Andersen last week.

Nunez's arrival from Benfica accounts for most of Liverpool's spend in the transfer window and the decision not to refresh Klopp's midfield options is a growing source of frustration among the Reds' support. Without Thiago and Keita, the 36-year-old James Milner and Harvey Elliott, 19, lined up either side of captain Jordan Henderson in midfield on Monday. Klopp admitted before the game that it would be "cool" to have another midfield option.

Alexander-Arnold targeted

That is not the only area of concern for Klopp. Trent Alexander-Arnold's defensive positioning is being increasingly targeted by the opposition. Following on from Real Madrid's winner in last season's Champions League final and Fulham's joy on the opening weekend of the season, an attack down Liverpool's right was the source for United's first goal.

Virgil van Dijk has also looked far from the world's best centre-back in recent weeks and was on the receiving end of a telling off from Milner for his role in giving Jadon Sancho the space to slot home the opening goal. Up front, the loss of Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich is hitting hard with Roberto Firmino looking a spent force as he deputized for Nunez. Slow starts are also a common theme in Liverpool's recent struggles.

They have now conceded first in their last seven Premier League games stretching back to the end of last season. "We're giving every team a goal start, we can't keep giving ourselves an uphill battle," said Andy Robertson. "In the warm-up it was the quietest I have heard this stadium and they wanted something to lift them and we gave them it. "Two points from nine is not the start we wanted. We need to pick up our performances individually and collectively.

"It is easy to talk about it in the changing room but we have to go out and do it. We can't keep conceding goals. They started better than us today. It needs to change." A first defeat in 31 games in domestic football stretching back to December is no time for panic. But City and Liverpool have raised the bar in jousting for the title over the past five years with in excess of 90 points now normally needed to be crowned champions. To reach those heights again, Klopp's men have no time to waste in awakening from their early-season slumber. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's English striker Marcus Rashford (left) shoots past Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (right) to score their second goal during the English Premier League football match on August 22, 2022. — AFP