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70 candidates file to run on second day of registration

Ex-MP Khalifa surrenders to police after filing his nomination

Sheikh Talal tours military, security sites



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the 26th Al-Sour Mechanized Division and Abdaly border crossing. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Seventy new candidates including two women filed nominations to run in the upcoming National Assembly polls on the second day of registration on Tuesday, bringing the total number of hopefuls to 185, including 10 females. The new candidates include nine members of the dissolved Assembly, bringing the total number of these members to 25. The candidates also include seven former lawmakers from previous assemblies, raising their number to 14.

Prominent among new candidates were deputy speaker of the dissolved house Ahmad Al-Shuhoumi, former opposition MPs Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Hamdan Al-Azemi and Marzouq Al-Khalifa. They also included the controversial candidate Mohammad Al-Juwaihel, who was a member of the 2012 Assembly which was nullified by the court.

Ex-MP Khalifa gave himself up to the police immediately after filing his nomination papers. He was taken to jail pending a ruling from the top court on Sept 12 regarding accusations he took part in outlawed tribal primary elections just ahead of the Dec 5, 2020 general polls. Khalifa was sentenced to two years in jail by the lower court. The verdict was upheld by the court of

appeals, but he challenged the ruling before the court of cassation, whose rulings are final. The court of cassation judge ordered that Khalifa should go to jail until the court issues its verdict.

Juwaihel is known for his extremely controversial statements. After registering to run in the third constituency, he told reporters that he will focus to "get rid of stateless people", locally known as bedoons, who claim to be Kuwaiti citizens. "We must find a solution to get rid of them," he said, adding that he has documents to prove his case. Juwaihel also said he will not vote for veteran opposition leader Ahmad Al-Saadoun as speaker because "he does not deserve it".

Former MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said the dissolution of the Assembly came after cooperation between the Assembly and the government became impossible. He said the country experienced a "black decade" in the past 10 years, during which corruption was rife and the constitution was violated in a flagrant way. Former MP Hamdan Al-Azemi said the country is passing through a crucial period, adding that some reform steps have started and "we hope they will continue". The snap polls will be held on Sept 29. Registration of candidates will continue until Sept 7.

News in brief

Kuwaitis urged to leave Iraq

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad has advised nationals who are currently in Iraq to leave soon and those planning to travel to Iraq to defer their trips due to the situation unfolding there. In a press statement, the embassy also encouraged nationals in Iraq to contact it on the hotline 0096407802604123. — KUNA

No plan to widen 60+ rule

KUWAIT: The panel to fix the demographic imbalance in the country rejected a request to apply the regulations related to work permits for expats over 60 years of age without a degree to all expats without a degree. Currently, all expat workers over 60 without a degree can only renew their work permits for a KD 250 fee, in addition to full private health insurance and other charges, amounting to nearly KD 850. "There are now many jobs where expatriates are still needed, so in order not to cause a mass exodus, the committee decided not to accept the request to change the regulations," sources told Kuwait Times.

Govt to use numbers for streets

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has agreed to use numbers instead of names on streets based on instructions of HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. "The prime minister instructed to number streets instead of using names. The exception is for streets named after the rulers of Kuwait and brotherly and friendly countries," sources told Kuwait Times. The prime minister also called to ensure reciprocal treatment when naming streets with capitals of brotherly and friendly countries.

Mina Abdullah fire was arson

KUWAIT: The fire that erupted in an industrial area of Mina Abdullah on Saturday was an act of arson, Kuwait Fire Force announced on Tuesday. KFF said in a press release that investigators reached this conclusion based on testimonies by witnesses, indicating that relevant legal authorities have been advised to impose necessary penalties against the purported arsonist or arsonists. — KUNA

'Disney on Ice' soon in Kuwait; talks on to host 'Winter Wonderland'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Tamdeen Group, Kuwait's leading property developer, announced on Tuesday it will soon launch the world-famous theatrical show "Disney on Ice". The group has signed an agreement with SES Live, the regional leader in providing live family entertainment. The live show will be held at Arena Kuwait, one of Tamdeen's projects located at 360 Mall's new extension.

Tamdeen Group revealed that the move is in line with their vision of developing the entertainment and sports sector to new levels in Kuwait by

Continued on Page 6



Iran seizes, then releases US Navy drone vessel

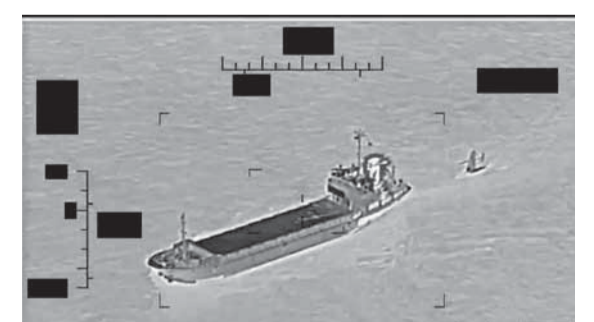
WASHINGTON: An Iranian ship seized an American military unmanned research vessel in the Gulf but released it after a US Navy patrol boat and helicopter were deployed to the location, the Pentagon said Tuesday. The US Central Command's 5th Fleet said a support ship from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, the Shahid Baziar, was spotted towing the seven-meter

Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel (USV) late Monday.

The US naval drone, equipped with an array of sensors, radars and cameras, was in international waters collecting navigation and other unspecified data, the 5th Fleet said in a statement. When the Iranian vessel was seen towing the unmanned boat, US forces sent the USS Thunderbolt coastal patrol ship, which was operating nearby, to the scene.

In addition, an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter based in Bahrain flew to the location. Those actions "resulted in the IRGCN vessel disconnecting the towing line to the USV and departing the area approximately four hours later" without further incident, the 5th Fleet said.

Continued on Page 6



This US Navy handout video grab shows Iranian navy support ship "Shahid Baziar" towing a Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel in international waters in the Gulf on Aug 30, 2022. — AFP

Iraq protesters disperse after Sadr ultimatum

BAGHDAD: Iraqi supporters of powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr withdrew Tuesday from Baghdad's Green Zone after he demanded an end to fighting between rival Shiite forces and the army that left 30 dead and hundreds wounded. The violence that erupted on Monday pitted Sadr loyalists against

Shiite factions backed by neighboring Iran, with the sides exchanging gunfire across barricades - violence the United Nations warned risked tipping the war-ravaged country deeper into chaos.

After Sadr's speech was broadcast live on television, his supporters started dismantling encampments and clearing the Green Zone, where municipal workers began cleaning up shells and bullet casings left in the wake of the unrest. The army lifted a nationwide curfew, with concrete barriers removed from main thoroughfares and traffic slowly starting to trickle back to its normal flow. Sadr, a grey-bearded preacher with millions of devoted

Continued on Page 6



NAJAF: Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr gives a speech in this central holy shrine city on Aug 30, 2022. — AFP

Local

Cabinet continues preparations for National Assembly elections

Ministers discuss mega projects, education, offset program

History, freedom, ethics

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

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“Freedom is the spirit of the ethical stand, and without freedom there are no ethics, mastery, creativity and duty.” - Mustafa Mahmoud

I wonder sometimes what is the relationship between ethics and the science of history, and are ethics a science? Here I will talk about examples of several persons and wonder how they will write history. I, of course, am not speaking about the inaccurate saying that history is written by the victorious, as for sure it is not an accurate saying. This particular expression brings out questions about who is victorious and who is defeated, and has the victorious really gained victory, or is it just gaining points? Is the defeated really defeated, or is it just on paper? Moreover, what is the aspect of victory and defeat?

I will refer you to an event that is going on now, in front of the world and on cameras - the military operations in Ukraine following the Russian invasion a few months earlier. I ask you here - who is victorious and who is defeated?

Do not talk to me about the Russian newspapers, as they talk about victories. The Ukraine media do not only speak about victories, but that they repelled the enemy's attack. So let us pause for a moment and ask - are victory and defeat linked to attack and defense? Is every attacker victorious, and every defender defeated? Do not hasten your answer, and standardizing will be in history books. But on which history will you measure, that of the victorious or the defeated? The history of the attacker or the defender?

Each party in such international wars claims victory, justifies it, constructs the unknown soldier monument and places flowers on it. Do not think with the mentality of the state that claims victory, and it is for sure that countries that admit defeat are rare, and there is no doubt they will not admit it except when the defeat is considered a catastrophe or totally decisive - what took place in Germany and Japan following the World War in the last century is a clear example.

Back to the science of history and its relation to ethics, be sure that the writer of history is a human being who has good deeds and inclinations, takes correct steps and makes mistakes - not an angel for sure - and has like us certain tendencies, be they personal or at the race or country level. Also, what is important here is that does this person face certain pressures, such as pressure by a political or a security system?

It is not an easy matter. It is not just to write several pages, commend this and criticize that. It is something much bigger. I believe the ethics of the history writer is what decides the level of credibility and lies in their history writing, and I do not doubt that. There is another question too, as questions are endless: What about the author who is commissioned by a political authority to write a history book about an event or a country? The answer is easy: Not fit for reading and is unreliable. Why? Because writing history is simply not an administrative decision issued by someone, then paying a reward to the writer!

Am I being strict with my opinion? I also ask you - do you expect the supposed historian to write all the pros and cons, or will they write what the reward payer likes? Freedom is the air an history writer breathes, and without freedom, you are in front of an administrative employee - you dictate them decisions, and they write them, no more!

No knowledge, development or credibility comes with repression, and it is not possible for the restricted to write freely, as the most sublime degrees of ethics is to be free! The relationship of history with ethics is like the relationship of man with water - will you be able to live without water?

In my view



KUWAIT: The Cabinet holds its weekly meeting at Seif Palace on Monday, chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Cabinet, during its weekly meeting at Seif Palace on Monday, adopted a number of decisions to set the stage for the parliamentary elections slated for Sept 29. The meeting, chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, recalled the speech of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressing a sincere desire to empower the people of Kuwait to have a final say on the correction of the political course.

The Amiri address, delivered on behalf of HH the Amir by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on June 22, charted a roadmap for realizing the aspirations of the people to choose their true representatives. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares said in a press release following the meeting.

Acting on the Amiri address, the instructions of HH the Prime Minister, and Cabinet decree 147 of 2022 on parliamentary elections, the Cabinet decided to suspend work at all government bodies on Thursday, Sept 29, declaring it a day off. The Cabinet accepted the resignation of Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Essa Ahmad Al-Kandari over his desire to stand for elections. It assigned Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares as Acting Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs. The Cabinet also assigned Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications and IT Affairs Rana Al-Fares as Acting Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development.

On development projects, the Cabinet reviewed the recommendations of the ministerial committee overseeing the mega projects, chaired by Deputy

Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The recommendations deal with the vision of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) for utilizing the industrial plots of land in a way that could best serve the national interests and the national economy. The Cabinet asked the committee to pursue its effort and report to the Cabinet within six months on the progress of the process.

The committee also presented recommendations on the project to establish a heritage village on Abdullah Al-Ahmad St, and the Cabinet tasked the ministry of finance, the ministry of public works and Kuwait Municipality to work together on this project. Regarding Kuwait Offset Program, the Cabinet members reviewed the recommendations of the committee on economic affairs, chaired by Mohammad Al-Fares. They were also briefed on the report of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in this regard and tasked the government bodies to work out technical specifications that could serve as points of reference in gauging their performance under the Offset Program.

The Cabinet was briefed on the youth, health and educational committee's recommendation on the report submitted by the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation & Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) on setting a common vision amongst government bodies interested in varying education outputs within the formwork of labor market needs. The Cabinet decided to form a ministerial committee headed by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Ali Fahad Al-Mudhaf to look into all topics related to education outputs, supervise efforts of the government bodies to make a connection between these outputs and labor market as well as other issues.

The Cabinet discussed the committee's recommendation on developing school management of general education phases. In this regard, the Cabinet was briefed on the presentation submitted by Mudhaf on a project aiming to develop a new interactive educational system, curricula and educational methods approved globally. The project also seeks to expand benefit from the capabilities provided by the STEM program, under the umbrella of the ministry. This system will gradually begin according to the educational stages of boys' and girls' schools for the kindergarten and primary stages.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Talal informed the Cabinet about the details of the fire at a Mina Abdullah store. The Cabinet lauded the efficiency and efforts of the firefighters who dealt with and controlled the blaze, stressing the necessity of taking all required measures to implement safety and security to avoid repeating such incidents again.

The Cabinet approved a decree appointing adviser Saad Abdul Karim Al-Safran as Public Prosecutor and referred the decree to HH the Amir. Furthermore, the Cabinet discussed the latest developments in international and Arab arenas, following, with great sorrow, the flash floods that engulfed some sisterly and friendly countries. It offered condolences to the governments of Somalia, Pakistan and Sudan over those killed by the floods.

The Cabinet voiced worry about the recent armed clashes that erupted in Libya's capital Tripoli that threaten safety and security of Libyans and undermine the country's stability. It affirmed Kuwait's firm stance supporting Libya, the political path and relevant UN Security Council in a way that maintains the country's stability, security and sovereignty. The Cabinet finally called on all parties to cease clashes to stop escalation and bloodshed. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A well-equipped large hall set up for journalists covering the elections. — KUNA photos

Minister orders well-equipped hall for journalists

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday instructed the election department to set up a well-equipped large hall to accommodate journalists covering the 2022 parliamentary elections. The hall will be distinguished with all needed facilities including a platform where candidates can publicize their manifestos and make public statements. — KUNA



Clinic offers services to candidates, poll registration staff

KUWAIT: A clinic was set up near the headquarters of the interior ministry's elections affairs department in Shuwaikh residential area, offering medical services to National Assembly hopefuls, staff registering the candidates and security personnel. The clinic, affiliated with the ministry of health, consists of medical staff and an ambulance in case of any emergency occurring during the registration for the 2022 National Assembly elections. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The medical clinic set up for the elections. — KUNA photos



Local

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled inspects military and security facilities

Minister: Military preparedness key to safeguarding security of the country



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visits the 26th Al-Sour Mechanized Division and Abdaly border crossing. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday highlighted the need of maintaining a high degree of preparedness at all security and military facilities, including border outlets. Military preparedness is key to safeguarding the security of the country against the risks of drugs smuggling, which poses a grave threat to the society, he said in a statement from the ministry of interior after an inspection tour of military and security sites in the northern region.

During his trip, Sheikh Talal Khaled conveyed the greetings of HH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and HH the Crown

Prince to the military and security personnel. He urged the leaders of the defense and interior ministries to maintain close cooperation, praising the dedication of the military and security personnel in preserving the security of the country, according to the statement.

Sheikh Talal Khaled inspected the 26th Al-Sour Mechanized Division where he was welcomed by Commander of the Ground Force Maj Gen Staff Mohammad Al-Thafeiri and Commander of Al-Sour Division Brig Staff Jaber Al-Hajeri and other senior officers. At Abdaly border crossing, he was warmly received by Director of the outlet Brig Abdulaziz Al-Husseini and several security officers. — KUNA

Kuwait launches advisory economic unit headed by PM

KUWAIT: Chief of the Prime Minister's Office Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil on Tuesday announced the launch of an advisory economic unit headed by HH the Prime Minister and includes representatives of concerned government agencies. This is based on the instructions of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah on the importance of adopting an advanced approach to support the national economy and work on attracting valued

investments and enhance the role of the private sector in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision.

Dakhil said the unit will take upon the task of reviewing and developing economic, financial and development legislations and policies to achieve the New Kuwait 2035 vision and several other tasks. The unit will work on strengthening the ties between economic, financial, developmental and operational institutions, noted Dakhil, and joining their efforts to promote economic development in the country.

The unit will discuss ways to improve the environment of small and medium enterprises in a way that will enhance their role in achieving the country's economic development goals, added Dakhil, and will work to establish national economic security to provide a safe economic environment, stimulating growth and investment. — KUNA

DGCA announces summer travel plan 'successful'

KUWAIT: The Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced on Tuesday that their summer travel plans were extremely successful, while it provided services to more than four million travelers. DGCA Deputy Director-General for Kuwait International Airport Affairs Saleh Al-Fadaghi told KUNA that the airport witnessed a

growth in the number of travelers this year in comparison to last year after the lifting of coronavirus preventative measures.

Fadaghi added that Dubai, Cairo, Jeddah and Istanbul are the most demanded destinations this summer, and that Kuwait International Airport "successfully" overcame the unstable situation it witnessed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He affirmed DGCA's commitment to abiding by safety regulations related to passengers and quality of the services provided to all travelers.

Fadaghi pointed out that DGCA focused in its current and future plans on developing the level of services and activating all tools and programs that reflect the level of passenger satisfaction. — KUNA



Arrests during surprise raid in Salmiya

KUWAIT: Under the direct field supervision of Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Anwar Al-Barjas, authorities carried out a surprise security campaign in Salmiya on Tuesday, which resulted in the arrest of many residency violators and wanted persons.

Barjas heard from security officials on the plan and deployment of security checkpoints within

Hawally governorate. He then inspected surveillance cameras in a number of police stations and reviewed the mechanism of work in them and procedures followed. He also inspected the detention cells of the stations and listened to detainees, directing to meet their needs in accordance with the laws, principles and charters of human rights.

The general directorate of security relations and media of the interior ministry affirmed that the security establishment continues its efforts on the ground and necessary preventive security measures to arrest violators of residency laws and wanted persons and combat all forms of crime. It called on everyone to cooperate with security personnel and not shelter any violator of the law.

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precious materials
without permit

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian has issued a decree to not allow any exhibitions of precious materials without a permit, limiting the activity to three entities - institutions licensed to host exhibitions, institutions licensed to trade in precious metals and stones and Arab and foreign countries.

The new regulations specify that all documents must be sent to the specific managements at least 60 days before the activity; a list of participants and their products and services, with precious metal traders making up a maximum 20 percent of total participants; location of the exhibition with supporting documents for a maximum duration of 15 days; formal agreement between participants and hosts; agreement of precious material management at the commerce ministry; agreement of Kuwait customs; any other documents the management requests. Exhibitions for display only are exempted from this decision.

The host must commit to the following regulations: Only listed participants are allowed to participate; cooperation with related managements and providing them with all necessary documents; no advertisement can be published without approval from the consumer protection department.

All participants must agree to the following regulations: The host and participants are responsible for all violations; food and beverages can be served; the ministry has the right to cancel the exhibition or any party to the exhibition, as supervised by the management of international relations and the management of precious materials and commercial supervision.

Divers retrieve four tons of
fishing nets from Kuwait Bay

Discarded nets pose a hazard to boats, power station

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Posters for the 'Donate to Teach' campaign saying 'Their education is essential'.

KRCS launches 'donate
to teach' campaign for
orphans, needy families

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society kicked off its campaign for needy families and orphans on Tuesday called 'Donate to Teach'. "This humanitarian campaign aims to enhance societal collaboration with the vision and the rights of education," said Chief Secretary of KRCS Maha Al-Barjas. "Education is one of the most important projects for KRCS to decrease the burden on needy families and disabled children specifically," she added. The donations can be done online through the KRCS website or at the society's headquarters in person. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Divers retrieve abandoned fishing nets from Kuwait Bay. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Dive Team, under the umbrella of Kuwait Voluntary Environmental Foundation, managed on Tuesday to retrieve several discarded fishing nets containing hundreds of dead and live fish, weighing four tons, from the offshore locations of Kuwait Bay and Umm Al-Namil island. Speaking to KUNA, Chief of Kuwait Dive Team Waleed Al-Fadhel said the team was able to lift the nets that were in various spots in the sea, ranging from a depth of two to 11 meters. Some nets were also close to Doha station for water distillation and electricity generation, and they were removed by the patrols of the Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, Fadhel explained.

These nets were located in shipping lanes leading to Shuwaikh Port and Doha Port, which posed a navigational hazard to boats, as well as to the power

and water station, especially as they were of high density, he added. Violators of environmental laws threw the nets out of greed for financial gain and fear of legal violations, he mentioned, saying that they contain sea creatures, several dead fish and live ones, causing pollution to the marine environment.

Fadhel underlined the team is doing their best to reduce the negative phenomena impacting the safety of marine environment, noting that these sites are vital for sea life growth, along with marine navigation. This caused the team to allocate five fully-equipped boats for rescue operations to collect fishing nets, plastic, ropes, tyres and ships that have sunk. The team lifted 200 abandoned fishing nets with a total weight of 260 tons, taking 160 working days, Fadhel pointed out.

The development of small and large projects

around Kuwait Bay caused disturbance in the environmental balance in this vital area, which currently requires work to limit the negative effects of various activities in the Gulf, he said. He hoped the penalties for fishermen who violate the marine and environmental laws linked to fishing will be tougher to preserve the marine environment.

He thanked the volunteers for informing them of the location of these nets, hoping that everyone should inform the General Directorate of Coast Guard, the patrols of the Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, or the diving team about any waste or abandoned fishing nets in the sea. He also thanked the Kuwait Ports Authority for its nonstop support for the diving team to complete environmental projects. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Surgeons perform operations at Ibn Sina Hospital. —KUNA

657 operations
performed at
Ibn Sina Hospital

KUWAIT: Ibn Sina hospital has announced that 657 surgeries have been performed this year at

the urology unit at the hospital. The head of the urology department at Ibn Sina Abdulsamer Al-Saeed said in a press conference the operations included 40 kidney surgeries, 16 urethral transplants, 121 laparoscopy operations, 379 birth defect surgeries and 101 other operations.

"New operations have been conducted for birth defects, as more than 90 operations have been performed during the last three years on patients of all ages, which have all been suc-

cessful," he said, noting laparoscopies are very sensitive to those under 16 years of age. "The department has participated in global and regional research projects and their success is at around 97 percent over the past 10 years. Moreover, the hospital works hard to provide the best services to its patients through increasing the sharing of the latest experiences with renowned visiting doctors," Saeed added. —KUNA



Afghan family rebuilds far from home after US drone strike

Zionist entity sentences World Vision ex-chief to 12 years for aiding Hamas

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Ukraine wages counter-offensive

Fresh Russian strikes in northeast city of Kharkiv kills five

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: Intense fighting was raging on Tuesday across the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson occupied by Russia, Kyiv's presidency said, as its troops pressed counter-offensives "in various directions".

Most of the region of Kherson bordering the Black Sea and its provincial capital of the same name were seized by Moscow's military at the start of the invasion six months ago. With the war in the eastern Donbas region largely stalled, analysts have said for weeks that combat is likely to shift south to break the stalemate before winter comes.

Also on Tuesday, fresh Russian strikes in the northeast city of Kharkiv killed at least five people, prompting officials to urge people to stay indoors. But much of the attention remained on the counter-offensive in the south. In its morning update, the president's office in Kyiv said "heavy fighting is taking place in almost the entire territory of the Kherson region".

"Powerful explosions continued throughout the day and throughout the night" and "the Armed Forces of Ukraine launched offensive actions in various directions," it added. In the town of Berezhneuvate-near the frontlines 70 kilometres (43 miles) north of Kherson city-AFP reporters saw soldiers resting by the roadside and heard artillery fire.

"We forced them well back," said infantryman Victor, in his 60s, who declined to give a surname. But his commander Oleksandr-a veteran of the war in Afghanistan-predicted the fight to retake Kherson will be "long and complicated".

In his nightly address on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelensky was coy about Ukraine's overarching strategy whilst striking a bullish tone. "You won't hear the specifics from any person in charge because this is war." "But the occupiers should know that we will push them to our borderline," he added. "If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee. Go home."

'Stay inside'

Russia's defence ministry claimed Ukraine suffered "large-scale losses" of more than 1,200 soldiers

and dozens of pieces of equipment during the "defeat" of its southern attack. Britain's defence ministry warned that since the start of August, Russia has made "significant efforts" to reinforce troops on the western bank of the Dnipro River which splits Kherson city.

But the Ukrainian presidency claimed its forces had destroyed "almost all large bridges" and that "only pedestrian crossings remain" in Kherson region. The British ministry said "most of the units around Kherson are likely under-manned and are reliant upon fragile supply lines by ferry and pontoon bridges across the Dnipro".

But "it is not yet possible to confirm the extent of Ukrainian advances," the ministry said on Tuesday. In Ukraine's second city Kharkiv, at least five people were killed Tuesday as Russian shelling hit the centre of town, the mayor Igor Terekhov said.

Seven people were also wounded, and regional governor, Oleg Syneghubov, gave a slightly lower death toll of four and said another four were injured. "The Russian occupiers shelled the central districts of Kharkiv," Syneghubov said on Telegram, as he warned residents to "stay inside the shelters".

Grain reaches Djibouti

The war has contributed to a global food and energy price crisis. Russia blockaded Ukraine's ports on the Black Sea at the start of the war, choking off the major harvest exporter from world markets and punishing poorer nations.

On Tuesday, the first UN-chartered vessel transporting grain to relieve the food crisis made port in Djibouti, after Turkey and the UN brokered a deal to relax the embargo last month. Some 23,000 tonnes of wheat aboard the MV Brave Commander is bound for Ethiopia, where millions are at risk of starvation.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the nation-which along with the EU bloc has pledged to wean itself off Russian gas-is well prepared for curbs on supply. Germany is set to meet an October target to replenish stocks early, Scholz said Tuesday, a day before Moscow is due to cut off



ANDRIIVKA, Ukraine: Vasily 68, looks at his destroyed house in the village of Andriivka, Kyiv region, amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

gas supplies for three days.

He said Germany is "in a much better position in terms of security of supply than was foreseeable a couple of months ago".

Challenging offensive

Moscow's troops seized Kherson, a town of 280,000 inhabitants, on March 3. It was the first major city to fall following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine on February 24. In an update early Tuesday, Ukraine's Southern Command said the situation remained "tense" in its area of operations.

"The enemy attacked our positions five times, but was unsuccessful," it said. The city of Mykolaiv, just northwest of Kherson, had come under "massive bombardment" from Russian anti-

aircraft missiles, with two civilians killed and 24 wounded, it said.

But a senior Pentagon official said Russia was struggling to find soldiers to fight in Ukraine and that many new recruits were older, in poor shape and lacking training. The fresh fighting came as students across Ukraine prepared to return to classrooms on Thursday after schools were shut by the Russian invasion, now in its seventh month.

Only those schools with air-raid bunkers will be permitted to reopen, with the rest reverting to online learning. "We just want to live our life fully," 16-year-old student Polina told AFP in Kyiv. "We are not afraid, we have already lived enough. Our generation has decided to live in the present moment." —AFP

Russian paratrooper flees to France denouncing 'chaos'

PARIS, France: Suddenly notorious for a scathing first-person account of the war in Ukraine published online, Russian paratrooper Pavel Filatiev arrived in France seeking political asylum Sunday after quitting his country for fear of reprisals.

"When I heard the higher-ups were calling for me to be sentenced to 15 years in prison for fake news, I realised that I wouldn't get anywhere here and my lawyers couldn't do anything for me in Russia," Filatiev tells AFP in the asylum seekers' waiting area at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport.

After a time out from the army, the 34-year-old last year rejoined Russia's 56th airborne regiment-his father's old unit-based in Crimea. The paratroopers were sent into southern Ukraine when President Vladimir Putin began his "special military operation" against Kyiv on February 24.

Filatiev himself spent two months around the key cities of Kherson and Mykolaiv before being withdrawn from the front with an eye infection. "We didn't have the moral right to attack another country, especially when it's the nation that's closest to us," he writes in a 141-page broadside called "ZOV" that he posted on the VKontakte social network in August.

The title, the Russian word for "call", is made up of the identification letters painted on military vehicles during the attack. In the text, Filatiev rails at both the state of the military and Moscow's assault on Ukraine, which he believes is broadly opposed by rank-and-file soldiers too afraid to speak out.

'Chaos and corruption'

Filatiev depicts a barely functioning army that lacked training and equipment even before the invasion



ROISSY-CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT, France: Russian soldier Pavel Filatiev, 34, poses at the waiting premises for asylum seekers near the Paris' Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport. —AFP

started. The armed forces "are in the same state Russia has fallen into in the last few years," he tells AFP. "Year by year the chaos and corruption grow. Corruption, disorder and a couldn't-care-less attitude have reached unacceptable levels," Filatiev adds. "For the first few months I was in shock, I told myself that it couldn't be true. By the end of the year, I realised that I didn't want to serve in an army like this."

But he did not resign before the attack on Ukraine began, and found himself advancing with his unit into the south of the neighbouring country. "If the army was already a mess in peacetime, corrupt and apathetic, it's clear that in wartime, in combat, that this will come even more to the fore and the lack of professionalism is even more obvious," Filatiev says.

Those in power in Moscow have played a major role in "destroying the army we inherited from the Soviet Union," he adds. Filatiev insists that his unit did not participate in the abuses against civilians and prisoners that have caused worldwide outcry and allegations of war crimes by the Russian invaders during his two months at the front. —AFP

"We have requested our partners to give us time to review and put in place our new processes before sending further requests for military vessels to enter the country," Sogavare said. He also denied reports that a US coast guard ship and a British navy vessel were not allowed to dock in the country, saying delays in processing their approvals meant both were turned away.

The US embassy in Canberra confirmed in a statement that it had received formal notification of the suspension of naval visits. "The United States received formal notification from the Government of Solomon Islands regarding a moratorium on all naval visits, pending updates in protocol procedures," an embassy spokeswoman said in a statement. "The United States is disappointed that the US Coast Guard ship was not able to make this planned stop in Honiara," the statement said. "We will continue to closely monitor the situation."

Sogavare did not outline the suspension's length but promised a "smoother and timelier" approval process for naval visits following the review. At the welcome ceremony for the US hospital ship Mercy, he invited the vessel to return during the Pacific Games, due to be hosted in the country in December next year. —AFP

Solomon Islands suspends all naval visits

HONIARA, Solomon Islands: Solomon Islands has suspended visits from all foreign navies, citing a need to review approval processes, the country's leader said Tuesday, after a US coast guard was unable to refuel at its port.

The decision comes amid concerns over the Solomons' growing ties with China in recent years, switching diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 2019 and signing a security pact with the Asian power in April.

Western governments are wary that the islands could provide China with a military foothold in a strategically important part of the world. In a speech Tuesday welcoming a US hospital ship to the capital Honiara, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said he was reviewing the process for allowing foreign military vessels to dock in the country.

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International

Zionist entity sentences World Vision ex-Gaza chief to 12 years for aiding Hamas

UN rights chief slams Zionist entity over blocked staff visas

BEERSHEBA: A Zionist court on Tuesday sentenced the former Gaza head of a major US-based aid agency to 12 years in prison for funneling millions of dollars to Islamist group Hamas.

The Beersheba district court in southern Jewish state issued a sentence of "12 years' prison time, less the detention" already served for World Vision's Mohammed al-Halabi.

The court had ruled in June that Halabi was guilty of siphoning off millions of dollars and tonnes of steel to Hamas, which controls the Palestinian enclave. Halabi, who was arrested in June 2016 and indicted in August that year, has denied any irregularities throughout his past six years in detention.

His lawyer reiterated his claim to innocence following Tuesday's sentencing. "He says that he's innocent, he did nothing and there is no evidence," Maher Hanna said. "On the contrary, he proved in the court above any reasonable doubt that he made sure that no money will be (given) directly to Hamas."

According to Hanna, if Halabi had admitted to wrongdoings, he would have been released. "But he insisted that truth also has value. And for his personal values and for the international humanitarian work values, he insisted on the truth, and he cannot admit a thing that he did not do," the lawyer said.

Secret evidence

Hanna said they would appeal the verdict to the

supreme court. The Zionist prosecution said it was also considering an appeal. "These are very severe deeds, the defendant funded terror with millions of shekels, helped strengthen the Hamas tunnel network," Moran Guez of the southern district attorney's office.

"We asked for 16-21 years prison. We'll read the sentencing and consider our actions," she told reporters. Halabi had been convicted of membership in a terrorist group-Hamas-and of financing terrorist activities, of having "transmitted information to the enemy" as well as the possession of a weapon.

Much of the evidence against him was kept secret, with Zionist entity citing "security concerns", prompting his legal team to question the verdict's legitimacy. In its sentencing, the court said Halabi had joined the military wing of Hamas in 2004, and was "planted in World Vision" the following year.

Meanwhile, outgoing UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet blasted Zionist entity on Tuesday for failing to issue or renew visas for her staff to monitor the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories.

The United Nations high commissioner for human rights said it raised questions as to what Zionist entity was "trying to hide" and vowed that her office would continue to report on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

"In 2020, the 15 international staff of my office in



BEERSHEBA: Maher Hanna, the lawyer of Mohammed al-Halabi, the former Gaza head of World Vision, a major US-based aid agency, speaks to the press at the Beersheba district court, after his client was sentenced to 12 years in prison for funneling millions of dollars to Islamist group Hamas. The sentencing comes after the court issued a ruling in June. — AFP

Palestine-which has been operating in the country for 26 years-had no choice but to leave," Bachelet said in a statement.

"Subsequent requests for visas and visa renewals have gone unanswered for two years. During this time, I have tried to find a solution to this situation, but Zionist entity continues to refuse to engage."

She said that as a member state, Zionist entity had to cooperate with the UN in good faith and allow its officials to carry out their duties.

"Zionist entity's failure to process visa applications that are necessary for my staff's access is inconsistent with these standards," Bachelet said. — AFP

Colombia's ex-guerrillas revert to coca

CATATUMBO, Colombia: When he laid down arms at the end of Colombia's decades-long civil conflict, Eiber Andrade did not expect to ever return to a life of crime. Yet a mere five years later, the 24-year-old ex-guerrilla fighter makes a living from coca-from which cocaine is derived-in a region where the government's post-conflict commitment to peace and better living has yet to bear fruit.

After the 2016 peace agreement that saw the disarmament of the FARC guerrilla group and its withdrawal from the Catatumbo region near the border with Venezuela, Andrade tried his hand at agriculture. The region is home to the world's largest concentration of coca crops-a total of 40,084 hectares under cultivation in 2020 according to the UN. It is also fertile ground for coffee, cacao and bananas, but none of these are as profitable.

Short on skills and capital, Andrade's brief foray into food farming failed-making him one of many among the 13,000-odd disarmed FARC combatants unable to find a way to make a legitimate living. Andrade, who became a guerrilla fighter at the tender age of 10, said he felt let down by the government.

The money he and other disarmed fighters were to have received as part of the peace deal never materialized. And in the end, Andrade told AFP, he had no choice but to rejoin the criminal underworld and become a coca harvester. He has a three-year-old daughter to take care of. "The presidents we had had have not given us any help," Andrade said.

Other demobilized FARC fighters unable to find



CATATUMBO, Colombia: Jose del Carmen Abril (R), member of the Peasant Association of Catatumbo (Ascamcat) and coca grower leader, speaks with his son Carlos, former rebel of the dissolved Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), at a coca plantation in Catatumbo. —AFP

a niche in civilian life turned to violence. Hundreds rejoined rebels battling other groups in a violent rivalry for control of drug and illegal mining resources and smuggling routes in the border region. Colombia's new president, Gustavo Petro, has vowed to stop the violence and negotiate peace with the last recognized guerrilla group still fighting, the ELN.

He has denounced the failure of the war on drugs that presidents before him had waged with US backing at a cost of tens of thousands of lives among police, soldiers, judges, journalists, subsistence farmers and others over four decades. —AFP

Waleed Bukhari told reporters.

Bukhari, who was speaking after meeting Lebanon's interior minister, said his country had seen improvements in counter-drug smuggling operations in Lebanon. Trade in Captagon in the Middle East grew exponentially in 2021 to top \$5 billion, posing an increasing health and security risk to the region, a report by the New Lines Institute said in April. Last week, authorities in Lebanon said they would investigate an audio recording shared online threatening to attack the Saudi Arabian embassy in Beirut.

Beirut's ties to Riyadh - formerly a major investor in cash-strapped Lebanon - have taken a blow in past years as Hezbollah's influence has grown. The interior ministry had said Ali bin Hashem bin Salman Al-Hajji, a Saudi national wanted by Riyadh for "terrorist crimes", was the likely author of the recording. Bukhari called on Lebanese authorities to hand over the suspect Tuesday. "We have submitted an official diplomatic note to the ministry of foreign affairs in this regard," he said. — AFP

tional events such as music, sports, theatrical and cultural performances.

Kuwait is also negotiating to host the Winter Wonderland during the 2022 winter season. The large winter festival that is held in London's Hyde Park annually will soon be hosted in the country, a source told Kuwait Times. The event in London features several festive markets, over 100 rides and attractions from across Europe, a giant Ferris wheel, live shows, a circus, an ice show and live music. In its first 10 years, it had 14 million visitors.

The source revealed that one of the proposed locations is the Shaab Park site, adding the event will be run by the same company that managed Winter Wonderland in Riyadh. Winter Wonderland has become one of the most anticipated Riyadh Season events, with more than 60,000 entry tickets sold during the first minutes of the ticket portal opening. The Riyadh Season recorded more than 15 million visits in all of its zones since October last year, with up to 7 million heading to Winter Wonderland since opening day.

Ex-PM warns of 'big risk' of Italy's hard-right

ROME: A victory for Italy's hard-right parties in September 25 elections would present a "big risk" to the EU, former premier and Democratic Party leader Enrico Letta warned in an interview with AFP. The alliance comprising Giorgia Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy, Matteo Salvini's anti-immigration League and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia is polling at more than 46 percent ahead of the vote, compared to around 30 percent who back Letta and his left-wing allies.

Italy "runs a big risk if it puts itself in the hands of friends of Trump and Putin", said Letta, referring to Meloni's admiration of former US president Donald Trump and Salvini and Berlusconi's historic ties with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

This was also a risk for the European Union, as "there has never been a major European country governed by political forces so clearly against the idea of a community of Europe", the 56-year-old said at his party's headquarters in central Rome.

By contrast, for the Democratic Party, "our idea of Europe is an idea of cooperation, of solidarity, of decisions taken by the majority, without someone like (Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor) Orban every time using his veto and blocking decisions".

The right-wing coalition has pledged to press for reform of the EU and more immediately, to revise Italy's plans for spending almost 200 billion euros in post-pandemic recovery funds. Letta is disparaging: "As if that money was Italian money and we could afford to argue and debate with Brussels,

when instead it is European money we have negotiated with Brussels."

Populism calmed

Letta was the Democratic Party's prime minister for 10 months over 2013 and 2014, before being forced out in an internal party coup. He left Italy and became the dean of the international affairs school at the prestigious Sciences Po University in Paris.

He returned in 2021 to take the helm of his old party, which was then part of Prime Minister Mario Draghi's grand unity coalition-until the withdrawal of the right-wing alliance and the populist Five Star Movement caused its collapse in late July.

Italy's elections come at a sensitive moment. Russia's war in Ukraine has brought about an energy crisis and soaring inflation is squeezing businesses and households still recovering from the devastation of coronavirus. Letta has warned repeatedly that Moscow is seeking to interfere in Italy's politics, notably by cutting supplies of energy on a country heavily reliant on Russian gas.

"It's obvious that Moscow is pushing for a right-wing victory in Italy," Letta said. "I think the most obvious demonstration of this is Putin's gas strategy, which is strangling Europe and putting Italy in great difficulty at the moment it is in an election campaign."

Europe had to provide a collective response to this and other crises, he said: from coronavirus to managing the tens of thousands of migrants who land on Italy's shores every year from North Africa.

"Italy played a very important role in the European response to the pandemic and it is no coincidence that the Draghi government arrived immediately afterwards, which calmed and appeased populism," he said. "But populism in Italy has only been calmed, it has not been eliminated." —AFP

based international order throughout the region," he added.

With solar panels and a sail wing five meters tall, the Saildrome Explorer is driven by solar and wind energy and can be deployed on missions on the ocean for up to one year, monitored remotely by a human pilot. It can collect a broad range of oceanic, navigational and meteorological data, as well as strategic intelligence.

The 5th Fleet stressed the vessel was US government property but that the technology it carries is "available commercially" and "does not store sensitive or classified information". The US Navy first began operational testing of the USV in the Gulf of Aqaba last December. — AFP

Sadr surprised many by announcing his "definitive retirement".

Violence continued on Tuesday morning - with the rattle of automatic gunfire and heavier explosions of rocket-propelled grenades - as Sadr's supporters clashed with the army and men of the Hashed al-Shaabi, former Tehran-backed paramilitaries integrated into the Iraqi security forces. "I think this strategy of violence and destabilization is part of Sadr's negotiation and bargaining tactics," Mansour told AFP.

The UN mission in Iraq warned of "an extremely dangerous escalation" and called on all sides to "refrain from acts that could lead to an unstoppable chain of events". "The very survival of the state is at stake," it warned. Medics said 30 Sadr supporters had been killed since Monday and some 570 others wounded - some with bullet wounds and others suffering tear gas inhalation.

A mass funeral was held Tuesday in the Shiite holy city of Najaf for some of the protesters killed in Baghdad. Witnesses said earlier that Sadr loyalists and supporters of a rival Shiite bloc, the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, had exchanged fire. The Framework condemned an "attack on state institutions", urging the Sadrist to engage in dialogue. Caretaker Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi said "security or military forces, or armed men" were prohibited from opening fire on protesters. The United States also urged calm amid the "disturbing" reports, while France called on "the parties to exercise the utmost restraint". —AFP

'Disney on Ice' soon in Kuwait; talks on to...

Continued from Page 1

attracting international entertainment shows and world-class sports and cultural experiences within the programs and events of Arena Kuwait. Its goal is to attract citizens, residents and visitors from GCC countries to attend yearly entertainment shows. It is worth mentioning that "Disney on Ice" will be held for the first time in Kuwait, as part of a tour currently being held around the Gulf, starting from Saudi Arabia.

The Arena Kuwait is the largest indoor events venue in Kuwait, built to host a range of different events. Its hall is designed and equipped with the latest technologies with international standards to serve leading companies in the field of entertainment and host various types of local and interna-

International

'Second life': Helicopters rescue the stranded from Pakistan valleys

Army, govt helicopter missions have rescued hundreds of panicked tourists, locals

SAIDU SHARIF, Pakistan: Up to 200,000 people are stranded in remote Pakistan valleys after the unrelenting floods of the past week with helicopters the only way of reaching them. Unprecedented rain in the Swat Valley turned rivers into raging torrents that washed away roads and bridges, cutting off tourists and residents from nearby towns, even as the water receded.

Army and government helicopter missions have rescued hundreds of panicked tourists and locals—some urgently needing medical help. "It feels like I have got a second life," said tourist Yasmin Akram, a diabetic who was airlifted to Saidu Sharif's airfield from the Kalam valley with her 12-year-old daughter and husband.

The traffic police officer watched in despair as the hotel they fled in the middle of the night was swallowed by the Swat river, taking with it a young boy. "I witnessed this all with my own eyes," she said. "Since then I haven't slept."

Her husband, dazed from exhaustion, said he ran out of medication for his kidney condition after Kalam was cut off. "When I arrived here it was like being given a new life," said Muhammad Akram, an official with the Punjab government.

Their two adult sons were left behind, with priority given to the sick, women and children. The stunning Swat Valley, known locally as the "Pakistani Switzerland", is a popular tourist spot because of its majestic mountains, lakes and rivers.

The deeply conservative area came to notoriety in

the mid-2000s, when it saw the rise of a powerful local chapter of the Pakistani Taliban. In 2012, following a military operation to displace the Taliban, then-schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai—now a Nobel peace laureate—was shot and left for dead by militants in Swat's main town, Mingora.

'Challenges are immense'

Junaid Khan, the deputy commissioner for Swat, told AFP that stricken tourists have made up the majority of evacuations. Government officials and doctors have been airlifted into the valleys to identify those most in need of rescue.

Locals are willing to stay behind if food and medical supplies are guaranteed, said Khan. Thousands of food aid packages have already been delivered—some dropped from the back of a helicopter when crowds of people reaching for the aircraft made it impossible to land.

'I witnessed this all with my own eyes'

"We've reached areas that no other organisations and aid groups have been able to," Khan said at Saidu Sharif's airfield, where some of the rescue missions are being coordinated. Locals are hurrying to create makeshift landing pads for the helicopters with the first established on grounds surrounding a mosque in Mankyl.

It could be days before roads leading to the mountains and valleys are repaired. "The challenges are immense but the hope is very high in this region which has seen the worst of terrorism, militancy,



SWAT, Pakistan: Stranded local tourists disembark from a Pakistan's army helicopter after they were rescued by army from the flood-hit tourist areas in Saidu Sharif. —AFP

earthquakes and floods," said Khan.

So far 21 deaths have been reported in the area's valleys—mostly as a result of collapsed houses—but a handful of people were washed away by floods. A helicopter supplied by the provincial government's

chief minister—not built for rescue missions—has helped to pull more than 350 people from villages, carrying up to double the recommended number of passengers. Army helicopters have collected hundreds more. —AFP

China's Communist Party Congress to open October 16

BEIJING: China's ruling Communist Party will begin its 20th Party Congress on October 16, state media reported Tuesday, a landmark meeting at which President Xi Jinping is expected to be anointed as the country's most powerful leader in decades.

The meeting in the capital Beijing is widely expected to see Xi reinstated as president for an unprecedented third term. It will also see the unveiling of a new top leadership line-up, as Xi consolidates his grip on the party and his position as the most powerful Chinese leader since the country's founder Mao Zedong.

The congress—held every five years—will be an "extremely important conference", according to a report by state broadcaster CCTV on a Monday meeting of the country's 25-member Politburo. Preparatory work for the conference is "progressing smoothly", the report added.

The event will see about 2,300 Communist Party delegates from across the country descend on Beijing in a highly choreographed exercise to pick members of the party's Central Committee of around 200 members.

The final meeting of the current Central Committee will take place in Beijing from October 9, the report said.

The Central Committee will then vote for the 25-person Politburo and its all-powerful Standing Committee—China's highest leadership body and apex of power, currently comprised of seven people.

Voting is mostly a formality—the pecking order of the Politburo and its Standing Committee is likely to have been decided well in advance.

Unchecked power

The congress comes as Xi faces significant political headwinds, including an ailing economy, deteriorating relations with the United States and a strict zero-COVID policy that has accelerated China's inward turn from the world.

He has also faced harsh human rights criticism from the international community over repressive policies in the northwestern Xinjiang region, which have seen an estimated one million Muslim Uyghurs detained in a sweeping crackdown ostensibly targeting "terrorism".

His decade-long tenure has also seen crackdowns on corruption within the party, which analysts say served to take down his political rivals, as well as the crushing of a democracy movement in Hong Kong and strict lockdowns on cities in the name of curbing the coronavirus. Xi also ushered in an assertive "Wolf Warrior" foreign policy that has alienated Western democracies and some of China's regional neighbours, and pushed for closer ties with Russia while cultivating domestic nationalism to rampant levels.

He abolished the presidential two-term limit in 2018 — originally set up by former leader Deng Xiaoping in



Chinese President Xi Jinping

the 1980s to prevent another Mao-like dictatorship—leaving the possibility of him becoming leader for life.

Over the past year, Chinese propaganda has worked in overdrive to bolster Xi's legacy, diminish the achievements of his predecessors and further enshrine him in the highest echelons of the Communist Party.

Analysts predict that at this year's congress, Xi will be looking to shorten the name of his official political philosophy in the party constitution to the pithier "Xi Jinping Thought", putting him on par with Mao. —AFP

Indonesia arrests soldiers accused of killings

TIMIKA, Indonesia: Six Indonesian soldiers have been arrested after being accused of killing four indigenous Papuans and mutilating their bodies last week, authorities said on Tuesday. The suspects pretended to be willing to sell weapons to lure the victims on August 22, the day the crime allegedly occurred, Papua provincial police director Faizal Ramadhani told AFP.

The victims were then dismembered, stuffed into sacks and thrown into a river outside of the city of Timika, according to a police report. As of Monday, body parts belonging to three of the victims had been found, Ramadhani said, adding that authorities were continuing to look for the remains of the last victim.

The Papua police have also named four civilians as suspects in the case, three of whom were arrested over the weekend, Ramadhani said. The civilian suspects said that the soldiers were "directly involved" in the killing and dismemberment of the victims, who are believed to be affiliated with rebel groups in the Nduga area, Ramadhani said.

Military investigators were questioning the six soldiers, who were named as suspects and arrested by the military police on Monday, military official Chandra W. Sukotjo said on Tuesday. Teguh Muji Angkasa, a senior military officer in Papua, told reporters in Jayapura on Monday that the army was coordinating with the police on an investigation.

"We are committed to upholding the rule of law. We will hand out firm sanction if the soldiers are proven to be involved (in the crime)," Angkasa said. Seby Sambom, a spokesman of the West Papua National Liberation Army, the military wing of Papua's main separatist group, demanded that the Indonesian government sentence the perpetrators to death.

"This is a crime against humanity by the Indonesian government through its security forces," Sambom said in a statement, threatening to carry out a "retaliation operation" if his group's demand was ignored.

Indonesia maintains a heavy military presence in the resource-rich but underdeveloped Papua region, where the conflict with a rebel separatist insurgency has been claiming an increasing number of victims.

A former Dutch colony, Papua declared itself independent in 1961, but neighbouring Indonesia took control of the region two years later, with the promise of holding a referendum on independence. The subsequent vote in favour of staying part of Indonesia was widely considered a sham. —AFP

Afghan family rebuilds far from home after US drone strike

KABUL: The damage inflicted by a United States drone that killed 10 members of Aimal Ahmadi's family in the Afghan capital can still be seen in the courtyard of his home a year after the strike. The 32-year-old, whose daughter was among those killed, left Afghanistan with some of his family members, moving to a refugee camp in Qatar from where they now expect to be evacuated to the US for a future far from home.

"I don't wish that any human being would go through what we went through, it's terrible, unimaginable", Ahmadi told AFP from Qatar. On August 29, 2021, Ahmadi's three-year-old daughter Malika, his brother Ezmarai, who had worked for an American charity, and several of his nephews and nieces were killed in the strike.

The 10 family members, including seven children, were near a family car when they were mistakenly targeted by a US drone. The family were the last civilian deaths linked to US forces recorded in the chaotic days before American troops left Afghanistan on August 30 last year, allowing the Taliban to fully take control of the country.

A few days after the drone strike the Pentagon acknowledged that it had made a "mistake" in wrongly identifying the family's white Toyota as an Islamic State (IS) target. The Pentagon did not punish the service members involved in the incident. "There was not a strong enough case to be made for personal accountability," said Pentagon spokesman at that time, John Kirby.

The US administration is currently helping relocate members of the family, Ahmadi said. The drone hit came three days after an IS suicide bomb attack at Kabul airport killed more than 150 people — including 13 US troops — significantly raising tensions in the last days of US withdrawal.



KABUL: In this photograph taken on August 27, 2022, Nasratullah Malikzada, the nephew of Aimal Ahmadi, removes the cover from a car that was damaged in a US drone strike, inside the house premises in Kabul. —AFP

An estimated 188 civilians have been killed by US forces by mistake in Afghanistan since 2018, according to the American military.

Compensation

A year after the strike, the modest two-storey house on a narrow street in the Khwaja Bughra neighbourhood in the north of Kabul is now inhabited by only a dozen distant relatives. Several other relatives of the victims fled the scene of the tragedy, which still bears the scars of the attack.

Blown out by the explosion, the windows have now been repaired, the walls of the courtyard rebuilt and others repainted. But on the floor, tiles are still missing where the drone strike hit.

The family's second vehicle — almost completely burned by the blast — still lies in the middle of the yard under a tarp. "We didn't want to get rid of it in memory of the victims and because it saved lives by protecting the women inside the house from the shrapnel," said Ahmadi's 20-year-old nephew, Nasratullah Malikzada, who is now in charge of maintaining the house. —AFP

HK court orders search of media tycoon's phones

HONG KONG, China: Two phones owned by jailed pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai can be searched on national security grounds and are not protected by journalistic privilege, a senior judge ruled Tuesday in Hong Kong.

Lai, owner of the now-shuttered Apple Daily tabloid, will soon go on trial for "collusion with foreign forces", an offence that carries up to life in prison under the sweeping national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong two years ago.

Two smartphones were seized when hundreds of police officers arrested Lai and raided the newsroom of Apple Daily, which eventually collapsed after its assets were frozen under the security law. Lai's legal team claimed the content of the phones was covered by journalistic privilege, which is recognised by case law in Hong Kong, as well as legal privilege that protects conversations between lawyers and their clients.

Last month, police applied for a warrant to search the phones under the national security law. Wilson Chan, one of the High Court judges handpicked by the government to try security cases, on Tuesday ruled that police could search Lai's phones, including journalistic materials. He excluded content covered by legal privilege.

"Press freedom simply does not equate (to) any blanket prohibition against the seizure, production or disclosure of journalistic materials," Chan wrote in his judgement. Chan ruled the warrant covers all types of materials so long as they contain or are likely to contain evidence of a national security offence, including jour-

nalistic materials.

However Chan later agreed to grant a stay on police accessing the phones until next week, to give Lai's team time to appeal to a higher court. In a day-long judicial review hearing last week, Lai's lead lawyer Philip Dykes warned that the lack of safeguards for journalistic materials would cause a chilling effect.

"Confidential journalistic materials are an essential feature and a cornerstone of a healthy and functioning free press," Dykes told the court. Dykes, a former chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association, argued that the national security warrant "abrogated the protection of journalistic materials" under Hong Kong law. —AFP

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2022

Business

Pakistan floods fuel 'back-breaking' inflation; UN appeals for \$160m help

IMF approves revival of massive Pakistan loan program

LAHORE/WASHINGTON: Catastrophic monsoon floods in Pakistan have sent food prices skyrocketing, putting many staples out of the reach of the poor as the cash-strapped nation battles shortages. The floods have submerged a third of the country, killing more than 1,100 people and affecting over 33 million.

Recovery could cost more than \$10 billion, according to the planning minister. The rains—which began in June, and whose unusual intensity has been blamed on climate change—have also damaged vast swathes of rich agricultural land and crops. Parts of the mountainous north and breadbasket south have been cut off because roads and bridges have been washed away.

"Things are so expensive because of this flood that we can't buy anything," said Zahida Bibi, who had come to a market in the central city of Lahore to get vegetables for dinner. She told AFP she had to forego some items on her shopping list because inflation had put them out of reach.

"What can we do? We don't make enough money to buy things at such high prices."

Onions and tomatoes—common ingredients in most Pakistani meals—have been affected the most. The prices of both had increased by 40 percent, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said Friday. But on Monday, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said the price of onions had shot up by more than five times, and that the government was trying to quickly implement policies to stabilize food prices—including importing from arch-rival India.

"We need to consider getting some vegetables over the land border," he told broadcaster Geo News. "We have to do it because of the kind of prices and shortages we are experiencing... Inflation

has broken people's backs."

Out of reach

With millions of acres of farmland still under water and certain roads inaccessible, prices are expected to climb further. "About 80 percent of the tomato crop in Pakistan has been damaged in the floods, and onion supply has been badly hit as well," Shahzad Cheema, secretary of the Lahore Market Committee, told AFP.

"These are basic items, and ultimately it is the average buyer who will be most affected."

Vegetable seller Muhammad Owais at a market in Lahore was struggling to find buyers at the current high prices. "Prices have increased so much because of (the flood) that many customers leave without buying anything," he told AFP.

Pakistan was struggling with record high inflation even before the floods, because of rising global oil prices and a balance of payments crisis. The government found some room to manoeuvre Monday when the International Monetary Fund approved the resumption of a massive loan program for Pakistan, releasing \$1.1 billion immediately.

UN appeal

The United Nations and the Pakistani government launched an emergency appeal for \$160 million on Tuesday to help those hit hardest by the floods devastating the country. The funds will provide 5.2 million of the worst-affected and most vulnerable people with food, clean water, sanitation, emergency education, protection and health support, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, calling the disaster a "colossal crisis".

"Pakistan is awash in suffering. The Pakistani

people are facing a monsoon on steroids—the relentless impact of epochal levels of rain and flooding," he said in a video statement. The aid, covering the initial six months of the crisis response, will help to avoid outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, and to provide nutrition aid to young children and their mothers. It will also provide assistance to refugees and facilitate schemes to reunite families separated by the disaster. "The people of Pakistan urgently

or non-fulfillment of its future financial obligations in light of its current financial revenues.

Fiscal sustainability depends on spending expectations, as well as long-term future revenues, and according to these expectations, current policies are modified, whether by increasing expenditures, or by reducing expenditures or revenues, the growth of spending program costs, or allowing them to grow within certain rates, or finding new sources of revenue, or raising the current rates of revenue.

Activities under the theme of sustainable finance include, but are not limited to, sustainable funds and green bonds, impact investing and microfinance, active ownership and credits for sustainable projects, and the development of the entire financial system in a more sustainable way. In addition to that, sustainable finance refers to any form of financial services which integrates environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into business, or investment decisions for the lasting benefit of customers and society as a whole.

Fiscal sustainability depends on long-term expectations of future spending and revenues; according to these expectations, current policies are modified, whether by increasing or decreasing expenditures or revenues.

On other hand, there is a difference between financial sustainability and sustainable development, as the latter refers to achieving economic growth, taking into account environmental dimensions that ensure the preservation of natural resources and not to waste them. It increases to include taking into account social dimensions, including social protection programs for low-income people and those negatively affected by rapid economic growth and its policies.

Benefits of financial stability

Sustainability encourages people, politics and business to make decisions on a long-term basis, and in this way, to act sustainably includes a timeframe of decades, rather than a few months or years, and is considered more than the profit or loss involved.

The strategic plan sets out the organization's strategic goals for the next three to five years, with an accompanying budget for how much it is likely to cost. The funding strategy sets out how the organization plans, to bring in funds to cover those costs, which will help the funding strategy to be as an inte-

gral part of determining the opportunities and activities that your organization will pursue.

While to ensure the continued financial sustainability of countries, it is necessary to have the legal and economic ability to limit the growth of the costs of the current spending programs, or to allow them to grow within certain rates, or to find new sources of revenue or to raise the current rates of revenue.



KARACHI, Pakistan: A volunteer distributes food to displaced families who fled from flood hit areas in Sindh province at a government school used as a temporary shelter on the outskirts of Karachi on August 30, 2022. —AFP

gral part of determining the opportunities and activities that your organization will pursue.



Marwan Salamah

Effect of loss of the financial stability

Countries are seeking to achieve a financial sustainability situation in order to be able to borrow and to cover the financial deficit on concessional terms, the loss of financial sustainability by countries or the decline in market confidence in their ability to meet their obligations leads to creditors stopping lending to them, or raising interest rates on their loans to high levels and setting controls and conditions for their borrowing.

Achieving financial sustainability enables countries to obtain the necessary funding to expand spending on public projects and provide services to their citizens, fiscal sustainability reflects the level of success of fiscal policies and gives confidence to the private sector to invest in the countries that enjoy it.

Also, the rapid increase rates in the ratio of public debt to GDP are the most negatively affecting factors in the continued enjoyment of financial sustainability by countries. There are many other factors that affect the financial sustainability of countries, the most important of which are real interest rates, real GDP growth rates and expenditure and revenue growth rates.

First in line are the state-run energy companies as well as two state-owned banks that dominate commercial banking in the country, he said. His government has already raised prices of fuel and electricity more than threefold and removed energy subsidies, a key pre-condition for a possible IMF bailout.

Last week, Wickremesinghe tightened import restrictions with a ban on more than 300 additional items, as the crisis showed no signs of abating. Worker remittances, a key source of foreign exchange, have dropped by more than 50 percent to \$1.6 billion in the six months to June compared to the same period last year. Inflation is officially estimated to peak at about 65 percent by next month while the import-dependent economy is forecast to contract by a record eight percent this year. —AFP

What does financial stability term mean?

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Have you ever heard the term financial stability and wondered what it means? And how it helps countries grow their economies? In an interview with Kuwait Times, economist Marwan Salamah explained the meaning of the term and its significance and implications in the financial world today.

He started explaining the term by applying it to an example to simplify the idea. "Financial sustainability is a modern fancy term for an ancient concept, which means that if you don't preserve your resources and have the ability to produce in the future, you will not be able to continue and it will lead to failure," he said.

"History tells us that in the first agrarian revolution, 10,000 years ago, early humans realized that if they did not save part of their crop seeds for replanting (investment) in the next season, they were likely to starve, and if they did not take care of their garden plot (environment), it would deteriorate, and that their harvests shrink year after year. Lastly, if they mistreat their farm workers and animals (poor governance), they will suffer from a labor shortage in the following season," he said. "This is an ancient example of today's concept of the three pillars of financial sustainability - economic, environmental and social," Salamah explained.

"The social and environmental part of sustainability comes within the responsibility and control of the government, which should enact and enforce the laws that ensure they are addressed by the private sector. As for the profitability part, that is purely within the realm of the private sector. The entrepreneurs should ensure that their projects or businesses are economically feasible, and then set out to manage them wisely to ensure they generate a profit, without damaging the environment or their societal responsibilities," he specified.

Definition of financial stability

The term financial sustainability is the financial situation in which the state is able to continue with its spending policies in the long term without reducing its financial solvency, exposure to bankruptcy risks,

Sri Lanka says IMF bailout talks in 'final stage'

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka's president announced further tax hikes and sweeping reforms on Tuesday, saying that bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund were in the "final stage".

The country of 22 million people has suffered months of dire shortages and protests culminating in the ouster of Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month. Presenting a new budget, his successor Ranil Wickremesinghe said Tuesday that Value Added Tax (VAT) would rise from 12 to 15 percent for all

goods and services from Thursday. He said a dedicated debt management agency was being set up to restructure borrowings. In April, Colombo defaulted on its \$51 billion external debt.

"Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund have successfully reached its final stage," Wickremesinghe told parliament. "Discussions on debt restructuring will be held with the main countries that provide loan assistance to our country," he said referring to China, Japan and India, the top three creditors of the island.

Debt restructuring is crucial to clinching an agreement with the IMF, which resumed its talks with Colombo last week after political upheaval in July held up negotiations.

Beijing has not publicly shifted from its offer of issuing more loans rather than taking a haircut on existing credit. Wickremesinghe said he would press ahead with the politically unpopular "restruc-

Russia's Gazprom further cuts gas deliveries to France

PARIS: French energy firm Engie said Tuesday that Russian energy giant Gazprom was slashing its natural gas deliveries "due to a disagreement between both sides over the execution of contracts".

Engie added in a statement that Russian gas supplies had already been reduced drastically after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. "Engie had already secured the necessary volumes to guarantee supplies for its clients and for its own needs," it said. Russia gas accounted for 4.0 percent of its overall energy supplies at the end of July, the group said. Warnings from the French government have mounted in recent days about possible difficulties this winter due to energy shortages and galloping inflation.

Many European countries are facing severe supply problems as Moscow turns off the gas taps in response to EU military and diplomatic backing for Ukraine. French President Emmanuel Macron is to gather ministers for a special cabinet meeting on Friday in order to "prepare for all eventualities this autumn and winter," his office said.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne urged company bosses on Monday to reduce their consumption and warned about the risk of rationing. "If we end up with rationing, companies will be the most affected and unfortunately we need to be prepared for it," she told the Medef business association.

Claire Waysand, deputy chief executive of Engie, told the same meeting on Monday that the weather would play a crucial role this winter. "To be sure that we get through winter with enough electricity and gas, we have an interest in it not being too cold," she said. "If so, then there might be days when there are real tensions." —AFP



COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: University students and demonstrators argue with police during a protest against the Sri Lankan government and for the release of student leaders in Colombo on August 30, 2022. —AFP

Business

India's Adani becomes world's third richest, first Asian in top 3

Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2022 List

NEW YORK: Indian industrialist Gautam Adani became the world's third-richest person on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index on Tuesday, the first time an Asian has ranked in the top three.

The self-made billionaire has seen his net worth more than double to \$137.4 billion in the last year, rising 20 spots on the index to now rank just behind Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, Bloomberg News reported.

Gautam Adani has surpassed the Fresh Business magnate Bernard Arnault, the co-founder of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, a world leader in luxury fashion. On Bloomberg Billionaires Index List 2022, Tesla Chief Elon Musk has a net worth of \$251 billion while the Amazon founder and the CEO of Amazon-Jeff Bezos- has a total worth of \$153 billion. As per the Bloomberg Report, this is also the first time that an Asian has made the list of the top three wealthiest people in the world.

Gautam Adani is the co-founder of the Adani Group, which is the largest port operator in the country. Gautam Adani's Adani Group is also said to be the largest coal trader in India. Revenue of \$5.3 billion was reported by Adani Enterprises in March 31, 2021, as per the Bloomberg Profile of Asia's richest person highlights.

Adani, 60, made his fortune in ports and commodities trading and now operates India's third-largest conglomerate with interests ranging from coal



AHMEDABAD, India: In this file photo taken on December 23, 2010, Indian industrialist Gautam Adani speaks during a press conference in Ahmedabad. — AFP

mining and edible oils to airports and news media.

His ballooning net worth reflects a stratospheric rise in the market capitalization of his publicly listed companies, as investors back the Adani Group's aggressive expansion of old and new businesses. Shares in the flagship Adani Enterprises-of which the billionaire owns 75 percent-have soared more than 2,400 percent since March 2020, and doubled

in value in the past six months.

Stock price surges in other group companies including Adani Transmission, Adani Power, Adani Ports and Adani Green Energy have catapulted Adani past fellow Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani. Born in the city of Ahmedabad in the western state of Gujarat to a middle-class family, Adani dropped out of college to work briefly in the diamond industry before starting his export business in 1988.

In 1995, he won a contract to build and operate a commercial shipping port at Mundra in Gujarat, which has since grown to become India's largest port. At the same time, Adani expanded into thermal power generation and coal mining in India and overseas. In recent years, the conglomerate has forayed into petrochemicals, cement, data centers and copper refining, in addition to establishing a renewable energy business with ambitious targets.

Recent investments in Indian news media and a bid for 5G airwaves this year have raised speculation that the billionaire's empire could soon impinge on sectors dominated by Ambani's Reliance Industries.

But Adani's rapid expansion into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarm, with Fitch Group's CreditSights warning last week that the group is "deeply overleveraged". "In the worst-case scenario, overly ambitious debt-funded

Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2022 List		
Rank	Name	Net Worth
1	Elon Musk	\$251 billion
2	Jeff Bezos	\$153 billion
3	Gautam Adani	\$137 billion
4	Bernard Arnault	\$136 billion
5	Bill Gates	\$117 billion
6	Warren Buffett	\$100 billion
7	Larry Page	\$100 billion
8	Sergey Brin	\$95.8 billion
9	Steve Ballmer	\$93.7 billion
10	Larry Ellison	\$93.3 billion
11	Mukesh Ambani	\$91.9 billion
12	Carlos Slim	\$71.1 billion
13	Zhong Shanshan	\$70.8 billion
14	Francoise Bettencourt Meyers	\$69.3 billion
15	Charles Koch	\$67.7 billion
16	Julia Flesher Koch and Family	\$67.6 billion
17	Jim Walton	\$61.6 billion
18	Rob Walton	\$61.1 billion
19	Alice Walton	\$59.4 billion
20	Mark Zuckerberg	\$59.4 billion

Note: The rankings are as of August 30, 2022

growth plans could eventually spiral into a massive debt trap, and possibly culminate into a distressed situation or default," the credit market research firm said in a note. Gautam Adani, last week made headlines with the announcement that the Adani firms are set to acquire 29 percent stakes in NDTV, one of India's top news networks. However, as per the network, the deal is subject to market regulator SEBI's nod. —AFP

In abandoned US airbase, Bagram's economy withers

BAGRAM, Afghanistan: For years, the sprawling military base at Bagram, just north of Kabul, was a potent symbol of the United States' two decades of war in Afghanistan. The sprawling complex included an air base that was the linchpin of the US invasion; a prison where rights groups allege widespread violations occurred; and a residential area that featured swimming pools, cinemas and spas.

But weeks before Washington officially ended its military presence in Afghanistan last August, US troops left the airbase in the dead of night. Today, the military base is occupied by the Taliban, who took over the country in a swift offensive as US forces were exiting.

The US departure from Bagram has also seen the collapse of the economy in the nearby town of the same name, an illustration of how Afghanistan's fortunes were so heavily tied to the war and foreign aid. "Today, I'm jobless. I don't know much about politics, but the exit of US forces from the base is a big economic loss," said Saifulrahman Faizi, one of the town's 80,000 residents.

Faizi earned \$30 a day when he was employed at the base, at a time when hundreds would queue for hours outside the compound in the hope of getting work. "Now, nobody goes there. Everything has just crashed, everybody is struggling," he said.

Shuttered shops

Nowhere is the town's economic collapse more evident than in the main market. It is marked by rows of shuttered shops and warehouses, and those that remain open have seen sales plummet.

Shah Wali, a 46-year-old grocery store keeper, said he used to earn an income of between 20,000 and 30,000 Afghanis (\$230 and \$340). Today, he



BAGRAM, Afghanistan: In this photograph taken on August 24, 2022, bakers work at a bakery in a market near the former US military base in Bagram. — AFP

can barely pay his rent.

"With the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) coming to power, peace has returned but business has gone," Wali told AFP, clutching his prayer beads. At the peak of the US invasion, Bagram was home to tens of thousands of troops and contractors, with the town serving as a hub for tons of supplies that would service the base.

The airfield was first built by the Americans for their Afghan ally during the Cold War in the 1950s.

The Soviet Union vastly expanded it after the Red Army invaded Afghanistan in 1979. After their withdrawal, the base was controlled by the Moscow-backed government, and later by the shaky mujahideen administration during the 1990s civil war. With the Taliban seizing power last year,

the airfield is now under their control.

'Empty town'

When the US military pulled out, it took much of its military hardware home, but tons of civilian equipment was left behind. For several months, the town managed to thrive on a booming scrap business, but residents say that now that, too, is dying.

Shops that sold used gym equipment, generators, air conditioners and spare car parts are either shut or receive few orders. Several houses are now deserted, their residents having moved to Kabul or elsewhere in search of work. Many who had worked at the base have also fled the country, fearing reprisals from the Taliban. "Half the people have gone, the town feels so empty," said Faizi. —AFP

China arrests hundreds over banking scandal

BEIJING: Chinese police have arrested more than 200 suspects linked to one of the country's biggest banking scandals that triggered rare mass protests and dealt a major blow to confidence in the country's financial system.

Four banks in China's central Henan province suspended cash withdrawals in April as regulators cracked down on mismanagement, freezing the funds of hundreds of thousands of customers and sparking protests that at times ended in violence. Police in the city of Xuchang said Monday they had now arrested 234 people in connection with the scandal and that progress was being made in recovering stolen funds.

They said in a statement that a "gang" had taken control of a number of local banks, attracting depositors with interest rates as high as 18 percent. Large amounts of funds, they said, were then "exploited by financial brokers". Authorities previously said the gang had effectively controlled the banks since 2011. China's rural banking sector has been hit hard by Beijing's efforts to rein in a property bubble and spiraling debt, in a financial crackdown that has had ripple effects across the world's second-largest economy.

The size and scale of the fraud dealt an unprecedented blow to public confidence in China's financial system, analysts have said, with the banks involved allegedly operating illegally for more than a decade. Beijing is desperate to avoid disruptions to social stability just months away from a major meeting of the ruling Communist Party, where President Xi Jinping is expected to secure an unprecedented third term in power. —AFP



AMSTERDAM: Dutch rail workers have staged a strike, knocking out rail traffic nationwide.

Dutch rail strike strands commuters

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch national railway operator cancelled almost all trains on Tuesday after workers went on strike demanding pay to match soaring inflation, stranding hundreds of thousands of commuters. The walkout, called after a deadlock in talks with the management of the national rail company NS, also seeks to fill a backlog of jobs left empty by the coronavirus pandemic.

Rail workers have staged smaller strikes for the past three days, but Tuesday's targeted the crucial rail hub in the central city of Utrecht, knocking out rail traffic nationwide.

Trains were only running between Schiphol Airport and Amsterdam, along with international services to Brussels, Paris and London. "Due to a strike there will be no NS trains in the Netherlands

today," a voice announced at empty stations around the country, where more than 620,000 people commute by rail daily according to NS figures for 2021.

Smaller regional train services were operating as usual. Unions are demanding a salary increase linked to inflation—currently at over 10 percent for the first time since the 1970s—plus 100 euros gross per month and a minimum wage of 14 euros an hour.

They also want better working conditions and for NS to fill around 1,400 unfilled positions.

"At the moment negotiations are deadlocked," Hans Walthie, spokesman for the umbrella FNV trade union federation, told AFP. "The ball is now in the NS's court". NS, which is offering an eight percent increase over 30 months, said it "fully understands" the strikers' concerns. But spokesman Oscar van Elferen said NS was also dealing with a tight labor market, rising prices and a drop in travelers. "The coronavirus pandemic had a huge impact on our passenger numbers," van Elferen told AFP.

Dutch deputy infrastructure minister Vivianne Heijnen urged both sides to resolve the impasse, saying the strike was "extremely annoying for all train passengers." —AFP

China developer Country Garden sees record profit slump

BEIJING: BEIJING: China's largest developer Country Garden Holdings reported a record 96 percent on-year drop in its first-half earnings Tuesday, in the latest grim illustration of the economic chaos coursing through the country's property sector.

Its earnings plunged to 612 million yuan (\$88 million) as China's property market has "slid rapidly into severe depression", the company said in a report. It was the company's biggest recorded fall since its Hong Kong listing in 2007. The Foshan-based firm reported that revenue tumbled 31 percent to 162 billion yuan amid a "harsh business environment in which only the fittest can survive".

Core net profit, which reflects adjustments such as re-evaluated properties, came in at 4.9 billion yuan, down 68 percent year on year.

Country Garden attributed the lackluster results to the market's weakening expectations, sluggish demand and a fall in property prices—though it still tried to paint a rosy picture of pending recovery.

"There are often hopes in crises. China's economy has proven resilient and its strong fundamentals for long-term development remain intact," the company said. The company on Tuesday also reported a record-low gross margin of 10.6 percent while the ratio of liabilities to assets climbed to 74 percent. Hong Kong-listed shares in Country Garden have fallen 64 percent this year.

The biggest names in China's real estate sector are still reeling from Beijing's crackdown on excessive debt and rampant speculation, and Country Garden earlier this month predicted that its earnings would plummet. Focusing on the lower end of the real estate market and counting migrant workers as a main customer base, the developer is more vulnerable to soft market demand, Bloomberg News reported. Tuesday's results could be a "stumbling block to the developer's fundraising via equity and debt" and its focus on low-tier cities might extend its gross-margin slump, according to Bloomberg Intelligence real estate analyst Kristy Hung. —AFP

German inflation climbs again as energy prices soar

BERLIN: German inflation gathered pace again in August, official data published Tuesday showed, as the soaring price of energy heaped pressure on households. Consumer prices rose by 7.9 percent in the year to August, according to the federal statistics agency Destatis, having fallen to 7.5 percent in July. Energy prices, which have taken off since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, had a "substantial impact on the high inflation rate", Destatis said in a statement.

The prices paid for household electricity and fuel rose by 35.6 percent in the year to August, according to the agency. Sky-high inflation figures—well above the two percent rate targeted by the European Central Bank—have strengthened calls for a response from central bank policymakers and the government in Berlin.

German ministers were set to discuss the alarming increase in the price of energy at a two-day cabinet retreat which started earlier on Tuesday. With energy bills on the rise, the government is under pressure to do more to ease the strain on struggling households.

Initial relief measures announced by Berlin earlier this year will fall away at the end of August, including a popular nine-euro (nine-dollar) ticket valid for a month's worth of travel on local and regional trains. The end of the relief measures and the high August inflation figures augured the start of what could be a "hot inflation autumn", LBBW bank analyst Elmar Voelker said. —AFP

Business

Fossil fuels causing cost-of-living crisis

Climate expert warns global heating risks causing runaway climate change

PARIS: The cost-of-living crisis pushing millions of people towards poverty in Europe is driven by fossil fuels, according to a leading Earth systems scientist, who has warned that global heating risks causing runaway climate change. Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and co-author of the new book *Earth For All*, said that spiraling inflation was in large measure a result of decades of government failures to decarbonize their economies.

"I find it very disturbing that our political leaders in Europe are unable to communicate that high living costs right now are caused by higher prices on fossil fuels," he told AFP at the book's launch on Tuesday. "So this is fossil fuel-driven, supply-driven inflation. If 20 years ago you invested in solar (panels) or had a share in a wind farm, you're not affected today. The only reason why we have this crisis now is that we've had 30 years of underinvestment in preparing towards this turbulent phase which we knew would be coming," said Rockstrom.

"We've been saying since 1990 that we need to phase out the fossil fuel-driven economy towards a renewable-driven economy. And now here we are—we're now hitting the wall." European energy prices soared to new records last week ahead of what many analysts expect to be a challenging winter as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to disrupt oil and gas supplies.

The year-ahead contract for German electricity reached 995 euros (\$995) per megawatt hour, while the French equivalent surged past 1,100 euros—a more than tenfold increase in both countries from last year. In Britain, energy regulator Ofgem said it would increase the electricity and gas price cap almost twofold from October 1 to an average £3,549 (\$4,197) per year.

Rockstrom, who helped pioneer the concept of planetary boundaries—thresholds of pollution or warming within which humanity can thrive—said he hoped the current energy price crisis would be "communicated as another nail in the coffin" for oil, gas and coal.

"This should accelerate our transition towards renewable energy systems," he said.

'Giant changes required'

Rockstrom has spent two years working on *Earth For All*—a guide to help humans survive climate change—with several of the authors of *The Limits to Growth*. Written 50 years ago, that groundbreaking work warned that the development of civilization could not go on indefinitely with no limit to resource consumption. The new book outlines two growth trajectories this century. The first—"Too Little, Too Late"—sees the economic orthodoxy of the last 40 years endure, leading to ever starker inequality as the Earth's average temperature rises by 2.5 degrees Celsius (36.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100.

The second—the "Great Leap" scenario—sees unprecedented mobilization of resources to produce five changes: eradicate poverty and inequality, empower women, transform the global food system towards more plant-based diets, and rapidly decarbonize energy. In particular, the book says the International Monetary Fund must provide \$1.0 trillion annually to poorer nations to create green jobs, and rich governments to cancel debt to low-income creditors while giving their own citizens a "universal basic dividend" to help share corporate windfalls.

Rockstrom said the tools are already available to make the Great Leap possible.

"(It) is to do with the current knowledge on all the current existing technologies and practices and policies. If we could put in place all the five turnarounds and scale them up very fast, that's the best outcome we can have."



Johan Rockstrom

'Urgency point'

The project comes after another record-breaking summer that has seen unprecedented heatwaves and drought in Europe and China and devastating floods in Pakistan.

Rockstrom said the world had reached an "urgency point" as climate-linked disasters occur more frequently than predicted in climate models.

"Here we are—at 1.1C (of warming now), the things that we thought would happen perhaps at 2C are happening much earlier and are hitting harder," he said. Rockstrom was recently involved in a paper studying the "climate endgame"—scenarios such as the complete melting of the Greenland ice sheet or heating "feedback loops", which are deemed by scientists to be extremely unlikely and, he believes, therefore understudied.

He explained the possibility of "self-amplified warming", which is when the Earth itself is



PARIS: The cost-of-living crisis pushing millions of people towards poverty in Europe is driven by fossil fuels, according to a leading Earth systems scientist.

triggered into producing emissions from carbon stored in forests and methane in permafrost.

"There is a risk of rolling towards a worst-case scenario, not because we are ploughing in more carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases from (manmade) sourcing but that the Earth system itself starts emitting these greenhouse gases." Rockstrom said scientists need to "open up a much broader palette of scenarios" in climate models that could incorporate the kind of low-probability, high-impact events that could lead to runaway warming.

As to whether governments were finally ready to take the kind of system-changing

action needed to avoid climate meltdown, Rockstrom said that he was "actually quite pessimistic".

"If you asked me three years ago, I would have said I was optimistic—we saw a post-Paris momentum and more policies coming into play and businesses stepping on board," he said. "Now with the post-COVID meltdown in public trust and the rise of populism ... I cannot see that we are really ready to implement all these giant leaps."

"That's why timing is really important. We need to bring back the debate and we have to have a conversation about the urgency of action. But is it a challenge? Definitely." —AFP

China state support for economy this year exceeds 2020

BEIJING: State support for China's economy this year is now greater than it was in 2020, Beijing's premier has said, surpassing help given at the height of the coronavirus pandemic as the country grapples with the impacts of its zero-COVID policy and a property sector crisis.

Economists have widely predicted that China will fail to meet its 5.5 percent GDP growth target, blaming record youth unemployment, ballooning developer debt and manufacturing disruptions from frequent COVID lockdowns. "In response to new challenges, (we have) decisively launched a package of policies to stabilize the economy. Their strength surpasses those of 2020," Premier Li Keqiang said during a Monday State Council conference.

China's economy has also been battered by the two-month lockdown of Shanghai, a nationwide mortgage boycott, and a severe drought and heatwave which shut down manufacturing hubs and severely impacted the agricultural sector.

The grim economic outlook underscores the difficulty of balancing economic growth with the country's strict zero-COVID policy, with targeted lockdowns, travel restrictions and mass testing depleting fiscal revenues and causing disruption to everyday life. Li hinted at this fact earlier in August, telling officials "the number of people in difficulty has seen an increase" due to the virus and recent natural disasters.

Real estate sales, a major economic driver, fell 22 percent in August, year on year, while new home prices have fallen for 11 months straight, according to data released earlier this month.

China's economic growth came in at just 0.4 percent on-year in the second quarter—its slowest rate since the pandemic began in 2020. Beijing has taken a number of steps to help revive its economy, including a ramping-up of infrastructure investment, tax credits and loan facilities for SMEs.

China's banks last week lowered their benchmark lending rates, including on mortgage loans, for the second time this year. Beijing also announced last week that it would allow local governments to issue more bonds. But Ting Lu, an analyst at Nomura, wrote these measures would likely not be "game changers" due to the continued zero-COVID policy and the persistent distress affecting the property sector. —AFP

LuLu Financial Holdings opens 250th branch at Dubai Silicon Oasis

DUBAI: The numbers speak volumes about the ambitious rise of Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings (LFH) - a global leader in the financial services industry, which on Tuesday opened its 250th global branch in Dubai's Silicon Central Mall.

The milestone branch, which adds to the company's growing network across the UAE and nine other nations, was inaugurated by Dr. Aman Puri, Consul General of India, in the presence of the holding company's Managing Director, Adeeb Ahamed, and other senior management.

Congratulating the team on their achievement, Adeeb Ahamed said, "Today's opening is a celebration of the amazing journey we have had as a team, and the many opportunities we have converted to emerge as a trusted brand. As one of the leading players in the financial services sector, not just in the UAE but also in our other markets, we have been credited for being attuned to the sector's needs. Our efforts to bridge the gap between our consumers and our various physical and digital touch points are a key part of our growth story, and the 250th branch is a mark of our determination and perseverance to disrupt the global payments ecosystem."

The opening of the milestone branch was followed

New Huawei 16-inch laptops cater to different budgets

KUWAIT: It is not very often that you come across two newly launched laptops that offer great performance for professionals and creatives. Huawei recently launched its first 16-inch laptops in (name of country) Huawei MateBook 16s - a Real Color powerful Professional Laptop and Huawei MateBook D 16 - a Compact High Performance Laptop. These two offer great and immersive display, immense power, and futuristic Super Device features and many more making them both ideal for consumers that need a powerful device to unleash their creativity and get work done effortlessly, and they also cater to different range of users, with the Huawei MateBook 16s selling at a higher price point. The Huawei MateBook 16s and Huawei MateBook D 16 will both be there for the taking on Huawei's official website and across select retailers in Kuwait.

Huawei MateBook 16s

An Immersive 2.5K 16" Real Color Touch Screen

Featuring a sizeable 2.5K resolution touch screen, the Huawei MateBook 16s's display boasts a high screen-to-body ratio of 90 percent along with a 3:2 aspect ratio, granting a larger viewing area for effective content creation. It also attains an average high color accuracy, supporting a 100 percent sRGB color gamut while covering the display of 1.07 billion rich colors. Whether it is a graphic designer differentiating the light and shadows in an HD image, or an office worker looking at colored graphs, the level of detail that can be seen on the Huawei MateBook 16s provides a more comfortable graphic viewing experience. The Huawei MateBook 16s features a flicker-free DC dimming feature, and has obtained the TÜV Rheinland Low Blue Light and

with different energy needs and sources will be a long and politically-fraught process, but time is short to prevent a winter crisis.

Why is the system struggling? Electric power can't be stockpiled, unlike natural gas, so production and use must constantly be balanced. In the EU market, electricity pricing is determined by the cost of the last energy source employed to respond to demand—often a gas-fired power plant as they can be quickly brought into operation. The system developed in the 1990s when renewable energies like solar and wind were expensive and less reliable, and there was a cheap and steady flow of gas.



by two more branch openings on the same day, at Al Majaz and Maaza regions of Sharjah in the UAE.

About LuLu Financial Holdings

An ISO:9001 certified conglomerate, Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings has various invest-

ments in financial services, including remittances, foreign currency exchange, structured finance for MSMEs and micro finance for retail consumers in India. Cumulatively, it processes annual transactions of over \$11 billion, serving over 15 million customers across various regions.



Flicker Free Certification. Not only does it effectively reduce harmful blue light emissions, it also ensures that the brightness energy of blue light rays is less than 20 percent of the total screen brightness energy. It does not produce screen flicker, making users' eyes more comfortable, relieving visual fatigue and achieving better eye comfort.

Powerful performance to handle multi-tasking

Powerful performance lies within the thin and lightweight body of Huawei MateBook 16s; it is powered by the 12th Gen Intel(r) Core(tm) Processor, which consists of up to i9-12900H. With 14 cores and 20 threads, the highest turbo frequency reached 5G Hz. The performance cores (P-cores) maximize single-threaded performance and the corresponding speed, while the efficiency cores (E-cores) provide scalable multi-threaded performance and efficient background task offloading for multi-tasking.

The Huawei MateBook 16s is Intel Evo certified. To be Intel Evo certified, the laptop must prove to be extremely lightweight and offer great battery life. With this certification, it shows that this device is setting the standard for laptops out there.

When it comes to graphics, the Huawei MateBook 16s uses the Intel Iris Xe Graphics to provide outstanding graphic processing capabilities. Ideal for graphic designers, photo and video editors, as well as gamers. The Huawei MateBook 16s will help with graphic-intensive tasks easily and smoothly.

Over the years, renewable energy has fallen in price and gas has become more expensive—slowly at first and then soaring after Moscow launched its war in Ukraine.

As EU member states scramble to fill gas storage sites, Russia has responded to Western support for Ukraine by cutting back supplies and staging what it claims are maintenance shutdowns of a gas pipeline. Prices have soared, even in less gas-dependent countries with nuclear and renewable energy sources. Last week electricity prices for early 2023 delivery hit euro 950 (\$950) per megawatt hour in Germany and 1,300 in France—compared to euro 85 last year.



In order to meet the needs of different user scenarios, the Huawei MateBook 16s comes with two modes, balance mode and performance mode. Simply activate the performance mode, which supports a 60W thermal design power (TDP) for heavy office tasks, by pressing the "Fn and P" keys at the same time.

The Huawei MateBook 16s comes with a large battery of 84Wh (rated capacity). Day and night, it offers users an enduring battery life so they can focus better on work and creation, without worrying about charging the device from time to time. The 135W and 90W power adapter coming with the Huawei MateBook 16s supports fast charging. With a 30-minute charge, the laptop can be charged near to 50 percent. It can not only support HUAWEI Supercharge for selected Huawei SuperCharge-enabled phones, but also charge a wide range of devices that come with a USB Type-C port. Whether for business trip or daily commute, this power adaptor gives you peace of mind as it can fulfill your needs for charging various devices.

What can Europe do to fight soaring power bills?

BRUSSELS: European leaders want to break the link between soaring gas prices and electricity bills, a wholesale reform of the EU energy market made urgent by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

This continent-wide shake up of 27 EU economies

Some EU powers have long been pushing for reform. Since last year, France has been urging that power prices be "decoupled" from gas, so that its consumers benefit from its large nuclear power base. Spain has invested heavily in renewable energy, but still sees prices based on the cost of gas. But as late as last year Germany and a dozen other EU capitals were still opposed to reform, believing the market supports innovation and protects stable supplies. That is now changing, and Germany will be more receptive to ideas from Brussels when EU energy ministers meet on September 9 for "urgent" crisis talks. —AFP

French-Indian textile designer brings back Mughal patterns



Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh displays an original fabric of the 17th century with a poppy flower design made for Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, in her office.



Tailors stitch quilts with hand block printing designs at the workshop of Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh in Amber.

Textiles designer Brigitte Singh lovingly lays out a piece of cloth embossed with a red poppy plant she says was probably designed for emperor Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal, four centuries ago. For Singh—who moved from France to India 42 years ago and married into a maharaja's family—this exquisite piece remains the ever-inspiring heart of her studio's mission. The 67-year-old is striving to keep alive the art of block printing, which flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries under the conquering but sophisticated Mughal dynasty that then ruled India.

"I was the first to give a renaissance to this kind of Mughal design," Singh told AFP in her traditional printing workshop in Rajasthan. Having studied decorative arts in Paris, Singh arrived aged 25 in 1980 in western India's Jaipur, the "last bastion" of the technique of using carved blocks of wood to print patterns on material. "I dreamed of practicing (miniature art) in Isfahan. But the Ayatollahs had just arrived in Iran (in the Islamic revolution of 1979). Or Herat, but the Soviets had just arrived in Afghanistan," she remembers. "So by default, I ended up in Jaipur," she said.

'Magic potion'

A few months after arriving, Singh was introduced to a member of the local nobility who was related to the maharaja of Rajasthan. They married in 1982. At first, Singh still hoped to try her hand at miniature painting. But after scouring the city for traditional paper to work on, she came across workshops using block printing. "I fell into the magic potion and could never go back," she told AFP.

She started by making just a few scarves,



In this picture a worker uses the hand block printing technique on a cotton fabric at the workshop of Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh in Amber, on the outskirts of Jaipur in India's Rajasthan state. —AFP photos

and when she passed through London two years later, gave them as presents to friends who were connoisseurs of Indian textiles. Bowled over, they persuaded her to show them to Colefax and Fowler, the storied British interior decorations firm. "The next thing I knew, I was on my way back to India with an order for printed textiles," she said. Since then, she has never looked back.

Soul comfort

For the next two decades, she worked with a "family of printers" in the city before building her own studio in nearby Amber—a

stone's throw from Jaipur's famous fort. It was her father-in-law, a major collector of Rajasthan miniatures, who gave her the Mughal-era poppy cloth connected to Shah Jahan. Her reproduction of that print was a huge success the world over, proving especially popular with Indian, British and Japanese clients.

In 2014, she made a Mughal poppy print quilted coat, called an Atamsukh—meaning "comfort of the soul"—that was later acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Another piece of her work is in the collection of the Metropolitan



Textile designer Brigitte Singh displays an original 19th century Rajasthani drawing (left) for a wall painting and her own rendition design (right) at her office in Amber.

Art Museum in New York.

'Sophistication of simplicity'

Singh starts her creative process by hand-painting precise designs to her sculptor, Rajesh Kumar, who then painstakingly chisels the designs onto blocks of wood. "We need a remarkable sculptor, with a very serious eye," she said. "The carving of the wood blocks is the key. This tool has the sophistication of simplicity." Kumar makes several identical blocks for each color used in each printed fabric. "The poppy motif, for example, has five colors. I had to make five blocks," he said. "It

took me 20 days."

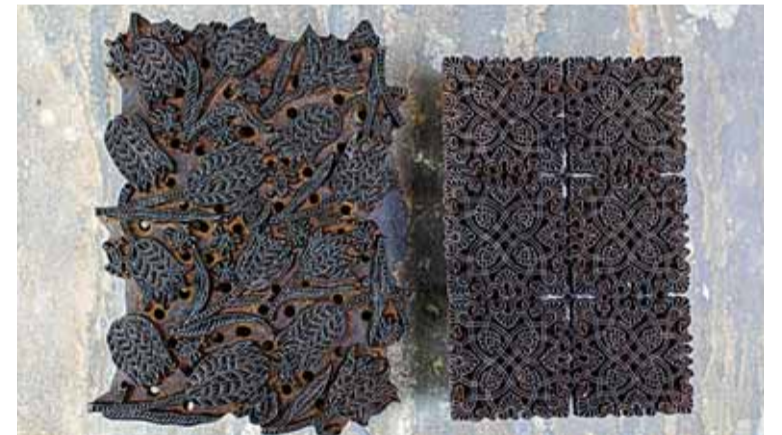
At Singh's workshop, six employees work on pieces of cloth laid out on tables five meters (16 feet) long. They dip the blocks in dye, place them carefully on the cloth, push down and tap. The work is slow and intricate, producing no more 40 meters of material every day. Her workshop makes everything from quilts to curtains and rag dolls to shoes. Singh just finished another Atamsukh for a prince in Kuwait. "The important thing is to keep the know-how alive," she said. "More precious than the product, the real treasure is the savoir faire." —AFP



A tailor irons a cotton fabric decorated with a design made using the block printing technique.



A worker weighs cotton for the filling of a quilt at the workshop of Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh in Amber.



Wood block designs used in the textile hand block printing technique are displayed.



A worker uses the hand block printing technique on a cotton fabric at the workshop of Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh in Amber.



Tailors stitch cotton fabrics made with a design using the hand block printing technique.



A worker uses the hand block printing technique on a cotton fabric.



A worker uses the hand block printing technique on a cotton fabric.



A worker displays a quilt with a hand block printing design of a poppy flower, rendered from an original design of the 17th century made for Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.



A worker carves a design on wood to make a block used in the textile hand block printing technique at the workshop of Indian naturalized textile designer Brigitte Singh in Amber.

Lifestyle | Features

Rapper stabbed to death as London's Notting Hill Carnival returns

London's Notting Hill Carnival was marred by the murder of a young rapper and hundreds of arrests, police said on Tuesday. The 21-year-old man died after being stabbed on Monday, the latest in a wave of knife-crime incidents in the British capital this year that have sparked growing concern. The victim was later identified as a rapper from Bristol, western England, who performed under the name TKorStretch.

"He came from Bristol to simply have a good time at the London carnival and this is the end result," his manager Chris Patrick wrote on Instagram. "TK was a good kid, a good guy and what has happened breaks my heart," he added. London's Metropolitan Police said officers were called at about 8:00 pm (1900 GMT) on Monday, the final day of the carnival, to reports of a stabbing in Ladbroke Grove and administered emergency first aid.

"He was taken to a west London hospital where, despite the best efforts of medical staff, he was pronounced dead," the force



TKorStretch

added. London mayor Sadiq Khan said he was "sickened" by the stabbing. "Violence has no place on our streets and we are doing everything in our power to root it out," he added. London police recorded 11,122 knife-crime offences in the year until March

2022, a 9.8 percent increase compared to last year, according to official figures.

At the carnival, officers made 209 arrests, including 46 for assault, 33 for possession of an offensive weapon and eight sexual assaults, said the force. Alison Heydari, Commander of Local Policing, said early on Tuesday that "the atmosphere over the past two days has been largely positive" but that on Monday evening "we saw a number of violent incidents".

The Notting Hill Carnival—one of the world's largest street festivals—was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The three-day celebration of British-Caribbean culture traces its roots back the 1950s after the first surge in arrivals from former British colonies post-World War II. Feathered dancers, steel bands and earth-shaking sound systems feature in the vibrant celebration held over the August bank holiday weekend. —AFP



We're hiring: Babies wanted for Japan nursing home

A nursing home in southern Japan is "hiring" babies for a very important job—to keep its elderly residents company and make them smile. The salary? Nappies and milk formula. New recruits at the facility in Kitakyushu must be under four years old, and their guardians have to sign a contract stipulating that the babies and toddlers can show up for work "whenever they feel like it".

They are allowed to take a break "when they feel hungry, sleepy or depending on their mood", the contract says. More than 30 babies have been signed up so far, tasked with lifting the spirits of more than 100 residents who are mostly in their 80s, said Kimie Gondo, head of the nursing home.

"The mere sight of babies makes our residents smile," she told AFP, adding with a chuckle that "there is no shift roster or anything". A job advert pinned to the wall at the facility says "We're hiring!" in large characters and informs would-be workers they will be compensated for their services in diapers and powdered milk.

Successful candidates' main—and perhaps only—responsibility will be to "take a stroll" around the nursing home while accompanied by their guardians, it says. "The babies stay with their mothers all the time. It's just like they're being taken for a walk in a park," Gondo said.

The residents appear delighted by the young recruits and have been greeting them, striking up conversations, or offering them hugs. "They're cute. It reminds me of when I was parenting," one resident told a local TV station. So far, the scheme has produced excellent results, Gondo said. "Some of the children get along with our residents so well, they're now like real grandparents and grandchildren." —AFP

UK cost of living crisis sees surge in pet abandonments: Charity

The UK's leading animal charity on Tuesday blamed spiraling costs and the huge upsurge in pet ownership during the pandemic for a 24-percent rise in pet abandonments this year. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) reported 22,908 abandonments in the first seven months of this year, compared with 18,375 in the same period of 2021. "The idea of putting your cat in a cat carrier and taking them to a secluded spot in the woods before walking away, or chucking your dog out of the car... is absolutely unthinkable and heartbreaking to most pet owners," said Dermot Murphy, the RSPCA's chief inspectorate officer.

"But sadly we are seeing animals callously abandoned like this every single day. "We understand that sometimes the unexpected can happen—the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis proved that—but there is never an excuse to abandon an animal." The charity, which is running an anti-animal cruelty campaign, attributed the surge to the pandemic and cost of living crisis for stretching pet owners' finances. Britain is in the grip of double-digit



inflation, running at 40-year highs, as well as a spiraling energy crisis that has left millions facing eye-watering gas and electricity bills this winter.

Around a fifth of pet owners are worried about how they will feed their animal, according to the charity's Animal Kindness Index survey. The UK's leading cat welfare charity meanwhile issued an urgent plea to potential adoptees after its waiting lists soared to a historic high. Cats Protection said the number of cats waiting to enter its adoption centers rose by 46 percent in July 2022 compared to July 2021.

Snakes dumped

"This is the worst situation in organizational memory in terms of the pressure on our services to take in cats," said Peter Shergold, head of field operations for Cats Protection. "The rise is directly linked to the cost-of-living crisis, such as not having the funds to afford the

basics like cat food or cat litter." Fellow animal charities Dogs Trust and Battersea have also warned of an increase in people wanting to give up their pets in recent months.

The RSPCA cited harrowing examples, including the case of terrier dog Freya, who was thrown out of a truck driving at around 50 miles per hour (80 kilometers per hour). "Freya was incredibly lucky to survive after being hurled from the moving vehicle at such a high speed," said inspector Kirsten Ormerod.

Other cases include 20 puppies found abandoned in Essex, southeast England, and four snakes dumped in plastic storage boxes beside the roadside in Surrey, south of London. A woman spotted the three royal pythons and one corn snake as she drove by. "The four snakes were each inside their own plastic storage box lined with newspaper," said animal rescuer Chloe Wilson. —AFP

Cut above: Barbers give Paris migrants a boost

Peals of youthful laughter rise above a whirring of clippers and the snipping of scissors—but this isn't your normal barber's shop. The Wilson barbers' collective is hard at work on a Sunday afternoon cutting hair in a Paris park, a popular meeting point for unaccompanied migrant minors. "I'm happy, I got a cool cut," grinned 16-year-old Ibrahim, who told AFP he had arrived in the French capital from Guinea in March.

As with most of his fellow young customers, his first request to stay in France as a minor was turned down, which meant he was left with nowhere to live while waiting for the authorities to deal with his appeal. "Sometimes you just want to pack it all in," he murmured, looking back at his time on the street before he got a place in a shelter run by a voluntary group.

But the teasing and the compliments of his friends waiting their turn for a cut put a smile back on his face. "It's not just a cut," said Marion Collet, of the Wilson Migrants Solidarity group. "In their day-to-day existence everything is imposed on them—where to sleep, what they eat, when food is handed out... "Here they have the right to choose what sort of haircut they would like—to choose their barber."

'A moment of normality'

Since February last year the group has been giving migrants and homeless people free haircuts. Once a month they set up in Belleville Park in eastern Paris at the same time the Mids du Mie charity passes out food. Collet said a haircut is a chance for "a moment of normality" in their disrupted lives—"a quarter of an hour when they become normal customers."

Around 100 young migrants queued up to have their hair cut on folding chairs by six barbers. Many of the volunteer hairdressers are migrants and asylum seekers themselves, with established Parisian barbers also donating their time.

All the kit is supplied by the collective—electric clippers, scissors, gowns—with some products donated by brands. "It's really great here, the youngsters are very laid back," said Warsame, a 41-year-old Somali asylum seeker who was a hairdresser back home and is about to start a professional course in Paris. "I wanted to help, as I am myself a refugee, so I know how tough it is," said Kunga Lakyap, a 30-year-old Tibetan who obtained refugee status and now works as a barber. —AFP



Brown leaves are seen on the branches of trees in St James' Park in London. — AFP photos



A Union Flag is seen amongst brown leaves on a pavement in East London.

Heatwave triggers 'false autumn' in UK

Searing summer temperatures in the UK have not just parched the earth and dried up rivers, lakes and reservoirs but are also seeing trees shed their leaves early. Instead of green, many gardens, parks and woods are now a sea of orange, yellow, red and brown, with thick carpets of leaves on the ground. The early leaf fall—dubbed a "false autumn"—is a sign of stress, as trees shed their leaves to try to retain moisture. But experts say while older trees with deep roots can withstand the drier conditions, younger, less established ones could be at risk. "The trees are enacting the hormones they use in autumn to just retract and ensure their survival," said Rosie Walker, of the Woodland Trust conservation charity. "They'll keep going like this for a few years but it is

going to start impacting our trees if we're not very careful," she told BBC radio. Temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) for the first time in Britain in July, with the month the driest on record in many parts of southern and eastern England.

Climate change has been blamed for the searing heatwave, which has led to drought being declared and a ban on the use of hosepipes to save water in some areas. The Woodland Trust said fallen leaves are most likely to come from birch, silver birch and rowan trees. "We saw the first turn in silver birch on August 12, which is incredibly early," said Walker, adding that other species were also shedding their leaves. —AFP



People sit on deckchairs among brown leaves fallen from the trees in St James' Park in London.



People walk past a tree with brown leaves in St James' Park in London.



A pedestrian walks past a tree with brown leaves, in East London.



Diana, Princess of Wales
1961-1997

- **July 1, 1961** Born into aristocratic family
- **1978** Leaves school with no qualifications
- **1981** Marries Prince Charles, 32-year-old heir to British throne, aged 20
- **1982, 84** Birth of sons William and Harry
- **1992** British premier John Major tells parliament in December that the royal couple will separate
- **1995** Confessional BBC interview, in which Diana talks of her marriage, struggle with depression and bulimia
- **1996** Divorce. Stripped of her royal title
- **1997** Relationship with Egyptian Dodi Al-Fayed, son of Mohamed Al-Fayed, then owner of the luxury department store Harrods
- **Aug 31, 1997** Dies with Dodi in Paris car crash, aged 36, prompting a global outpouring of grief



A human touch

Visits AIDS and leprosy sufferers, minefields, orphans, refugees.

Quotes

- “ There were 3 of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded
Diana, 1995
- “ I'd like to be a queen of people's hearts but I don't see myself being queen of this country
Diana, 1995
- “ She was the people's princess
British PM Tony Blair, 1997
- “ Our mother was a total kid... She was one of the naughtiest parents.
Prince Harry, 2017

© AFP Photo: AFP / John Stillwell, Douglas Curran

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

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

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

However, recent controversies—notably Prince Andrew's links to billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle quitting frontline royal duties—have cast doubts on the monarchy's remodeling. “Diana's death is this whirlwind moment, which requires the monarchy to reorientate its public image, to embrace a more modern, expressive kind of celebrity image as a way of appealing to audiences,” royal historian Ed Owens told AFP.

Noting “that story lives on through her sons”, he sees particular peril in Harry's apparent estrangement, the queen's recent handling of scandal-tarred Andrew and heir Charles' looming reign. “I think there are troubled times ahead,” Owens predicted.

'Rehabilitated'

In the immediate aftermath of Diana's death, the queen and Charles, whose divorce from Diana had been finalized the previous year, remained for days at Balmoral Castle, their remote Scottish residence, making no public statements. Fueled by other missteps, a media-driven narrative took hold that the family were out of touch at a moment of national significance. Royal commentators disagree on how fair this criticism was, noting the family's priorities were supporting William and Harry over the sudden loss of their mother as well as organizing an elaborate funeral service.

Nonetheless, Buckingham Palace's press operation



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

was gradually revamped, with more PR-savvy people brought in. Robert Hardman, author of this year's “Queen of Our Times: The Life of Elizabeth II”, argued it was a measured “evolution” as the 24-hour news cycle ramped up and then social media arrived. “Monarchy is not like a brand of cereal, it doesn't relaunch,” he cautioned. “It changes slowly, imperceptibly, but firmly for a reason (and) there was definitely a sense in those years that things needed to change. But you don't suddenly tear the whole thing up.”

The shift offered a more “human” image of the queen, who had been reported as being more concerned about her dogs and horses than her subjects.

Charles, mocked as haughty and stiff, underwent an expensive image makeover, according to royal insiders. William and Harry were key, emerging as Diana-esque “princes of feeling” supported by their father, said Owens. “His image is very carefully rehabilitated around this idea that he is a loving father to two sons both touched by this

tragedy of their mother's death,” he added.

'Great mistake'

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

“Meghan also embodied some of the virtues that Diana had sought to project as well, in terms of emotion and being in touch... with the lives of people in the developing world,” he noted. Meanwhile, the queen's response to the scandal that has engulfed Andrew-

rumored to be her favorite son—has echoes of Diana-era errors, with Owens branding it the 96-year-old's “great mistake” of recent decades.

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

“She should've been more responsive to public opinion in keeping Andrew out.” The royal historian sees plenty of similar “pitfalls” ahead in the imminent reign of Charles, who has faced several scandals over fundraising for his charities in addition to longstanding concerns over political interventions. In contrast to the queen, Charles lacks “subtlety” said Owens. “So you've got problems here.” —AFP

Princess Diana's Greatest fashion moments epitomize royal glamour

It's impossible to ignore Diana, Princess of Wales's ongoing impact on the world of fashion. The royal, who would have turned 60 today, remains an inspiration to millions for her philanthropic work and distinctive personal style. Diana's looks are so famous they come with special names and stories of their own. In fact, they're some of the most talked-about outfits of all time. The revenge dress, the Travolta dress, that fairytale, David- and Elizabeth Emanuel-designed wedding dress, each stands out as a distinct pop culture moment.

Diana's rise to prominence during the 1980s meant embracing some of the decade's key trends. The era of big shoulder pads and shapeless suits was a fashion challenge for all who lived through it, but for royals, it was especially tough. Modern princesses can dress in runway fare from McQueen and Givenchy and occasionally-test out daring styles. Protocols against short skirts, bare legs, and cleavage are still intact, but their enforcement was stricter in Diana's day. Still, she was able to cultivate a look that felt unique to her. Pre-fame, she stuck to “Sloane Ranger” staples like prep sweater vests, printed midi-dresses, and equestrian

boots. Once she became a princess, Diana switched gears and began to rely on trusted designers like Catherine Walker, Anya Hindmarch, and Murray Arbeid to create exquisite custom pieces.

Statement-making gowns were Diana's calling card. Whether she was taking in a performance of The Phantom of the Opera in a strapless navy ball gown by Arbeid covered in silver stars, or wearing a Catherine Walker taffeta number with a gathered skirt at a society gala in Melbourne during the Australian tour she and Charles undertook in 1988, Diana embodied the ideal of the princess, even when her life was far from that fantasy.

It's telling that Diana's style truly bloomed once she was freed from royal restrictions. After her separation from Prince Charles in 1992, she found herself with a wealth of new options and plenty of designers eager to dress her. The woman who dared to wear a Dior slip dress to the Met Gala in 1996 or body-con turquoise Versace at the Heart Foundation Ball that same year wasn't the same shy Di who hid behind baggy sweaters. Confident and entirely in control of her destiny, this era was her best.

No one knows what the princess could have contributed to the world if her life hadn't been cut short, but her legacy still resonates. Current royals like Kate Middleton regularly reference her fashions and habit of re-wearing favorite pieces multiple times. Millions who remember her fondly have also incorporated lessons from her wardrobe into their daily lives, and it's through these homages and tributes that Diana's fashion influence lives on. —www.vogue.com



Sports

Family conflict, extortion claims and witch doctor - what's Pogba affair?

Football star a victim of multi-million euro blackmail plot

PARIS: A police investigation has been opened after claims by French football star Paul Pogba that he is the victim of a multi-million euro blackmail plot that includes his brother Mathias. AFP looks into an affair involving a family conflict and a witch doctor, and which comes less than three months before the Juventus star is expected to help France defend their World Cup crown.

Who is Mathias Pogba?

Mathias, 32, is the elder brother of Paul (29) and the twin brother of Florentin. All three are professional footballers. Mathias, who was born in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, has had a journeyman career which has taken him to Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Slovenia. Much of his career has been spent in the United Kingdom, including spells at Wrexham, Crewe Alexandra and Partick Thistle. Last year he played 12 matches for Belfort in the French fourth tier. Mathias Pogba has also appeared on television in France as a pundit. Until recently, the Pogba brothers appeared close-knit. Mathias, Florentin and their mother, Yeo Moriba, have regularly been seen attending France matches in which Paul has played. Paul Pogba is also one of the main donors to 48 H POUR, a charity established by Mathias to help provide drinking water and education for children in Guinea.

What has Mathias Pogba said?

On Saturday, Mathias Pogba published a video on Instagram in which he promised "great revelations" about Paul and the Juventus player's agent, Rafaela Pimenta. In the video, Mathias Pogba says the "whole world, as well as my brother's fans, and even more so the French team and Juventus, my brother's team-mates and his sponsors deserve to

know certain things". "All this is likely to be explosive," he concluded without adding any substance to his "revelations".

How has Paul Pogba responded?

A statement released on Sunday, and signed by Paul Pogba's lawyers, his mother Yeo Moriba and agent Pimenta, said that the videos published on Saturday night "are unfortunately no surprise". "They are in addition to threats and extortion attempts by an organized gang against Paul Pogba," read the statement. They added that "competent bodies in Italy and France were informed a month ago". France Info radio reported that Paul Pogba told investigators he had been threatened by "childhood friends and two hooded men armed with assault rifles". They are demanding 13 million euros (\$13m) from him for "services provided", he said, adding that one person close to him had withdrawn 200,000 euros using his credit card.

How far along is the investigation?

Paris prosecutors confirmed to AFP that an investigation was opened on August 3 into allegations of extortion and attempted extortion by an organized gang. According to France Info reports confirmed to AFP by a source with knowledge of the case, Paul Pogba told investigators that he had been threatened by "childhood friends and two hooded men armed with assault rifles" who blamed him for not having helped them financially. Paul Pogba also told investigators that he had been threatened on several occasions in Manchester, during his time playing for Manchester United, and in Turin, where he currently plays for Juventus. He said he recognized his brother Mathias from among the suspects.



TOURS: In this file photo, the Pogba brothers, Manchester United and France midfielder Paul Pogba (center), Atlanta United defender Florentin Pogba (left) and CD Manchego midfielder Mathias Pogba (right), pose prior to a gala football match between All Star France and Guinea at the Vallee du Cher Stadium in Tours, central France, as part of the "48h for Guinea" charity event. —AFP

What does Mbappe have to do with this?

The Paris Saint-Germain striker, and France teammate of Paul Pogba, appears reluctantly in the affair. Paul Pogba told investigators that his blackmailers wanted to discredit him by claiming he asked a witch doctor to cast a spell on Mbappe, which Pogba denies. In a series of

tweets published on Sunday, Mathias Pogba appeals directly to Mbappe, saying: "Kylian, do you understand now? I have nothing against you, what I am saying is for your good, everything is true and known, the witch doctor is known! Sorry for this brother, a so-called Muslim up to his neck in witchcraft." —AFP



NEW YORK: Serena Williams of the United States is greeted by her daughter Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr following her victory against Danka Kovinic of Montenegro during the Women's Singles First Round on Day One of the 2022 US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on August 29, 2022. —AFP

Love, affection as curtain goes up on Serena's farewell

NEW YORK: Serena Williams walked onto Arthur Ashe Stadium with her diamond-encrusted dress glittering under the New York sky, over 23,000 people screaming their approval. Poor Danka Kovinic, her opponent, must have felt like the loneliest woman at the US Open.

"We love you Serena," fans screamed as the 23-time Grand Slam title winner appeared for what could have been the final singles match of her career. Their fervor was more intense just under two hours later when she secured a place in the next round with a 6-3, 6-3 win. This being New York, there were no limits to the hype or expectancy. "THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME" screamed the court-side videos followed by "#Twirl for Serena", a plea to mimic the player's signature victory celebration.

Anybody who was anybody wanted to witness history should this be the legend's final hurrah. Tennis legend Martina Navratilova, nursing her pet dog, sat next to heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson. There was former US president Bill Clinton, Hollywood star Hugh Jackman, Vogue editor Anna Wintour and fashion designer Vera Wang. In a post-match celebration of Williams's 27-year long career, Billie Jean King hailed her compatriot.

"Thank you for sharing your journey with every single one of us," she said. Williams's outfit caught the eye, a skirt designed with six layers-one tier for every US Open title she has won-and a diamond-encrusted bodice. "It is a dress made for a supernova's farewell," said The New York Times. Williams later revealed she had adapted the dress on the fly. "I have six layers to represent the six wins but I took four out because it was too heavy," she said.

Earlier, as Kovinic sat patiently court-side, actress and rapper Queen Latifah narrated a show reel of Serena's greatest moments. "Queen of this, this and this. Queen of style, queen of grace. You rewrote history, page after page." Serena hasn't officially committed to retiring but Queen Latifah appeared to know better. "If you decide to return, the throne will be waiting. The queen of our hearts."

Film director Spike Lee, a regular at Flushing Meadows, got one of his most cherished close-ups helping with the pre-match toss. But it wasn't just the glitterati who were out in force on Monday. Loyal fans of Williams had travelled far to witness what could have been the icon's last appearance. Tia Green had jetted in from Oklahoma City and along with her four cousins from Indiana, explained what Williams meant to them. —AFP

Afghanistan's Rashid calls for greater 'opportunities'

DUBAI: Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid Khan on Monday said he has gained from playing in global leagues but the country's up and coming talent needs more exposure to top-flight opposition. The Mohammad Nabi-led side crushed Sri Lanka in the opener of the Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament and next take on Bangladesh in Sharjah on Tuesday.

Rashid remains the brightest star in a galaxy of talented players many of whom have seen dark days in the war-torn nation, which witnessed another takeover by the Taliban last year. Despite the odds, the one-time minnows have made their presence felt among the cricketing elite since making their Test debut in 2018 in India. The 23-year-old Rashid, who has been key to the team's fairytale rise, alongside Nabi and former captain Asghar Afghan, said they still need more space in the cricketing calendar with top teams.

"We haven't played much international cricket, especially the longer format. It's just about the FTP (future tours program), it's not in the hand of the players," Rashid told reporters on the eve of their second Asia Cup match. "We want to play a lot of international cricket, that gives opportunities as youngsters come up through that. They should get the kind of environment where they can promote their cricket and skills."

Afghanistan are scheduled to play 53 ODIs, 71 T20Is and 22 Tests between April 2022 and May

S Africa make 8 changes for 2nd Wallabies Test

SYDNEY: South Africa rang the changes on Tuesday in their search for a desperately needed win against Australia, with eight new players named in the starting team, partly due to injuries. The Springboks head into the clash on Saturday in Sydney after back-to-back defeats, a 35-23 loss to the All Blacks at home before crashing 25-17 against the Wallabies in Adelaide.

It left the world champions bottom of the four-team Rugby Championship with three games to play and in dire need of a victory to keep their hopes alive. "We selected a team we thought would be best for this match given that we have several

Toulouse aim to fill stadium with 'real' fans for PSG stars

TOULOUSE: In the build up to their Ligue 1 encounter with champions Paris Saint-Germain, Toulouse have made it clear they want 'real' fans only at the game. "The team needs to play in front of a public that encourages them, not with a public that comes to the opera," Olivier Jaubert, general manager of the Toulouse club, told AFP. When Toulouse published the season's fixtures on their web site in June, they put jokey logos next to the names of opponents.

Lorient, from a Breton port city, had a fish, Reims a bottle of champagne. PSG and Marseille received



DUBAI: Afghanistan's Rashid Khan delivers a ball during the Asia Cup Twenty20 International cricket Group B match between Sri Lanka and Afghanistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on August 27, 2022. —AFP

2027 but most of them against lower ranked teams like Ireland and Zimbabwe. Rashid, a champion leg-spinner who plies his trade in various short-format leagues including the IPL and the Hundred, has raced to 112 wickets in 67 T20 internationals. "Playing all the international leagues is something which gives us the kind of opportunity where we can learn from the best players," said Rashid.

"That is where we learn and we bring that experience to the national level and share that with the team. The more players go around the world and play in the leagues, I think that is what helps us, especially in the batting department." Always known as giantkillers, Afghanistan's stock has risen considerably at the Asia Cup after they hammered Sri Lanka by eight wickets on Saturday when they skittled their opponents for a meagre 105 and then knocked off the runs in just 10.1 overs. —AFP

players out with injuries and with an eye on how we want to play," said coach Jacques Nienaber, whose team have failed to win on Australian soil since 2013.

"We let ourselves down in the last two games and we are determined to rectify that this week and change our fortunes in Australia. We'll prepare as well as possible this week to stay in the hunt for the title." Four of the changes are injury-enforced with Handre Pollard, Lukhanyo Am and Pieter-Steph du Toit all out with knee problems, while Elton Jantjies has hurt his hand.

It means Damian Willemse will move from full-back to flyhalf, Jesse Kriel slots in at centre and Franco Mostert was included in the loose trio. Talented young back Canan Moodie will make his Springbok debut on the right wing in a positional switch with Warrick Gelant, who moves to the bench. The experienced Willie le Roux takes Willemse's place at fullback in his 77th Test, with the other backline change at scrumhalf, where Jaden

a dig in the form of Footix, the mascot of 1998 World Cup in France. In France, Footix has become the term for what the English call 'glory seekers', fans who switch teams according to the results. Toulouse, whose only honors are a trio of Ligue 2 titles, have built their marketing strategy on 'real fans' since, playing in Ligue 2, they were bought in 2020 by an American investment fund.

The last time PSG visited in 2019 the club upset fans by pricing tickets from 70 euros. This time the cheapest seats are 30 euros. For the visit of the champions and their three tenors, Neymar, Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, Toulouse have structured sales to keep "Sunday fans" out of the stands. The club sold match tickets first as part of a package with the visits of Lorient and Reims.

It also gave preference to season-ticket holders, fans who are members of official supporter groups and fans who came last season as the club won Ligue 2. "The people who came to see Toulouse-

Hendrikse replaces Faf de Klerk who was axed from the 23.

Prop Steven Kitshoff and hooker Malcolm Marx earn starts in a new-look front row with Frans Malherbe while Jasper Wiese takes over at No.8 from veteran Duane Vermeulen, who is among the replacements. The changes forced a reshuffle of the front row on the bench, with Deon Fourie the replacement hooker, and Ox Nche and Trevor Nyakane providing cover at prop. Cobus Reinach is the replacement scrumhalf while the experienced Frans Steyn offers options at flyhalf and centre.

South Africa (15-1): Willie le Roux; Canan Moodie, Jesse Kriel, Damian de Allende, Makazole Mapimpi; Damian Willemse, Jaden Hendrikse; Jasper Wiese, Franco Mostert, Siya Kolisi (capt); Lood de Jager, Eben Etzebeth; Frans Malherbe, Malcolm Marx, Steven Kitshoff. - Replacements: Deon Fourie, Ox Nche, Trevor Nyakane, Kwagga Smith, Duane Vermeulen, Cobus Reinach, Frans Steyn, Warrick Gelant. —AFP

Dunkerque, Toulouse-Quevilly or Toulouse-Niort are people who fundamentally love the club and the game we play today," Jaubert said. This approach could be repeated in February for the visit of Marseille. "Some teams have support just about everywhere in France," Jaubert said. "The risk, if you don't give priority to your fans, is that your stadium will not be in the colors of your club."

Jean-Baptiste Jammes, the founder of a Toulouse news site LesViolets.com agrees. "It was frustrating and problematic," he said. "It was even worse for Marseille's matches than PSG's." "The club has since put things in place so that the stadium is purple and not blue or white." "You want an audience of consumers and people committed to the cause of the opposing team, you will have it..." he said. Toulouse are not alone in targeting traditional fans. Reims also mocked star-struck PSG and Marseille fans this summer when marketing club membership. —AFP

Sports

Bournemouth sack Parker days after 9-0 Liverpool humiliation

‘Our search for new head coach begins immediately’

LONDON: English Premier League strugglers Bournemouth sacked head coach Scott Parker, days after they were thrashed 9-0 at Liverpool. In a parting shot at Parker, owner Maxim Demin said in a statement that “in order for us to keep progressing as a team and a club as a whole, it is unconditional that we are aligned in our strategy to run the club sustainably. We must also show belief in and respect for one another. That is the approach that has brought this club so much success in recent history.”

He added: “Our search for a new head coach will begin immediately.” Parker had taken several public swipes at Bournemouth’s management over their failure to strengthen the squad after the south coast club’s return to the top flight. He was especially blunt following the Liverpool match, saying the Cherries were “ill-equipped” following a rout which came after a 4-0 loss at champions Manchester City and a 3-0 defeat by Arsenal.

“I can see some more (heavy losses),” Parker said during his post-match press conference at Anfield. “We need to make a decision. I have been clear how this season could look for us and I stick by that. “We need to make a decision and try and help this young

group who at times are struggling for air. “We have been trying to get more quality in and there are a million reasons why (they have not). “I feel sorry for the fans. I feel sorry for the players because we are ill-equipped at this level.”

Gary O’Neil will take interim charge of the team, who are 17th in the Premier League and have lost three of their four opening games, conceding 16 goals. The 41-year-old Parker, a former England international midfielder, had taken Bournemouth to promotion last season from the second-tier Championship. “I would like to place on record my gratitude to Scott and his team for their efforts during their time with us,” said Demin.

“Our promotion back to the Premier League last season under his tenure will always be remembered as one of the most successful seasons in our history.” While it is unusual for a Premier League manager or head coach to be sacked in August, more games than normal have been played at this point after the start of the season was brought forward in response to a World Cup in Qatar commencing in November. Bournemouth’s next match is at home to second-bottom Wolves on Wednesday. —AFP



Bournemouth's English head coach Scott Parker

African players in Europe: Salah fails to score

PARIS: Liverpool equaled the record for the biggest Premier League win by thrashing Bournemouth 9-0 at the weekend, but prolific Egyptian Mohamed Salah was not among the scorers. Salah has netted twice in four league matches since the season kicked off - equalizing at Fulham and snatching a late consolation goal at Manchester United. A strained relationship between Wolves and Willy Boly intensified when the Ivory Coast defender failed to turn up for a 1-1 draw with Newcastle after being included in the squad. Here, AFP Sport highlights African headline-makers in the major European leagues:

Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)

The two-time African Footballer of the Year played an inadvertent role in the build-up to the fourth goal when his attempted pass ricocheted off Bournemouth’s Marcus Tavernier and flew toward the six-yard box, where Roberto Firmino directed the ball into the net.

Willy Boly (Wolves)

Nottingham Forest had a £1 million (\$1.2 mn/1.2 mn euros) bid for the centre-half turned down but it looks as if Boly will leave Molineux before the transfer window shuts on Thursday. “He has been a great professional but in the end he wants to force something,” said Wolves manager Bruno Lage.

Umar Sadiq (Almeria)

The energy and persistence of the tall Nigerian was rewarded after 55 minutes when he tapped in the winner for Almeria in a 2-1 La Liga victory over Sevilla. Sadiq netted off a low cross and came close to scoring just before and after his goal.



Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah

Boulaye Dia (Salernitana)

Senegal international Dia couldn’t have hoped for a better first start for Salernitana after joining on loan from Villarreal, opening the scoring and setting up two more in a 4-0 Serie A hammering of Sampdoria. The 25-year-old tapped home the opener in the seventh minute before laying on Federico Bonazzoli’s superb second and Erik Botheim’s smart finish, which rounded off the scoring.

Sadio Mane (Bayern Munich)

Mane had two goals ruled out for offside in Bayern’s 1-1 draw with Borussia Moenchengladbach, meaning the Senegalese has now had goals chalked off in each of his four Bundesliga games this season for either offside or handball. Mane was a constant danger, frequently sewing seeds of doubt in Gladbach’s backline.

tier Serie D in 2017 to Serie B, where they finished 13th last season. Wise said that Serie A was Como’s “long-term goal”. The former England international added that the club was also working to rebuild the youth academy in order to “compete with AC Milan and Atalanta” in developing young talent and trying to get a new stadium built. Earlier this month Como signed Henry’s former Arsenal teammate Cesc Fabregas, who joined after a difficult season at Ligue 1 team Monaco for whom he did not play a game after September. And on Monday they announced the signing of attacker Patrick Cutrone from Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Fabregas also became a shareholder at the club as part of his deal to join Como, whose Giuseppe Sinigaglia stadium - owned by the city - has the stunning backdrop of one of the world’s most famous lakes. He is expected to make his first start for Como on Monday night in a Lombardy derby with Brescia. “The most important thing about Cesc is his brain,” said Henry. “I think we sometimes forget to develop their (player’s) brain. When you’re fast there, you’ve won, and that’s why he’s lasted.”

Mostafa Mohamed (Nantes)

The 24-year-old Egypt striker - who played in the Pharaohs’ side beaten by Senegal on penalties in this year’s Africa Cup of Nations final - scored his first goal in French football as Nantes beat Toulouse 3-1. Signed on loan from Turkish giants Galatasaray, Mohamed also set up a goal for Nigerian teammate Moses Simon as Nantes claimed their first win of the Ligue 1 season.

Mohamed Camara (Monaco)

The combative 22-year-old Mali midfielder started for Monaco for the first time and impressed in his new side’s 1-1 draw at Paris Saint-Germain. Camara did his best to make life difficult for the PSG superstars, although he also picked up a second-half booking before being substituted. Signed from Red Bull Salzburg for a reported 15 million euros (\$14.9 mn), Camara was brought in to replace Real Madrid-bound Aurelien Tchouameni. —AFP

‘Ambassador’

Wise refused to reveal any specifics regarding Henry’s role at the club, nor how much Henry had invested in order to become a shareholder. His stake in the club was “private”, according to Wise. “Thierry is a shareholder and that’s all I’m prepared to say,” said Wise. Asked what his official title or responsibilities were, Wise said: “We want to understand his experiences and his ideas”. “He’s welcome to come in any time and talk, we will listen. You can call him an ambassador... We’ll talk in depth about football,” Wise added.

Henry said that he “will come as much as I can” to Como as part of his role, depending on his other commitments as a pundit and assistant manager with the Belgium national team. Henry won a host of trophies during a stellar career at Arsenal and Barcelona and was part of the France side alongside the likes of Zinedine Zidane which won the 1998 World Cup. He retired as a player in 2015 and then coached Monaco and Montreal before becoming a television pundit. —AFP

Dundee United sack manager Ross after 9-0 loss to Celtic

GLASGOW: Dundee United have sacked Jack Ross following their record 9-0 home defeat by Celtic, the Scottish Premiership club announced Tuesday. The former Alloa, St Mirren, Sunderland and Hibernian manager’s reign at Tannadice lasted just seven games in charge. United’s humiliating reverse by Scottish champions Celtic on Sunday was their fifth consecutive defeat and meant they had conceded 23 goals in their last four games.

“Dundee United can confirm head coach Jack Ross has been relieved of his duties with immediate effect,” said a club statement. “Liam Fox will take charge of the first team on an interim basis with the focus now fully on Wednesday’s Premier Sports Cup match with Livingston.” Ross was appointed on June 20 after Tam Courts moved to join Hungarian club Honved.

The 46-year-old Ross’s first match in charge of United was a Premiership draw with Kilmarnock and he then oversaw a 1-0 Europa Conference League win over AZ Alkmaar at Tannadice. But results rapidly went downhill after that win, with a 1-0 home defeat by Livingston followed by a 7-0 loss away to Dutch club Alkmaar that equaled the worst result by a Scottish club in European competition. There was no domestic comfort for Dundee United, with a 4-1 defeat by Hearts and a 3-0 home loss to St Mirren preceding the collapse against Celtic. Ross, speaking after Sunday’s thrashing by Celtic, signaled his determination to get United back on an even keel. “Regardless of what club I’m at or what level I had the same burn to do well as a manager at Alloa as I do now,” he said. “And because of the embarrassment and humiliation I feel right now then, absolutely, I want to put that right.” Ross’s departure from Dundee United was announced on the same day as English Premier League club Bournemouth sacked boss Scott Parker following a 9-0 defeat by Liverpool last weekend. —AFP



Thierry Henry

Henry begins ‘new chapter’ as Como new shareholder

COMO: Thierry Henry was revealed on Monday as a new shareholder of ambitious Italian club Como, who are aiming for big things after rising from amateur football to the country’s second tier. France icon Henry was presented by the Serie B club at a media conference in the lakeside city, alongside CEO and former Chelsea captain Dennis Wise.

“It’s a new chapter in my life,” Henry told reporters. “I know the love for football here... People come to visit for the town. People in France or Spain, they talk about the lake or the beauty of the town but now it’s time to talk about the club.” Como, owned by Indonesian tobacco giants Djarum, are targeting a return to Serie A for the first time since 2003 after rising from bankruptcy and fourth-

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital 24812000	23940620	Rawda 22517733
Amiri Hospital 22450005	Ibn Sina Hospital 24840300	Adaliya 22517144
Maternity Hospital 24843100	Al-Razi Hospital 24846000	Khaldiya 24848075
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital 25312700	Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9	Kaifan 24849807
Chest Hospital 24849400		Shamiya 24848913
Farwaniya Hospital 24892010		Shuwaikh 24814507
Adan Hospital		Abdullah Salem

Clinics

Kaizen center
25716707

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MUFADDAL LIMDIWALA currently holder of Indian passport No. T8280260 issued in Kuwait on 26-11-2019 and expiry on 25-11-2024, I want to change my name to MUFADDAL ISMAIL LIMDIWALA. (#2049-31/8-2/9/22)

Changed my name to Hatim Shabbir Hamid Address: 33 Chandan Gardens NIBM Road Undri Kondhwa Pune Pune-411048 affidavit dated 4 Aug 2022 Notary Jagannath Gopinath Ghuge (C# 2048-30/8-1/9/22)

hereby change my name to NIHAL (as given name) KAMAL (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name NIHAL KAMAL and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all mu documents. (C# 2047-29/8-31/8/22)

I Hatim Shabbir Bhai holder of Passport No. V6128276 have

I NIHAL BALLUR holder of Passport No. V7423854 do

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SERENA WILLIAMS



NEW YORK: US player Serena Williams warms up ahead of her match at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York, on August 29, 2022. — AFP

Serena Williams battles on as US Open farewell underway

Wu Yibing claims a piece of history

NEW YORK: Serena Williams delayed her farewell to tennis on an electrifying opening night at the US Open on Monday as the sporting icon battled to victory in front of a star-studded crowd. The 23-time Grand Slam winner—who earlier this month signaled she plans to retire from tennis after the tournament—drew on all of her experience to down lowly ranked Montenegrin opponent Danka Kovinic 6-3, 6-3.

A galaxy of celebrities ranging from Hollywood stars, fashion icons and former presidents were out in force at Flushing Meadows' Arthur Ashe Stadium to watch could have been Williams final appearance in a Grand Slam singles match. But the 40-year-old ensured that her legions of fans will have at least one more chance to savor her talents as she dug out victory despite an error-strewn display. "I feel so comfortable on this court and in front of everyone here," a jubilant Williams said after her victory.

"The crowd was crazy - they really helped pull me through. I was really pumped," added Williams, who won the first of her Grand Slam titles in the same arena in 1999 as a 17-year-old prodigy. Williams admitted that deciding to walk away from the sport after 27 years as a professional was "such a hard decision." "I think when you are passionate about something it is always hard to walk away," she said. "I have been trying to decide what to do. I love this game. "But I was just like 'Alright, I think now's the time'. I have a family, there's other chapters in life. I call it evolution."

Williams later refused to be definitive about her retirement however when asked if the US Open

would be her last tournament, teasing the possibility that she may yet play on. "I've been pretty vague about it, right?" she said. "I'm going to stay vague because you never know." A sell-out crowd of 23,500 had roared its appreciation for Williams as she strode into the arena wearing a striking sparkling bodice and black skirt comprised of six layers—one for every US Open title she has won.

The roll-call of A-listers on hand for the occasion included former US President Bill Clinton, Vogue editor Anna Wintour, former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, tennis legend and Hollywood stars such as Hugh Jackman and Queen Latifah. Williams acknowledged that leaving the spotlight—whenever that is—would be a wrench. "The more tournaments I play, I feel like the more I can belong out there," she said. "That's a tough feeling to have, to leave knowing the more you do it, the more you can shine."

Tsitsipas stunned

In other women's draw action on Monday, former world number one Simona Halep, seeded seventh, was the biggest casualty in the first round, crashing out 6-2, 0-6, 6-4 to Ukrainian qualifier Daria Snigur. But there were no such problems for US teenager and 12th seed Coco Gauff, who cruised past France's Leolia Jeanjean 6-2, 6-3.

Meanwhile the men's draw got under way with a stunning upset for Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who was bundled out by Colombian qualifier Daniel Elahi Galan 6-0, 6-1, 3-6, 7-5. Earlier, Russia's defending champion Daniil Medvedev routed Stefan Koslov of the United States in the top half

of the draw. The Russian comfortably dispatched world No.111 Kozlov 6-2, 6-4, 6-0 in 2hrs 1min.

Medvedev, bidding to become the first man to defend the US crown since Roger Federer retained the title in 2008, faces France's Arthur Rinderknech in the second round. Britain's Andy Murray, another veteran well into the twilight of his career, marked the 10th anniversary of his maiden Grand Slam win with a straight sets defeat of Argentinean 24th seed Francisco Cerundolo. The 35-year-old Scot showed no signs of recent cramping problems in a 7-5, 6-3, 6-3 win, but admitted afterwards: "It felt like five sets." It was Murray's first straight sets win at a

Grand Slam event since 2017.

Elsewhere Monday, Wu Yibing claimed a piece of history in the men's draw, becoming the first man from China to win a Grand Slam singles match since 1959. The qualifier upset Georgia's 31st seed Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-3, 6-4, 6-0. But there was agony for China's other player in the men's draw, Zhang Zhizhen who squandered seven match points in a 3-6, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (11/9), 6-1, 6-4 defeat to Tim Van Rijthoven of the Netherlands. Spain's Rafael Nadal, chasing a fifth US Open crown and 23rd Grand Slam title overall, begins his campaign on Tuesday against Australia's Rinky Hijikata. — AFP

WOMEN		MEN	
1	Serena Williams (USA) 362 wins*	1	Roger Federer (SUI) 301
2	Martina Navratilova (CZE/USA) 306	2	Novak Djokovic (SRB) 285
3	Chris Evert (USA) 299	3	Rafael Nadal (ESP) 278
4	Steffi Graf (GER) 278	4	Jimmy Connors (USA) 270
5	Venus Williams (USA) 270	5	Andre Agassi (USA) 233
			224

* = 10 wins

