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END OF AN ERA

Amir: World lost a great leader • Britain's new King is officially Charles III



Queen Elizabeth II passes away

1926-2022

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LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-serving monarch in British history and an icon instantly recognizable to billions of people around the world, died on Thursday. She was 96. Buckingham Palace announced her death in a short statement, triggering 10 days of national mourning and an outpouring of tributes to her long life and record-breaking reign.

"The Queen died peacefully at Balmoral this afternoon," Buckingham Palace said in a statement at 6:30 pm (1730 GMT). "The King and The Queen Consort will remain at Balmoral this evening and will return to London tomorrow." The eldest of her four children, Charles, Prince of Wales, who at 73 is the oldest heir apparent in British history, becomes king immediately. Royal officials confirmed he will be known as King Charles III, the first king of that name to sit on the throne since 1685.

III the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to King Charles III on the sad demise of Queen Elizabeth II. In the cable, III the Amir said that the world has lost a "great, wise and visionary leader" with historic positions who promoted peace and security around the world. III the Amir recalled with deep gratitude the late Queen's position in support of Kuwait during the 1990/91 Iraqi invasion.

The queen's death came after the palace announced on Thursday that doctors were "concerned" for her health and recommended she stayed under medical supervision. All her children - Charles, Princess Anne, 72, Prince Andrew, 62, and Prince Edward, 58, flocked to her Scottish Highland retreat, Balmoral. They were joined by Charles' sons, Prince William, and his estranged brother Prince Harry.

Two days earlier the queen appointed Liz Truss as the 15th prime minister of her reign and was seen smiling in photographs but looking frail and using a walking stick. One photograph of the meeting sparked alarm, showing a deep purple bruise on the monarch's right hand. From the steps of 10 Downing Street, Truss mourned "the passing of the second Elizabethan age" nearly 500 years after the first and concluded: "God save the king." Charles himself called his mother's death "a moment of the greatest sadness for me and all members of my family".

Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne aged just 25 in 1952 in the aftermath of World War II, joining a world stage dominated by political figures from China's Mao Zedong to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and US president Dwight D. Eisenhower. Her 70-year reign straddled two centuries of seismic social, political and technological upheaval. The last vestiges of Britain's vast empire crumbled. At home, Brexit shook the foundations of her kingdom, and her family endured a series of scandals.



But throughout, she remained consistently popular and was queen and head of state not just of the United Kingdom but 14 former British colonies, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand. She was also head of the 56-nation Commonwealth, which takes in a quarter of humanity, and supreme governor of the Church of England, the mother church of the worldwide Anglican communion. But questions will be asked about whether the golden age of the British monarchy has now passed, how an ancient institution can remain viable in the modern era and whether Charles will command the same respect or reign in his mother's shadow.

Television and radio stations interrupted regular programming to broadcast the news, with long-rehearsed special schedules set in place to remember her long life and reign. The national anthem, "God Save the Queen", was played. Flags were lowered and church bells tolled to remember a woman once described as the "last global monarch". The national mourning period will culminate in a final public farewell at Westminster Abbey in central London. Charles' coronation, an elaborate ritual steeped in tradition and history, will take place in the same historic surroundings, as it has for centuries, on a date to be fixed.

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor was for most of her subjects the only monarch they have ever known - an



immutable figurehead on stamps, banknotes and coins. Diminutive in stature yet an icon of popular culture, she was instantly recognizable in her brightly colored suits and matching hat, with pearls, gloves and a handbag. During her reign, the royals went from stiff, remote figures to tabloid fodder and were then popularized anew in television dramas such as "The Crown," watched by tens of millions worldwide.

Her time on the throne spanned an era of remarkable change, from the Cold War to the 9/11 attacks, from climate change to coronavirus, "snail mail" and steam ships to email and space exploration. She became seen as the living embodiment of post-war Britain and a link between the modern era and a bygone age. The mother of one of the most famous families in the world, she retained huge public support throughout, surviving even a backlash in the wake of the death of Charles' first wife, Diana, in 1997.

More recently, the royal family was rocked by claims from Prince Harry and his mixed-race wife Meghan of racism in the royal family. She also endured a scandal involving her second son Prince Andrew, whose friendship with convicted sex offenders Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell saw him settle a civil claim for sexual assault in the United States. Britons were jolted into recognizing the beginning of the end of her reign when in



April 2021 she lost her beloved husband of 73 years, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Yet the palace had long recognized her mortality and the transition to Charles was already well under way. He, his eldest son Prince William, who now becomes heir, and his wife, Catherine, began to assume more of the queen's official roles. The coronavirus pandemic and her advanced years forced her into the splendid isolation of Windsor Castle, west of London. But from behind its stately walls, she remained a reassuring presence, popping up on video calls with members of the public. In a rare, televised address during the first lockdown, she recalled the "Blitz spirit" of Britain under siege during World War II that defined her generation. "We will meet again," she said.

She cast off the shroud of Philip's death and her enforced confinement to resume public duties, but age and ill-health forced her slow down. After an unscheduled night in hospital in October 2021 following undisclosed health tests, her appearances became rarer. "None of us will live forever," she told world leaders attending a UN climate change summit soon afterwards, urging them to leave a legacy for generations to come. One of her last decisive acts was to settle an unanswered question for the succession, giving her blessing for Charles' second wife, Camilla, to be called "queen consort". — Agencies

Local

OPEC decision mirrors regional uncertainty

KUWAIT: OPEC's decision to reduce production by 100,000 barrels daily and to remove a similar increase announced at the Jeddah meeting on Sept 5, reflected a high degree of uncertainty. This state of sharp fluctuation in oil prices, with a downtrend is the result of variables over which neither OPEC nor others seem to have any control. While the Russian-Ukrainian war and its economic repercussions occurred while the world economy had not yet recovered from a previous turmoil, it also tightened the Chinese economy in the second quarter of the year leading to a decline in its demand for oil. More importantly, the pessimistic expectations of the performance prospects for major economies still exist.

During that period, the highest price of Brent crude oil per barrel reached US\$ 133.18 on March

8 and its lowest was at US\$ 95.06 on August 22. The difference is US\$ 38.12 in a span of only several months, which is represented by the risk premium that has dropped over time. This premium, whether for geopolitical or economic reasons, may rise or fall substantially when its justifications are either exacerbated or eliminated. Dealing with it should take into account that it is an exceptional case. Today's world is different from the one that had to go through high oil prices due to its export ban to the West during the October 1973 War; likewise, it differs from its increase in 1979 after the Iranian Revolution. Technological progress in the transport sector is advanced. Even after these two cases, oil prices and production fell sharply in less than a decade.

The purpose of the above introduction is to

recall what happened in Kuwait in the summer of 2020, when the Ministers of Finance and Oil disagreed on social media platforms over KD 7 billion profits, withheld by the Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC). The Minister of Finance wanted them immediately, to avoid being in a position where he would be unable to pay salaries and wages. The government then entered into a feud with the National Assembly, when it submitted its proposals to request that it be allowed to withdraw, from future generations' reserves or resort to borrowing from the global market, to counter the liquidity drain.

Today, due to the stated exceptional circumstances of the world, it was estimated in Al Shall, the possibility of the public budget achieving a surplus of slightly more than KD 10 billion for the fiscal year

2022/2023. But with the recent fall in oil prices, the estimated surplus may begin to decrease, though it remains on a significant scale. Associated with this, the signs of a return to the loose fiscal policy begins to emerge and so does promises from high government levels of bonuses and allowances unrelated to productivity, but in place to attract loyalties. This is not just another clever government signal to start a similar auction, in the era of parliamentary elections and their subsequent results. What is assumed to happen is, the transfer of most of the revenues of the exceptional and temporary risk premium on oil prices, to an emergency reserve that saves the country from a liquidity bottleneck crisis, similar to the summer of 2020, in addition to the need to hedge against the inevitably negative possibilities of oil market conditions for a short-term period.

A detailed study of PACI's population and labor figures

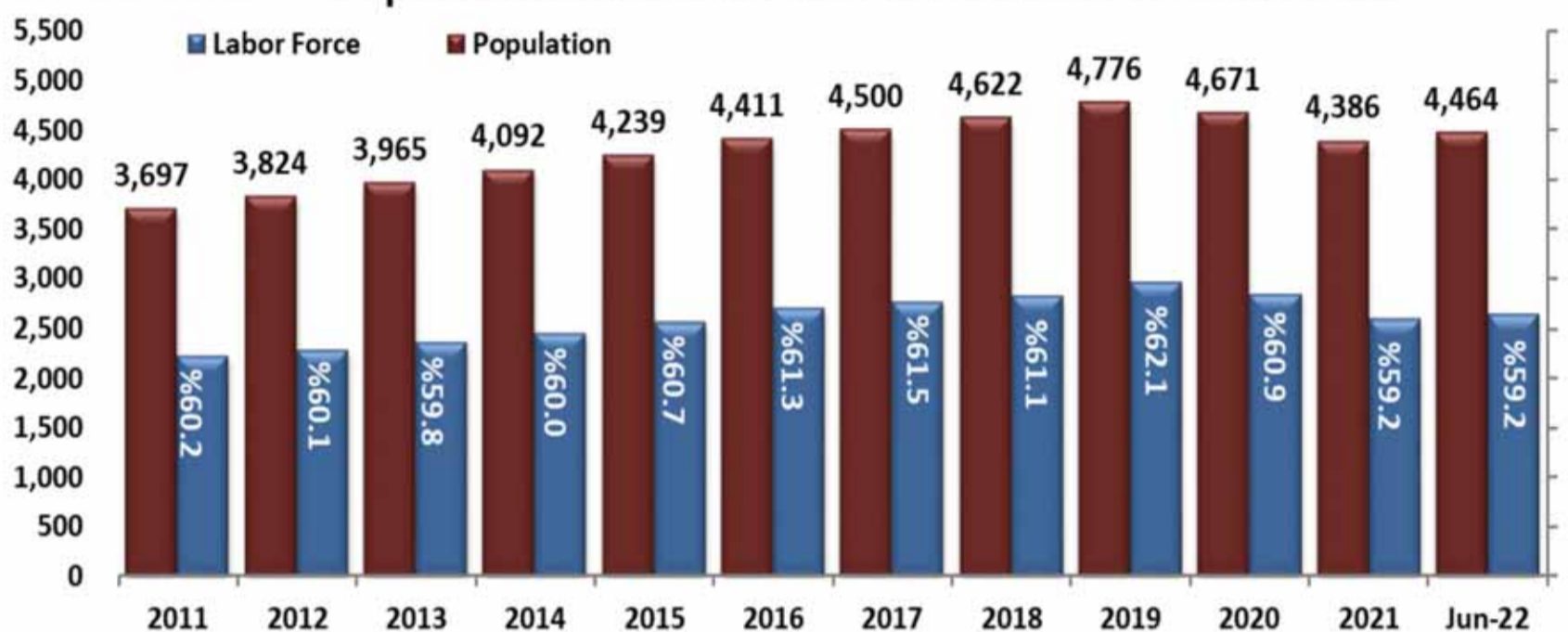
KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) issued the latest detailed statistics on population and employment at the end of June 2022. The data shows that total population in Kuwait, at the end of June 2022, reached to 4.464 million people and the population census recorded a semi-annual growth of 1.8 percent, compared to the end of 2021 at 4.386 million people (4.217 million people according to the Central Statistical Bureau), with an expected annual growth of 3.6 percent. The total population had achieved a decline of -6.1 percent in 2021 compared to a decline of -2.2 percent in 2020. The absolute increase during half a year amounted to 78.7 thousand people, whereas the absolute decline for the whole of 2021 was -285 thousand people.

The Kuwaiti population increased during the first half of 2022 by 13.4 thousand people, with a growth rate of 0.9 percent (1.8 percent expected annual rate), bringing their total number to about 1.502 million people with their percentage slightly decreasing from the total population from 33.94 percent at the end of 2021 to 33.65 percent according to the latest figures. The number of Kuwaiti females amounted to 765.6 thousand, exceeding the number of males of about 736.5 thousand. The non-Kuwaiti population rose by 65.3 thousand people, a growth rate of 2.3 percent and reached 2.963 million people, with a compound annual growth rate during the period of 2011-June 2022 at 1.8 percent.

Workforce in Kuwait

The total number of workers in Kuwait reached

Thousand People **Population and Labor Force in Kuwait 2011 - June 2022**



Source: PACI

2.64 million workers or 59.2 percent of the total population, while this percentage for Kuwaitis reached 31.5 percent of the total Kuwaiti population, and it is noted that the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers out of the total non-Kuwaiti population reached 73.3 percent. When comparing it with the end of June 2021, the percentage of Kuwaiti workers in the total number of workers in Kuwait increased from 16.3 percent in June 2021 to 17.9 percent in June 2022, and the percentage of female employment in the total Kuwaiti labor force increased slightly to 50.8 percent at the end of

June 2022 versus 49.8 percent at the end of June 2021, while the percentage of female employment out of the total workforce in Kuwait was about 29.5 percent. The number of Kuwaiti workers increased by 17.6 thousand workers, bringing their total to 473.3 thousand workers and rising from 455.7 thousand workers at the end of June 2021. The number of employees within the government reached 372.9 thousand workers or 78.8 percent of the total number of Kuwaiti workers, while the number of jobs for Kuwaitis outside the government sector increased by 13.6 thousand, with a

remarkable growth rate of 21.9 percent compared to the end of June 2021. It is believed that the unemployment of Kuwaitis has decreased to 24.5 thousand workers or 5.2 percent of the total Kuwaiti employment on June 2022, compared to 32.9 thousand workers or 7.2 percent at the end of June 2021. The total number of workers (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) in the government sector amounted to 484.1 thousand workers or about 10.8 percent of the total population, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector is 77 percent.

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RIYADH: Officials from member nations at the Islamic Sports Conference in Jeddah. — KUNA photos

Information Minister heads delegation to sports conference

JEDDAH: Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, Kuwait's Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, headed a delegation to the 5th Islamic conference for Ministers of Youth and Sports in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The conference, which is hosted by the Saudi Ministry of Sports, in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), will be held from Sept 7 to 9. As part of its agenda, the conference will discuss youth-related issues in all OIC member nations, reinforce their abilities and provide appropriate circumstances for their stability and development, as well as fight radical and violent ideas and encourage dialogue, moderation and tolerance. In his inaugural speech, General Hussain Ibrahim Taha, OIC Secretary, called for helping the region's youth face their challenges, especially with the high rates of unemployment, the risk of spreading radicalism, displacement, asylum and illegal immigration. — KUNA



RIYADH: Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi at the Islamic Sports Conference in Jeddah.



KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry inspectors inspect a store selling school goods, to check if illegal colours have been used.

Local

Indifference, lack of deterrence blamed for littering on streets



By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Despite the progress humans have made in preserving the environment, the world still witnesses actions from people who are not only careless towards the environment, or its cleanliness, but also waste food and throw it on the streets with no appreciation for it. But why do people act like this? And what prevents them from throwing rubbish into the nearest trash can?

Kuwait Times met people on the streets and asked them about their opinions on this issue. Amira Al-Azmi said that she could not understand how people could act this way, especially in places near health facilities, describing a situation she once witnessed. "I parked my car in the parking lot of a hospital, and when I opened the door, I stepped on a whole sandwich. First, I thought it must've fallen from someone's hands, but then I noticed that the whole meal was on the ground. On the opposite side of my car, there was more discarded food. I picked it up and threw it in the trashcan, but I was really frustrated by these people," she said.

Kuwait Municipality under the environmental protection law has set penalties for dumping waste, with a fine of between KD 100 and KD 300 for throwing waste on sidewalks, roads, yards, public squares or other private places and for throwing papers, tissues, packets and cigarette butts on the sidewalk, streets, roads, squares, parking lots or public areas.

Fines are also imposed for the destruction of plants and uprooting of trees on public lands, spit-



ting, urinating and defecating in places other than those designated for it, and discarding fire residue and smoldering coal in waste bags or containers. The Municipality has also set a fine of not less than

KD 50 and not more than KD 500 for not throwing garbage or waste of any kind into the street containers designated for it, but these penalties have not deterred some people from throwing food and

trash everywhere.

"There are several reasons for such behavior of some people. A primary reason is the individual's lack of sense of responsibility for hygiene in the society, in addition to the fact that penalties for violating hygiene are not enforced despite being widespread," Samar Al-Anbar told Kuwait Times. "Our schools should add in the curriculum more subjects about environment protection to educate students from an early age the importance of personal hygiene, and how it is an uncivil behavior that negatively affects the environment at all levels," she added.

Ritta Zuhair stressed the importance of the government's role in distributing more trashcans on the streets and making environmental police implement the laws set by authorities. "Despite the existence of laws that warn people from throwing trash on the roads, implementation of the law is lacking," she said. Zuhair suggested a new way to punish people who throw garbage and are careless towards the environment - forcing them to clean the streets for a week in addition to the fine, to make them realize the negativity of their behavior.

Several campaigns are launched every year in Kuwait to urge people to participate in mass cleaning campaigns at beaches, streets and other places. But these efforts go in vain due to the irresponsible actions of people. These uncivilized behaviors cost the state in environmental and health pollution, in addition to visual pollution. Cleaners also have to exert more efforts in some places, and are forced to clean these areas twice a day.

GCC FMs backs Kuwait's missing persons archives referral to UNAMI

RIYADH: Foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States have renewed their support for the UNSCR N. 2107 of 2013 -the referral of the file of the prisoners, missing persons, Kuwaiti property, and the National Archives to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Speaking at the conclusion of the 153rd session of the GCC Ministerial Council which was held in Riyadh, the foreign ministers urged Iraq to continue cooperating with Kuwait to ensure progress in these matters. They also called on Iraq and the UN to make maximum efforts in order to reach a solution toward these files, as well as to work towards the completion of the demarcation of the maritime borders beyond mark 162. On the latest developments in Iraq, the foreign ministers reiterated their call for preserving the territorial integrity, full sovereignty, Arab identity and the national unity of Iraq. The members also expressed support for Iraqi measures to counter terrorist groups and armed militias and enforce the rule of law calling for the de-escalation of the situation in Iraq and to prioritize dialogue and national interests over any other considerations to defuse the current tension which threatens Iraq's stability.

On the Palestinian cause, the Ministerial Council affirmed the firm positions of the GCC states on the Palestinian cause, calling it an Arab and Muslim issue as well and extended their support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Al Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

The council also underlined the need for guaranteeing the rights of refugees, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-state solution and relevant international legitimacy resolutions. It also called on the international community and influential countries to exert more efforts to resume the peace process and negotiations between the Zionist entity and the Palestinian side. On Syria, the Ministerial Council renewed the calls for preserving its territorial integrity, respecting its independence and sovereignty as well as meeting the aspirations of the Syrian people. It stressed its support for the efforts of the United Nations to reach a political solution in Syria, in accordance with Security Council Resolution No. 2254 and the principles of the Geneva 1 statement. It also backed the efforts of its Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, hoping that the meetings of the Constitutional Committee in

Syria would result in a quick consensus. On Lebanon, the Ministerial Council expressed the GCC's unwavering solidarity with the Lebanese people to achieve everything that would preserve Lebanon's security and stability.

The Council also voiced support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, urging all political groups in Lebanon to work on achieving the aspirations of the Lebanese people for stability, progress, prosperity and in implementing the necessary reforms, combating corruption and in fighting mismanagement issues. It also stressed the need to ensure that Lebanon would not be a springboard for any terrorist acts or an incubator for terrorist organizations and groups that target the security and stability of Lebanon and the region and that it is not a source for drug smuggling activities.

On Libya, the Ministerial Council expressed its concern over the recent clashes in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, calling on the Libyan parties to exercise restraint and calm and to give priority to the supreme national interest, stressing the need to preserve the ceasefire agreement and prevent the outbreak of a new wave of violence.

With regards to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the Ministerial Council stated that the water security of Sudan and Egypt is an integral part of the Arab national security. It expressed rejection to any act that encroaches upon or threatens their rights of the River Nile waters. The Council also expressed its backing for all efforts aimed at resolving the dispute over the GERD, in a way that guarantee the interests of all the concerned parties.

On relations with Iran, the Ministerial Council urged the Islamic Republic to show commitment to the principles based on the United Nations Charter and international law on relations between states, including the principles of good neighborliness, respect for state sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, resolution of disputes by peaceful means, not using or threatening force and rejecting terrorism and sectarianism.

It stressed that negotiations with Iran should tackle its destabilizing behavior in the region, its sponsorship of terrorism and sectarian militias, its missile program and the safety of international navigation and oil facilities. The Council also emphasized the need for the GCC states to participate in those negotiations and all regional and international discussions and meetings related to this matter.

It reiterated the GCC's firm position rejecting the continued occupation by Iran of the three Emirati islands: the Greater and Lesser Tumb, and Abu Musa and affirmed support for the sovereignty of the UAE over its three islands, its territorial waters, the airspace, the continental shelf and the special economic zone, which is a part of the territory of the UAE adding that it considered any practices or actions carried out by Iran in the three islands to be void and having no effect on the right of the sovereignty of the UAE over its three islands. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Health Minister, Dr Khaled Al-Saeed with officials from the Kuwait Nursing Association. — KUNA

Health Minister addresses nurses' concerns

KUWAIT: Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, Health Minister, discussed the issues of nurses and their needs, during a meeting with a delegation from the Kuwait

Nursing Association, which included joint cooperation to create a motivating environment to attract Kuwaitis to the profession, improvement of the quality of nursing services, regulation of the required academic formalities as well as the opening of the academies of higher studies in nursing sciences to educate Kuwaiti cadres. The minister said that a study was also being conducted, to place the nursing program under the Kuwait Medical Specialties Institute, in order to regulate the promotion system in the field. — KUNA

New regulations issued for mobile ice cream vendors

KUWAIT: Major General Jamal Al-Sayegh, Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Operations, held a meeting with representatives of dairy companies in the presence of representatives from the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition and Vehicle inspection department, to discuss issues that were raised during security campaigns conducted towards mobile ice cream carts. Violations by those manning the carts were discussed and the risks they caused for themselves as well as other motorists were raised, following

which solutions to the problems were also discussed and the Ministry announced the following - conditions and stipulations issued by Kuwait Municipality, Food and Nutrition Authority and traffic department must be complied with by the ice cream carts and in the places where they distribute ice creams: the companies should prepare a new and developed style of the cart that meets safety conditions and agrees with the traffic law and adheres to the conditions of protecting food set by concerned authorities; motorcycles should not be used alongside ice cream carts unless the motorcycle is licensed to sell ice cream and if yes, he must wear a suitable uniform; the proposals will be presented to the traffic department for approval in coordination with concerned authorities and solve all their problems to improve this service; a grace period will be given until Sept 29, 2022 for the ice cream vendors to meet these procedures and conditions.



Local

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News in brief



RIYADH: Mohammad Al-Mutairi submits credentials to OIC Secretary General Hussein Ibrahim Taha. — KUNA

Kuwaiti diplomat submits credentials to OIC

RIYADH: The Consul General of Kuwait in Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Al-Mutairi submitted his credentials as permanent representative of Kuwait to Hussein Ibrahim Taha, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). During the meeting, Al-Mutairi conveyed to the OIC chief, the greetings of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. Al-Mutairi also underscored the significance of enhanced cooperation between Kuwait and OIC, commending the vital role played by OIC in uniting the member states to face all current challenges and achieve the aspirations of the Islamic nation. He also extolled the efforts of Taha in this regard. On his part, Taha lauded the role played by Kuwait in supporting OIC's issues and its contribution to developmental projects in member states, along with providing humanitarian aid to them, wishing Al-Mutairi success in his work. First Secretary Hamidi Al-Mutairi and Second Secretary Mohammad Alabduljalil from the Consulate General of Kuwait in Jeddah attended the meeting as well. —KUNA

Municipality inspectors continue protest

KUWAIT: Inspectors from the municipality of Kuwait proceeded for the second day, their protest about their collective transfers to municipalities in other governorates. After refusing the decision made by the Municipality Minister Dr Rana Al-Fares, demonstrators described the decision as oppressive on workers who were diligent in their jobs. They have also called on for the removal of the decision and to revise the decision to make transfers within the same governorate.

Kuwait's deputy FM, UK ambassador discuss bilateral ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister, Majdi Al-Thufairi received UK's Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, to discuss bilateral ties and the latest regional and international developments of common interest.

Construction vehicle violators to be detained

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has announced that the abuse of road regulations by construction vehicles will result in the revoking of their license, detention of violators as well as their vehicles. "We have decided to announce these restrictions after noticing many violations committed by construction vehicle drivers who drive their heavy vehicles for purposes that are not work-related," said a statement from the MoI.

Onam festival to be celebrated with gaiety in Kuwait

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Malayali community in Kuwait celebrated the annual festival of Onam - the harvest festival of the southern Indian state of Kerala, with plenty of enthusiasm this year, as it took place without much coronavirus-related restrictions in the country. Over the last two years, Keralites celebrated a low-key Onam as the pandemic had thrown a wrench in their festival plans. The Onam festival brings together a multitude of colors and flavors from around Kerala and the festivities reach their zenith on the auspicious day of 'Thiruvonam.'

"We are quite happy because we could come out of the shadow of the pandemic and celebrate Onam delightfully this year," said Jayaprakash Menon, a resident of Salmiya whose family prepared a traditional multi-course vegetarian feast 'Onasadya' at his apartment on the day of 'Thiruvonam', which is the most important day during the 10-day-long festival. Many people said they would celebrate Onam on Friday since 'Thiruvonam' fell on a working day. Indian restaurants in Kuwait also deliver attractive Onam package meal kits consisting of more than 20 traditional dishes on Thursday, to the convenience of families.

The festivity is not just confined to the sheer variety of food and desserts prepared and served, as the spirit of Onam is also experienced in the form of a range of cultural events, musical and dance performances being organized under the aegis of various social groups and associations in Kuwait.

The Indian Embassy in Kuwait kickstart-

ed this year's festivities by hosting an extravagant Onam event in association with Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC), Kuwait on Sept 1.

"Onam lives in the heart of every Malayali whether they live in Kerala or outside. I am happy that this feeling has been imbibed by the younger generation including our little children," Indian Ambassador Sibi George told Kuwait Times.

Thanima Kuwait, an Indian expat association, announced that it was bringing back the most popular 'tug-of-war' competition, held on the sidelines of the festival, this year after a hiatus of two years. The event is scheduled to be held Oct 28. KALA Kuwait, one of the largest Indian associations, has scheduled several cultural and social events as well to celebrate the festival. "We don't have a centralized Onam celebration this year. Instead, we will celebrate the festival at our unit levels in view of our membership strength," said



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George with family laying out a floral carpet (pookalam) on the occasion of Onam at India House in Kuwait.

KALA Kuwait general secretary J Saji KALA Kuwait has currently around 10,000 active members. He expressed his happiness that the community could cele-

brate 'the festival of equality much better this year with traditional cultural events and sumptuous Onam meals, reflecting the legacy of Onam.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Art under the highway. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KFAS announces participants of 'Innovation Challenge' program



KUWAIT: Officials of KFAS 'Innovation Challenge' program

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has announced the selection of five companies from the private sector in Kuwait, chosen in coordination with the London Business School (LBS), for its business program, titled 'Innovation Challenge' - to learn more about finding innovative solutions to problems they face in their respective companies. The names of the selected companies were-Burgan Bank, Gulf Bank, Boubyan Bank, Baitak Capital for Investment and National Investment.

The companies were chosen based on personal interviews and held against competitive standards, to identify candidates who were - passionate to

solve challenges, have the ability to lead innovative initiatives to improve services and products in their companies and also stood to gain the most from the experience. Spread over three months, the program will also give the participants, the opportunity to learn from the experience of successful businessmen

"The program, which is in its seventh edition, is an executive learning initiative with several stages, which offers academic knowledge in business management through scientific tools adopted and applied by global companies," said the Deputy Manager of Strategic Programs, Dr Khawla Al-Shaiji, adding that she hoped that the program will show a positive reflection of efforts done to develop

Kuwait's economy.

Sponsored by KFAS, the program is aimed at encouraging those companies who are keen to develop employee abilities through workshops conducted by experts and academics, held in countries such as the UK which often involves lectures and visits held in London. The program also focuses on improving the work environment with an innovative mindset, encourage the financial sector in Kuwait to become more creative and bring about a culture where priority is given to invest in solutions rooted in science and innovation, thereby creating a foundation for an economy based on scientific knowledge.



KUWAIT: Participants at the KFAS program.



KUWAIT: KRCS team with aid ready to be dispatched. — KUNA

KUWAIT: As part of the international disaster relief efforts for Pakistan by KRCS, Jazeera Airways will carry 2.5 tons of cargo, containing medical supplies and necessary equipment donated by the people of Kuwait, to Pakistan. Offering support to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in carrying aid to regions in need, within its network of routes, tons of donations were flown to the aid of the people of Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Nepal, amongst others in need. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the airline also placed its entire fleet at the service of the government of Kuwait.

Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We are very humbled to be able to support such noble efforts where we have an

opportunity to give back to the communities we have been serving. Jazeera Airways has always been at the forefront of supporting communities affected

by crisis. Our airline will continue to make a positive contribution and respond to requests where we can be of assistance."



Women forced to stay in flooded Pakistan village

Evangelicals flex muscle in Brazilian election race

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LUKASHIVKA, Ukraine: A teenager rides a hoverboard past a destroyed Russian army tank in this village in Chernihiv region on Sept 7, 2022 amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP photos

Ukraine claims battlefield breakthroughs

Army makes gains in north, south and east • Visiting Blinken ramps up aid

KYIV: Ukraine on Thursday claimed a military breakthrough in its counter-offensive against Russian invaders as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on a surprise visit to Kyiv, unveiled another \$2.8 billion in military aid. Ukraine said its forces made gains both in the north, the south and the east, prying back land seized by Russia which had hoped for a swift victory when it attacked nearly seven months ago.

In the area around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, Kyiv's forces penetrated 50 km beyond Russian lines and "liberated" more than 20 towns and villages, senior military official Oleksiy Gromov said. Hoping to build the momentum, Blinken secretly travelled to Kyiv for his second trip during the war, passing through dark hallways with sandbags that guarded the windows to discuss the military aid with President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Ukrainian leader voiced gratitude for the "enormous support" from the United States which was helping to "return our territory and lands", Blinken, in a statement on the talks, hailed

"Ukraine's extraordinary frontline defenders" who "continue to courageously fight for their country's freedom". President Joe Biden "has been clear we will support the people of Ukraine for as long as it takes," Blinken said in a statement.

The latest package includes \$675 million to be shipped shortly in arms, ammunition and supplies and another \$1 billion in longer-term loans and grants for Ukraine to buy more US equipment. The State Department also approved \$1.2 billion for 18 other nations seen as facing threats from Russia including Baltic states and Moldova and Georgia, which both have breakaway regions backed by Moscow.

A day after the United Nations said there were "credible reports" of Russia forcing Ukrainian children into its territory, Blinken started his trip by visiting toddlers injured in the war at a hospital. In a room with toy trucks and alien figurines, Blinken arrived with a basket of stuffed animals. "I brought some friends," Blinken told the children. "The spirit of your children sends a very strong message around the world," he said. Blinken also knelt down

to pat Patron, a fabled Jack Russell terrier that has helped Ukraine's military find more than 200 mines laid by Russian forces.

In a coordinated display of resolve, Biden was to speak by telephone with leaders of allies on Ukraine and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met his counterparts at Ramstein air base in Germany. "Now, we're seeing the demonstrable success of our common efforts on the battlefield," Austin said. Amid Ukraine's reports of gains, Russia trumpeted battlefield successes, saying it had hit five command posts and downed 13 drones on Thursday.

Addressing a forum in Moscow, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Russia had withstood Western sanctions over the war better than expected, estimating that GDP had fallen just over one percent year-on-year in the first six months of 2022. "Unprecedented sanctions were imposed on our country. But their initiators did not achieve their main objective. They failed to undermine our financial stability," Mishustin said. But as the war grinds on, both sides have increasingly been facing a



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pose for a photo during their meeting on Sept 8, 2022.

crunch on military supplies with US officials saying Russia, long a major defense exporter, was buying drones from Iran and large quantities of rocket and artillery shells from North Korea. —AFP

Manhunt in Canada stabbing ends with both suspects dead

ROSTHERN, Canada: A days-long search for the second man suspected of carrying out a deadly stabbing spree in a remote western Canadian Indigenous community ended Wednesday, with the 32-year-old dying after being taken into custody, police said. Federal police Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore told a news conference that Myles Sanderson, suspected along with his brother of killing 10 people and wounding 18 on Sunday, "went into medical distress" shortly after being arrested in Saskatchewan province.

She added that he was taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead, but gave no other details of the circumstances. On Monday, his 31-year-old brother Damien Sanderson had been found dead in a grassy field in the Cree community. Authorities said he likely had been killed by his older sibling, who remained a fugitive until his arrest near the town of Rosthern in Saskatchewan - about 100 km west of where the stabbings occurred.

Blackmore said that with both brothers now dead, "we may never have an understanding of (their) motivation". The manhunt had stretched across three provinces, and gone from Regina, Saskatchewan province's capital 300 kilometers to the south, and then back to the James Smith Cree Nation - in response to reported sightings. An AFP reporter at the scene near Rosthern on Wednesday saw several police cars surrounding a white pickup along the side of a highway.

An hour before the arrest, police issued an alert about a man armed with a knife in a stolen white Chevrolet Avalanche nearby, making a link to the stabbing case and urging locals to shelter in place. Blackmore said police, after receiving an emergency call about the theft, spotted the speeding vehicle and "directed (it) off the road and into a nearby ditch". "He was arrested by police and taken into



SASKATOON, Canada: Mark Arcand (right), brother of James Smith Cree Nation stabbing victim Bonnie Burns, and Brian, husband of Bonnie, pause behind pictures of Bonnie during a news conference on Sept 7, 2022. — AFP

custody," she said. "A knife was located inside the vehicle."

It was a dramatic end to a four-day manhunt across the vast Prairies region. It also offered relief to a nation distressed by one of modern Canada's deadliest incidents of mass violence. "Our province is breathing a collective sigh of relief as Miles Sanderson is no longer at large," Blackmore commented, adding that now the families of victims and the community "will be able to start healing."

Myles Sanderson had a history of explosive violence that led to 59 past convictions, and was also wanted for breaching parole in May after serving part of a sentence for assault and robbery. But with no known motive for the latest attacks, relatives of victims spoke out earlier Wednesday about their "nightmare" and called for answers from authorities. Mark Arcand said the killings that claimed the lives of his sister Bonnie Burns, 48, and her son Gregory Burns, 28, were a "horrible, senseless act". "We're broken," he said, describing emotions of anger and sadness. "It still feels like it's a nightmare. It doesn't feel real. How did this happen to our family? Why did it happen? We have no answers," he told a press conference. "We just know that our family members were killed in their own home, in their yard." —AFP

Pak ex-PM Khan to be indicted on contempt charge

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan will be formally indicted on a contempt of court charge later this month after judges on Thursday rejected his explanation and "regrets" for comments he made about a magistrate, state media reported. The ruling is the latest twist in months of political wrangling that started even before he was ousted in April by a vote of no confidence in the national assembly.

State media reported the Islamabad High Court ruled Khan would be indicted on Sept 22 for criticizing the magistrate responsible for keeping a party leader in police custody, after also claiming the official had been tortured. "Imran Khan's response

Attacker, girlfriend 'planned' attempted hit on Argentine VP

BUENOS AIRES: The man accused of trying to shoot Argentine Vice President Cristina Kirchner last week planned the attack with his girlfriend, according to preliminary charges filed by a judge, local media reported Wednesday. The alleged shooter in the attack at point blank range, Fernando Sabag Montiel, and his girlfriend, Brenda Uliarte, both in custody, are accused of trying to assassinate Kirchner "with planning and prior agreement." Judge Maria Eugenia Capuchetti said in an indictment of the two, according to the Telam news agency.

Kirchner, the 69-year-old former president and current vice president, survived the assassination attempt as she mingled with supporters outside her

home last Thursday night, when a gun brandished by Sabag Montiel failed to fire. He was taken into custody on the spot and video of the incident quickly spread online. The charges seen by media Wednesday are preliminary and can still be modified, but they mark the first official charge that the attack on Kirchner was premeditated. Kirchner enjoys a loyal support base among followers of the center-left Peronist movement inherited from former president Juan Peron. But she is disliked in equal measure by the political opposition. Tens of thousands of Argentines took to the streets after the shooting attempt.

Sabag Montiel, 35, a Brazilian national who has been living in Argentina since his youth, has not told investigators what his motivations were. Uliarte, his 23-year-old companion, was arrested Sunday night in a Buenos Aires train station. Following the attack, she said in television interviews that she had not seen Sabag Montiel for two days, but analysis of video surveillance images has since shown that they were both at the scene of the attack that evening, according to judicial sources cited by the media. —AFP

Obituary

Elizabeth II: Queen of the world



Queen Elizabeth II poses on her coronation day in London on June 2, 1953. — AFP

LONDON: Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor was not just Queen Elizabeth II. She was simply The Queen. For billions of people, she was the one constant in a world of bewildering change, an omnipresent matriarch linking the past with the present. While the enormous British Empire she once presided over shrank, her symbolic influence only seemed to grow, her mystique bolstered by films like "The Queen" and the Netflix series "The Crown".

Against the tide of history and logic, she made a medieval anachronism somehow modern, a stoic old lady in a hat onto whom so much could be projected. Perhaps only the pope held as much sway, and she saw seven of them come and go during her record-breaking seven-decade reign.

Accident of history

Although Elizabeth Windsor became the very definition of the word, she was not born to be queen. An accident of history brought her to the throne. Until her "Uncle David" - Edward VIII - abdicated to marry the twice-divorced American Wallis Simpson in 1936, she had only an outside chance of reigning. Even as heir apparent, the birth of a baby brother would have sent her back into relative aristocratic obscurity under succession laws in place at the time that gave precedence to males.

All changed for "Lilibet" when she was 10 and her reluctant, stammering father became George VI. Until the "shock" of the abdication, she had been brought up exactly like her more outgoing younger sister Margaret. The two were often dressed like twins. Her tough-minded mother, also called Elizabeth, was her emotional lodestar. She made sure the girls had an "insulated and care-free childhood" in contrast to the suffocating Palace strictures their father suffered.

Nevertheless, she learned duty early. "Princess Elizabeth was quite a good tap dancer and mimic and could be very funny when she wanted to be," said royal biographer Andrew Morton, whose study of her close but often strained relationship with Margaret appeared in 2021. And she "could be depended upon to do what was asked, keeping her toys and clothes in perfect order".

'Magnificent isolation'

An introvert, she adapted easily to the "magnificent isolation" of royal life spent surrounded by scores of servants and courtiers. The royal family - George VI, Queen Elizabeth, princess Elizabeth and princess Margaret - referred to themselves as "we four", Morton said, and were close. Yet as queen, Elizabeth looked more to her steely and stolid grandfather George V - a reformer who believed in leading by example.

Her biographer, Robert Lacey, told AFP that like him she saw the decline of the English class system, and wanted to establish a direct relationship with the people. George V began the royal broadcasts, which the queen used to hone her own mix of mystery and intimacy, inviting television viewers into Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle for rather stilted fireside chats surrounded by photographs of her children, dogs and horses.

Young queen

Her coronation on June 2, 1953 was the first major event of the television age. The news that morning of New Zealander Edmund Hillary's conquest of Everest made the celebrations all the more giddy. The Union Jack had been planted on the top of world, as Britain financed the expedition, alongside that of the United Nations and Nepal. But for all the glamour of the young queen - then just 25 - and talk of a second Elizabethan age, Imperial Britain was in trouble.

India - the so-called "Jewel in the Crown" - had already gained independence in 1947. Hard-won victory in World War II had left the country exhausted and virtually bankrupt, its cities bomb-scarred and rationing was in its 14th year. The Suez Crisis in 1956 would deal Britain's status as a world power a final shattering blow. While the Tudor-era Elizabeth I in the 16th century oversaw the birth of England's imperial project, Elizabeth II's fate was to watch the flag come down on the biggest empire the world has ever seen. The latest to go was Barbados, which cut ties with the British Crown after nearly four centuries in 2021.

Quiet reformer

Such a retreat would have carried other monarchies with it, but the queen was the embodiment of British stiff upper lip and its "keep calm and carry on" spirit. She had already done her dynastic duty by giving birth to an "heir and a spare" - a successor and a younger sibling - by the time she was crowned. With the ageing Winston Churchill - the first of 15 British prime ministers to serve under her - at her side, she began to slowly reinvent the

ELIZABETH II

Key dates



September 8, 2022

Dies at aged 96

Sept 9, 2015

Becomes longest serving British monarch

April 5, 2020

Rare televised address to reassure the nation during Covid-19 pandemic

April 9, 2021

Death of her husband Prince Philip, at the age of 99

Feb 6, 2012

Diamond Jubilee (60 years as sovereign)

Aug 31, 1997

Criticised for initial refusal to return to London after death of Princess Diana, despite public outpouring of grief

1992

"Annus horribilis", three of her children divorce. Fire at Windsor Castle

June 2, 1953

Crowned at Westminster Abbey, London

July 29, 1981

Son Charles marries Diana Spencer at Saint Paul's Cathedral, in London

June 21, 1982

Birth of her first grandchild William, second in line to the throne

Feb 6, 1952

Becomes queen after death of her father, King George VI

Nov 14, 1948

Birth of Charles. The couple will have 3 children: Anne, Andrew and Edward

Nov 20, 1947

Married to Philip Mountbatten, son of Prince Andrew of Greece

April 21, 1926

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary born in London

AFP Source: royal.uk

institution.

Decades sidestepping diplomatic bear traps on never-ending royal tours and state visits made her a formidable operator. Those skills have been "capital" in holding the Commonwealth of incredibly diverse mostly former British colonies together, Lacey insisted. Despite crises and conflicts, it still counts 54 countries with a combined population of 2.57 billion people.

Princess in love

The queen was 13 when she fell for her 18-year-old third cousin Philip in 1939, then a dashing naval cadet preparing to go to war. Her nanny noted that "she never took her eyes off him". Letters were soon flying back and forth. Despite the constant threat, the future queen experienced her greatest freedom during those teenage wartime years. Relatively safe behind the thick walls of Windsor Castle, west of London, she became a volunteer driver and mechanic.

When victory was declared in 1945, the 19-year-old princess joined the crowds celebrating in central London along with her friends and her sister Margaret. She later described it as "one of the most memorable nights of my life. I remember we were terrified of being recognized". Two years later, despite her mother's reservations - the Queen Mother referred to plain-speaking Philip as "The Hun" because of his German wider family - she married the impetuous Danish-Greek prince.

She gave birth to Charles 11 months later and Anne followed in 1950. Andrew - said to be her favorite - arrived in 1960, with Edward born four years later. The queen was a one-man woman, who "never looked at anyone else", her cousin and confidant Margaret Rhodes said. Philip's marital fidelity was reportedly less sure, but his sense of duty was equally iron cast. Their 73-year partnership, which lasted until his death in April 2021, was her "strength and stay", the queen later confessed.

Both loved horses. The queen's racing stables turned out some 1,700 winners, with the Racing Post occupying pride of place on her desk alongside state papers. She only missed two Epsom Derbies in her entire reign. Philip played polo into his 50s and raced carriages into his 90s. Fittingly both were obsessed with breeding. On her highly sensitive royal visit to Ireland in 2011 - the first by a British royal since its independence - the queen met almost as many horses as people after asking to take in two famous stud farms.

Humanizing the royals

Thoroughbreds can be difficult to handle. And this was also to prove true with members of the royal family,

known as "The Firm", who would become more visible than ever under Elizabeth's reign. The world got its first glimpse of their private lives in 1969 when BBC cameras were allowed around the Buckingham Palace breakfast table. The documentary was part of a bid to "humanize" the monarchy masterminded by Philip's uncle, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and the former viceroy of India's son-in-law, film producer John Knatchbull, the seventh Baron Brabourne.

Since the beginning of her reign, the Palace had sought to portray the royals as a family like any other, a more well-born, well-appointed version of a modern British household. But "Royal Family" lifted the veil further than ever before, revealing some surprising quirks - behind her shy and dutiful exterior, the queen was actually a rather racy driver. Not for the last time, it was Prince Philip who delivered the biggest bombshell, telling viewers how the queen's father King George VI would take out his rage on the rhododendrons. "Sometimes I thought he was mad," he deadpanned. Critics, including Princess Anne - who called the film "rotten" - blamed it for opening the door to the tabloid voyeurism that would soon dog the clan.

Tabloid troubles

The queen's rather unruly and resentful sister, Margaret, was first in the firing line, her colorful private life making her prime paparazzi material. All the royals, apart from the "untouchable" queen herself and Prince Philip, would in time feel the swipe of the media's double-edged sword. Yet the queen seemed to float above it all, her life a carefully guarded secret. Beyond her love of horses and rather snappy Corgi dogs, along with a fondness for crossword puzzles and a Dubonnet and gin cocktail before lunch, very little about her private life was known.

In later life she developed a fondness for television soap operas, and while self-isolating in Windsor during the coronavirus lockdown is said to have become a fan of the police corruption drama "Line of Duty". She even reportedly watched the upper-class period drama "Downton Abbey". In 2021, when she was forced to slow down because of ill health, The Times reported that late-night television had left her "knackered". She even stopped drinking her lunchtime gin and martini in the evening.

'Annus horribilis'

For a time, there was much to celebrate in her children's lives. The "fairytale" marriage of Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 was a massive global media event,

as was the wedding of Andrew to Sarah Ferguson five years later. Yet the couples' private lives would soon provide endless fodder for the voracious British tabloids. Both marriages very publicly fell apart in 1992, as did Anne's to Captain Mark Phillips. To top it all, Windsor Castle was badly damaged by fire. The queen called it her "annus horribilis".

In an effort to win back public support, she began paying tax and Buckingham Palace was opened to the public for the first time. But the rancor between Charles and Diana became poisonous as they settled scores in rival TV interviews in what became known as the "War of the Waleses". And then the unimaginable happened. Diana's tragic end in a car crash in Paris in 1997 not only shook confidence in the monarchy, but in the queen herself.

Diana

A series of missteps in the days after her daughter-in-law's death left the queen looking cold, uncaring and out of touch. "Show us you care," said one newspaper front page after the queen opted to stay in her Scottish summer retreat of Balmoral rather than return to London. "Speak to us Ma'am," headlined another, in criticism that would have been unthinkable only a few years before. And her decision to strip the so-called "People's Princess" of her royal status in the wake of Diana's bombshell 1995 BBC interview came back to haunt the monarch.

But through it all, the queen kept her counsel, sticking doggedly to the royals' reputed mantra of "never complain, never explain". It may have helped maintain the institution's mystique in past but here it badly backfired. A major Palace overhaul followed. Help in restoring faith in the monarch was to come from an unlikely source - the self-confessed "old republican leftwinger" Stephen Frears.

His Oscar-winning 2008 movie "The Queen", set against the backdrop of the Diana crisis, did much to explain her position and rewrite the narrative. Helen Mirren - another republican - won an Oscar for her moving portrayal of the queen's struggle between duty and family, winning her sympathy even from people who had little time for the monarchy.

The problem with Charles

Rehabilitating Charles would be trickier. As early as 1977, during her Silver Jubilee marking 25 years on the throne, the queen had vowed to rule until her death. While this promised stability, it also seemed to undermine the Prince of Wales, whom some saw as unfit to follow her. His buttonholing of politicians over his hobby horse causes seemed to challenge the unwritten rule that the royals stay out of politics.

However, as many of his once "fringe" ideas, such as on the environment, became mainstream, Charles has shown a more relaxed, self-deprecating side, particularly after his 2005 marriage to his lifelong lover Camilla. With his mother in her 90s, he began to take over her duties as the most senior royal on overseas trips.

Family

Despite the consolation of grandchildren and great grandchildren in the twilight of her reign, her greatest headaches continued to come from within her own family. Now the longest serving British monarch ever, the marriages of both of her grandsons William and Harry to commoners seemed to offer another phase of modernization and renewal. However, within three years of Harry's mold-breaking marriage to the mixed-race American actress Meghan Markle in 2018, a rift with the Palace became horribly public.

A month after allegations of racism within the family were raised in a television interview with Oprah Winfrey, Philip died aged 99 in April 2021, leaving her ever more alone. With Andrew also mired in underage sex allegations over links with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, it was another "annus horribilis".

Last of her kind?

Yet the monarch herself remained hugely popular and admired, an embodiment of traditional values and all that seemed eternal about England. In his book on her and her sister, Morton recounts how Margaret burst in on the queen's weekly audience with the prime minister early in her reign. "If you weren't queen, nobody would talk to you," Margaret fumed, angry at being left out.

Time and again since, Elizabeth proved the contrary, that she was infinitely worthy - the first and perhaps the "last global monarch", as the New York Times put it in 2021. The unknowable mystique she cultivated in a world ever more demanding of transparency may well die with her. — AFP

International

Downpours, mudslides hamper China quake rescue mission

Over 22,000 people have so far been moved into 124 temporary sites

BEIJING: Rain, flash floods and mudslides threatened the search for dozens of people still missing on Thursday, days after a strong earthquake rocked mountainous southwest China, killing at least 82. The magnitude 6.6 quake hit about 43 km southeast of the city of Kangding in Sichuan province at a depth of 10 km on Monday, according to the US Geological Survey, forcing thousands to be resettled into temporary camps.

State broadcaster CCTV said that 46 people died in Ganzi prefecture near the epicenter, while 36 deaths were reported in neighboring Ya'an city. More than 270 others were injured while the number of missing remained at 35, CCTV reported without giving more details about the situations of those unaccounted for. A yellow alert issued by the national weather service - warning of a "risk of geological disaster" - was in force until Thursday night, and moderate rain was forecast to continue to Friday with heavy showers in some areas.

"Since the post-earthquake geological conditions are inherently fragile, and the impact of additional rainfall may lead to landslides and mudslides, the local area needs to beware of secondary disasters," China's meteorological administration said. The People's Liberation Army, paramilitary police, and fire rescue services dispatched more than 10,000 workers to the area, who continued search operations and landslide clean-up efforts in the remote countryside.

Mountain torrents

Rescuers braved flash floods and landslides caused by aftershocks to relocate villagers from destroyed homes, often having to haul them through mountainous terrain on ropes and stretchers. CCTV images showed soldiers in military fatigues and orange life jackets using a zip-line to ferry people across river rapids.

"We also waded through the water to get to Xingfu

village. The mountain torrents contain rocks... the stones you can't see in the water pose the greatest threat to us," a rescue team member named Tan Ke told CCTV. "We quickly used ropes to build a human ladder... when we first started wading, the water reached our knees and thighs. By the time we got to a safe place, the flash flood had reached waist level."

Over 22,000 people have so far been moved into 124 temporary sites across Ganzi and Ya'an, the state-owned People's Daily newspaper reported. The paper said over 21,000 students and staff at a school in Shimian county, where Ya'an is located, were safely evacuated within one minute of the quake. Nearly 1,800 schools in the area had reopened by Wednesday, it added.

Workers raced to fix hundreds of kilometers of power and optical cables, with communications in affected areas "basically restored" as of Thursday, the China Youth Daily reported. Local authorities have received over 100 million yuan (\$14 million) in disaster relief donations so far, the report said, and the Sichuan government issued an emergency notice requiring local authorities to dish out hardship allowances for affected people.

The quake also rocked buildings in the provincial capital of Chengdu - where millions are confined to their homes under a strict COVID-19 lockdown - and in the nearby megacity of Chongqing, residents told AFP.

Lockdown extended

The Chinese megacity of Chengdu extended a COVID-19 lockdown in most areas, maintaining curbs that have ground business to a halt and China is the last major economy welded to a zero-COVID strategy, tamping down virus flare-ups through a combination of snap lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines.

Chengdu, the capital of southwestern Sichuan



YA'AN, China: This photo taken on Sept 7, 2022 shows rescuers evacuating residents following a 6.6-magnitude earthquake that struck on Sept 5 in China's southwestern Sichuan province. —AFP

province, has been effectively under lockdown for a week since reporting several hundred COVID cases, confining the majority of its 21 million residents to their homes. The measure was expected to be lifted on Wednesday, but the city government said in a notice that "the entire city will continue to deeply push forward our assault for zero community spread".

Authorities would "strive hard for a week to realize the goal of zero community transmission in the whole city", the government added. "The fruits of the whole city's anti-epidemic measures are beginning to become apparent, but the risk of community transmission still

exists in some areas," it said. All residents under lockdown will be tested every day, and each household will be permitted to send out one person per day to purchase groceries and other supplies, according to the notice.

Chengdu logged 116 new local infections on Thursday, more than half of which showed no symptoms, according to figures from the provincial health commission. Confined to their housing complexes, some residents were unable to flee when the strong earthquake in a nearby part of Sichuan reverberated through the city earlier this week, locals told AFP. —AFP



Chengdu extends COVID lockdown

Chengdu, the capital of southwestern Sichuan

Women forced to stay in flooded Pakistan village

BASTI AHMAD DIN, Pakistan: The 400 residents of Basti Ahmad Din, a tiny Pakistani village left surrounded by floodwater after torrential monsoon rains, are facing starvation and disease. But they have refused pleas to evacuate. Leaving for a relief camp would mean the women of the village mingling with men outside their families, residents told AFP, and that would violate their "honour".

The women of Basti Ahmad Din do not get a say. "It is up to the village elders to decide," said Shireen Bibi, 17, when asked if she would prefer to go to the safety of a camp on dry land. Catastrophic monsoon rains blamed on climate change have left vast swathes of Pakistan under water this summer, with villagers such as those in Basti Ahmad Din grappling with the destruction of their homes and livelihoods.

More than half of the 90 homes in Basti Ahmad Din, located in the Rojhan area of Punjab province, have been destroyed. The cotton crops that surrounded the village when the rains start-

ed in June are now rotting in flooded fields, and the dirt road that once connected to the nearest city is under three metres (10 feet) of water. Rickety wooden rowboats are the only way for villagers to head out to purchase food and supplies. They are also expensive, with their operators charging fares far higher than normal.

Basti Ahmad Din's families have worryingly low amounts of food left, and they have decided to pool and ration whatever wheat and grain they managed to salvage after the rains. Numerous volunteers who come to the village to drop off aid packages have pleaded with the residents to leave for safety, to no avail.

'Would rather starve'

"We are Baloch. Baloch don't allow their women to go out," said Basti Ahmad Din resident Muhammad Amir, referring to the dominant ethnic group in the village. "The Baloch would rather starve and make do than let their families go out." In many parts of conservative, deeply patriarchal Pakistan, women live under a strict system of so-called honor.

It severely limits their freedom of movement and how they interact - if at all - with men outside their families. Women can even be killed for bringing "shame" by interacting with men or marrying

to close, he would do so "immediately", he added. "So far we have not been told to send the girls back," Ahmadi said.

Khalique Ahmadzai, the provincial head of information and culture, told AFP five schools had reopened, without offering an explanation. "A few days ago female students approached the principals of five schools demanding that their schools be reopened," he said. "Since then, classes have resumed and these schools are now functioning."

Four of the schools are in Gardez, the capital of Paktia province, and the other in Samkani. Officials at the education ministry in Kabul were not immediately available for comment. Ahmadzai said it was likely that other schools in the province would follow suit. "If students coordinate with principals, then this process of reopening schools will continue in the province," he said.

Since seizing power in August last year, the Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on girls and women to comply with their austere vision of Islam - effectively squeezing them out of public life. In March they ordered all secondary schools for girls to be shut just hours after reopening them



DADU, Pakistan: Pakistan naval personnel distribute relief food supplies to flood-affected residents of Basti Ahmad Din, a tiny village, after heavy monsoon rains in Sindh province on Sept 7, 2022. —AFP

someone they, rather than their families, choose. And in a disaster situation such as the floods in Pakistan, this code can completely cut off women and girls from basic needs such as food and medical care.

Instead of taking their families there, the men of Basti Ahmad Din make the expensive boat trip to the nearest relief camp for aid and supplies once a week. The village elders - all men - say it is

only acceptable for women to leave in "emergency" situations such as ill health. Natural disasters do not count, and one elder named Mureed Hussain said they did not evacuate during the last catastrophic floods in 2010. "We didn't leave our village then," he told AFP. "We don't allow our women to go out. They can't stay in those camps. It's a matter of honor." —AFP



GARDEZ, Afghanistan: Girls walk to their school along a road in Gardez in Paktia province on Sept 8, 2022. —AFP

for the first time since returning to power.

Officials maintain the ban is just a "technical issue" and classes will resume once a curriculum based on Islamic rules is defined. A few public schools did continue to operate in some

parts of the country following pressure from local leaders and families. They remain shut in most provinces, however, including the capital Kabul as well as Kandahar, the de facto power center of the Taliban. —AFP

Five Afghan girls' schools reopen after demands

GARDEZ, Afghanistan: Five government secondary schools for girls have resumed classes in eastern Afghanistan after hundreds of students demanded they reopen, a provincial official said Thursday. Officially the Taliban have banned girls' secondary school education, but the order has been ignored in a few parts of Afghanistan away from the central power bases of Kabul and Kandahar.

Mohammad Wali Ahmadi, principal of Shashgar High School in Gardez, told AFP around 300 girls had returned to school since last week despite there being no change in official policy. Groups of girls wearing headscarves and hijabs were seen heading to the school on Thursday morning. "Since the girls came on their own, we haven't turned them back," Ahmadi said. But, if the education ministry ordered them

nationwide vote and host the Pacific Games in the same calendar year. His move has sparked allegations of democratic backsliding in a country that is rapidly building ties with China's authoritarian government. As parliament debated the bill Thursday, opposition leader Matthew Wale accused Sogavare's government of turning its "democratic majority into a tyranny of numbers that hijacks parliamentary process".

Wale described the bill as a scheme by Sogavare to remain in power "at the cost of the voters". "The people of Solomon Islands must - and will - remember this sad day when the government abused parliament for no worthy reason, but a power grab by the prime minister," he added. Police were deployed to the streets of the capital Honiara ahead of the vote - with many fearing a repeat of politically fueled rioting that gutted the capital's Chinatown late last year.

In a statement, Solomon Islands police called for calm, and described a beefed-up street presence as important "to ensure law and order is maintained and to swiftly manage any public order issue". The passage of the bill created a wave of negative comments on social media platforms and some dismay on Honiara's streets. "I cannot comprehend the fact that the government hasn't listened to our views," a man in his 50s, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP. "This will set a bad precedent for future parliaments." —AFP



Manasseh Sogavare

Solomons PM wins in bid to delay election to 2024

HONIARA: Solomon Islands' pro-Beijing prime minister on Thursday won a bid to delay elections until 2024 at the earliest, sparking opposition accusations of a "power grab" in the Pacific nation. Veteran leader Manasseh Sogavare wrangled the support of two-thirds of Solomons lawmakers, for a constitutional amendment that would hand him at least an extra seven months in power.

Elections had been required by May 2023, but Sogavare claimed his government cannot hold a

Anger over bloated new Sri Lanka govt

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka added 37 new senior posts to its government on Thursday, sparking a social media backlash over "useless" public spending in the middle of its worst economic crisis on record. The country of 22 million has suffered months of rampant inflation, severe shortages of essential goods and widespread protests, pushing it to default on its foreign debt in April. The 37 new state ministers will not accept their modest salaries, but they are entitled to three cars each with fuel, state housing, bodyguards, salaries for personal staff and free meals, the government said.

On social media, some Sri Lankans vented frustration over the use of public funds. "No pot to pee... but 37 state ministers!" tweeted user Soraya Deen. Mirhani Rahees added on the platform: "Spending on these useless state ministers... we have to tighten our belts. There goes my tax money in flames." Another user, Krishna Perera, accused the government of having "no commitment to human rights, economic reform, or accountability".

The new members all come from the coalition of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled Sri Lanka in July after protesters overran his official residence, but he returned to the country last week. Among the new ministers is Rajapaksa's nephew, Sashindra, who takes the irrigation portfolio. The 37 new posts are in addition to the 20-member cabinet of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took over in late July following Rajapaksa's exit. —AFP

Half of LDP MPs had Unification Church ties

TOKYO: Around half of Japan's ruling party lawmakers have had dealings with the Unification Church, an official said Thursday, after the assassination of ex-premier Shinzo Abe heightened scrutiny of the religious organization also sometimes known as the Moonies. The man suspected of shooting Abe dead in July allegedly targeted the former prime minister believing he was linked to the sect.

Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi said a probe found some lawmakers had accepted support for election campaigns from the church and its spin-off groups. Other LDP lawmakers had attended meetings or paid fees to the organization, whose members are sometimes colloquially referred to as "Moonies" after Korean founder Sun Myung Moon.

Of 379 elected LDP lawmakers, 179 "had some sort of links" with the Unification Church, Motegi told reporters. "We take the results seriously. We honestly feel sorry, and we'll make sure the party no longer has any relationship at all" with the church, he said. Last week, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said LDP members must cut ties with the group, following controversial revelations of its links with a raft of Japanese politicians.

The Unification Church has condemned Abe's murder and denied accusations of coercive fundraising tactics among its members, but Kishida's government has seen its approval ratings drop in recent weeks as more details have emerged. —AFP

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2022

Business

Apple unveils new gadgets despite supply chain woes

iPhone 14 costs \$799; premium iPhone 14 Pro Max go for \$1,100

CUPERTINO: Apple launched new smartphones Wednesday at prices similar to recent models despite inflation and supply chain woes, while unveiling a premium digital watch with a price tag to match. While a 90-minute presentation at the company's California headquarters did not include any surprise reveals, the tech giant did unveil new digital identification system to obviate the need for a physical sim card. The company's newest smartphone, the iPhone 14, costs \$799 for the base model - the same price as the current version, while a premium iPhone 14 Pro Max will go for \$1,100.

The set of updated products, which also includes new earbuds, is designed to keep customers loyal to its lucrative technology ecosystem. "Apple continued its strong growth in the first half of 2022, driven by robust demand for the iPhone 13 - which was the best-selling smartphone worldwide," said Le Xuan Chiew, an analyst at Canalis. The ability to keep the iPhone prices flat reflected the benefits of diversifying the supply chain to India after China's zero-tolerance COVID policies crimped production there, the analyst said.

Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said the launch event underscored Apple's logistics strength. "Taking a step back, launching 3 new core hardware products within the Apple ecosystem despite the biggest

supply chain crisis seen in modern history is a major feat for Cook & Co. especially with the zero COVID shutdowns in China seen in April/May," Ives said. Features of the new iPhone 14 include a more durable battery and new photographic capacities to capture "ultra wide" scenes and low-light settings.

The phones also contain an "emergency SOS" function to enable messaging to emergency services when outside of Wifi coverage. The iPhone 14 Plus comes in a giant 6.7-inch (17-centimeter) screen that offers a better experience when playing games or watching videos. Company officials touted new digital watch products with enhanced features. The Apple Watch Series 8 - which can monitor body temperature and other body functions - prices at \$400.

The company also unveiled the Apple Watch Ultra, priced at \$800, which includes a battery with enough lifespan for hardcore athletes "to complete a long-course triathlon," according to an Apple press release. Neil Saunders, analyst at GlobalData Retail, described the new offerings as having "incremental improvements rather than groundbreaking new innovations," adding that the company "has done enough to drive demand by persuading consumers to upgrade and indulge in its new products.— AFP



CALIFORNIA: The new iPhone 14 is displayed alongside the new Apple Watch 8 Series and new AirPods Pro during a launch event for new products at Apple Park in Cupertino, California, on September 7, 2022. — AFP

Al Wataniya Investment Fund receives 'Best Investment Product Award'

KUWAIT: National Investments Company, a leader in managing investment funds locally and regionally, announced that Al Wataniya Investment Fund won the Best Investment Product Award for the Year 2021 from Global Banking and Finance. The award was granted considering a wide range of performance-related elements, including innovation, flexible strategy, and keeping up with local and global changes within the investment sector, as well as experience and excellence in the world of investment banking.

In a press statement, NIC mentioned that the award received by Al Wataniya Investment Fund comes as a recognition of the performance achieved by the fund, the cash dividends distributed for the year 2021, in addition to other global technical standard measures the stability and development progress of the achieved performance.

Commenting on receiving the award, Hamad Al Humaidi, Executive Vice President of MIENA Sector



Hamad Al Humaidi

said: "Winning of this prestigious global award reflects the high experience and professionalism which is a testament to outstanding performance of our investment products. It also highlights NIC's leading position in the field of asset management in Kuwait and GCC, being one of the largest local and regional companies in terms of total assets under management exceeding KD 1 billion. It also reflects the success of its investment philosophy, which focuses on preservation of capital and sound investment strategies."

Performance of Al Wataniya Fund

The National Investments Company is always keen on managing its funds by following a robust investment policy that aims to achieve highest possible return on invested capital by investing in the shares of companies listed on Boursa Kuwait. Al Wataniya Fund delivered a return of 27.77% in 2021 and a total return of 296.75% since inception and have maintained a good ranking among the large sized funds (+KD50 million) based in Kuwait.

Al Humaidi also highlighted that the fund distributed cash dividends of 5% of the nominal value, i.e., 50 Fils for unit holders for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021, with a total value of KD 10 million. "Al Wataniya Investment Fund was established in 2001 and is considered one of the leading funds

in Boursa Kuwait, and its performance is remarkable when compared to the size of the net assets of other funds, as it is one of the largest funds in Kuwait with a net asset value of KD 158 million as of 31st December 2021. The fund invests in shares of well performing companies with profitable returns, solid management, and a clear future vision, which had a significant impact on the fund's stable cash and bonus distribution levels," added Al Humaidi.

Outstanding funds performance

Al Humaidi has also hailed the unique performance of the investment funds managed by the National Investments Company, which reflects the right approach, the prudence of the fund management team, the company's extensive experience and the track record of achievements in managing investment funds. He also highlighted that the company's investment funds have managed to achieve outstanding performance and have distributed cash dividend for the year 2021 to the unit holders registered as on March 31, 2022, the distribution commenced on 20th April, 2022.

"The National Investments Company provides a variety of services related to asset management and financial services and follows a prudent investment philosophy while offering innovative financial

solutions, taking advantage of its position as an integrated asset management firm relying on its presence in the market and client confidence on one hand and to pursue innovation, excellence and competition on the other hand," Al Humaidi elaborated.

Services Development

Al Humaidi has confirmed that NIC plans to focus on developing its services and investment products in accordance with the highest international standards in quality and excellence, while maintaining its position as a leader in providing investment tools that fulfill our clients' needs and adapt with the market situation, thus achieving good growth rates that meet the expectations of clients.

Al Humaidi has praised the employees' efforts and efficiency both locally and regionally to maintain progress and position of the company. Global Banking and Finance is one of the world's leading platforms which relies on quantitative and objective criteria in its awards rankings, as well as unparalleled depth in fund data and information. This enshrines the privileges and unique value of this award.

Egypt to champion climate finance for Africa at COP27

CAIRO: When Egypt hosts a global climate summit in November, it will seek to represent Africa which shares little of the blame for global warming but suffers many of its worst impacts, its environment minister says. Yasmine Fouad told AFP in an interview Wednesday that Egypt will also remind rich countries of the industrialized world of their unfulfilled aid pledges, at the COP27 summit in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. Part of Egypt's role as host is to "represent the African continent and its needs clearly and explicitly: We were not the cause of these emissions, but it is us - our people and our natural resources - that are affected," Fouad said.

She was speaking on the sidelines of an international conference in Cairo aimed at highlighting "Africa's needs and ambitions" in fighting and adjusting to climate change. African countries are among the most exposed to the impacts of climate change, especially worsening droughts and floods, but responsible for only around three percent of global CO2 emissions, former UN chief Ban Ki-moon said this week. He was speaking at an Africa-focused summit in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, where African leaders lashed out at industrialized nations for failing to show up.

Targets in danger

Egypt's environment minister said that "at this point, a stance must be taken on the international community level to say that everyone must fulfil their obligations, as set out in the Paris Agreement". In 2015, 196 UN members meeting in Paris set the goal of keeping warming below two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels,



CAIRO: Picture shows a partial view of the Nile river and the island of Al-Dahab, in Egypt's capital Cairo. —AFP

and preferably 1.5 Celsius, but surging carbon emissions have since endangered the targets. The Paris Agreement also stipulated that developed countries "shall provide financial resources to assist developing country parties" in curbing their emissions and strengthening resilience.

Already in 2015, a promise made at the Copenhagen climate summit in 2009 - to spend \$100 billion a year by 2020 on helping vulnerable nations adapt to climate change - was receding in the rear-view mirror. The 2020 goal came and went with pledges unmet, and regional meetings in preparation for COP27, such as this week's in Egypt and the Netherlands as well as another last week in Gabon, signal that funding could become a key flashpoint in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Fouad said environmental concerns had until recent years been regarded "as an obstacle to investment" and a "luxury" that Egypt could not afford. Drumming up support for environmental efforts was an uphill battle, until the tide turned and the world became increasingly aware that climate change is a matter of "human survival on planet earth", she said. — AFP

Tunisia food-makers starved for supplies amid crisis

TUNIS: Cash-strapped Tunisia is facing a dearth of imported foodstuffs from dairy products to coffee, forcing informal rationing at supermarkets and threatening some food and beverage companies. For weeks, consumers and businesses have been struggling to find essentials such as sugar, flour and cooking oil - a crunch experts blame on the dire financial situation of the state which has a monopoly on many staples.

Radhia Kamoun, CEO of the patisserie chain Gourmandise, says she is struggling to source key ingredients, while those that are available have surged in price. "When the sugar crisis began, we started using less of it, and the same with coffee - but you can't make pastries without butter," she said from her office in the capital's Ariana district. Gourmandise, with 27 branches across the country, has had to raise its prices twice this year, she said.

The state has failed to communicate and clarify "what's going on and what's going to happen", Kamoun said, describing the situation as the worst crisis since the business was founded in 1976. "If it carries on, we'll be forced to close shops, even though we had an expansion plan that had continued even throughout the coronavirus pandemic," she said. Economists say the problem stems from Tunisia's woe finances and a trading system in which the state has a monopoly on imports of commodities such as coffee, sugar, tea and rice.

It buys the products either on credit or with its foreign currency reserves, then releases them to local markets, in some cases heavily subsidizing them. But in March, ratings agency Fitch downgraded Tunisia's credit rating to CCC, citing political uncertainty and gaping budget deficits. Since then, "many international suppliers have stopped trusting Tunisia and are



TUNIS: Employees of the Tunisian chain of cakes and pastries 'Gourmandise' work in their laboratory in Tunisia. Tunisia has been experiencing a shortage of flour and sugar for two years. —AFP

demanding cash up front for products and transport," said economist Moez Hadidane.

Tunisia has been negotiating for months for a bailout loan likely worth two billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund, which is expected to demand painful economic reforms in return. President Kais Saied, who seized far-reaching powers last year and has since focused his efforts on remaking the political system, has consistently blamed "speculators" for the shortages. Some commentators say police raids on food storage facilities - ostensibly targeting hoarders - have worsened the problem as businesses are afraid to keep their usual inventories. The upshot is that many supermarkets have started informally rationing foods, such as by limiting purchases of flour and coffee to one pack per customer.

Traders say subsidized vegetable oil is almost impossible to find, despite the government insisting it is available. Social Affairs Minister Malek Zahi acknowledged last month that there was a crisis, blaming disrupted supply chains and price hikes on commodities and transport worldwide, largely due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Business

'Help, wanted': Businesses and companies struggle to fill jobs

Germany needs plumbers; US needs postal workers; Australia lacks engineers

PARIS: Germany has a shortage of plumbers. The United States needs more postal workers. Australia is lacking engineers. In Canada, hospitals are looking for more nurses. "The Great Resignation" that countries have experienced since COVID pandemic restrictions were eased is not over yet. Michael Blume, chief executive of a software company in eastern Germany, said he had "a lot of difficulties finding workers".

"Wherever we look, we are lacking qualified workers," Blume, whose firm Currentsystem23 is based in eastern Germany, told AFP. There were 887,000 job vacancies in Germany - Europe's biggest economy - in August, some 108,000 openings more than last year. "Help Wanted" signs are plastered in front of restaurants and other businesses in the United States, where there were more than 11 million job openings in late July, or two for every employment seeker.

"Vacancy rates are very high across the world. Surveys and firms are saying it is still very hard to fill positions," said Ariane Curtis, a Toronto-based economist at research firm Capital Economics. Countries in Western Europe and North America are having a particularly tough time filling jobs, though the problem is also present in eastern Europe, Turkey and Latin America, Curtis said. Vacancy-to-unemployed rates rose sharply in Australia, Canada and Britain in later 2021 compared to pre-pandemic levels, an OECD report said in July.

Businesses closing early

The shortages have persisted even as the world economy has begun to slow since Russia invaded Ukraine earlier this year. It affects a broad range of sectors: from a lack of teachers in Texas to not enough staff in the hospitality industry in Italy or the Canadian health system. The shortages have forced businesses to adapt.

Pharmacies in the US state of Wisconsin, services at hospitals in Canada's province of Alberta and restaurants in Australia's Sunshine Coast have had to close for parts of the day, according to local news reports. White-collar workers are also in short supply. Clement Verrier, who co-heads an executive recruiting firm in Paris, said it used to be difficult to find companies looking to hire. Now it's the opposite. "We're seeing an unprecedented number of candidates who disappear in the middle



CALIFORNIA: A person receives employment information during a job fair hiring new postal workers and mail carrier assistants at a US Postal Service in Inglewood, California. —AFP

of the recruitment process, without calling back," Verrier said.

'Shift in mindset'

Aging populations were already starting to cause shortages before COVID, but the problem exploded with the pandemic. There are multiple factors behind the phenomenon: some people have chosen to retire early, while others have struggled with long COVID symptoms. Others have simply had enough of poor working conditions or low salaries. Other factors include a drastic drop in immigration due to lockdowns, people moving out of cities and workers seizing the moment to rethink their career choices.

"The pandemic drove a fundamental shift in mindset and priorities, and employers aren't keeping pace with that change," said Bonnie Dowling, expert associate partner at McKinsey, a global

consultancy that conducted a study on the wave of resignations around the world. To keep or woo workers, companies are offering higher salaries. Other benefits that have emerged include the option of working from home, "bonus" holidays and more personal days.

Some countries are easing their immigration rules to attract more workers. Germany unveiled plans Wednesday to make it easier for people to hold multiple nationalities and make naturalisation of foreigners easier. "The big question is if what we have seen in the last months will cool down or not," said Mike Smith, CEO of Netherlands-based international recruiter Randstad Sourceright. "From our position we don't believe it is transitory," he said. "We think it is a structural change in the way employees are looking to interact with work. Trends continue to point to that. The shift in worker expectations is here to stay." — AFP

Norway keen to protect energy windfall

OSLO: Norway, a major producer and supplier of energy, is well placed to help alleviate Europe's energy crisis—and reap the profits, a situation not all of its European partners welcome. The Nordic country was already a leading exporter of electricity thanks to its many hydroelectric dams. But since the cut in natural gas supplies from Russia following the invasion of Ukraine, it has now emerged as Europe's main supplier in that field.

Offshore, Norwegian platforms and facilities are running at full capacity to make up at least some of the shortfall. "The most important contribution Norway can make in the current situation is to maintain high gas production," oil and energy minister Terje Aasland told parliament last month. The country is set to increase its gas exports by eight percent this year, bringing production to a record 122 billion cubic meters, according to Aasland. But the sharp rise in gas prices also means greater profits. The state's oil and gas revenues are expected to smash last year's record 830 billion Norwegian kroner (\$83 billion), potentially reaching 1.5 trillion in 2022 and 1.9 trillion next year, according to projections by Nordea Markets.

With such a spectacular windfall, there are those who worry that the country risks being viewed as a "war profiteer". Already in May, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said Norway should share "this excess, gigantic profit". The country was "indirectly preying", albeit unintentionally, from "the war started by Putin", Morawiecki argued. So far, Oslo has turned a deaf ear to calls for a cap on gas prices, instead emphasizing its role as a stable and predictable supplier. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,045	1,030	1,048	1,021	27	21,819,551	-10	-0.96%	8.48%	1,024	1,038	18.7	2.01	2.3%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	342	338	345	335	10	38,792,120	-4	-1.17%	27.20%	338	346	19.2	1.59	2.0%	1.19
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	213	213	215	212	3	1,683,821	1	0.47%	1.61%	212	217	33.9	0.67	1.8%	1.18
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	241	240	244	236	8	16,017,308	-3	-1.23%	0.40%	238	242	20.5	0.89	2.0%	1.32
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	900	884	900	871	29	41,223,197	-16	-1.78%	16.87%	874	890	30.0	3.78	1.2%	1.19
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	842	808	842	802	40	7,185,510	-24	-2.88%	13.43%	803	813	53.5	3.28	0.6%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	280	281	287	274	13	1,830,678	-3	-1.06%	28.31%	274	283	10.5	1.11	16.1%	1.76
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	155	157	164	152	12	18,755,101	2	1.29%	10.56%	153	161	88.9	0.85	3.1%	0.95
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	93	91.7	93	90.0	3.2	1,582,294	-1.3	-1.40%	-22.29%	90	95	NULL	0.54	9.8%	1.16
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	124	121	124	119	5	13,187,955	-3	-2.42%	-30.37%	119	124	14.7	0.88	2.4%	1.02
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	823	845	848	811	37	2,333,099	24	2.92%	12.95%	825	850	17.7	1.91	1.6%	1.14
501	National Industries	Financial Services	272	263	272	261	11	42,280,024	-9	-3.31%	9.15%	259	264	6.1	1.12	4.2%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,420	1,391	1,446	1,391	55	362,991	-55	-3.80%	59.70%	1,390	1,450	13.0	1.30	4.3%	0.86
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	904	900	910	886	24	1,077,964	-6	-0.66%	5.63%	900	915	10.2	1.84	6.7%	0.93
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	315	318	320	312	8	885,642	3	0.95%	-8.36%	313	323	12.1	0.78	5.7%	1.01
603	Agility	Industrials	819	807	821	798	23	25,514,336	-12	-1.47%	2.48%	805	824	62.7	1.39	2.0%	1.45
605	Zain	Telecommunications	602	588	605	587	18	14,424,786	-12	-2.00%	-1.18%	581	589	13.9	2.15	5.6%	0.84
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,400	3,317	3,400	3,312	88	153,724	-83	-2.44%	2.88%	3,315	3,350	7.8	3.71	11.9%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	195	190	195	189	6	1,188,581	-2	-1.04%	-12.84%	184	195	-	0.70	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,919	1,890	1,932	1,851	81	1,016,545	-6	-0.32%	46.51%	1,880	1,939	15.3	13.71	2.4%	1.35
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20.68%	-	-	17.9	2.04	2.8%	1.78
821	Warba Bank	Banking	247	245	248	245	3	13,103,709	-3	-1.21%	-10.58%	243	249	29.1	1.34	0.0%	1.07
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	420	414	423	412	11	3,920,619	-6	-1.43%	-28.31%	405	432	42.2	1.21	3.8%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	409	401	412	396	16	1,139,942	-9	-2.20%	8.38%	396	405	30.9	1.67	2.5%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	202	205	206	202	4	3,676,446	3	1.49%	-10.09%	201	205	15.8	2.32	8.7%	0.48
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,302	2,327	2,375	2,290	85	187,343	-8	-0.34%	15.20%	2,300	2,350	25.0	8.04	2.8%	0.76
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	853	839	853	817	36	1,911,735	-17	-1.99%	-	830	860	13.2	3.89	-	0.75

* As of end of week closing

Business

Nations growing 70% of world's food facing 'extreme' heat risk

Climate change stokes heatwaves, extreme weather

PARIS: Blistering crop-withering temperatures that also risk the health of agricultural workers could threaten swathes of global food production by 2045 as the world warms, an industry analysis warned Thursday. Climate change is already stoking heatwaves and other extreme weather events across the world, with hot spells from India to Europe this year expected to hit crop yields.

Temperature spikes are causing mounting concern for health, particularly for those working outside in sweltering conditions, which is especially dangerous when humidity levels are high. The latest assessment by risk company Verisk Maplecroft brings those two threats together to calculate that heat stress already poses an "extreme risk" to agriculture in 20 countries, including agricultural giant India.

But the coming decades are expected to expand the threat to 64 nations by 2045 - representing 71 percent of current global food production-including major economies China, India, Brazil and the United States. "With the rise in global temperatures and rise in global heat stress, we're going to see crops in more temperate countries as well start being affected by this," said Will Nichols, head of climate and resilience at Verisk Maplecroft. Rice is particularly at risk, the assessment said, with other crops like cocoa and even tomatoes also singled out as of concern.

Growing risk

Maplecroft's new heat stress dataset, using global temperature data from the UK Met Office, feeds into its wider risk assessments of countries

around the world. It is based on a worst-case emissions scenario leading to around 2 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels as soon as 2045. However, the authors stress that in projections to mid-century, even scenarios that assume higher levels of carbon-cutting action could still result in temperatures nearing 2C.

India-responsible for 12 percent of global food production in 2020 and heavily reliant on outdoor labour productivity-is already rated as at extreme risk, the only major agricultural nation in that category at current temperatures. "There's a very real worry that people in rural areas, which are obviously highly dependent on agriculture, are going to be much more vulnerable to these kinds of heat events going forward," Nichols told AFP.

That could impact productivity and in turn exports-and have potentially "cascading" knock-on effects on issues such as the country's credit rating and even political stability, he said. By 2045, the list grows much longer. Nine of the top ten countries affected in 2045 are in Africa, with the world's second largest cocoa producer Ghana, as well as Togo and Central African Republic receiving the worst possible risk score.

The top 20 at-risk countries in the coming decades include key Southeast Asian rice exporters Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, the authors said, noting that rice farmers in central Vietnam have already taken to working at night to avoid the high temperatures. The assessment highlights that major economies like the US and China could also see extreme risk to agriculture in 2045, although in these large countries the impacts vary by region.



AMPUIS: Grape pickers participate in the wine harvest in the Domaine Guigal on the first day of the harvest of Cote-Rotie near Vienne in the northern Rhone wine region, in Ampuis, eastern France. —AFP

Meanwhile, Europe accounts for seven of the 10 countries set to see the largest increase in risk by 2045. "I think what it reinforces is that, even though a lot of us are sort of sitting in sort of Western countries, where we might think we're a bit more

insulated from some of these threats, actually we are not necessarily," Nichols said. "Both in terms of the sort of physical risks that we're facing, but also in terms of the kind of knock on effects down the supply chain." —AFP

China's car sales rise the most in a decade

BEIJING: Sales of passenger cars in China rose 28.9 percent on-year in August—the most in a decade—driven by a surge in demand for electric vehicles, a trade body said Thursday. A total of 1.87 million vehicles were sold last month, China's Passenger Car Association said, with sales of hybrid and electric units doubling on-year in the world's largest car market. Sales had contracted sharply in May—shrinking by 17 percent on-year—and even more in April, which saw the biggest drop since 2020 at 40.4 percent.

The Chinese government introduced a string of measures, including a tax break extension, in July to stimulate sales of electric cars against the backdrop of an economic slowdown. China's electric car market is particularly competitive, with manufacturers jostling to take advantage of an industry boosted in recent months by generous purchase subsidies from local governments. The measures are supposed to support the economy at a time when sporadic Covid-19 lockdowns around the country have dampened consumer enthusiasm and business confidence. Local manufacturer Geely saw its sales jump in August by 429 percent on-year.

Carmaker BYD

Meanwhile, a major Chinese carmaker struck a deal Thursday to build an electric vehicle plant in Thailand, according to the local property developer, its first factory in Southeast Asia. BYD, one of the most prominent Chinese brands in the electric vehicle market, will buy a 96-hectare plot to house the facility, from Thai property developer WHA Group.

The site—about 140 kilometers southeast of Bangkok—will eventually be able to produce up to 150,000 vehicles a year and is expected to be operational by 2024, WHA said in a statement. The cars will be destined mainly for the Southeast Asian and European markets, it added. China's electric car market is crowded, with many local manufacturers vying for market share, buoyed by generous subsidies.

Chinese manufacturers are now looking to build an overseas presence. BYD got a foothold in the European market by setting up shop in Norway before expanding to neighboring countries. The brand, known in Europe for its electric buses, now has operations in Hungary and France. Originally specializing in battery production, BYD moved into the automotive sector in 2003 and has since become a heavy-weight in electric vehicle production. The firm stopped producing petrol-powered cars in April, saying it would only produce hybrid and electric models in future. —AFP

Why HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 has the edge

KUWAIT: Thinking of buying a new pair of wireless earphones? With so many options out there, you might be forgiven if you just do not know which one to get. Well, there are a couple of key factors to consider before buying a new pair of premium earphones, ie quality of sound, noise cancellation, etc. With this in mind, let's put the flagship earbuds to the test: Huawei's latest high-end earbuds, the HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2. Read on to find out why we think the HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 is the better choice.

Sound quality

When buying a pair of premium earbuds, sound quality should be your first priority. In that regard, HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 scores high. It features a unique 'Ultra-hearing True Sound Dual Driver' sound system that intelligently coordinates two drivers for excellent audio performance. The earbuds use a planar diaphragm for bright and precise treble and overtones and a quad-magnet dynamic driver for medium and lower frequencies to deliver punchier bass. The bass goes down to 14Hz, with treble going up to 48KHz, far beyond the range of perception of human ears.

These earbuds also use 'Triple Adaptive EQ' technology, which can automatically tune audio according to your ear canal structure, wearing posture and volume level in real-time. On top of that, support for LDAC(tm) high-resolution audio codec protocol effectively preserves details in the audio with less



deterioration and gives you a high-fidelity sound.

Also, HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 is co-engineered with Devialet, a high-end acoustic technology brand from France. It combines state-of-the-art technologies in acoustic engineering with unrivalled acoustic innovations to enable more people to experience high-fidelity sound with new technologies. Both Huawei and Devialet have worked together to create a sound signature with surging bass, and detailed, pure sound quality.

Active noise cancellation

The ANC on HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 is just extraordinary. They have a wide frequency range of noise cancellation within a normal living environment ranging between 50Hz and 3000Hz. Its 'Triple Mic ANC System' boosts the average ANC depth by a whopping 15% compared to its predecessor. On top of that, the 'Intelligent Dynamic ANC 2.0' selects the best noise cancellation mode based on the surroundings.

Even on flights, the Intelligent Dynamic ANC 2.0 eliminates the roaring aircraft engine noises with the exclusive aircraft noise cancellation curve. Compared to the industry standard single microphone systems for ambient noise pick-up, HUAWEI

FreeBuds Pro 2's dual outward-facing microphone design is much superior.

Call voice quality

HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 ensures clear, quiet calls wherever you are. It uses a 4-Mic Call Noise Cancellation system combined with a Huawei-exclusive deep neural network (DNN) noise cancellation algorithm. These earbuds can accurately pick up human voices while filtering out noise. Thanks to the new hidden wind-proof design industry-leading intelligent wind-noise cancellation algorithm, these earbuds can effectively reduce wind noises during running or riding bikes. Both caller and receiver can experience crystal clear calls. The earbuds also eliminates ambient noise for users to hear clearly, and picks up human voices accurately in a noisy environment for the receiver.

Our verdict

HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 win out when you consider all the features together including sound quality. The best part is that it supports a dual connection with Huawei all-scenario devices, including smartphones, tablets, PCs and watches, and with Android, iOS and Windows smart systems.

Al Muzaini Company opens 124th branch

KUWAIT: Al Muzaini Company, the leading exchange house in Kuwait with more than 80 years of experience is proud to announce the latest opening of its 124th branch in Aswaq Al Qurain Kuwait on Tuesday, 6th of September 2022. The General Manager Hugh Fernandes and members of Al Muzaini management inaugurated the new branch. "We are extremely delighted to introduce our latest branch opening in Aswaq Al Qurain. We continually invest in our product to ensure convenience and ease of remittances. Since customers expect excellent service when it comes to money transfers and foreign exchanges, our commitment is towards delivering a reliable and safe service each and every time," Hugh Fernandes said.



UK's Truss freezes energy bills in first big policy shift

LONDON: New British Prime Minister Liz Truss on Thursday said domestic fuel bills would be frozen for two years, marking her first week in office with a costly plan to tackle a politically perilous cost-of-living crisis. The government said it would also review progress towards its legally enshrined target to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, to ensure the needs of consumers and businesses are taken into account, while stressing it remained committed to the goal. Households are facing an 80-percent hike in gas and electricity bills

next month due to the rise in the cost of wholesale energy made worse by a squeeze on supplies after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Businesses whose bills are not capped have warned they could go to the wall because of even bigger rises, at the same time as inflation is at 40-year highs of 10.1 percent and predicted to go higher. The government expects the state-backed scheme to cost tens of billions of pounds (dollars), but Truss and new finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng insisted it would have "substantial benefits" to the economy. It would curb inflation by four to five percentage points, they said in a statement.

They also announced an end to a ban on fracking—a controversial method to drill for fossil fuels—and more drilling licences for North Sea oil and gas. Truss said "decades of short-term thinking on energy" and failing to secure supplies had left Britain, which is heavily reliant on gas for its energy needs, vulnerable to price

shocks. "Extraordinary challenges call for extraordinary measures, ensuring that the United Kingdom is never in this situation again," she said. Kwarteng said the freeze means worried households and businesses "can now breathe a massive sigh of relief".

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis, which has led to widespread strike action over pay, threatens to define Truss's premiership, just two days after she formally took over from Boris Johnson. Truss said energy bills for an average British household would be capped at £2,500 (\$2,872) a year - £1,000 less than October's planned level. Non-domestic energy users, including businesses, charities, and public sector organizations such as schools and hospitals, will see a six-month freeze. Analysts predict the plan, which will likely be in place at the next general election expected in 2024, could top well over £100 billion, surpassing Britain's COVID-era furlough jobs scheme. —AFP



LONDON: A petrol pump shows the price for 58.12 liters of fuel on a Diesel and Unleaded Petrol fuel pump, at a BP petrol station on the M25 motorway, south of London. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Dark reality of Marilyn Monroe comes to Venice

The film with the biggest buzz going into the Venice Film Festival, a dark portrait of Marilyn Monroe starring Cuban actress Ana de Armas, finally gets its world premiere Thursday. "Blonde" is a long-awaited biopic produced by Netflix that promises to delve deep into the childhood trauma and abuse that lay behind the sexualized image of the 20th-century icon. Armas told reporters in Venice that she could feel the presence of Marilyn during the filming, which included shooting in the real homes where Monroe was raised and died. "I truly believe she was very close to us, that she was with us," Armas said ahead of the premiere later Thursday.

"She was all I thought about, all I dreamed about, all I could talk about, she was with me, and it was beautiful," she said. The choice of Armas for the lead role has not been without controversy, with online trolls slamming her slight Cuban accent when the trailer was released this summer. But Monroe's estate, although not involved in the film, has supported her performance, saying Armas "captures Marilyn's glamour, humanity and vulnerability".

'Dark and vulnerable'

There have also been rumors of an extended stand-off between Netflix and Australian director Andrew Dominik over the film's three-hour running time and graphic scenes. Dominik struggled for 11 years to get the film made, and has credited the MeToo movement with finally generating interest in the story, which takes an unflinching look at the sexual exploitation Monroe suffered in the industry. The project finally "came alive" when he spotted Armas in



(From left) US actress Julianne Nicholson, US actor Adrien Brody, Australian New Zealand director Andrew Dominik and Cuban Spanish actress Ana de Armas pose during a photocall for the film "Blonde" presented in the Venezia 79 competition as part of the 79th Venice International Film Festival at Lido di Venezia in Venice, Italy. —AFP photos

a small film called "Knock Knock". "I knew it was her as soon as I saw her on TV, it's

a little like love at first sight." Armas worked for months with a vocal coach, but said she "had to go

to places that I knew were going to be uncomfortable and dark and vulnerable" to connect with Monroe. Adrien Brody, who plays husband and playwright Arthur Miller, said he was "transported" by Armas's performance. "On the first day of filming, I went home with this sense of awe that I had the privilege of actually working with Marilyn Monroe," he said at the press conference.

Awards race

The 11-day Venice Film Festival draws to a close with its awards night on Saturday. Critics have been divided on many films, but it has been a stellar year for individual performances. There was a huge standing ovation for Brendan Fraser, who makes a comeback from the Hollywood wilderness as a 600-pound (250-kilo) English professor in "The Whale", sparking talk of Oscar nominations and a "Brendanaissance".

Cate Blanchett is also an awards frontrunner for her complex role as a classical music conductor in "Tar", which takes a nuanced look at cancel culture. And Hugh Jackman's performance as a father dealing with a depressed teenager in "The Son" has been labeled the best of his career.

Several films have tackled sexual identity, with Trace Lysette becoming the first trans actress to star in a competition film in Venice for "Monica". Other frontrunners for the top award, the Golden Lion, are oddball Irish drama "The Banshees of Inisherin" starring Colin Farrell, and "Argentina 1985", the true story of the lawyers who prosecuted the military generals accused of the disappearance of tens of thousands of their citizens. —AFP

Hugh Jackman says mental health film changed his view on parenting

Hugh Jackman says playing the role of a father to a depressed teenager in "The Son", which premiered in Venice on Wednesday, made him rethink his entire approach to parenting. The Australian star says he had a need "like a fire in my gut" to play the part after reading the theatre version by writer-director Florian Zeller. Jackman plays alongside Laura Dern as divorced parents trying to cope with a son who is falling ever-deeper into depression. "It was a compulsion...it's a scary, beautiful feeling to have, that you rarely get as an actor, that you feel the part is right for you at this point in your life and you just must play it," he told reporters in Venice, where the film is competing for the top Golden Lion award. What he didn't expect is how the film's devastating look at mental health would change his own relationship with his children. "For many years as a parent, the job was to appear strong and dependable," he said. "But...since this movie, I've changed my approach. I share my vulnerabilities more with my 17- and 22-year-old kids, and I see the relief when I do."

Following a successful theatre career, Zeller's first film, "The Father", won Oscars for him and its star Anthony Hopkins, who also makes a small but crucial appearance in "The Son". Jackman said he took the rare step of emailing Zeller to request the part personally, and the director said he agreed after just eight minutes on a Zoom call together. "I felt something very strong about the reason he was connected to that story," Zeller said. "It was the best decision ever because from that moment it was such a joyful, truthful and intense journey that we have shared."

'Greatest crisis'

There were mixed reviews, with The Guardian calling it "a powerful and literate film", while others, such as the Hollywood Reporter, found it a "punishing slog". But there was all-around acclaim for the actors, with Deadline praising Jackman for "the most impressive dramatic performance of his career, one he jumps into with no movie star filter".



(From left) British producer Iain Canning, Australian actor Zen McGrath, US actress Laura Dern, French director Florian Zeller, Australian actor Hugh Jackman and British actress Vanessa Kirby pose during a photocall for the film "The Son" presented in the Venezia 79 competition.

Dern said the film carried a particularly vital message in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. "The greatest crisis that has come through this time is the epidemic of mental health, particularly in adolescents and young adults around the world. The numbers are so shocking," she said. Although the teenager, played by newcomer Zen McGrath, blames his parents' divorce for his difficulties, Zeller said the real roots of mental health problems are "much more difficult to explain".

"My intention was not to try to explain where it comes from," he said. "It was important for me to capture that mystery...the frustration that comes with wanting to help someone and not knowing where it comes from." One rare moment of light relief in the film features some dad-dancing from Jackman. The actor said he tried to practice some embarrassing moves with his daughter, who assured him: "Dad, you don't need to rehearse." —AFP



Cuban Spanish actress Ana de Armas poses on September 8, 2022 during a photocall for the film "Blonde".

Ana de Armas: 'Marilyn was with us' during 'Blonde' filming

Cuban star Ana de Armas says she could feel the presence of Marilyn Monroe as they put her traumatic life on screen for "Blonde", which premieres in Venice on Thursday. Armas said she had to go to "uncomfortable, dark and vulnerable" places to depict the harsh reality of the 20th century icon's life. "I truly believe she was very close to us, that she was with us," Armas told reporters at the Venice Film Festival ahead of the world premiere. "She was all I thought about, all I dreamed about, all I could talk about, she was with me, and it was beautiful. She was happy. "She would throw things off the wall when she got mad and didn't like something," Armas added. "Maybe this sounds mystical or something, but it's true—we all felt it." The crew, led by Australian director Andrew Dominik, filmed in the real house where Monroe—then Norma Jeane Mortenson—was abused by her mentally unwell mother as a child, as well as the home where the actress died at the age of 36. "Her dust is everywhere in Los Angeles," Dominik said. "It definitely took on elements of a séance."

He struggled for 11 years to secure financing and complete the film, and has thanked the MeToo movement for generating interest in the story, which takes an unflinching look at the sexual abuse and exploitation Monroe suffered in the industry. The project finally "came alive" when he spotted Armas in a small film called "Knock Knock", he said. "I knew it was her as soon as I saw her on TV, it's a little like love at first sight." Armas worked for months with a vocal coach to lose her Cuban accent and pick up Monroe's distinctive, breathy voice.

"It was about understanding, empathizing, connecting with her and her pain and her trauma," she said. "If you put aside the movie star that she was, she was just a woman just like me—same age, also an actress in the industry." "I had to go to places that I knew were going to be uncomfortable and dark and vulnerable, but that's where I found the connection with this person."

Adrien Brody, who plays husband Arthur Miller, said the divide between Monroe's iconic image and her "inner struggle and unresolved traumatic moments" was "almost criminal". "I can't think of any other person who could have brought what Ana brought to this role," Brody said. "On the first day of filming, I went home with this sense of awe that I had the privilege of actually working with Marilyn Monroe." —AFP

Kim Kardashian launches private equity firm

Reality TV star-turned-entrepreneur Kim Kardashian announced Wednesday she is branching into a new business arena with the launch of a private equity firm co-founded with a former partner at industry giant Carlyle. "I'm pleased to announce the launch of @SKKYPartners with private equity veteran Jay Sammons as co-founder and co-managing partner," Kardashian wrote on Twitter. Kardashian said her mother, Kris Jenner, would also serve as partner.

According to the new firm's Instagram account, SKKY Partners will focus on investments in consumer and media companies in sectors including "consumer

products, digital and e-commerce, consumer media, hospitality and luxury." It is the latest of a series of business ventures for megastar Kardashian, who came to fame with the US reality show "Keeping Up With the Kardashians," which tracked the lives of her family members in Los Angeles.

The 41-year-old has steadily built her business empire in recent years—most visibly with her apparel and beauty brands—and has a net worth of \$1.8 billion, according to Forbes. Jay Sammons, who in the summer left his long-time role as head of consumer, media and retail at Carlyle—one of the top private equity companies in the world—told The Wall Street Journal he approached Kardashian and her mother about launching the firm this year.

Kardashian told the Journal she liked the idea of working closely with entrepreneurs to help them grow their vision. "The exciting part is to sit down with these founders and figure out what their dream is," Kardashian told the paper, adding the firm plans



Kim Kardashian

to make its first investment before the end of 2022. "I want to support what that is, not change who they are in their DNA, but just support and get them to a different level." SKKY did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. —AFP

Real life, right now-photo app claims to capture authenticity

It's not all sunsets and selfie smiles—people are flocking to a new social network app that calls on users to share true glimpses of their lives rather than cherry-picked moments. Once a day, BeReal simultaneously prompts users to take photos of what they are doing, giving them two minutes. The app uses front and rear facing cameras on phones, putting shared "selfies" into context. The app shares software filters that add glossy special effects or touch-up effects. The approach is a sharp contrast to the carefully cultivated images common on Instagram and Facebook that often focus on parties, holidays, fancy food and perfect weather.

"The ideal of BeReal is you are just in a moment—where are you and what are you doing right now," said Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a professor at Syracuse University school of information studies in the United States. "Our lived lives,

not our best lives—maybe you are walking the dog or in your pajamas eating cereal." Launched two years ago by French entrepreneurs, BeReal has seen its popularity surge in recent months. It was the most downloaded app in the United States at start of September, and ranked among the top three in Britain and France, according to figures provided by market tracker Data.ai.

BeReal has been downloaded nearly 35 million times worldwide and is proving popular with Gen Z, people born between the late 1990s and about 2010, Data.ai figures showed. "It does seem to have really taken off as the next potential social media application," Stromer-Galley said of BeReal, though cautioning that the same was once said for ephemeral photo sharing app Snapchat.

BeReal creator Alexis Barreyat was at a mountain bike

event when it struck him how social media users focused more on perfecting content than what was happening around them, according to venture capitalist Jean de La Rochebrochard, who invested in the startup. "While he was in the moment, he was surprised to see so many influencers busy staging their life with multiples shots, stories, trying out dozens of filters while completely missing the show," the investor wrote in a blog. "It was even making some of them and their audience miserable."

BeReal's rise in popularity signals that people are tired of polished online images that don't reflect actual life. Creative Strategies tech analyst Carolina Milanesi told AFP: "I think the younger generation is done with fake and perfect, because life isn't." Milanesi said. "Gen Z seems a bit of a sweet spot; the fact they want to be who they are and they



want to be portraying how real life is and how they navigate through it." One BeReal user posted a playful video of her scrambling about her home in a frenzy to stage a flattering photo with just two minutes to get ready. Another lamented on Twitter about a friend abruptly ending a phone call to take a selfie after getting a BeReal alert. "The app is called BeReal NOT wait until I think I look cute enough to post," read a tweet by the account of @garrett_parker1. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



A journalist takes a picture of Vermeer's "Milkmaid" during a press conference on new discoveries made on one of Vermeer's most famous paintings at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. —AFP photos



Annelies Van Loon, paintings conservator and chemist of the Rijksmuseum (right) shows a detail on a screen projection of the painting the "Milkmaid" by Johannes Vermeer during a press conference on new discoveries made on one of Vermeer's most famous paintings at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Hidden items found in Vermeer's famed 'Milkmaid' painting

Experts from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum said Thursday they have found a hidden jug holder and basket in Dutch master Johannes Vermeer's famed painting "The Milkmaid" which he later painted over. The "startling" discoveries in the 17th century masterpiece shed new light on the technique of the enigmatic artist, ahead of the largest ever exhibition of Vermeer's work starting at the museum in 2023. Advanced scanning technology revealed that beneath the plain white wall that makes the milkmaid's bright yellow and blue clothes stand out, Vermeer had originally painted extra details before changing his mind.

The resulting simplicity paved the way for later masterpieces like his iconic "Girl with a Pearl Earring", which will also form part of next year's landmark Vermeer show, researchers said. "This reveals a new unexpected Vermeer, it's astonishing," Gregor Weber, head of fine arts and at the Rijksmuseum, told a news conference. Vermeer's changes mean that the figure of the maid, seen in the painting pouring a stream of milk from an earthenware jug, "stands in front of us in a much more

monumental way," he said. Researchers knew from x-rays carried out around a decade ago that there was something hidden below the layers of paint in the artwork, which is believed to date from 1657-8, but they weren't sure what.

'Too hectic'

One of the most significant new discoveries by the Rijksmuseum was that the artist had sketched out a wooden holder for jugs on the wall just behind the milkmaid's head. Experts previously thought it might be a fireplace, but a new technique called Short Wavelength Infrared Reflectance clearly showed the details of the jugs and the wooden frame. The technique, usually used for industrial inspections and for military purposes, produces "false color" images in blue, although in reality it was in black paint.

Further research revealed that such a jug rack was mentioned in Vermeer's estate after his death, while a model of a very similar holder can be seen in a 17th century dolls house in the Rijksmuseum. "What we discovered with The Milkmaid is that

she didn't at first have a very beautiful white wall behind her. No, there was a rack hanging with jars in it," Rijksmuseum General Director Taco Dibbits told AFP. "One of the jars is now picked to make the milk pudding she's making. So that's one of the things that Vermeer then thought - 'this will make a composition that is too hectic, I'm going to paint it over.'"

Another key finding was that the previously-noticed shadow of some kind of basket could now be seen to be a "fire basket", woven from willow, which would typically be used to air clothes. The basket was replaced by a much smaller foot stove complete with Delft blue tiles. The researchers further discovered a "hastily applied" thick black line of paint underneath the milkmaid's left arm showing that Vermeer had apparently made a swift initial sketch.

'Less is more'

The uncovered sketches provide a crucial insight into the genius of Vermeer (1632-1675), since none of his drawings or studies remain. Very little is

known about Vermeer, who lived a life of modest means in the historic city of Delft during the Dutch "Golden Age" of painting. The changes to "The Milkmaid" would be crucial for his later works, introducing a "motto of simplicity" involving blocks of colour and the use of light and shade. "These steps had consequences for his whole work which will follow, he learned that less is more," Weber said.

The Rijksmuseum has used similar techniques to uncover the creative process behind Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" and Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring". "You would think that these iconic paintings have no secrets for us any more," said Annelies van Loon, researcher from the Rijksmuseum and the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague. The exhibition running from 10 February to June 4 2023 will feature 27 of Vermeer's small lifetime production of some 35 paintings, gathered from museums around the world. Dibbits said it was the "first and also the last time that so many Vermeer paintings could be gathered together". Tickets go on sale on the Rijksmuseum website on Thursday. —AFP



Students attend a training seminar at the Tourism Ministry Training center in the city of Riyadh. —AFP photos



A student attends a training seminar at the Tourism Ministry Training center in the city of Riyadh.

Eyeing tourism boom, Saudi scrambles to train hotel staff

Under the watchful eye of an instructor, Munira Al-Rubaian spreads fresh bed linen in a mock hotel room in the Saudi capital, aiming to land a job in the desert kingdom's growing tourism sector. The unemployed 25-year-old is one of thousands of Saudis enrolled in the state-run "Tourism Pioneers" program, which aims to prepare 100,000 job-seekers for a field that government officials insist is set to take off.

At two facilities in Riyadh, Rubaian and other trainees study tasks like welcoming hotel guests, plating food in upscale restaurants and keeping luxury



Students take part in a practical training course, as part of a Saudi state-run "Tourism Pioneers" program, in the city of Riyadh.

suites squeaky-clean. Others are sent abroad for short courses in countries with far more advanced tourism industries, including the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and France.

This army of newly minted bellboys, cleaners and higher-paid hospitality managers is expected to help Saudi Arabia—a famously conservative and closed-off Gulf kingdom that only opened its doors to tourism three years ago—make a positive impression on first-time visitors. The scheme also supports the govern-

ment's goal of employing more Saudis in roles traditionally occupied by migrant laborers.

The niqab-wearing Rubaian signed up for Tourism Pioneers after her own efforts to find a job at a hotel went nowhere. She is optimistic the experience will help her get a foot in the door. "I've had the opportunity to learn and improve my capabilities for employment," she told AFP. "I will now have the experience and self-confidence to deal with people."

Aiming high

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's 37-year-old de facto ruler, is counting on a tourism boom to diversify the economy of the world's largest oil exporter. In 2019, two years after Prince Mohammed became first in line to the throne, the country introduced tourist visas, but the coronavirus pandemic dashed hopes of an immediate influx. Authorities nonetheless remain committed to their eye-brow-raising goal of drawing 30 million foreign guests annually by 2030, up from just four million last year.

That's on top of 70 million targeted domestic trips each year by Saudis and foreign residents. Of the combined 100 million a year hoped-for tourists, officials project some 30 million will be making religious pilgrimages, largely to Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest sites, in western Saudi Arabia.

The rest, officials hope, will be partially powered by new attractions like Al-Ula, a budding arts hub set amongst ancient Nabatean tombs, and the Red Sea Project, a Maldives-style resort destination. But while the kingdom has in recent years relaxed rules barring cinemas, mixed-gender concerts and sports events, other regulations including an alcohol ban remain in place, potentially denting its appeal.

In a bid to lure more Arab tourists and better compete with regional rivals like the United Arab Emirates, the tourism ministry announced last week that residents of the Gulf Cooperation Council could apply for electronic tourism visas. That right has already been granted to 49 countries, mainly in Europe and North America.

Overseas exposure

To make their dreams a reality, Saudi leaders recognize the need to dramatically increase the number of people working in tourism. Some 850,000 currently work in the sector, only 26 percent of them Saudis, according to official figures. Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030 reform agenda aims to create one million new tourism jobs and boost the portion of Saudis filling them to 70 percent. Tourism Pioneers, launched in June, has a budget of \$100 million, with programs for



Bandar Al-Safeer, General Manager of Tourism Nationalization and Training speaks to AFP on the sidelines of a training seminar at the Tourism Ministry Training center in the Saudi city of Riyadh.

52 specific jobs from entry-level to management.

"We need to build the knowledge, the skills, the competencies for Saudis at the highest levels," said Mohammed Bushnag, deputy tourism minister for human capital development. Al-Waleed Al-Zaidi, who works as a sales manager in Riyadh for a foreign hotel chain, visited Switzerland for a week-long course and got a taste of what it's like to serve leisure travelers—an altogether different challenge from the business clientele he's accustomed to.

Instead of questions about dry-cleaning services and international call rates, he was being pressed for recommendations on attractions and how best to use public transportation. The experience "opened my understanding of the different needs of tourists in terms of activities, food and places they would like to visit", he said. —AFP



A trainer leads a class at the Tourism Ministry Training center in the city of Riyadh.

Chinese man rescued 2 days after floating away on gas balloon

A Chinese man has been rescued after floating in the air for over a day after he lost control of a hydrogen balloon that he was riding to harvest pine nuts, state media reported. The man, identified as Hu Yongxu, had been picking pine cones in northeast China's Heilongjiang province last Sunday with a fellow worker when the balloon "suddenly rose uncontrollably", official broadcaster CCTV reported Tuesday.

Hu's colleague jumped out of the basket in time but Hu got stuck, beginning a nerve-racking, 300-kilometre (186-mile) journey in the air. Hu immediately called his brother-in-law, saying he was scared of the height and that "everything he saw looked like ants," according to an interview with the brother-in-law by state-run Zhejiang Daily on Wednesday.

Video footage from multiple Chinese media outlets showed a pale balloon bobbing in the sky over pine forests. CCTV said police made contact with Hu the following day, and instructed him over the phone on how to safely deflate and lower the balloon. Hu landed successfully in a forested area, but rescuers continued to search for him as his "phone location service was inaccurate," CCTV said. Hu was finally rescued on Tuesday morning, and is "in good condition, aside from light injuries on his back," CCTV reported. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Jakarta's 'zombie' train confronts traffic apocalypse



This picture shows a man acting as a zombie at an LRT station as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta. —AFP photos



A performer acting as a zombie on board an LRT coach as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



Passengers riding in an LRT coach as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event featuring performers as zombies, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



This picture shows performers (right) acting out a zombie attacking a soldier as a passenger (left) boards an LRT coach during the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



Picture shows performers (left) acting out a zombie attacking a soldier on board an LRT coach as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



Picture shows performers acting out as zombies attacking a soldier as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



A performer as a zombie as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.



Passengers exiting an LRT coach as performers (right) act out a zombie and soldier as part of the "Train to Apocalypse" event, part of an initiative to attract commuters to ride the city's rapid transit system, in Jakarta.

In a city known for monstrous traffic, "zombies" are rising up in a scary bid to get more people to use public transport. That's the hope of Jakarta's light rapid transit operator, which has turned a train and station into the set of a bloody zombie apocalypse—with real passengers invited to the show. The paid attraction, which the supercity's light rail operator PT LRT Jakarta and event organizer Pandora Box launched last month, aims to promote the relatively new system and, more generally, encourage young people to take public transport.

The twitching, growling actors are dressed in tattered clothes.

One especially scary character shows only the whites of his eyes. The zombies drag their feet toward passengers, sending them running through the dark station tunnels to a train. Inside the blood-spattered carriage, a TV anchor—another actor—reports news about a made-up "Pandora" virus outbreak spreading around the city, turning humans into the walking dead. Soldiers armed with fake rifles fight the "zombies" and try to escort passengers to safety. But the reanimated corpses lurk, hidden, ready to emerge and terrorize.

"Danger, beware of zombie" warns a sign in the station, where red emergency lights pulse. "The zombies didn't actually chase us but we were still panicking," said Genesis Christi, a 17-year-old zombie enthusiast. Called the "Train to Apocalypse", the event is inspired by the 2016 South Korean horror film, "Train To Busan". "We want to tell young people that taking public transportation can be something cool too," Billy Junior, CEO of Pandora Box, told AFP. Home to more than 30 million people, heavily polluted Jakarta has some of the world's worst traffic congestion, and its

uneven pavements mean it is not conducive to walking.

Its light rapid transit system only began commercial operation in December 2019. Transport analysts cautioned at the time that the new line and cheap prices alone would not cure the city's infatuation with private vehicles. Riding the "Train to Apocalypse" costs 60,000-70,000 rupiah (\$4-4.70), until the event ends on Sunday. The organizers promised the 20-minute ride does not disrupt the trips of regular LRT passengers. Even without participating, they can catch a glimpse of the horror show for free. —AFP

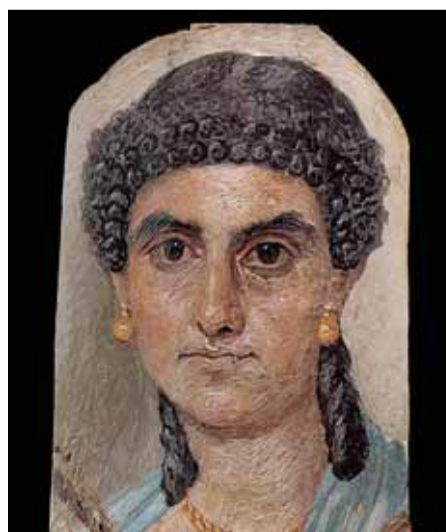
US returns antiquities to Egypt



In this file photo an Egyptian limestone model of a tomb, dated 1750-1720 BC, and valued at approximately \$251,725



In this file photo a face from a painted wooden Egyptian coffin dated ca. 945-712 BC, and valued at approximately \$6,500.



In this file photo a painted portrait of a woman of the Fayum type, dated AD 54-68, and valued at approximately 1,245,350.

Authorities in New York announced Wednesday the return of 16 antiquities to Egypt, including five works that were seized from the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of a probe into international art trafficking. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said the 16 works were worth more than \$16 million. He spoke a day after announcing a similar return of 58 artworks to Italy. "Today's repatriation shows the breadth and prevalence of antiquities trafficking networks," Bragg said in a statement.

Nine of the pieces had been in the possession of Michael Steinhardt, whom Bragg described as one of the world's largest collectors of ancient art. In 2021, Steinhardt was forced by US authorities to return 180 stolen ancient artworks worth a total of \$70 million. Under that deal he avoided going to jail but was banned for life from acquiring antiquities in the legal market. Five other pieces were seized in May and June from the Met, worth \$3.1 million, as part of a probe carried out by US and French authorities and under which former Louvre

director Jean-Luc Martinez was charged in France. Those five pieces had been looted from archaeological sites in Egypt, smuggled through Germany or the Netherlands to France, and sold by the Paris-based Pierre Berge & Associates to the Met, Bragg said. "The information developed and shared by the Manhattan DA's office with law-enforcement agencies around the world related to this investigation has led to the indictment or arrest of nine individuals in France, including the former Louvre Director Jean-Luc Martinez," Bragg said. —AFP

New York returns \$19m of stolen art to Italy

Prosecutors in New York on Tuesday returned dozens of antiquities stolen from Italy and valued at around \$19 million, some of which were found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "These 58 pieces represent thousands of years of rich history, yet traffickers throughout Italy utilized looters to steal these items and to line their own pockets," said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, noting that it was the third such repatriation in nine months.

"For far too long, they have sat in museums, homes, and galleries that had no rightful claim to their ownership," he said at a ceremony attended by Italian diplomats and law enforcement officials. The stolen items had been sold to Michael Steinhardt, one of the world's leading collectors of ancient art, the DA's office said, adding that he had been slapped with a "first-of-its-kind lifetime ban on acquiring antiquities."

Among the recovered treasures, which in some cases were sold to "unwitting collectors and museums," were a marble head of the Greek goddess Athena from 200 B.C.E. and a drinking cup dating back to 470 B.C.E., officials said. The pieces were stolen at the behest of four men who "all led highly lucrative criminal enterprises - often in competition with one another - where they would use local looters to raid archaeological sites throughout Italy, many of which were insufficiently guarded," the DA's office said.

One of them, Pasquale Camera, was "a regional crime boss who organized thefts from museums and churches as early as the 1960s. He then began purchasing stolen artifacts from local looters and sold them to antiquities dealers," it added. It said that this year alone, the DA's office has "returned nearly 300 antiquities valued at over \$66 million to 12 countries." —AFP

Sports

India face the heat for 'chopping, changing' after Asia Cup failure

'Too much theory is not a very good thing'

DUBAI: Rohit Sharma's India have been slammed for "chopping and changing" as they failed to make the final of the Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament with a game to go. Pakistan's win over Afghanistan on Wednesday knocked out India from the tournament, which was a warm-up for next month's T20 World Cup. India, who won the previous Asia Cup in 2018 played in a 50-over format, came in as pre-tournament favorites but lost their first two Super Four matches to Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"I think there was too much chopping and changing done after just one defeat," former India wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel told website cricbuzz. "We lost against Pakistan and made three-four changes." India's tinkering was not confined to the latter stages: Dinesh Karthik had been wicketkeeper for India's opening win against Pakistan, but Rishabh Pant was brought back behind the stumps for the next match.

Karthik, a hard-hitting batsman who specializes as a finisher in the short format, missed both Super Four matches as the left-handed Pant was retained in the middle-order. "The consistency and the clarity of thought is so impor-

tant, especially when you play this T20 format," said Patel. "Dinesh Karthik came in and he was left (out). Rishabh Pant came in and would be thinking whether I am a permanent member of the team or not."

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar blamed an inability to be flexible with onfield plans for India's disappointing results. "Too much theory ... is not a very good thing. What happens on the field is completely different," Gavaskar told India Today. "You have to have a Plan A, B and C, which is where the Indian team in this particular tournament has not had alternate plans. "They seem to have been stymied when things started to unravel for them. "Cricket is a game that changes in seconds, particularly the T20 format, and you've got to be ready for it."

Shami sidelined

India can start to put things right when they play Afghanistan in a dead rubber Super Four Asia Cup match in Dubai on Thursday. They will have home series against Australia and South Africa to cement their team plans before the T20 World Cup begins on October 16 in Australia.

India's lone T20 World Cup success came at the inaugural tournament in 2007, and Gavaskar implored the team to "please see the areas where you can improve and plug those gaps". India remain top of the T20 team rankings but have constantly faltered at global international tournaments with their last International Cricket Council title coming at the 2013 Champions Trophy.

India failed to make the semi-finals of last year's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates and in 2019 lost in the semi-finals of the 50-over World Cup in England. But captain Rohit played down his team's Asia Cup failure after they lost a close match to Sri Lanka on Tuesday. "In tournaments like the World Cup, Asia Cup, here the challenge is you face different teams with different plans," said Rohit. "But we should not think about it too much. Yes, pressure is there, and our work is to make the boys realize how to deliver in pressure situations."

Former coach Ravi Shastri criticized the team choices and remained puzzled by the exclusion of veteran pace bowler Mohammed Shami. "I am completely amazed to see how Mohammed Shami has been sidelined by the cur-



DUBAI: India's captain Rohit Sharma takes a catch to dismiss Pakistan's captain Babar Azam (not pictured) during the Asia Cup Twenty20 international cricket Super Four match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. —AFP

rent Indian team management and the selectors," Shastri said on Star Sports. Injuries to pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Harshal Patel made India turn to Avesh Khan, who fell sick in Dubai and was unavailable for selec-

tion in the last two matches. "The Indian bowling hasn't looked that effective in this year's Asia Cup," said Shastri. "And a veteran like Shami should have certainly made it to the squad." —AFP

Arrest warrant issued for Nepal cricket captain

KATHMANDU: A Nepali court issued an arrest warrant Thursday for the captain of the national cricket team, police said, after a 17-year-old girl accused him of rape. Sandeep Lamichhane, 22, has been a poster boy for the rise of cricket in mountainous Nepal, which gained one-day international status in 2018 but remains a long way from contesting a World Cup.

The leg spinner's big break came when he was snapped up by the Delhi Capitals for the money-spinning Indian Premier League in 2018, and he has since been the most sought-after Nepali cricket player in international T20 leagues. A 17-year-old girl, along with a guardian, filed a complaint against the player earlier this week, alleging that he raped her in a hotel room in Kathmandu last month after they met and went out.

Lamichhane is currently playing for Jamaica Tallawahs in the Caribbean Premier League being held across the West Indies. His latest Instagram post, posted three days ago, was tagged at a hotel in St Lucia. "The district court has issued an arrest warrant against Sandeep Lamichhane for further investigation," Dinesh Mainali, a spokesman for Kathmandu district police, told AFP.

Police said Wednesday that they might seek the assistance of law enforcement overseas, or Interpol, if he was not in Nepal. Lamichhane was named captain of Nepal's national team last year. Prashant Bikram Malla, acting secretary at the Cricket Association of Nepal, told reporters that he had spoken to Lamichhane and also briefed ICC officials on the case. "He is our player. If he has committed a crime, we are not going to cover it up or protect him. This is the stance of the Cricket Association of Nepal," Malla said.

Lamichhane could not immediately be reached for comment by AFP. It was not clear whether he has legal representation. About 2,300 rape cases were reported in Nepal in the last fiscal year, according to police, but rights workers say many more assaults go unreported in the deeply patriarchal country. Only a handful of women in Nepal spoke out during the #MeToo movement and people accused have faced little or no repercussions over the allegations.

But the accusations against Lamichhane come after the conviction of popular Nepali actor Paul Shah for sexual misconduct with a minor. He was sentenced this week to two and a half years in prison and ordered to pay his victim compensation. In May, hundreds protested in Kathmandu for better laws and enforcement in cases of sexual violence after an aspiring model posted a series of TikTok videos detailing abuse when she was a teenager. —AFP

Verstappen ready to dash Ferrari title hopes at Monza

MONZA: Max Verstappen has an opportunity this weekend to move within comfortable reach of his second drivers' world title when he leads Red Bull's bid to defeat Ferrari on home soil at the Italian Grand Prix. Buoyed by a luxurious cushion of 109 points ahead of team-mate Sergio Perez and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, the runaway leader and defending champion knows another victory could set him up to take the title in Singapore or, more likely, Japan early next month.

England debutant Harry Brook 'living the dream'

LONDON: England batsman Harry Brook said he was "living the dream" on the eve of his Test debut against South Africa. Brook has replaced injured Yorkshire colleague Jonny Bairstow in the England team for the third and deciding Test, which starts at The Oval on Thursday. The 23-year-old is the lone change to the side that leveled the series with a commanding victory in the second Test at Old Trafford after Bairstow was ruled out with a freak leg injury suffered playing golf. "I'm taking every minute as it comes, not thinking about the outcome, how many runs I'm going to score or whatever," Brook told reporters on Wednesday.

"I'm just enjoying the moment. It's just another game, isn't it? I'm just hitting a ball. I'm already living the dream—I'm looking forward to it," Bairstow, in stellar form this year with 1,061 runs in 10 Tests, is a player Brook has long admired. "I saw him yesterday (Tuesday)," said Brook. "I think he's down here (in London) seeing the special-

ist. He just said good luck and enjoy it. "I've played quite a bit of cricket with him. I like the way he plays, smacking it around."

'Positive'

Brook added his own attacking ethos England have developed while winning five out of six Tests under their new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum. "I am going to try to be positive and put the bowler under pressure," he said. "I'm not just out there to survive, I'm there to score."

Brook has played four Twenty20 internationals for England and last month made 140 for the second-string England Lions in a tour match against South Africa at Canterbury but has not seen much red-ball action since. "I played the Lions game, so it's not too bad," he said. "I'm still hitting a ball. "I don't think the way I play changes too much. A little bit more extravagant in white ball, but like I say I am still trying to put pressure on the bowlers."

The Lions won by an innings and 56 runs, but South Africa did not field frontline quicks Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi. "He (Brook) got a few runs against us but, again, this is Test cricket and we've got our fast bowlers now who didn't



England batsman Harry Brook

bowl against him in Kent, so I'm not reading too much into that," said South Africa captain Dean Elgar. "I just know the environment and this is the big league now."

Stokes, speaking earlier Wednesday, said of Brook: "The way in which our middle order has been playing this summer, I feel as if Harry coming in, the way he goes about his game with the bat is pretty much

a like-for-like replacement. "He's always going to look to take the bowling on, take the positive option. It's obviously devastating to not have Jonny but I'm very excited we get a replacement with the skill Jonny possesses." South Africa won the first Test at Lord's by an innings and 12 runs, only for England to bounce back to win by an innings and 85 runs in Manchester. —AFP

Miandad to Naseem: Pakistan 6-shooting heroes

SHARJAH: Pakistan fast bowler Naseem Shah smashed Afghanistan left-arm seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi for successive sixes in the last over Wednesday to take his team to the final of the Asia Cup in a thrilling encounter. AFP Sport looks at five memorable six-hitting moments in Pakistan's cricketing history:

Mighty Miandad

Javed Miandad's final ball six off India's Chetan Sharma in the 1986 Austral-Asia Cup final at Sharjah still hurts India fans. Needing 246 for victory, Pakistan were in trouble at 61-3 before Miandad struck an unbeaten 116 off 114 balls. With four needed off the final delivery, India fast bowler Sharma bowled a full toss and Miandad slogged it high over the leg side and into the crowd to trigger wild celebrations.

Mujtaba leveler

A left-handed gutsy middle-order batsman, Asif Mujtaba took on Australia's bowlers in a 50-over World Series match in 1992 and hit a six off the last ball from Steve Waugh to tie a dramatic game. Chasing 228 for victory in Hobart, Pakistan slipped to 197-7 but Mujtaba stood firm and with 17 needed off the final over Australia skipper threw the ball

to part-time seamer Waugh. Mujtaba hit him to all parts and dispatched the last delivery, a full toss, over midwicket to level the scores.

'Boom Boom' Afridi

Shahid Afridi won many exciting games for Pakistan with his maverick batting but his two sixes off India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in a 2014 Asia Cup 50-over match remain special. Pakistan, chasing 246, needed 10 when Ashwin started the 50th over by taking a wicket. But Afridi smashed the off-spinner for two straight sixes to live up his 'Boom Boom' nickname as Pakistan won with one wicket and two balls to spare.

Asif arrives

Asif Ali was relatively unknown when he hit four straight sixes off Afghanistan's Karim Janat to announce his arrival at last year's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates. Pakistan needed 26 off 18 balls when Asif walked in to bat. Asif watched calmly from the non-striker's end in the 18th over before smashing Janat over the ropes four times to take Pakistan home with an over to spare.

Naseem heroics

Naseem Shah became Pakistan's newest six-hitting hero when he walked in to bat at number 10 with Pakistan needing 20 off 10 balls with just two wickets in hand in their chase of 130 against Afghanistan on Wednesday. Pakistan lost Asif in the 19th over but Naseem kept his cool, with 12 needed off the last over, to smash Farooqi's attempted yorkers for consecutive straight sixes over long-off. —AFP



DUBAI: Pakistan's Naseem Shah delivers a ball during the Asia Cup Twenty20 international cricket Super Four match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. —AFP



ZANDVOORT: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen steers his car during the third free practice session ahead of the Dutch Formula One Grand Prix at the Zandvoort circuit. —AFP

Sports

Alcaraz overpowers Sinner, books US Open semi-finals

Tiafoe relishing role model status at US Open

NEW YORK: Carlos Alcaraz battled past Jannik Sinner in five sets to reach the US Open semi-finals on Thursday in the latest ever finish in the tournament's 141-year history. A thrilling 5hr 15min duel that finished at 2:50am local time ended with the 19-year-old Alcaraz claiming a 6-3, 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (0/7), 7-5, 6-3 victory to advance to a last-four showdown with Frances Tiafoe of the United States on Friday.

The previous record for the latest finish to a US Open match was 2:26am, which had been set three times before. Incredibly, it was the second early-hours-of-the-morning finish for Alcaraz this week. The Spanish No 3 seed had edged past Croatia's Marin Cilic in another five-set epic in the fourth round in a match that finished at 2.23am local time on Tuesday.

A crowd of a few thousand die-hard spectators roared their appreciation for Alcaraz as the Spaniard collapsed to the Arthur Ashe Stadium court in delight after a famous victory over Sinner, the 21-year-old Italian 11th seed. "Honestly, I still don't know I did it," said Alcaraz after a win which came after he survived a match point in the fourth set. "I always

say that you have to believe in yourself all the time. Hope is the last thing that you lose. I just believed in myself and believed in my game."

Alcaraz later described the win as the best performance of his career. "At five hours 15 minutes, from the first ball to the last, there was immense quality from both Jannik and me," he said. "In all the sets there were goals and we were very close to winning or losing...it was a match that Jannik and I will remember for the rest of our lives." A shattered Sinner said the defeat was the hardest of his young career. "I had some tough losses for sure, and this is in the top list," he said. "I think this one will hurt for quite a while but tomorrow - or today - I wake up and try to somehow take the positives but it's tough for sure."

Roller coaster

Alcaraz got off to a smooth start after taking the first set 6-3, breaking Sinner twice towards the end of the set to seize an early advantage. But Sinner showed great character to level in the second set, recovering from 5-6, 0-40 down to force a tie break. Alcaraz had a fourth set point at 7-6 in the breaker but Sinner got it

back to 7-7 with an ace and then converted on set point at 8-7 to level the match at one set apiece after an Alcaraz unforced error. Another hard fought battle followed in the third set, Alcaraz finally gaining the crucial advantage with a break in the 11th game to take a 6-5 lead.

Once again though Sinner remained unflustered and restored parity to force another tie break. This time Alcaraz was slow to adjust and Sinner sprinted into a 6-0 lead before taking the set when an Alcaraz return drifted long. Sinner looked to be in control in the fourth set after breaking early to set up a 3-1 lead. But Alcaraz again staged another fight-back and after holding serve broke Sinner to level at 3-3 with a blistering forehand down the line.

Yet the Spaniard's grit in restoring parity went out the window when Sinner broke back immediately, Alcaraz double-faulting on break point to gift his opponent a 4-3 lead. That led to Sinner serving for the match at 5-4, and it appeared as if a thrilling duel was about to reach its conclusion when the Italian moved to match point. But Alcaraz clawed it back to deuce with a backhand return before Sinner then double-faulted to cough up



NEW YORK: Carlos Alcaraz of Spain celebrates match point against Jannik Sinner of Italy after going 5 sets and over 5 hours during their Men's Singles Quarterfinal match on Day Ten of the 2022 US Open on September 07, 2022. —AFP

a break point. On the next point Sinner lashed a forehand way wide to leave the score at 5-5. Alcaraz then held and broke to force the fifth set decider. Still there was more drama in store in the fifth, with Sinner going a break up. But Alcaraz would not be denied, hitting

back with two breaks to set up a remarkable win. Tiafoe reached his first Grand Slam semi-final by seeing off Andrey Rublev 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/0), 6-4 to move within two wins of becoming the first African-American man in 54 years to win the US Open. —AFP

Swiatek, Sabalenka cruise into US Open semi-finals

NEW YORK: Iga Swiatek reached her third Grand Slam semi-final of 2022 on Wednesday and first at the US Open with an error-strewn triumph over Jessica Pegula, the last remaining American woman in the tournament. French Open champion Swiatek claimed a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) win, her third against Pegula this year. In Thursday's semi-final, the 21-year-old Pole faced Aryna Sabalenka who she has also got the better of on three occasions this season.

World number six Sabalenka made the last-four for a second successive year with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) victory over former finalist Karolina Pliskova. "That will be a very tough match. There will be some fast serves and heavy hitting, just like tonight," said Swiatek who beat Sabalenka in Doha, Stuttgart and Rome. The Pole went onto win the titles at those events, three of her six trophies collected in 2022. On Wednesday, she came through a mistake-plagued quarter-final which featured 13 breaks of serve and a combined 61 unforced errors.

"It means a lot to be in the semi-finals for the first time," said Swiatek. Swiatek overcame giving up the first break of the match in the fifth game to reel off 16 of the next 18 points to claim the opening set in 38 minutes. The pair exchanged three service breaks apiece in the first eight games in an untidy second set. It was the French Open champion who carved out the seventh break on a net cord to give herself the opportunity to serve for the match.

'Low expectations'

Eighth-ranked Pegula roused herself to stay alive before a double fault on break point in the 11th game handed Swiatek a second opportunity to seal a spot in the semi-finals. The top seed failed again as Pegula grabbed the 10th break to send the set into a tiebreak which the Pole dominated. "I am very happy as I have worked very hard but have kept my expectations low," said the top seed. Sabalenka



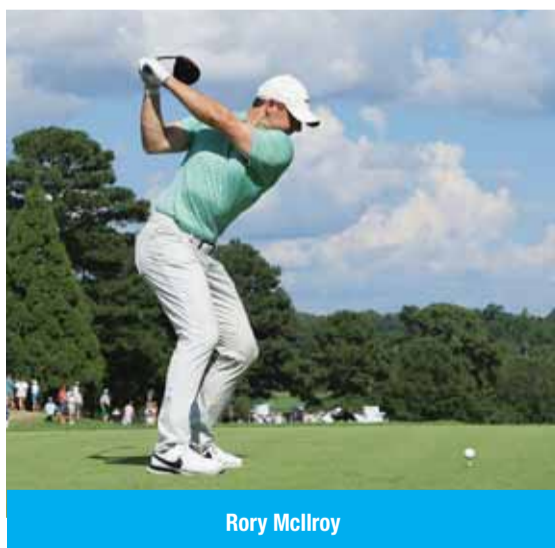
NEW YORK: Iga Swiatek of Poland celebrates after defeating Jessica Pegula of the United States during their Women's Singles Quarterfinal match on September 07, 2022. —AFP

reached the semi-finals for a second successive year, fired up by the lingering and bitter aftertaste of her Wimbledon ban.

Russian and Belarusian players, such as world number six Sabalenka, were prevented from competing at the All England Club due to the invasion of Ukraine. The ban deprived Belarus's Sabalenka of the opportunity to improve on her semi-final run in 2021. "They took away one opportunity from me, so I worked really hard for this one," said Sabalenka. She admitted that she made a determined effort not to watch any of this year's grass-court Grand Slam as she trained in Miami during her enforced break from the sport.

'Just an athlete'

"I'm just an athlete and I have nothing to do with politics," she said. "It was a tough time, especially when I was working out in the gym and there was Wimbledon playing on the TV. "I always turned it off because I couldn't watch it." Belarusian players



Rory McIlroy

er in the final round on Sunday, he said: "I'll be trying to win a golf tournament regardless. They are going to be pretty tired on Sunday-it will be the fourth day." The world number three has emerged as one of the most vocal supporters of the PGA Tour and DP World Tour (European Tour) as they try to combat the threat of LIV Golf, which he likens to a "soap opera".

"It's incredibly divisive and does it bring more eyeballs on to golf? Probably, because people are interested in the soap opera of it all, but that's not golf," he said. "The most interesting thing about LIV is the rumors and who is going and who is not going. It's not the golf right now. It might be at some stage, but right now it's the rumor mill that's fuelling it. "So when you come back here and you play DP World Tour or PGA Tour, you're watching the golf and you're watching who is going to win tournaments and have context and mean something. That's why I'm speaking up." — AFP

McIlroy reveals LIV Golf defections have strained friendships

LONDON: Rory McIlroy admits his relationships with a number of Ryder Cup team-mates have been significantly damaged by their defection to LIV Golf. Five members of the European team beaten at Whistling Straits last year have joined the Saudi-funded breakaway, along with Henrik Stenson, whose decision resulted in him losing the captaincy for next year's contest in Rome.

Four of those five-Ian Poulter, Lee Westwood, Sergio Garcia and Bernd Wiesberger-are among the LIV contingent in the field for this week's PGA Championship at Wentworth, near London, a factor McIlroy said he would find "hard to stomach". Asked on Wednesday if his relationship with Poulter, Westwood and Garcia specifically could survive, McIlroy said: "I have no idea. I wouldn't say I've got much of a relationship with them at the minute. "They are here. They are playing the golf tournament. My opinion is they shouldn't be here, but again that's just my opinion.

"But if you're just talking about Ryder Cup, that's not the future of the Ryder Cup team. They've played in probably a combined 25, 30 Ryder Cups, whatever it is. "The Hojgaards (Rasmus and Nicolai), Bobby Mac (Robert MacIntyre), whoever else is coming up, they are the future of the Ryder Cup team. That's what we should be thinking about and talking about." McIlroy also could not resist a dig at the LIV rebels, who have been banned by the US PGA Tour for joining the breakaway series, which stages events over 54 holes.

Asked about the prospect of battling a LIV play-

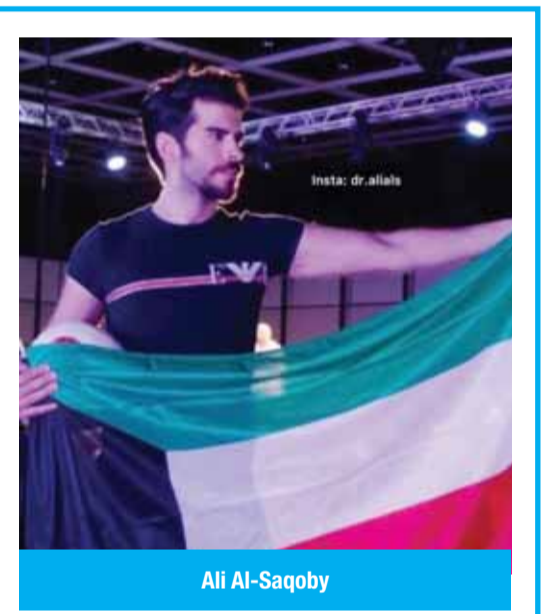
'Confidence' about Rugby WCup despite CL fiasco

PARIS: World Rugby chief executive Alan Gilpin says he is "confident" about fan safety with one year to go to the Rugby World Cup in France despite the security issues surrounding May's Champions League final held in Paris. The kick-off for the match between Liverpool and Real Madrid in the French capital was delayed as supporters struggled to get through bottlenecks accessing the ground and were repelled by teargas fired by local police.

After the game, supporters were preyed on by gangs as they made their way to public transport con-

Orlando City blanks Sacramento, capture US Open Cup

MIAMI: Facundo Torres scored two second-half goals to power Orlando City over Sacramento 3-0 on Wednesday in the US Open Cup final, delivering the Major League Soccer club its first trophy. The host Lions hoisted their first hardware since joining MLS eight seasons ago and also earned a berth in next year's CONCACAF Champions League before a sell-out crowd of more than 25,000 spectators. Orlando City took a 1-0 lead in the 75th minute on a left-footed shot from outside the box into the top left corner by 22-year-old Uruguayan midfielder Torres.



Ali Al-Saqoby

Al-Saqoby 'one of the best football skills athletes'

KUWAIT: Professional player Ali Al-Saqoby who represented Kuwait and the Arabs in the World Championship for football skills in the Czech Republic was able to achieve a high position in the qualifying routine category. In addition to raising the Kuwaiti flag on stage in front of viewers around the world, his achievement reflects the pride in his national and Arab identity. Ali Al-Saqoby aspires to become the best in the world despite his preoccupation with performing his other duties like as a dentist. He seeks to inspire young people to take advantage of sports to fill their spare time in the hope of raising the status of the country in international arena.

nections, with many reporting pickpocketing, muggings and threats as the police looked on. "There's always more to learn from experiences of other events," Gilpin told AFP. "There's been a significant amount of dialogue between the organizing committee, the authorities in Paris and the government more broadly. "We're confident that lessons can be learnt from that and we're also confident that we have a great security plan, spectator experience plan for the Stade de France."

Last week, Gilpin's counterpart at the organizing committee, Claude Atcher, was suspended by French sports minister Amelie Oudea-Castera as a preliminary investigation into his management style found evidence of a deep social malaise within the organization. "First of all the allegations around the treatment of staff in Paris, we've taken them seriously," Gilpin said. "We've discussed those with the relevant ministries and with the board of the organizing committee. "It's business as usual for us," he added. —AFP

The goal came off an assist from US reserve forward Benji Michel, who entered in the 61st minute. Michel was fouled in the penalty area by Sacramento's Dan Casey and Torres converted the penalty in the 80th minute, blasting a left-footed shot into the bottom right corner to double the Lions' lead. Michel netted the final goal six minutes into stoppage time on a right-footed shot from the heart of the box. The US Open Cup final returned this year after going unplayed the past two years due to Covid-19. It was a heartbreak finish for the second-tier United Soccer League champion Sacramento Republic, the first non-MLS squad in the Open Cup final since 2008. Not since the Rochester Rhinos beat Colorado in the 1999 final has a lower-division side captured the US Open Cup. Sacramento's fairy-tale run has included victories over three MLS sides-the San Jose Earthquakes, Los Angeles Galaxy and Sporting Kansas City. — AFP

Liverpool trounced by Napoli as Lewandowski hits hat-trick

Napoli thump troubled Liverpool in stunning Champions League return



NAPLES: Napoli's players celebrate after winning the UEFA Champions League Group A first leg football match between SSC Napoli and Liverpool FC at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples on September 7, 2022. — AFP

PARIS: Last season's beaten finalists Liverpool got their Champions League campaign off to a disastrous start in a 4-1 defeat away to Napoli on Wednesday, while Robert Lewandowski hit a hat-trick in a big win for Barcelona. Tottenham Hotspur and Bayern Munich also got their campaigns underway with victories, but Rangers were crushed 4-0 by Ajax in the Netherlands on their return to the group phase of Europe's elite club competition.

Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool have won just two of their first six Premier League games this season and there was to be no improvement on their trip to Italy as Napoli raced into an early lead and never looked back. Piotr Zielinski converted a fifth-minute penalty, and Victor Osimhen then had a second Napoli spot-kick saved by Alisson Becker. Yet Napoli—who had defeated Liverpool in their own stadium in the group stage in 2018 and in 2019 – were 3-0 up at the break as Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa's fine finish was followed by a tap-in from substitute Giovanni Simeone.

Liverpool fell further behind two minutes into the second half as Zielinski followed up to score after his initial effort was saved, but Luis Diaz did pull a goal back. "We were miles too open. You can't come to a place like this and not be compact. They were by miles the better team," Liverpool left-back Andy Robertson told BT Sport. "We have to wake up and quickly because we can't perform like that."

Rangers crushed by Ajax

The six-time European Cup winners' next group A outing is at home to Ajax, who could have won by more than four at home to Rangers, last season's Europa League finalists playing in the Champions League group stage for the first time since 2010.

Edson Alvarez headed Ajax in front before a Steven Berghuis shot deflected in and a superb individual strike from Mohammed Kudus made it 3-0 to Ajax by half-time. Steven Bergwijn pounced on a poor backpass to seal the victory late on in Amsterdam, leaving Rangers manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst to give a bleak assessment of his side's prospects. "To compete in the Champions League you spend hundreds of millions, for us to compete it is too much to ask," insisted the Dutchman.

Lewandowski became the first player to score a Champions League hat-trick for three different clubs as the ex-Borussia Dortmund and Bayern star marked his first appearance in the competition with Barcelona in style. The Catalans crushed Czech champions Viktoria Plzen 5-1 in Group C, with Franck Kessie heading in the opener before Lewandowski made it 2-0. Jan Sykora pulled one back only for Lewandowski to score again before half-time and then fire in his third goal midway through the second half.

The Pole now has 89 Champions League goals, three more than Karim Benzema, with only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi ahead of him. Ferran Torres scored the fifth for Barca, whose next game will be away to Lewandowski's old side Bayern. The Germans claimed an impressive 2-0 win away to Inter Milan on Wednesday, with Leroy Sané rounding Andre Onana for the first-half opener and then forcing Danilo D'Ambrosio into a 66th-minute own goal.

Richarlison brace for Spurs

Antonio Conte's Tottenham struggled to break down Marseille in north London until the French side



NAPLES: Napoli's Polish midfielder Piotr Zielinski (right) scores the opening goal with a penalty kick past Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (left) during the UEFA Champions League Group A first leg football match between SSC Napoli and Liverpool FC on September 7, 2022. — AFP

had Chancel Mbemba sent off just after half-time. Richarlison scored the opener in the 76th minute, heading in Ivan Perisic's cross, and the Brazilian headed in again soon after to make it 2-0. "I think we felt a bit of pressure in this competition, but at the end we have to be pleased," Conte said of the victory.

Also in Group D, Sporting Lisbon scored three second-half goals to win 3-0 at Eintracht Frankfurt, with former Spurs youngster Marcus Edwards, Francisco Trincao and Nuno Santos all on target. In Group B, Antoine Griezmann headed the winner in the 11th minute of injury time as Atletico Madrid

beat Porto 2-1. In an incredible finish, Porto had Mehdi Taremi sent off late on before Mario Hermoso put Atletico ahead with a deflected 92nd-minute strike.

Hermoso then conceded a penalty for handball, allowing Matheus Uribe to equalise in the 96th minute, only for Griezmann to have the last laugh. The only other game in Champions League history to feature three goals scored in stoppage time was Porto's meeting with Atletico in December last year. In the same group Abakar Sylla's header was spilled over the line by the goalkeeper to give Club Brugge a 1-0 win over Bayer Leverkusen. — AFP

WCup drinking will be 'business as usual' in Qatar

LUSAIL: Drinking will be "business as usual" at the Qatar World Cup, the tournament's chief insisted Thursday, despite severely restricted alcohol sales in the Muslim Gulf state. Speaking 73 days from the first World Cup kicks off in an Arab nation, chief executive Nasser Al-Khater said there was a "misconception" about sales, calling it one of the "unfair" criticisms faced by Qatar.

The price of accommodation and availability of drinks have been among the main concerns raised by fans. "Very simply put, we always stated that the sale of drink is available here in Qatar. We also said that during the World Cup, we will make it available in specific zones for the fans," Khater said. "I think that there is a misconception regarding the sale in the stadiums," he said. "We are working as any other World Cup where this is something typical and usual, and it is no different than any other World Cup."

While Qatar is not dry, like fellow Gulf states Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, alcohol can only be bought by residents in one special government



DOHA: This picture shows the Khalifa International Stadium building complex in Qatar's capital Doha ahead of the FIFA football World Cup 2022. — AFP

store and about 35 hotel bars and restaurants. Drinking in public is normally illegal. But for the World Cup, drinks will also be sold at special zones around the eight tournament stadiums before and after games, in a FIFA fan zone and some specially-designated areas. Many countries have restrictions on beer sales at sporting events. At English Premier League games, fans are not allowed to drink within sight of the pitch.

Security silence

Khater said that Qatar, which has spent tens of billions of dollars on new stadiums and related

infrastructure over the past decade, wanted a "family-oriented World Cup" which is why beer would not be widely available. But away from the stadiums in the hotels and bars of Doha, it would be "business as usual" for drinkers, he declared.

Qatar is expecting more than one million fans for the World Cup, which runs from November 20 to December 18. After having stipulated that only fans with tickets would be allowed into the country during the tournament, they now say that each registered ticket holder can bring in three people. In response to fears raised about LGBTQ rights, the Gulf state's leaders have said

all fans will be "welcome".

The organizers refused to say, however, what sanctions would be imposed for violence or drunkenness in the street. They also refused to outline which countries are sending police or security forces for the World Cup. So far, some 3,250 police from Turkey are the only contingent whose deployment has been confirmed. Security accords have been signed though with France, Britain, Italy and NATO. Khater said all stadiums and infrastructure were now ready and that "aesthetic" work to roads was being completed as "the icing on the cake". — AFP



DOHA: (Left to right) Qatar 2022 CEO Nasser Al-Khater, Chairman of the Operations Office of Qatar's Supreme Committee, Yasir Al Jamal and Col Jassim Abdulrahim Al-Sayed of the Safety and Security Operations Committee for FIFA 2022, give a press conference in the Qatari capital Doha, on September 8, 2022, ahead of the FIFA football World Cup 2022. — AFP