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Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



3 Woman remembers sacrifices of brothers martyred during invasion



5 20 killed in crane collapse in India



8 UAE vows to allow 'peaceful' assembly of activists at COP28



16 Holders US stumble into last 16, England, Dutch rampant



Election body gets final nod

MPs study Kuwait's financial status, refer report to Audit Bureau



KUWAIT: Lawmakers attend a session at the National Assembly on August 1, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved in the second and final reading a law to establish a high election commission and allow people convicted of offending HH the Amir from running in polls after rehabilitation. The Assembly also discussed in a secret session the financial status of the country during which they heard a presentation by the acting finance minister on the public finances.

Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said after the closed-door discussion that it was decided that the financial status report will be sent to the Audit Bureau for study and it will submit its report back to the Assembly within three months. He provided no details on the discussion. The presentation normally includes figures on Kuwaiti investments abroad and assets in the country's sovereign wealth fund, or the fund for future generations and the state general reserve fund.

Fifty-nine members, including all attending Cabinet ministers, voted for the election commission law, while just three lawmakers, protesting against some specific clauses, rejected the legislation. "Today, we can officially say political execution has ended in the country," MP Khaled Al-Otaibi, head of the interior and defense committee which reviewed the law, said after the vote. He described the law as one of

the most important political reform legislation. The law requires those convicted of committing offenses against the Almighty and prophets to repent to be able to run for public office. Those convicted of offending HH the Amir will be allowed to contest polls after they have been rehabilitated under the law. A large number of former opposition MPs and political activists, who had been barred for life from contesting polls under a controversial law passed in 2016, stand to benefit from the new legislation, which becomes effective after publication in the official gazette.

The Assembly however included a condition stating that women and men wishing to contest the polls must abide by sharia rules despite protests by a few lawmakers, who said the clause is discriminatory. MPs Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Jenan Bushehri submitted separate proposals to get the clause deleted, but the Assembly refused. Writer Ahmad Al-Sarraf claimed on Twitter, now known as X, that the clause bans women without hijab and non-Muslims from contesting the polls.

MPs also rejected a proposal stating that lawmakers can serve for up to eight years only. They also rejected proposals to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 years. Under the law, the election commission will consist of five senior judges instead of seven approved in the first reading, who will be appointed by an Amiri decree.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Handout image provided on July 31, 2023 shows a test photo taken during commissioning of ESA's Euclid spacecraft. — AFP

First Euclid images unveiled

WASHINGTON: The Euclid space telescope, launched July 1 on a mission to shed more light on elusive dark matter and dark energy, has reached its destination orbit and on Monday its European operators revealed its first test images. The star-filled snapshots were taken during the space telescope's commissioning — a phase during which its powerful instruments are finely calibrated — and therefore not representative of its full potential. —AFP

Zoo denies bear is human

BEIJING: A Chinese zoo has been forced to deny that its sun bear is actually a human in a costume, after footage of one standing on its hind legs raised online accusations of a furry imposter. A video clip of a bear rearing up and interacting with a group of people at a zoo in eastern Hangzhou city went viral on Chinese social media. The zoo said in a statement written from the bear's perspective on Sunday that the animal was real and its detractors "really don't understand me". —AFP

Kuwait recalls Iraqi invasion after 33 years

KUWAIT: In a historically unforgotten epic, most countries stood united as a single group to stand by Kuwait's leadership, government and people against the heinous Iraqi invasion on Aug 2, 1990. This black day remains engraved in the minds and memories of the Kuwaiti people for good, including new generations that learn about all relevant painful details from their parents and grandparents.

On that day, Iraqi forces advanced into Kuwaiti territories in a dreadful aggression that ruthlessly targeted the

occupation of the country, undermined its freedom and attempted to wipe out its legitimacy, using the most abhorrent methods of murdering, detaining and torturing civilians, striking at civilian and military locations and dispossessing and intimidating people.

Despite the painfulness of the Iraqi invasion, let alone its catastrophic ramifications and impacts on all aspects of life in the country, Kuwaitis have been trying hard to bury the hatchet and turn over a new chapter of good relationships, neighborliness and joint interests. Remembering 33 years since the Iraqi invasion, the Kuwaiti people will always remain grateful to countries worldwide, mainly the United States, Gulf, Arab and friendly countries, for their highly commended efforts against oppression and their support for Kuwait's liberation. —KUNA (See Pages 2-4)

2-day holiday in Iran over extreme heat

TEHRAN: Iran on Tuesday declared a two-day holiday for government workers and banks nationwide as searing temperatures sweep across the country, state media reported. The decision came after the meteorological office forecast temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius in many cities, and hovering around 50 degrees Celsius in the southwest.

State broadcaster IRIB has said many cities including in the provinces of Ilam, Bushehr, and Khuzestan have seen temperatures rise above 45 degrees Celsius

in recent days. "The cabinet agreed to the health ministry proposal to declare Wednesday and Thursday public holidays all over the country to protect public health," the official IRNA news agency quoted government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi as saying.

IRNA said the decision was taken because of what it described as an "unprecedented" heatwave across the country. According to IRIB, Dehloran city in western Iran recorded the highest temperature of 50 degrees Celsius in Iran over the past 24 hours. It added that temperatures were expected to rise in the north as well, including in the city of Ardebil as well as at the southern shores of the Caspian sea.

The health ministry has warned of the risks of heatstroke from over-exposure to the sun, and urged peo-

Musk removes giant, flashing X sign after furor

SAN FRANCISCO: The company formerly known as Twitter removed a towering, blinking X from atop its San Francisco headquarters Monday after the rebranded tech firm tangled with city officials over the controversial sign. The X, installed on the roof of the company's downtown office last week, was part of owner Elon Musk's bid to rebrand the troubled social media giant to the 24th letter of the alphabet.

But local residents had complained about the brilliant flashing lights emitting from the sign at night. Some also complained about safety, suggesting the sign — which had loomed over the building's edge — did not appear securely anchored to the roof. San Francisco's Department of Building Inspection and City Planning received 24 complaints about the sign, including concerns about its "structural safety and illumination", agency communications director Patrick Hannan told AFP. "This morning, building inspectors observed the structure being dismantled," Hannan said.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: In this file photo taken on March 26, 1991, two Kuwaiti men walk in Ahmadi oil field next to a burning oilwell set ablaze by retreating Iraqi troops. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: An aerial view shows a newly constructed X sign on the roof of the headquarters of the social media platform previously known as Twitter on July 29, 2023. — AFP



Local

THE DARK DAY OF KUWAIT

Kuwaitis, Iraqis must not inherit the anguish of conflict, say youth



Kuwaiti oil wells were set ablaze by the retreating Iraqi forces in this file photo. — KUNA photos



A store at Souq Al-Mubarakiya lies in ruins following the Iraqi invasion.

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Every generation has its own opinion of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, especially those born after 1990. Some Iraqi and Kuwaiti youth believe those born after the crisis should not inherit the anguish of conflicts that preceded them, as in most countries that have engaged in conflict. They believe the neighboring countries should move on and strengthen their relationship towards prosperity, rather than continuing a deteriorating relationship.

"Iraq is a fascinating country for me. It's ancient and diverse ethnically, religiously and culturally. It's a country I'd love to visit. When talking about the invasion, I think as a Kuwaiti it is impossible to think of Iraq without thinking of the invasion. It hasn't necessarily shaped my opinion on the country," said Ahmad Ali, a 28-year-old Kuwaiti.

"It's nice to know that our relations have improved. Yes, there are occasional disputes here and there, as any country would have, but I am glad that our relationship with our neighbor, with whom we share cultural, historical and social ties, is improving," he said, stressing, "it is important to know when to move on from conflicts or differences we may once have had. This goes for any form of conflict."

Regarding the future, Ali said: "Of course, I hope for warm ties in the future. We're a small nation situated between

three regional powers. This can grant us a position of mediation and provide neutral soil for our neighbors to have grounds for dialogue. It would be beneficial for both of us on many levels."

On ways to improve relations, he said starting bilateral agreements with trade and cooperation deals would be the right step to take. "This is similar to what happened in Europe after the Second World War, where Germany and France created the European Coal and Steel Community in an effort to improve cooperation and create a means of dependency in order to avoid another conflict."

Regarding public opinion, Ali said: "I can assume that resentment exists, especially in the generation that experienced the invasion and the families affected. However, I am sure that there are people of all ages who don't carry any hate and recognize the importance of being on friendly terms with our neighbor. It's important to be aware of Iraqis who also have the same complex views of Kuwait."

Ali stressed the importance of educating future generations about history. "We can look back onto the prelude of war and try to understand what happened for diplomacy to no longer be an option, so that it may never happen again. It's our duty to remember what happened, and those who disappeared in this period — these are unifying factors for both nations. However, it is also important to not

preach hate. We must teach acceptance of what happened and move on in good faith, as many other countries across the world have," he said.

Hassan Al-Shaikh, 30-year-old Iraqi, concurred. "As an Iraqi, in general, I see Kuwait as an Arab country that is a neighbor to Iraq. As someone from Basra, Kuwait City is the closest city to Basra in terms of dialect, customs, traditions and general culture of the two peoples. Walking around Zubair or Safwan, you will feel that you are walking in Kuwait, because 90 percent of the customs and traditions are the same, with similar dialects," he pointed out.

Shaikh indicated that as a person born after the war, he perceives the relationship between Kuwait and Iraq at the present time as a good one. "Sometimes I notice coverage of the invasion on social media, and it becomes a trend in the Arabian Gulf, but this is only on social media. Anyone who publishes on social media any sensitive issue that promotes sectarianism, discrimination or hatred between the two countries must be fought," he said.

"In reality, the relationship is very good now, and this is what I noticed during the Khaleeji 25 (Arabian Gulf Cup), and I saw how many Iraqis received their Kuwaiti brothers," Shaikh said. "It is my hope that the relationship between the two countries will become strong in all social, political, economic

and cultural aspects. We are one people, and many Kuwaitis have married Iraqi women. I see cars with Kuwaiti license plates in Basra, and I hope to see the same in Kuwait," Shaikh said.

Regarding improving the relationship between the two countries, he said: "The simplest thing is to open the borders between the two countries, or to give visas to Iraqis with conditions. Many Iraqis like to visit Kuwait. We could also work to bring investors from Kuwait to Iraq. Many Kuwaiti companies have opened branches in Basra and other governorates of Iraq," he added.

Shaikh also stressed that we must take lessons from Russia and Germany after the Second World War. "When I was living in Russia, Russian citizens traveled to Germany by train without any complications of entry procedures." He said people need to be educated and generations should be taught about the cultural invasion that is currently taking the Arab and Islamic nation towards the abyss.

"We must teach future generations that the war is over and there is no winner in it — both sides lost. It is a civil war because we are one Arab people. We lost many of our relatives and people. We must build a generation capable of advancing the Arab nation and preserving the authentic Arab cultural and civilizational heritage away from grievances, hatred and wars. We must build an educat-

ed generation capable of weathering the coming tribulations," he said.

Abdulrazak Jassim, a 29-year-old Kuwaiti, said: "The relationship between Kuwait and Iraq is a fraternal one that transcends previous differences. This is evidenced by Kuwait's repeated assistance to the Iraqi government, especially the latest commercial agreement during the visit of the foreign minister in July 2023. We hope that the relationship will get stronger. We need to see more agreements due to the distinguished and important geographical location that the two countries have, overlooking the Arabian Gulf."

With regards to public opinion, Jassim said most people do not have the same stance. "They have an acceptable excuse as a result of the psychological impact that the brutal invasion left on the souls of martyrs and all Kuwaiti families, as well as the destruction it inflicted during the months of the invasion. However, after the fall of the tyrannical regime, we must consolidate relations without forgetting the wounds of the martyrs and the positions of the Kuwaiti resistance who bravely confronted the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein," he noted.

"The heroism of the Kuwaiti people during the brutal Iraqi invasion must be studied, and we should also not forget the role of the Kuwaiti government with the Kuwaiti people inside Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion," Jassim added.

UK continues to work with Kuwait on defense, security

By Belinda Lewis
British Ambassador to Kuwait

Although the UK and Kuwait signed the Treaty of Friendship almost 125 years ago in 1899, our bilateral relations date back to the 16th century. The treaty was signed to preserve Kuwaiti independence through British protection. The UK has been at Kuwait's side numerous times since then, from the days of the protectorate when it was facing the prospect of close rule by the Ottoman Empire, to the threat from Abdul Qasim's regime soon after Kuwait's independence on 19 June 1961. The threat was immediate and significant, and Britain sent a sizable task force known as operation Vantage to deter the threat successfully.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the UK responded quickly with our then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher leading the way. Mrs Thatcher stated "Iraq's Invasion defies every principle for which the United Nations stands. If we let it succeed, no small country can ever feel safe again. The law of the jungle would take over from the rule of law." She immediately took action and the UK played a crucial role both at the United Nations, where the UK and the US led the Security Council in passing Resolution 661, resulting in economic sanctions on Iraq and authorizing the use of force should Iraq not retreat from Kuwait. Margaret Thatcher used her excellent relationship with then President George H W Bush to secure his commitment to the defense of Kuwait and the region.

Our diplomatic service also played a key role in mobilizing international opinion immediately following the invasion. Most memorably, the British Ambassador to Kuwait, Sir Michael Weston, held out against the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's forces for four months, surviving on little more than canned food and water. In a symbolic rejection of Iraq's claim to Ku-



wait, our Ambassador refused to budge. Saddam Hussein had given diplomats three weeks to transfer their operations to Baghdad but the British, along with some other embassies, refused to leave. The British embassy held out until December 16 when no drinking water was left. This act of fortitude and courage was just one of the political actions undertaken by the United Kingdom to engage and convince the international community to take action in response to the invasion.

The UK was the driving force behind many of the political, economic and military actions to put pressure on Saddam Hussein's regime. Our military contribution to operations in the Gulf was significant, setting an example to others to use all means available to defend Kuwait's freedom and independence. The UK supported the Liberation of Kuwait by deploying 53,462 personnel on land, sea and air during Operation GRANBY (also known as Operation Desert Storm) — the largest single deployment of UK personnel since the 2nd World War.

Shortly after Kuwait's Liberation on February 26, 1991, the UK Prime Minister Mr John Major visited Kuwait on March 5. During his visit, he stated that, "I want to see Kuwait, I want to see the city, I want to talk to the ambassador, I want to see what damage has been done and what needs to be done to repair it."

British Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, noted that, "32 years after Kuwait's Liberation, the UK continues to work in close partnership with Kuwait on defense and security, including on joint military exercises, military education and cybersecurity. The UK has long been and will remain a true friend to Kuwait."

— The British Embassy, Kuwait

An appeal to liberate and protect KHNW

By Yousuf Al-Ameeri

There will be a day when we sit down to tell and teach our children and grandchildren, how heroes emerged from our people who are small in numbers but large in value and status. We'll tell them how the entire world stood beside our people at a sad time during which oppression and darkness prevailed, as they carried the beacons of light and freedom in an unprecedented unity.

A marble plate welcomes you at the entrance of Kuwait House of National Works (KHNW), which carries something from the spirit of the famous speech of the late Egyptian President Mohammad Anwar Al-Sadat to be the best witness of the close relations between Arab victories, as from the October war to the Kuwait Liberation war there are stories and examples that generations pass from one to another.

Yet, on August 2, the anniversary of the heinous Iraqi occupation, and later on the occasion of liberation, the question always remains: what did we prepare for the next generations so that they understand the lesson learned from their history and the struggle of their fathers and grandfathers?

I say that while KHNW is shackled with restrictions that keep our children from viewing the panorama that speaks of an important era of our beloved country's history.

When you search for the reasons for these restrictions, you cannot but laugh. But it's a laughter closer to crying, as tears crystallized in the eyes, and tongues became dry because of the many appeals for removing these restrictions, in hopes that someone listens to the



Photographs from the Kuwait House of National Works show the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Liberation.

sound of reason while officials and MPs are preoccupied with trivial matters. On August 2, your children will sit at home and ask you about the secret behind the state granting an official holiday for everyone on this day.

His questions are justified as the party that documents the incident of occupation and later the liberation, which we celebrate on February 26 each year, is restricted from performing its role. As if someone wants to wipe off an era that bears witness of our courageous people's struggles from the entire world.

For anyone who forgot or is pretending to forget, KHNW was established in 1977 for the sake of documenting the epic of independence and was opened under the patronage of the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah, and the then Information Minister Yousuf Al-Sumait represented him.

This national monument includes a panorama, museum, cinema theater and a hall for allies with the participation of 29 countries in addition to three museums abroad — in Brit-



ain, Senegal and Bulgaria. There have also been 27 twinning agreements signed to grant Kuwait a permanent ward in those countries' national museums. Yet, it is strange that the times have changed, and this major national monument is being tampered with. I say that what is happening to KHNW is deliberate negligence of the right of future generations to learn the history of their country, which this national museum documents. What happened to KHNW is illegal and brings out many rightful questions about the secret or goal behind what is happening.

I, in my capacity, personally appeal to HH the Amir Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister, Information and Culture Minister and members of Parliament as this appeal brings out the spirit of patriotism to liberate KHNW from this imposed frozen state. This is a national duty towards future generations to which history will bear witness.

Note: Yousuf Al-Ameeri is the head of Kuwait House of National Works



Local

THE DARK DAY OF KUWAIT

'I'll never forget': Woman shares painful memories of imprisonment



KUWAIT: Naema Al-Yaqout shows photos of her martyred brothers during an interview with Kuwait Times.

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: It was just another hot summer day in 1990 when Naema Al-Yaqout's life was forever changed. Sitting at home with her family, Naema, a young mother of a six-month-old girl at the time, first heard that the Iraqi army had launched an attack on Kuwait in the early hours of the day at Saddam Hussein's orders.

Naema's father didn't allow the terrible news to shake up his sons and daughters. "My father said we should all go to work (as usual). ... We all did," she recalled. Naema, who worked as an infectious disease nurse, came from a family of servicemen — her half-brother Sami served in the air force and her three brothers — Waleed, Adnan and Hani — were members of the National Guard and the Kuwaiti army. The three brothers played football professionally, Naema said as she affectionately looked through old photos of them — both Adnan and Hani played with the Arabi team, while Waleed played with Sulaibikhat and Kuwait's national team.

Nearly 35 years after the photos were taken, Naema and her siblings have become heroes who risked and lost their lives for their country. "I'll never forget what I saw. Thank God Kuwait is back ... My brothers were martyred and made us proud. They sacrificed their lives for our homeland," she said in tears.

Naema was captured by Iraqi forces four months into the invasion, during which she was subjected to multiple forms of torture and wasn't given anything to eat beyond crusty bread and tea. She recounts being held in a shed and not being allowed to change out of her clothes. The difficult times Naema lived through were all worth it for the sake of Kuwait, she said.

'We couldn't sleep'

Soon after the onset of the invasion, Waleed,

Adnan and Hani joined the Kuwaiti resistance movement, which engaged in both armed and non-violent acts of defiance to deter the Iraqi invaders. Naema continued to report to work — as a nurse, she was given a permit that allowed her to go out during curfew hours and obligated Iraqi soldiers to let her pass without inspecting her vehicle at checkpoints.

"I used to help my brothers. I would help them with transferring weapons from Sulaibikhat (where they lived) to Khaldiya," she said. Naema's three brothers were captured in October at their home in Sulaibikhat after it was raided by intelligence forces while they slept. It was at a time when Iraq's occupation army was intensifying its crackdown on Kuwaiti resistance. Nearly two months later, on Dec 14, Naema's home was once again surrounded by Iraqi intelligence officers. Leaving her baby daughter behind, Naema was brought in for interrogation at a site that was taken over by Iraqi soldiers in Jahra.

"I could hear my brothers' voices there," she said clutching documents proving her brothers were martyrs. "(The Iraqis) would tell me that they were not there, although I was sure they were." Naema said she was tortured and humiliated while in capture as officers tried to coerce her into admitting her brothers were with the Kuwaiti resistance. "They put me in a small office where they interrogated me every minute from 10 pm until 4 am," she said. Naema recalled being forcefully injected with illicit drugs and electrocuted. "The torture room was next to the holding cells. We couldn't sleep as prisoners screamed in pain. They had no consideration for anyone, whether they were men or women."

The last meeting

Despite the pain, Naema vehemently denied that her brothers were involved with the resis-

ance. She was later taken to the Mashatel area, where the army had set up a detention camp. Naema remembers seeing young men and women, who were with the resistance, hung on trees as a form of torture. After spending some time at a juvenile correctional facility in Firdous, which was under Iraqi siege, Naema was finally transported to Basra in Iraq. At the Basra detention camp, Naema said she met with several Kuwaitis — entire families, including women and children — who had been imprisoned.

"We stayed there until the air attack," she said, referring to the aerial bombing campaign carried out by coalition air forces from Jan 17 to Feb 23, 1991 against Iraq. The POWs, she added, were taken to military sites where the Iraqi army expected air strikes. Naema said they were used as human shields. It was also the first and last time she saw her brothers since she was captured. "They didn't know I was there," she said, quietly sobbing.

Overcome with emotion, Naema said she was separated from her brothers as prisoners were distributed to multiple military sites — Naema was taken to Najaf, while her brothers were transported to Baghdad. Although the air campaign marked the beginning of the end for Saddam Hussein's invasion, Naema, who was imprisoned for four and half months in total, still couldn't go home. She was still in Iraq when Kuwait was liberated in 1991.

In March 1991, following Iraq's defeat, ethnic and religious uprisings against the Iraqi president took the country by storm. The revolt lasted from March to April 1991 after a ceasefire following the end of the invasion. During that time, Naema was rotated through multiple detention camps, including the Diwaniya camp, until she was brought back to Najaf.

"The (opposition groups) liberated us," she said, referring to the 18 men, eight women and

four children, with whom she was held captive. The prisoners stayed in hiding for a few days with an Iraqi man and his Lebanese wife who owned a restaurant in Sharq at the time. "We were smuggled in trucks used for transporting cattle all the way to Liwaa Al-Shaheed (martyrs' brigade). ... That's where we were handed over to coalition forces who brought us back to Kuwait," she recounted.

"When we entered Kuwait, we couldn't see anything. We couldn't tell if it was nighttime or daytime," Naema said, likely referring to the thick black smoke that covered Kuwait after Iraqi forces deliberately set over 700 oilwells ablaze before retreating, causing one of the world's worst environmental crises.

Keeping their memory alive

While physically safe, Naema's mental health suffered on her return due to what she endured. "I went for treatment (in Kuwait) and Sheikh Salem, may Allah have mercy on him, sent me for further therapy to Egypt ... I'm back to normal, thanks to Allah." The brothers remained missing until 2004, when Naema's half-brother received a call that revealed their fate.

"Waleed, Adnan and Hani were found in mass graves in Samawa. Hani — multiple shots in the head, neck, chest, and right lower limb. Waleed and Adnan — just one shot to the head," Naema said as she read from the three brothers' death certificates. On a bench next to the entrance of her home, Naema proudly displays her three brothers' photos to keep their memory alive. She said she makes sure her daughter, who was too young to remember what happened, knows who they are. "I always show her photos of her uncles and tell her: 'These are your uncles...young men who sacrificed (their lives) for Kuwait to come back to us,'" she said crying.

US-Kuwait partnership never been stronger

By James Holtsnider
US Chargé d'Affaires

On August 2nd, we mark 33 years since the United States led a coalition of 35 nations to launch Operation Desert Shield and stand against the occupation of Kuwait. When President

George H W Bush learned of the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, he quickly announced that the United States considered Saddam Hussein's aggression and violation of internationally recognized borders unacceptable, saying the unjustified invasion "would not stand." Nearly 700,000 American servicemembers deployed to the region to help liberate Kuwait and 299 servicemembers lost their lives. We remember and honor our American, Kuwait, and coalition servicemembers who died and were wounded fighting for freedom.

As President Bush said, "Let no one doubt our staying power. We will stand by our friends." More than 30 years later, we continue to stand together with Kuwait. The U.S.-Kuwaiti partnership has never

been stronger, and our work together is helping shape a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. The liberation of Kuwait is a reminder to all around the world today of the importance of standing up for our values and defending nations against aggression. The United States continues to uphold these values and support our friends and allies around the world.



Kuwait recalls Iraqi invasion after 33 years

KUWAIT: In a historically unforgotten epic, most countries stood united as a single group to stand by Kuwait's leadership, government and people against the heinous Iraqi invasion on Aug 2, 1990. This black day remains engraved in the minds and memories of the Kuwaiti people for good, including new generations that learn about all relevant painful details from their parents and grandparents. On that day, Iraqi forces advanced into Kuwaiti territories in a dreadful aggression that ruthlessly targeted the occupation of the country, undermined its freedom and attempted to wipe out its legitimacy, using the most abhorrent methods of murdering, detaining and torturing civilians, striking at civilian and military locations and dispossessing and intimidating people.

Despite the painfulness of the Iraqi invasion, let alone its catastrophic ramifications and impacts on all aspects of life in the country, Kuwaitis have been trying hard to bury the hatchet and turn over a new chapter of good relationships, neighborliness, and joint interests. Remembering 33 years since the Iraqi invasion, the Kuwaiti people will always remain grateful to countries worldwide, mainly the United States, Gulf, Arab and friendly countries, for their highly commended efforts against oppression and their support for Kuwait's liberation.

Immediately following the Iraqi invasion of

Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held an emergency session, as requested by many countries, on August 3, 1990, and adopted Resolution 660 that condemned the invasion and called on Iraq to pull its forces out of Kuwait immediately and unconditionally.

The US and Soviet Union deplored the Iraqi move and called on Baghdad to immediately withdraw its forces from Kuwait. The foreign ministers of Muslim countries met in Cairo to adopt a statement urging the Iraqi army to leave Kuwaiti territories, while Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ambassadors convened in New York to denounce the Iraqi invasion and demand Iraqi army pullout.

Only a few days after the Iraqi military action, the US tabled a draft resolution to the UNSC imposing comprehensive economic and military sanctions on Iraq in a bid to force it to withdraw from Kuwait in line with the UNSC resolution adopted just a few hours following the invasion.

As developments went on, peace-loving countries had to dispatch forces to the region, and immediately, various world capitals had contracts to mobilize an international coalition, particularly after the UNSC adopted a third resolution on the occupation of Kuwait, Resolution 662, in which the UN underlined its categorical opposition to Iraq's decision to annex Kuwait as being "void". Only several weeks following the Iraqi invasion, Arab and international vanguard forces began to flow to Saudi lands as part of an international coalition to liberate Kuwait. Afterwards, the five major countries of the UNSC agreed on a draft resolution authorizing the use of military force against Iraq due to its reluctance to pull out of Kuwait. In late November 1990, the UNSC adopted several resolutions related to



KUWAIT: Beaches were barricaded and used as military hideouts by Iraqi forces during the invasion. — KUNA photos

Iraq, mainly Resolution 677, which warned Iraq of the consequences of its attempts to wipe out the identity of Kuwait and settle Iraqis in Kuwait, stressing the significance of keeping smuggled copies of Kuwait's population registry.

The UNSC, then, adopted Resolution 678, which authorizes all necessary means to ensure compliance with previous resolutions and gives Iraq a deadline until January 15, 1991, to pull its forces out of Kuwait, or it would be at war with the international coalition forces.

At the dawn of January 7, 1991, the international coalition's forces commenced their major attack on Iraqi military and strategic sites in Kuwait and Iraq as a prelude to the liberation of Kuwait. They launched an air attack on Iraqi military facilities and bases, public facilities, bridge-

es, water, and electricity stations, as well as 60 military bases. The international coalition started preparations for a ground attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait, with then US President George Bush having greenlit the coalition forces' commander Norman Schwarzkopf, to launch the ground attack shortly before the end of the UN deadline. Consequently, the Iraqi army collapsed under the international forces' strikes, and the Kuwaiti forces began to return to the country on February 26, 1991. Remembering the invasion after 33 years, Kuwaitis would remain grateful to the late Saudi King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for having hosted the Kuwaiti leadership and people, along with the Egyptian leadership for having supported Kuwait from the very beginning of the invasion. —KUNA

Places to go to learn more about invasion

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Today marks the anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which occurred on August 2, 1990. The crimes of the invasion made an impact on the people of Kuwait, including new generations that witnessed the events as children, along with others who were born later. Some Kuwaiti museums document the brutal Iraqi invasion and remain witness to the ex-

tent of the destruction left behind in order to honor those who sacrificed themselves for the sake of liberating this country.

Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum is considered the most prominent symbol of Kuwaiti resistance, as it witnessed a battle in which 12 citizens were martyred. The house is still witness to the steadfastness of the people of Kuwait. It is located in Qurain and opens its doors from 10 am to midnight.

The house was converted into a museum to tell the story of the martyrs and war. The house includes a variety of weapons used by members of the resistance, in addition to information about this period, where a bloody battle took place in this house between Iraqi forces and Kuwaiti fighters on Feb 24, 1991, with 12 members of the Kuwaiti resistance killed. Late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah issued a decision that this house be converted into a historical museum in order to perpetuate the memory of these martyrs. The museum has

been divided into several halls. The first hall contains pictures of the martyrs and their belongings, including the weapons that were used during the battle. The second hall overlooks the back garden of the house. The third hall includes a number of books on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and its background. Bait Al-Othman Museum is also a historical building located in Hawally, and its working hours are from 9 am to 1 pm and 4 pm to 9:30 pm. The museum contains a number of weapons from the invasion, in addition to military clothes, various documents and notes that tell the suffering of the people of Kuwait and what they went through. The museum tells the history of Kuwait in general, but there is a wing dedicated to the Iraqi invasion and a part for the martyr's office that contains pictures, information and belongings of martyrs of Kuwait, including the bullets they were shot with, weapons, clothes they wore with marks of torture and diaries they wrote back then.

In my view

The first hours of dark Thursday



Abdellatif Sharaa

Local@kuwaittimes.com

The eve of August 2, 1990 was like no other. By 9:00 pm, I was at my desk at home listening to news while preparing to translate a movie for Kuwait TV on an urgent basis, and my interest in the news was due to a meeting in Jeddah between a Kuwaiti delegation headed by the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and an Iraqi delegation to find a solution to the artificial dispute that was ignited by the other side, but things were not promising.

I went on with my work until around 2:00 am on Thursday morning, when I heard a brief statement on BBC that "some Iraqi units crossed the borders of Kuwait and gained a foothold in the country." Oh my God! I do not remember how I finished the translation, but I could not go to sleep. Then at 7:00 am, I had to take my wife to work from Fintas to the social security building, which is not far from Dasman Palace.

Driving along highway 30, we could hear bombardment, loud and scary. I saw soldiers who were shooting in the air, but curiosity and stubbornness took me all the way to the social security building, where many of my wife's colleagues were at the gate crying and screaming, because of what they were hearing and not knowing what was going, and could not call their husbands who brought them to work.

I took some of the women with us to take them to their homes, but I decided to pass by the information ministry to submit my work, despite what was being said on the radio by my dear colleague Ali Hassan. But once I reached the intersection of Soor Street with Riyadh Street, the scene sent chills down my spine, with abandoned vehicles, paperwork, documents and even passports. It made me very sad — is this what a brother does to his brother?

I went back to my apartment in Fintas to discover that the telephone exchange there was knocked out, so I decided to go to my parents' house, which is in close proximity to Mubarak Hospital, because my wife was due with our second child at any moment. At around noon, I went to the fruit and vegetable market in Shuwaikh, only to find it totally empty, with strange armed people being with their weapons at the ready, so it was wise to turn around and go home.

Believe me this was not easy, as what I experienced can only happen in nightmares. Many incidents took place between August 2 and September 19, the day I had to leave Kuwait despite my wishes to remain, and maybe there will an opportunity to write about that.

Forgive — maybe; forget — never.

An unlived war

By Ahmad Ali

Being born in 1995, the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War is an event that I only lived through history books, documentaries and the stories of my family. As a Kuwaiti living abroad, whenever I mention where I am from, most people who actually know of Kuwait, know it through the Gulf War. It may seem easy for others to assume that being from the invaded nation, I might feel resentment towards our neighbors to the north.

Everyone who had family in the country at that time can sympathize with the stories of my parents attempting to flee across the border to Saudi Arabia through the desert in groups of jeeps whilst being pursued by Iraqi armored vehicles, or of other family members getting randomly arrested at checkpoints. But it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the reality of conflict is always complicated, and, as with any conflict, there are stories on all sides.

I cannot speak for the views of everyone, and I know that there are those who disagree with me, especially those who may have suffered during the war, and I understand that. While I didn't live the invasion of Kuwait, I remember playing in the living room in March 2003 and witnessing the bombings of Baghdad on TV. We were watching our neighbor, who we viewed as enemies at the time, being invaded, occupied and going through the devastations of war.

I believe that it is important to recognize these stories on both opposing sides, and that these stories may be a means of preventing any future conflict, especially when looking at the current state of both nations. On one hand, Iraq is a nation that has known sanctions, invasion, occupation, instability, insurrection and civil unrest over the past 30 years, whilst Kuwait has grown to be unrecognizable, a nation that you would not know was the grounds of war if nobody told you, especially when compared to other nations at war during the same period, such as in the Balkans.

While it is important to not forget, it is important to forgive and move forward on the path of reconciliation, as both our nations share a lot of cultural, social and historical ties. There will always be disagreements, as in any relationship, but it is up to us to decide on how to approach our problems and move on from our issues. It's relieving to know that we are on the course of mending our ties and that the past years have led to more cooperation and contributions between the two states.

On a personal level I feel no animosity, believing that our peoples have more in common than they don't. I even find it ironic when I'm abroad, whether in another Arab country or talking with local Arab immigrants, to often find myself mistaken for being Iraqi due to our similar dialects. We're neighbors in a region that is already very divided, with a lot of potential to offer each other in terms of cooperation, as we would all benefit from reconciliation. While there may be some resentment, especially amongst the senior generations and those who were directly involved, it is important notably for the later generations to know when to put the past behind, and to know how to move on, away from the times of conflict.

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comCo-ops maintained
food security, cash
flow during dark times

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Federation of cooperative societies Abdulwahab Al-Fares cooperative societies had a prominent role during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Fares said the brutal invasion was a humanitarian disaster in every sense of the word, pointing out that the Kuwait was able to overcome the difficulties with the determination of its people.

He added that during the "seven dark months", cooperative societies opened the doors of their warehouses to all residents in Kuwait and formed work teams to distribute food and supplies to them. Thanks to the high spirits and heroism of co-op employees, the associations were able to preserve food security, he said.

Although the invasion carries many painful memories, Fares said it revealed the true essence of the men of Kuwait and its vital institutions. At a time when the ordeal intensified and Kuwaitis were cut off from the outside world, cooperative societies opened their doors to save the country and its people from starvation, he said. The co-ops were also utilized as banks lending money to citizens to facilitate their livelihood, Fares added.

Fares said cooperative societies were "the stronghold of resistance against this brutal invader" and from which the cries of liberation emerged. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This photo shows people lining up outside a co-op during the Iraqi invasion. — KUNA

Researcher preserves invasion
relics to honor martyrs' sacrifice

Archives center resource for students interested in Kuwaiti heritage



A drawing of President George H. W. Bush wearing traditional Kuwaiti clothes is seen displayed at the center.



The Historical Archives Center at Kuwait University.



KUWAIT: Abdullah Buwair is seen with the collection at the Historical Archives Center at Kuwait University.



Pictures of the hostages captivated by Iraqi forces during the invasion are seen in this photo.

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Upon recommendations from the deputy director of the office of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and under his guidance, a site was allocated for the establishment of a museum that houses the artifacts and heritage of Kuwait. The museum features the medals, certificates and honors received by the previous and current rulers of Kuwait.

Researcher and writer Abdullah Abbas Buwair heads and manages this museum. One of the ideas that came to his mind, which he was keen to prioritize, was to allocate a hall or multiple halls to preserve the belongings of Kuwaiti martyrs and prisoners of war, as well as remnants of the oppressive Iraqi regime. The researcher has already contacted the families of the honorable martyrs and discussed with them the necessity of including their belongings in this museum, as they sacrificed their lives for the sake of Kuwait.

"These families have generously donated personal items such as IDs and certificates, as well as state-awarded medals, as a token of gratitude and appreciation for their dedication and defense of our beloved country Kuwait. This museum aims to make it known to the enemy that there are those who stand

firmly against anyone plotting to seize our ancestral land. I would also like to mention the days of the crisis involving Abd al-Karim Qasim in June 1961, when he was the ruler of Iraq. He gathered his leaders at the Iraqi ministry of defense and claimed that Iraq had historical rights over Kuwait, considering it part of Basra governorate," Buwair told Kuwait Times.

At that time, the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was in power, leading the country. He firmly rejected these claims and stated that Kuwait is an independent Arab state supported by its people. During this period, Kuwait received strong support from Gulf, Arab, and Islamic countries against these baseless claims. Kuwait also joined the Joint Arab Defense Agreement at that time.

Deputy director of the office of Sheikh Sabah, Ateeq Subaib Al-Fuqa'an, arranged with Buwair an important meeting with professor of history and head of the Kuwait Historical Archives Center Sheikh Dr Maimouna Al-Sabah. A meeting was held with the Sheikh Maimouna at her residence, discussing the topic of this museum, to house the heritage and history of Kuwait. Sheikh Maimouna expressed no objection to the establishment of this museum at Kuwait University, so students can close-

ly observe the heritage, history and possessions of Kuwait and the sacrifices of its martyrs. Buwair was assigned and authorized to collect Kuwait's heritage and place it at this site.

The museum was inaugurated on January 19, 2023 in the presence and under the recommendations of Fuqa'an, requesting Buwair to be present and deliver a speech on his behalf. The minister of education also attended, along with Sheikh Maimouna and Professor Iman Areeqat, the head of research and exploration at the United Nations, as well as the First Secretary of the Embassy of Oman Mohammed Al-Nabhani and ambassadors, history professors from Kuwait University and state officials.

Buwair has organized many celebrations over the years in honor of families of the martyrs. It is worth mentioning that Buwair was present in Kuwait and did not leave during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, remaining resilient. During the days of the aerial bombardment on Kuwait, on January 15, 1991, he was taken and detained at Jabriya police station. He was humiliated and beaten due to possessing unofficial identification. A certificate has been issued to him by the solidarity committee for the heroes of the resistance.

Sheikh Mubarak
sponsors new
scholarship in UK

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah announced the launch of a new scholarships grant's program that enables outstanding students to complete their higher studies in the United Kingdom, pointing out that this new initiative includes Kuwaiti and Arab students, and paving the way for them to complete their bachelor's and master's studies at the University of Buckingham in the UK.

Sheikh Mubarak said that the launch of this scholarships grant's program comes in line with our eagerness to sponsor and support outstanding students, and to invest in education to qualify Kuwaiti and Arab students to excel in their scientific and professional careers, and to develop and upgrade the skills necessary for the labor market.

In a statement, Sheikh Mubarak said, after signing the scholarships grant's agreement with Professor Dr James Tooley, Vice Chancellor of the University of Buckingham, that the launch of the new initiative coincided with University of Buckingham's ceremony celebration of its fortieth anniversary of its royal charter granted by the late British Queen Elizabeth II in 1983. Sheikh Mubarak pointed to the special place that the University of Buckingham occupies in his heart and the cherished memories it evokes, as it is the university from which he personally graduated with a BA in economics and political science, before joining the University of Cambridge to complete postgraduate studies, graduating with a master's degree in international relations.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, Sheikh Mubarak affirmed that his sponsorship of the new scholarship grant's program embodies the depth of partnership and friendship between Kuwait and Britain and their joint commitment toward economic prosperity through the education sector.

The new scholarships grant's program sponsored



by Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah comes on Kuwait remembrance of the Iraqi brutal invasion on the August 2. Kuwait marks this day by paying tribute to all the martyrs, in the honor of all who lost their lives and those who participated in the international coalition alliance for liberation of Kuwait. Moreover, we do not forget that then, the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was key figure in defending the rights of Kuwait sovereignty, she upheld principles of democracy, freedom, justice and rule of law. Baroness Thatcher was a true loyal friend of Kuwait, and the most prominent advocate and supporter of Kuwait's just cause of its liberation from treachery, injustice and aggression, and thus she well deserved the title The Iron Lady.

It is noteworthy that the University of Buckingham has a close association with the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, when she was Minister of Education, she oversaw the establishment of the university in 1973 as the first private university in the United Kingdom, and it was also, after becoming Prime Minister, the primary role she played in obtaining the university's royal charter by the late Queen Elizabeth II in 1983. Thatcher's close relationship with the university continued after her retirement from politics, where she held the position of Chancellor of the University of Buckingham from 1992 until 1998.

Four people
arrested in Jleeb

KUWAIT: Security officers arrested four people in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area for running fake companies. One person was found running a fake travel office and two others were caught running a fake medical clinic. The suspects have been referred to the authorities for further legal action.

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'Doomsday' mother sentenced to life for murdering children

US tightens visa rules for Hungarians on security concerns

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20 killed and 19 missing as rainstorms hit China

Roads submerged, neighborhoods deluged with mud



BEIJING: A man stands near a damaged car after heavy rains in Mentougou district in Beijing on August 1, 2023. — AFP

MENTOUGOU: At least 20 people were killed and 19 were missing after heavy rains lashed Beijing and surrounding provinces, state media said Tuesday, in downpours that have submerged roads and deluged neighborhoods with mud. Storm Doksuri, a former super typhoon, swept northwards over China after hitting southern Fujian province on Friday, following its battering of the Philippines.

Heavy rains began pummeling the capital and surrounding areas on Saturday, with nearly the average rainfall for the entire month of July dumped on Beijing in just 40 hours. Swaths of suburban Beijing remain badly hit by the rains — some of the city's heaviest in years. On the banks of the Mentougou river, one of the worst affected areas, AFP reporters saw muddy debris strewn across the road.

One man told AFP he had not seen flooding this bad since July 2012, when 79 people were killed and tens of thousands evacuated. "This time it's much bigger than that," he said, declining to give his name. "It's a natural disaster, there's nothing you can do," a 20-year-old man surnamed Qi, who was waiting for a taxi with his grandmother outside a hospital, told AFP.

"(We) still have to work hard and rebuild." On Tuesday, state broadcaster CCTV said that the rains had killed at least 11 people in Beijing, two of whom were workers "killed on duty during rescue and relief".

Thirteen people were still missing, but another 14 had been found safe, the broadcaster said. In neighboring Hebei province, nine people were killed and six were missing, it said. Another two casualties were reported in northeastern Liaoning province over the weekend. President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for "every effort" to rescue those "lost or trapped" by the rains. More than 100,000 people deemed at risk across Beijing have been evacuated, according to state-owned Global Times newspaper. Authorities have allocated 110 million yuan (\$15.4 million) for disaster relief work in the capital and surrounding provinces, CCTV said.

'Endure what we can'

On Tuesday, emergency vehicles and workers were spotted on the road between Shijingshan and Mentougou districts. In Shijingshan, next to the 2022 Winter Olympics Big Air jump, the Yongding River had

completely flooded a park, burying benches in mud. In Mentougou, 62-year-old florist Wang Yongkun had piled sandbags around the door of his shop, but the floor inside was still coated in mud.

He said in 15 years working there he had never experienced anything like the last few days. "We started cleaning up in the afternoon yesterday... and woke up again at seven today to continue," he said. "You just have to deal with it... We will endure what we can." Further south in Fangshan district, the Dashi River had also overflowed, with trees along the riverbank partially submerged, and some sections of the road cordoned off. Roads were caked in mud, foliage and various debris, including an upturned armchair.

AFP reporters saw collapsed bridges at two locations, with locals saying the damage had happened during the rains. Earlier social media videos tagged in Fangshan had shown multiple cars being swept along roads turned into fast-flowing streams. Live images from broadcaster CCTV on Tuesday morning showed a row of buses half submerged in floodwater. In the parking lot of a high-rise apartment complex, cars were piled on top of each other, alarms still sounding,

while people lined up with buckets and other containers to collect fresh water.

Chaotic scenes

Parts of Hebei remain under red alert for rainstorms, with authorities warning of potential flash floods and landslides. In Zhuozhou, a city of around 655,000, local media reported the roof of an underground carpark had fallen through. Accompanying video showed the neighboring building almost completely encircled by what looked like a raging waterfall falling into the sinkhole created by the collapse. Zhuozhou's police department said the entire city's water supply had been cut off, with some areas also affected by power outages. In Handan, Hebei province, rescuers lifted by crane reached a man trapped on top of his car in floodwaters, lifting him to safety before the car was flipped and washed away by the current. China has been experiencing extreme weather and posting record temperatures this summer, events that scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change. The country is already preparing for the arrival of typhoon Khanun, the sixth such storm of the year, as it nears China's east coast. — AFP

17 killed as crane collapses in India

MUMBAI: At least 17 workers were crushed to death in western India on Tuesday when a crane collapsed above an under-construction expressway outside the financial capital Mumbai, disaster response officials said. The crane toppled onto large concrete slabs during the night, with debris then smashing down as laborers worked on the Samruddhi Expressway in Maharashtra state, India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said.

The NDRF said 17 bodies had been recovered, and three injured people had been taken to hospital. An NDRF video clip showed rescuers working through piles of mangled steel girders at the construction site in Thane, in the suburbs of Mumbai. The Samruddhi Expressway, connecting Mumbai with the city of Nagpur, is part of an expansive road infrastructure push in one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to inaugurate infrastructure projects in Maharashtra



MAHARASHTRA: Members of NDRF inspect the site of an under construction Samruddhi Expressway where a crane collapsed on a slab of the bridge in Thane district of India's Maharashtra state. — AFP

on Tuesday, said he was "pained" by the deaths and ordered compensation be paid to the families of the dead and injured workers. Accidents on large infrastructure construction sites are common in India. In

October last year, 130 people died in Gujarat when a bridge collapsed soon after it was repaired. In 2016, the collapse of a flyover onto a busy street in Kolkata killed at least 26 people. — AFP

Drone attacks target Moscow and Russia's Black Sea patrols

MOSCOW: Russia said Tuesday it had downed another wave of Ukrainian drones aimed at vessels in the Black Sea and Moscow, as an office block in the capital's main business district was struck for the second time in a few days. "Two Ukrainian (unmanned aerial vehicles) were destroyed by air defense systems over the territory of the Odintsovo and Narofominsk districts of Moscow region," the Russian defense ministry said. "Another drone was suppressed by electronic warfare and, having lost control, crashed on the territory of the Moscow City," the capital's main commercial district, the ministry said.

On Sunday, Russian defenses downed drones in that same district, with debris damaging two office towers, blowing out several windows and scattering documents on the pavement below. "One flew into the same tower in (Moscow) City as last time," mayor Sergei Sobyannin said Tuesday on Telegram. "The facade on the 21st floor was damaged," and a number of windows were smashed, the mayor said. He added that emergency



MOSCOW: Emergency personnel work outside a damaged office block of the Moscow International Business Center (Moskva City) following a reported drone attack in Moscow on August 1, 2023. — AFP

services had gone to the scene and that there was no information on any casualties. "We heard a big explosion, there was no panic," local resident Arkady Metler, 29, told AFP. "Nobody should be scared... we cannot do anything but stick together," said Metler.

Other residents were more shaken by the renewed explosion in their neighborhood. "After the last attack, everyone was saying, 'They don't hit the same place twice'. But when we woke up this morning we were in

shock," Anastasia Berseneva, 26, told AFP. "I'm not sure whether I will move out or not but I'm thinking probably yes." Shortly after the drone attack, Moscow's Vnukovo international airport was briefly closed. TASS state news agency reported. "Vnukovo was temporarily closed for arrivals and departures, the planes are redirected to other airports," emergency services said, according to TASS, which later reported that it had resumed normal operations. — AFP

Saudi approves \$1.2 billion in Yemen aid

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has approved a \$1.2 billion grant to Yemen's internationally recognized government, two officials told AFP on Tuesday, the latest attempt to prop up the war-scarred country's flagging economy. Yemen's finance minister and central bank governor as well as the Saudi ambassador were expected to disclose details of the grant at a signing ceremony in Riyadh at 5 pm (1400 GMT), said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm the amount.

Since 2015, Riyadh has led an international coalition backing the Aden-based government in its war against Houthi rebels, who seized the capital Sanaa in 2014. Fighting has dropped off sharply since a UN-brokered truce took effect in April last year, even though it lapsed in October. However more than two-thirds of Yemenis depend on aid to survive amid a grinding economic crisis marked by a collapsed currency and import bans.

The UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, said in June that "economic warfare" between the opposing parties had compounded the country's problems. At the end of last year, Houthi drone attacks on government-run oil terminals halted hydrocarbon exports, the main source of income for the Saudi-backed government, which is headed by an eight-member Presidential Leadership Council unveiled in Riyadh shortly after the truce began.

The government has struggled to finance basic services and pay the salaries of civil servants. The Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen has touted Riyadh's efforts to ease Yemen's economic woes, including a \$1 billion deposit in the central bank earlier this year, a \$600 million oil derivatives fund and \$400 million for development projects such as housing and hospitals.

A surprise rapprochement deal announced in March between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which backs the Houthis, raised hopes for a durable ceasefire in Yemen. The following month, Saudi ambassador Mohammed Al-Jaber travelled to Sanaa for talks with Houthi officials. Those meetings ended without a new agreement, though Jaber told AFP in May he believed all parties were "serious" about wanting peace. — AFP

International

European nations to evacuate citizens from Niger after coup

Hostile crowds gather outside French embassy

NIAMEY: France and Italy prepared on Tuesday to fly out their citizens and other Europeans from Niger on Tuesday, six days after a coup that toppled one of the last pro-Western leaders in the jihadist-plagued Sahel and stoked anti-French demonstrations. President Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown on July 26 by his own guard, in the region's third putsch in as many years following takeovers in neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso. After hostile crowds gathered on Sunday outside the French embassy and Niger accused France of plotting to intervene militarily, Paris said Tuesday it would withdraw its citizens and offered to evacuate other Europeans as well.

"In the face of a deteriorating security situation in Niamey and taking advantage of the relative calm in Niamey, an operation of evacuation by air is being prepared," the embassy said a message sent to French citizens. The evacuations "will take place very soon in a very limited span of time," it said. The foreign ministry in Paris later said the evacuations would begin later on Tuesday. There are an estimated 600 French nationals in Niger, not counting visiting tourists or French residents currently outside the country.

In Rome, the Italian government said it was putting on a "special flight for those (Italians) who want to leave the country," adding that this was "not an evacuation." It said there were around 90 Italian nationals in Niamey, out of just under 500 across the country. The West African bloc ECOWAS on Sunday slapped sanctions on Niger and warned it may use force as it gave the coup leaders a week to reinstate Bazoum. The following day, the junta accused France of seeking to "intervene militarily," a charge which drew a French denial, while junta-ruled Mali and Burkina Faso warned any military intervention in Niger would be a "declaration of war" against them.

Unstable

The events are unfolding in one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world - a vast

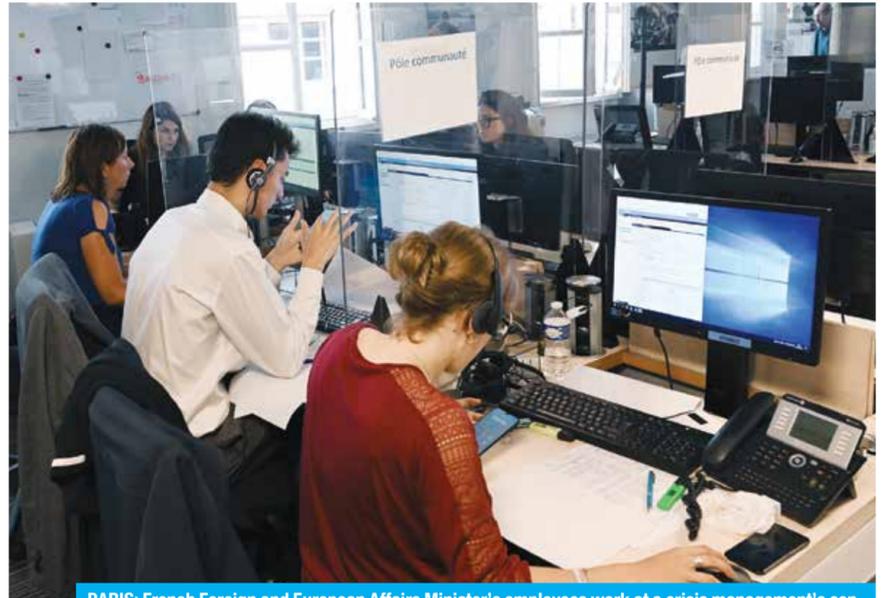
semi-desert nation that had already experienced four coups since independence in 1960. Bazoum was feted in 2021 after winning elections that ushered in Niger's first-ever peaceful transition of power. But his tenure was already marked by two attempted coups before last week's dramatic events, in which he was detained at his official residence by members of his elite Presidential Guard.

Guards chief General Abdourahmane Tiani has declared himself leader - but his claim has been rejected internationally, from ECOWAS, the African Union and the UN to France, the United States and the European Union. Bazoum was seen in a photo on Sunday sitting alongside Chadian leader General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, another pro-Western leader, who was sent to Niamey by ECOWAS. According to Bazoum's PNDS party, the junta has arrested the country's oil, mining, interior and transport ministers, the head of the PNDS's executive committee, and a former defense minister.

Alarm

The coup has triggered alarm bells in Western countries struggling to contain a jihadist insurgency that flared in northern Mali in 2012, advanced into Niger and Burkina Faso three years later and now threatens the borders of fragile states on the Gulf of Guinea. An unknown number of civilians, troops and police have been killed across the region, many of them in ruthless massacres, while around 2.2 million people in Burkina Faso alone have fled their homes. The economic damage, to three of the poorest countries in the world, has been devastating.

France had at one point around 5,400 troops in its anti-jihadist Barkhane mission across the Sahel, supported by fighter jets, helicopters and drones. But that mission had to be drastically re-focused on Niger last year, when France pulled out of Mali and Burkina Faso after falling out with their juntas. Today, the re-configured French force has around 1,500 men, many



PARIS: French Foreign and European Affairs Minister's employees work at a crisis management's centre at the French Foreign and European Affairs Ministry in Paris on August 1, 2023, as France prepared to evacuate its citizens from Niger. — AFP

of them deployed at a major air base near Niamey, while the United States, which also has an important air base in Niger, has around 1,100 personnel.

Russia

In all three Sahel countries, the disgruntled military intervened against elected presidents as the toll mounted from jihadist attacks. The takeovers

have been accompanied by nationalist rhetoric and strident anti-French, pro-Russian demonstrations. Mali in particular has forged close ties with Moscow, bringing in Russian military hardware and paramilitaries that Western nations say are Wagner mercenaries. Junta supporters say France has failed to shield them from the jihadists, whereas Russia would be a stronger ally. — AFP

Catholic Woodstock kicks off in Portugal

LISBON: The world's largest Catholic gathering, a week-long religious festival known as World Youth Day, kicks off in Lisbon on Tuesday, a day before Pope Francis arrives on his first foreign trip since recent surgery. Around 300,000 people are expected to attend the opening mass at 7:00 pm at the hillside Eduardo VII park, which offers sweeping views of the Portuguese capital and the Tagus river.

Pilgrims roamed around Lisbon ahead of the mass, waving national flags in the air and singing Catholic anthems from their home countries. "It's going to be extraordinary, all this Christian youth coming together," said Gabriel Forestier, a 28-year-old engineer from Amiens in northern France.

Francis is set to arrive in Lisbon on Wednesday morning to celebrate World Youth Day, which is actually a week of religious, cultural and festive events held about every three years in a different city. The 86-year-old pontiff is by Church standards the most liberal pope in decades and is very popular with young

people. During his papacy, Francis has tried to create a more compassionate church, reaching out to the gay community and talking frankly to youngsters about abortion, divorce and gender identity.

In Portugal, he has a typically packed schedule for his five-day visit, despite having spent nine nights in hospital after undergoing hernia surgery in June. Francis, the first Latin American pope, is due to make 11 public pronouncements and hold numerous meetings, and on Saturday will visit the shrine of Fatima north of Lisbon. Church organizers expect one million faithful will attend the event's closing mass held by the pope on Sunday at a waterside park on the outskirts of Lisbon.

Images of the pope were on display on banners set up across the city as well as on screens on automatic bank machines along with the message: "I am with you". A Lisbon pastry shop is even selling cookies with the image of the smiling pontiff wearing a crucifix. "I think it is going to be an amazing experience to be in the same spot as the pope," said Barbara Weisz, a 19-year-



LISBON: People wait for the arrival of the pilgrim image of Our Lady Fatima ahead of the World Youth Day (WYD), in Lisbon. — AFP

old student from the United States, part of a group of 37 youths who came from a San Diego parish.

"It is a great feeling to be among so many young people who share your beliefs," she added as the group, who wore matching red t-shirts, gathered in the lobby of their hotel before go-

ing sightseeing before attending the opening mass. World Youth Day, which has been dubbed the "Catholic Woodstock", is part of the Vatican's efforts to galvanize young Catholics at a time when secularism and disgust over clerical child sex abuse cause some faithful to abandon the Church. — AFP

'Doomsday' mother sentenced to life for murdering children

LOS ANGELES: A US mother with "doomsday" religious beliefs was sentenced Monday to life in prison without parole for murdering two of her children and conspiring to kill her husband's ex-wife. Lori Vallow had been found guilty in May over the deaths of her 16-year-old daughter Tylee Ryan and adopted seven-year-old son Joshua "JJ" Vallow.



Lori Vallow

"You are sentenced to the custody of the State Board of Corrections to serve the maximum allowed sentence... life imprisonment with no possibility of parole," said Judge Steven W. Boyce, at a court in the northwestern US state of Idaho. Vallow claimed to be a goddess charged with preparing humanity for the second coming of Jesus Christ, and said she believed she could communicate with angels. — AFP

'Heartbeat' heard from Voyager 2 after blackout

WASHINGTON: NASA's distant Voyager 2 probe has sent a "heartbeat" signal to Earth after mission control mistakenly cut contact, the US space agency said Tuesday. Launched in 1977 to explore the outer planets and serve as a beacon of humanity to the wider universe, it is currently more than 19.9 billion kilometers from our planet — well beyond the solar system.

A series of planned commands sent to Voyager 2 on July 21 "inadvertently caused the antenna to point two degrees away from Earth," NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) said in a recent update. This left it unable to transmit data or receive commands to its mission control — a situation that was not expected to be resolved until it conducted an automated re-orientation maneuver on Oct 15.

But on Tuesday, Voyager project manager Suzanne Dodd told AFP the team enlisted the help of the Deep Space Network — an international array of giant radio antennas, plus a few that orbit Earth — in a last-ditch effort to re-establish contact sooner. To their surprise, "this was successful in that we see the 'heartbeat' signal from the spacecraft," she said. "So we know the spacecraft is alive and operating. This buoyed our spirits."

But while engineers can now see a heartbeat — in technical terms, the carrier wave associated with Voyager 2 — they can't yet read the information signal that shapes the carrier wave, which conveys all the data collected by the spacecraft. "We are now generating a new command to attempt to point the spacecraft antenna toward Earth," Dodd added, although she said there is only a "low probability" it will work. Still, given October 15 is a long way away, NASA will keep trying to send up these commands.

Golden Record

While JPL built and operates Voyager spacecraft, the missions are now part of the NASA Heliophysics System Observatory. Voyager 2 left the protective magnetic bubble provided by the Sun, called the heliosphere, in Dec 2018, and is currently traveling through the space



This NASA image obtained on Aug 9, 2002 shows one of the Voyager spacecraft. — AFP

between the stars. Before leaving our solar system, it explored Jupiter and Saturn, and became the first and so far only spacecraft to visit Uranus and Neptune.

Voyager 2's twin Voyager 1 was mankind's first spacecraft to enter the interstellar medium, in 2012, and is currently almost 15 billion miles from Earth. Both Voyager spacecraft carry "Golden Records" — 12-inch, gold-plated copper disks intended to convey the story of our world to extraterrestrials. These include a map of our solar system, a piece of uranium that serves as a radioactive clock allowing recipients to date the spaceship's launch, and symbolic instructions that convey how to play the record.

The contents of the record, selected for NASA by a committee chaired by legendary astronomer Carl Sagan, include encoded images of life on Earth, as well as music and sounds that can be played using an included stylus. For now, the Voyagers continue to transmit back scientific data, though their power banks are expected to be eventually depleted, sometime after 2025. They will then continue to wander the Milky Way, potentially for eternity, in silence. — AFP

Biden hits the beach — and ditches the shirt

REHOBOTH BEACH, Delaware: Vladimir Putin hoped to project strength by posing shirtless on a horse. Donald Trump, imagining himself even stronger, pasted his face onto images of Sylvester Stallone's rippling torso. But when Joe Biden ditched his shirt Sunday, he apparently just wanted to catch a few rays. A picture taken of the 80-year-old US president sunning himself shirtless on the beach near his Rehoboth, Delaware, home went viral on social media Monday.

Posted by a journalist who happened to be vacationing in Rehoboth, the picture showed Biden in long blue swimming trunks, blue tennis shoes, a backwards baseball cap, sunglasses — and nothing else. "President Biden is enjoying a gorgeous beach day here in Rehoboth," the journalist, Eric Geller, wrote on X, the site formerly known as Twitter.

Unlike the Kremlin leader's infamous 2009 horse riding photos, let alone Trump's frequent Photoshop fantasies, there was no indication that Biden was actually trying to show off his chest. White House reporters who accompany the president on his travels had earlier been briefly brought to witness



REHOBOTH BEACH, Delaware: US President Joe Biden and US First Lady Jill Biden sit under an umbrella on July 30, 2023. — AFP

and photograph him sitting down under an umbrella with First Lady Jill Biden. At that time, however, he was still wearing a blue polo shirt.

Geller told Politico he was walking along the shoreline when he pulled out his cellphone and snapped three pictures of the president, who was protected by a discreet, but robust security detail. For a man already the oldest president in history and hoping to win a second four-year term in 2024, the scrutiny over Biden's physical health is intense. Americans have now been given a closer look than they might have expected. — AFP

Musk removes giant, flashing X...

Continued from Page 1

The owner of the property where X is renting offices will have to pay the cost of permits to install and remove the sign, as well as the cost of the city's investigation, according to Hannan. A building inspector following up on a complaint first went to the tech firm's headquarters on Friday — but was not allowed onto the roof to check the sign, according to the complaint posted on a city website.

Instead, an X representative told the inspector that the structure was "a temporary lighted sign for an event", the complaint showed. A second attempt by an inspector to check the sign was also rebuffed on Saturday, according to the city. The city sent X a notice of violation warning that it needed proper permits for the sign. When contacted by AFP about the complaint, X replied with an automated message saying it would respond "soon".

Musk has brushed off the backlash to the sign and to the rebrand in general, responding with a laughing emoji to one X

user's post about the city being at odds with him over the new sign. The billionaire killed off Twitter's globally recognizable bird logo early last week as he rebranded the company he hopes to turn into a super-app inspired by China's WeChat, which would function as a social media platform and also offer messaging and payments. Since Musk bought Twitter for \$44 billion last October, the platform's advertising business has collapsed as marketers soured on Musk's management style and mass firings at the company that gutted content moderation. In response, he has moved toward building a subscriber base and pay model in a search for new revenue.

Workers last week were stopped while removing the Twitter sign and blue bird logo from the headquarters due to a lack of proper permits. It was also gone Monday. A group of former Twitter employees who lost their jobs when Musk took over said in a federal civil suit filed against the company in May that the billionaire made it clear that he did not intend to pay expenses such as rent or severance packages. An attorney for Musk was overheard crudely insulting San Francisco at one point, contending it was unreasonable for landlords to expect Twitter to pay rent given living conditions, the suit maintained. — AFP

International

Myanmar's leader cuts 6 years from Suu Kyi 33-year jail term

US 'deeply concerned' as junta extends emergency

YANGON: Myanmar reduced ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's 33-year prison sentence by six years in a partial pardon on Tuesday, as the junta struggles to quell bloody resistance to its rule. The country has been ravaged by violence in the two years since Suu Kyi was deposed in a coup and hit with 19 criminal cases ranging from corruption to breaching COVID-19 rules. There have been concerns for the 78-year-old Nobel laureate's health and the junta moved her from prison to a government building last week.

"Six years imprisonment will be reduced," junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told reporters after it was announced she had been pardoned in five cases. Suu Kyi still faces 14 cases despite the pardon. Rights groups have condemned the legal battle against her as a sham designed to remove a popular democratic leader from the public eye. Former Myanmar president Win Myint, who was also removed in the 2021 coup, was granted a four-year reduction in relation to two cases, the junta spokesman said.

'Cruel games'

Tuesday's announcement was part of an amnesty of more than 7,000 prisoners to mark Buddhist Lent, including 125 foreigners who are to be released and pardoned. An unspecified number of prisoners facing the death penalty also had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment, the announcement said. David Mathieson, an independent analyst on Myanmar, said the partial pardon was a "cynical ploy to tell the world that there might be some kind of political resolution coming. When we know that there is not".

"I think they are just playing cruel games with a political prisoner," Mathieson told AFP. "All the charges against her are absurd and shaving six years off 33 isn't mercy." Human Rights Watch's Asia division deputy director Phil Robertson said the junta aimed "to create the impression of moderation and dialogue when in fact there really is none on offer". Joe Freeman, a spokesman on Myanmar for Amnesty International, said the reductions showed the arbitrary nature of the junta's military courts. "Those swept up in its clutches never know what may happen to them," he told AFP.

Still popular

Suu Kyi was detained on the night of the coup in February 2021 and has only been seen once since — in



YANGON: Relatives gather around a bus carrying prisoners being released outside the Insein prison in Yangon on August 1, 2023. — AFP

grainy state media photos from a bare courtroom in the military-built capital Naypyidaw. She was required to attend almost daily hearings in the junta court to hear cases against her ranging from corruption to possession of illegal walkie-talkies and flouting coronavirus restrictions. In July, Thailand's foreign minister met Suu Kyi, the first known meeting with a foreign envoy since she was detained. Details of what they discussed are not known. Suu Kyi remains popular in Myanmar, even after her international image was tainted by a power-sharing deal with the generals and her failure to speak up for the persecuted Rohingya minority.

But many of those fighting for democracy since the coup have abandoned her principle of non-violence and taken up arms to try and permanently root out military dominance of Myanmar's politics and economy. As a result, much of the Southeast Asian country is in armed conflict, with thousands killed since the coup, more than a million displaced according to the United Nations, and the army struggling to assert its dominance.

According to a local monitoring group, more than 3,800 people have been killed since the coup, a figure the junta puts at 5,000. The junta announced on Monday it would extend a state of emergency by six months, which is likely to delay elections promised for August.

Myanmar emergency

Meanwhile, the United States is "deeply concerned" by the decision from Myanmar's ruling junta to extend the country's state of emergency for six months, a State Department spokesman said Monday. The extension, announced earlier in the day, spelled a delay for elections the military had pledged to hold in August as it battles anti-coup fighters across the country. "The United States is deeply concerned by the Burma military regime's extension of the state of emergency, which comes as the regime plunges the country deeper into violence and instability," said spokesman Matthew Miller, using an alternate name for the country. The military cited alleged widespread voter fraud during November 2020 elections as a reason for its coup, which sparked huge protests and a bloody crackdown.

Those polls, won resoundingly by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, were described as free and fair by international observers. Myanmar regularly grants amnesties to thousands of prisoners to commemorate holidays or special Buddhist dates. The junta released some 23,000 prisoners after the 2021 coup, although rights groups feared it was an attempt to free up space for military opponents. More than 24,000 people have been arrested since the military's coup, according to a local monitoring group, and almost 20,000 remain behind bars. — AFP

Australian accused of sexually abusing 91 young girls

SYDNEY: An Australian childcare worker sexually abused 91 young girls over 15 years, police said Tuesday, accusing him of documenting his "unfathomable" alleged crimes in thousands of photos and videos. Seasoned detectives have described it as one of Australia's "most horrific" child sex abuse cases, calling it "beyond the realms of anyone's imagination". "I know this news will seem unfathomable, and I know there will be many questions," said assistant federal police commissioner Justine Gough. "There is not much solace I can give to the parents and children who have been identified," she added. Included within the 1,623 charges are 136 counts of rape, 110 counts of sexual intercourse with a child younger than 10 — a charge used instead of rape in some Australian jurisdictions — and 613 counts of making child pornography. Investigators had been hunting for the 45-year-old man since discovering a cache of child pornography shared on the dark web in 2014.

But their efforts had been mostly fruitless until they made an unexpected breakthrough in August last year — matching visual clues in the background

Palestinian camp death toll hits 11

SIDON: Three days of fighting in south Lebanon's Ain El-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp have left at least 11 dead and dozens wounded, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said. Clashes broke out over the weekend between members of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas' secular Fatah movement and Islamist militants based in the camp, Lebanon's largest located in the coastal city of Sidon.

Renewed gunfire and shelling on Monday shook the camp, said an AFP correspondent in Sidon, sending frightened residents fleeing. "According to reports, 11 were killed and another 40 were injured, including one staff member" of UNRWA, said Dorothee Klaus, the UN agency's director in Lebanon. She added in a statement that UNRWA has "temporarily suspended" operations in the camp due to the fighting.

Palestinian factions said they had agreed on a truce on Sunday but it did not hold, with fighting continuing with automatic weapons and rocket fire. Officials said five Fatah members and one Islamist militant had been killed in the initial violence over the weekend. There was no immediate word on the identities of the other fatalities. "UNRWA urgently calls on all parties to immediately return to calm and take all measures necessary to protect civilians, including children," Klaus said.

The statement noted that "two UNRWA schools have sustained damage" and more than 2,000 Ain El-Helweh residents had been forced to flee. An AFP correspondent on Monday morning saw dozens of people, mostly women and children, leaving the camp carrying light luggage, while others took refuge in a nearby mosque. Shells also fell outside the camp, AFP journalists said, with a nearby hospital evacuating patients and shops in Sidon closing fearing further escalation.

of the images to a childcare centre in the city of Brisbane. While the man was initially charged with just three offences, Gough said the gravity of his "heinous" alleged crimes emerged as police sifted further through his computer, phone and hard drive. "This is chilling and shocking news for parents," she said. Police believe the man filmed or took pictures of "all" his alleged crimes — and eventually catalogued more than 4,000 photos and videos of abuse. New South Wales assistant police commissioner Michael Fitzgerald said it was one of the most horrific cases he had ever seen. "It's beyond the realms of anyone's imagination what this person did to these children," he said. "I can only say, you try not to be shocked after a long period of time in the police, but this is a horrific case."

Police said the abuse happened at 10 different childcare centers between 2007 and 2022 and exclusively targeted "prepubescent girls" — some as young as one year old. Investigators painstakingly combed through the images to identify 87 of the 91 victims, who were from the Australian states of Queensland and New South Wales. The remaining four unidentified children were abused while the man worked overseas for a brief spell between 2013 and 2014. Police said they were now working with international crime agencies to find those children, without revealing which country they were targeting. "We have been working tirelessly since August last year to identify the children in the alleged child abuse material," Gough said. — AFP



AIN EL HILOUE, Lebanon: This picture shows ammunition in the aftermath of clashes between the Fatah movement and Islamists inside the Ain El-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp in the southern coastal city of Sidon on August 1, 2023. — AFP

'Raining shells'

By long-standing convention, the Lebanese army does not enter Palestinian refugee camps in the country — now bustling but impoverished urban districts — leaving the factions themselves to handle security. "We fled from the scene of the fighting, shells are raining in the streets," a 75-year-old woman told AFP, requesting anonymity for security concerns.

She said armed factions were carrying weapons "to fight the Zionist entity, not to fight each other and become displaced". Ain El-Helweh, now home to more than 54,000 registered refugees, was created for Palestinians who were driven out or fled during the 1948 war that coincided with the Zionist entity's creation. In recent years, they have been joined by thousands of Palestinians who had been living in Syria and fled the war there. Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon rarely confront the Zionist entity nowadays, but fighting between rival factions is common in Ain El-Helweh. — AFP

News in Brief

UK recognizes Yazidis 'genocide'

LONDON: The British government on Tuesday officially acknowledged that the Islamic State group committed "acts of genocide" against the Yazidi people in 2014, the foreign ministry said in a statement. "The UK has today formally acknowledged that acts of genocide were committed against the Yazidi people by Daesh in 2014," the statement said, using the Arab acronym for the Islamic State. So far, the UK has acknowledged only four other instances where genocide has occurred, the Holocaust, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and acts of genocide in Cambodia. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said the announcement comes ahead of events marking nine years since the "atrocities" were committed by the Islamic State against the Kurdish-speaking Yazidi minority in Iraq. — AFP

Communal clashes kill 4

NEW DELHI: At least four people have been killed in violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims near the Indian capital New Delhi, police said Tuesday. Mobs hurled stones at a Hindu religious procession and set cars alight on Monday in the predominantly Muslim district of Nuh, around 75 kilometers south of the capital. "Three people have died so far, including two police personnel," police spokesman Krishan Kumar told AFP, adding that the situation was under control. Authorities rushed hundreds of riot police to the area and cut mobile Internet service in parts of Haryana state after the violence. A fourth person died in nearby Gurugram — a key business centre where Nokia, Samsung and other multinationals have their Indian headquarters — when a mob attacked a mosque in apparent retaliation. Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar urged citizens of his state to keep the peace. — AFP

'Gunfire' in Ouagadougou

OUAGADOUGOU: Bursts of gunfire were heard early Tuesday in the centre of the Burkina Faso capital Ouagadougou near an airbase, an AFP journalist said. The shots were heard from around 12:45 am (0045 GMT) in the heart of the city before ceasing about 40 minutes later. "It's an unfortunate incident limited to the air base," a security source told AFP without giving further details, saying only that "the situation is under control". Traffic that had been briefly interrupted by the shooting resumed tentatively, the AFP journalist noted. The incident comes 10 months after a coup, the second in less than a year in the West African country plagued by jihadist violence. It also comes less than a week after the military seized power in neighboring Niger after overthrowing democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum. Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power in Burkina Faso in a September 30, 2022, coup that ousted Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who in January that year had toppled the country's last elected president, Roch Marc Christian Kabore. — AFP

US tightens visa rules for Hungarian citizens on security concerns

BUDAPEST: The United States tightened the conditions under its visa waivers program for Hungarian citizens Tuesday due to what it called Budapest's failure to "address the security vulnerabilities" emanating from passports issued since 2011. Washington has repeatedly criticized Hungary's fast-track passport system brought in by nationalist leader Viktor Orban — which has seen about a million people becoming naturalized Hungarians since 2011 — for being prone to "security breaches". Most are from countries neighboring Hungary where around two million ethnic-Hungarians live, a legacy of a post-World War I treaty that shrank the country's borders. In 2018, the US threatened to scrap visa waivers for Hungarian passport holders after officials uncovered a fraud scheme that has let non-Hungarians allegedly enter the US under false identities.

Hungary's simplified naturalization process during that period lacked "adequate security measures... to verify identities," said a statement by the US embassy in Budapest. "In light of... Hungary's decision not to fully address the security vulnerabilities created by its earlier implementation of its simplified naturalization process, procedures for all Hungarian passport holders to utilize the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) have been modified," it said. Starting Tuesday, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) validity period for travel by Hungarian passport holders will be "reduced from two years to one year", it added.

"Additionally, the validity of an ESTA for Hungarian passport holders will be limited to a single use," the statement said. Countries participating in the visa waiver program are allowed to travel to the US for tourism or business for up to 90 days without a visa, as long as they have obtained an ESTA. Hungary's interior ministry blasted the US move, saying that Washington's request for "data of Hungarians (living) abroad with dual citizenship" would not be met. "The safety of Hungarians abroad is at stake. That is why President Joe Biden's government is now taking revenge on the Hungarians!" it said in a statement. — AFP



DAKAR: Senegalese police officers stand guard in front of the courthouse, where opposition politician Ousmane Sonko was being heard by the senior judge following charges brought by the public prosecutor. — AFP

Two killed in Senegal protests; Opposition figure detained

DAKAR: Two people were killed Monday during protests in southern Senegal after the indictment and detention of opposition figure Ousmane Sonko, a presidential candidate for the 2024 election, the interior ministry said. Sonko, President Macky Sall's fiercest critic, on Monday was charged with fomenting insurrection and his party dissolved, prompting clashes between protesters and police. The leading opposition figure has faced a string of legal woes, which he claims have been designed to keep him out of politics and jeopardize his participation in the February 2024 presidential election.

The interior ministry said protests erupted Monday afternoon in the southern city of Ziguinchor where "two lifeless male bodies" were discovered. The ministry press release sent to AFP did not give further details of the circumstances of the deaths in the city where Sonko is mayor. Less than two hours after Sonko's indictment, the interior minister announced that his PASTEF party would be dissolved for having "frequently" called for insurrection, leading to destruction and the loss of life. The party slammed the move, saying in a statement that the country's stability was "now compromised", and that the dissolution was "anti-democratic".

'Farce'

Sonko's sentencing in June in absentia to two years in prison in a moral corruption case sparked clashes that left 16 dead according to the government, 24 according to Amnesty International, and 30 according to PASTEF. He had not been jailed despite that conviction, which rendered him ineligible to stand in next year's election. On Friday, he was arrested on new allegations tied to comments he has made, rallies he has held, and other episodes since 2021. The new charges include undermining state security, criminal association with a terrorist body, disseminating false news and theft. "It's a farce," Cire Cleodor Ly, one of Sonko's lawyers, told reporters outside the courthouse on Monday. "It's a plot that was formed, thought out, planned and executed." Sonko, who has a passionate following among Senegal's disaffected youth, on Monday continued a hunger strike he began a day earlier, his lawyers said. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2023

Greek islanders dismayed by plan to scale up fish farming

Fishermen fear aquaculture industry to wreak havoc on environment



POROS, Greece: Veteran fisherman Spiros Papaioannou poses for a portrait in front of his boat on the Poros Island. — AFP photos



POROS, Greece: An aerial photo shows fish farms on the Poros Island, on July 5, 2023. Greek-Spanish group Avramar already operates several fish farms in Poros.

POROS, Greece: On the sunny quay of the picturesque Greek island of Poros, veteran fisherman Spiros Papaioannou makes no bones about imminent plans to expand fish farming.

"We don't want them on our island," the rubber-booted man in his seventies grumbled while cleaning his nets. "We fishermen are going to be chased away, that's for sure," he said.

Greek-Spanish group Avramar, which presents itself as the world's leading producer of Mediterranean fish, already operates several fish farms in Poros. The Greek state has long planned to make the Saronic Gulf island of 3,000 inhabitants near the Peloponnese peninsula one of the country's top aquaculture sites for sea bream and sea bass, which mainly end up at French and Italian restaurants.

Eventually, fish farms would cover a quarter of the island, 600 hectares on land and 269 hectares at sea. A Mediterranean country with more than 15,000 kilometers (9,300 miles) of coastline, Greece is keen to develop its aquaculture industry and has

earmarked 25 sites for fish farm installation.

The European Union has allocated 92 million euros (\$101 million) to promote aquaculture in Greece by 2027. According to the Hellenic Aquaculture Producers Organization (HAPO), the industry in 2021 saw a seven percent increase in volume to 131,000 tons. In Poros, annual production would increase eightfold to more than 8,800 tons from 1,100 tons currently over the next five years, according to local project managers POAY Poros. Poros mayor Yannis Dimitriadis is among those opposed to the initiative, which he says will endanger the island's existing tourism industry.

"Yes to maritime tourism, no to fish farming", read a banner hanging from the Poros cultural centre building. Poros "is 95 percent dependant on tourism, directly or indirectly," Dimitriadis told AFP.

Upsetting the balance

"We are going to become an industrial zone, calling into question the whole balance of our

economy", added the mayor, who claims to have already twice met Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to explain his opposition to the project. Contacted by AFP, the Avramar group, which achieved a turnover of 157 million euros in 2021, did not wish to provide details.

"The project is in a preliminary phase. However, we can assure you that we are committed to transparency and will share updates as soon as we are able to do so," the group said in a statement.

According to POAY Poros, the Greek state is expected to approve the project by November 2024.

'Not Mykonos'

With its pastel-colored buildings and oleander and bougainvillea-filled squares, Poros presents itself as a far cry from the mega hotel model. "We don't want to be Santorini or Mykonos," explained Magdalena Iwaszko, owner of a small hotel near the island port.

"Tourists come here to relax... the establishment

of fish farms would have enormous environmental consequences. Nobody wants aquaculture here," she said. Poros' advantage is "crystal clear waters and an untouched coast," the hotelier argues.

The sea off the northern part of Poros is dotted with large floating cages. "I am not (fundamentally) opposed to fish farms," said fisherman Tasos Ladas, acknowledging that Greek seas are "being emptied of fish year after year" one way or another. "They are a necessary evil. But it has to be done correctly, with strict protocol and controls—and not in tourist areas," the fisherman noted.

Mayor Dimitriadis is also worried about the environment, arguing that the high concentration of fish in small basins encourages disease. He is also concerned about the possibility of fish waste and administered drugs and chemicals, such as formaldehyde. "All this then spreads into the sea," he says.

Fish farms deny these accusations, insisting that protecting the environment and ensuring fish health are essential to their business. —AFP

UAE to allow assembly of climate activists at COP28

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates said Tuesday it would allow environmental activists to "assemble peacefully" at this year's UN climate talks, despite a prohibition on unauthorized protests in the Gulf state. The oil-rich UAE, set to host COP28 from November to December in the business hub of Dubai, requires official permission for protests but effectively bans demonstrations it deems disruptive.

At the upcoming UN climate talks "there will be space available for climate activists to assemble peacefully and make their voices heard," it said.

The announcement was made in a joint statement with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) released on Tuesday and published by the UAE's official WAM news agency.

The statement was released after COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber and UNFCCC chief Simon Stiell signed a bilateral agreement in Abu Dhabi that provides the legal basis for organizing and hosting the climate talks. "We are firmly committed to ensuring that UN values are upheld at COPs," the statement quoted Stiell as saying.

The UAE is a major oil producer and one of the



world's largest emitters of CO2 per capita.

The choice for it to host COP28 has sparked criticism from environmental groups who warn that the involvement of a major oil exporter could slow progress in the fight against global warming. Non-government groups including Human Rights Watch have also warned that the Gulf state's restrictions on freedom of expression could hinder the meaningful participation of climate activists. "Civil society actors will struggle to effectively play their role in pushing for ambitious action to address the climate crisis in a country whose government has such an abysmal human rights record," HRW warned in a March report. Large protests have been common at most previous COPs, and limited rallies were allowed at the last UN climate talks in Egypt, where authorities regularly crack down on demonstrations and detain activists. —AFP

products," as BP described it on Tuesday. In 2022, the five oil majors earned a combined total of \$151 billion in net profits thanks to the double-whammy of the Russian invasion of Ukraine causing supply concerns, with Moscow cutting gas supplies to most of Europe, just as the emergence of the global economy from pandemic lockdowns boosted demand.

"2022 was clearly an exceptional year and not the norm," said Moez Ajmi, an energy analyst at the consulting firm EY. Oil and gas prices are now much lower. The Dutch TTF gas contract, the reference for western Europe, fluctuated between 25 and 55 euros per megawatt hour in the past three months, after hitting nearly 350 euros in March 2022 in the wake of the Russian invasion. Meanwhile, Brent crude traded at an average of \$78.10 per barrel in the second quarter, far from the \$114 during the same period last year.

While their earnings were considerably lower, the energy majors "remain very profitable", Ajmi said. "The proof: their policy to always reward shareholders and boost dividends, the increase in investments compared with last year, and the better debt ratios," he added. —AFP

Oil majors still profitable even if super-profits gone

PARIS: From BP to ExxonMobil to TotalEnergies, none of the oil and gas majors have repeated the exceptional profits posted in 2022 when prices surged in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but they nevertheless remain comfortably profitable this year.

BP was the last to report earnings, reporting Tuesday a second-quarter net profit of \$1.8 billion, which was just a fifth of what it earned in the same period last year. Before it, the US giant ExxonMobil saw its second-quarter profits tumble 56 percent to \$7.9 billion, while rival Chevron saw a similar fall to \$6 billion. Shell saw a 64 percent drop in net earnings to \$3.1 billion, while TotalEnergies fared better with just a 28 percent slide to \$4.1 billion.

All of them saw their financial performance "impacted by fluctuating prices of oil, gas and refined

Ukraine grain lorries wait days to unload at Danube port

IZMAIL, Ukraine: Anton Moiseyev sat for the third day in the cabin of his lorry, parked by a roadside cafe in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, in a bottleneck triggered by Russia's scrapping of a grain shipping deal.

He was waiting along with hundreds of other lorry drivers taking grain to the Danube river port of Izmail, now the main export route for Ukrainian agricultural products. "I don't know how much longer it will take," said the 41-year-old driver delivering a cargo of wheat from the central Kirovograd region. Previously, Ukraine exported via the Black Sea on large ships but a wartime deal on safe passage broke down after Moscow exited July 17.

Russia then bombed Black Sea port infrastructure. Huge volumes of grain are now heading to small river ports in Odesa region adjacent to Romania. "That's why everyone comes here. From all over Ukraine, practically," said lorry driver Sergiy Gretsnyk, 36, from Vinnytsia region in centre-west Ukraine.

Formerly obscure ports, Reni and Izmail, have become crucial to global food supplies and are struggling to process all the grain, causing the massive bottleneck. "The ports of Reni and Izmail cannot handle this," since they are "drops in the ocean" compared to the Black Sea ports, Moise-

yevev said. "There is a lot of grain but we can't get it out." In a further obstacle, Russia attacked Reni with drones on July 24. It was unclear whether Reni port was still operating. Army spokeswoman Nataliya Gumenyuk told AFP on Wednesday that "the damage is quite significant, but it did not stop the port completely".

All the lorry drivers AFP reporters spoke to were heading to Izmail. "The guys (at Reni) say that they won't accept us there yet," said Gretsnyk. "Things got worse after Reni was bombed," Moiseyev said, explaining the ports had improved processing time since last year. "One strike and it all ended, we are sitting and waiting again." In Izmail itself, at least four cargo ships were docked at or near the port, facing Romania across the broad, greenish river, AFP journalists saw.

Ships on the river were flying flags including Liberia and Slovakia. Lorries were waiting outside the port but the cranes were not operating. Lorry drivers blamed the rainy weather, saying Izmail does not have facilities to load grain under cover.

On the road to the port, birds pecked at grains of wheat and maize spilled from lorries. The small town — with a pre-war population of about 70,000 — appeared to be benefiting from the grain boom.

On the main avenue, there were Ukrainian flags flying and the tarmac and pavements looked new and well maintained. There were numerous restaurants and cafes and a yacht club under construction. Due to its strategic position, Izmail has changed hands many times. A stone mosque on the riverbank dates back to 16th century Turkish rule. —AFP



ODESA, Ukraine: This photograph shows hundreds of trucks lined up in a car park, waiting for the green light from their company to head for the nearest port, in the Odessa region, Ukraine, on July 27, 2023. —AFP

Business

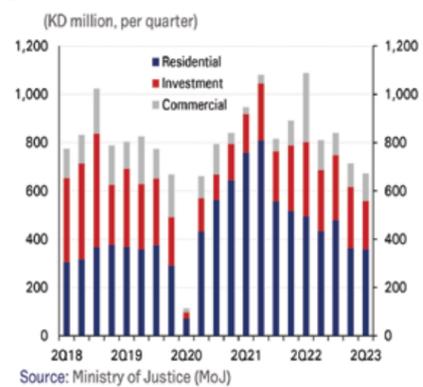
NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's real estate activity eases in Q2 2023 on softening demand

Residential market outlook to remain soft for rest of 2023

KUWAIT: Real estate sales fell in Q2 2023, in a further sign of a market slowdown amid high residential valuations and rising borrowing costs. Sales dropped across all segments on a year-on-year basis, and we expect activity to remain soft during the remainder of 2023. Meanwhile, the government's recent efforts in resolving the housing crisis could help in reducing the number of outstanding applicants over the medium-to-long term.

Chart 1: Real estate Sales



Overall sales declined for the second consecutive quarter, reaching KD 672 million (-5.8 percent q/q) and the lowest level since Q3 2020. There were also signs of a slowdown in other indicators, with our real estate price index (incorporating both residential and investment segments) showing price gains decelerating to just 1.4 percent y/y which is the slowest since Q3 2018. In addition, central bank data show real estate-related lending slowing significantly so far this year.

Admittedly however, weak sales figures in Q2 2023 may have been impacted by seasonal factors, with activity dropping sharply in April which coincided with the typically slow Ramadan/Eid period.

In terms of market segments, residential sector sales saw only a modest decline in the quarter though still fell to their lowest since Q3 2020. Home sales remained concentrated in Kuwait City and Al-Ahmedi governorates, accounting for nearly half of total homesales, while plot sales in Kuwait City accounted for around a third of total plot sales during the quarter, some of which may be related to the KD 55 million Mubarakiya development project.

Residential sales have been trending lower for

the past two years with several factors potentially at play. These include a normalization following exceptional strength during the pandemic period, weaker speculative pressures due to elevated valuations, and higher borrowing costs. Meanwhile, the residential price index saw its third consecutive quarterly decline, resulting in the first year-on-year drop since Q1 2018 (-0.3 percent y/y). Home prices (as opposed to land) were still up (+2.2 percent y/y), reflecting a rise in prices in Kuwait City, Hawally and Farwaniya governorates. Ahmedi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer saw a decline in y/y prices, while Jahra saw no change.

Investment sales (which includes individual units and apartment buildings), declined a steeper 21 percent in the quarter to their lowest since Q2 2021. Nearly half of the apartment unit sales were concentrated in Al-Ahmedi governorate (101 units), while 54 percent of apartment building sales were in Hawally governorate (59 buildings). Price trends in the investment segment are currently holding up somewhat better than in the residential market, up 3.5 percent y/y in Q2 2023. We attribute this to two key factors: prices rose much less through the pandemic than in the residential sector, meaning that valuations are lower; and demand has been supported by the post-pandemic increase in expatriate workers, the main demographic driving demand. The past year has also seen apartment rents picking up in the Consumer Price Index figures, following a multi-year period of stagnation/contraction. This said, activity in the segment is still well below pre-pandemic levels. The potential re-opening of dependent

Chart 2: NBK real estate price index



Ooredoo announces pre-ordering service for Galaxy Z phones

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, the leading telecommunications company, has announced an exciting opportunity for its customers to get the latest Samsung Galaxy Z series phones, by opening the door to pre-order the devices prior to their availability at points of sale. The new group, which is already available since July 26, includes the Galaxy Z Flip5 and Galaxy Z Fold5 phones.

The Galaxy Z series is distinguished by its innovative foldable design, which makes it easy to carry and use. The advanced camera, large-capacity battery, and various customizations combine to offer a unique experience unparalleled in similar smart devices. In addition, the devices are equipped with immersive screens and multitasking features that are equivalent to those of a laptop.

In terms of the individual features of each device, the Galaxy Z Fold5 is most popular with cus-

Nigeria's president moves to combat cost of living

LAGOS: Nigeria's president announced measures to tackle the soaring cost of living on Monday, including the release of 200,000 tons of reserve grain after food store looting in the country's northeast. Since coming to power in May, President Bola Tinubu has made a series of decisions designed to boost long-term investment — but the moves have hit households hard and exacerbated poverty in Africa's largest economy and most populous country.

Last month the president ended a fuel subsidy regime, leading to petrol prices quadrupling and rocketing food costs. "Our economy is going through a tough patch and you are being hurt by it. The cost of fuel has gone up. Food and other prices have followed it," Tinubu said in a televised speech on Monday. "Things seem anxious and uncertain. I understand the hardship you face. I wish there were other ways. But there is not." To "reduce the burden", he pledged at least \$264 million for agriculture, \$165 million for small and medium-sized businesses, and \$99 million for manufacturing.

"In the short and immediate terms, we will ensure staple foods are available and affordable," he said, explaining his decisions in a marked contrast to his predecessor Muhammadu Buhari.

"To this end, I have ordered the release of 200,000 metric tons of grains from strategic reserves to households," he said. On Sunday, au-

Table 1: Real Estate Sales

| | Quarterly Average | | Quarterly Sales/ Transactions | | | | | Change in 2023, % | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 | 3Q22 | 4Q22 | 1Q23 | 2Q23 | q/q | y/y |
| Sales (KD million) | 921 | 907 | 1,088 | 810 | 840 | 714 | 672 | -5.8 | -38.2 |
| Residential | 692 | 482 | 495 | 434 | 480 | 363 | 358 | -1.5 | -27.8 |
| Investment | 188 | 275 | 307 | 252 | 269 | 254 | 200 | -21.3 | -34.8 |
| Commercial | 40 | 151 | 285 | 124 | 91 | 96 | 114 | 18.6 | -60.0 |
| Number of Transactions | 2415 | 1473 | 1621 | 1272 | 1368 | 1085 | 1029 | -5.2 | -36.5 |
| Residential | 2124 | 1091 | 1158 | 911 | 982 | 760 | 729 | -4.1 | -37.0 |
| Investment | 271 | 342 | 372 | 331 | 364 | 306 | 280 | -8.5 | -24.7 |
| Commercial | 19 | 40 | 91 | 30 | 22 | 19 | 20 | 5.3 | -78.0 |
| Average Transaction Value (KD '000) | 381 | 616 | 671 | 637 | 614 | 658 | 653 | -0.7 | -2.7 |
| Residential property | 326 | 442 | 428 | 477 | 489 | 478 | 491 | 2.7 | 14.7 |
| Investment | 694 | 803 | 826 | 760 | 738 | 831 | 715 | -14.0 | -13.4 |
| Commercial | 2098 | 3745 | 3137 | 4145 | 4142 | 5061 | 5704 | 12.7 | 81.8 |

visas could support demand for apartment property over coming quarters. Finally, commercial sales rose 18.6 percent q/q in Q2 2023, though was still down sharply on a year-on-year basis. The quarterly increase came mainly on a KD 21 million transaction in Kuwait City. Excluding this item, sales would have been broadly stable compared to Q1 2023.

Loans disbursed by Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB), the public organization in charge of providing residents with home loans, fell by -13 percent q/q (-1.0 percent y/y) to KD 111 million in Q2 2023. Again, the weaker figures could reflect seasonal factors during the quarter. However, we expect that disbursed loans could pick up in H2 2023 and 2024 as the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) is accelerating plot distributions, the rise in the demand for construction permits, the recent announcement of the availability of 30,593 plots for distribution in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak project, Khaitan, and Mulla city suburbs (N1,3,4,5,12), and projects to develop the Al-Sabriya and Nawaf Al Ahmad areas, which could make around 52,000 units available for future distributions.

Moreover, the government's recently published four-year action included arrangements to distribute 15,094 lots in Qairawan and Saad Al-Abdullah, as well as 42,932 building permits in South Sabah Al-Ahmad, South Saad Al-Abdullah, South Qairawan in the next four years. The plan also outlines steps to

tomers who prefer smart foldable devices. The device includes two foldable AMOLED screens and supports a refresh rate of up to 120Hz, which provides rich and vivid viewing. Also, the lack of edges of the screen and the integration of the front camera under it, gives a smooth experience without interfering when displaying the content. The internal screen was designed to support the S-Pen, which gives more smoothness to users, especially in business-related uses.

The device features powerful and superior performance thanks to the Snapdragon 8 Gen 2 processor from Qualcomm, along with the latest Android 13 operating system with Samsung's custom interface (One UI 5.1.1), which has been continuously developed. It is Samsung's thinnest and lightest foldable device to date, with IPX8 water resistance, robust construction and Gorilla Victus 2 protection that underpins all parts of the phone. For the Galaxy Z Flip5, the external display has been significantly improved, expanding from 1.22 inches to about 2.2 inches. The device offers a flexible and customizable Flex Window feature, in addition to a camera capable of capturing selfies with sharp angles. The device's battery supports various activities and has the ability to work for 57

hours of listening to music, and supports watching videos for up to 20 hours. And with the phone's support for IPX8 water resistance standards, it can stay under water up to a depth of one and a half meters for 30 minutes. In the same context, Ooredoo Kuwait intends to offer the two devices with multiple options of storage capacities to meet different usage requirements, in addition to providing a variety of colors to suit different customer tastes.

Residential market outlook

The outlook for residential activity remains soft for the rest of 2023, with high valuations and the higher interest rate climate representing headwinds to demand. On a brighter note, the government's reform proposals and focus on addressing the housing shortage offer the prospect of a supply boost in the future which would help reduce the large backlog of applications for government housing and absorb new applications. In the investment and commercial property segments, we expect that moderate growth in the non-oil economy, the pick-up in rents and the recovery in expatriate demand to provide some offset to downward pressures from the higher interest rate environment, although given global trends the latter may be at or close to their peak.

Commenting on this, (Ooredoo Spokesperson) said: "We are pleased to introduce the new Samsung Galaxy Z Flip5 and Galaxy Z Fold5 range for pre-order, as they represent an important addition to the devices and modern smartphones that we provide to customers. We are committed to empowering our customers to experience the latest technologies and smart devices." To enjoy a unique and enjoyable experience, and this reflects our constant endeavor to develop their digital experience and achieve their satisfaction."

Customers wishing to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity can get either of the two devices by pre-ordering on the Ooredoo Kuwait website (www.ooredoo.com.kw), or by visiting any of the Ooredoo branches across Kuwait.

Pakistan inflation eases for second month in a row

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's headline inflation eased for the second month in a row in July, government data released Tuesday showed, but a fuel price hike announced overnight could see a fresh rise in August.

Year-on-year inflation was 28.3 percent compared with 29.4 percent in June, the Bureau of Statistics said in its monthly report, with food prices the driving factor. Prices were up 3.5 percent month-on-month.

Inflation hit a record 38 percent in May but the central bank has kept the key interest rate at 22 percent in a bid to stabilize prices. Years of financial mismanagement have pushed Pakistan's economy to the limit, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, a global energy crisis and record floods that submerged a third of the country last year. But Islamabad struck a \$3 billion stand-by deal with the International Monetary Fund last month that could provide temporary relief for the country's ballooning foreign debt. The deal forces the government to scrap a range of subsidies that help the poor but the fuel price hike is largely in line with a rise in oil globally. — AFP



Pfizer trims 2023 revenue outlook as profits tumble

NEW YORK: Pfizer reported a steep drop in profits Tuesday on much lower COVID-related revenues as it curtailed its full-year sales outlook, in part due to tornado damage to a key manufacturing facility. Profits in the second quarter were \$2.3 billion, down 77 percent as revenues fell 54 percent to \$12.7 billion. Quarterly revenues for Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine and Paxlovid therapeutic were \$1.6 billion, far below the \$16.9 billion in the year-ago period.

The drugmaker pointed to a "few near-term individual product revenue" challenges as it trimmed its full-year sales forecast. These include US approval for a drug combination for prostate cancer and a needed recommendation on the Abrisvo vaccine from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pfizer also cited recent tornado damage to a North Carolina manufacturing facility as a drag on near-term results.

The tornado slammed Pfizer's Rocky Mount plant on July 19, which accounts for manufacturing nearly 25 percent of company's sterile injectables. Pfizer said most of the damage was to a warehouse, which stores raw materials and finished medicines awaiting release by quality assurance.

The pharmaceutical giant now expects full-year revenue growth of six to eight percent in 2023, excluding COVID programs. That's down one percent from the prior range.

On COVID, Chief Financial Officer David Denton said the environment "continues to evolve rapidly and remains highly unpredictable," according to a company press release. "In spite of this uncertainty the company is maintaining its focus on ensuring successful fall vaccinations during the respiratory infection season," Denton said. Pfizer said its acquisition of biotechnology company Seagen remains on track. The company is in touch with regulators and expects the deal to close in late 2023 or early 2024. Shares of Pfizer fell 1.2 percent to \$35.64 in pre-market trading. — AFP



ABUJA, Nigeria: Chairperson of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and President of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, reacts while addressing the ECOWAS head of states and government in Abuja on July 30, 2023. — AFP

thorities in Nigeria's northeastern Adamawa state imposed a statewide round-the-clock curfew to stop widespread looting of food stores in the state capital Yola.

Hundreds of residents broke into public and private warehouses storing grains and other commodities and carted them away. Earlier this month Tinubu declared a state of emergency over food security, promising investment in agriculture and cash transfers to the nation's poorest. Nigeria's economy has been weakened by recession, the fallout from COVID-19, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, making life hard for its 215 million citizens — nearly half of whom live on less than \$2 a day.

The northeast has been hit especially hard by rising prices, where a 14-year conflict between the army and jihadist groups has displaced millions of people and driven farmers from their land. — AFP

China imposes export curbs on critical metals, drones

Beijing denies controls target 'any specific country or territory'

BEIJING: Chinese controls on exports of two metals critical to making semiconductors came into force on Tuesday, a day after Beijing imposed curbs on the foreign sales of some drones. The Biden administration has in recent months stepped up measures to restrict Chinese companies' access to the most advanced semiconductors.

China, which seeks to become self-sufficient in semiconductor design, says those measures are aimed at maintaining US supremacy in the field. From Tuesday, Chinese companies seeking to export gallium or germanium will need to obtain a license, according to a directive from the Ministry of Commerce.

Under the new rules, they will also need to provide information on the final recipient and give details about their end use. China accounts for 94 percent of the world's production of gallium—used in integrated circuits, LEDs and photovoltaic panels—according to a report by the European Union published this year.

For germanium, essential for fiber optics and infrared, China makes up 83 percent of production. The export curbs "send a clear signal that China holds all of the power in this dangerous game", analyst James Kennedy told AFP, calling the curbs "an unambiguous message" to the United States.

"If the US chooses further escalation, China's next response will have consequences." For now, he said, China "aims to cause a minimum of damage" to the United States, because their needs in gallium and germanium are "low" and the metals can be acquired elsewhere.

The measures come as the Biden administration mulls fresh curbs on Chinese access to high-tech chips, as well as on outbound US investments in China.

Drone export ban

They also follow curbs by Beijing on the exports of certain types of unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones. As of September 1, exporters will require a license laying out their

end use as well as other details before they can be sold overseas.

A China commerce ministry spokesperson said the move was not aimed at "any specific country or territory". But they did cite the risk of drones "being converted for military use" in justifying the restrictions. China is a major exporter of drones, with the US-blacklisted DJI representing more than 70 percent of global market share, according to CNBC. The company's drones are reported to have been used extensively by both sides in the war in Ukraine.

In April 2022, DJI said it was temporarily suspending business in both Russia and Ukraine while it "internally reassess(ed) compliance requirements". The United States has accused China of mulling arms shipments to support Russia's campaign—claims Beijing has strongly denied.

A US intelligence report last week said Beijing likely supplied Moscow with dual-use civilian-military equipment employed in Ukraine, but noted



A worker produces automotive bearings at a factory in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on July 31, 2023.

that it is "difficult to ascertain the extent to which (China) has helped Russia evade and circumvent sanctions and export controls". — AFP

BMW raises 2023 outlook on strong orders

FRANKFURT: German automaker BMW on Tuesday lifted its 2023 earnings forecast on the back of strong orders and improved availability of its premium models.

The group said it now expected

a pre-tax profit margin (EBIT) of 9 to 10.5 percent, compared with 8-10 percent previously. Car deliveries are expected to see "solid growth", it added, after earlier penciling in only "slight growth".

The more optimistic outlook comes after BMW released preliminary results showing a "solid" performance in the first half of this year. The company delivered 1.2 million vehicles over the first six months, a 4.7 percent increase on last year.

The group achieved an EBIT mar-

gin of 10.6 percent, helped by "a positive price situation".

Like other carmakers, BMW struggled last year with a global shortage of semiconductors and other supply chain disruptions that curbed production in the automotive sector. The group nevertheless reported an increased net profit of 18.6 billion euros (\$20.4 billion) for 2022, as higher prices for its luxury models helped offset a 4.8 percent drop in deliveries.

With supply issues gradually easing, BMW said it "expects positive

momentum in the business during the second half of the year". "This is built on the ongoing strength of the order book and an expected improvement in the availability of its premium vehicles," it added.

The company warned however that it was bracing for "higher expenses for suppliers" due to inflation.

Lingering supply issues will also "continue to be a headwind", it added. BMW will publish its detailed results for the first half of 2023 on Thursday. — AFP

HSBC reports bumper profits on rising interest rates

HONG KONG: Banking giant HSBC said on Tuesday that pre-tax profit more than doubled to \$21.7 billion in the first half of 2023, boosted by higher interest rates. The massive jump from \$8.8 billion in the same period a year ago came as central banks around the world have ramped up borrowing costs to fight inflation, helping inflation lenders' income.

HSBC said revenue jumped \$12.3 billion to \$36.9 billion. "We have delivered a strong first-half performance and are confident of achieving our revised mid-teens return on tangible equity target in 2023 and 2024," chief executive Noel Quinn said in a statement.

"There was good broad-based profit generation around the world, higher revenue in our global businesses driven by strong net interest income, and continued tight cost control," chief executive Noel Quinn said in a statement. The firm also said second-quarter earnings came in better than forecast, jumping almost 90 percent to \$8.8 billion, thanks to the bumper income from surging interest rates. With regards the outlook, it said: "Given the current market consensus for global central bank rates, we have raised our 2023 full-year guidance for net interest income to above \$35 billion."

HSBC continued to sharpen its focus on Asia for diversification of revenue. With around two-thirds of its revenue from the region, the lender has sold its Canadian, French retail and Greek businesses, exiting from Russia and downsizing personal banking in New Zealand. The group said to grow income by investing in wealth business, especially in Asia, would be a key strategic priority to diversify its revenue.

Toyota Q1 net profit soars to \$9.1 billion

TOKYO: Toyota reported on Tuesday a quarterly net profit of \$9.1 billion as global production rebounded after major supply disruptions a year ago, but warned of "severe" competition in China. The Japanese giant, the world's biggest automaker by sales, said net profit in the three months to June surged 78 percent year-on-year to 1.31 trillion yen (\$9.1 billion).

Sales in the firm's first fiscal quarter were 10.55 trillion yen, up 24.2 percent from a year ago.

Australia keeps key interest rate on hold

SYDNEY: Australia left its key interest rate unchanged Tuesday, with central bank governor Philip Lowe saying previous hikes were "working" but the outlook was uncertain. The pause is the second in a row that the rate has been kept on hold at 4.1 percent, following a string of rises aimed at taming runaway prices.

Toyota, including its high-end Lexus brand, sold 2.538 million vehicles worldwide, up 8.4 percent from a year ago. The figures beat market expectations, sending the company's stocks up almost three percent after the announcement.

Major automakers are enjoying a robust surge of global demand after the COVID-19 pandemic slowed manufacturing activities. Severe shortages of semiconductors had also limited production capacity for a host of products ranging from cars to smartphones.

Toyota said that chip supplies were improving and that it had raised product prices and worked with suppliers to bring production activities back to normal. Toyota has said its global production in the first six months of the year reached

a record 5.6 million units, while sales reached 5.4 million, reinforcing its position as the world's biggest carmaker.

However, the company is still experiencing delays for deliveries of new vehicles to customers, it added.

Toyota maintained its annual targets, including net profit of 2.58 trillion yen and sales of 38 trillion yen. "The sales volume increased in all regions due to productivity improvement efforts promoted with suppliers, in addition to an improvement in the supply and demand situation for semiconductors, which continued for a while," the company said in a statement.

The yen's slide and foreign exchange fluctuations added 115 billion yen to Toyota's operating profit. A better mix of models, im-

proving sales and price revisions in overseas markets also boosted its earnings, Toyota said. However, soaring materials prices impacted the company to the tune of 230 billion yen.

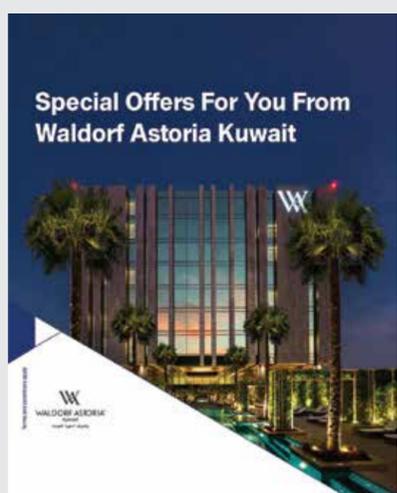
But Toyota said it believed "market conditions, such as those for precious metals, have stabilized compared to last year". While Toyota registered rising earnings in major markets, it suffered falling profits in China, mainly due to forex fluctuations and increased marketing costs to compete with rivals.

"Although the competitive environment is becoming increasingly severe due to the rise of local brands, Toyota and Lexus vehicle sales are steadily increasing," the company said. Toyota shares closed up 2.49 percent at 2,445.5 yen. — AFP

mortgage holders, who have seen their monthly repayments rise rapidly over the past year. Central banks raise rates to make borrowing more expensive, reducing the buying power and demand of consumers and businesses, which usually pushes prices down.

Many other central banks have been tightening monetary policy in recent months in an attempt to soften food and energy prices, which have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

The US Federal Reserve increased its benchmark lending rate in July. But New Zealand left its key rate unchanged last month following a number of hikes. — AFP



Special Offers For You From
Waldorf Astoria Kuwait

NBK offers privilege customers unmatched banking experience

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to provide Privilege Banking Customers with unmatched experience comprising an array of top-notch banking products and services and a variety of offers that are relevant to their unique lifestyle. To this end, the bank introduced an exceptional range of luxury services and offers that meet their needs and expectations during the summer and holidays.

In this context, NBK announced providing privilege banking customers with special discounts at Waldorf Astoria Kuwait including 15 percent on spa memberships, 15 percent on restaurants (AVA, Peacock Alley, OXIO or ROKA), and 5 percent when booking the wedding venue or the executive club.

The bank also provided privilege banking customers with free limo service to and from the airport during the Eid Al-Adha holidays as well as Eidiya Cash Delivery service to their doorsteps, anywhere in Kuwait through concierge service provider "Q'go Concierge" by calling or messaging WhatsApp number 1888125.

In addition, NBK conducted a draw on return tickets to the Maldives valid for six months for customers who used three services provided by "Q'go Concierge", by making the booking and using the services during the period from February until July 2023, and three winners were announced on 4 July 2023.

NBK also introduced multi-currency delivery to the doorstep of privilege banking customers. The service is available around the clock all week long through concierge service provider "Q'go Concierge" by calling or messaging WhatsApp number 1888125. The currencies included US dollar, euro, pound sterling, Saudi riyal, UAE dirham, and Qatari riyal.

Moreover, NBK offered privilege banking customers up to 50 percent discount on Samsonite products when making their purchases using eligible NBK credit cards.

Speaking on this, Mohammed Akram Hashim, head of Segments, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Recognizing the unique lifestyle of Privilege Banking Customers, we strive to provide them with a personalized experience incorporating unmatched services and offers that are tailored to their needs and expectations."

"We are committed to deliver a luxurious experience to customers and always seek to be closer to them all year round, which makes us more able to meet their various needs at all times, including holidays and Eids," he added. "NBK is always seeking to provide a steady stream of premier innovative services and offers to give privilege banking customers more luxury and peace of mind," he noted.

Over the past years, NBK was able to maintain top-notch privilege banking services, and is always striving to offer customers a more innovative banking experience. NBK provides Premium Banking Customers with an exclusive array of services, including: a dedicated relationship manager for Privilege Customers and a Personal Banking Officer for Thahabi Customers taking care of all customers' banking needs. It also provides them with access to Premium Banking lounges, diverse investment solutions including: SmartWealth and Watani Brokerage, Family Banking package, Premium Banking Teller Services which grants them priority in making their transactions in a quick and easy way, in addition to card home delivery service, priority status when contacting NBK Call Center on 1801801



Mohammed Akram Hashim



Pedestrians walk past the logo of HSBC outside a local branch bank in Hong Kong on August 2, 2021. — AFP

In May it defeated an activist proposal supported by its largest stakeholder, Chinese insurer Ping An, to spin off the bank's Asia business in a search of better returns. Ping An, which has a stake of more than eight percent in the bank, argued that the lender lags behind international peers and that a recent improvement in performance was tied mainly to rising interest rates, which it claims have peaked.

Ping An had called on HSBC to engage in a "strategic restructuring" that would see it create a separately-listed bank headquartered in Hong Kong. The proposal was voted down more than 80 percent of

the voting shareholders. In June the firm relaunched the newly acquired British arm of collapsed US lender Silicon Valley Bank as part of a major push into technology and life sciences.

The firm rebranded SVB UK as HSBC Innovation Banking, it said in a statement, three months after it bought the unit in a rescue deal for £1 (\$1.20).

Tuesday's report was welcomed by shareholders, with shares in HSBC jumping 1.5 percent to a four-year high in Hong Kong afternoon trade. The stock has soared by more than a third this year, far outpacing the broader Hang Seng Index. — AFP

Lifestyle



Tugboats escort the MSC Orchestra cruise ship across the basin as it leaves Venice.



A view shows a full moon over the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.



St Mark's square in Venice.

UNESCO recommends putting Venice on heritage danger list



A view shows tourists taking a Gondola ride across a canal in Venice.



A view shows the Arsenal in Venice's Sestiere di Castello district.



An early morning view shows a man loading a boat with goods to be transported in Venice.



A view shows the Venice arsenal.

The UN's cultural agency UNESCO on Monday recommended that Venice be added to its list of world heritage in danger, saying the Italian authorities needed to step up efforts to secure the historic city and its surrounding lagoon. UNESCO said in its recommendation that Venice risked "irreversible" damage due to a string of issues ranging from climate change to mass tourism. The recommendation will now go to a meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in Riyadh in September for adoption.

"The effects of the continuing deterioration due to human intervention, including continuing development, the impacts of climate change and mass tourism threaten to cause irreversible changes to the outstanding universal value of the property," said UNESCO. "Some of these long-standing issues have already led to the deterioration of the inherent characteristics of the property and its attributes," UNESCO said, warning that developments including high rise buildings risk "having significant negative visual impact".

"Moreover, the combined effects of human induced and natural changes are causing deterioration and damage to build structures and urban areas," it added. It said that overall, there was a "lack of significant progress" by Italy in addressing these issues and this was further "hindered by a lack of overall joint strategic vision".

'Still insufficient'

A draft resolution prepared for adoption by the World Heritage Committee said there had not been "a significant level of progress in addressing the persistent and complex issues" and added measures proposed by Italy were "still insufficient and need to be further developed". UNESCO said it hoped inscription on the danger list "will result in greater dedication and mobilization of local, national and international stakeholders."

The World Heritage Committee, which oversees the awarding of the coveted World Heritage label to sites around the world, is due to meet in Riyadh from September 10-25. It is due to consider 53 new candidate sites for addition to the World Heritage List. Intense lobbying is often employed by delegations to ensure their national sites are given — and retain — the status.

agreement that the current state of the city was letting everyone down. "It's uncontrollable" said gondolier Antonio Vertotto, of the masses of tourists who visit the city each day, adding that the government had done "nothing" for years to control it.

"I would say there are too many tourists, but the solution, that's hard to say," said tourist Valmir Reznik, 34, visiting for the day from Switzerland with



A view shows tourists taking a Gondola ride across the Grand Canal in Venice.

The "in danger" label aims to encourage the better preservation of the site for the future. In exceptional circumstances a site can be stripped of its World Heritage label if the steps are deemed unsatisfactory. Venice was included on the World Heritage List in 1987 but its state has concerned UNESCO for some years. It avoided being named a world heritage site in danger in 2021, weeks after Italy moved to ban large cruise ships from sailing into the city centre.

'We were wrong'

In the city itself as the recommendation was announced, there was

his wife. "We thought it's Monday, maybe it's not so full, but we were wrong." In a related recommendation announced Monday, UNESCO said its experts believed Australia needed more time to boost protection of the Great Barrier Reef before it was declared "in danger" due to the risk of damage from climate change. On the basis of progress made by Australia, UNESCO said the natural wonder's current state should not be discussed at the Riyadh meeting, but instead be revisited in 2024. — AFP



The MSC Orchestra cruise ship sails across the basin as it leaves Venice.

Venetians plead 'please don't come' as tourists jam city

Venice's famed Rialto Bridge was jammed with tourists on Monday, the same day UNESCO recommended the watery city be put on its endangered list citing overtourism and other concerns. Taking selfies, licking gelato and wheeling suitcases, the hordes of visitors seemed happily oblivious to the possible downgrade UNESCO said was due to the risk of "irreversible" damage.

New York tourist Ashley Park, 28, said she knew it would be crowded in Venice, but it wasn't ruining her vacation. "Obviously if we lived here with all these tourists it wouldn't be fun," she acknowledged.

Among the crowds on the historic bridge was city worker Diego Nechifrovo, 23, wearing an #EnjoyRespectVenezia T-shirt, who was busy keeping an eye out for misbehaving tourists. "Sometimes I see someone throwing away his cigarette or walking around without a T-shirt," he said, noticing a bag of potato chips discarded on the doorstep of a jewelry shop. The worst? One time a family "sat down right in front of the Doge's Palace and started to set up a picnic." A few weeks ago, a distracted tourist fell into the water, Nechifrovo said. "He was trying to get a good photo".

Please don't come

Not far away, a seller of watercolors had a sign on his stand pointing to St. Mark's Square. "That's all they want to know," said the native Venetian, Claudio, who declined to give his last name. "They come to Venice because it's Venice. That's all." The days of educated tourists visiting and enjoying the city's many churches and museums were over, he said.

"Those who come now don't even know what a museum is. It's not cultural tourism," he said. "They need to go to the beach, or the mountains, but not here!" he lamented. "Please don't come anymore!" The list of Venice's challenges are many, from environmental damage to its lagoon to its fleeing residents — with only about 50,000 left — leaving what many critics charge is now a city without a soul.

Two years ago, Venice narrowly avoided being placed on the same UNESCO list — which is intended to spur governments into action to preserve places deemed of "universal value to humanity" — after the city imposed a ban on massive cruise ships travelling past the centre. Environmental groups warned the ships, carrying thousands of day-trippers and sailing exceptionally close to shore, caused large waves eroding Venice's foundations and harming the lagoon's fragile ecosystem.

But the rerouting of the ships to the more distant industrial port of Marghera did not address the issue of overtourism itself.

Some 3.2 million tourists stayed overnight in Venice's historic centre last year, according to official data, a number that does not include the thousands of daily visitors who do not spend the night. "It's pretty beautiful — it's a draw!" justified US tourist Mike McWilliams, 53, who had just arrived in the city for a two-day visit with his family.

Managing the masterpiece

UNESCO, the UN's cultural wing, put Venice on its heritage list in 1987 as an "extraordinary architectural masterpiece", but it has warned of the need for "more sustainable tourism management". On Monday, it said progress had been insufficient while citing "a lack of overall joint strategic vision" by authorities.

Critics say measures put in place to check tourism are ineffective and have come too late. A long-discussed plan to introduce a paid booking scheme for day-trippers has been repeatedly postponed, now until 2024, over concerns it will seriously dent tourist revenue and compromise freedom of movement.

Back at St Mark's Square, city worker Lorenzo Seano, 21, was struggling to keep tourists from sitting on the steps of the surrounding arcades. The problem of too many tourists invading cities went well beyond Venice, Seano said, but no one in government had tried to tackle the problem "on a structural level". "After all, there's a ton of money coming in," he said. — AFP

Lifestyle



US actor Paul Reubens aka "Pee Wee Herman" accepts an award onstage during Spike TV's "SCREAM 2011" awards held at Universal Studios in Universal City, California, on October 15, 2011. — AFP photos



Paul Reubens speaks onstage at the 10th Annual TV Land Awards at the Lexington Avenue Armory in New York City on April 14, 2012.



Flowers and memorabilia placed on the star of Pee-wee Herman on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

'PEE-WEE HERMAN' ACTOR PAUL REUBENS DIES AGED 70



US actor Paul Reubens, best known for portraying Pee-wee Herman, arrives at the premiere of his new film "Blow" in Hollywood, California, on March 29, 2001.

Paul Reubens, the US comic who became famous in the 1980s for playing eccentric man-child Pee-wee Herman, and later infamous for his arrest at an adult theater, has died aged 70. Reubens passed away Sunday after a six-year battle with cancer which he had not publicly disclosed, according to a statement on the actor's official social media accounts.

"Last night we said farewell to Paul Reubens, an iconic American actor, comedian, writer and producer whose beloved character Pee-wee Herman delighted generations of children and adults with his positivity, whimsy and belief in the importance of kindness," it said. "Paul bravely and privately fought cancer for years with his trademark tenacity and wit."

A Facebook post included a quotation posthumously attributed to Reubens. "Please accept my apology for not going public with what I've been facing the last six years," he

said. Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel led the tributes, calling Reubens "a brilliant and original comedian who made kids and their parents laugh at the same time."

"He never forgot a birthday and shared his genuine delight for silliness with everyone he met. My family and I will miss him," he posted on social media. Born in New York state in 1952, Reubens launched his career as a comedian in Los Angeles in the 1970s. He introduced his most famous bow-tie-wearing persona in a 1980 stage show called "The Pee-wee Herman Show."

The production was a hit and led to an HBO special the following year. In 1985, Reubens teamed up with director Tim Burton to bring his character to the big screen, starring in "Pee-wee's Big Adventure." "Pee-wee's Playhouse" became a US television sensation, running from 1986-1990, with Reubens staying in character during

interviews throughout its duration. But in 1991, Reubens' career was dramatically derailed after he was arrested at an adult theater in Florida, and pleaded no contest to indecent exposure.

The scandal was widely covered, and Reubens largely disappeared from the public eye for several years. Reubens later had minor roles in films such as "Blow," starring Johnny Depp and Penelope Cruz, and television shows including "30 Rock" and "Ally McBeal." He also reprised the character of Pee-wee Herman in a number of television appearances, a stage show revival that went to Broadway, and 2016 Netflix film "Pee-wee's Big Holiday." "I have always felt a huge amount of love and respect from my friends, fans and supporters," said Reubens' posthumous quote. "I have loved you all so much and enjoyed making art for you." — AFP

Mattel reports profit dip despite 'Barbie' blockbuster glow

American toy maker Mattel reported a drop in profits compared to last year, due to lower sales including a decline in Barbie products in the second quarter. Profits fell 59 percent compared to this time last year, to \$27.2 million, on a 12 percent fall in revenues to \$1.1 billion. The first quarter had seen a net loss of \$106 million, and analysts had expected a loss of \$11 million this quarter.

Business was negatively hit by retailers trimming inventory levels and "some overall industry softness," said Chief Financial Officer Anthony DiSilvestro. "At this point, we believe the retail inventory correction is mostly behind us, and we look forward to meeting consumer demand for our product as we enter the second half of the year and all-important holiday season," DiSilvestro said.

Mattel's toy categories were mixed, with "Hot Wheels" and the overall vehicles category scoring increased gross billings compared with last year, while Fisher Price and the action figures/building sets/games categories fell. Barbie had a six percent drop in worldwide gross billings to \$282.7 million.

A coming 'Barbie' bump?

The star-studded "Barbie" film was released after the end of the second quarter, and the iconic doll is expected to be a cash-cow for Mattel in the coming period. The movie, from director Greta Gerwig and starring Margot Robbie, raked in a stunning \$155 million in its opening weekend in North America. Mattel Chief Executive Ynon Kreiz said that the toymaker had entered into 165 product partnerships tied to the film.

"We launched a wide range of 'Barbie' movie-related toys and products," Kreiz said. "Releases to date have sold out across major distribution channels and we will be expanding the range in the second half." "The Barbie movie is a showcase for the cultural resonance of our IP (intellectual property), our ability to attract and collaborate with top creative talent and the capabilities of our franchise management organization," Kreiz added. "This also speaks to the potential of Mattel Films and the significant progress of our strategy to capture the full value of our IP." Shares of Mattel edged up 0.1 percent, to \$21.34, in after-hours trading. — AFP



A customer shops for Barbie merchandise at a Target store in San Rafael, California. — AFP



'Barbenheimer' memes spark anti-nuclear anger in Japan

Internet memes referencing the films "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" have sparked anger online in Japan, the only country to ever have been attacked in wartime with nuclear weapons. One film is about a wildly popular children's doll and the other is a biopic about J Robert Oppenheimer, one of the creators of atomic weapons.

Memes shared on social media combined images from both, with one showing a cheering Barbie on the shoulders of Oppenheimer, against the backdrop of an apocalyptic blast. "Do they know how many people died when that mushroom cloud appeared?... Don't have fun with the atomic bomb," said one irate Japanese social media user, using the hashtag #NoBarbenheimer.

Around 140,000 people died in Hiroshima and 74,000 in Nagasaki when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the two Japanese cities days before the end of World War II in 1945. "We just want (the US) to know what kind of devastation the two atom-

ic bombs caused before speaking, not just for Japan but also for the world," wrote another user.

The official account of the "Barbie" movie on X, formerly known as Twitter, replied to one such image, saying: "It's going to be a summer to remember" accompanied by a blowing kiss emoji. The message, which on Tuesday was no longer visible, prompted Warner Bros. Japan, the local distributor of "Barbie", to apologize.

"We apologize to those who were offended by this series of inconsiderate reactions," Warner Bros. Japan said in a statement. The distributor also said the replies by the US official account were "extremely regrettable", adding they are urging the headquarters to "take appropriate action". "Barbie" is due to be released in Japan later this month, but no date has been set for "Oppenheimer". Both films have been major box-office successes in the United States. — AFP

Man dies after bouncy castle blown away at France water park

A father died and his four-year-old daughter was badly injured in France after a bouncy castle in which they were playing at a water park was blown skyward by high winds, prosecutors said Monday. The 35-year-old man had been taken to hospital with his child after the accident on Sunday at the water park in Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume in France's southern Var region, hugely popular with tourists in the summer. He died later that day.

The structure, some 20 meters (65 feet) long, lifted 50 meters off the ground at the Wonderland Waterpark, with both victims trapped inside, the prosecutor for the nearby town of Draguignan said in a statement. The daughter's life remains in danger, the prosecutor's office added. It said the bouncy castle had taken off due to "strong gusts of wind" that were buffeting the area at the time after a spell of hot weather.

An investigation has been opened into involuntary homicide. Draguignan prosecutor Guy Bouchet told AFP that the management of the park had taken the decision to suspend the bouncy castle activity due to the weather at the very moment the accident happened.

"How can a water park that had been accepted on the municipal territory to bring joy and happiness to children be transformed into a machine of death that strikes down an entire family?" the local mayor Alain Decanis wrote on Facebook. He vowed the investigation opened by prosecutors would provide answers. The child, like her father, had to be resuscitated after suffering cardiac arrest. The Wonderland Waterpark opened only this summer some 40 kilometers (25 miles) outside the town of Aix-en-Provence. — AFP

Aussies drive car across bottom of Darwin Harbor

A bunch of Australians are celebrating after taking a weekend car drive across the bottom of crocodile-populated Darwin Harbor. A team of dozens of engineers and divers completed the feat after refurbishing a 1978 Toyota Land Cruiser, swapping in an electric motor that was waterproofed for the 12.5-hour trip, said project leader Tom Lawrence.

About 30 divers took turns driving along the bottom of the harbor, slipping to depths of 30 meters (98 feet) on an eight-kilometer (five-mile) route that was slightly longer than planned after the car, baptized the "mudcrab", was "blown off course". Lawrence told AFP on Tuesday. "There's quite notoriously big crocodiles and tiger sharks in the Darwin Harbor, but there's also box jellyfish and irukandji (jellyfish) as well," he said, describing some of the dangers faced during the Saturday evening feat.

"It's always a risk but no-one was particularly concerned about it. A giant, orange Land Cruiser driving around under the water is probably not the sort of thing wildlife would swim towards." It was the first successful underwater car crossing of Darwin Harbor after a previous attempt in 1983 that relied on an old diesel motor and giant snorkels stopped about half-way, Lawrence explained.

But why make the attempt at all? "We just asked ourselves that on repeat, especially for the last three months (it took) to rebuild it," Lawrence said. Ultimately, he added, the team plan to make a documentary about Land Cruisers and Australian car culture. — AFP

New Gap chief executive boosted Barbie as Mattel president

US clothing chain Gap announced Wednesday that it tapped as its next CEO Richard Dickson, the current Mattel president who has been credited with reinvigorating Barbie. Gap, which owns its namesake stores as well as Old Navy, Banana Republic and Athleta, said Dickson will take reins of the company on August 22. Gap's press release described Dickson as a "lead architect in a global corporate transformation that has reinvigorated Mattel's iconic brands, including Barbie, Hot Wheels and Fisher-Price, as well as restored the company to growth and reaffirmed Mattel as an in-

dustry thought leader."

Gap has suffered weak sales in recent years, leading to myriad store closures and criticism of the fashion sense of the once-trendy clothing brand. Mattel in the last couple of years has emerged from a slump of its own, with the toy company now seen as profiting from the Barbie franchise following last week's successful premiere of the live-action film.

Dickson, who worked in apparel prior to Mattel with stints at the Jones Group and Bloomingdale's, joined the Gap board in November 2022. The two companies already have a partnership

to sell Barbie merchandise at Gap, including denim skirts, a lunch bag, bike shorts and a dog hoodie — mostly in pink. "Gap Inc has a rich heritage, with brands that have great meaning in people's lives," said Gap's chair, Bobby Martin.

Dickson "is destined for this role at this moment," said Martin, who has served as interim chief executive. "His experience as a proven transformational brand builder and belief in the power of inclusivity, make him a perfect fit for Gap Inc."

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData, called Dickson a "very sol-

id" choice for the role with relevant experience. "His reinvention of the Barbie franchise, which is currently riding on a high, is also proof that he understands how to turn around established brands that have run out of energy and steam," said Saunders, who added that Gap would give the new leader the "time and space" to make changes. Shares of Gap jumped 7.9 percent to \$9.94 in afternoon trading, while Mattel edged up 0.1 percent to \$21.20. — AFP



Richard Dickson, who is in charge of the Barbie brand for US toy maker Mattel, talks about the opening of the Barbie concept store in Shanghai on March 5, 2008. — AFP

Lifestyle



Norwegian climber Kristin Harila shows her photo with her Nepali guide Tenjin "Lama" Sherpa, on her mobile phone during an interview with AFP in Islamabad.



File picture shows Norwegian climber Kristin Harila holding a flag during an interview with AFP at a hotel in Kathmandu.



In this handout photo taken on May 18, 2023 and released by Courtesy of Field Productions shows Norwegian climber Kristin Harila (left) and Nepali guide Tenjin Sherpa at Kanchenjunga, the third-highest mountain in the world located in Nepal. — AFP photos

Record-breaking mountaineer Kristin Harila ready for a normal life

Newly minted world record-breaker Kristin Harila is done with 8,000-metre mountains and ready for a "normal life" after achieving her goal of giving women a rare role model in extreme climbing. The 37-year-old Norwegian and her Nepali guide Tenjin "Lama" Sherpa became the fastest people to summit the world's 14 highest mountains after reaching the top of mighty K2 in Pakistan's Himalayas on Thursday.

It's going to change, we need to have some profiles and we need to take some place." More than 40 people have summited the world's 14 "super peaks" that rise above 8,000 meters (26,250 feet), only a few of them women. Harila, who had a custom-made down suit because none in the market fitted her slender female frame, hopes her success will help more women to secure attention and financial backing for mountain challenges.

falling asleep," she said after enjoying her first shower in weeks.

"Sometimes you have really good days and just enjoying good weather and friends. And sometimes I'm really sick and throw up a lot and have a bad stomach." Harila's rise to prominence has been rapid compared to other climbers at her level and, having started climbing in 2019, marked by dogged determination.

She gave up her job with a chain of

mountains. "Of course, I was very disappointed last year when we didn't get the permit, but I decided immediately 'it's okay, I'm doing it again next year'. Of course, I have regretted it a little bit!" she joked.

Harsher weather conditions this year compounded the effort, with K2 blanketed with deep snow that, together with a bottleneck of climbers, almost tripled the final stage of the ascent from five hours to 14. There was little time to celebrate at the top. "When I realize that we are going to reach the summit, I cry a little bit... But we also knew that it was a very tough condition there this year, and we had to go down," she said, having been wary of avalanche risks and dwindling oxygen supplies.

'I'm finished'

Harila was thrilled to share the record with Lama, who has been a guide since the age of 16, fearing that one of them would get sick or injured before the end of the challenge. "When we met on the first mountain it wasn't planned at all. I didn't know him. He didn't speak much English, like a few words. And I speak a few words of Nepali, and yet we understood each other perfectly," she said. "He was just amazing. We kept each other safe." Now she intends to settle back in Norway, where she aims to call out sports firms on their poor record of sponsoring women athletes.

She'll also pick up running and take a slower approach to life. "For me the hardest thing has been to be away so much from my family and like missing Christmas and birthdays. And all these holidays we had and my grandma died and I couldn't be there," she said. "I'm going home to have a normal life, live with my boyfriend, then get kids, get married. I'm finished with 8,000 meters," she said. — AFP



In this handout picture Norwegian climber Kristin Harila with her country flag at Shishapangma, 14th-highest mountain in the world, located in China.

Together they completed the feat in three months and one day, surpassing Nepal-born British adventurer Nirmal Purja's record, set in 2019, of six months and six days. "I haven't been thinking too much about the record... for me, I wanted to change something," Harila said about the male-dominated climbing sphere.

"If you go and look at history, it's been all about men. And I think that if

'Very, very challenging'

Harila spoke to AFP in Islamabad on Sunday evening, after waking up in K2 base camp the same morning and flying back part of the way by helicopter. She was exhausted after completing a summit every 6.5 days for the past three months. "It can be very, very challenging. And sometimes I'm just like, so tired. Like super tired, like I'm

furniture stores and sold her apartment to partly fund the expedition, for which she later secured some funding from brands including watch and backpack manufacturers. She set out to achieve the record last year but suffered a crushing setback when Chinese visas for the last two mountains took months to come through.

The only route to the record was to repeat the ascent of 12 of the

'Euphoria' actor Angus Cloud dies aged 25

Angus Cloud, the 25-year-old co-star of hit HBO drama "Euphoria," died on Monday, his family said. No cause of death was given for the actor, who portrayed laconic drug dealer Fezco "Fez" O'Neill in the multiple Emmy Award-winning series. A statement said Cloud had been struggling to deal with the recent passing of his father, and had experienced ongoing mental health issues.

"The only comfort we have is knowing Angus is now reunited with his dad, who was his best friend," said his family, in a statement sent by Cloud's publicist. "Angus was open about his battle with mental health and we hope that his passing can be a reminder to others that they are not alone and should not fight this on their own in silence."



US actor Angus Cloud attends the 2022 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 94th Oscars at the The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

"Euphoria," fronted by Zendaya, is one of the most-watched HBO series of all time. The show has drawn controversy as well as plaudits for its dark depiction of the issues facing contemporary American teens, including drug addiction and sexual violence.

It was Cloud's first acting job, having been discovered by a casting director while walking through the streets of Brooklyn, New York with friends. —



Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett perform on stage at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles February 8, 2015. — AFP

Lady Gaga recalls 'magical' partnership with crooner Bennett

Lady Gaga, who was Tony Bennett's friend and collaborator in the final years of the hitmaker's life, over the weekend hailed their "magical" relationship and urged others not to "discount your elders." Bennett died at 96 on July 21, having lived with Alzheimer's disease for years. In 2014 he became the oldest person ever to reach number one on the US album chart through a collection of duets with Lady Gaga, with whom he also won a Grammy in 2022 for their album of Cole Porter standards. "With Tony, I got to live my life in a time warp. Tony & I had this magical power. We transported ourselves to another era, modernized the music together, & gave it all new life as a singing duo," Gaga posted in a lengthy ode to Bennett on Instagram.

"But it wasn't an act. Our relationship was very real. Sure he taught me about music, about showbiz life, but he also showed me how to keep my spirits high and my head screwed on straight." Among Bennett's many gifts was his stage presence: with a welcoming smile and dapper suit, he sang with gusto and a smooth vibrato in a strong, clearly enunciated voice. His death prompted an outpouring of gratitude for his life and work, with Elton John calling him "irreplaceable" and President Joe Biden saying "he himself was an American classic." — AFP

Recovering Madonna thanks family for support during illness

Madonna over the weekend praised the support of friends and family one month after she was hospitalized with a bacterial infection that forced her to postpone her tour. "Love from family and friends is the best Medicine," the 64-year-old wrote on Instagram. "As a Mother you can really get caught up in the needs of your children and the seemingly endless giving... But when the chips were down my children really showed up for me," Madonna continued. "I saw a side to them I had never seen before. It made all the difference. So did the love and support from my friends."



US singer-songwriter Madonna arrives on the red carpet for the 57th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Earlier this month the Grammy-winning icon behind hits including "Like a Prayer" and "Material Girl" had said she was on "the road to recovery." The illness required Madonna to postpone her nearly sold out, 84-date "Celebration" tour that was due to start July 15.

She said her current plan was to begin the European leg of her tour — due to start October 14 in London — as scheduled, and rebook the earlier US shows for later dates. Touring giant Live Nation has said a new calendar is forthcoming. "Thank you to all my angels who protected me and let me Stay to finish doing my work!" Madonna said. — AFP

US police probe Cardi B mic throw

Days after a video showed rapper Cardi B hurling a microphone at a member of her audience, US police said Monday they had begun a battery investigation. In footage that has ricocheted around social media, the "WAP" star can be seen retaliating after a concert-goer threw a drink at her during a Las Vegas show. Clips posted to social media show the "Money" singer recoiling after someone close to the stage splashed the contents of a cup at her.

She pauses briefly, before flinging the microphone back in the same direction, as the person who apparently threw the liquid apologizes and security staff intervene. However, some videos online appear to show the mic making contact with a different member of the audience.



US singer Cardi B gestures as she departs the Fendi runway during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said Monday that a woman had contacted them to report a battery. "According to the victim, she was attending an event on July 29, 2023, at a property located in the 3500 block of Las Vegas Boulevard," the police said in a statement to US media.

"During a concert, she was struck by an item that was thrown from the stage." The police statement did not mention Cardi B by name, but the date and location accord with her show. In June a man threw a phone at Bebe Rexha during a concert in New York, landing the singer in hospital. The same month an audience member threw a bag purportedly containing the ashes of their mother at the stage while singer Pink was performing in London. And last year Harry Styles good-naturedly paused a New York concert after someone threw a chicken nugget in his direction. In December, Guns N' Roses frontman Axl Rose pledged to stop throwing his microphone into the audience at the end of a show after a fan was reportedly hurt in Australia. — AFP



BBC, Netflix announce drama based on Lockerbie bombing

A series dramatizing the Lockerbie bombing has been commissioned by the BBC and Netflix nearly 35 years after the flight from London to New York exploded mid-air, the BBC announced Monday. The British broadcaster and international streaming giant have asked World Productions to make Lockerbie, a six-part drama series based on real events of the December 1988 bombing and the joint Scots-US investigation which followed.

Pan Am flight 103 was flying over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, en route to JFK airport from Heathrow just days before Christmas, when a bomb exploded in its hold, killing all 259 on board and another 11 on the ground. The tragedy remains the worst ever terror attack to take place in the UK. Former Libyan intelligence officer, Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi, is the only person convicted in relation to the attack so far. The series will shine a light on the aftermath of the bombing, from the cross-Atlantic investigation which followed to the turmoil experienced by the Lockerbie community and the families of the victims.

Lockerbie will feature stories from interviews with officers involved in the investigations that have "never previously" been shared, according to the BBC statement. British novelist and screenwriter Jonathan Lee will be the lead writer of the series which was researched and initiated by filmmaker Adam Morane-Griffiths.

"The Pan Am 103 Disaster and the global manhunt it spawned was a defining event in world history — one that contains so many instances of resilience and courage that deserve to be honored and understood," said Lee. Gaynor Holmes, BBC commissioning editor, said:

"We have the right team in place to tell this extraordinary story with the greatest of care (reflecting) the devastating events of that night, the complex and far-reaching investigation that followed and the effect it had on all those who lost loved ones." Lockerbie will first be aired by the BBC followed by Netflix in the UK and globally after filming later this year. — AFP

Sports

World Athletics chief defends championships host Budapest

Coe hails sport's latest doping case

PARIS: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe has defended the choice of Hungary's capital Budapest to host this month's world championships and also said the sport's latest doping case was actually a reason to celebrate. Hungary's far-right Prime Minister Viktor Orban is strongly opposed to what he calls the European Union's "offensive" and last month the US ambassador to Hungary blasted him for opportunistically stirring up hatred against gay people.

Coe, speaking to selected reporters on a conference call ahead of the August 19-27 championships, said: "The world is a complex place, it's becoming more complex by the year and that isn't going to change. So one thing that does need to adapt here is sport and sport is ultimately probably the most adaptable organism that is out there and in an uncertain world sport is the only anchor point."

The International Olympic Committee has argued in the past that taking the Games to countries such as China would help accelerate a greater respect of human rights. Athletics itself held its world championships in 2019 in Doha, the capital of Qatar, whose own approach to human rights came under intense scrutiny when it hosted the 2022 men's football World Cup. Coe, the head of the largest Olympic sport, said his ideas and those of the IOC "don't always run in parallel" - but he added: "On this one, I agree." "Do countries use sport? Of course they do?" he said. "One thing I can tell you is that I have never, ever been involved in sport that has gone anywhere, particularly into challenging environ-

ments, where it has left that society politically, culturally, socially worse off for being there."

Doping case

Athletics was dealt a blow in July when women's 100m hurdles world record holder Tobi Amusan of Nigeria, the reigning world champion from last year, was charged with an alleged anti-doping whereabouts rule violation. Amusan is accused of missing three tests in 12 months. Coe argued that far from tarnishing the sport's reputation, such cases "lend confidence". "Our sport has improved its reputation more than any other sport in the last two years by a distance because we have been prepared to tackle the issues around doping," he said. "I would much prefer to have the occasional headline which none of us actually want than the knowledge that we were gently declining into a landscape where we didn't have the systems in place to weed out the people we don't want in the sport."

It was, he said, "not brain surgery" for athletes to identify "one hour a day where they are going to be" so anti-doping testers can locate them. Looking ahead to the action in Budapest, Coe said the handful of world records set so far this season suggested "these have the potential to be the best world championships performance-wise of all time". Coe picked out the men's shot put as an event he was looking forward to.

Ryan Crouser of the United States set a new world record of 23.56m in May. "He is in the form of his life again," Coe said. "The men's shot put from 2019 onwards has been unmissable." Coe, the double Olympian



EUGENE: Athlete Eugene Obichere of Team United States, Kara Winger of Team United States, and President of World Athletics Sebastian Coe pose during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in this file photo. — AFP

1,500m gold medalist, identified the women's middle distance events as the track events to watch. Reigning champion Athing Mu of the USA against British challenger Keely Hodgkinson in the women's

800m would be one highlight and Faith Kipyegon, the Kenyan who has set world records at the 1,500m, mile and 5,000m - outstanding performances - was another, Coe said. — AFP

News in Brief

Al-Ittihad, Fabinho ink deal

RIYADH: Brazil midfielder Fabinho has signed a three-year deal with Saudi Arabian side Al-Ittihad after completing his move from Liverpool on Monday. The 29-year-old was left out of Liverpool's pre-season squads for trips to Germany and Singapore after Al-Ittihad made a \$40 million (\$51 million) bid for him. He will join Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante at Al-Ittihad, one of four Saudi clubs controlled by the Gulf state's sovereign wealth fund. Fabinho joined Liverpool from Monaco in 2018 and made 219 appearances for the Reds, winning the Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup, League Cup and Club World Cup. "Today I leave my home. It's been five years wearing this jersey and always with the greatest honor and happiness possible," Fabinho wrote on Twitter, which is being rebranded as X. "Since day one at Liverpool, I've been embraced by everyone," he added. "In these five years, I grew as a player, as a man, I made dreams come true... With that jersey, I won every title a player can dream of." — AFP

Alves faces trial for rape

MADRID: Brazilian defender Dani Alves will be tried on sexual assault charges in Spain, the high court of Catalonia told AFP on Monday. The former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star was detained in January after being accused of raping a young woman in the bathroom of a nightclub in late December. The court said a date for the trial had not yet been set. The 40-year-old Brazilian has been held in custody without bail because the court investigating him felt there was a risk he would try to flee. When the story first broke—and before he was arrested—Alves in a television interview initially denied knowing the woman. But when questioned by investigators after his arrest, he changed his story, insisting that they had had consensual relations. Alves, who could face up to 12 years in jail if found guilty, defended his innocence in an interview published in June, saying he has a "clear conscience". — AFP

Bumrah back in Indian squad

NEW DELHI: Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has bounced back from his back injury and was selected to lead India's squad for the three-match T20I series against Ireland, India's cricket board said Monday. Bumrah, 29, has been out of action since September and had surgery in New Zealand in March. The skipper's clean bill of health paves the way for him to play in the ODI World Cup in India in October. The three ODIs will start on August 18 at Malahide, Dublin, with the following matches on August 20 and 23 at the same ground. India will then be next in action at the Asia Cup, to be jointly hosted by Pakistan and Sri Lanka from August 30 to September 17. These will be their last assignments before India host the marquee ODI World Cup from October 5. On Saturday, the West Indies won a series-leveling six-wicket victory over India in the second One-Day International of a three-match series in Barbados. — AFP

Majka outsprints Mohoric

PARIS: Poland's Rafal Majka outsprinted Slovenian race leader Matej Mohoric to victory in the third stage of the Tour of Poland on Monday. Michal Kwiatkowski of Poland finished third in a bunched sprint to the line after the 163km run from Walbrzych to Duszniki in the southwest. The sole survivor of a four-man breakaway, Andreas Kron of Germany, was caught on the last climb of the day at Zieloniec 14km from the finish. Led by the Ineos team in support of Kwiatkowski, the peloton then plunged into the descent before the two last kilometers on a slight climb at the end of which Majka turned on the power. Mohoric retained the race lead with a 10-second advantage on Majka heading into the 199km fourth stage on Tuesday. — AFP

Broad bows out with match-winning wicket as England draw Ashes

LONDON: Stuart Broad enjoyed a fairytale finish as England beat Australia by 49 runs to win the fifth Test at The Oval on Monday and end the Ashes series all square at 2-2. Australia, chasing a mammoth 384 to win, slumped from 264-3 to 334 all out, with retiring paceman Broad wrapping up the match with the final two wickets. England did the bulk of the damage when, after a rain break of more than two hours, they took four Australia wickets for 11 runs in 19 balls.

Off-spinner Moeen Ali (3-76) and all-rounder Chris Woakes (4-50) led the way before Broad, England's all-time leading Ashes bowler, polished off the tail. "I thought Chris Woakes and Moeen Ali set the tone absolutely unbelievably," Broad, who announced on Saturday he would be retiring after this match, told Sky Sports. "Once we got a couple we really started to believe. The crowd were unbelievable. It was so loud and we just jumped on the back of that. When you make that decision you wonder what your last ball will be so to take a wicket to win an Ashes Test match is pretty cool."

'Fair reflection'

England captain Ben Stokes added: "I think 2-2 is a fair reflection of the teams literally going toe to toe. Australia are world Test champions, they are a quality team. I don't think

many teams would have been able to respond from 2-0 down (like we did)." Australia captain Pat Cummins agreed a drawn series was a fair result. "We can be hugely proud of retaining The Ashes. It is no easy feat against a high-quality side in English conditions," he said.

Cummins's men, as the holders, had already retained the urn but this defeat means Australia remain without an Ashes series win in England since 2001. "We were over here to win the Ashes," said Cummins. "Unfortunately it was not to be." When play resumed after the rain delay, Australia were 238-3, needing 146 more runs for victory to finish a tour they started by routing India in last month's World Test Championship final at The Oval. Steve Smith, dropped at leg gully by Stokes just before the interval, was 40 not out and left-hander Travis Head 31 not out.

Moeen triggers collapse

The pair had extended their fourth-wicket stand to 95 when off-spinner Moeen, who later confirmed this had also been his last Test before retirement, turned a ball out of the rough. Head, on 43, tried to drive, with Joe Root holding a routine catch at first slip. Australia then lost their star batsman when Smith fell for 54, edging paceman Woakes to Zak Crawley at second slip. The tourists slipped to



England's Stuart Broad

274-6 when Moeen had Mitchell Marsh caught superbly by diving wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow. Woakes and Crawley then combined to dismiss Mitchell Starc, the leading bowler in the series with 23 wickets, for a duck.

Cummins was next to go, caught by Stokes off Moeen for nine. But with Australia needing 55 to win, Broad produced a brilliant delivery to take tailender Todd Murphy's outside edge, with Bairstow holding another fine diving catch. Australia were on the brink of defeat at 329-9. Broad then had Alex Carey edging behind only for Crawley to drop a tough low chance at second slip before the 37-year-old rounded things off by having the wicketkeeper caught behind.

Earlier, Woakes - often one of England's unsung heroes but named as both the player of the match and series - reduced Australia to 141-2 by removing openers David Warner (60) and Usman Khawaja (72) in quick succession. The left-handed batsmen had made an admirable start to the chase but history was always against Australia. Had they reached their target, it would have been the second-highest successful fourth-innings run chase in a Test in England, behind the celebrated 1948 Australia side's 404-3 at Headingley. It would have also surpassed the highest-such winning pursuit in 143 years of Test cricket at The Oval, which remains England's 263-9 against Australia in 1902. — AFP

Cummins falls short of Ashes ambition

LONDON: When rain kept Australia holed up in The Oval changing rooms for more than two hours, Australia captain Pat Cummins might have thought his side were on their way to a long-awaited Ashes series win in England. Australia were well-placed at 264-3 after play resumed in pursuit of a mammoth victory target of 384 on Monday's final day of the fifth Test. Even had they come away with a draw, that would still have been enough for a 2-1 series success and a first Ashes campaign triumph in England since 2001.

But instead Australia lost seven wickets for 70 runs in a dramatic collapse as England won by 49 runs to end the series all square at 2-2 - the same overall result as the 2019 Ashes. This was an unusual trip, starting for Australia with a 209-run rout of India in last month's World Test Championship final on the same London ground. But with the WTC in its infancy, Cummins was aware the tour would be judged on the outcome of the Ashes.

'Legacy-defining'

"Whether we like it or not, Ashes series tend to define eras and teams," he said after the final. "If we win, that is legacy-defining stuff." Yet in an Ashes in which Cummins's tactics were called into question, it was Australia's batting failures that ultimately cost them a series win. And Nathan Lyon's absence for the final three Tests following the veteran off-spinner's tour-ending calf injury at Lord's also deprived Cummins of much-needed control in the field.

As a fast bowler, a rarity among captains, a schedule of six Tests in just under eight weeks would have been physically and mentally gruelling enough for Cummins without the additional responsibilities of leadership.

Nevertheless, the 30-year-old remained an ever-present and took 18 wickets at 37.72 during the Ashes. So much of the series was framed as a contest between England's aggressive 'Bazball' ap-



LONDON: Australia's Pat Cummins (center) holds the urn trophy as Australia celebrate the drawn series and retaining The Ashes after England's victory on day five of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at The Oval cricket ground in London on July 31, 2023. — AFP

proach and Australia's more traditional Test style, exemplified by painstaking opener Usman Khawaja becoming the leading batsman in the series, with 496 runs. England seamer Ollie Robinson proclaimed Australia were unwilling "to go toe-to-toe with us". But cricket, unlike ice skating, does not confer additional points for artistic impression.

In a dramatic first Test at Edgbaston, it was Cummins's composure as a lower-order batsman that took Australia to a thrilling two-wicket win. The flashpoint of the series followed at Lord's, where the skipper was criticized for ignoring the "Spirit of Cricket" when quick-thinking Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey stumped Jonny Bairstow, who wrongly thought the ball was dead. What got lost in the ensuing furor was that England had been set a stiff 371 runs to win.

Despite home captain Ben Stokes's stunning 155, Australia still won by 43 runs after Cummins had lured several batsmen to their doom with a

hooking trap. England had the better of a rain-marred draw at Old Trafford, with Cummins often veering between all-out attack or defense, with little in between during a run-spree. Former Australia batsman Mark Waugh, whose twin brother Steve was the last Aussie skipper to enjoy an Ashes series win in England, 22 years ago, suggested the "burnt-out" Cummins's time as captain was nearing its end.

"I think he's OK when it's easy and he doesn't have to think too much, but it's a real question mark," said Waugh. And Ian Chappell, one of Australia's most venerated captains, told Channel Nine: "If you put nine on the boundary that's really not designed to get people out—not good batsmen out anyhow. Some of his tactics in this series I would question." But Chappell, for all his concerns, said: "I think Pat Cummins was the right choice at the time and I haven't seen a reason to promote another captain." — AFP

Sports

Brazil Women's World Cup hopes hang in the balance

Football legend Marta moved to tears

MELBOURNE: Football legend Marta was moved to tears Tuesday as the Brazilian reflected on her career and legacy on the eve of what could be her final Women's World Cup appearance. Brazil face Jamaica in Melbourne in their final group match on Wednesday knowing they must win to guarantee they stay in the tournament in Australia and New Zealand. The 37-year-old Marta - nicknamed "Pele in a skirt" by the late football great - has already said this will be her last World Cup.

She is the all-time leading goal-scorer in World Cups, men's or women's, and if she adds to her tally of 17 she will be the first footballer in history to score at six World Cups. "You know what's good? When I started there were no idols in women's football," she told reporters on the eve of the match with Jamaica, tears filling her eyes. "How could there be if you didn't show women's football? How could I understand that I would reach the national team and become a reference point? "Now I go out on the street and people stop me, parents say to me, 'My daughter adores you, she wants to be just like you.'"

Marta has spent a lifetime overcoming obstacles, from a childhood of poverty to sexism and, more recently, the worst injury of her career. "It is logical that I am happy to see all this because 20 years ago, in 2003, nobody knew Marta," she added, looking back at how far women's football has come. It is un-

clear if the attacker, who has never won the World Cup despite all her achievements, will start against Jamaica. But she could be called off the bench by coach Pia Sundhage if Brazil are chasing the win they so desperately need to stay in the competition.

'Lethal weapon'

Jamaica are second behind Group F leaders France going into the last round of games, and won their first Women's World Cup game in history when they defeated Panama 1-0 last time out. They were missing the prolific striker Khadija Shaw in the Panama win after she was sent off for a second yellow card in their opening 0-0 draw with France. The 26-year-old Shaw, who scored 31 goals in 30 games for Manchester City last season, will be back to face Brazil and could have a major say in proceedings.

"She's a lethal weapon, she scores goals and is the leading goal-scorer in Jamaica," coach Lorne Donaldson said. "She's a very good leader and an outstanding footballer." Donaldson, whose side is ranked 43 in the world to Brazil's eight, said his team were the underdogs despite being in a better position to make it out of the group. But he called his players "resilient", adding: "We know Brazil are going to come after us with everything they've got, but we have to be ready. "We want to stay a little longer." — AFP



MELBOURNE: Brazil's Marta (center) takes part in a training session at the Lakeside Stadium in Melbourne on August 1, 2023, on the eve of the Women's World Cup football match between Jamaica and Brazil. — AFP

France to shuffle deck for Panama World Cup clash

SYDNEY: France coach Herve Renard plans to make changes for their clash against Panama at the Women's World Cup on Wednesday with a draw enough to make the last 16. The French kickstarted their campaign with a 2-1 victory over Brazil last weekend after struggling to a goalless draw against Jamaica in their opener. It put them in a commanding position to reach the knockout phase for the fourth consecutive World Cup, with a point enough in Sydney on Wednesday.

They could even progress if they lose, provided Jamaica beat Brazil in the other Group F encounter. With an eye on the knockout round, Renard said Tuesday some players would be rested, without revealing who. "Yes, there will be changes to the starting XI. I will wait till tomorrow to make my final decisions," he said. "But we are determined to get victory." Skipper Wendie Renard,

who picked up a calf injury last week but played against Brazil, heading the late winner, could be among those given time off.

The coach - no relation to his captain - said he would speak with her and see how she felt. "In terms of Wendie, I will speak to her because sometimes some players would rather play than be on the bench to be ready," he said, referring to the last 16. "Sometimes it's good for them to rest, sometimes it isn't. It depends on the player." World number five France head into the game heavy favorites against a Panama team that is already eliminated, leaking five goals so far and scoring none.

Despite this Renard remains wary and said they would not underestimate a team playing for pride. "We know it will be tough, it is not a friendly," he said. "We must still focus. "It is an opponent who will want to win for their country, their pride. We must take it seriously. The players will give 100 percent in order to top the group." Should France secure progression, as expected, their last-16 opponent will only be known on Thursday. They will meet one of the top two finishers from Group H, which is still wide open with Colombia, Germany, Morocco and South Korea all in contention. — AFP



SYDNEY: France's defender Wendie Renard attends a training session at Leichhardt Oval in Sydney on August 1, 2023, on the eve of the Women's World Cup football match between France and Panama. — AFP

Missed chance? Most games behind paywall in World Cup hosts

PERTH: It was France versus Brazil and one of the biggest matches so far at the Women's World Cup, but unless you paid, you could not watch it on primetime television in host nation Australia. The rugby union clash between Australia and New Zealand's All Blacks, Ashes cricket, Australian Rules and swimming were all free to watch on Saturday evening. But if you wanted to catch the heavyweight World Cup group match in Brisbane - which France won 2-1 with a late goal - you had to subscribe to a streaming sports channel.

The majority of World Cup games in co-hosts Australia and New Zealand are behind a paywall. Experts warn this could hurt efforts to grow football in two countries where the sport lags in the popularity stakes compared to the likes of cricket and rugby. "Live viewing of sport helps encourage participation and provide a spark for youngsters," Clare Hanlon, of Women in Sport at Victoria University, said.

"Being on television is also an opportunity to attract sponsors which helps grow the game," added Hanlon, whose role includes advancing women in sport.

'Disappointing'

Of the 64 matches at the month-long tourna-

ment, 15 are free to air on Australian broadcaster Seven Network. As part of government anti-siphoning laws, all of Australia's matches and the final are required to be part of the free-to-air slate. But a paid subscription with main broadcaster Optus Sport is the only way to watch the entire tournament in Australia, costing AU\$24.99 (US\$17) a month or \$6.99 for existing customers.

It is a similar situation in New Zealand. There, all 64 matches can be viewed on subscription service Sky Television. There is free-to-air coverage of 26 games, including all three of New Zealand's group games and both of the semi-finals and the final. The home team were knocked out of the tournament in the group phase on Sunday. Football fan Christine Jones is refusing to pay for another subscription. "There are only so many subscriptions you can have these days," she said ahead of attending the Canada versus Ireland game in Perth. "It can be hard to follow the tournament properly when you're only watching the odd game."

Chris Reilly has been criss-crossing Australia having travelled from Ireland to support his team, whose debut tournament ended on Monday in the group phase. When not in attendance, Reilly has resorted to pubs and bars to watch the tournament. "I was shocked it's not on free to air here because all the games are on in Ireland," he said. "Everything else has been great about the tournament, but that has been disappointing."

Legacy?

All the matches are free to air in France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy - all already established football countries - after gov-

erning body FIFA struck a last-minute deal with broadcasters there. At the previous Women's World Cup, in France in 2019, all the matches were shown on the paying service Canal Plus.

Broadcaster TFI showed for free all the home team's matches, six of the eight last-16 ties and all games from the quarter-finals onwards. FIFA, the sport's governing body, declined to comment on what the repercussions were for growing football in Australia and New Zealand. But the local governing body, Football Australia, said the money FIFA brought in from selling broadcast rights went back into the game everywhere.

"As FIFA has stated, broadcast rights form an important revenue stream to support increased player payments and enable FIFA to invest in the women's game across the globe," a Football Australia spokesperson said. "Australian fans have two passionate broadcasters covering this FIFA Women's World Cup, delivering record viewership and streaming numbers, where the local market is accustomed to having to access sporting content via paid platforms."

Football Australia hopes the showpiece - which has played out to generally strong crowds at stadiums, especially in Australia - can leave a legacy for the sport in the country, especially in the women's game. Females currently represent about a quarter of the almost two million football players in Australia, a figure Football Australia wants to increase to 50 percent by 2027. But Hanlon warned: "To do that soccer needs to be more visible, part of the everyday conversation. "World Cup games not being on free to air is a massive opportunity missed." — AFP

Klopp concerned about Saudi transfer window

SINGAPORE: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on Tuesday urged football authorities to address the late closure of the transfer window in the Saudi Arabia league, fearing it may have a detrimental effect on European clubs. Speaking in Singapore on the eve of his team's pre-season friendly against German champions Bayern Munich, Klopp voiced his concern while reacting to the news that former Liverpool striker Sadio Mane is set to leave Bayern to join Saudi side Al Nassr.

Since the start of the year, clubs in the oil-rich Middle Eastern kingdom have spent generously to sign some of the world's leading players including Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante. Brazilian midfielder Fabinho on Monday became the third Liverpool player to move to a Saudi club in this close season when he joined Al-Ittihad in a £40 million (\$51 million) deal, hot on the heels of Jordan Henderson and Roberto Firmino.

Klopp appears concerned that the closure of the Saudi transfer window on September 20, three weeks after it shuts in Europe, could impact clubs who would be unable to sign suitable replacements. "The influence of Saudi Arabia? We will see. I don't know. At the moment it looks like they have quite an influence, it is massive," said the German. "I think that pretty much the worst thing is that the transfer window in Saudi Arabia is open for three weeks longer. If I am right, I heard something like that. Then, at least in Europe, that's not helpful. So UEFA and FIFA must find solutions for that."

"But in the end, I don't know at this moment exactly what will happen. It is already influential, for us, for sure. We will have to learn to deal with it, but that's what we do," he added. "That's pretty much all I can say about it, time will show." Bayern Munich manager Thomas Tuchel was also asked about the rising influence of Saudi football and he likened it to the Chinese Super League where clubs also spent heavily on importing footballing talent in the middle of the last decade.

"I'm just observing the situation, which is a very new situation," said the Bayern boss. "It's maybe a bit similar to the situation when China started their league. It's kind of a similar gold rush there and we're experiencing the next league which tries to become more popular, more famous and tries to build a brand by signing a lot of quality players and coaches," he added. "It's a completely new situation and a bit too early for me to have a clear opinion. So I'm an observer, a surprised observer." — AFP

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I, **HOZEFA**, holder of Passport No. L5938075 do hereby change my name to HOZEFA (as given name) JAAM (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name of HOZEFA JAAM and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all documents. (#3039) 2/8/2023

I, **HUSSAIN BOHRA** (current name in passport) holder of Indian Passport No. V9392506, having permanent address: Maharashtra, India, 444001 residing in Ku-

wait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) HUSSAIN FAKHRUDDIN and (surname) **BOHRA**. 2/8/2023

I, **Hussain**, holder of Indian Passport No. Z2690148, do hereby change my name to Hussain (as given name) Calcuttawala (as surname) for all purpose. I will henceforth be known in the name Hussain Calcuttawala and I also undertake to carryout this name change in all my documents. (C#3838) 01/08/2023

Announcement

Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons for General Trading & Contracting Co. would like to attract the attention of its customers who have given their devices for repair at the Al-Yousifi Service Center located in Ardiya Industrial Area until **30-6-2023** and did not yet come and collect their devices till this date, to urgently contact Al-Yousifi Service Center on **1809809** in order to collect their devices within a period of only 2 weeks from the date of this Ad. The company will not be responsible under any matter in the future for these devices after the mentioned grace period is over.



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England demolish China 6-1

Holdings US squeeze into World Cup last 16



ADELAIDE: England players celebrate after England's forward #07 Lauren James scored a third goal during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group D football match between China and England on August 1, 2023.— AFP

AUCKLAND: Lauren James scored twice and played a starring role as European champions England swept past shellshocked China 6-1 on Tuesday and into a Women's World Cup last-16 clash with Nigeria. It equaled England's biggest-ever World Cup victory and booked them top spot in Group D, while consigning the Asian champions to their earliest-ever exit.

Meanwhile, holders the United States squeezed into the last 16 of the Women's World Cup on Tuesday with a nervy 0-0 draw against Portugal but England and the Netherlands powered through with big wins. The United States came to Australia and New Zealand as favorites - ahead of European champions England - to win an unprecedented third World Cup in a row.

But they have been nothing like the team that has dominated international women's football for so long

and they will need to be a lot better if they are to go much further at the tournament. Debutants Portugal came within inches of the win they needed to progress - and dump out the Americans - when substitute Ana Capeta hit the post in injury time in front of almost 41,000 in Auckland. But the US held on and are likely to face a Sweden team in the last 16 who thrashed Italy 5-0 in their last match.

US coach Vlatko Andonovski attempted to put a positive spin on what was an alarmingly poor performance by the team ranked number one in the FIFA rankings. "The most important thing was to get the job done," he said. "This is a fairly new team that have not been together for a long time. "The more time they spend together the more chances will go in."

The Netherlands, who drew 1-1 with the US last

week in a rerun of the 2019 final, racked up the biggest win of this World Cup with a 7-0 demolition of already eliminated Vietnam. Esmee Brugts and Jill Roord both scored twice for the Dutch, who topped Group E with seven points. The US were second with one win and two draws -- they have never before won just one group game.

England punish China

In Group D, England overran China 6-1 to sail through as group winners and set up a meeting with Nigeria in the last 16. Denmark join them from the group after defeating Haiti 2-0 and will face co-hosts Australia. Chelsea star Lauren James got a brace for England and was at the centre of everything that was good about Sarina Wiegman's team. She called it

"what dreams are made of". "I felt free, whether I am on the wing or the middle I am just happy to be on the pitch. I think like last game, I thought, why not hit it and see what happens?" said James, who scored a cracker in the win over Denmark.

"Yeah (Nigeria will be) very tough, every team has been tough -- teams are catching up with each other." After stodgy 1-0 wins over Haiti and Denmark, England let loose, albeit against limited opposition in Asian champions China. "I am very delighted. What I said before the game, we are going to do things a bit different. It shows how adaptable this team is. I think today it worked really well, players felt comfortable," said Wiegman. "I don't think they expected us to play this way and they didn't find a solution." — AFP

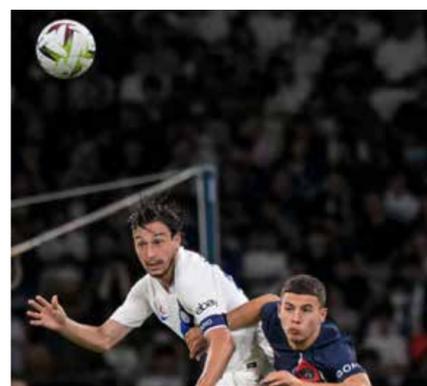
Inter overpower PSG 2-1 in Tokyo

TOKYO: Inter Milan scored twice late in the second half to come from behind and beat Paris Saint-Germain 2-1 in a pre-season friendly in Tokyo on Tuesday. Vitorino gave PSG the lead early in the second half but goals from Sebastiano Esposito and Stefano Sensi in the final 10 minutes gave the Champions League runners-up the win. Neymar was among PSG's substitutes but did not come off the bench.

The Brazilian has not played since injuring his right ankle in February and undergoing surgery the following month. It was the final game of PSG's visit to Japan, which has been overshadowed by the omission of superstar striker Kylian Mbappe. Mbappe was left out of the squad on the eve of PSG's departure, casting doubt on his future at the French champions. PSG drew 0-0 with Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr in their opening game in Japan, before

going down 3-2 to J-League side Cerezo Osaka. They will now travel to South Korea to take on K-League side Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors. PSG begin the new French league campaign at home to Lorient on August 12. They dominated the opening stages and were unlucky when Marco Asensio hit the post and watched the rebound fly straight into the arms of Inter goalkeeper Filip Stankovic. Achraf Hakimi smashed a free-kick over the bar soon after, before Hakan Calhanoglu tested PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma with Inter's first chance of the match.

Vitorino went close with a shot early in the second half but he made no mistake five minutes later. The Portuguese midfielder found himself in space on the edge of the box and let fly with a shot that gave Stankovic no chance. Substitute Esposito pulled one back when he drilled the ball past Donnarumma in the 81st minute. Sensi then completed the turnaround two minutes later, calmly slotting home at the back post after another dangerous Inter attack. Vitorino had a chance to equalize with the last action of the match but sent his free-kick high over the bar. — AFP



TOKYO: Paris Saint-Germain's French midfielder Ismael Gharbi (right) clashes with Inter Milan's Italian defender Matteo Darmian during the football friendly match between Italy's Inter Milan and France's Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on August 1, 2023. — AFP

Philippines coach Stajcic quits after World Cup exit

MANILA: Philippines coach Alen Stajcic has left his post after the national team's exit from their first Women's World Cup, the Philippine Football Federation said on Tuesday. The Philippine Football Federation said on Tuesday that Stajcic's appointment as coach in late 2021 - they have jumped from 68 in the FIFA rankings to a best-ever 46th. The Philippines were not expected to get out of their group, but caused a major upset by beating co-hosts New Zealand for a historic first World Cup win before a 6-0 defeat to Norway on Sunday ended their adventure.

The Philippine Football Federation said Stajcic and assistant coach Nahuel Arrarte had "decided

to explore other options" at the end of the World Cup campaign. "Coach Alen Stajcic's appointment as Philippine Women's National Team head coach brought women's football in the Philippines to new heights and hope," PFF president Mariano Araneta said in a statement.

"Coach Alen showed full dedication to hone the Filipinas into a fighting team. He will long be remembered as the coach who trained and dared the team to win at any international competition," Araneta said. Under Stajcic, the Philippines made the semi-finals of the Women's Asian Cup in early 2022, where they lost to South Korea but secured a historic World Cup berth. They followed it up with bronze at the Southeast Asian Games last year, then won the regional AFF Women's Championship on home soil.

Stajcic was a major reason for the Philippines' improvement. He brought a wealth of experience after a playing and coaching career in Australia. He coached Australia at the 2015 World Cup and took the Matildas to as high as fourth in the FIFA rankings, but was



Alen Stajcic

dumped despite guiding them to the 2019 tournament. After the Philippines' loss to Norway, Stajcic said he was "proud of the heart and spirit" of the team, but ducked questions about his future as coach. "We will reflect on that for now and in the coming days we will start making plans for the future," he said.— AFP

No handshake, no problem as Svitolina downs Azarenka

WASHINGTON: Ukraine's Elina Svitolina grabbed a second straight victory over Victoria Azarenka of Belarus at the WTA Tour DC Open in Washington on Monday, weeks after the duo's Wimbledon clash was marred by a handshake controversy. Azarenka was booed off court at Wimbledon earlier this month after her defeat to Svitolina, with fans apparently perceiving she had snubbed her Ukrainian opponent by not advancing to the net for a handshake. In fact, Svitolina did not offer a handshake—something she has declined to do with players from Russia and Belarus ever since the invasion of her homeland. Belarus is a key military ally of Moscow.

On Monday, tournament organizers in Washington aimed to pre-empt any possible repeat of the controversy by informing fans before the match there would be no handshakes. "At the conclusion of the match there will be no handshake between the players," a message on an arena screen said beforehand. "We appreciate your respect for both athletes during and following the match, and for your understanding during these difficult circumstances."

With that issue settled, it was left to the two rivals to serve up a hard-fought if error-strewn battle that saw no fewer than 17 breaks of serve before Svitolina finally prevailed 7-6 (7/2), 6-4. Svitolina clinched victory by breaking Azarenka's serve in the 10th game of the second set. A wild Azarenka backhand presented Svitolina with a match point which she duly converted on the first attempt after bludgeoning a forehand winner into the corner. Azarenka saluted Svitolina's victory with a fleeting thumbs up before heading off the court.— AFP