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## Kuwait's largest budget passed

PM hails cooperation • Speaker says Kuwaitis, expats should be equal in number



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah speaks during a session at the National Assembly on Aug 2, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly on Wednesday passed the 2023/2024 budget, which is projecting the largest spending in the country's history, most of it for wages and subsidies, as Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun called for reducing expat numbers so that they will be equal to citizens. The budget projects spending at KD 26.2 billion and revenues at KD 19.4 billion, leaving a shortfall of KD 6.8 billion, mostly due to calculating oil proceeds at a conservative price.

After the vote, the Assembly closed its current term, shortened by the snap polls on June 6. The Assembly will hold its second term in late October. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah thanked lawmakers for the cooperation they exhibited and called for more cooperation in the next term. Forty-seven MPs voted for the budget, 12 members opposed it and one member abstained.

The approval comes just a few days after the finance ministry announced that Kuwait posted an actual surplus of KD 6.4 billion, according to the final accounts of the 2022/2023 fiscal year which ended on March 31. The ministry said public revenues reached KD 28.8 billion, of which KD 26.7 billion came from oil, while total spending reached KD 22.4 billion.

Rapporteur of the Assembly's budgets committee

MP Osama Al-Zaid told the Assembly on Wednesday that as much as KD 21 billion of expenditures are allocated for wages and spending. Oil income in the current year's budget is estimated at KD 17.2 billion, while non-oil revenue is projected at KD 2.2 billion.

Speaking during the debate on the budget, Saadoun called for amending the demographic structure in the country in a way that Kuwaitis and expats will be equal in number. The call means that Kuwait should get rid of as many as 1.8 million expats, whose number currently stands at 3.3 million, in order to be equal to 1.5 million Kuwaitis. Saadoun did not say in how many years his call should be achieved.

Saadoun said he will oppose any public debt law from the government before it holds to account all corrupt people, adding all Kuwaitis should have jobs and criticized the low housing allowance the government pays to Kuwaiti families who are waiting for houses. The veteran speaker said Kuwait is before an extraordinary phase and praised the reformist steps taken by the government, but urged HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad to do more.

Minister of Oil and acting finance minister Saad Al-Barrak accepted criticism by lawmakers, but added that asking the government to resolve the years-long bad practices in one budget is impossible.

Continued on Page 6

## Kuwait's scorching summers warning for heating planet



KUWAIT: Essa Al-Essa, a 46-year-old Kuwaiti dentist and conservationist, tends to trees that he planted in Hiteen on July 24, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

**KUWAIT:** As the blazing summer sun beats down on Kuwait, shoppers stroll down a promenade lined with palm trees and European-style boutiques, all without breaking a sweat. In one of the world's hottest desert countries, it's all made possible by architecture and technology: The entire street is located inside a heavily air-conditioned shopping mall.

Outside, where temperatures now often soar around 50 degrees Celsius, barely anyone is moving around on foot, leaving the historic market largely deserted. "Only a few people stay in Kuwait at this time of year," said date merchant Abdullah Ashkanani, 53, as large fans sprayed cooling mist onto the few customers braving the blistering heat. Ashkanani, who hails from Iran, said he keeps his shop open largely "for appearances" during the hottest months when most of Kuwait's four million residents flee abroad.

For those who stay behind in the country, life is made bearable by the ever-present Arctic blast of air-con systems. "We can put up with it because the house, the car, everything is air-conditioned," said pensioner

Continued on Page 6

## In warming world, is air-conditioned future inevitable?

**WASHINGTON:** They are ubiquitous in the Gulf and United States, controversial in Europe and coveted in South Asia. As heatwaves intensify across the world, air conditioning has taken center stage. For better or for worse, these power-hungry appliances are among the most common adaptations to a warming world. They have become a necessary tool for the survival of millions, according to experts.

But while they bring immediate, life-saving

relief, air conditioners come at a cost to the climate crisis because of their enormous energy requirements. Air conditioning is responsible for the emission of approximately one billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), out of a total of 37 billion emitted worldwide.

It is possible to end this vicious cycle, experts say, by increasing the contribution of renewable energies, developing less energy-intensive air conditioners and augmenting them with other cooling techniques. "There are some real purists who think that we can eliminate, but I just don't think that's feasible," Robert Dubrow, a Yale epidemiologist who specializes in the health effects of climate change, told AFP.

Continued on Page 6

## Trump indicted for trying to overturn 2020 US election

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump was indicted on Tuesday over his efforts to upend the results of the 2020 US election — the most serious legal threat yet to the former president as he campaigns to return to the White House. It is the third criminal indictment of the 77-year-old Trump since March and charges him with three counts of conspiracy and one count of obstruction.

Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024

Republican presidential nomination, is already scheduled to go on trial in Florida in May of next year for allegedly mishandling top secret government documents. The new charges, two of which carry maximum sentences of 20 years in prison, raise the prospect of Trump being embroiled in more legal proceedings at the height of what is expected to be a bitter and divisive presidential campaign.

The indictment brought by special counsel Jack Smith accuses Trump of conspiracy to defraud the United States and conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding — the Jan 6, 2021 joint session of Congress held to certify Democrat Joe Biden's election

victory. Trump is also accused in the 45-page indictment of seeking to disenfranchise American voters with his false claims that he won the November 2020 presidential election.

"Shortly after election day — which fell on November 3, 2020 — the defendant launched his criminal scheme," the indictment, handed down by a grand jury in Washington, said. "The purpose of the conspiracy was to overturn the legitimate results of the 2020 presidential election by using knowingly false claims of election fraud," it said.

Smith, a former war crimes prosecutor at the Hague, said the Jan 6 attack on the Capitol by Trump support-



Donald Trump

ers was "an unprecedented assault on the seat of American democracy". "It was fueled by lies," Smith told reporters in brief remarks.

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## Tunisia president dismisses premier

**TUNIS:** Tunisian President Kais Saied sacked Prime Minister Najla Bouden without explanation Tuesday night and replaced her with former central bank executive Ahmed Hachani, whom he tasked with overcoming the "colossal challenges" facing the cash-strapped North African country. No official explanation was given for Bouden's dismissal, but several local media outlets highlighted Saied's displeasure over a number of shortages, particularly of bread in state-subsidized bakeries.

Saied "terminated the functions" of Bouden, who had been the first woman to head a government in Tunisia, according to a press release and video released by the presidency shortly before midnight. Saied immediately appointed in her place Hachani, who until now worked at

the Tunisian central bank and studied law at the University of Tunis, where Saied taught, according to Hachani's Facebook profile.

The new head of government, a figure unknown to the general public, was sworn in before the president, according to the presidency video. At the end of the ceremony, Saied wished him "good luck in this responsibility". The president stressed that "there are colossal challenges that we must overcome with a solid and strong will, in order to protect our homeland, our state and social peace".

In recent days, several meetings have taken place within the government and between the president and ministers over the problem of shortages of subsidized bread in several regions. According to media, Saied, who recently said "bread is a red line for Tunisians", fears a repeat of the bread riots that left 150 dead in 1984 under Habib Bourguiba, the father of Tunisian independence.

Faced with a low-wage economy, the Tunisian state has since the 1970s centralized the purchase of a large



TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied poses for a picture with outgoing prime minister Najla Bouden and incoming Prime Minister Ahmed Hachani during a handover ceremony at Kasbah Palace on Aug 2, 2023. — AFP

number of basic ingredients such as flour, semolina, sugar, coffee and cooking oil, before putting them on the market at subsidized prices. — AFP



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## Local

# Great sacrifices of Kuwaiti martyrs recalled on invasion anniversary

## Martyrs' Office holds exhibition, displays images of 1,317 martyrs



KUWAIT: Visitors take a look at the images of martyrs on display at the exhibition organized by the Martyrs' Office at 360 Mall on Wednesday. -KUNA photos



The images and names of 1,317 martyrs from Kuwait and 14 other nationalities on display.

## In my view

## A day that will not be forgotten

By Abdullah Buwair

Local@kuwaittimes.com

August 2, 1990 is the day a neighbor attacked a neighbor, and overnight Kuwait was at the mercy of the aggressor, who did not care for old or young, and did not differentiate between male or female. They entered Kuwait, a small country that did not attack anyone and did not have any animosity with anyone. A peaceful country with peaceful people whose religion is Islam, while respecting other heavenly religions, as Almighty Allah said: "You have your way, and I have my way" (109:6).

The aggressor was a regime of criminality and killing. At the start of the '80s, it took its people to war with another Muslim neighbor for eight years, and as a result of that, the two peoples lost so much between prisoners of war and those killed. Then as the war was over with this neighbor, it resumed its aggression with another Muslim neighbor, which is our beloved country Kuwait, a state with a small area and people, but large in heart and belief in Allah and the message of his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The aggressor destroyed Kuwait's landmarks including Kuwait Towers, Seif Palace, Council of Ministers building, information ministry and many houses and buildings. It did not leave anything intact — even the environment was destroyed, trees burnt and oilwells ignited, as over 720 oilwells were torched. A day that will not be forgotten over the years, as history will continue telling generations what happened as long as life exists.

I personally was not spared from the evil of this regime and had a strange incident with its "wardens". I mention this day to you dear readers and I can never forget it. It was January 17, 1991, and as we were out with my brother and friends, eight of us apart from the driver, who was not a citizen, heading for Jabriya. When we were near the police station roundabout, there was a house that was occupied by a leader from the regime, and there was a checkpoint in front of the house.

A soldier stopped us and asked for our IDs. I was sitting in the front seat, so I gave him my ID. He was from the popular army, who were trained to back the regular aggressor army. He kept checking the ID, then said it is forged, claiming I kept it in the sun to make it look old and change its color, threatening my punishment is execution. They also asked my brother, who was in the back seat, for his ID, which was issued by my brother-in-law who worked for the interior ministry and had the system, IDs and interior ministry seal.

The ID had his profession as student, and this made the soldier worried. He said if all of you are students, where are the soldiers and the army? Then he kept repeating the same sentence: You are a forger and your sentence is execution, adding that your brother will join us. So I told him to take me and no need to take my brother, so he stopped talking, then started to kick the driver. He then took me along with the driver to the police station and left my friends because their IDs were OK and they were not in the military. He also left my brother Nasser.

While on the way to the police station, he kept repeating the phrase "your sentence is execution". I hardly could walk, so he asked the driver to enter the police station and slapped him on the face, telling him we are defending you and want to liberate your country, and you are taking a large group of Kuwaitis in your vehicle. On the way to the police station gate, they had sandbags in front and were singing "welcome Bush" as an expression of not being in fear, while jets were in the skies above them. We entered the station, and at the door I saw crying and screaming everywhere. I think there were some who were being electrocuted, apart from being beaten.

This member of the popular army asked me to go upstairs to see the official, and I had to remain in the office until he came. I did not sit until the official arrived, who asked several questions, starting with you are a soldier and not a student as you claim; you changed your ID; all of you in Kuwait are from the municipality and school students, so where are the soldiers?

I told him we are a few, Kuwait is occupied, and I am a member of the resistance, and we do not have any weapons. I was wearing a dishdasha and headgear, and had a Cartier wallet and pen, which I gave to the soldier. He said do you know the way out? I said yes, so he said go ahead. This is what happened with me personally, and I was so close to death, if it was not for Allah's will. There are other incidents that took place with me, and I will mention them in the coming days.

May Allah bestow His mercy on our martyrs.

KUWAIT: Martyrs' Office Director General Salah Al-Awfan stressed Wednesday the importance of commemorating the Iraqi invasion, in honor of the sacrifices of the martyrs in the face of aggression.

In a statement to KUNA, Awfan said, on the occasion of the office's exhibition at the Avenues Mall titled (Precious Homeland), this event comes to commemorate the martyrs and learn about their sacrifices and continues until Saturday. The office is also holding another exhibition at 360 Mall that includes images and names of 1,317 martyrs from Kuwait and 14 other nationalities. It also highlights the role of Kuwaiti women and their sacrifices during the Iraqi invasion, as the number of women martyrs reached 92, he added.

Awfan explained that the Martyrs' Office carries a message in spreading the memory of the martyrs and monitoring their heroism in events and programs in a way that contributes to inculcating the values of citizenship and loyalty. He also stressed the keenness of the political leadership to

sponsor and support the office in various aspects.

He also called on citizens and residents to visit the exhibition to learn about the sacrifices of heroes, especially the generations that did not live in that era. Martyrs' Office held several other exhibitions in Malls such as Al-Assima, Al-Kout, Al-Hamra and Al-Khairan complexes, in addition to Al-Shaheed Park and Kuwait International Airport (TI).

On Tuesday, Martyrs' Office announced the launch of the 20th Martyrs' cultural contest for skill and innovation, set to begin at the start of next school year in cooperation with the education ministry. Awfan said during a press conference at the education ministry on the occasion of the Iraqi invasion anniversary that the values of loyalty and belonging are the most important things "we seek to instill in our students". He added that it is "at the core of our duties to publicize the role of martyrs and their memories."

The contest aims at supporting innovation and skill "out of belief in our youth and what their skills that are worthy of praise". He said cooperation with the educa-

tion ministry is not the first, as this was preceded with exchanging visits to scientific museums through schools. He said the contest will start with the school year and continues until February 2024 and will have several sections including poetry, drawing, music, calligraphy and theater. The students from the intermediate and secondary school grades can participate in the contest.

Assistant Acting Undersecretary for educational development and activities at the education ministry Dr Ghanim Al-Suleimani said the Martyrs' Office's initiative has a role in instilling loyalty and the value of sacrifice and agrees with the views of the leadership and Kuwait's vision. — KUNA



Salah Al-Awfan



KUWAIT: Medical Director at Blood Transfusion Services Department Dr Hanan Al-Awadi poses for a photo with National Guard, army and interior ministry representatives. -KUNA photos



Volunteers donate blood during the blood donation campaign organized by the ministry of health on Wednesday.

## MoH stresses need to promote blood donation culture

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health stressed the need to promote a culture of blood donation to save lives, and to recognize the value of voluntary blood donation to highlight noble human values by preferring others to oneself. In a statement to reporters Wednesday, on the sidelines of the inauguration of the blood donation campaign, "Together forever, wall of the homeland 8," the Assistant Undersecretary of MoH for External Health Services Affairs Dr Yaqoub Al-Tamar underlined the need to promote a culture of blood donation by urging citizens to follow this behavior, which is crucial for saving the lives and the development of health services.

The ministry has always supported services related to blood transfusion and strives to raise awareness about the need to donate and organize campaigns throughout the year, he said, indicating that the ministry is represented by the Blood Transfusion Services Department, working on assessing Kuwait's needs for blood annually according to international standards and drawing plans and strategies for the country's future projects in this regard. Such campaigns are only a continuation of the year-round campaigns carried out by MoH to activate community partnership, promote the principle of social solidarity, and promote awareness about the importance of blood donation to enhance the strategic stock of the blood bank, Dr Al-Tamar added.

He pointed out that this campaign comes out of remembrance of the memory of the brutal invasion of Kuwait and the role of righteous martyrs who sacrificed their blood and to encourage community participation with various institutions.

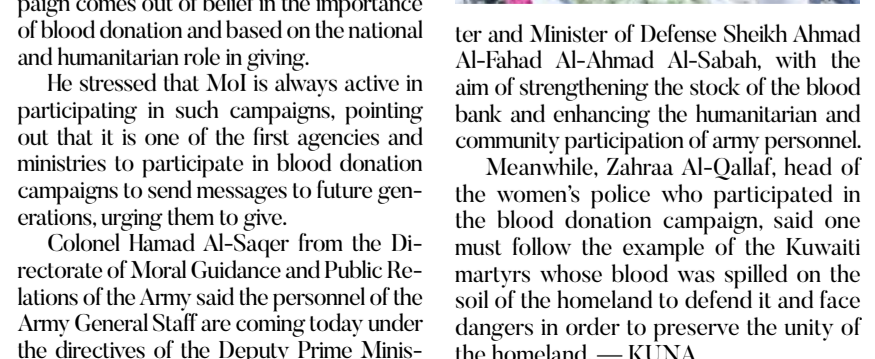
In a similar statement, the medical Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department Dr Hanan Al-Awadi confirmed that the campaign is witnessing, since the early morning, an excellent turnout, especially from members of the military institutions. Evoking the memory of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait means giving, and there is no better way than donating blood to save lives that are in dire need of every

drop of blood, she pointed out. Dr Al-Awadi referred to the need for blood banks with all its types, especially since the expiry date of blood is only one month, pointing to the constant need to donate on an ongoing basis, calling on every person who is able to donate blood to donate. The doors of the blood bank are always open and on all days to receive donors on a regular basis, she noted. Regarding the quantities of blood donations this year compared to last year, she explained that this is better than last year, as the rate of increase during the period from January to July of this year ranged between 59 and 60 percent compared to last year for the same period. In turn, the Head of the Public Relations Department in Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Colonel Yusef Ghuloom said that KFF is participating in the national campaign to donate blood organized by MoH.

He explained that this participation comes from the national and societal role of KFF to unite the concept of social solidarity and humanitarian work by supporting and strengthening the strategic stock of the blood bank, in a way that contributes to treating patients and saving lives, pointing to the presence of a wide participation of firefighters who come throughout the day.

On his side, Colonel Sattam Al-Awadi, director of the nursing branch and the examination and medical center at the National Guard, said that based on the cooperation protocol between the National Guard and MoH, in order to activate the role of community service, one of the provisions of the strategic document of the National Guard is the participation of National Guard members to donate blood. He pointed to the participation of many officers in this campaign on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion, pointing out that it is a humanitarian action that everyone is supposed to do to enhance the stock of blood and contribute to saving lives that are in dire need of blood.

He explained that the National Guard has prepared an electronic platform for registration to donate blood, so that a specific time is set for every 10 members to re-



duce crowding, especially since all military agencies participate in this campaign, and it is expected that the number of donors will exceed 200 individuals.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Turki Al-Baidan from the Department of Public Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said that their participation today comes in response to the nation's call to strengthen the strategic stock in the blood bank out of a sense of social responsibility, pointing out that the campaign comes out of belief in the importance of blood donation and based on the national and humanitarian role in giving.

He stressed that MoI is always active in participating in such campaigns, pointing out that it is one of the first agencies and ministries to participate in blood donation campaigns to send messages to future generations, urging them to give.

Colonel Hamad Al-Saqer from the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations of the Army said the personnel of the Army General Staff are coming today under the directives of the Deputy Prime Minis-



ter and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with the aim of strengthening the stock of the blood bank and enhancing the humanitarian and community participation of army personnel. Meanwhile, Zahraa Al-Qallaf, head of the women's police who participated in the blood donation campaign, said one must follow the example of the Kuwaiti martyrs whose blood was spilled on the soil of the homeland to defend it and face dangers in order to preserve the unity of the homeland. — KUNA



Local

# Kuwaiti mother recalls her life's darkest moments during invasion

'I was worried I would only see them again in my dreams'



Buildings severely damaged during the Iraqi invasion.



KUWAIT: Umm Qassem is seen with two of her sons at their home. — KUNA photos



Hussein is seen with fellow service men during the Iraqi invasion.



KUWAIT: "They invaded our country on a pitch-black night ... My heart was tormented and oozed blood due to the back-stabbing aggression and fears for my children's safety," Maliha Al-Ansari said recalling her life's darkest moments.

Ansari, Umm Qassem, recalled, in an interview with KUNA, the first moments of the Iraqi aggression that happened on August 2, 1990, when the Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait under the cover of darkness in a blatant aggression that contradicted all international conventions.

Umm Qassem has remained overwhelmed with deep sentiments of pain and bitterness particularly after the aggressors abducted her eldest son, Qassem, during the first day of the aggression. Qassem, who was an engineer at an oil company, was taken prisoner after he left home before dawn to

join his military unit. "Weeks later we learned that he had been taken prisoner and languishing in prisons of the Iraqi regime," she said.

"The piece of my heart did not see sunlight throughout seven months of the flagrant aggression," she bitterly recalled. The Kuwaiti mother deeply suffered as she continued to hear horrific stories about merciless killings of the prisoners by the Iraqi regime at the time. "I used to be overwhelmed with fear each night with deep sentiments of pain piercing my soul due to his absence."

Qassem was one of many young Kuwaitis who were kidnapped by the Iraqi forces. Some of them had been freed, others remained missing or were found dead. Ansari's other son, Hussein, who was studying medicine in Ireland, decided to return home during the occu-

pation and join ranks of the American forces for defending Kuwait. Within a few days, Hussein was flown on a Kuwait Airways flight with his friends to Boston, where they received military training from a US army unit.

Whenever his mother would call to check on him, Hussein told his mother that he was still in Ireland for studies, keeping his military involvement a secret. "I know deep down that he wasn't in Ireland. A mother's heart can see through what her children are hiding." Her third son, Ali, followed his brother's path, joining the British forces for liberating Kuwait.

Umm Qassem was silent for a moment as she recalled the anguish of being away from her sons.

"I was worried I would only see them again in my dreams," she said. "How could I stop my son, Ali, when he's a

grown man? He was only a baby when my husband died so I named him after his father."

Ansari recalled horrific moments when other Kuwaiti mothers received disfigured corpses of their sons from the occupiers. "I still hear their weeping and moaning after receiving their remains in black bags." Umm Qassem found solace when the Kuwaiti forces backed by the allies liberated the homeland. Intent on inflicting harm before their withdrawal, the aggressing forces set ablaze hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells inflicting one the largest environmental catastrophes on record. "The skies turned pitch-black with smoke billowing from the burning wells ... however the gloom has tapered off with the relieving sense of restoring freedom," she said. — KUNA



A handmade gift crafted by Qassem during his capture.



Mahdi, son of the martyr Abdul Wahid Al-Serafi, and his family pose for a photo. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Families of martyrs watch a film documenting the invasion at Al-Salam Palace Museum.



Al-Salam Palace Museum

## Film tells story of Iraqi invasion

KUWAIT: Al-Salam Palace Museum recalled the memory of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait through producing a film titled "Liberation", coinciding with the 33rd anniversary of the invasion on Wednesday.

The film presented the story of the Iraqi invasion and the epic of liberation led by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his Crown Prince and Prime Minister at the time, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, may God have mercy on them.

The film addressed the role that the people of Kuwait played during liberation, the role of the coalition forces and the United Nations, as well as the Kuwaiti government's efforts to mobilize international support for the liberation and the effects of destruction and human, environmental and economic losses.

The film will be screened from August 1-3. The morning period will be allocated to the families of the martyrs and the afternoon period will be for the public. Anyone can book to watch the movie through the museums' website at <https://aspm.com.w>.

The film will be screened at the 13th Amir of Kuwait Hall Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and produced by the Center for Historical Documents and the Amiri Diwan Museums and Offices.

The attendees from the families of the martyrs expressed their feelings to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), which ranged between the joy of liberation and achieving victory after resistance and sadness



The poster of the film "Liberation" is seen at the museum.



Families of martyrs arrive at the museum for a screening of the film.



Mahdi, son of the martyr Abdul Wahid Al-Serafi, speaks to KUNA.



Sahar, sister of Jordanian martyr Ashraf Mahmoud.

over what happened to Kuwait and the loss of the martyrs who lost their lives for the homeland.

Mahdi, son of the martyr Abdul Wahid Al-Serafi, said: "We came to watch the film with my family and children to emphasize the impact of these national events in consolidating Kuwait's history for generations, commemorating the martyrs and strengthening the children's national spirit."

Wife of the martyr Zakaria Al-Qadri confirmed: "These national events have a remarkable impact on the hearts of the families of the martyrs," recalling her husband's capture at the beginning of the invasion until his remains were found in 2004.

### An Arab issue

Sahar, sister of Jordanian martyr Ashraf Mah-

moud, said that her brother "was born and lived in Kuwait and did not accept that it had been occupied and joined the resistance group." He was captured, tortured and martyred at the age of 21 on February 5, 1991. She stressed that the invasion was not an issue that affects Kuwaitis only, but rather an issue of Arabism in which the separation borders were abolished, adding that she and her family lived and grew up in Kuwait and did not skimp on seeking to give back to this country.

It is noteworthy that the Salam Palace was completely destroyed during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and looted and obliterated until a proposal was submitted in 2013 to restore it by the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Cultural Centers on

the need to establish a museum that collects the history of Kuwait.

The Museum (Salam Palace) was completed after years of hard work to include under one roof several wings, including the section concerned with the history of the Salam Palace and the history of Kuwait through its rulers, while another section includes the history of the civilizations that inhabited Kuwait.

On April 29, 2019, the palace was inaugurated under the patronage and presence of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God rest his soul, to form a unique historical, civilized and architectural edifice that preserves and documents the history of Kuwait and deepens the concepts of pride in the homeland and simulates them for generations. — KUNA



## News in Brief

Electrical loads  
break records

**KUWAIT:** The electrical load index continued to rise for the second day, recording at 1 pm the highest electrical load in the history of Kuwait with 16,850 megawatts in a new record. Sources in the ministry attributed the reason for the record load to the high temperature, which ranges from 49 to 50 degrees Celsius. "The ministry still has a reserve of 875 megawatts," sources added. The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said two sub feeders in Salam are out of commission, which led to a power outage in limited parts of the Al-Salam area in blocks 1 and 5. According to local media, several areas witnessed partial outages in Salwa, Al-Rai, Jabriya and Al-Salam as a result of malfunctions in the main electricity stations, pointing to the efforts exerted by the ministry to quickly address those outages, whether by fixing the defect or by supplying diesel generators to areas where it will take a long time to fix the defect.

Kuwait University bans  
smoking in all buildings

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait University's acting rector Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri issued a circular banning all kinds of smoking in all Kuwait University faculties and buildings. Violators will be subjected to legal accountability, the circular warns. The step comes in line with efforts to promote healthy city standards by protecting the health of individuals and the society.

Municipality campaign  
removes violations

**KUWAIT:** Public cleanliness and road occupancy department of Farwaniya Municipality carried out field campaigns in Jleeb area resulting in the removal of 15 abandoned vehicles, that in addition to hauling 18 loads of rubbish. Director Mishaal Al-Azmi said the aim of the campaigns is to find violators and take legal action against them.

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** A commercial airline aircraft flies before the rising "sturgeon supermoon" above Kuwait City on August 1, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Kuwaiti civil disobedience powerful weapon that paralyzed Iraqi invasion

## Experts recount patriotic acts of resistance by civilians

**KUWAIT:** The civil disobedience observed by the people of Kuwait during 1990-1991 was not merely a demonstration against the Iraqi occupation but also implied the patriots' message of their ardent adherence to Kuwait as the homeland, its independence and faithful loyalty to the sagacious leadership.

The Kuwaitis, in the wake of the black Thursday, August 2, 1990, made their voice echo to all corners of the world, demonstrating no compromise, no negotiations and no cession of the State of Kuwait's sovereignty, independence and its territorial sanctity. Their civil disobedience in the face of the heavily armed occupiers carved out a road map and created great hope to liberate the homeland of the occupiers' desecration. On the occupation's 33rd painful anniversary, the sentiments of pride are renewed regarding the heroic stand by the steadfast Kuwaiti people and the honest residents of the country who observed civil disobedience, joining hands in keeping State utilities running and maintaining social sol-

idarity. Dr Ayed Al-Manna', a researcher, historian, and media figure, said in an interview with KUNA that the civil disobedience against the Iraqi occupation had no leadership and was not very organized; however, the movement was driven by the citizens' belief in the justice of their cause.

The Kuwaitis, since the early hours of the occupation, engaged in a wide scale confrontation against the occupation despite repression. Manna' said, adding that the confrontation that had lasted for seven months isolated the enemy. Farhan Al-Farhan, a researcher and historian, told KUNA that the civil disobedience constituted an internal front that paralyzed the occupiers and obstructed their schemes. Citizens on the first day of the aggression removed the numbers of houses, districts, and streets to make it difficult for occupiers to move around.

When asked by occupation troops about directions and locations, Kuwaitis used to give them wrong information or say, "I do not know". Many

Iraqi intelligence agents who went to residential districts seeking to collect information about state officials and citizens were given false information. Citizens held meetings at mosques and served as guards in the districts on shifts' basis, said Manna'.

Hussein Abdulrahman, a media personnel, said the plight of the aggression revealed the strength of the internal front and support of the Kuwaiti people for their legitimate government and leadership, thus foiling the enemies' plot to erase the identity of the State of Kuwait and plunder its resources.

At the time, there was no social media and the daily newspapers had to stop publishing, prompting the citizens to print leaflets to guide the activists and publicize resistance action. Moreover, statements were recorded on cassettes and communications abroad were conducted via radio signals. Furthermore, the resistance activists painted graffiti against the occupation on public walls and at public locations. — KUNA



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## NBK supports dive team to protect reefs

**KUWAIT:** As part of its corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability strategy, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) supports the Kuwait Dive Team project to protect coral reefs in a number of Kuwaiti islands.

The project includes installing mooring buoys to prevent boaters from using anchors in this fragile environment. The project covered four important marine locations in Kuwait including Jaber Al-Kuwait Reserves, along the north and mid coast of Bnaider and Khairan.

NBK Public Relations Senior Manager, Talal Al-Turki, said: "The environment is a major priority for NBK. Protecting and preserving the environment are pivotal elements of our social commitment for the aim of realizing overall sustainability in Kuwait."

Al-Turki added: "NBK is proud to join Kuwait Dive Team in these initiatives to clean up and preserve the marine environment of the Kuwait Bay,

which is one of the main drivers of the national economy."

"NBK is committed to promoting the adoption of socially impactful and accountable practices in Kuwait. This initiative is inline with our directive to raise awareness on the best practices of social responsibility as well as increase awareness to reduce harm and preserve the environment," he noted.

NBK is keen on supporting programs that serve the community and spread awareness in efforts to keep the environment safe and clean. NBK remains the largest contributor to society. NBK confirmed its commitment to corporate social responsibility through its tireless community development efforts.

The Kuwait diving team has been participating in the protection and rehabilitation of Kuwait's aquatic world through a host of activities that runs the spectrum of positive interaction with the environment.



Talal Al-Turki





Migrants sleep outside; Mayor says 'city is full'

## Indonesia arrests Muslim preacher for blasphemy, hate speech

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ZHUOZHOU: This aerial view shows the corn crops being submerged at a flooded village after heavy rains in Zhuozhou, Baoding city, in northern China's Hebei province on August 2, 2023.— AFP

# Beijing records heaviest rain in 140 years; streets flooded

## Millions hit by extreme weather events

**ZHUOZHOU:** Deadly rains that pummeled China's capital in recent days were the heaviest since records began 140 years ago, Beijing's weather service said on Wednesday, as a massive cleanup operation began. Millions of people have been hit by extreme weather events and prolonged heatwaves around the globe in recent weeks, events that scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change. And the Beijing Meteorological Service said the capital has just experienced the "heaviest rainfall in 140 years", when city authorities started keeping records.

"The maximum (amount) of rainfall recorded during this storm, which was 744.8 millimeters, occurred at the Wangjiayuan Reservoir in Changping," the service said, adding the largest volume previously recorded was 609 millimeters in 1891. At least 11 people have died in the rains in Beijing, state broadcaster CCTV said Tuesday, with more than a dozen missing.

The epicenter of flooding shifted to neighboring Hebei province on Wednesday. Dramatic aerial photographs taken by AFP of Hebei's Zhuozhou city showed shopping streets turned into rivers of brown water, while others showed farmland in the surrounding areas completely submerged and floodwater stretching for miles.

A 34-year-old print factory worker, who gave

only his surname of Liu, said water began pouring into Zhuozhou's factory district on Monday afternoon. "First we tried to block the water, but then it was impossible," Liu told AFP. "We couldn't get any of our plant's equipment or materials out to shelter. We were trapped inside until midday today before being rescued." AFP saw rescuers using boats to ferry instant noodles, bread and drinking water to residents who could not or did not want to leave properties engulfed by water.

### Tons of rubbish

In Beijing's Fangshan district, on the border between the capital and Hebei province, an AFP team saw a park that had been completely flooded, with tons of rubbish that had been washed away by torrential rains stuck near a bridge. "I have never seen something like this in more than 40 years," said a 71-year-old resident called Li, who also did not want to give her full name. A police officer said the area became "extremely dangerous" on Tuesday. Journalists also saw a military vehicle with caterpillar wheels on its way back from the worst-affected areas.

State media footage showed rescuers rowing inflatable rafts through waterlogged neighborhoods, while locals clung to construction scaffolding awaiting help. Storm Doksuri, a former super typhoon,

swept northwards over China after hitting southern Fujian province last week, following its battering of the Philippines. Heavy rains began pounding the typically dry capital and surrounding areas on Saturday. The amount recorded in just 40 hours neared the average rainfall for the entire month of July.

State media warned last week that 130 million people would be affected by the extremely heavy rainfall across northern China. Swaths of suburban Beijing and the surrounding areas have been inundated, with state media reporting 974,400 people have been evacuated in the capital and neighboring Hebei province. A further 42,211 people were evacuated in Shanxi province to the west. Authorities in the capital lifted the red alert for flooding on Wednesday morning "as the water flow in major rivers has gone below the warning mark", state news agency Xinhua said.

### 'Extreme weather'

China has been hit hard by extreme weather in recent months, from record-breaking heatwaves to deadly rain. Ma Jun, director of the Beijing-based NGO the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, said that while the typhoon had brought the rain, rising ocean temperatures caused by climate change were also causing the extreme weather. "Chi-

na has suffered unprecedented extreme heatwaves since last year... this year, there are record-breaking high temperatures in Northern China," Ma told AFP. "These heatwaves are linked to global warming, and this is what most climate scientists around the world tend to agree," he said.

With rainfall easing, the focus has moved to the relief operation, with hundreds of rescue workers from the Chinese Red Cross being sent to hard-hit areas to clean up debris and help evacuate victims, Xinhua said. Two of the 11 people killed in the rains in Beijing died while "on duty during rescue and relief", according to state broadcaster CCTV. Thirteen people were still missing but another 14 have 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 at the weekend. President Xi Jinping called on Tuesday for "every effort" to rescue those "lost or trapped" by the storm. And visiting a relief work site in Beijing's Mentougou - one of the capital's hardest-hit areas - Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing urged "all-out" efforts to rescue those still missing. The country is now on alert for the arrival of Typhoon Khanun, the sixth such storm of the year, as it nears China's east coast. — AFP

## Still no answers 3 years after Beirut mega-explosion

**BEIRUT:** One of history's biggest non-nuclear explosions rocked Beirut on August 4, 2020, destroying swathes of the Lebanese capital, killing more than 220 people and injuring at least 6,500. Three years on, the probe into the traumatic disaster caused by a huge pile of poorly-stored fertilizer remains bogged down in legal and political wrangling, to the dismay of victims' families.

The massive explosion, heard as far away as Cyprus, destroys much of Beirut port and entire districts of the city in scenes that shock the country and the world. The blast leaves a 43-metre deep crater and registers as the equivalent of a magnitude 3.3 earthquake. The disaster spreads fear and chaos, with mountains of broken glass littering roads and bloodied survivors flooding overwhelmed hospitals. The blast was caused by a fire in a warehouse where a vast stockpile of the industrial chemical ammonium nitrate had been haphazardly stored for years. The tragedy strikes amid a deep economic crisis, almost a year after mass demonstrations erupted against a ruling class deemed inept and corrupt as living conditions worsen. On August 10, Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigns under a barrage of pressure over the explosion.



BEIRUT: A picture shows a view of the Beirut port, the site of a huge blast which devastated the Lebanese capital three years ago. — AFP

In December 2020, the lead investigator examining the blast, Fadi Sawan, charges Diab and three ex-ministers with negligence. Two of them file a complaint, the probe is suspended, and Sawan is removed from his post by court order. In July 2021, the new investigating magistrate, Tarek Bitar, moves to interrogate four former ministers but parliament stalls on lifting their immunity. He is forced to suspend the probe following a series of court challenges.

### Gun battle

In October 2021, the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah and its ally Amal call for

demonstrations to demand Bitar's dismissal. Seven people are killed in gun battles during the rally. At the end of 2021, Bitar resumes his investigation but less than two weeks later is forced to suspend work for a fourth time following more legal challenges.

### Silos collapse

On August 4, 2022, several grain silos damaged in the explosion collapse in a cloud of dust, a traumatic reminder of the disaster that struck exactly two years before. Days earlier, other parts of the silos crumbled after a fire broke out when remaining grain stocks fermented and ignited in the summer heat. — AFP

## AI 'could halve time' reading cancer scans

**PARIS:** Artificial intelligence could help almost halve the workload of radiologists when it comes to searching routine scans for signs of breast cancer, a large Swedish study suggested on Wednesday. The interim results of the trial were hailed as promising, but the authors cautioned that more research was needed before AI can be used to screen for breast cancer on a wider scale.

While increasingly convincing chatbots such as ChatGPT have driven speculation about the future potential applications of AI, one area in which the technology has already shown proficiency is in reading medical scans. With many countries suffering from a shortage of radiologists, there are hopes that AI could make the time-consuming job of analyzing routine scans quicker and more accurate.

This could have a particularly large impact for breast cancer. More than 2.3 million women were diagnosed with the cancer in 2020 alone, according to the World Health Organization, and it caused 685,000 deaths. Regular screening is vital to identifying early signs of cancer. In Europe, women aged 50 to 69 are advised to get a mammogram every two years, with the resulting scan analyzed by two radiologists. The study in Sweden involved the

scans of 80,000 women who had mammograms at four sites in southwest Sweden between April 2021 and July last year.

Their scans were randomly divided for analysis to either an AI-supported system or two human radiologists, who served as the control group. The AI algorithm read the scans and predicted the risk of cancer out of 10. Its predictions were then checked by a radiologist. The AI-supported system spotted 20 percent more cancers, the study said, which worked out to be an additional case for every thousand women screened.

When it came to false positives - when a mammogram is first thought to look suspicious but is later cleared - both the AI-supported system and the two humans spotted the same rate: 1.5 percent. And the workload for radiologists was reduced by 44 percent for the AI group, because only one person was required to read the scans rather than the normal two.

"The greatest potential of AI right now is that it could allow radiologists to be less burdened by the excessive amount of reading," said Kristina Lang, a radiologist at Sweden's Lund University and lead author of the study. But Lang said the "promising interim safety results" were "not enough on their own to confirm that AI is ready to be implemented in mammography screening," she said in a statement. It will take two more years before the trial can say whether using AI leads to a reduction in what are called interval cancers, which are detected between routine screenings, the researchers cautioned. — AFP



## International

# Migrants sleep outside as NY mayor says 'city is full'

## Dozens of asylum seekers sleep on sidewalks

**NEW YORK:** New York, once the gateway to the United States through Ellis Island and a city built by immigrants, is full, according to the mayor - but migrants seeking a better life continue to arrive by the hundreds. Dozens of asylum seekers, mainly from West Africa, have been sleeping on sidewalks outside a Manhattan hotel this week, waiting to be processed at a makeshift center following perilous journeys fleeing violence and poverty.

They are seeking shelter in the Big Apple two weeks after Mayor Eric Adams said the city had no more space, following an influx of migrants that has stretched services to their breaking point. "There is no more room," Adams reiterated on Monday. And it's "not going to get better," he added. His comments in late July encouraging migrants to go to other cities sparked accusations that he was violating the city's right-to-shelter laws and betraying the spirit of New York, as symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, which in years gone by welcomed new arrivals by sea.

Abdoulahi Diallo was among those who waited outside the Roosevelt Hotel on Tuesday after traveling for two weeks from his native Mauritania, first to Turkey, then Nicaragua, before crossing the Mexican border into the United States. The journey cost him \$8,000 and he undertook it in search of "democracy" and "respect," the 25-year-old told AFP.

Others seeking temporary accommodation were from Senegal. Some said they had slept on cardboard in storefronts for five days waiting to be accommodated. Volunteers distributed food and water and during a mini heatwave last week

made air-conditioned minibuses available to them. Since April last year, more than 93,000 migrants, mostly from Central and South America, have arrived in New York, which is required by law to offer free housing to anyone who requests it.

The influx has come as Republican-led states such as Texas have transported migrants to Democratic-run areas to protest President Joe Biden's immigration policies. Almost 106,000 people, including some 54,000 migrants, currently live in New York City's care, either in shelters or hotels, according to officials. Last month, Adams announced that authorities would hand out flyers at the US-Mexican border saying there was "no guarantee" they would receive shelter in New York and that they should "please consider" another city.

Adams has met with federal authorities to try to find a solution, which, according to him, includes more border controls, a state of emergency and federal aid to deal with the immigration wave. He also wants federal authorities to speed up the approval of work permits for new arrivals. "There's nothing more anti-American than you can't work," Adams added.

New York City has long been a sanctuary city for migrants but Adams, a Democrat, has been gradually trying to restrict the number of new arrivals. His administration now gives priority to families with young children when granting free housing, while single men will have to reapply for shelter after 60 days. "Our compassion is infinite. Our space is not," a senior official at the agency that operates much of the emergency housing for migrants said recently.



**NEW YORK:** Dozens of recently arrived migrants to New York City camp outside of the Roosevelt Hotel, which has been made into a reception center, as they try to secure temporary housing on August 1, 2023. — AFP

Adams has blamed the federal and state governments for not providing enough assistance. But city comptroller Brad Lander has accused him of undermining "the defining role of New York as a beacon of promise, inscribed at the base of the

Statue of Liberty." For Diallo, he just wants the means to support himself. "We've crossed a lot of countries to get here. We've suffered. We've come here because we trust this country. We trust the United States," he said. — AFP

## German military struggles to find new recruits

**FRANKFURT:** Germany's armed forces are facing major problems in attracting new recruits, the defense minister said Wednesday, as Berlin seeks to overhaul its creaking military following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Bundeswehr has long suffered from a lack of resources and funding but the start of the Ukraine war prompted Chancellor Olaf Scholz to pledge to boost spending.

However, a central challenge is recruiting the next generation of soldiers, admitted Defence Minister Boris Pistorius during a visit to an armed forces career centre in Stuttgart. "Everyone is talking about a shortage of personnel in the Bundeswehr — and no one knows this better than I," he told reporters. "We have seven percent fewer applicants this year compared to the same period last year." During training in the army, there is a dropout rate of about 30 percent, he said.

The acute problems facing the Bundeswehr were laid bare in March when a top MP said the military had "too little of everything" and its barracks were in a pitiful state. Some troops' living quarters were lacking Wi-Fi and even working toilets, said Eva Hoegl, a German parliamentary commissioner tasked with scrutinizing the military. The centerpiece of Berlin's efforts to overhaul the military is a special 100-billion-euro (\$110 billion) fund — but Hoegl said that none of this was spent in 2022 amid sluggish bureaucratic decision-making. When it came to recruitment, Pistorius said the younger generation had greater concerns about work-life balance than in the past, which were hard to reconcile with a military career. And the fact German society was ageing — leading to shortages of workers across many industries — meant military recruitment was particularly difficult. "By 2050, we will have 12 percent fewer people in the 15-24 age group," he said. — AFP

## 33 killed in five days of Brazil police raids

**SAO PAULO:** At least 33 people have been killed in police operations against drug gangs in two Brazilian states since last week, authorities said Tuesday, triggering calls for independent investigations. In the southeastern state of Sao Paulo, Governor Tarciso de Freitas said police had killed 14 suspects after coming under fire during a massive anti-gang operation launched after an officer was shot dead Thursday in the port city of Guarujá.

In the northeastern state of Bahia, officials meanwhile said 19 suspects in three different cities had been killed since Friday in clashes with police. In all

the cases, authorities said police had returned fire after coming under attack. However, the killings drew criticism from rights groups in Brazil, where accusations of abuses by security forces are frequent.

The Sao Paulo operation was launched Friday, a day after a 30-year-old police special forces officer was shot dead while on patrol in Guarujá, one of several ports that feed the Brazilian economic capital. The state police force's internal ombudsman's office is investigating more deaths stemming from that operation, and estimates the total number could rise to 19, newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo reported. TV channel Globo News said that locals have accused police of torturing suspects during the crackdown, dubbed "Operation Shield."

Freitas, an ally of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro, denied Monday that officers had com-

mitted rights violations. But "if there were abuses, they will be punished," he told a news conference Tuesday. Leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's justice minister, Flavio Dino, criticized the operation, saying the police reaction "doesn't seem proportional to the crime committed." The Arns Commission, a rights group, called for an "immediate investigation" of the deaths, and Amnesty International criticized Freitas for "legitimizing police violence."

Authorities said they had arrested 32 suspects so far in the operation and seized 11 weapons and more than 20 kilos (44 pounds) of drugs. In Bahia, authorities said a police operation Friday had left seven people dead in the city of Camacari. That was followed by an operation Sunday that killed eight people in a rural area outside Itaitim, and another Monday that killed four in Salvador, the state capital. — AFP

## Meta blocking news in Canada

**OTTAWA:** Meta on Tuesday started blocking Canadians' access to news on Facebook and Instagram in response to a new law requiring digital giants to pay publishers for such content. Google, another critic of the Online News Act, has said it is considering a similar move, among an ongoing global debate as more governments try to make tech firms pay for news content. "News links and content posted by news publishers and broadcasters in Canada will no longer be viewable by people in Canada," Meta said in a statement.

News posted on foreign sites will also not be viewable by Canadian Facebook and Instagram users, and they will no longer be able to share articles on the two platforms. Meta noted that the changes starting Tuesday would be implemented "over the

course of the next few weeks." An AFP reporter was still able to see news on Facebook Tuesday, but some users reported already getting messages saying such content was being blocked.

The Online News Act builds on similar legislation introduced in Australia and aims to support a struggling Canadian news sector that has seen a flight of advertising dollars and hundreds of publications closed in the last decade. It requires digital giants to make fair commercial deals with Canadian outlets for the news and information that is shared on their platforms, or face binding arbitration.

An October 2022 report by Canada's parliamentary budget watchdog estimated the legislation could see Canadian newspapers receive about Can\$330 million (US\$250 million) per year from digital platforms. Meta said the bill is flawed and based on the "incorrect premise that Meta benefits unfairly from news content shared on our platforms, when the reverse is true." Rather, it said, news outlets share con-

tent on Facebook and Instagram to attract readers, which helps their own bottom line. "The people using our platforms don't come to us for news," it added.

Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge called the move to block news "irresponsible," noting that 80 percent of all online advertising revenues in Canada goes to Meta and Google. "A free and independent press is fundamental to our democracy," she said, adding that other countries are considering introducing similar legislation "to tackle the same challenges."

Canada's public broadcaster slammed Meta's move as "irresponsible and an abuse of their market power." The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) said it was "calling on Meta to act responsibly by restoring Canadians' access to news." But some Canadian media have taken a more complex view. Last month an editorial in the leading Globe and Mail newspaper suggested the bill "distorts the marketplace by protecting certain companies from reality." — AFP

## Kuwait's largest budget passed...

Continued from Page 1

He described this year's budget as an "emergency budget" following the events in the past three years, which included dissolving the Assembly twice and holding two general polls.

MP Hasan Jowhar said the country's finances have reached a "red line", as oil revenues are no longer

sufficient to meet wages and subsidies. MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf said "we are selling oil with our right hand and spending with our left hand". MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the budget is a repetition of previous years "without solutions or a plan". He added the breakeven price for oil is \$93 a barrel and no one believes oil prices are going to increase sharply. MP Saud Al-Asfour said KD 24 billion are allocated for current expenditures and just KD 1.8 billion for capital spending, which goes against the government's program, adding KD 3 billion is allocated for health and the services are still poor.

the century, noted the meteorologist. As the world records ever more heat records, "what is happening to us will happen elsewhere", he warned.

Kuwait — where glass towers soar into the sky and cars choke the highways — has only recently invested in public transport and green energy to help counter climate change. Its environment protection authority, which falls under the oil ministry, recognizes "a rise in temperatures in recent years", its director Samira Al-Kandari said.

To help change course, Kuwait has started building its first commercial solar power park, the Shagaya project. With the first phase complete, and other projects planned, Kandari said Kuwait's goal is that "renewable energy constitutes 15 percent of our energy production by 2035". "We will increase this percentage in the future," she said.

Outside of the state institutions, some Kuwaiti citizens have launched grassroots initiatives, including tree-planting to help cool sunbaked urban environments. Essa Al-Essa, a 46-year-old dentist, started planting trees as a "hobby" in a vacant, sandy lot near his home on the outskirts of the capital, he told AFP. In 2020, at the height of the COVID pandemic, he developed it into the Kuwait Forest project, starting a green space that also helps scrub the air and captures carbon.

"Trees are particularly useful in polluted places such as industrial and residential areas," said Essa. But he also hopes the natural shade and cooling they provide will help break the dominance of energy-intensive air-conditioning. "The more we cool our houses," Essa said, "the more we warm our surroundings." — AFP

## In warming world, is air-conditioned...

Continued from Page 1

Access to air conditioning already saves tens of thousands of lives a year, a figure that is growing, according to a recent IEA report co-authored by Dubrow. Studies show that the risk of heat-related death is reduced by about three-quarters for those living in homes with an air conditioner. In the United States, where about 90 percent of households have AC, studies have highlighted the role of air conditioning in protecting the population — and the potentially devastating effect of widespread power cuts during heatwaves. But globally, of the 3.5 billion people living in hot climates, only about 15 percent have air conditioners at home.

The number of air conditioners in the world, about two billion today, is set to skyrocket as temperatures and incomes rise. India, China and Indonesia — the first, second and fourth most populous countries in the world — are among those that will see the strongest growth. By 2050, the share of households in India equipped with air conditioners could increase from 10 to 40 percent, according to a recent study. But such an increase in electricity consumption would be equivalent to the current total annual production of a country like Norway. If India's future grid uses as much fossil fuels as it does today, that would mean around 120 million tons more carbon dioxide emitted annually — or

15 percent of the country's current energy sector emissions. The problems posed by increased air conditioning do not stop there. Running power plants also causes air pollution.

Air conditioners also generally use fluorocarbon gases as refrigerants, which have a warming power thousands of times greater than CO2 when they escape into the atmosphere. And by discharging their hot air out into the streets, air conditioning contributes to urban heat island effects. A 2014 study found that at night heat emitted from air-conditioning systems in city centers increased the mean air temperature by more than 1 degree Celsius. Finally, due to its cost, access to air conditioning poses a major equity issue. Once installed, the price of the electricity bill can force families to choose between cooling and other essential needs.

For Enrica De Cian, a professor in environmental economics at Ca Foscari University in Venice, the use of AC is "an important strategy in certain conditions and in certain places". But, she adds, it's essential to combine it with "complementary" approaches. First, by continuing to ramp up renewable energy production, and wind down fossil fuels, so that energy used by air conditioners leads to fewer emissions. Second, by developing and installing affordable air conditioners that consume less energy, which some companies are working on. The IEA advocates for stricter efficiency standards, but also recommends air conditioners to be set at a minimum of 24C. Beyond limiting emissions, greater efficiency would also curb the risks of power cuts linked to excessive demand. On hot days, air conditioning can account for more than half of peak consumption. — AFP

## Kuwait's scorching summers warning...

Continued from Page 1

Abou Mohammad, dressed in a white robe and ghutra and sitting in a comfortably cooled cafe. The irony is not lost on him that such energy-guzzling systems produce the carbon emissions that are heating up the planet — especially the sweltering Gulf region, a climate hotspot. Such excessive energy consumption, said Mohammad, has "brought this heat to Kuwait".

Kuwait is home to seven percent of the world's crude reserves — energy wealth that has long afforded many of its people a luxury lifestyle. An extremely water-scarce country, it also relies heavily on fossil fuels to power seawater desalination plants. Like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Kuwait is one of the world's leading emitters per capita of CO2, a key driver of global warming.

Kuwait has always been hot, its dry summers fanned by the northwesterly shamal wind that also blows over Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Temperatures in Mitribah, a remote area in northwest Kuwait, often soar past 50 degrees Celsius, making it one of the hottest places on Earth after Death Valley in eastern California. But in recent years, climate change has made summer peaks hotter and longer, said meteorologist Essa Ramadan, as periods of extreme heat have gone "from two weeks to about a month". The number of days per year that see temperatures rise above 50C have more than tripled since the turn of

## Trump indicted for trying to overturn...

Continued from Page 1

"Lies by the defendant targeted at obstructing a bedrock function of the US government — the nation's process of collecting, counting and certifying the results of the presidential election."

Part of that plan, the indictment alleges, was to have then-vice president Mike Pence use his role as presiding officer over the Jan 6 joint session to throw out several states' votes. Pence ultimately refused, issuing a public statement saying that he did not believe the constitution allowed him that power. As Trump's supporters later stormed the US Capitol, where Pence was in hiding, Trump tweeted that his

vice president "didn't have the courage to do what should have been done."

The White House on Tuesday maintained silence on Trump's historic indictment. Biden, who is seeking reelection next year, continued his beach vacation in Delaware, dining out with First Lady Jill Biden before seeing the film "Oppenheimer". Trump's campaign, meanwhile, issued a blistering statement, comparing his prosecution to "Nazi Germany in the 1930s" and stating that he had followed "advice from many highly accomplished attorneys" — a likely line of defense at trial.

The indictment mentions six co-conspirators but none are identified and Trump, who is to be arraigned on Thursday, is the only named defendant. The case is expected to be heard by US District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan, an appointee of former Democratic president Barack Obama. Smith said he is seeking a "speedy trial". — AFP



## International

# Forced to flee: Despair after India deadly ethnic clashes

## Death toll mounts as Hindu Meitei, Christian Kuki battle

**MOIRANG:** Deadly ethnic violence in India's troubled Manipur state divided communities but each side tells similar stories of loved ones murdered, homes torched and harsh new lives in camps. At least 120 people have been killed since May in armed clashes between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki in the northeastern state. Many in Manipur believe the number could be higher.

Some 50,000 people have been forced to flee, among them teacher Ranjana Moirangthem, who was evacuated by the army after a terrifying night sheltering with 25 neighbors crowded in a room as gun battles between gangs raged around them. Moirangthem, a Meitei living in what has become a Kuki-only area of Churachandpur, fled with just the clothes she was wearing. In her panic, she forgot the education certificates she needs to find work.

She later asked a Kuki friend to rescue her precious documents but was told her home was likely among the thousands set on fire. "I was a teacher," she said. "I don't know what to do now that I don't have anything to prove my qualification." She now lives on government and charity handouts in a crowded camp in Moirang district, with around 250 people living in a guesthouse with mattresses covering every space on the floor. "I just want to go back," she said. "Churachandpur is where I have lived all my life—it is my home too."

### 'Houses on fire'

L. Sonia, another Meitei in the same camp, said she made desperate calls to local politicians when gangs rampaged through her neighborhood in Churachandpur. "Their problem is with the government, right? Why set our houses on fire?" she asked angrily. "People are moved to relief camps after floods, but they get to go back to their homes... What do we do?" The far-flung states of northeast India—sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar—have long been a tinderbox of tensions between different ethnic groups. In Manipur, conflict erupted from a mix of causes including competition for land and public jobs, with both sides blaming state and national government for failing to stop the violence.

India's Interior Minister Amit Shah has promised an "impartial investigation" into the violence and has said



MOIRANG: People gather in a relief camp for displaced Meitei community, in Moirang. — AFP

the government "stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Manipur". But violence continues and those left homeless are angry. "Tens of thousands of people in Manipur are crying, what is Narendra Modi doing!" Sonia shouted, in a desperate appeal to the Indian prime minister. "Are we not Indian citizens?"

### 'Every day we cry'

Communities are divided. In Churachandpur, Meitei are no longer welcome. Dummy coffins line the route into the district as a terrifying warning to Meitei, and road signs with the Churachandpur name have been scored out because it is derived from an ancient Meitei king. The Kuki have built a bamboo hut memorial with images of their people killed, including the youngest,

a two-month-old baby. One message reads that their "blood will never go in vain". In a camp for the Kuki displaced, 40-year-old Vaneihling, a mother-of-two who ran a shop before she fled, described how a mob of hundreds dressed in black appeared at her house. First they looted it and then set it ablaze.

"Every day we cry... some people didn't even find the time to wear their shoes before they ran," she said, too scared of possible reprisals to give her full name. The community gathers at night in a makeshift chapel, praying and singing hymns in a bid to drown out the crackle of gunfire between vigilante militia forces. Joy was tempered with gloom when a baby was born earlier this month in the camp. "What is this baby going to do now? Where will it go?" asked Vaneihling. — AFP

## Chinese youth to have smartphone, internet use curbed

**BEIJING:** Chinese children and teens will be cut off from accessing the internet at night and have their smartphone use curbed under new rules unveiled Wednesday aimed at fighting internet addiction. Under the restrictions, set to come into force on September 2 following a public consultation, anyone under the age of 18 will be cut off from accessing the internet with a mobile device between 10 pm and 6 am.

A tiered system for managing smartphone usage time will also be imposed, spanning a maximum of 40 minutes a day for those under the age of eight to two hours for 16- and 17-year-olds. The new rules - proposed by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) - are some of the most stringent in the world. Parents will be able to bypass them if they wish, however.

The CAC said the rules would "im-

prove the positive role of the internet, create a favourable network environment, prevent and intervene in minors' internet addiction problems, and guide minors to form good internet use habits". The measures would build upon existing efforts to strengthen the online protection of minors, it added, including by "enriching age-appropriate content" and reducing "the influence of bad information". Beijing authorities have pursued expansive regulation of the domestic tech sector in recent years, due in part to concerns over the risk posed to young people by digital technology.

In 2021, China capped the amount of gaming time for children with the stated aim of fighting addiction, and froze approvals of new games for nine months, hammering the bottom lines of many companies including sector titan Tencent. And Wednesday's decision suggests Beijing's



SHANGHAI: An employee walks with his smartphone at the ByteDance office in Shanghai. — AFP

regulatory clampdown on domestic tech giants continues. Stocks of many leading Chinese internet firms fell Wednesday following the CAC's announcement, with Tencent's Hong

Kong-listed shares down 3.0 percent. Meanwhile, web search, AI and online services giant Baidu saw its shares fall 3.75 percent during trading in Hong Kong. — AFP

## Indonesia arrests Muslim preacher for blasphemy

**JAKARTA:** A Muslim preacher has been arrested on charges including blasphemy and hate speech after his Islamic boarding school provoked protests for allowing women to preach and pray beside men, police said Wednesday. The Al-Zaytun boarding school in West Java, Muslim-majority Indonesia's most populous province, has faced backlash from conservative groups that have accused it of following a version of Islam incompatible with the Quran.

School head Panji Gumilang, 77, was detained ear-

ly on Wednesday after questioning, national police spokesman Ahmad Ramadhan told reporters. "Investigators took legal action... and he is detained in the criminal investigation agency's detention facility for 20 days," he said. Gumilang faces five years in prison for blasphemy, six for spreading hate speech and 10 on the charge of spreading fake news and intentionally causing chaos in public, according to the charges.

The school sparked uproar in conservative circles and protests outside its compound when social media footage in late April showed women praying in the same row as men. Women are typically expected to pray behind men in traditional Islamic prayer. Another practice of the school that sparked controversy was allowing women to give a sermon in Friday prayers, a task usually reserved for men in traditional Islamic teaching. The school opened in 1999 and holds around 5,000 students.

It is also accused of ties to Darul Islam, a group

that fought for an Islamic state in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s and survived a military defeat. Thousands have gathered outside the school several times since late June to call for its closure. Indonesia's blasphemy legislation has been on the statute books since 1965 but was rarely used before the end of authoritarian rule under dictator Suharto in 1998. Conservative forms of Islam have since become more popular in Indonesia, which supports a tolerant version of the religion.

However, rights activists say the blasphemy law curbs free speech and puts religious freedom under increased pressure. Indonesia recognizes six official religions but the growing use of the blasphemy law is fuelling fears that its moderate brand of Islam was coming under threat from increasingly influential radicals. Jakarta's former governor, the capital's first Christian leader of Chinese descent, was sentenced in 2017 to two years in jail for blasphemy. — AFP

## 'Afghans' helping suicide bombers, Pakistan PM says

**ISLAMABAD:** Militants behind a spate of suicide attacks in Pakistan were being helped by "Afghan citizens" across the border, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said, days after a deadly bombing at a political gathering near the countries' shared frontier. Sharif stopped short of accusing Afghanistan's Taliban government of knowingly allowing attacks from its soil, but he did say Pakistan militants were operating from "sanctuaries" in the neighboring country.

Islamabad has previously said fighters from the Pakistan Taliban were operating freely from Afghanistan—a charge Kabul routinely denies. Sharif's remarks late Tuesday followed a security briefing and a visit to victims of Sunday's blast, which killed 54 people and wounded dozens more at a gathering of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-F

(JUI-F) political party workers in Khar.

The attack was claimed by the Pakistan chapter of the Islamic State group, who have a bloody rivalry with the Taliban. "The Prime Minister noted with concern the involvement of the Afghan citizens in the suicide blasts," a statement from Sharif's office said. It noted there was "liberty of action available to the elements hostile to Pakistan in planning and executing such cowardly attacks on innocent civilians from the sanctuaries across the border".

Since the Taliban surged back to power in Afghanistan two years ago, Pakistan has witnessed a dramatic uptick in militant attacks focused in its western border regions. Taliban authorities have consistently pledged not to let Afghan territory be used by foreign militants to stage attacks—a



PESHAWAR: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (3rd right) meets a blast victim along with the Pakistan's army Chief General Syed Asim Munir (2nd left) at a military hospital in Peshawar. — AFP

key part of the accord that saw US-led forces leave after a 20-year occupation. Afghan government spokes-

man Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP on Wednesday that the Khar attack was a "criminal act". — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Elon Musk called 'illiterate'

**JOHANNESBURG:** Elon Musk on Wednesday was branded an "illiterate" by the leader of a South African party who the world's richest man accused of pushing for "genocide" in his native country. The war of words between Musk and Julius Malema, head of the radical leftist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), comes amid a broader debate over a controversial anti-apartheid song. Malema has been accused of inciting ethnic violence by leading chants of "kill the Boer, the farmer" at a weekend rally. The Boer are the descendants of Dutch settlers. "Why must I educate Elon Musk, he looks like an illiterate. The only thing that protects him is his white skin," Malema told a press conference in Johannesburg. Singing "Kill the Boer" has long been a thorny issue in South Africa. One of a number of struggle songs, political anthems that were an important part of the fight to end white-rule, it is considered inflammatory by some due to its violent lyrics. — AFP

#### Scouts suffer exhaustion

**SEOUL:** Hundreds of scouts at a massive jamboree in South Korea suffered heat exhaustion, organizers said Wednesday, as the peninsula battles a heatwave that has caused a reported spike in heat-related deaths. Around 43,000 people from across the world are currently taking part in the World Scout Jamboree—known as the world's largest youth camp. This year, the event is being held in North Jeolla province where a heatwave warning is in place, with temperatures hovering at about 35 degrees Celsius daily. There were roughly 400 cases of heat exhaustion on the first night at the campsite, organizers said, adding that people were being treated at a makeshift hospital on the campgrounds. One Malaysian scout told a South Korean newspaper that the weather was even hotter than in his home country: "It was so hot that I got a migraine," he said. Local media reported that scouts from the United States, Britain, Belgium, Bangladesh, Colombia, Poland and Sweden were affected. — AFP

#### Rwanda imposes curfew

**KIGALI:** Rwanda has imposed a curfew on all "non-essential services" to reduce what the government calls "noise pollution", a move that has angered nightclub owners who say it will hurt their business. "For effective regulation of night-time entertainment and noise pollution, the Cabinet established closing time of non-essential services at 1 am on working days, and 2 am on weekends (Friday and Saturday), effective September 1st 2023," the government announced late Tuesday. Under the hard-line rule of President Paul Kagame, police in the east African nation have been cracking down on noise pollution, ordering bars to close and confiscating equipment from entertainment venues. One nightclub owner who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity said the latest restrictions were "backward and will definitely kill businesses". — AFP

#### Petrol bomb kills two

**DAKAR:** Two people were killed and five wounded when an attacker hurled a petrol bomb on a bus in Dakar on Tuesday, the interior minister said. Bus driver Abdoulaye Diop, who was hurt in the attack, told an AFP journalist at the scene that a group of hooded youths boarded the bus and insulted him, while one lit the bomb and threw it. The bus was travelling from the suburbs to the centre of Dakar when it was blocked by a group of people. Interior Minister Antoine Felix Abdoulaye Diome said the attackers had also robbed the passengers of their money and mobile phones. "We have been informed by the gendarmerie and the fire brigade that seven hooded individuals wrested control of a public transport bus," he said, standing beside the burnt-out vehicle. — AFP

#### Earthquake hits Eritrea

**NAIROBI:** A quake with magnitude of 5.6 struck southeast of the Eritrean capital Asmara on Tuesday, the government and the US Geological Survey (USGS) said, with no immediate reports of damage or casualties. The moderate earthquake which hit at a depth of 10 kilometers struck at 8:15 pm local time (17:15 GMT). Information Minister Yemane Meskel said. "Ministry of Mines and Energy affirms that Irafalle is epicenter of the earthquake," Meskel wrote on social media. A full report would follow, he added. Tuesday's quake hit roughly 55 kilometers southeast of Asmara, according to USGS. Asmara, a quiet city of sidewalk cafes and picturesque villas, was in 2017 designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its colonial Italian modernist architecture. Eritrea is classified by the United Nations as one of the world's least developed countries. — AFP

#### Five Yemen troops killed

**DUBAI:** A militant attack in southern Yemen on Tuesday killed five fighters loyal to a secessionist force, a military spokesperson said. Mohammed Al-Naqib, the spokesman for Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces, said that the dawn attack in Wadi Omran in Abyan province hit the affiliated Southern Armed Forces who are "tasked with confronting Al-Qaeda" in the region. In a statement, he said "five troops were killed and four others were wounded" in the attack that involved heavy fire from artillery, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. He said the militants infiltrated the area from the neighboring Al Bayda governorate. Al-Naqib did not say who was behind the operation and there was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the area is subject to frequent attacks by Al-Qaeda fighters. In June, suspected Al-Qaeda militants killed two Yemeni soldiers at a military checkpoint in the southern province of Shabwa. — AFP



## Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 2023

# Fitch cuts US credit rating to AA+ after debt limit standoffs

## Agency cites growing debt burden and 'erosion of governance'

WASHINGTON: Fitch downgraded the United States' top-notch credit rating by a step on Tuesday, citing a growing federal debt burden and an "erosion of governance" that has manifested in debt limit standoffs. The decision to downgrade the US from AAA to AA+ sparked a fiery rebuttal from the White House, with press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre saying the move "defies reality."

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a separate statement that she "strongly" disagreed with Fitch as well, calling the change "arbitrary and based on outdated data." It is the first such downgrade by a major ratings company in more than a decade. A debt ceiling impasse in 2011 saw S&P lower Washington's AAA rating, drawing bipartisan outrage.

"The rating downgrade of the United States reflects the expected fiscal deterioration over the next three years, a high and growing general government debt burden, and the erosion of governance" relative to peers, said Fitch Ratings on Tuesday. It added that there was a stable outlook assigned.

Yellen said Fitch's quantitative ratings model declined between 2018 and 2020, but the agency was only announcing its change now despite progress seen in indicators.

She argued that US "Treasury securities remain the world's preeminent safe and liquid asset, and that the American economy is fundamentally strong." While the lifting of the US debt ceiling - a limit on government borrowing to pay for bills already incurred - was often routine, it has for several years become a contentious partisan issue.

### Little lasting impact?

There is a "clear short-run implication" of the downgrade involving higher bond yields and a potential sell-off in the stock market and the dollar, said Mickey Levy of Berenberg Capital Markets. But he does not expect long-run ramifications even if it could lead some investors to reduce their Treasury exposure in the near term. Levy noted widespread awareness of the rising debt situation.

John Canavan, lead US analyst at Oxford Economics, does not expect the Fitch move to have a "lasting market impact." "One key reason for that is that the S&P downgrade more than a decade ago already broke the dam on this front," he told AFP, noting that there was little lasting effect from that decision.

But "psychological support for dollar-denominated debt" could take a hit in the short-term, interfering with Treasury auctions at a time when it needs to ramp up the size of issuance, he said.

### 'Steady deterioration'

In May, Fitch had placed the country's credit on "rating watch negative," reflecting increased political partisanship that hampered a resolution to raise or suspend the debt limit ahead of a looming deadline. While lawmakers reached a bipartisan agreement to avert a catastrophic default, Fitch in June kept the US on negative watch.

"In Fitch's view, there has been a steady deterioration in standards of governance over the last 20 years, including on fiscal and debt matters," the agency said Tuesday. "The repeated debt-limit political standoffs



WASHINGTON: Fitch downgraded the United States' top-notch credit rating by a step on Tuesday.

and last-minute resolutions have eroded confidence in fiscal management," Fitch added.

It also said the US government "lacks a medium-term fiscal framework" and has seen only "limited progress" tackling challenges related to rising social security and Medicare costs as the population ages. This year, hard-right Republicans dominating their

party's narrow majority in the House of Representatives decided to use the debt limit vote as leverage for forcing President Joe Biden into accepting cuts to many Democratic spending priorities.

This triggered a test of political strength that threatened to end in chaos before the two sides reached an agreement. — AFP



TOKYO: A man walks in front of an electronic board showing a share price of the Tokyo Stock Exchange along a street in Tokyo on August 2, 2023. — AFP

## Stock markets slide after US downgrade

LONDON: Global stock markets slumped Wednesday after the United States had its top credit rating downgraded by Fitch. Ratings agency Fitch downgraded the United States' top-notch credit rating by a step late Tuesday, citing a growing federal debt burden and an "erosion of governance" that has manifested in debt limit standoffs.

The decision to downgrade the US from AAA to AA+ sparked a fiery rebuttal from the White House. Wall Street stocks declined early Wednesday, joining international bourses in retreating after Fitch stripped the United States of its highest credit rating. Analysts noted that Wednesday's early losses come amid concerns about lofty equity valuations and do not suggest investor alarm. The blue-chip Dow shed 0.4 percent, the broader S&P 500 gave up 0.7 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq fell 1.1 percent.

"Market participants were already contending with the nagging notion that the stock market was overbought on a short-term basis and due for a pullback," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management, said the "downgrade will unlikely cause a significant Treasuries sell-off or prompt a major shift in investor behavior mainly because investors experienced a similar downgrade from S&P in 2011 and came away unscathed."

The US dollar rose against the euro, but dipped against the yen, which is even more of a safe haven asset. The downgrade follows a long, drawn-out row between Republicans and Democrats earlier this year over raising the US borrowing ceiling, which had fuelled fears of a devastating default by the world's top economy. While a deal was eventually struck, the saga rattled markets and reinforced the sense of long-running deadlock on Capitol Hill that has seen the gears of government jammed up.

Though the lifting of the US debt ceiling — a limit on government borrowing to pay for bills already incurred — was once routine, it has for several years become a contentious partisan issue. The downgrade is the first by a major ratings company since a similar debt impasse in 2011 saw S&P lower its top-notch classification for the United States. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the move "defies reality", while Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen voiced strong opposition, calling the change "arbitrary and based on outdated data". — AFP

## Russia hits Ukraine grain export route near Romania

KYIV: Russian drones on Wednesday damaged infrastructure at a Ukrainian port on the Danube, as Moscow targeted facilities vital for grain shipments from Ukraine following the collapse of a key export arrangement. Turkey, which along with the United Nations brokered the deal to allow Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea, urged Russia after the port strike not to take steps that would escalate tensions.

Russia struck a grain elevator in the port of Izmail which sits just across the Danube River from Romania, damaging silos, warehouses and administrative buildings, Kyiv said.

Izmail is now the main export route for Ukrainian agricultural products via Romania, following Russia's withdrawal last month from the Black Sea grain agreement. The deal had allowed around 33 million tonnes of grain to leave Ukrainian ports, easing fears of global food shortages after the start of the conflict.

Russia has been pounding the seaports in the Odesa region that were key for the grain exports granted safe passage under the deal. "No steps should be taken that will escalate tensions in the Russia-Ukraine war," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Russian leader Vladimir Putin in a phone call.

Erdogan emphasized to Putin the significance of a grain deal that he called a "bridge for peace", the Turkish leader's office said.

### 'Unacceptable'

Failure to re-establish the grain deal "will not benefit anyone" and nations in need will suffer the most, Erdogan said. In the same call, Putin asked Erdogan to aid Russia export its grain to African countries vulnerable to food shortages. "The mood for cooperation with Turkey and other interested states on this issue was expressed," the Kremlin said in statement. But Paris accused Moscow of "pursuing its

own interest at the expense of the most vulnerable", putting global food security at risk with the strikes on grain infrastructure.

With the Black Sea route effectively blocked, the formerly obscure ports of Izmail and Reni on the Danube have become crucial to global food supplies. But the transit hubs are struggling to process all the arriving grain, causing massive bottlenecks, and have been targeted by Russia.

The overnight strike damaged nearly 40,000 tons of grain destined for Africa, China, and Zionist entity, Ukraine's Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said that Russia's repeated attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure along the river were "unacceptable".

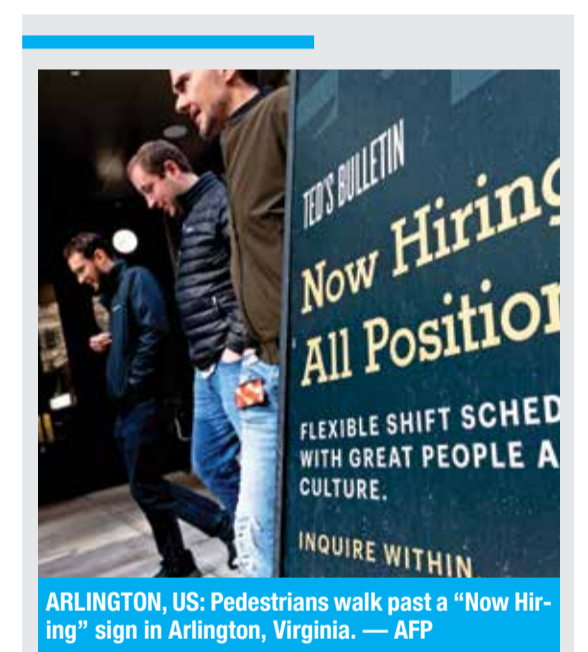
Ukraine needed "more air defense" to repel Russian attacks, the head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andriy Yermak, said Wednesday on Telegram. In Kyiv, more than 10 Russian drones were downed during an overnight strike that left several floors of a glass high-rise damaged, the city's military administration said. "Groups of drones entered Kyiv simultaneously from several directions," said Sergiy Popko, head of the administration. Popko said Russia had used a barrage of Iranian-made drones, with debris hitting several areas.

### Naval drills

In the Golosiivsky district, "parts of a drone fell on a playground" and a fire broke out in a non-residential building, he said, adding that emergency services were on the scene. Kyiv's Mayor Vitali Klitschko had said earlier that the attack on the capital had damaged several areas, including the busy Solomyansky district. The attacks came a day after Russia said it downed a wave of Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow and vessels in the Black Sea. A skyscraper in Moscow's business district housing government offices was struck for the second time in a few days. Russia also said Wednesday it had launched naval drills on the Baltic Sea, involving 30 warships and boats, amid rising tensions with European countries over the Ukraine conflict. During the drills, the navy will practice how to protect sea lanes, transport troops and military cargo, and defend the coastline, the defense ministry said. — AFP



CONSTANTA, Romania: A ship is loaded with rapeseeds at "COMVEX" grain terminal in Constanta harbor, Romania. — AFP



ARLINGTON, US: Pedestrians walk past a "Now Hiring" sign in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

## US private hiring hotter than expected despite July easing

WASHINGTON: Hiring in the US private sector decelerated in July but was nearly twice as high as analysts expected according to payroll firm ADP on Wednesday, signaling strength in the jobs market. The US labor market has proven resilient even as the central bank hiked interest rates rapidly since March 2022 to cool demand — with higher lending costs making it pricier to borrow funds for activities like business expansion.

Job gains came in at 324,000 last month according to ADP, down from a revised 455,000 figure in June and well above analysts' consensus estimate of 185,000 on Briefing.com. Robust job numbers and other encouraging data points have raised hopes of a "soft landing" for the world's biggest economy, where inflation comes down without triggering a major recession.

"The economy is doing better than expected and a healthy labor market continues to support household spending," said ADP chief economist Nela Richardson. Leisure and hospitality were a key area behind the strong job creation, according to ADP data, while manufacturing showed weakness.

Meanwhile, pay growth continued a "downward trend in July" as workers who changed jobs logged gains of 10.2 percent, compared to 11.2 percent reported for June. Those who stayed in their jobs saw an increase of 6.2 percent last month, the slowest pace since November 2021, the report added.

The overall downward trend, if sustained, would be good news to officials trying to ensure that a hot labor market and wage growth does not translate into persistent cost-of-living pressures for consumers. Looking ahead, all eyes are on the Labor Department's employment numbers due Friday, although economist Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics noted that ADP may not be a reliable indicator of the official estimates.

For now, Shepherdson said "we expect job growth to slow over the next few months," tracking a decline in a hiring intentions measure. — AFP



## Business



Waleed Khaled Mandani

- I am delighted to announce that during the first half of the year 2023, Gulf Bank achieved a strong financial performance as net profit grew by 18% to reach KD 35.8 million.
- We are witnessing a relative stability in the political landscape, which will lay the foundation for potential government reforms, and further enhancement of the operating environment and outlook of the country.



David Challinor

- The relatively low level of cost of risk is a result of the excellent quality of our loan book that continues to remain resilient in the higher rate environment.
- We will aim to continue executing our strategy of increasing market share in retail and growing selectively with high quality transactions in corporate.

# Gulf Bank holds H1 earnings webcast

## Bank achieves strong financial performance; Net profit grew by 18% to reach KD 35.8m

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its investors webcast on Tuesday (Aug 1) to present and discuss the bank's financial performance for H1-2023. The webcast was organized by EFG Hermes and presented by Waleed Mandani, Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, and David Challinor, Chief Financial Officer of Gulf Bank. The discussion was moderated by Dalal Al-Dousari, Head of Investor Relations at Gulf Bank.

### Operating environment

Waleed Mandani commenced the webcast with key updates regarding Gulf Bank's operating environment for the first half of 2023. Mandani stated: "We remain optimistic about the opportunities presented by Kuwait's economy as it continues to be generally healthy. We are also witnessing a relative stability in the political landscape, which will lay the foundation for potential government reforms, and further enhancement of the operating environment and outlook of the country." He added: "We have closely monitored the banking sector performance, which has experienced a slowdown in loan growth in recent months, especially with the rising interest rate environment and inflation. We acknowledge these industry-wide challenges and have proactively taken steps to navigate this environment effectively. Our focus on prudent risk management and strategic initiatives ensures that we maintain stability and drive sustainable growth."



Dalal Al-Dousari

On Major milestones achieved by Gulf Bank during the first half of the year, Waleed Mandani commented: "I am delighted to announce that during the first half of the year 2023, Gulf Bank achieved a strong financial performance. Our focus on operational excellence and customer-centricity has been instrumental in this achievement. One significant highlight of this period has been our relentless pursuit of our digital transformation strategy. I am proud to share that we have achieved a major milestone in our digital transformation journey. A notable accomplishment was the launch of phase I of our new Core Banking system, which will enhance our operational efficiency and improve the overall customer experience."

Waleed Mandani also mentioned that the Bank held an Extraordinary Annual General Assembly Meeting in May 2023 related to the increase of the Gulf Bank's authorized capital, by stating: "Shareholders of Gulf Bank approved the increase of its authorized capital by KD 150 million. This is an authorized increase only, that will provide the Bank with optionality in the future. The approval received reflects the trust and confidence of shareholders in Gulf Bank's growth prospects and long-term success."

### Solid financial performance

Waleed Mandani summarized Gulf Bank's first half of 2023 financial performance with six key messages:

1. Net profit grew by 18 percent for the first half of 2023, to reach KD 35.8 million in comparison to KD 30.3 million reported in the first half of 2022.
2. Return on average equity increased to 10.1 percent for the first half of 2023 up from 9.1 percent at the same period last year.
3. Gross loans and advances reached KD 5.5 billion, which is relatively flat when compared to the first half of 2022.
4. The quality of our loan book remains resilient, as our non-performing loan ratio (NPL) for the first half of 2023 is at 1.0 percent, together with a strong NPL coverage ratio of 546 percent including total provisions and collaterals.
5. At the end of the first half of 2023, our Tier 1 ratio was 13.9 percent achieving a buffer of 187 basis points above regulatory minimums of 12 percent, and our Capital Adequacy Ratio was 16.1 percent achieving a buffer of 208 basis points above regulatory minimums of 14 percent. These buffers will support the bank in pursuing growth opportunities in line with its strategy.
6. Gulf Bank remains an 'A' rated bank by major credit rating agencies. Our current position stands as follows:
  - Moody's Investors Service maintained the Long-Term Deposits Rating of the Bank at "A3" with a "Stable" outlook.
  - Capital Intelligence affirmed the Bank's Long-Term Foreign Currency Rating of "A+" with a "Stable" outlook.
  - Fitch Ratings affirmed the Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at "A" with a "Stable" outlook, and a Viability Rating of 'bbb-'.

### Loan book growth outlook

In response to questions raised by participants on the call related to loan book and the expectations for the second half of the year, David Challinor commented: "We continued the trend of strong growth in retail during the quarter and grew KD 34 million which was 1.6 percent. This was the highest growth in retail since Q3 last year and represents yet another quarter of market share gains which is in line with our strategy. In fact, we have grown market share in retail in 5 out of the last 6 quarters. In particular, this quarter, we grew very strongly in the Kuwaiti private banking segment. The growth in the system has basically been flat for the first 6 months of the year according to the latest data released by CBK. So, against this backdrop of zero industry growth, we managed to grow 2.4 percent, which is a great outcome."

David Challinor added: "On the corporate side, despite some customers paying down debt early because of the high rates, the book returned to growth in Q2, and we booked some very high quality and capital efficient deals. In fact, the total

bank RWA's were flat from Q1 to Q2 despite the total customer loan book growing almost 1 percent for the quarter so our capital adequacy ratios were unchanged from Q1." He also Added: "We will aim to continue executing our strategy of increasing market share in retail and growing selectively with high quality transactions in corporate."

### Development in margins

David Challinor commented on the outlook of profit margins of the Bank by saying: "Earlier, we expected an improvement in the Banks margin, and we saw this materialize in the form of an 8 basis

point increase from Q1 to Q2. This brings the banks margin to 215 for the quarter as compared to 207 for the first quarter." Challinor added: "Clearly, we've seen very large increases in the cost of funds throughout this entire rate rise cycle. But what we saw in Q2 was a significant slowdown in the quarterly increase. What we've also seen, which is very encouraging, is that the growth in interest expense from Q1 was lower than the growth in interest income. And this was the first quarter that showed this dynamic, effectively positive interest jaws since the rate hikes began." Challinor added: "However, last week we did see a 25-basis point rise in Kuwait following the Fed increase. This is the first one in Kuwait since January. So, this will place some upward pressure on the cost of funds. But on the asset side, we repriced our corporate book and also, we have ongoing repricing of the retail book so we believe this will be positive for margin."

- We acknowledge the banking industry-wide challenges and have proactively taken steps to navigate this environment effectively.
- Our focus on prudent risk management and strategic initiatives ensures that we maintain stability and drive sustainable growth.
- We've seen a meaningful drop of almost 2 percent in the Cost to Income ratio from last year, as income has grown faster than expenses.
- The second quarter of 2023 represents the 8th consecutive quarter of profit expansion.
- We continue to see very strong asset quality metrics which are indicative of the high quality of the book as our NPL percentage is only 1 percent.

We currently have total coverage including collaterals of almost 550 percent. And in terms of credit costs, they were around 5 million for Q2 which was lower than Q1 and the lowest we've seen since Q2 of last year. And the cost of risk was only 45 points for the first half which is very low. So, we're very happy with the way everything is holding up and trending."

### Improvement in cost to income ratio

On the topic of operating expense and cost to income ratio trends, David Challinor commented: "Operating expenses have been stable this year as we saw no growth from Q1 to Q2. In fact, the Q2 level of 21.5m is the same as a year ago. For the first half we are up 4 percent versus last year. However, even though we've had some expense growth, we've still seen a meaningful drop of almost 2 percent in the Cost to Income ratio from last year as income has grown faster than expenses. So, the cost to income ratio for the first half now stands at 46.5 percent." He added: "I think in the second half we may see a moderate increase in costs from current levels, but we should still be able to improve the overall cost to income ratio."

## Less power, lower emissions: Improving AC technology

NEW YORK: With air conditioner demand surging, scientists are looking for ways to improve the energy efficiency of cooling systems and limit damaging emissions that accelerate global warming.

### Improve efficiency

Innovation is focused on three major fronts, with much of the attention on energy consumption. Air conditioning units account for six percent of electricity used in the United States. Several breakthroughs have already cut power consumption by half since 1990, according to the US Department of Energy. The most impactful was the so-called "inverter" technology, which makes it possible to modulate the motor's speed instead of running it at 100 percent continuously.

Other new features include demand controlled ventilation (DCV), which relies on sensors to determine the number of people in the building and adjust airflows.

### Different refrigerants

Another major area is the search for substitutes to the refrigerant gases used in most of the nearly two billion installed AC units, according to the International Energy Agency. For decades, air conditioners almost exclusively ran on chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) or hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) gases, which are thought to be up to 10,000 times as bad as CO2 in terms of global warming impact. CFC and HCFC were banned under the Montreal Protocol, from 1987.

Then came hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are now scheduled to be phased out by 2050. Factories and commercial buildings already use other gases, such as ammonia—which has no greenhouse gas impact—as well as hydrocarbons, mainly propane, whose emissions are lower than methane.

"In some countries, you're starting to see hydrocarbon refrigerants," mostly propane, "being used, but there are restrictions around how much quantity you can put into the system" because such gas is flammable, said Ankit Kalanki, manager at the Rocky Mountain Institute. Mandatory safety features make for a "level of sophistication" with "a price premium that gets added to the units itself," he added. "And the residential air conditioning market tends to go towards the lowest first

cost products, then the highest efficiency products." Some are trying to go gasless, like Pascal Technology, a Cambridge, Massachusetts startup, that's working on a mechanism to keep refrigerants in a solid state, avoiding any discharge.

### A new generation

Other innovation is focused on products that bypass compression, an energy-intensive process in air conditioning that has changed little since its invention in 1902. Separate groups of scientists at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Wyss Institute at Harvard University, respectively have built air conditioners that use water to cool the air.



FURSTENFELDBRUCK, Germany: This picture taken on July 28, 2023 shows a detail of an air conditioning technology in the Bavarian village of Fuerstenfeldbruck, southern Germany. — AFP

The Wyss Institute has already made prototypes based on its cSNAP model, that operates on a quarter of the electricity used in the traditional compression process. The device is partly built with ceramic panels, made in Spain. The startup Blue Frontier, which counts Bill Gates as an investor, uses a salt solution that captures the humidity of the air, then cools it through contact with water.

The solution also makes it possible to store energy, "so you're not having to deal with capacity limits of the infrastructure," said Daniel Betts, Blue Frontier's CEO. The Florida-based startup plans to rent its AC units to commercial building owners for a subscription fee, recouping its investment from electricity savings. Usually, acknowledges Betts, "building owners don't see the value, except for marketing, of having higher efficiency equipment." "We eliminate the burden of financing high efficiency equipment, because we're doing it as a subscription service." Air conditioning innovation has been slower to address the third major issue related to conventional units, the discharge of hot air outside buildings. — AFP



DUISBURG, Germany: German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck (left) high-fives with Minister of Economic Affairs in North Rhine-Westphalia Mona Neubaur (right) during his visit at Thyssenkrupp Steel Europe AG in Duisburg, western Germany. — AFP

## Berlin hails 'progress' in EU talks on hydrogen plants

FRANKFURT: German Economy Minister Robert Habeck on Tuesday welcomed "important progress" in talks with the European Commission on the conditions for state aid for hydrogen power plants. Berlin, which aims to source the country's electricity almost entirely from renewable energy by 2035, sees hydrogen playing a key role in the shift away from fossil fuels. Habeck, describing the discussions with Brussels as "intensive", said an understanding had been reached on the legal framework for planned tenders for the plants.

"We achieved important progress," he said in a statement. The economy ministry, in the same statement, stressed there was no approval yet from Brussels regarding national state aid for the hydrogen plants. But the talks had set out "the guard rails within which the state subsidy programs must operate in order to comply with the state aid and energy legislation at European level", the ministry said.

### Hydrogen: Zero-emission energy carrier

The ministry will finalize its power plant strategy over the summer before launching a consultation

phase with relevant stakeholders. "A climate-neutral power sector is the backbone of decarbonization of the other sectors, because all other sectors will use more electricity in the future than they do today," Habeck said.

Germany aims to get most of its clean energy from wind and solar power in the future. But in times of little wind or sunshine, "controllable power plants" such as those running on climate-neutral hydrogen will be needed to make up the shortfall, Habeck said. Berlin wants to tender 8.8 gigawatts of new plants that will run on hydrogen from the start, Habeck said.

The government also plans to tender another 15 gigawatts of power plants that will temporarily run on natural gas until they are connected to the hydrogen grid, by 2035 at the latest.

But the issue of subsidies for power plants has proved thorny in talks between the European Commission and Berlin. Germany wants subsidies for future plants to be included in the EU's decarbonization plans, which would guarantee faster approval and larger sums, magazine Der Spiegel reported in July. But the Commission reportedly believes this would be problematic if it also covers plants running on climate-damaging gas, meaning only hydrogen plants could qualify for subsidies. Hydrogen is a zero-emission energy carrier when it is made using renewable electricity. So-called green hydrogen is produced by passing an electric current through water to split it between hydrogen and oxygen, a process known as electrolysis. — AFP



## Business

# Nigerian workers rally over rising cost of living crisis

## Removal of fuel subsidy pushes up prices of food and other services

**ABUJA:** Hundreds of Nigerian workers across various sectors were on strike Wednesday over the rising cost of living following the removal of subsidy on petrol.

The nationwide walkout was called on Tuesday by the two main workers unions—the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) — after talks with the government to extend the subsidy broke down. President Bola Tinubu on May 29, during his inauguration as the new leader of Africa's most populous nation, ended a fuel subsidy regime, pushing up prices of food, transportation and other services.

In the capital Abuja on Wednesday, some 400 protesters led by NLC president Joe Ajaero, marched through the city carrying placards and chanting pro-labor slogans.

The protesters were accompanied by armed police and soldiers. Ajaero told reporters demonstrations will continue until the government reverses its decision on the petrol subsidy.

Many businesses, including government offices, banks and markets were closed. Only a few vehicles were on the roads as the workers rallied towards the city centre. But in Lagos and other

cities across the country of some 210 million people, the strike action was mixed. Some markets and shops remained open although some commercial banks were closed.

Commercial buses were operating on the streets of Lagos while a few government offices opened for business in the sprawling city of over 20 million people. Many Nigerians see cheap petrol as the best benefit they can get from their leaders who are often accused of inefficiency, mismanagement and corruption. Nigeria, an oil rich country, imports the bulk of its petroleum products due to the dysfunction of its four oil refineries.

Under the subsidy, the government paid the difference between the cost of import and prices at the pump. Last week both unions gave the government until Wednesday to revise the removal of the subsidy or be faced with a nationwide action.

The unions are also asking government to fix the decrepit refineries in order to end imports of fuel, which has been a huge drain on the country's foreign reserves and resources.

The strikes were called despite Tinubu announcing Monday a raft of packages to cushion the effect of petrol subsidy removal.—AFP



**ABUJA:** Two main workers unions — the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) — hold demonstrations after talks with the Nigerian government to extend the subsidy broke down.

## US debt: What does the loss of a triple A rating mean?

**PARIS:** Fitch has downgraded its credit rating for the United States, becoming the second of the top-three ratings agencies to strip the country of a top AAA rating. The impact upon the world's top economy is likely to be just symbolic, at least immediately.



Janet Yellen

### What is a AAA credit rating?

The AAA or "triple-A" rating is the highest rating that an agency gives to a country, locality or company concerning its ability to repay its debts. The top three global ratings agencies: S&P Global, Fitch and Moody's, use the same system of letters, ranging from a top AAA rating through B, C and D for payment defaults.

The ratings are intended to reflect the economic and/or financial health of a borrower. For countries, the agencies look at economic growth, tax revenue, government spending, deficits and debt levels to determine their ratings. These ratings are intended for use by investors to guide them in their investment choices. The lower a rating, the more investors are likely to demand higher interest payments from a borrower to compensate for the risk of not getting repaid.

### Who still has a triple-A?

Only a small group of nations have a triple-A rating from all three major ratings agencies: Australia, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore and Switzerland. Several others have an AAA from one or two of the agencies. That is the case with the United States, which still has a triple-A from Moody's. S&P stripped the United States of its AAA in 2011. Canada and the European Union are in a similar situation.

### Who has lost their triple-A?

In Europe, several countries including France lost theirs in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. For France, "it was a leap into the unknown," the founder of the Global Sovereign Advisory consultancy, said earlier this year of the country's downgrades in 2012 and 2013. But the country "didn't lose investors" then or when Fitch lowered its rating in March when the country was in the midst of a wave of strikes over a contentious pension reform. Fitch's downgrade of the United States was the first time it has changed its rating for Washington since it began rating it in 1994. Moody's has not changed its rating for the United States since 1949.

### What are the consequences?

The loss of a triple-A rating is above all symbolic: it sends a strong signal to the markets. In this case, the United States is keeping a very strong AAA+ rating and the downgrade will unlikely cause investors to flee as the country still enjoys the confidence of markets and its debt is a critical part of the global financial system. The yield—or interest rate—on US 10-year Treasuries (bonds) which are the reference for the market, rose above 4.0 percent for the third time this year just before Fitch's announcement, and dipped immediately following it. They have been approaching that level as the US Federal Reserve raises its interest rates, and the dollar rose slightly against the euro on Wednesday in a sign of the greenback's role as a safe haven in times of uncertainty.

Global stock markets were lower, but only moderately so. Fitch itself intimated that there would likely be little immediate consequence from its downgrade for the United States. In explaining its decision, Fitch noted "the US dollar is the world's preeminent reserve currency, which gives the government extraordinary financing flexibility." Analysts agree that there is unlikely to be a significant impact.

"Despite the poor eye candy and initial surprise, the recent US downgrade will unlikely cause a significant Treasuries sell-off or prompt a major shift in investor behavior mainly because investors experienced a similar downgrade from S&P in 2011 and came away unscathed," said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management. Analysts at Capital Economics agreed there would be little impact on the US bond markets, and expressed surprise about the timing of the Fitch downgrade "when the economy now appears poised to pull off the seemingly impossible trick of bringing inflation back to target without triggering a recession".

While it noted the federal deficit is set rise to nearly six percent of GDP and interest costs on government debt set to double in the coming years, Capital Economics said that a lot depends on whether the Fed can soon begin to lower interest rates. If it can't "then the debt dynamics could quickly become unsustainable," it warned.—AFP

## US manufacturing struggles with 9th month of contraction

**WASHINGTON:** The US manufacturing sector saw activity contract for a ninth straight month in July, survey data showed Tuesday, as new orders struggled on cooling demand while companies reduced production and headcount.

The weakness comes as demand for goods took a hit from shifting consumption towards services, while the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes in the past year also impacted business spending.

To rein in surging inflation, the central bank lifted rates rapidly to ease demand, and its actions are rippling through the world's biggest economy. The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in at 46.4 percent last month, inching up from 46.0 percent in June—but this was still firmly below the 50-percent threshold indicating growth. "Demand remains weak but marginally better compared to June, production slowed due to lack of work, and suppliers continue to have capacity," said ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore. "There are signs of more employment reduction actions in the near term to better match production output," he added.

But with manufacturing accounting for around nine percent of payrolls, falling employment is unlikely to drag overall numbers, said economist Kieran Clancy of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

## Kenya suspends Worldcoin crypto over privacy concerns

**NAIROBI:** Kenya on Wednesday suspended the Worldcoin crypto project that relies on an eye scan to verify a user's identity, citing concerns about data protection.

Worldcoin, set up by OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman, began operating in June in Germany and provides users with a private digital identity—a "World ID"—after they get their eye's unique iris pattern scanned.

The project, according to its founders, aims to solve one of the main challenges facing the crypto industry that largely relies on pseudonyms to operate, leaving it vulnerable to spam bots and scams.

Users who registered with the project in Kenya were offered 25 free Worldcoin tokens worth about 7,000 shillings (\$45), drawing thousands of people to multiple sign-up points in the capital Nairobi.

Interior minister Kithure Kindiki

said authorities were "concerned" by the project and launched investigations to ascertain "the safety and protection of the data being harvested, and how the harvesters intend to use the data". "The government has suspended forthwith, activities of 'Worldcoin' and any other entity that may be similarly engaging the people of Kenya until relevant public agencies certify the absence of any risks," Kindiki said.

Kenya is one of the most dynamic economies in East Africa but about a third of the population lives in poverty. The country has been battling soaring inflation and a jobs crisis, particularly among the young, prompting many people to flock to register with Worldcoin in exchange for cash.

There was no immediate response from Worldcoin to an AFP request for reaction to Kenya's suspension. The project is already under scrutiny for running afoul of



strict data privacy rules in Europe. "Worldcoin has begun to collect data in France... which seems questionable as does the conservation of biometric data," France's CNIL data regulator told AFP last week. After conducting an initial review, CNIL said it identified its counterpart in the German state of Bavaria as the lead agency in Europe to conduct a probe

into Worldcoin, and said it supports their investigation.

More than 2.1 million people have signed up for Worldcoin across the world, with iris scans conducted in 34 countries, according to the company's website. Worldcoin is now trading at \$2.37, up from the initial price of \$1.70, according to CoinMarketCap.—AFP

Worldcoin is now trading at \$2.37, up from the initial price of \$1.70, according to CoinMarketCap.—AFP

## Romania Black Sea port braces for more Ukrainian grain

**CONSTANTA, Romania:** At the deepest berth of the Black Sea in the Romanian port of Constanta, the belly of a massive cargo ship bound for Belgium is fed tons of rapeseed through a huge steel hose as more vessels queue up.

Since the beginning of Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine, Constanta port, the largest for cereals in Europe, has been racing to adapt to the influx of grain diverted from traditional shipping routes that have been cut off by the conflict. In the first half of 2023, it registered 7.5 million tons of Ukrainian grain compared to 8.7 million tons for all of last year.

After Moscow withdrew from a grain deal last month that allowed Kyiv to export around 36 million tons of grain despite the war, the port braces to play an even bigger role in shipping out globally vital crops. "We are ready for a larger quantity of Ukrainian

grain," said Dan Dolghin, a director at Comvex, one of the companies at Constanta that receive grain from trains, barges and trucks to load them onto ships. Dolghin points to a 3-million-euro (\$3.3 million) investment his company made last summer to speed up its barge unloading capacity.

"We can load ships with a speed of 3,000 tons an hour, which is the equivalent of two trains," he said, as he fielded constant phone calls. Comvex also plans to grow its storage capacity in the coming months by almost 50,000 tons to close to 250,000 tons. The company has about 3,600 tons of Ukrainian corn in its silos. Dolghin said wheat should also arrive soon.

### Under attack

Most of the grain handled by Comvex comes by train and on barges from the Ukrainian Danube ports of Reni and Izmail. But these ports have also become targets: Ukraine said Wednesday that Russia had struck port facilities and industrial infrastructure on the Danube.

Russia already attacked Reni with drones on July 24, causing "quite significant" damage, according to Ukraine army spokeswoman Nataliya Gumenyuk. Rail transfer, on the other hand, is expected to pick up, ac-



**CONSTANTA, Romania:** Workers inspect the grain silos at "COMVEX" grain terminal in Constanta harbor, Romania on July 31, 2023.—AFP

According to Dolghin, silos are being built so that trains from the wider-gauged Ukrainian tracks can transfer their loads to the Romanian railway system.

They are due to be completed in some weeks, Dolghin said, adding the port now has more lines for trains than last year. Though he admitted the entrance points to the port, particularly where trucks arrive, can still bottleneck.—AFP



## Lifestyle



A derelict swing ride at an abandoned amusement park in Nicosia. — AFP photos



A mural of a cricket player painted on a wall inside a hangar at the International Airport.



Cyprus researcher and urbex enthusiast Christos Zoumides climbs a fence into an abandoned amusement park in Nicosia.



A fenced-off corridor in the derelict terminal of the abandoned Nicosia International Airport in the UN buffer zone separating the divided Cypriot capital.

## 'Urban explorers' drawn to Cyprus and its haunted past



A hangar at the abandoned Nicosia International Airport in the UN buffer zone separating the divided Cypriot capital.

Chained swings eerily creak in the breeze at the deserted Tivoli amusement park in Cyprus, a divided island that has caught the eye of the global "urban explorer" community. To enter the shuttered park, overgrown by nature, in the capital Nicosia, "urbex" enthusiast Christos Zoumides hoists himself up a wall, climbs through rusted bars and walks across broken glass. "I have so many memories here," marvels the 40-year-old Cypriot scientist as he reaches an abandoned go-kart track where his family used to take him as a child.

For the past eight years, he has embraced urbex, the underground pastime of exploring abandoned places—usually illegally and at the risk of accidents in badly dilapidated locations. Considered part of "dark tourism", it has drawn explorers to "lost places" everywhere, from abandoned Cold War bunkers to forgotten cinemas, factories and concert halls that appear frozen in time.

The most popular sites tend to evoke historic disasters, tragedies and wars, said tourism specialist Katerina Antoniou, who added that this had made Cyprus a "unique" setting for many. The island in the eastern Mediterranean has been divided since Turkish troops in 1974 invaded its northern third in response to a coup by Greek-Cypriot nationalists. The UN-patrolled Green Line buffer zone, with a heavy military presence on both sides, separates the Republic of Cyprus from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus recognized only by Ankara.

### 'Not a playground, a military zone'

As reminders of its tragic history, century-old sandstone homes, with caved-in roofs and shattered windows, remain in many areas including Nicosia where their "No Entry" signs draw urbex fans. Zoumides argued that roaming

through them is a "different way to document Nicosia ... You feel a lot of things when you explore a forgotten place. You connect with the people who lived there." He said Cyprus has attracted ever more urbex fans who are curious about its sandbags and barbed wire, its "abandoned military bases, UN posts... places untouched for half a century".

Drawn by online videos, "they want to discover the hidden face of Nicosia, the secret side of Cyprus," said Zoumides, who sometimes guides foreign urbex enthusiasts. Authorities are alarmed by the trend, and UN peacekeeping force spokesman Aleem Siddique labelled any excursions that come even close to military areas as "completely irresponsible".

"This is not a playground... this is a military zone," he stressed of the Green Line. "There are thousands of opposing forces, armed soldiers on both sides of the line. It would be very easy for a civilian to be mistaken for one of the

opposing members and for civilian casualties to result," not to mention the 47 remaining minefields, he warned. Siddique added with a sigh that "one of the most frustrating aspects of this urbex trend is that some people know nothing about the context of the conflict."

"Peacekeepers, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots have died on this land... This is not a location for you to make videos." Antoniou argued that urbex in Cyprus also poses an "ethical issue", with foreign explorers "offending locals by sneaking in" to buildings that their owners have been unable to enter for decades.

### 'Off the beaten paths'

Such warnings have not stopped urbex stars such as Bob Thissen. The Dutchman, who has shared video from three Cyprus trips with his more than 500,000 YouTube followers, boasts that he will risk his "life, freedom and health" for his passion. One foray into

the UN buffer zone took him to Nicosia's old airport where an abandoned plane still sits on the runway and a thick layer of dust covers the interior of the abandoned terminal.

"I had never seen a place like this in Europe," Thissen told AFP, adding that his "exceptional" visit ended with "a bit of adrenaline when we saw the UN soldiers searching for us. We stayed hidden until nightfall, then we ran." His other favorite spot lies in the north, the once popular seaside resort of Varosha whose inhabitants were forced to flee and which is now a vast ghost town on the beach. The TRNC has controversially opened parts of it to tourists, who can walk or cycle along several streets and take pictures of the roped-off sights beyond.

"It's so unique, an entire city frozen in time... like a time capsule since 1974," said Thissen, who couldn't resist venturing past the Turkish guards. "Of course I wasn't going to obediently go where the soldiers wanted me to go," he said. "It was easy to escape their vigilance and explore off the beaten paths."

Inspired by Thissen's videos, a South Korean urbex fan who asked to be named only as Kim, came in March to visit both Varosha and the abandoned airport. The 28-year-old Seoul architect said she had dreamed of entering the Cyprus buffer zone "because there is one between South Korea and North Korea" that is strictly off-limits, the DMZ. "What I felt when I crossed the barbed wire was very intense," said Kim. "I thought I would die because my mind forgot whether I was in Cyprus or in Korea." Thissen brushed off all the safety warnings, asserting that hardcore urbex fans will just keep coming. "If they put up new fences," he said, "people will climb over them." —AFP

A dilapidated Cyprus Airways Hawker Siddeley Trident passenger plane is pictured at the abandoned Nicosia International Airport in the UN buffer zone separating the divided Cypriot capital.



## 'War for identity': Kyiv pulls hammer, sickle from giant war WWII statue

Workers lowered a hammer and sickle from a towering sculpture overlooking Kyiv on Tuesday in a campaign to remove Soviet icons that ramped up after Russia invaded last year. The 62-metre-high steel figure of a woman holding a sword and shield bearing the USSR-linked symbols was unveiled in 1981 as a memorial to Soviet victory in World War II.

But since Russia's invasion, Ukraine doubled-down on the removal of references to Soviet history and Russian culture from geographical names, and a law on decolonization came into force this summer. There are similarly massive war memorials in former Soviet cities like Volgograd in Russia and Brest in Belarus.

The monument standing atop a war museum is known literally as the "Fatherland Mother" but there are now calls to rename the it Mother Ukraine. The culture ministry has meanwhile backed a plan to furnish the figure with a new

shield bearing the country's trident emblem. The statue is part of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War and it is planned that the Soviet shield will go on display there.

### 'Culture and information front'

"We're obliged to carry out de-communization, and replacing the shield is one of the main steps of that work," the museum's director Yuriy Savchuk told AFP standing beneath the statue. He said the project fits with Ukraine's aspirations to move towards the West and become a member of NATO and that the work was part of an ideological war. "The war is obviously also playing out on the cultural and informational front: it's a war for identity, for people's consciousness," Savchuk said.

Workers in a cradle suspended from the top of the shield have since last month been removing sheafs of wheat and ribbons from the Soviet emblem, lowering

them on ropes. AFP journalists on the scene saw them cutting around the hammer and sickle and lowering them to the ground after delays due to several air raid warnings. "Maybe this should have been done before the full-scale invasion... but today the Russian-Ukrainian war brings fresh relevance to a lot of questions that were put off in the past," Savchuk said. Replacing the shield is set to cost 28 million hryvnias (\$758,000), although officials stress it will be paid for by donations and sponsorship, not state funds.

The arts minister who had backed the project resigned last month amid official criticism of the cost of arts projects in wartime. But a survey commissioned by the culture ministry last year found 85 percent of Ukrainians backed removing the hammer and sickle.

### 'Looking at the enemy'

Acting minister Rostislav Karandeyev hailed the project as an "essential element of our resistance in the ideological battle with our enemy," as he watched the work from the ground. He said the new shield should be in place by this month's national holidays: Ukraine's flag day on August 23 and independence day on August 24.

The minister said that he expected the decision on renaming the statue "will be taken on a political level". Sculptor Oleksiy Pergamenshchik, who created the trident emblem for the new shield, told AFP the removal of the symbols was a long time coming. "We can prove that we are a great nation and we are not afraid of anything, any challenges," he said.

Pergamenshchik studied under one of the original monument's sculptors, Vasyly Borodai, and dismissed calls for the monument itself to be removed due to

its construction during the Soviet era. "It was made by two Ukrainian great sculptors, (Evgeniy) Vuchetych and Borodai, and it doesn't look Soviet because Borodai made it in Greek dress," Pergamenshchik said. —AFP



A steeplejack looks out of an opening after the coat of arms of the former Soviet Union from the shield of a 62-meter (102 meters with pedestal) Motherland Monument was removed in Kyiv. — AFP photos



This aerial view shows the Motherland Monument as steeplejacks dismantle the coat of arms of the former Soviet Union from the shield of a 62-meter (102 meters with pedestal) Motherland Monument in Kyiv.

## Greece offers free week for tourists who fled fires

Tourists who had to flee wildfires on Greece's Rhodes island can return for a free week next year, the prime minister said Wednesday. Fed by scorching temperatures, dry conditions and strong winds, a two-week inferno sparked chaos at the peak of Greece's busy summer tourist season. Tens of thousands of visitors and locals fled from hotels and villages on Rhodes and hundreds more were evacuated in Corfu and other areas.

"The Greek government will offer one week of free holiday on Rhodes next spring or fall for all of those whose holiday was cut short due to the wildfires," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told Britain's ITV channel. The fires killed at least five people in Greece and scorched nearly 50,000 hectares (123,500 acres), according to the Athens Observatory.

Travel giant TUI and Britain's low-cost Jet2 suspended passenger flights to Rhodes and flew in empty planes to evacuate tourists. Greek travel agents have launched a "Rhodes is safe" campaign to lure back holidaymakers. "Rhodes today is more welcoming than ever, the island is back to normal," the prime minister told ITV. TUI resumed flights to the island last week. For more than 10 days last month, Greece sweltered under what some experts say is its longest July heatwave recorded in decades. Temperatures hit 46 degrees Celsius (114 Fahrenheit) but have since dropped. —AFP

An aerial view of the Motherland Monument.





## Lifestyle



Picture shows the Mediano reservoir at 25.5% of its capacity due to the ongoing drought in Mediano, Huesca province.—AFP Photos



The ruins of the Church of Asuncion of Mediano, normally submerged almost entirely in the waters of the Mediano reservoir, are now visible on solid ground due to the ongoing drought that has caused the reservoir to be at 25.5% of its capacity, in Mediano, Huesca province.

Ongoing droughts and an over-exploitation of land for both agriculture and industry have stoked fears in Spain over the creeping spread of "sterile soil" which could devastate Europe's kitchen garden. "There used to be a holm oak forest here.. but now the land is barren," says Gabriel del Barrio, pointing to a hill where only stunted shrubs remain. Wearing dusty trainers and with a canvas hat on his head, this specialist in desertification has been worriedly monitoring the daily degradation of the landscape in Almeria, in the southern Andalusia region.

"Spain is not going to be a desert with dunes like in the Sahara, that's morphologically impossible," explains del Barrio, a researcher at EEZA, the experimental centre for research into arid zones. But desertification, which is characterized by a severe "degradation of the soil" causing it to lose its productive capacity, "is worrying", he says.

In the dock are the usual suspects: global warming, which is driving rising temperatures leading to water evaporation that causes more wildfires, but also human activity, which is the biggest culprit, notably due to intensive farming. Despite its very dry climate, Almeria has transformed itself into Europe's vegetable garden through its 40,000 hectares of greenhouses—its "Sea of Plastic"—which produce thousands of tons of tomatoes, peppers, courgettes and cucumbers all year round. But these vast crop-producing areas are exacerbating the problem by using groundwater and "depleting the aquifers," says del Barrio.

#### 'Complicated position'

Although the situation is extreme, it's not only happening in Almeria. According to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, 75 percent of Spain's land is battling climatic conditions that could lead to desertification, making it the European nation most threatened by the problem. "This puts us in a complicated position in which

the combination of extreme temperatures, droughts and other factors aggravate the risk of erosion and the loss of soil quality," Spain's Ecology Minister Teresa Ribera warned in June.

According to the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), to which EEZA reports, soil degradation has

tripled over the last 10 years, creating a problem which is "irreversible on a human scale". And that means soils which are unable to retain water or organic matter, that cannot support crops or nourish livestock—a matter of huge concern in a country where agriculture accounts for annual exports of some 60 billion euros (\$66 billion).

According to the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), to which EEZA reports, soil degradation has

prompted some to roll up their sleeves

in, in a bid to "halt the soil erosion" in the region.

These farmers now use manure instead of chemical fertilizers, don't use pesticides "which kill insects," limit use of ploughing "which damages the soil" and use plant matter to cover the soil in order to conserve moisture on the rare

farmers to adopt new practices, environmental associations are pushing for new ways of farming, by reducing irrigated areas and using crops that consume less water. "We need to adjust our needs in light of the available water resources to reduce the risk exposure of both people and our productive sec-



## Spain worries over 'lifeless land' amid creeping desertification

triple over the last 10 years, creating a problem which is "irreversible on a human scale". And that means soils which are unable to retain water or organic matter, that cannot support crops or nourish livestock—a matter of huge concern in a country where agriculture accounts for annual exports of some 60 billion euros (\$66 billion).

"Soil erosion is now the main problem for most farmers in Spain," said

and get down to work. "We have to act on our own wherever possible... and not give in to fate," says Juan Antonio Merlos, 40, who owns a 100-hectare almond farm in the hills above Velez-Blanco. Together with a handful of farmers from an association called AIVelAI, Merlos has introduced new "regenerative" practices since taking over his parents' farm three years ago, which has now been certified as organ-

occasions when it rains. "This is long-term work" using techniques that have been around for years, says Merlos as he examines a few barley stalks planted under his almond trees. But that doesn't stop him from being optimistic.

"In theory, you need seven years to see results from regenerative agriculture. But I have already started to notice the difference in the soil and the insects," he told AFP. As well as urging

tors in a period of scarcity," said the World Wildlife Fund.

By and large, del Barrio agrees. "We have to find a balance" to ensure food needs without endangering the soil, he said. "We need to manage the soil in a way that makes it as sustainable as possible" to avoid the spectre of "lifeless" land.—AFP

## Heaviest animal ever? Scientists discover massive ancient whale

Look out, blue whale—there's a new contender for your heavyweight title. A newly discovered whale that lived nearly 40 million years ago could be the heaviest animal to have ever lived, based on a partial skeleton found in Peru, scientists said on Wednesday. The modern blue whale has long been considered the largest and heaviest animal ever, beating out all the giant dinosaurs of the distant past. But *Perucetus colossus*—the colossal whale from Peru—may have been even heavier, according to a study published in the journal *Nature*.

Extrapolating from some massive bones found in the Peruvian desert, an international team of researchers estimated that the animal had an average body mass of 180 tons.

That would not take the heavyweight title by itself. The biggest blue whale ever recorded weighed 190 tons, according to Guinness World Records. But the researchers estimated the ancient whale's weight range was between 85 and 340 tons, meaning it could have been significantly larger. The researchers were careful not to declare the ancient whale had broken the record.

But there was also "no reason to think that this specimen was the largest of its kind," study co-author Eli Amson told AFP. "I think there's a good chance that some of the individuals broke the record—but the take-home message is that we are in the ballpark of the blue whale," said Amson, a paleontologist at the State Museum of Natural History Stuttgart in Germany.

#### Rewriting cetacean history

The first fossil of the ancient whale was discovered back in 2010 by Mario Urbina, a palaeontologist who has spent decades searching the desert on the southern coast of Peru. But what he found "looked more like a boulder" than a fossil, Amson said. A total of 13 gigantic vertebrae—one of which weighed nearly 200 kilograms (440 pounds) -- were found at the site, as well as four ribs and a hip bone.

It took years and multiple trips to collect and prepare the giant fossils, and longer for the team of Peruvian and European researchers to confirm exactly what they had been found. On Wednesday, they revealed it is a new species of basilosaurid, an extinct family of cetaceans.

Today's cetaceans include dolphins, whales and porpoises, but their early ancestors lived on land, some resembling small deer. Over time they moved into the water, and basilosaurids are believed to be the first cetaceans to have a fully aquatic lifestyle. One of their adaptations at that time was gigantism—they became very big. But the new discovery indicates that cetaceans reached their peak body mass roughly 30 million years earlier than previously thought, the study said.

#### Tiny head, heavy bones

Like other basilosaurids, *Perucetus colossus* likely had a "ridiculously small" head compared to its body, Amson said—though there were no available bones to confirm this. Lacking any teeth, it was impossible to say for sure what they ate. But Amson speculated that scavenging off the seafloor was a strong possibility, partly because the animals could not swim quickly.

The researchers were confident that the animal lived in shallow waters in coastal environments, due to the strange heaviness of its bones. Its whole skeleton was estimated to weigh between five to seven tons—more

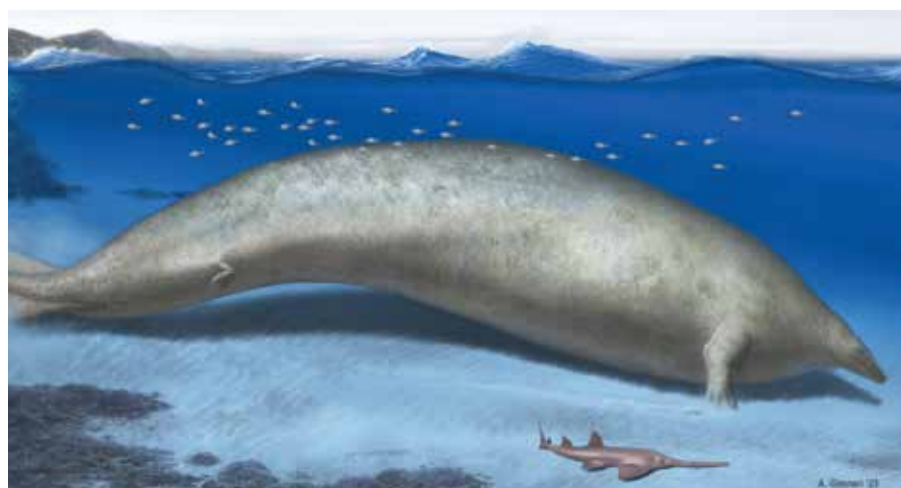
than twice as heavy as the skeleton of a blue whale. "This is—for sure—the heaviest skeleton of any mammal known to date," as well as any aquatic animal, Amson said.

*Perucetus colossus* needed heavy bones to compensate for the huge amount of buoyant blubber—and air in its lungs—which could otherwise send it bobbing to the surface. But just the right balance of bone density and blubber allowed the giant animal to stay in the middle of around 10 meters (33 feet) of water "without moving a muscle," Amson explained.

Felix Marx, a marine mammal expert at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa not involved in the study, told AFP that *Perucetus colossus* "is very different from anything else we've ever found". He cautioned that extinct sea cows had heavier bones than would be expected for their total body weight, potentially suggesting *Perucetus colossus* could be on the lower end of its estimated weight range. The fossils are being displayed at the Museum of Natural History in Lima.—AFP



A handout image shows researchers in Peru winching up one of the ancient whale's massive vertebrae, some of which weighed nearly 200 kilograms, near Zamaca, Ica Province, southern Peru.—AFP photos



A handout image shows an artist's illustration of *Perucetus colossus*, an ancient whale discovered in Peru that scientists think could be the heaviest animal to have ever lived.



The logo of the French luxury Piaget jewellers store at Rue de la Paix that leads to Place Vendome, in Paris following a robbery with losses estimated at €10-15 million according to the public prosecutor.—AFP

## Armed gang takes Piaget jewelry worth millions in Paris heist

An armed gang robbed a Paris store of luxury jewelry and watch brand Piaget on Tuesday, making off with 10 to 15 million euros worth of goods in broad daylight, police and prosecutors said. According to early indications, three people were involved in the robbery at around 1:00 pm (1100 GMT), with at least one of them carrying a weapon. The gang fled the scene with their bounty, estimated at between 10 million euros (\$11 million) and 15 million euros (\$16.5 million). Nobody was hurt, a police source said.

The store is located on the Rue de la Paix in the heart of the French capital, situated near the prestigious Place Vendome and home to several stores of high-end jewelry brands. The last high-profile heist in the neighborhood occurred in April, when three people on motorbikes robbed the Bulgari store, making off with several million of euros worth of jewelry.

Piaget, founded in Switzerland, makes luxury watches with price tags that can reach several tens of thousands of euros, and high-end jewelry. It is a subsidiary of the Richemont group, which also owns several other luxury goods companies including Cartier, Baume and Mercier, Chloe, and Van Cleef and Arpels.—AFP



Lifestyle



Genevieve de Fontenay (center), head of the "Genevieve de Fontenay national committee", poses with official candidates of Miss Nationale 2011 beauty contest in Paris. - AFP photos



French former founder and president of the Miss France committee Genevieve de Fontenay poses next to her waxwork model at the Grevin museum in Paris.

# 'Lady in the hat': Miss France diva De Fontenay dies at 90

Genevieve de Fontenay, who embodied France's idea of feminine chic for decades at the helm of the Miss France pageant before falling out of step with modern views on women and gender, has died, her family said Wednesday. She was 90. Known as "the lady in the hat" because she was rarely seen without one, De Fontenay joined the Miss France committee in 1954, and in 1981 became its president, a job she held for more than 25 years.

During her reign, the former model for the Balenciaga fashion house turned the national beauty pageant into a company, sold parts of the business to enhance its exposure, and put it on track for commercial and TV success. Her trademark brimmed hats and elegant outfits, usually black and white, made her instantly recognizable and a prime example of Parisian chic and glamour.

Her social views were conservative, and she tried to strip Miss France winner Valerie Begue of her title for



Miss Provence Barbara Morel (left) reacts after being crowned Miss Nationale 2011 in a beauty contest of the "Genevieve de Fontenay national committee", next to Genevieve de Fontenay (right), on December 5, 2010 in Paris.

allowing her pictures to be taken in suggestive poses for a tabloid. She was also accused of racism towards Begue, who is from the French overseas territory of Reunion.

Nor did she accept another Miss France, Isabelle Turpault, posing naked for celebrity weekly Paris Match. "I

never allowed two-piece bathing suits," she once said. "Showing your belly button in a contest is just exhibitionism."

She said Miss France contestants should never present themselves as sexual objects. "When you are a Miss, you are the contrary of laxness, of untidiness and of vulgarity, all these things

that make me sad," she said.

After leaving Miss France she started a rival pageant, Miss Prestige Nationale, in 2010, continuing to court controversy. In 2021 she said that allowing trans women to participate in the Miss France contest would be "against nature", a remark for which she was charged with inciting transphobic discrimination in June.

She also came out against LGBT parenting and joined protests against same-sex marriage which France adopted in 2013. By the time she retired in 2017, she was seen as hopelessly out of touch with the social progress in modern France. De Fontenay was born in Longwy, eastern France, the eldest of 10 children in a well-to-do family.

Her political views tended to be left-of-centre. Among presidential candidates she voted for were Arlette Laguiller, a communist, and Segolene Royal, a socialist. In 2004, she made her entry into the Parisian wax museum Musee Grevin. "I find it amusing to end up in a museum," she said as her wax dou-



French former founder and president of the Miss France committee Genevieve de Fontenay arrives for a press conference of French political movement "Les Patriotes" on April 23, 2018 in Paris.

ble was unveiled. De Fontenay died on Tuesday, her family said. — AFP

## Italian rapper hurt by fan blames selfie 'madness'

Italian rapper Baby K on Wednesday railed against the "madness" of selfies and called for greater protection for artists after she was injured by a fan and forced to cancel the rest of her tour. In a video posted on TikTok, Baby K said she suffered "breast trauma" after being "charged at" by a woman at the end of a concert on Monday in Teramo, Italy, as a crowd of fans surged around her for selfies.

The 40-year-old rapper and singer said she had suffered breathing difficulties and been examined in hospital before being forced to cut short her summer tour. "The most important thing for people is to take a photo, but it has become very dangerous", she said. "It's madness".

"I'm not complaining about taking pictures... but it's getting out of hand. Safety must come first," she said, accusing Italian police of poor crowd management. Baby K, whose real name is Claudia Nahum and who was born in Singapore, has sold hundreds of thousands of albums. Her most famous tracks include "Roma Bangkok" and "Killer". She has more than 730,000 followers on Instagram, and the music video for "Roma Bangkok" has over 300 million views on her YouTube channel. — AFP



## Where's the beef? US man sues Taco Bell over filling size

A New York man unhappy with the amount of filling he received in his Taco Bell order has sued the fast food chain for false advertising. Frank Siragusa claims the Mexican Pizza he bought last September had approximately half the beef and bean filling shown in adverts. Had he known this, the plaintiff "would not have paid the \$5.49 price," according to the class-action lawsuit filed in the Eastern District of New York Monday.

Siragusa is seeking upwards of \$5 million from the chain for "unfair and deceptive trade practices." The Mexican pizza offers seasoned beef and refried beans between two pizza shells with sauce, cheese and tomatoes on top, with add-ons including guacamole and chicken.

Siragusa filed the suit on behalf of himself and other customers who were left similarly disappointed with items, including Taco Bell's popular Crunchwraps. The court filing juxtaposes photos of food taken from the chain's website with photos of the "actual" item that customers say they received.

The restaurant's images show brightly colored meat, cheese and salad oozing out of tightly packed tacos. The customers' photos show duller food looking rather sad and limp. The lawsuit claims the adverts are "unfair and financially damaging to consumers as they are receiving a product that is materially lower in value than what is being promised."

"Taco Bell's actions are especially concerning now that inflation, food, and meat prices are very high and many consumers, especially lower income consumers, are struggling financially," it adds. The suit includes links to media articles making similar claims about Taco Bell's portions. In one, published on the US edition of The Sun last September, a journalist wrote that the Mexican Pizza "wasn't as beefy as the commercial pictures made it look." A spokesperson for Taco Bell did not immediately respond to request for comment from AFP. — AFP

## Mud-struck German heavy metal bash slashes attendance

The world's biggest heavy metal music festival starting in northern Germany on Wednesday was forced to cap attendance after heavy rains turned its farmland venue into a muddy quagmire. Organizers of the annual Wacken Open Air (W:O:A) bash, featuring 150 bands on eight stages over four days, said the event would go forward as planned but with only around 60 percent of the 85,000 ticket-holders after imposing an entry freeze. In messages to "dear metalheads" on social media, the promoters said they regretted having to cap the total audience at the around 50,000 who were already present, calling the situation "very sad". "We tried everything but unfortunately we are unable to allow anyone else onto the Holy Ground," they said, referring to the sprawling rural venue.

"There is no other way," they added, calling it the "first time we've taken this decision in the history of the W:O:A." The festival said it was examining whether to



Festival-goers stand in the mud and hold up flags of Brazil on the grounds of the Wacken Open Air music festival in Wacken, northern Germany.



Festival-goers make their way through mud as they arrive for the Wacken Open Air music festival in Wacken, northern Germany on the eve of the festival's opening.

offer refunds to fans who were refused entry or allow them to use their tickets for next year's event.

Launched in 1989, Wacken is billed as the world's largest heavy metal gathering and regularly draws the scene's biggest bands, with headbangers travelling from across Germany and abroad to take part. Britain's Iron Maiden, US thrash metal act Megadeth and folk-punk group Dropkick Murphys are among the headliners this year.

### 'Incredibly lucky'

Although often a muddy affair, Wacken is facing particularly severe accessibility problems due to a steady downpour, prompting both promoters and police to tell anyone who had not already arrived at the showgrounds by Tuesday to turn back.

Organizers of the sold-out festival said weather forecasts indicated the rain would continue, with electrical storms possible, leading them to take the pre-

cautionary measures without halting the event entirely. The mood at the showgrounds remained festive as the event prepared to kick off, with black-clad festival-goers making their way ankle-deep in muck. Fans using wheeled walkers and even a wheelchair proved undeterred.

Lene Fuchs, who said she arrived in Wacken from the southern town of Hohenheim on Monday, said the organizers were doing their best under the circumstances. "We are at the camping site and got incredibly lucky," she wrote on Facebook. "The W:O:A team is doing an amazing job!" However festival-goer Dirk Liberowski urged the promoters to call off the event, fearing a disaster if there were an emergency at the venue. "Cancellation is the only right decision! All the paths are impassable! At night it's really dangerous, especially for those who have been drinking." — AFP



Festival-goers stand in front of a stage at the start of the Wacken Open Air music festival in Wacken, northern Germany. — AFP photos



Festival-goers cheer as they enter the grounds of the Wacken Open Air music festival in Wacken, northern Germany.



## International

## Track, BMX, road, mountain all rub shoulders at cycling championships

Over 200 of eye-catching jerseys to be handed out



GLASGOW: Great Britain's Daphne Schrage takes part in a women's C2 individual pursuit qualification race during day one of the Cycling World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland. — AFP

GLASGOW: Remco Evenepoel is among the stars assembling for the world cycling championships in Scotland with 13 disciplines including road races, BMX, mountain biking and track racing on the menu from Thursday. Over 200 of the eye-catching jerseys will be handed out over the 11 days of action to the various world champions. The men's world road race champion Evenepoel arrives in good shape after landing his third San Sebastian classic.

"It's super-good for the head and for the motivation to start the second part of the season and to go to Glasgow next week," he said after Saturday's win. The 23-year-old Belgian is unlikely to have to contend with swooping parrots in Scotland as he did at the 2022 championships in Wollongong. He forms part of a powerful Belgian team aided by Wout Van Aert. Van Aert was last in action as 'shepa' to Tour de France winner Jonas Vingegaard but left the race in the final week to attend the birth of his second child.

The epic 271km course from Edinburgh to Glasgow will weed out any bluffers and Evenepoel's endurance will lend him an edge. Another to consider is Mathieu van der Poel, who is targeting the men's road race before switching to cyclo-cross. Vingegaard himself is absent having chosen to race the Vuelta a Espana in late August, but Denmark can call upon 2019 champion Mads Pedersen, who won in a deluge in Yorkshire. France's Julian Alaphilippe, who won the 2020 and 2021 titles, is also there but somewhat struggling for form since a bad fall a year ago.

## Van Vleuten to retire

The elite women's road race takes top billing on the closing day on Sunday with 40-year-old Annemiek van Vleuten ending her career in the 154km race from the banks of Loch Lomond into downtown Glasgow. Standing in her way are a new generation of cyclists including Lotte Kopecky, Marianne Vos and Demi Vollering, who succeeded Van

Vleuten as winner of the women's Tour de France in Pau last Sunday - this trio are all capable of their own tilt at the title in the fast-growing women's sport.

The two elite time trials both run to Stirling and culminate with a sharp climb to the city's landmark castle. There are also events for the juniors and the under-23s for the men and women plus a mixed team time trial. Three women and three men race a 20.15km road circuit in turn with the men first down the ramp in central Glasgow. Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the British Isles, provides the backdrop for the mountain biking while the BMX events all take place in Glasgow. The Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome stages the track racing with British riders bent on garnering 2024 Paris Olympic Games spots by doing well here. The velodrome will be one of the hubs of the entire carnival - built for the 2014 Commonwealth Games it is dotted with a 250m Siberian timber track and is named after 11-time world champion Hoy, the greatest Scottish cyclist of all time. — AFP

## Bayern edge Liverpool 4-3 in Singapore

SINGAPORE: A stunning stoppage-time strike by Frans Kratzig sealed victory for Bayern Munich in a pre-season friendly against Liverpool in Singapore on Wednesday as the German league champions came from behind twice to win 4-3. The 20-year-old fired past Alisson as the game entered stoppage time to settle a thrilling encounter in front of a crowd of nearly 50,000 fans at the National Stadium.

A goal inside two minutes by Cody Gakpo and a header by Virgil van Dijk had put the English side two goals up in the opening half-hour but Bayern hit back through Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sane to level the score before half-time. Luis Diaz regained the lead for Liverpool midway through the second half before Josip Stanisic drew level at 3-3 in the 80th minute and Kratzig secured the win for Bayern at the death.

A left-back from Bayern's youth system, Kratzig has impressed on the club's pre-season tour of Asia and manager Thomas Tuchel was delighted with his performance on Wednesday when he was deployed in a more attacking position. "Let's not get overexcited but he's a lovely guy," said Tuchel. "First of all, he has good character, is a very good football player and is very intelligent and smart on the pitch. He was very strong when we changed him into an offensive position. I didn't know how well he could play there because he's usually a specialist defender," Tuchel added.

"But he's played well since day one of our tour in training and in our matches against Manchester City and Kawasaki Frontale in Tokyo, and today he finished in a very spectacular manner." Liverpool had trounced Leicester City 4-0 at the same venue last Sunday and they caught the German champions napping with their opening goal after 112 seconds. Gakpo played a neat one-two with Diogo Jota on the halfway line and surged past the Bayern defense before firing past Yann Sommer into the roof of the net.



SINGAPORE: Bayern Munich's defend Matthijs de Ligt (2nd right) kicks the ball towards Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (right) during the Singapore Festival of Football pre-season friendly match in Singapore on August 2, 2023. — AFP

## Missed chances

Bayern should have equalized in the 10th minute but Benjamin Pavard headed against the woodwork from five meters out before nodding the rebound over the crossbar. They would rue that miss when Liverpool extended their lead in the 28th minute through newly appointed captain Van Dijk who rose unchallenged in the Bayern box to head in Andy Robertson's corner from the right. Bayern reduced the deficit five minutes later as Kim Min-jae's ball over the top of the Liverpool defense found Gnabry who cut inside Joel Matip before slotting past goalkeeper Alisson with his right foot.

Gnabry also played a big part in Bayern's equaliser three minutes before half-time. Sent clear down the left flank by Mathys Tel, the German international winger surged into the Liverpool box before squaring the ball for an unmarked Sane to fire home with his

left foot. Half-time substitute Darwin Nunez should have restored Liverpool's lead early in the second half when he headed wide with the goal at his mercy. At the other end, Jamal Musiala had his attempt from point-blank range blocked by an alert Alisson.

But the English side would go back in front in the 66th minute after some fine work by Mohamed Salah who cut in from the right flank before feeding the ball to Diaz for an emphatic finish. With 10 minutes remaining, Bayern hit back. Alisson made a fine reflex save to keep out Kratzig's powerful header but the rebound went to Stanisic who turned the ball in from close range. Nunez then squandered another chance to get a fourth for Liverpool. Kratzig made them pay for the miss when he gathered a long ball from Matthijs De Ligt with an excellent first touch before rifling an unstoppable effort past Alisson. — AFP

## India blow away West Indies to seal ODI series

TAROUBA: India swiftly erased the memory of a poor second match to annihilate the West Indies by 200 runs in the decisive third and final one-day international at the Brian Lara Stadium on Tuesday. Even with senior players in captain Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli still rested the tourists' batting finally came good collectively to post a formidable 351-5 batting first. Their seamers then demolished the home side's top order and a ninth-wicket partnership of 55 merely delayed the inevitable with the West Indies bundled out for 151 off 35.3 overs.

India's margin of victory was their second largest in ODIs against the West Indies and also extended their run of bilateral series wins against the Caribbean team in the format to 13. Openers Shubman Gill and Ishan Kishan set the tone for the India innings after they were put in with man-of-the-series Kishan benefiting from an early dropped chance to belt 77 off 64 balls - his third consecutive half-century - in an opening stand of 143, a new record for the wicket for India in ODIs in the West Indies.

Gill was more circumspect in getting to a top score of 85 off 92 balls before falling to Gudakesh Motie, the left-arm spinner being the most economical for the home side in conceding just 38 runs from his 10 overs. "This was definitely special to finally get a fifty on this tour," said Gill after receiving the man-of-the-match award. "It's all about playing according to the conditions and assessing the situation as quickly as possible." Sanju Samson also wasted no time in taking advantage of another rare ODI opportunity to smash 51 off 41 with four sixes.

## Pandya piles on

However his impressive mid-innings assault was surpassed by Hardik Pandya, the stand-in captain hoisting five sixes and four fours in an unbeaten 70 off just 52 deliveries. "I look forward to these sorts of games where there is something on the line," said Pandya. "We knew there was something at stake and the way the boys were up for it, came out and performed but also enjoyed it was really satisfying."

In this first-ever men's ODI to be played at the venue, the West Indies were never in the hunt af-

ter Mukesh Kumar's opening burst removed openers Brandon King and Kyle Mayers before adding the important wicket of captain Shai Hope. "I keep stressing on our attitude because I don't think we are consistent enough," Hope lamented. "Some days we compete with the best in the world, other days we get steamrolled. We have to work on this." Shardul Thakur and Jaydev Unadkat, playing his first ODI in 10 years, then joined the rout to have the home side in ruins at 50 for six.

Kuldeep Yadav's wrist-spin claimed two more wickets and although Motie (39 not out) and Alzarri Joseph provided a measure of entertainment for the home fans, it was left to Thakur to claim the final two wickets to finish with the best figures of 4-37 and end the series as the leading wicket-taker with eight. Both squads now prepare for the final leg of the tour, a five-match T20 international series, with the first fixture on Thursday also at the Brian Lara Stadium. — AFP



TAROUBA: Ishan Kishan of India attempts to take a catch during the 3rd and final ODI match between West Indies and India in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago on August 01, 2023. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Juncheng Shang of China returns a shot to Ben Shelton of the United States during Day 4 of the Mubadala Citi DC Open at Rock Creek Tennis Center on August 01, 2023. — AFP

## Shang bests Shelton to reach third round

WASHINGTON: Chinese teenager Shang Juncheng defeated Ben Shelton for the second time in two weeks on Tuesday, downing the 14th-seeded American 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 to reach the third round of the ATP hard court tournament in Washington. "I'm definitely very happy right now," the 18-year-old Shang told ATP.com. "Ben is not an easy player to beat. I think I've got a game that kind of suits me to playing him."

Shang, who ousted Shelton 6-4, 6-4 at the Atlanta Open last week, converted five of his nine break point chances on Tuesday and polished off the victory in one hour and 42 minutes. "In the past two weeks, I've been returning really well," Shang said. "So I think that was the key today, to break a few service games from him." The left-hander from Beijing posted his fourth victory in as many days, including two qualifying victories and a first-round triumph over Emilio Gomez. He had started his year by qualifying for the Australian Open and winning a first-round match but was then slowed by mononucleosis.

Once back on court he qualified for the French Open, but didn't make it out of the first round. Shang's reward for Tuesday's win will be a meeting with American second seed Frances Tiafoe, who opened his campaign with a 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5) win over Russia's Aslan Karatsev. "Unbelievable match tonight. — AFP

## Woods joins PGA Tour policy board in transparency move

MIAMI: Tiger Woods is joining the PGA Tour's newly expanded policy board, the tour announced Tuesday, in a move aimed at cooling player tensions over secrecy surrounding merger talks with the Saudi backers of LIV Golf. The 15-time major champion, a long-time supporter of the PGA Tour in its fight with upstart LIV, will have a direct say in approving any eventual deal with the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF), the framework of which was unveiled in June to the shock of tour players.

"I'm honored to represent the players of the PGA Tour," Woods said in a statement from the tour. "This is a critical point for the tour, and the players will do their best to make certain that any changes that are made in tour operations are in the best interest of all our stakeholders, including fans, sponsors and players." PGA commissioner Jay Monahan, under fire from many players over handling of the LIV talks since he made the announcement, said future rule changes will require the involvement and approval of the six player directors from the board, including Woods and Rory McIlroy.

That gives player representatives an upper hand on the 11-member board and the power in all decisions regarding any final agreement with the Saudis. The special advisor to the player directors, Colin Neville, will be fully aware of the state of talks on the "framework agreement" with LIV, which the board must approve by the end of the year in order for the controversial merger to occur.

"The players thank commissioner Monahan for agreeing to address our concerns and we look forward to being at the table with him to make the right decisions for the future of the game that we all love," Woods said. "He has my confidence moving forward with these changes." The Washington Post reported that 41 PGA Tour players - including stars McIlroy, Jon Rahm and Scottie Scheffler - sent Monahan a letter on Monday asking Woods be added to the policy board and the tour's governance structure be reviewed immediately.

PGA player Charley Hoffman said Woods pushed for a place among the decision makers and Monahan had little choice than to agree. "Tiger has done more for golf than arguably anybody," Hoffman said. "To have him sit in those meetings now is very powerful and I think his voice will be listened to." And, he added, it will begin rebuilding the trust between Monahan and players. "It's a start. This is the best move we've made in the past few months," he said. "It's Tiger coming up with it and I think he wants to be part of the PGA Tour going forward."

Woods, 47, has been limited in his ability to play in recent years by severe leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash. Monahan said having the leadership and voice of Woods is "welcomed and impactful" as he tries to complete the PGA-LIV deal. "I'm committed to taking the necessary steps to restore any lost trust or confidence that occurred as a result of the surprise announcement of our framework agreement," Monahan said. "Any agreement we reach must be shaped by our members' input and approval earned through our player directors."

## 'Got to keep him busy'

Players at this week's PGA Tour event in Greensboro, North Carolina, supported the move. That included two-time major winner Justin Thomas, a long-time friend of Woods, who has invoked legends Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer in backing the PGA Tour. "It's important to him," Thomas said. "When Arnold and Jack passed the torch to him, that's not something he takes lightly. "I don't think there's anybody else I would want speaking on my behalf and the rest of the guys."

Thomas warned, however, that it would likely take more than Woods to soothe players who felt betrayed by Monahan. "You're never going to make everybody happy," Thomas said. "It's about the majority and what's best for the entire PGA Tour. I'd like to think and hope the membership understands that's what Tiger has in mind, especially with him clearly not playing as much. "We've got to keep him busy somehow. He can't just sit on the couch and do nothing." — AFP



Sports

# Alba eyes more trophies after re-uniting with Messi in Miami

'I have come here to compete and to win everything'

FORT LAUDERDALE: Spain full-back Jordi Alba says he is targeting more trophies after re-uniting with former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Sergio Busquets at Inter Miami. Alba is available for a possible Inter Miami debut in Wednesday's Leagues Cup match against Florida rivals Orlando City after arriving in Miami at the weekend. The 34-year-old won five Spanish league titles and a Champions League title during his time with Barca and a European Championship and Nations League with Spain. "I have come here to compete, to win everything," Alba told a press conference after training on Tuesday.

"I've been fortunate to win everything with Barcelona and almost everything with the national team...it was the right decision to come here to a very exciting project." Alba said the impact of Messi and Busquets, who led Miami to back-to-back wins over Cruz Azul and Atlanta in the group stage of the competition, has already been evident. "I think the arrival of Busi (Busquets) and Leo (Messi) has made the team grow a lot, Alba said. "And I'm going to be the same player I've been in Europe, I'm going to have the same demands of myself."

Alba said that despite not having played since Spain's Nations League final victory over Croatia on June 19, he has kept himself in good condition and is ready to hit the ground running. "I have trained quite well in Barcelona for many days. It is true that it is not easy to train alone, but I got in touch with the (athletic staff) here, from Inter Miami, and well, they

made it very easy for me," he said. "I worked hard to be able to compete when I got here and I couldn't wait to train with my teammates, to know how they were personally."

The left back has been greeted warmly. "They have welcomed me spectacularly," he said. "The truth is that I am very happy to be here. And well, physically I feel good, I am sure that with the passing of the weeks I will feel much better, and the change of climate is important but I feel good and strong. "I've been here three days and it feels like I've been here my entire life." Inter head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said that he was impressed with Alba's shape but that he would wait until Wednesday before deciding if Alba would play against Orlando. With three top talents having joined a team that is bottom of the standings in MLS, it has been a challenge for Martino to create a cohesive team.

But he said he has been impressed by the way the players have responded to Messi, Busquets and Alba in the dressing room. "What we have seen so far is that they are growing. They are not overshadowed by the greatness of the three players that we are talking about, but instead are focused on being able to learn from everything that they have done their careers," said the Miami coach. "It is not easy for the players that we have here to receive players with so much history, with so many titles, with such good ability, with such a legacy in world football. In that sense, I think we are on the right track." — AFP



FORT LAUDERDALE: Inter Miami's new Spanish defender Jordi Alba (right) and teammate Argentine forward Lionel Messi (left) speak during training at the Florida Blue Training Center next to DRV PNK Stadium in Florida, on August 1, 2023. — AFP

## Dembele set to leave Barca after PSG offer

LAS VEGAS: Barcelona boss Xavi Hernandez confirmed on Tuesday that Ousmane Dembele is poised to leave the Spanish giants after receiving an offer from Paris Saint-Germain. Dembele, 26, was left on the bench on Tuesday as Barcelona wrapped up their North American pre-season tour with a 1-0 win over AC Milan in Las Vegas. Afterward, Xavi told Spanish television that French international Dembele - who scored in last weekend's victory over Real Madrid in Dallas - had been left out after informing Barcelona he wanted to leave.

"I will be very clear," Xavi said. "He has asked us that he wants to leave, he has been very direct, that he has a proposal from Paris Saint-Germain, that they have called him from there and here we cannot do anything. It is his personal decision. "To me, it hurts me

because I think we have taken great care of him here so that he is happy and content and continues to make a difference for us. "But he says that he has this proposal and that he has decided to leave. That is why he has not played today."

Dembele, who joined Barcelona in 2017, has one year left on his contract with the La Liga giants. Barcelona's victory on Tuesday came courtesy of a spectacular second-half strike from Ansu Fati. A lackluster game at Las Vegas's Allegiant Stadium was settled in the 55th minute after a counter-attack launched by Barcelona's teenage left back Alejandro Balde. The 19-year-old Spanish international passed to Fati just inside the Milan area and the forward cut in from the left before curling a superb shot into the top corner. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Barcelona's French midfielder Ousmane Dembele looks ahead of the pre-season friendly football match between AC Milan and FC Barcelona, at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada, on August 1, 2023. — AFP

## James steps out of brother's shadow to light up WCup

SYDNEY: Lauren James said on the eve of the Women's World Cup that she wanted to be known as more than just the sister of Chelsea's Reece James - safe to say she has now done that, and more. The 21-year-old sparkled in a 6-1 annihilation of China on Tuesday as European champions England swept into the last 16 of the World Cup and a meeting with Nigeria. James scored twice, had another disallowed and a hand in three other goals in a remarkable display.

She had needed just six minutes to stamp her mark on the tournament in Australia and New Zealand with a wonderful strike from outside the area in a 1-0 win over Denmark. Coach Sarina Wiegman resisted calls to start the exciting attacker in the tournament opener against Haiti, when England underwhelmed in a 1-0 win thanks to a penalty.

But James, who like England men's international

Reece plays for Chelsea, was given a start in the next match against the Danes and was the best player on the pitch for 45 minutes. She rightfully kept her place for the China game in Adelaide and produced a scintillating display to light up the World Cup. "She's special - a very special player for us and for women's football in general," England team-mate Chloe Kelly told reporters. Wiegman makes a point of not picking out individual players for praise, but she conceded afterwards that James "did special things". James came off in the 81st minute to a standing ovation.

### Handling the pressure

For many casual football fans brother Reece, the attacking full-back who has excelled for Chelsea, will be the better known of the siblings, who are close. Speaking to English media ahead of the World Cup, James admitted that always being talked about in the same breath as her brother bothered her.

"Even just 'that's Lauren James, that's Reece's sister', but I want to carve that out and be known as 'this is Lauren James'," she said. James would perhaps have been better known by the wider public by now were it not for injuries. Having been in Chelsea's youth teams, she then played for Arsenal and Manchester United before rejoining the Blues

two years ago. But persistent knee injuries held her back initially and when England won the Euros last summer she was watching from the stands.

She has said that fuelled her determination to be involved at the World Cup and 12 months later she is the talk of the tournament. Writing in London's Evening Standard, former England international Rachel Yankey said she had no fears that James could handle being under the spotlight. Yankey believes that the link to her brother has actually stood James in good stead. "That meant automatically people were watching Lauren, so I am not worried about her handling this," Yankey wrote.

### Feeling free

James's first goal against a shellshocked and outclassed China came four minutes before half-time. James struck the ball sweetly first time with her right foot from outside the box and into the opposite bottom corner after being teed up from a free-kick by Alex Greenwood. Her second was just as impressive, volleying into the corner, this time with her left foot. James said having a hand in five of England's six goals was "what dreams are made of". "I felt free, whether I am on the wing or in 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?" — AFP

## 'We can beat them': Sweden set up USA showdown at WCup

HAMILTON: Sweden coach Peter Gerhardtsson said his in-form side are "convinced" they can knock the United States out of the Women's World Cup after setting up a last-16 tie with the holders this weekend. A Rebecka Blomqvist header and an Elin Rubensson penalty gave a much-changed Sweden team a 2-0 win over Argentina in Hamilton on Wednesday as they topped Group G with three wins out of three. The world's third-ranked team will now head to Melbourne to play the USA on Sunday, after the reigning world champions stumbled out of their group in second place with just one win.

It will be their first meeting since Sweden beat the USA 3-0 at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago on their way to taking the silver medal. "We have played really good group-stage games, we have won all three of them, and we also beat them in the Olympics," said Sofia Jakobsson, who came into Sweden's line-up against Argentina and set up the opening goal. "We are a confident team and looking forward to playing these games where it really matters and you have to win to move forward."

Sweden, who came third at the 2019 World Cup, had already secured a place in the knockout phase before their final group game by thrashing Italy 5-0 last weekend. Even a defeat was unlikely to prevent them topping their group and so Gerhardtsson made nine changes. Key forwards Fridolina Rolfö and Stina Blackstenius were among those rested, with the centre-back pairing of Magdalena Eriksson and Amanda Ilestedt the only players to keep their places.

Blomqvist headed in Jakobsson's cross for the opener in the 66th minute on a wet and windy night before substitute Rubensson clinched the win with a last-minute penalty after Blomqvist was fouled. "The US are ranked number one. It might be better to play them on Sunday than in the semis or final," said Gerhardtsson. "From a psychological perspective we know we can beat them. I think the players are convinced they can definitely win on Sunday and I believe that too."

### Olympics victory

Two goals from Blackstenius and one from Lina Hurtig gave Sweden a convincing win over the USA in Tokyo, although Gerhardtsson said rewatching that game recently made him realise it was not one of his side's best performances. He highlighted the absence for the US of midfielder Rose Lavelle due to suspension as good news, while Jakobsson said Sweden remained wary of the holders. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

### Hospitals

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

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## Change of Name

I, **Burhanuddin**, holder of Indian Passport No. L5940788 having permanent address, Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, India - 457001, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Burhanuddin** (Given Name) and **Ghadyali** (Surname) (C 3841) 3/8/2023

I, **Asgar Ali**, holder of Indian Passport No. L5936609 having permanent address, Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, India - 457001, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Asgar**

**Ali** (Given Name) and **Presswala** (Surname) (C 3839) 3/8/2023

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 Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **HUSSAIN FAKHRUDDIN** and (surname) **BOHRA**. (#2323) 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

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## South Africa make history; France crush Panama 6-3

### Jamaica dump Brazil and Marta out of World Cup



SYDNEY: France's defender #20 Estelle Cascarino (left) and Panama's midfielder #20 Aldrith Quintero compete for the ball during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group F football match between Panama and France on August 2, 2023. — AFP

SYDNEY: Jamaica dumped out Brazil and South Africa sent Italy home on Wednesday as the supposed minnows roared into the last 16 of an increasingly open Women's World Cup. The Reggae Girlz' coach Lorne Donaldson declared it "job done" after his dogged Jamaica side strangled the life out of eighth-ranked Brazil in Melbourne for a 0-0 draw. It was the point Jamaica needed to progress into the knockout rounds for the first time in history and meant a crushing end to the World Cup career of Brazilian legend Marta.

The 37-year-old, arguably the greatest player in the history of women's football, was as shell-shocked as she was upset afterwards. Brazil's meek group-phase exit at the hands of a team ranked 43 was their earliest departure from the tournament since being turfed out at the same stage in 1995. "It's hard to talk at a time like this. Not even in my worst nightmares was it the World Cup I dreamed of," said Marta, once nicknamed "Pele in a skirt" by the late football icon.

Jamaica finished second in Group F and will meet

the team that comes top when Group H concludes on Thursday. That is currently Colombia. France topped Group F as Kadidiatou Diani hit a hat-trick in a 6-3 win over Panama and a possible meeting next with Germany. Marta Cox's wonder strike on 67 seconds had left the French reeling, swerving a free-kick into the corner from 30 yards for Panama's first-ever World Cup goal. She spun away in celebration and was mobbed by teammates as the tears flowed at a sold-out Sydney Football Stadium.

#### South Africa joy

There were also tears - of joy and devastation - after 54th-ranked South Africa showed Jamaica the way in a wet Wellington. The African champions won a Women's World Cup match for the first time with a stunning 3-2 victory over 16th-ranked Italy in a thriller. Captain Thembi Kgatlang scored the winner in the 92nd minute to make history for South Africa and set up a meeting with the Netherlands - sending Italy home. Arianna Caruso scored twice for Italy

and thought she had salvaged the draw they needed to go through with 16 minutes left, before Kgatlang's stunning late intervention.

"Over the last two weeks, I've lost three family members. I could have gone home but I chose to stay with my girls," said Kgatlang, who plays for Racing Louisville in the United States. "Because that's how much it means." Sweden topped Group G with the maximum nine points to set up a clash with holders the United States. It will be the teams' first meeting since Sweden beat the USA 3-0 at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago on their way to taking the silver medal.

"We have played really good group-stage games, we have won all three of them, and we also beat them in the Olympics," said Sofia Jakobsson, who came into Sweden's line-up against Argentina and set up the opening goal in a 2-0 win. The Americans came into the tournament in Australia and New Zealand as favourites to win an unprecedented third World Cup in a row. But they have looked nothing like the team that has for so long dominated women's international football and only

scraped out of the group phase with a shaky 0-0 draw against debutants Portugal on Tuesday.

Group action concludes on Thursday with Colombia needing only a draw against Morocco to top Group H. Germany, stunned by Colombia and 18-year-old attacker Linda Caicedo in their previous match, are through with a win over a South Korea side who are more or less already out. Caicedo underwent X-rays after health scares at the tournament but is "100 percent" fit for the Morocco game, coach Nelson Abadia said.

The teenage Real Madrid attacker, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at 15 but made a full recovery, has lit up the World Cup with goals in wins against South Korea and Germany. In the upset over two-time champions Germany Caicedo scored one of the goals of the tournament, days after going down in training clutching her chest. She also appeared to suffer breathing difficulties in that 2-1 win - which took Colombia to the brink of the last 16 - but carried on playing. — AFP

## Mane joins Ronaldo at Saudi side Al Nassr

RIYADH: Saudi side Al Nassr confirmed the signing of Bayern Munich striker Sadio Mane on Tuesday as the Senegal star prepares to team up with five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo. The twice African footballer of the year is the latest high profile player to join the cash-rich Saudi league. "I'm really happy to be part of you guys, I can't wait to see you," Mane said in a video addressed to Al Nassr supporters on the club's social media accounts.

Both clubs announced the transfer involving the former Liverpool star which German media estimated at around 30 million euros on a three-year deal with an annual salary for Mane of 40 million plus 10 million in results-based bonuses. Earlier Tuesday Mane, 31, raved his departure with two years of his contract at Bayern remaining. "Leaving Bayern hurts me. I would have wished for a different ending," he told Sky Germany.

Those sentiments were echoed by Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel when he spoke in Singapore on the eve of his side's friendly against Liverpool. "We had a long, big hug and we both agreed that we don't like what's happening now, but we think it's for the best in this situation," said the Bayern coach. "Sometimes things don't work out as everybody wants it to work out. In person I have always had a very good relationship with him and this will stay. "I can totally understand that he feels hurt and I also wouldn't feel happy if things like this happened.

"Obviously it's something that we didn't bring into the picture, which is my job and my responsibility, but in this particular situation, it was the best solution to untie the knot." Mane moves to the club that instigated the first coup of a raft of signings by Saudi clubs with



Senegalese forward Sadio Mane

the capture of Ronaldo on a four-year contract. Mane won the Champions League and Premier League in six seasons with Liverpool and was a key part of Jurgen Klopp's devastating front three with Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino. When Liverpool won their first English league title for 30 years in the pandemic-disrupted 2019-2020 season, Mane scored 18 goals. But in the summer of 2022, Mane decided he wanted a new challenge—unconfirmed rumors said he had tired of sharing the limelight with Egypt's Salah at Anfield. Bayern made a big play for Mane, promising to make him the focal point of an attack which had just lost the services of Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona. After a strong start to the season at Bayern, it soon became clear that Mane was not clicking in Bavaria.

In a Bundesliga game against Werder Bremen in November, Mane suffered an injury to his fibula and his season was put on hold. The injury forced him to miss the World Cup in Qatar at the end of last year in a crushing blow to Senegal's chances. Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen reflected on Mane's difficult spell in Germany. — AFP

## Italy legend Buffon hangs up his gloves

MILAN: Gianluigi Buffon announced his retirement from football on Wednesday, bringing down the curtain on a glorious career as one of the world's greatest ever goalkeepers. "That's all folks! You gave me everything. I gave you everything. We did it together," he posted in English on social media. Buffon, 45, hangs up his gloves after two final years at Parma, the club where it all began nearly three decades ago when Italian football was Europe's gold standard. He had a contract which ran until next summer with Parma but he will no longer be a part of the Serie B club's bid to return to the top flight after two years away.

Buffon is a symbol of a halcyon age when the best footballers went to play in Serie A and Italy developed dozens of world class players. The former Italy captain has a record 176 caps for his country while also holding the record for Serie A matches played - 657, stretching back to 1995. After bursting onto the scene as a 17-year-old, keeping out the likes of George Weah and Roberto Baggio in his Parma debut against AC Milan, Buffon won 27 major trophies.

The majority came over 19 seasons at Juventus, where he won 10 Serie A titles, five Italian Cups, while he also won the UEFA Cup in 1999 for Parma as part of possibly the best team in the club's history. He also won Ligue 1 with Paris Saint-Germain in 2019 before returning to Juve, but he will be most fondly remembered for Italy's victory at the 2006 World Cup. Buffon was one of the stars as an Azurrri team battered by the 'Calciopoli' match-fixing scandal - which would cost him as Juve keeper two



Gianluigi Buffon, known as Gigi, Italian footballer and goalkeeper

league titles - beat France on penalties after knocking out hosts Germany in the semi-finals.

That was the last hurrah for a generation which had made Italy one of the world's dominant football nations, and as their fortunes slowly declined he suffered the ignominy of two straight group stage exits before bowing out not long after failure to qualify for the 2018 tournament. Buffon won his last trophy in his final season with Juve two years ago, lifting the Italian Cup alongside Federico Chiesa, 22 years after he triumphed with Parma alongside his teammate's father Enrico.

However Buffon's career has also been plagued by scandal, not least consistent rumors that is, or at least once was, a sympathizer of the far-right. He drew fierce criticism for choosing the number 88, a neo-Nazi code for 'Heil Hitler', on his jersey for the 2000-01 season. Two years before he wore a t-shirt with the neo-fascist slogan 'Boia chi molla', which loosely translated means death before surrender, under his kit for a match against Lazio, who have some of Europe's most hard-right supporters. — AFP