

2 Kuwaiti women boldly confronted Iraqi occupiers during aggression



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Kuwait, Saudi reject Iran claims to Durra gas field

Kuwaiti foreign minister receives credentials of Iranian ambassador



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah receives the credentials of Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonchi on Aug 3, 2023. — KUNA

By B Izzak & Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Saudi Arabia said Thursday they have sole ownership of a disputed gas field also claimed by Iran, in an escalating feud after Tehran threatened to pursue exploration. The offshore field, known as Durra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and Arash in Iran, has long been focal point of contention between the three countries.

The Kuwaiti and Saudi authorities said in a joint statement published on Thursday that "they alone have full sovereign rights to exploit the wealth in that area". The two Gulf states renewed "their previous and repeated calls to the Islamic Republic of Iran to negotiate" the demarcation of their maritime borders to settle the issue.

Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak also refuted Iran's claims, reiterating that the offshore field is entirely and jointly owned by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In a reply to a parliamentary question, Barrak said "Iran's claims regarding the field cannot deny the true reality on the ground, which confirms that the field is jointly owned by

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia".

He said the Durra gas field, which was discovered in 1967, is entirely located in the divided maritime zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, adding this indicates "they alone have the full rights to exploit natural resources in the region". Barrak said in the reply that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement in March 2022 to jointly start the development of the field through one company and its production capacity is expected to reach one billion cubic feet and 84,000 barrels of condensates daily.

Barrak said in statements last week that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would commence drilling and production from the field without waiting for a demarcation deal with Iran. The two countries have held many rounds of negotiations in the past several decades to demarcate the maritime borders, but all have failed. Iran claims that it has rights to the field and a few weeks ago threatened to start drilling unilaterally if no settlement was reached with Kuwait to demarcate the maritime borders.

"Iran will pursue its rights and interests regarding exploitation and exploration" of the

field "if there is no desire for understanding and cooperation", Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji was quoted as saying by the official Shana news agency. Last month, Kuwait had invited Iran for another round of maritime border talks after Tehran said it was ready to start drilling in the field.

The row over the field stretches back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait each awarded an offshore concession, one to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the forerunner to BP, and one to Royal Dutch Shell. The two concessions overlapped in the northern part of the field, whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220 billion cu m.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah received the credentials of newly-appointed Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonchi on Thursday. During their meeting, the two sides discussed Kuwaiti-Iranian relations. Totonchi handed Sheikh Salem a letter from his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, which included an invitation for an official visit to Iran.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Temps to soar above 50C

KUWAIT: The temperature was forecast to exceed 50 degrees Celsius on Thursday, with the scorching heat expected to remain over the weekend. Yasser Al-Bloushi, chief marine forecaster, said the Indian seasonal depression coupled with very hot winds will remain prevalent throughout Kuwait, also forecasting scattered dust waves. The temperature was expected to reach as high as 51C on Thursday, later subsiding to 49C. At night, the mercury was expected to drop to 35-27C. On Friday, the temperature will soar to 47-49C, with lows of 33-35C. On Saturday, Bloushi said maximum temperatures will be 50-48C, with lows of 32-35C at night. — KUNA

IS announces death of leader

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group on Thursday announced the death of its leader Abu al-Hussein Al-Husseini Al-Qurashi, who it said was killed in clashes in northwestern Syria. Qurashi "was killed after direct clashes" with jihadist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in Idlib province, an IS spokesman said in a recorded message on its channels on the Telegram messaging app, without specifying when he was killed. — AFP

Canada PM, wife separate

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Wednesday that he and his wife of 18 years, Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, are separating. In a post on Instagram, the prime minister said "that after many meaningful and difficult conversations, we have made the decision to separate". A statement from his office added that the couple have signed "a legal separation agreement." — AFP

Saudi extends 1m bpd oil cut

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced Thursday it is extending a voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels per day for another month, keeping up its campaign to prop up prices. "Saudi Arabia will extend the voluntary cut of one million barrels per day... for another month to include the month of September," the energy ministry said in a statement. The cut, which first took effect for July, could be further prolonged or even deepened, the energy ministry added.

The move leaves daily production by the world's biggest crude exporter at approximately nine million

bpd. The "voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC Plus countries with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets," the energy ministry said. Announcing the cut following a June meeting of the 23-nation OPEC+ alliance, which also includes Russia, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman noted that it was potentially "extendable".

It followed a decision in April by several OPEC+ members to slash production voluntarily by more than one million bpd — a surprise move that briefly buttressed prices but failed to bring about lasting recovery. Oil producers are grappling with falling prices and high market volatility, reflecting continued fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's faltering economic recovery. Saudi Arabia is counting

on high oil prices to fund an ambitious reform agenda that could shift its economy away from fossil fuels.

Analysts say the kingdom needs oil to be priced at around \$80 per barrel to balance its budget. There are signs recent supply cuts are starting to have the desired effect, with oil prices "strengthening", the Riyadh-based firm Jadwa Investment said in a report published on Tuesday. "Brent was trading at around \$85 (per barrel) in late July, up by some \$10 (per barrel) from the beginning of the month," Jadwa said.

"Sour crudes, which dominate Saudi Arabia's output, are especially in vogue. Meanwhile, there are hopes that US demand will be stronger than expected, with many anticipating a 'soft landing' for the US economy rather than a recession."

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Activists cover Sunak's home in black fabric

LONDON: Activists from Greenpeace were arrested Thursday after scaling UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's constituency home in northern England and covering it with black fabric to protest his fossil fuel policy. Sunak this week approved hundreds of new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea off Britain's east coast, angering environmentalists.

"We desperately need our prime minister to be a climate leader, not a climate

arsonist," said Greenpeace UK climate campaigner Philip Evans. "Just as wildfires and floods wreck homes and lives around the world, Sunak is committing to a massive expansion of oil and gas drilling." Greenpeace UK posted videos of four activists climbing onto the roof of Sunak's mansion in Richmond, north Yorkshire, and covering it with black sheets. It later said that the activists, who spent around five hours on Sunak's roof, had been arrested.

Two more activists unfurled a banner reading "Rishi Sunak — Oil Profits or Our Future?" on the front lawn. The prime minister and his family are currently on holiday in California. "He seems quite happy to hold a blowtorch

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KIRBY SIGSTON, United Kingdom: Greenpeace activists cover Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's manor house in black to protest against his backing for new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea on Aug 3, 2023. — AFP

X lets users hide vaunted blue check

SAN FRANCISCO: Users on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, will now be allowed to hide their once-prized blue check marks, the company says. A coveted status symbol at Twitter before Elon Musk bought the company, the blue checks have been mocked by some as a sign that the user is willing to pay for special treatment.

"As a subscriber, you can choose to hide your checkmark on your account," an X help page said on Wednesday. "The checkmark will be hidden on your profile and posts." Blue ticks, long free at Twitter,

were intended to signal the identity of certain users — such as journalists, celebrities and politicians — had been verified in an effort to build trust in the platform.

But Musk decried that as a "lords & peasants system," and opened up access to the check marks to anyone who paid for a Blue subscription — an \$8 per month program which gives users access to other special features as well. He quickly put the program on a temporary hold after problems with people buying tick marks and impersonating high-profile personalities, including the tycoon himself.

In April, the eccentric billionaire then followed through with a long-promised move to strip free blue ticks from Twitter users. Some praised the move as egalitarian while others decried it as being shaken down for money to safeguard their status on

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Local

Kuwaiti women boldly confronted Iraqi occupiers during aggression

Families recount heroism of martyred daughters

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women had a significant and important role that history would never forget in confronting the Iraqi occupiers, with a record of highest degree of sacrifice for their homeland, since the gloomy date August 2, 1990. As soon as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait took place, Kuwaiti women recorded a historical epic in defending the homeland and resisting the occupiers, leading to the liberation of the country.

Examples of the heroism and sacrifices made by the women and their courage in facing the treachery of the neighbor will remain in the memory of the Kuwaitis. Marking the 33rd anniversary of the invasion, KUNA met Thursday with families of two female martyrs Wafa Al-Amer and Suad Al-Hasan in addition to professor of political science Dr Haila Al-Mukaimi, to talk about the role of the women during this painful stage.

The mother of Suad Al-Hasan, said her daughter made many heroic acts during the Iraqi invasion, even though she was only 19 years old at the time, as she stood in the face of the enemy in defense for Kuwait. Hasan joined resistance ranks from the first moments of the invasion and was a friend of the two martyrs Asrar Al-Qabandi and Wafa Al-Amer, as they together helped out the resistance, where "she was working on car bombs and detonating them with Amer and transferring weapons to resistance

fighters," she added.

Hasan was working in multiple capacities against the occupiers, she said. For example, at the Sheraton Hotel and Kaifan area she used to put toxic substances in food and distribute it to the occupiers. She also used to deliver money to the Kuwaiti resistance. Her daughter was captured in January to be martyred 20 days before Kuwait's liberation in February 1991.

The sister of martyr Wafa Al-Amer told KUNA that her sister, who was 23 years old at the time, had achieved many heroic acts. The news of the occupation of Kuwait was appalling to her, said her sister, and she never accepted it. Amer planned to be with the resistance, as she fought the armed occupiers out of love for Kuwait.

She initially joined a group of Kuwaiti youth (February 25 Force), where she transmitted news and distributed leaflets and explosive materials as needed. Because of her courageousness, she was assigned to head a resistance group, she added.



Wafa Al-Amer



Dr Haila Al-Mukaimi



Suad Al-Hasan

of her house in the Adailiya area, she said. The sister expressed her pride in the martyrdom for the homeland and her happiness that over these years, people still remember the martyr Wafaa Al-Amer and her heroism.

Political science professor Dr Haila Al-Mukaimi told KUNA that Kuwaiti women played an active role during the Iraqi invasion, as they participated in the resistance in all its forms, including civil disobedience and martyrdom. In all of her roles, she was the mother, sister and daughter supporting her male counterparts. Mukaimi added that Kuwaiti women presented the most beautiful images of sacrifice, represented by a group of martyrs that are all remembered to this day, such as Asrar Al-Qabandi, Suad Al-Hasan, Samira Marafi and others, to emphasize the Kuwaiti society's rejection of the invasion and devotion to the homeland.

There is an unforgettable scene, she said, when Qabandi was featured by the famous media icon, Oprah Winfrey. Qabandi spoke to Oprah and recounted what the occupation soldiers were doing in Kuwait, including assaulting people, killing children, destroying and burning wells and sabotaging.

The number of martyrs during the period of the Iraqi invasion reached 968, with 876 men and 92 women, from 14 different nationalities, in addition to illegal residents. — KUNA

News in Brief

Sports car driver dies after police chase

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti citizen died after his sports car crashed and flipped over in Wafra desert (um Qadeer area). The car was being chased by police after they received a report that its driver was speeding and driving recklessly. The car had a Gulf-country license plate, according to a news release. The police officer involved in the incident is being held under investigation.

Men caught stealing subsidized diesel

KUWAIT: Three people of Arab nationality have been caught re-selling diesel subsidized by the state. A statement from the interior ministry said the arrest was made as part of the continuous efforts of the criminal security sector, represented by the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation (Jahra Governorate Investigation Department). The suspects were transferred to the authorities for further legal action.

University to announce non-Kuwaiti acceptances

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Higher Education and Kuwait University will announce the names of accepted non-Kuwaitis students for the academic year 2023/2024 at the end of the month. The categories of non-Kuwaitis include, cultural scholarships, minister's grants, students from GCC countries, children of university employees, illegal (Bedoon) residents. The number of non-Kuwaitis to be accepted from these categories is 500 students.



Kuwait's press fought invasion from abroad

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti press successfully rose up to the challenge and bore the national responsibility 33 years when tanks of the defunct Iraqi re-

gime's aggressors rumbled into the country. Bent on supporting the national legitimacy and the just cause of Kuwait, the publishers scrambled into action abroad to hit the stands and promote the national cause against the occupation. Al-Anbaa daily newspaper had chosen Cairo as the venue for its external offices, in addition to Al-Qabas International that published in London, Al-Seyassah (Jeddah) and Sawt Al-Kuwait—the latter came to light after the invasion.

The Kuwaiti newspapers abroad at the time affirmed loyalty to the legitimate leadership, covered Kuwaiti political and diplomatic activities at the Arab and international levels, broadcast news about the hard seven months of the aggression, the patriotic Kuwaiti resistance and Kuwaitis' conditions in the stricken homeland and abroad. The Kuwaiti press archive is rich in reports about practices of the occupiers and the Kuwaitis' steadfastness. — KUNA

Kuwaiti aid behind support during invasion

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Walid Al-Bahar said that the unprecedented global consensus in support of Kuwaitis' rights during the Iraqi invasion is due to Kuwait's foreign policy. In a statement to KUNA on Thursday, Bahar said that the fund was committed to fulfilling its mission and extending a helping hand to the beneficiary countries during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, which contributed greatly to the issuance of UN Security Council Resolution

No (660) condemning the brutal invasion and demanding the return of Kuwaiti legitimacy with the vote of most world countries without any opposition.

He explained that the Kuwait Fund is among the entities whose global development efforts have contributed to raising the issue of Kuwait regionally and internationally. Despite these difficult circumstances, Bahar added, the Kuwait Fund continued its work based on the directives of the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah,

who insisted that the Fund continue its work in development during the crisis.

Bahar indicated that most of the countries that borrowed from the Kuwait Fund for Development came to the temporary funds HQ in the British capital, London, during the Iraqi invasion, expressing their willingness to repay their debt fully, if Kuwait was in urgent need of funds, as those countries wanted to help the Kuwaiti government in time of distress. He stated that Kuwait Fund succeeded, through its efforts, in being a link between Kuwait and the vast majority of world countries, as it gained loyalty and support to protect the country from crises. Bahar pointed out that the main objective of establishing the Kuwait Fund is to consolidate the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Kuwait and the rest of world countries. — KUNA



Walid Al-Bahar



A memorial of Kuwaiti martyrs is seen at Al-Shaheed Park in Kuwait City. — KUNA photos

A section of the Memorial Museum at Al-Shaheed Park is seen in this photo.

Kuwait Martyr's Park bears testimony of patriots' sacrifices

KUWAIT: The Martyr's Park (Al-Shaheed Park) marks the anniversary of the flagrant Iraqi aggression that happened on August 2, 1990. In revived memory of the martyrs, the Memorial Museum stands out as the icon for permanent eulogizing of the devout citizens who sacrificed their lives for Kuwait. Equally symbolic at the park is the Martyr's Statue. The museum presents detailed information about battles that happened on the Kuwaiti soil, namely the old battles of Al-Reqaq, Al-Sereef and Al-Jahraa as well as the Iraqi aggression on the country, shedding light on the patriots' resistance against the occupiers and their sacrifices. — KUNA



The Statue of Liberty



The Martyr's Statue

Local

Work smart, not hard: Entrepreneurs share what it takes to succeed

Expect 'a lot of sleepless nights', says young Kuwaiti woman

By Noor Abdulaziz

KUWAIT: Kuwait is a place that unites smart, innovative people, especially when it comes to starting a business. However, with the boom in cafes, clothing stores and restaurants, one could easily assume that starting a business is a piece of cake. What people don't pay attention to, however, is the number of individuals who help keep the machine running. Whether it's getting a business license, finding a creative PR team to run all the socials, and constantly being ready to rebrand and reinvent, running a business takes a huge amount of effort and dedication.

Twenty-seven-year-old Meshary decided to start a business earlier this year. When asked what advice he'd give to those who are thinking of starting their own business, he said: "Starting a business is the smartest thing you can do for yourself. Investing in yourself is always a good idea. However, you'd want to make sure you're working smart instead of working hard. For example, be extra careful on who you go into business with. I'd advise keeping friends and fam-

ily out of it. Instead, it should be someone with whom you share a professional relationship with."

The second thing to look out for is contracts. "Please make sure to not sign on anything without thoroughly reading it first. Also, when going into a partnership agreement, the contract should make it clear who owns what portion of the business, and how the profits as well as losses will be split, along with each person's assignments and duties towards the business," Meshary said. This emphasizes the need to be particularly cautious, as it is tied to one's livelihood.

Muneera, a Kuwaiti clothing store owner, adds on her experience of being a young woman in Kuwait branching out on her own, as she decided to start a business as another source of income aside from her regular desk job. "Starting my own business was the smartest thing I've done for myself. If you're looking for a sign to start something you can call your own, now is your time. I'm not going to lie and say it's easy," she told Kuwait Times.

"Truthfully, you'd have to be financially stable enough to do something so major, as it comes with the territory.

As well as expecting a lot of sleepless nights, it consumes your entire being, mind, body and soul. But it's your baby, so it makes it all worth it, honestly," Muneera added. When asked how she keeps her business running, she said: "First, you need to understand your target audience, as this is a clothing store. What values and attitudes do they share? You must understand them on a psychological level to understand what they're looking for in terms of fashionable pieces. In the retail world, you need to learn how to serve your tribe."

Also, your brand idea needs to be clear, focused, and easy to understand, as well as super-relevant to its prospects. And since a brand is a personality, you must be consistent with the vision, or else it will die. You're constantly researching to see what's trendy and what's not. So, it can be overwhelming at times for sure."

Her partner, Dalal, chimed in. "Also, you need to constantly find ways to grab the consumer's attention. Social media is a huge outlet for that. Whether it's through Instagram reels, TikTok videos, or a fun and quirky logo or website design, being a business owner is so much more fun and



creative nowadays. Anyone who's hesitant about the idea — I'd say go for it, but be smart. It's always the right time to be a young entrepreneur," she said.

This proves that the Kuwaiti youth can take on such challenge as they are

passionate, goal-driven and are constantly ready for an abrupt revival, as the business industry requires one to be quick-witted to instantaneously find new facets that keep their business relevant and afloat.

Business advisor gives tips on how to survive recession

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times interviewed Sultan Al-Farhan, a business and tech advisor, about a prospective recession and its effects on businesses and individuals. He spoke about how everyone should deal with it.

Farhan, who worked in banks for many years in the credit analysis sector, where they analyze companies to look at their sustainability and projected future, said a recession could happen due to many different reasons. But in general, it would be a due to problem either in demand or supply. For example, in 1973 the rise in oil prices was due to a decrease in supply, since some governments decided to place an embargo on petroleum exports.

"This increased the price of petrol and gas, which as a result increased all prices. How did governments resolve this issue? They solved it with negotiations and conversations. Countries that were affected by this sat down and had a conversation with countries that stopped the supply, and the problem was solved."

What we are going through currently, according to Farhan, is a result of the war in Ukraine, which increased the price of grains, barley and almost everything else, including the logistics of the supply chain. The other thing is, after the pandemic, the interest

rate was hiked, he explained, which resulted in high costs, and high costs do not allow growth to happen.

"The recession is growing and taking a long time because the solution is in the hands of central banks and the Federal Reserve, but they are not helping in making the problem easier. In Kuwait, we are lucky, because the country is helping a lot. However, businesses and individuals need a backup plan. They need to act in a way where even if the country is not able to help, they would be able to manage," Farhan said.

Six streams of income

According to Farhan, for an average person who is not a business owner, having six different streams of income is necessary. However, he said since Kuwait is very helpful financially to its people, an average Kuwaiti person can survive with only three or four streams of income, but six is optimal.

When it comes to a business that wants to save money and survive a recession, for example a restaurant, Farhan suggested they look at the demand. He explained that a restaurant can remove items from the menu that do not have high demand, make their menu smaller and focus on what has high demand.

If there are three waiters or chefs working at your restaurant and not a lot of people dine in, Farhan suggests reducing the number of hours and close early, or open at a later time to cut costs. "Also, if people are only ordering from your restaurants and are not dining in, why don't you become an order-only restaurant? Or you can do the opposite if people only dine in and rarely order food delivery. By doing this, you will save money. However, these measures must only be used in case of a crisis, because these decisions have a huge effect, therefore, they need to be based on numbers and studies."

According to Farhan, whoever does not have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with AI will be in a position where they would have to exit the market. He explained this is exactly what happened during the Industrial Revolution, when people



who did not want to innovate were left behind.

Farhan explained that AI makes everything much more convenient and efficient because it does things with the snap of a finger. This does not mean that AI will steal jobs — it will make them more efficient. He stressed AI is a skill that needs to be learned rather than something to be intimidated by. According to Farhan, what we see now in AI is only "the tip of the iceberg" of what is to come.

"In Kuwait, we are as individuals in a very safe position, because the country is bearing the burden of the people. We can see this in the financial support and high wages in the country. This is a huge responsibility on the country and Kuwait is trying to help in providing an environment where a person would be able to easily become an entrepreneur and start their own business, even if it was digital," he said.

Lastly, Farhan advised young people who have just graduated and are looking for a job. "Work at a company that matches your interests. If you want to start a business, work in the sector you are planning to start a business in and be reasonable — do not rush things. Expect starting a business to be tiring in the beginning. Consult business advisors, bankers, mentors and people who are in the same sector as you. You can sit with these people weekly or monthly or whatever timeframe suits you best."

Balancing patients' privacy and security in hiring practices

By Ahmed Al-Sabeeh

KUWAIT: In a bid to enhance public safety and ensure a secure society, government officials are urging private mental health professionals to report patients' mental health conditions to government mental health facilities. The new calls aim to address concerns regarding individuals with mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder, personality disorder and schizophrenia, who may pose a risk to society when applying for sensitive government roles.

Currently, patients seeking treatment in private practice enjoy confidentiality, with their mental health files kept private. However, this secrecy could potentially create risks when these individuals apply for sensitive government positions, as the government may remain unaware of their mental health



history. Director General of the Interior Ministry's General Department of Security Relations and Media Maj Tawheed Al-Kandari said the "ministry of interior does not have a mental health facility for applicants and refers them to the mental health hospital for checks".

A public relations officer who works at the mental health hospital said: "When a person opens a file with us, they are not allowed to apply to jobs in the police and some ministry jobs." A proposed collaboration between private mental health professionals and government health officials is aimed at striking a balance between individual privacy rights and national security. By sharing relevant patient data, society can be assured that qualified individuals occupy crucial government positions, minimizing potential risks associated with mental health conditions in such roles.

This call for collaboration has sparked a debate surrounding ethics and morality. Proponents argue that integrating private mental health data with government health records could pave the way for a better future for the country. By identifying qualified candidates for sensitive roles, this collaborative effort promises to provide relief to society, assuring citizens that the government is actively working towards securing their wellbeing.

However, it is essential that private mental health professionals exercise sound judgment and adhere to strict ethical guidelines when disclosing patient history to government authorities. Respecting patient confidentiality, while also considering public safety, remains the cornerstone of this initiative.

According to article 13 of the law no 70 of 2020 regarding the practice of the medical profession and the rights of patients and health facilities: "A healthcare professional is prohibited from divulging a patient's secrets, whether this secret came to their knowledge or was discovered through the practice of the profession, or the patient had entrusted them with it, or heard it from others. This prohibition applies to all individuals who come to know about patient's secrets through their work in the concerned healthcare facility."

As discussions continue, stakeholders must carefully weigh the potential benefits and ethical implications of such collaboration. Striking the right balance between individual rights and societal safety will be crucial to charting a path forward. With a shared commitment to both patient privacy and public security, Kuwait can forge a brighter and safer future for all its citizens.

Omniya continues its mission to reduce pollution

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Recycling and reducing plastic waste are of great importance in today's world. With growing concerns about environmental sustainability and the detrimental effects of plastic pollution, we need to take action to preserve our planet for ourselves and future generations through recycling and reducing plastic waste, which help to conserve valuable resources, as plastics are derived from non-renewable fossil fuels such as petroleum.

Recycling and reducing plastic waste contribute to the reduction of pollution, because plastics take hundreds of years to decompose, and improper disposal leads to their accumulation in landfills, oceans and other ecosystems. Hence, by recycling, we divert plastic waste from landfills and reduce the likelihood of it ending up in our natural environments, protecting ecosystems and preserving our planet.

In Kuwait, Omniya, a recycling factory, is moving towards a healthier and more sustainable Kuwait, as it aims to engage the public in a nationwide recycling initiative about the disposal of plastics and reducing plastic waste. Kuwait Times interviewed Sanaa Al-Qamlas, a member of Omniya, to discover the factory's progression in Kuwait and its future plans.

Qamlas highlighted the public's positive interaction with Omniya. "Since the very day we initiated Omniya in 2015, we believe in humans and mainly depend on them, and fortunately, people in Kuwait, both citizens and expats, did not disappoint us, as they cooperated with our aim, which is to reach the hope of making a better Kuwait," she said.

She also spoke about Omniya's app and development plans. "The coming step is going to be bigger and better, as we are working on improving our application, which is the first-of-its-kind to locate garbage bins in streets with Google Maps. When you download this application, it will show the nearest garbage bin, and will give points to a user that dis-



KUWAIT: A young boy collects plastic waste to throw in Omniya's bins.

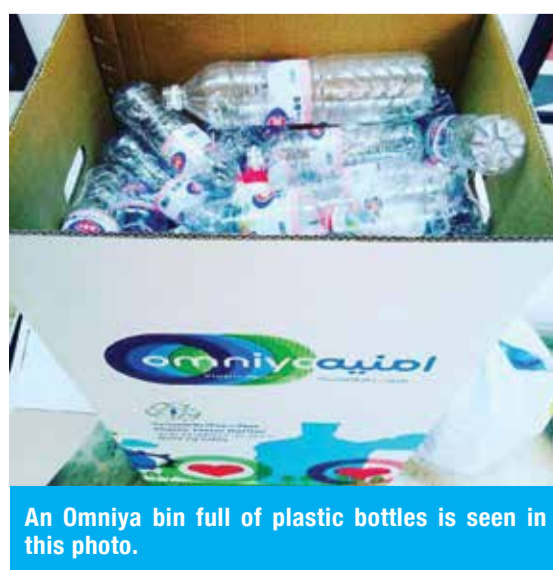
poses plastic in Omniya's garbage bins. There will be a barcode on each bin, which you can scan to count the number of plastics you have disposed, and it will mark points for you. These points encourage competition between users," she said.

"We have something called 'Omniya Ambassadors' — this title is only given to people who break a record in disposing plastics. One person from India became our ambassador, as he collected the most points in the app, and got rewarded for his work. We are also looking forward to collaborate with some companies to activate the redemption policy. For instance, when the user collects a certain number of points, they can get a discount or free voucher from some coffee shops or stores," Qamlas explained.

Qamlas shared a message from Omniya: "Join us and support us by downloading the application and disposing plastic in order to reach our goal to make Kuwait a healthier and more sustainable place for us and for the coming generations."



A young girl throws a plastic bottle into an Omniya bin.



An Omniya bin full of plastic bottles is seen in this photo.

Kuwait University names best arts researcher

KUWAIT: Kuwait University has awarded Dr Nawaf Al-Abduljader from the Department of Management and Marketing at the College of Administrative Sciences the Best Young Researcher Award in the field of Arts and Humanities for the academic year 2023/2024.

One of the research papers that Dr Al-Abduljader has submitted to the award was in the field of entrepreneurship and small business management, where he explored the reasons why students in Kuwait choose to start a business in comparison to those in the US. He also investigated ways to encourage students to become entrepreneurs. Abduljader said he published four research papers in the field.

Kuwait University's research department offers awards annually to the best young researcher to recognize exceptional research efforts of faculty members with the rank of assistant professor. The awards are equally distributed in the fields of applied sciences, arts and humanities.

The winners are selected through a unified process of evaluating the achievements of researchers, with quality as the only criterion for selecting the award winners.



Dr Nawaf Al-Abduljader

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A camel herder leads his animals in the dessert on Jal Al-Liyah road north of Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Consistency key to get health back on track

Fitness trainer shares tips for working out after long break

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: With a busy life, demanding career, personal challenges or losing motivation, we may find ourselves farther from the path of health and wellness. Kuwait Times spoke with Fares Oraby, fitness trainer and nutritionist, to learn how long it takes to get fit again. "People who have stopped working out for a year can get back in shape in 3 to 4 months. The most important thing to do is to get back on track and get your fitness level back to set realistic goals, stay consistent and be patient," Oraby said.

Oraby noted setting realistic goals is the most important element. "You were running 5km in 20 minutes, or doing 20 pullups in a row, but you are not what you were, so you have to work based on your fitness level at this moment, and from there you will build yourself again until you reach your fitness level," he said. He indicated that one of the best ways to get back on track is

to have short-term and long-term goals — "by reaching every week that short-term goal, we are one step closer to the long-term one".

"Short-term goals can be divided between building healthy habits and recording or writing your progress every week. So let's say if my long-term goal is to do 50 squats, then the short-term goal is to eat healthier, make sure to exercise, working on adding every week something harder such as more repetitions, more sets or less resting time between sets," he explained.

On the second step toward fitness, Oraby said: "Consistency is the key to reaching your goals; without consistency, you will not be able to reach your goals. Consistency is like a balloon — if you stop blowing it, it will get smaller. Do not skip days of workout and put a schedule in place that won't affect your life, so that you will stick to the plan."

Oraby stressed the need to keep moving. "Everyone feels down — you're not alone here. Even the greatest people in the world have their down days. You have to keep pushing forward. One of the best examples of that is the soccer players. They are in their prime and they get injured. If they are not patient with what they want to achieve, they will never be back on the pitch."

Oraby explained the easy way to get back into



shape. "We will talk about what makes it easy to do it. First things first, if you want to reach a goal, you have to be surrounded by the right people. You cannot have it in your mind to run three kilometers every day while you smoke and play cards with your friends. Surrounding yourself with the right people will help you a lot. One more thing to help you reach these goals is to have either a coach or dietitian. They will help you a lot with staying consistent and working on your goals in a safe and right way. But even if you have both, you need to work for it," he cautioned.



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The Minister of Health is seen with blood bank staff.

Kuwait has no shortage in blood: MoH

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Ministry of Health is keen on expanding services and medical centers at hospitals to improve this sector, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said. Awadhi made the statement to KUNA during partaking in a blood donation campaign launched by the blood transplant department under his patronage on the 33rd anniversary of liberation of Kuwait. Awadhi indicated that most of the ministry's hospitals have centers of blood donation ready to receive donors. He said that the Ministry has spared no efforts to provide state-of-the-art devices to make sure of the quality and safety of blood. Kuwait has no shortage in blood, thanks to the efforts of the blood bank's workers and the keenness of Kuwaitis and expats on contributions to enhance the stock of the bank, he said.

Awadhi said the Ministry was eager to launch the campaign for the eighth year in a row to encourage Kuwaiti people to donate blood to help their brothers and sisters, he said. He expressed his delight as both Kuwaitis and expats took part in the campaign and contributed to increasing the strategic stock of the blood bank. He also lauded the role of military personnel from the Ministries of Interior and Defense, as well as the National Guard and the Kuwaiti Fire Force for their donation. — KUNA



The Minister of Health inspects Kuwait's blood bank.



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi partakes in the blood donation campaign held on occasion of the Iraqi invasion. — KUNA photos



Cleanup begins in Beijing's flood ravaged suburbs

'Persistent' human rights abuses at US border: Report

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Coup backers stage rally in Niger

Demonstrators hail Russia, slam France • Security worries grow among Western countries



NIAMEY: Protesters hold placards denouncing ECOWAS during a demonstration on Independence Day on Aug 3, 2023. — AFP

NIAMEY, Niger: Thousands of people rallied Thursday in Niger's capital in support of the coup that toppled the democratically elected government, as security concerns mounted among Western nations. Demonstrators in the heart of Niamey, some brandishing giant Russian flags, chanted anti-French slogans at the rally called to mark the anniversary of the west African nation's 1960 independence from France.

Issiaka Hamadou, one of the protesters, said that it was "only security that interests us", irrespective of whether it came from "Russia, China, Turkey, if they want to help us". "We just don't want the French, who have been looting us since 1960 — they've been there ever since and nothing has changed," he said. The crowd at the rally around him was shouting "Down with France", "Long live Russia, long live (Vladimir) Putin".

A week after the toppling of elected President Mohamed Bazoum, European citizens have been evacuating from Niger, which has had a key role in French and Western strategies to combat a jihadist insurgency that has plagued the Sahel since 2012. The clock is ticking down on Sunday's ultimatum from West African regional bloc ECOWAS for the coup leaders to restore Bazoum to power within a week or face the possible "last resort" of military intervention.

Niger is the fourth member of the group to undergo a putsch since 2020. Senegal said Thursday it would send soldiers to join ECOWAS if it decided to intervene militarily in Niger. "It is one coup too many," said Foreign Minister Aissata Tall Sall. Bazoum has been held by the coup plotters since July 26, prompting US President Joe Biden to call for his immediate release Thursday, urging the "preservation of Niger's hard-earned democracy".

Britain and the United States have announced the pulling back of embassy personnel in Niger as a precaution. Paris — which said Thursday it had completed its evacuation flights — urged the junta led by General Abdourahmane Tiani to "fully guarantee" the safety of embassies in Niamey ahead of Thursday's protests.

Sanctions

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders have imposed trade and financial sanctions, with Nigeria cutting off the electricity supplies that account for some 70 percent of Niger's grid. West African military chiefs were meeting in Nigeria's capital Abuja on Thursday to discuss the possibility of military intervention if diplomatic negotiations fail. An official from the Nigerian defense ministry told AFP those talks were set to end Friday.

As tensions rise across the region, an ECOWAS team headed by former Nigerian leader Abdulsalami Abubakar was also in Niger for talks. Nigeria, West Africa's pre-eminent military and economic power, is the current chair of ECOWAS. It has vowed a firm line against coups that have proliferated across the region since 2020. Junta-ruled Mali and Burkina Faso have that warned any military intervention in their neighbor would be tantamount to a "declaration of war" against them. Anti-French sentiment in the region has only continued to rise, often whipped up by Russia which over the last years has taken an increasingly prominent presence via the Wagner mercenary group.

A French diplomatic source said there was "no evidence that Russia played a role in the coup" in Niger, but that it had an "opportunistic attitude" which meant it could seek to capitalize on events. Publicly, Russia has called for "urgent national dialogue" in Niger, warning that threats of intervention "will not help ease tensions".

'Refuse to give in'

Bazoum, 63, was feted in 2021 after winning elections that ushered in Niger's first-ever peaceful transition of power. He took the helm of a country burdened by four previous coups since independence from France in 1960. But after surviving two attempted putsches, Bazoum was overthrown on July 26 when members of his own guard detained him at the presidency.

Their commander, Tiani, has declared himself leader, but his claim has been condemned internationally. In a televised address Wednesday, Tiani rejected the international sanctions imposed and said he "refused to give in to any threat". France still has around 1,500 troops in Niger, where it refocused its anti-jihadist mission after pulling out of Mali and Burkina Faso last year.

After joining a regional revolt in northern Mali, armed Islamists advanced into Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015 and now carry out sporadic attacks on fragile states on the Gulf of Guinea. Countless civilians, troops and police have been killed across the region, while around 2.2 million people in Burkina Faso alone have fled their homes. The impact has contributed to army takeovers in all three Sahel countries and devastated economies at the very bottom of the world's wealth table. France's anti-jihadist Burkina Faso mission had at its peak about 5,400 troops, supported by fighter jets, helicopters and drones. — AFP

S America sweats under high temps in middle of winter

SANTIAGO: Far away from the extreme summer temperatures of the northern hemisphere, Southern Cone countries such as Chile and Argentina are also experiencing record heat, but in the middle of what is supposed to be their winter. On Tuesday, the mountain town of Vicuna in central Chile hit 37 degrees Celsius. "It's been more than 70 years since a temperature like this was recorded" in Vicuna, Chilean meteorologist Cristobal Torres told AFP.

Unusually high temperatures were also recorded 450 km south in the capital Santiago: 24C on Wednesday, with similar levels forecast for Thursday and Friday. Meanwhile in Buenos Aires, the temperature exceeded 30C on Tuesday, making it the highest Aug 1 temperature since record-keeping began, according to Argentina's National Meteorological Service. The average August temperature in Buenos Aires is usually between 18C and 9C.

Several cities across Uruguay also recorded temperatures of 30C on Wednesday. "What we are experiencing is the combination of two phenomena: a global warming trend due to climate change plus the El Nino phenomenon," said Chile's Environment Minister Maisa Rojas, a climatologist. "When El Nino ends, the global weather situation should stop being so extreme," she said.

An El Nino event is characterized by increased Pacific Ocean temperatures, causing rainfall, floods and avalanches in western South America, as well as heat waves. Santiago, Buenos Aires and Montevideo are expected to return to normal temperatures in the coming days, but it is believed that similar heat waves will occur with increasing frequency. "It is very likely that the heat record will be broken this year (in Santiago), and that is extraordinarily abnormal. Ten years ago we had two heat waves a year and now we are talking about nine," explained University of Santiago climatologist Raul Cordero.



SANTIAGO: People eat ice cream during a heatwave on Aug 2, 2023. — AFP

One of the most significant impacts of the warm weather is on snowpacks in the mountains, which are vital for the water supply in Chile's capital. "Winter heat waves have devastating effects on glaciers and snow," Cordero said. Rojas also warned about the effects of heat at the poles. "The ice around the polar areas is at minimum levels," she said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Especially around Antarctica, where at this time of year sea ice grows to reach a maximum in September, it is at a historic minimum." — AFP

Amnesty warns of extensive war crimes in Sudan

PARIS: Extensive war crimes are being committed by both sides in the conflict that has been raging in Sudan since April, Amnesty International said on Thursday. The Britain-based human rights group said in a report that the crimes committed by the warring parties, led by two feuding generals, included sexual violence against girls as young as 12 and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians. Since April 15, regular army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has been locked in a war with his former deputy, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

"Civilians throughout Sudan are suffering unimaginable horror every single day as the Rapid Support Forces and Sudanese Armed Forces recklessly vie for control of territory," said Amnesty secretary general Agnes Callamard. "The RSF and SAF, as well as their affiliated armed groups, must end their targeting of civilians and guarantee safe passage for those seeking safety," she added.

Burhan came to power, with Daglo as his number two, in an Oct 2021 coup that derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule after the military's ouster of long-ruling autocrat Omar Al-Bashir in April 2019 following a popular uprising. But the two men then fell out in a bitter feud. The fighting — concentrated in Khartoum and the western region of Darfur — has killed more than 3,900 people, according to the NGO ACLED and displaced more than 3.3 million, according to the UN.

"Extensive war crimes are being committed in Sudan as the conflict... ravages the country," Amnesty said, adding there were "mass civilian casualties in both deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by the warring parties". It said men, women and children have been caught in the crossfire as both sides launch frequent attacks in densely populated residential neighborhoods, often using explosive weapons with wide area effects.

Amnesty said scores of women and girls, some as young as 12, have been subjected to sexual violence, including rape, with some held for days in conditions of sexual slavery. In most of the cases documented by Amnesty International, survivors said the perpetrators were fighters of the RSF or its Arab militia allies. For its report, Amnesty said it had interviewed more than 180 people, primarily in eastern Chad where refugees from Darfur have fled, or remotely via secure calls. The group said it had put its allegations to the army and the RSF, who had both responded "claiming adherence to international law and accusing the other side of violations". — AFP

Trump legal bills emptying coffers

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has been burning through millions of dollars as he faces an onslaught of legal bills from the investigations threatening his presidential election bid — with some sources of funding drying up fast. The former US president is hardly strapped for cash, as his joint fundraising committee brought in \$54 million during the first half of 2023 — more than any of his Republican primary rivals in next year's election. But critics say new financial filings demonstrate how his spiraling legal woes are making a significant dent in a war chest that could be going to TV spots, rallies and other campaign events as he bids for a second term. The Save America political action committee (PAC) Trump founded disclosed this week that it was down to its last \$4 million by the end of June — loose change in campaign finance terms — after spending more than \$20 million on legal fees.

Trump has a wide berth to spend vast sums on lawyers, and there is no question of criminal wrongdoing in doing so, but Washington watchers have questioned whether campaign donors should be expected to pick up such tabs. "If you're sending Trump money, it's almost exclusively going to his per-

sonal legal fees," said attorney and conservative political writer A G Hamilton. "Which also means they are going to have practically nothing left over for spending on turnout efforts to compete with Democrats in key states." Trump's latest indictment over his push to overturn the 2020 election will further strain resources, with legal bills now his PAC's largest expense as the billionaire faces indictments in Florida, New York and Washington.

78 felony counts

The Republican National Committee covered most of Trump's legal bills until November last year but stopped when he launched his 2024 election bid. His various political operations have around \$32 million cash in the bank heading towards January's Iowa caucus — the first nominating contest in the primary season. Most of the money Trump raises goes directly to his presidential campaign, with just 10 percent going to Save America, which has been covering legal expenses for almost any figure in Trump's orbit ensnared in the investigations. The PAC, which raises most of its money from small-dollar donations, informed the Federal Election Commission it had given \$21.6 million to law firms defending Trump and his allies this year — \$5 million more than its total legal costs in 2021 and 2022 combined. Estimated by Forbes to be worth \$2.5 billion, the former reality TV star enters primary season charged with 78 felonies in three separate criminal probes.

He is due to go on trial in New York in March next year



WASHINGTON: A supporter of former US president Donald Trump holds a cutout of Trump as he rides in a limousine near the E Barrett Prettyman United States Courthouse on Aug 3, 2023. — AFP

over allegations that he covered up "hush money" payments to a porn star, and is scheduled to be tried two months later over his alleged mishandling of national security secrets. He is in court on Thursday for a preliminary hearing over his alleged election interference and is expected to soon be charged by state prosecutors over similar allegations in a separate case focused on the southern state of Georgia. — AFP

International

Zimbabwe election disinfo spreading on WhatsApp

App's encrypted messaging service makes fact-checking harder

JOHANNESBURG: From doctored photos making small crowds big to posts praising government accomplishments that never were, WhatsApp has become the channel of choice for disinformation in Zimbabwe before this month's elections. The landlocked southern African country heads to the polls on August 23 to elect the president and legislature in what analysts expect to be a tense affair amid a crackdown on the opposition and rigging fears.

Large-scale disinformation campaigns in the run-up to a vote are now a staple across the continent. Zimbabwe is no exception, but the situation there is more opaque. In Kenya and Nigeria, which recently held votes, misinformation peddlers hung out in the open, mostly on Facebook and Twitter, while in Zimbabwe WhatsApp is king of the rapid spread, analysts say. This is because that's where most voters are — but the app's encrypted messaging service makes fact-checking harder, as fake content proliferates undetected.

Chris Chinaka, editor-in-chief of ZimFact, a Zimbabwean fact-checking group, said staff now spend

most of the time flicking through WhatsApp groups for messages to debunk. "For most Zimbabweans, the internet is WhatsApp, and a lot of communication happens there," said Nqaba Matshazi, a journalist working at the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Zimbabwe.

Internet penetration is quite low in Zimbabwe, where only about a third of the country's more than 15 million people are online, according to a 2023 report by DataReportal, a data analysis firm. Only nine percent of those who have internet use social media. WhatsApp has a much broader reach and many Zimbabweans consider it a safe means of communication — a valued commodity in a country where criticizing the government can land people in jail. In May, Zimbabwe approved a broadly worded law imposing harsh penalties for damaging the country's "sovereignty and national interest", which critics say effectively bans government criticism.

Bots and pseudonyms

Few people on Twitter write about politics under

their real name, as that comes with the "risk of you being arrested", said Matshazi. But WhatsApp is not a free zone either, as messages on the app have also landed people behind bars, he added. The law worsened "a festering wound in an environment where already freedom of expression is quite limited," said Matshazi.

Still, traditional social media are not immune from fake content. Political analyst Jamie Mighti said Twitter was awash with bots that seem to have been commissioned to push government talking points. Some embellish the accomplishments of the ruling ZANU-PF party, in power since independence in 1980. Others repeat President Emmerson Mnangagwa's view that Western sanctions are to blame for the country's economic collapse. The United States and Europe deny this, noting that the measures target specific individuals accused of graft and rights abuses.

Doctored videos

Manipulated photos and videos are also circulating in large numbers — with both ZANU-PF and the leading opposition party, the Citizens' Coalition for

Change (CCC), making good use of them, analysts say. "(They) have used doctored images of rallies from the past, or from totally different contexts, to project the false impression of overwhelming support," said Bhekizulu Tshuma, a media studies professor at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe. The parties have also used the tactic to suggest their rivals have few followers, he added.

Campaign messages have been deliberately distorted. In one example, a clip of CCC leader Nelson Chamisa was edited to make it sound as if he advocated for the reversal of radical land reforms enacted by late president Robert Mugabe — and for the land to be returned to white farmers. Disinformation can also be easily found on television, where experts say state broadcaster ZBC often depicts the CCC as a party with little support and takes its leader's speeches out of context. "It is a matter of public record that ZBC refuses to give any independent or fair coverage to the CCC," the party's spokeswoman Fadzayi Mahere wrote on Twitter, which is being rebranded as "X". — AFP

Man sentenced to death for 2018 US synagogue massacre

NEW YORK: An American truck driver was sentenced to death on Wednesday for massacring 11 Jewish worshippers five years ago in the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in US history. The 12-member jury unanimously ruled that Robert Bowers should be executed for the Oct 27, 2018 mass shooting in Pittsburgh. President Joe Biden's Justice Department has put a moratorium on federal executions, however, meaning it is not clear whether the sentence will ever be carried out on Bowers.

The 50-year-old was found guilty in June of all 63 charges leveled against him, including hate crimes resulting in murder and attempted murder. Bowers methodically tracked down his victims at Pittsburgh's 'Tree of Life' synagogue, shooting many times from close range as he yelled "All Jews must die! The massacre compounded

fears of a resurgence of far-right extremists and neo-Nazis across the United States.

"Hate crimes like this one inflict irreparable pain on individual victims and their loved ones and lead entire communities to question their very belonging," said Attorney General Merrick Garland, reacting to the sentence. "All Americans deserve to live free from the fear of hate-fueled violence and the Justice Department will hold accountable those who perpetrate such acts," he added.

Bowers, who had an AR-15 semiautomatic assault rifle and three Glock handguns, carried out the slayings during Shabbat — the Jewish day of rest. He had expressed strong anti-Semitic views online. He was arrested at the scene of the attack, which left several police officers and two additional worshippers with non-fatal wounds. Donald Trump, then the US president, called for Bowers to receive the death penalty, which federal prosecutors formally requested in Aug 2019. Wednesday's verdict marks the first time federal prosecutors have sought and won a death sentence during Biden's presidency. — AFP



Robert Bowers

'Persistent' human rights abuses at US border: Report

WASHINGTON: US border police persistently commit human rights abuses without accountability in their handling of migrants at the frontier with Mexico, a new report from two Latin America-focused NGOs said Wednesday. The report, from the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the Kino Border Initiative (KBI), points to deaths in custody amid unclear circumstances as well as abusive language, the denial of food and the separation of families by border agents.

"Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the federal government's largest civilian law enforcement agency, has a persistent problem of human rights abuse without accountability," the report said. CBP did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. Since 2020, WOLA and KBI have tallied 13 deaths where Border Patrol agents used force "under circumstances in which it is unclear whether they faced an imminent threat" or "failed to prevent the death of an individual in custody."

In a section detailing how formal complaints to CBP often fail to be resolved, KBI tallied 78 complaints that it filed between 2020 and 2022. Just five

44 killed in week of deadly Brazil police operations

RIO DE JANEIRO: Nine people were killed Wednesday in a police operation targeting criminal gangs in Rio de Janeiro, authorities said, the latest in a week of security force raids that have left at least 44 dead across Brazil. The Rio raid came after days of deadly police crackdowns on drug trafficking gangs that have left 16 dead in Sao Paulo state and 19 killed in the northeastern state of Bahia.

Rio state police said officers had returned fire after coming under attack during a raid on a meeting of organized crime bosses in the Complexo da Penha group of favelas, on the city's north side. Authorities face mounting calls for independent investigations of alleged police abuses in Brazil, where the security forces have been accused of human-rights violations in their war with heavily armed drug gangs.

Police said the Rio operation came after officers received intelligence on a high-level meeting by gang leaders. "A clash occurred when police teams came



EAGLE PASS, Texas: Migrants walk by a string of buoys placed on the water along the Rio Grande border with Mexico on July 16, 2023. The Mexican government on Aug 2, 2023 said a dead body had been found caught in the controversial floating barriers installed by Texas authorities to stop migrants crossing into the US. — AFP

percent "led to either policy recommendations or discipline recommended for the agent in question," the report said. "We have documented a shocking pattern, including cases of misuse of lethal force, intimidation, sexual harassment, and falsifying documents,"

under attack by gunmen at the scene," state police said in a statement. "Eleven suspects were wounded" and taken to the hospital, it said. "Nine of them died of their injuries." Two policemen were also wounded and are in stable condition, it added.

Residents described the favela complex as a scene from a war zone during the raid, with locals left covering inside their homes — mostly small shacks packed tightly on the hillsides. "Businesses are all closed. People can't leave home to take their kids to school. You just have to take cover in a safe place and wait for the shooting to end," one resident told TV Globo, speaking on condition of anonymity.

AFP reporters outside the hospital where the wounded were taken described anxious residents waiting for news on injured relatives, flanked by a heavy police contingent as helicopters hovered overhead. Police said makeshift barricades had been set up across the neighborhood to slow officers' advance. They also said they had seized seven assault rifles, grenades and ammunition in the operation. The dead included two gang leaders, police said. They did not report any arrests.

Rio state legislator Dani Monteiro noted the operation came just over a year after a May 2022 raid in the same favela complex that left 25 dead, the second-deadliest police operation in the city's history. Calling that raid

report co-author Adam Isacson said in a statement. "The lack of accountability is so widespread that it helps cement in place a culture that enables human rights violations. The abuses keep coming because impunity is so likely." — AFP

a "massacre," she criticized Rio state Governor Claudio Castro, a security hardliner and ally of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro. "Castro's (in)security policy must stop!" Monteiro, a lawmaker for the left-wing PSOL party, wrote on X, formerly called Twitter.

Alleged abuses

In Sao Paulo, state police launched a massive anti-gang operation Friday, a day after a 30-year-old special forces officer was shot dead while on patrol in the port city of Guarujá. Authorities said Wednesday that 16 alleged criminals have been killed so far in the ongoing operation there, updating an earlier toll of 14.

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 have drawn criticism from rights groups in Brazil, where accusations of abuses by security forces are frequent.

The Sao Paulo operation shows "clear signs of seeking vengeance for the death of a police officer," said Amnesty International. "Residents have accused officers of abuses, intimidation and torture." The rights group sharply criticized Sao Paulo Governor Tarcisio de Freitas, another Bolsonaro ally, for "legitimizing police violence." — AFP

Saudi extends 1m bpd oil...

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Yet Jamie Ingram, senior editor at the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES), told AFP that Riyadh "will want to see an extended period of higher prices before bringing volumes back on to the market". He added: "Concerns over the Chinese

economy are also hanging over oil markets."

Oil giant Saudi Aramco, the jewel of the kingdom's economy, said it recorded profits totaling \$161.1 billion last year, allowing Riyadh to notch up its first annual budget surplus in nearly a decade. But with the spiking oil prices that resulted from Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year now a thing of the past, Saudi oil activities contracted 4.2 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, according to preliminary data published on Monday by the kingdom's General Authority for Statistics. Non-oil activities grew by 5.5 percent during the same period, resulting in overall GDP growth of 1.1 percent, the authority said. — AFP

demonstrate against the government's policy. "We all know that climate science screams that we cannot have more fossil fuels... I am really furious on behalf of my kids," said protest organizer Lorna Powell, 37. "Instead of being a climate leader and acting in the right way, he's decided that he is going to use it as a political game to try and stoke a culture war," she added. Downing Street insists the policy is essential to ensure Britain's domestic energy security, and that it can still meet its 2050 net zero goals. — AFP

few personally", and replied to King's message with "You're welcome namaste." Word that X Blue subscribers can try to hide that fact prompted one user to fire off a post contending that Musk "destroyed a decade old symbol of trust and turned it into a mark of shame". A post from the X account @ianvisits said that "Blue ticks are now so toxic that you can hide the fact that you have one."

Other paid-for features, such as posts longer 280 characters, may still allow other users to identify a Blue subscriber even if their blue tick has been hidden. "The checkmark may still appear in some places and some features could still reveal you have an active subscription," X said at its help page. — AFP

Workers fret over uncertain future amid AI anxiety

NEW YORK: The tidal wave of artificial intelligence (AI) barreling toward many professions has generated deep anxiety among workers fearful that their jobs will be swept away — and the mental health impact is rising. The launch in November 2022 of ChatGPT, the generative AI platform capable of handling complex tasks on command, marked a tech landmark as AI started to transform the workplace. "Anything new and unknown is anxiety-producing," Clare Gustavsson, a New York therapist whose patients have shared concerns about AI, told AFP. "The technology is growing so fast, it is hard to gain sure footing."

Legal assistants, programmers, accountants and financial advisors are among those professions feeling threatened by generative AI that can quickly create human-like prose, computer code, articles or expert insight. Goldman Sachs analysts see generative AI impacting, if not eliminating, some 300 million jobs, according to a study published in March. "I anticipate that my job will become obsolete within the next 10 years," Eric, a bank teller, told AFP, declining to give his second name. "I plan to change careers. The bank I work for is expanding AI research."

Trying to 'embrace the unknown'

New York therapist Meris Powell told AFP of an entertainment professional worried about AI being

used in film and television production — a threat to actors and screenwriters that is a flashpoint in strikes currently gripping Hollywood. "It's mainly people who are in creative fields who are at the forefront of that concern," Gustavsson said.

AI is bringing with it a level of apprehension matched by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, she contended. But she said that she tries to get patients to "embrace the unknown" and find ways to use new technology to their advantage. For one graphic animator in New York, the career-threatening shock came from seeing images generated by AI-infused software such as Midjourney and Stable Diffusion that rivaled the quality of those created by humans.

"People started to realize that some of the skills they had developed and specialized in could possibly be replaced by AI," she told AFP, adding she had honed her coding skills, but now feels even that has scant promise in an AI world. "I'll probably lean into more of a management-level role," she said. "It's just hard because there are a lot less of those positions. 'Before I would just pursue things that interested me and skills that I enjoy. Now I feel more inclined to think about what's actually going to be useful and marketable in the future.'"

Peter Vukovic, who has been chief technology officer at several startups, expects just one percent or less of the population to benefit from AI. "For the rest, it's a gray area," Vukovic, who lives in Bosnia, said. "There is a lot of reason for 99 percent of people to be concerned." AI is focused on efficiency and making money, but it could be channeled to serve other purposes, Vukovic said. "What's the best way for us to use this?" he asked. "Is it really just to automate a bunch of jobs?" — AFP

Activists cover Sunak's home...

Continued from Page 1

to the planet if he can score a few political points by sowing division around climate in this country," said Evans. "This is cynical beyond belief." Separately, dozens of mothers joined forces outside parliament to

X lets users hide vaunted blue...

Continued from Page 1

the platform. Wordsmith Stephen King, who had previously vowed he would never cough up, even telling Musk that Twitter should instead be paying him to post, appeared horrified to discover that he still had his blue check.

Musk said in response to a news article about the check marks at the time that he was "paying for a

International

Followers of Indonesian native faith fighting for recognition

'Godless' Sunda Wiwitan believers face significant hurdles

KUNINGAN, Indonesia: As 81-year-old Subrata listened to a gong echo during a celebration of his ancient Indonesian indigenous faith, he betrayed little of the trauma of a lifetime of discrimination deriding him as "godless". He was enjoying a cleansing ritual for younger followers of the Sunda Wiwitan religion in Muslim-majority Indonesia's most-populous province West Java, where they are often derided as infidels, primitive or faithless idolaters.

Sunda Wiwitan believers are pushing for official recognition of their shunned faith — which has existed longer than Islam and Christianity in Indonesia. "I hope people will no longer treat God's creatures differently," Subrata, who like many Indonesians has one name, told AFP between rituals in Cigugur village, around 200 km east of Jakarta. Sunda Wiwitan believers face significant hurdles, including policies that bar them from government jobs and having their marriages officially recognized. "I am a citizen of this country, yet I am ostracized on my land," said Subrata. Around him, preparations were under way to celebrate Seren Taun, the annual harvest festival outlawed from 1982 until the end of Suharto's dictatorship in 1998.

Before a ritual known as "Pesta Dadung" to protect crops from ruinous pests, men dressed in black solemnly chanted prayers while lighting a fire, as women in white kebaya sang in a traditional Sundanese language. Sunda Wiwitan venerates the spirit of followers' ancestors as well as the power of nature, causing misconceptions that they revere dead objects.

Before he retired from the civil service, Subrata said he was repeatedly denied promotions and interrogated because he was deemed "godless" by his then-boss. "I was treated differently. Of course, it hurts," he said. Later, the government barred native faith believers from applying for civil service jobs altogether.

Social stigma

Despite the religion's centuries-long existence, Sunda Wiwitan followers continue to face barriers to their ability to practice their faith and access other rights. Before 2017, more than 10 million native-faith followers



KUNINGAN, Indonesia: This picture taken on July 7, 2023 shows members of the Sunda Wiwitan faith taking part in a ritual called "Pesta Dadung" in Cigugur village during the Seren Taun ceremony. — AFP

were required to fill the religion field on their ID cards with a dash. The move created several bureaucratic roadblocks for believers, including renewing driving licenses, applying for certain jobs or undertaking other official administrative tasks.

In 2017, Indonesia's Constitutional Court allowed native-faith followers to fill the religion column with a generic phrase: "the Belief in God Almighty". But bureaucratic problems remain. Some are reluctant to renew their ID cards because they cannot state their actual religion. "We are all different, why do we need to be lumped into one term?" asked Dewi Kanti Setianingsih, an advocate for Sunda Wiwitan rights.

Without a listed religion, people cannot register their marriages legally, forcing some women into unofficial nuptials that carry further stigma in Indonesia. "Their children's status will not be acknowledged by the law and they will be considered as children born outside of marriages," said Setianingsih. Followers say they face more obstacles than other religions and local

authorities have also moved to shut down their tombs, citing a lack of permits.

"We are still fighting because there are still articles... that are discriminatory," Ira Indrawardana, an anthropologist at Padjadjaran University who practices Sunda Wiwitan, told AFP. The government, however, denies discriminating against the community. "The ministry can't provide such service for that many religions so we decided on a universal term," said Samsul Hadi, senior official at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology.

Sunda Wiwitan followers numbered as many as 15,000 in the early 1960s, said Setianingsih. More precise estimates are hard to come by because many hide their faith. As a child, Restu Buana would call himself a Catholic for fear he would be bullied if his true religion was known. When his religious studies teacher found out, he condemned Sunda Wiwitan as a culture that "is not a religion", the 20-year-old student said. He now settles for a dash on his ID card. — AFP

Cleanup begins in Beijing's flood ravaged suburbs

MENTOUGOU, China: On the banks of the Yongding River west of Beijing on Thursday, Chen Xiaoyuan stared at the remains of a bridge that once led to his village. Cleanup has begun after the region's worst rainfall in years battered northern China, killing at least twenty people, destroying infrastructure and deluging swathes of Beijing and its surrounding areas. In the village of Chenjiazhuang west of Beijing, the deluge ripped up trees and sent debris crashing into a bridge Monday, causing it to collapse, Chen said.

"Everyone in our village used to use this bridge each day," Chen, 50, told AFP. "I've never seen anything like this here, even in 2012," he said, referencing heavy rains over 10 years ago that left 79 people dead. His home still lacks electricity and water. But Chen was lucky that his house was situated at a high enough level to not be affected directly by the surging floods.

Others weren't so fortunate: Chen told AFP that one of his former classmates was missing and that he was feared to have been swept away by the torrent. Further upstream, AFP journalists found the hard-hit village of Shuiyuzui struggling with the aftermath of

the historic rains, which tore down a perimeter wall, sending waters flooding into residential buildings. At the entrance to the village, downed power lines were propped up by logs to allow emergency personnel to deliver water and food to besieged residents.

Locals waded through muddy water — in some places waist-deep — salvaging their belongings in bags to take to temporary accommodation. Dozens of large vehicles belonging to the People's Armed Police were seen lined up along the road outside the village, providing assistance to affected residents and helping cope with damage in the area. Heavy rain was replaced by a muggy heat on Thursday, and locals took a break from collecting their belongings to eat watermelon by the village bridge, whose railings had also been swept away by the floods.

Around 100m above the village, landslides triggered by the rains sent giant heaps of soil and rock over two railway lines. Emergency workers deployed bulldozers to mend the tracks, hauling equipment and material up the mountainside. Standing on a pile of debris atop a railway line situated between two tunnels, an emergency worker told AFP that just last week trains had been able to pass through unhindered. "It all came down through here," a local woman surnamed Ma, 43, told AFP, indicating up to where the landslides had overrun the railway lines. "I've just come today to deal with my belongings," said Ma, who is temporarily sleeping at another location. "There's nothing at our house now, no electricity, no water." — AFP



BEIJING: A man stands on a broken bridge in a flood-affected area following heavy rains on Aug 3, 2023. — AFP

Taiwan vows to tighten seals after spy detained

TAIPEI: Taiwan's ministry of defense has vowed to bolster its anti-espionage efforts after an army lieutenant colonel was detained for allegedly collecting intelligence for China. The latest spying case comes during a low point in relations between Taiwan and China — which claims the democracy as its territory — with Beijing ramping up military and political pressure on the island.

The Taiwanese ministry of defense responded on Wednesday to local media reports about a lieutenant colonel surnamed Hsieh, and others, "who allegedly were recruited by China to collect intelligence". "The Defense Ministry condemns a small number of personnel... who committed such crimes of betraying the people and the country," it said in a statement, mentioning Hsieh by name without confirming

or denying his detention. "In the face of the Chinese Communists' infiltration, the military will continue to strengthen counter-intelligence education and enhance security vigilance," it added.

No details were given about the alleged crime. The statement came after a report from Central News Agency — a partially state-funded news outlet — that said Hsieh had worked for the army's Aviation and Special Forces Command in northern Taoyuan county. He had allegedly gathered and passed intelligence to China via a middleman. CNA reported, citing prosecutors. He also attempted to recruit active and retired servicemen to develop a spy network, CNA said, adding that prosecutors had launched a probe after receiving a tip.

Hsieh and the alleged middleman were reportedly taken into custody after being questioned by prosecutors, while four retired servicemen also suspected of involvement were released on bail. Taiwan and China have been spying on each other since the end of a civil war between Chinese nationalists and communists in 1949. A number of former high-ranking Taiwanese military officials have in recent years been accused of spying for Beijing. — AFP

News in Briefs

Several hurt in 'stabbing rampage'

SEOUL: A man went on a "stabbing rampage" near a South Korean subway station, police said Thursday, with as many as 10 people reported wounded two weeks after a similar attack killed one person. The attack took place near the Seohyeon subway station in Bundang, about 20 km southeast of Seoul, an official at the National Police Agency told AFP. The suspect "had been arrested at the scene", the official said. The Yonhap News Agency reported that 10 people had been wounded in the incident. Unverified images of Thursday's attack showed what appeared to be a floor stained with blood drops and at least one emergency medical helicopter. — AFP

'Ovaries needed' to fight crime

MEXICO CITY: An outspoken opposition politician hoping to be Mexico's first female president said Wednesday that "ovaries are needed" to confront organized crime in the violence-wracked country. Senator Xochitl Galvez's decision to seek the opposition nomination in the 2024 election has shaken up the race to replace outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. "Enough already! Ovaries are needed to punish those who break the law," Galvez wrote on Instagram, criticizing the security strategy of Lopez Obrador's government. Born to an Indigenous Otomi father and a mixed-race mother, the 60-year-old businesswoman and senator is seen by many as the opposition's best hope of defeating Lopez Obrador's ruling Morena party. — AFP



Xochitl Galvez

Flights cancelled in Amhara

NAIROBI: Ethiopian Airlines said Thursday it had cancelled flights to two cities in Amhara after Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen said he was worried by the escalation of violence in the northern region. Clashes between federal troops and local fighters have led Britain and Spain to issue security warnings to their nationals, with the UK's Foreign Office saying that the Amhara militia Fano had taken over the airport in Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage site. "Flights to Gondar and Lalibela airports have been suspended," Ethiopian Airlines spokesman Ashenafi Zeray told AFP by phone, adding that he did not know the reason for the cancellations. — AFP

Thai parliament delays PM vote amid deadlock

BANGKOK: Thailand's parliament on Thursday postponed a vote to choose a new prime minister after a Constitutional Court ruling, prolonging the kingdom's political deadlock nearly three months after an election. The reformist Move Forward Party (MFP) won the most seats in May's polls but fell well short of a majority, and an eight-party coalition was not enough to get its leader Pita Limjaroenrat approved as premier.

The 42-year-old was blocked by junta-appointed senators spooked by MFP's pledge to reform strict royal defamation laws, then was denied the chance to be renominated a week later — throwing Thailand into political turmoil. On Thursday the Constitutional Court said it needed more time to decide whether to hear a petition challenging the legality of that decision.

This prompted house speaker Wan Muhamad Noor Matha to delay another vote to choose a PM that had been scheduled for Friday. "The vote for the prime minister tomorrow is postponed — we will have to wait for the Constitutional Court decision on August 16," he told reporters. The court said it needed to weigh more evidence on whether to accept the case brought by the official ombudsman.

The developments come a day after MFP dropped out of the coalition it once led — now headed by the Pheu Thai party, which came second in the election. Pheu Thai has said property tycoon Srettha Thavasin will be its PM nominee, but following Thursday's events it cancelled a press conference that had been planned to announce a new coalition. "We have enough votes to set up the government," Pheu Thai deputy leader Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters. "The delay of the Constitutional Court will allow us to be even better prepared." To become prime minister, a candidate must be approved by a majority of both houses of parliament — including 250 senators appointed under the last junta. Without MFP's 151 seats, Pheu Thai has been in talks with other parties to build a parliamentary majority. — AFP



CASCAIS, Portugal: Pope Francis waters an olive tree as he visits the Scholas Occurrentes educational foundation after a meeting with youths on Aug 3, 2023. — AFP

Pope tells youths to tackle climate crisis, poverty

LISBON: Pope Francis on Thursday urged young people to combine fighting to save the planet with tackling poverty during the second day of his visit to Portugal. The 86-year-old Francis has made the protection of the environment a cornerstone of his pontificate. He returned to the theme during an open-air address to students at Lisbon's Catholic University on the second day of his visit to Portugal.

"We must recognize the dramatic and urgent need to care for our common home," he said, speaking in his native Spanish. "Yet this cannot be done without a real change of heart. We cannot be satisfied with mere palliative measures or timid and ambiguous compromises," he added. Around 6,500 people, including Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and bishops, were gathered under a bright sun in a main square of the campus of the institution, one of Portugal's top universities, to listen to the pope.

The crowd cheered and applauded when the leader of the world's 1.3 billion Roman Catholics pontiff took to the stage. "Keep in mind that we need an integral ecology, attentive to the sufferings both of the planet and the poor," he told them. "We need to align the tragedy of desertification with that of refugees, the issue of increased migration with that of a declining birth rate. Instead of polarized approaches, we need a unified vision, a vision capable of embracing the whole."

Paints mural

After his speech, the pope headed to Cascais, a seaside town some 30 km west of Lisbon, to visit the local branch of his Scholas Occurrentes foundation, a movement he founded in 2013 to bring young people from different backgrounds and nationalities together. In keeping with his unpretentious style, the pontiff was driven to the foundation in a white Toyota car. Well-wishers lined the route, cheering, waving and taking pictures with their mobile phones.

At the foundation he answered questions from youths of different nationalities before putting the final brushstroke on a mural that the community has been working on. "This is your Sistine Chapel," the pope said, sparking laughter from the assembled youths. Before leaving the pope watered an olive tree, the symbol of peace, in the patio of the foundation. Francis began his day meeting 15 youth from Ukraine at the Holy See's diplomatic mission in Lisbon where he is staying, the Vatican said in a statement. The meeting had not been listed on the official program of the pope's visit. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2023

BoE hikes rate, 14th time in row on high inflation

UK inflation stays high, prolonging cost-of-living crisis

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday hiked its key interest rate for a 14th time in a row, by a quarter-point to 5.25 percent as UK inflation stays high, prolonging a cost-of-living crisis. Policymakers "will continue to monitor closely indications of persistent inflationary pressures", the BoE said in a statement following a regular meeting that sent borrowing costs to the highest level in more than 15 years. The pound dropped following the announcement as traders bet on whether this could be the final increase from the BoE in the current tightening cycle. British annual inflation remains close to eight percent, far higher than in the euro-zone and United States.

"It is expected to fall significantly further, to around five percent by the end of the year, accounted for by lower energy, and to a lesser degree, food and core goods price inflation," the BoE said Thursday. "Services price inflation, however, is projected to remain elevated at close to its current rate in the near term." The BoE is tasked by the UK government with keeping annual inflation at around two percent. At its last meeting in June, the BoE lifted its rate by a half point. Since then, UK annual inflation has dropped to 7.9 percent from 8.7 percent but remains the highest among G7 nations.

Avoiding recession?

Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has set a

target of reducing inflation to five percent by the end of 2023, ahead of a general election next year which his Conservative party is on course to lose. Responding to the latest rate hike, finance minister Jeremy Hunt said in a separate statement: "If we stick to the plan, the bank forecasts inflation will be below three percent in a year's time without the economy falling into a recession."

"But that doesn't mean it's easy for families facing higher mortgage bills so we will continue to do what we can to help households." Surging interest rates in the UK have sparked mortgage turmoil as commercial lenders lift their own borrowing costs on home loans, boosting their profits. In response, the government has launched temporary measures to ease the burden on repayments.

In a bid to cool prices, the BoE led by governor Andrew Bailey began lifting its key interest rate from a record low of 0.1 percent at the end of 2021, when inflation started to creep higher as economies slowly emerged from lockdowns. Global inflation worsened in the months after as Russia's invasion of Ukraine fuelled energy and food prices. UK inflation struck a 41-year peak at 11.1 percent in October 2022. At 5.25 percent, the BoE's interest rate is at the highest level since the global financial crisis in 2008. The latest UK growth data showed that the economy shrank slightly in May. — AFP



LONDON: Protesters wearing masks of Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (2nd right) and Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey (center) hold balloons and placards representing the billions of pounds of profit earned by British banks during a protest outside the Bank of England in the City of London on August 3, 2023, ahead of another expected rise in the base rate. — AFP

German exports inch up, outlook remains gloomy

FRANKFURT: German exports rose only marginally in June while imports fell, official data showed Thursday, highlighting weaker demand as Europe's top economy struggles through a downturn. Germany shipped goods worth 131.3 billion euros (\$143 billion) in June, according to data published by federal statistics agency Destatis, up 0.1 percent on the previous month.

Imports plunged by 3.4 percent to 112.6 billion euros, widening the trade surplus to 18.7 billion euros. The decline was mainly down to lower imports from fellow euro-zone countries, Destatis said. "Trade is no longer the strong resilient growth driver of the German economy that it used to be, but rather a drag," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

The latest figures confirm that "the German economy remains stuck in stagnation", he added. Europe's powerhouse economy recorded zero growth between April and June, preliminary figures showed last week, as inflation and high interest rates continued to weigh on demand. The German economy shrank over the two preceding quarters, sliding into a technical recession after Russia's war in Ukraine sent energy prices surging.

The United States remained the most popular



FRANKFURT: A woman used an umbrella during a heavy rain as she walks along a street in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

destination for made-in-Germany goods in June, Destatis said, though exports were down 0.2 percent on a month earlier. Most imports again came from China. Looking ahead, economists saw little hope of a quick economic rebound. "The collapse of export order books since the start of the year sug-

gests a further weakening of exports in the very near term," Brzeski said. "Supply chain frictions, a more fragmented global economy and China increasingly being able to produce goods it previously bought from Germany are all factors weighing on German exports," he added. — AFP

AFP sues Musk's X over copyright

PARIS: AFP news agency launched a copyright case in France on Wednesday against social media giant Twitter, recently rebranded X, part of a global struggle to get tech firms to pay for news. Media groups have long argued that their stories and images bring value to platforms like X, Facebook and Google, meaning they should get a slice of the profits. Their cause was boosted by a 2019 EU law that allowed for payments for sharing content under a regime called "neighboring rights", and Google and Facebook eventually agreed to pay some French media outlets.

But AFP has accused X, owned by billionaire tycoon Elon Musk, of a "clear refusal" to engage in discussions on neighboring rights. AFP said in a statement it had lodged a case with a judge in Paris



LOS ANGELES: This photo illustration shows the X logo (formerly Twitter) on a smartphone screen in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

to force the platform to hand over data that would allow the French news agency to estimate a fair level of compensation. "As a leading advocate for the

adoption of neighboring rights for the press, AFP remains unwavering in its commitment to the cause," the statement said.

"The Agency will continue to employ the appropriate legal means with each relevant platform to ensure the fair distribution of the value generated by the sharing of news content." Contacted by AFP, the company was not immediately available for comment, but on Thursday Musk called the lawsuit "bizarre" in a post on X. Although media groups in France have won some victories, big tech firms have pushed back hard in other regions.

Meta blocked users of Facebook and Instagram in Canada from seeing posts from news organizations this week over a law that mandates compensation for the content. Google has threatened to take similar action. Meta and Google also opposed similar proposals in Australia. The two firms dominate online advertising and stand accused of draining cash away from traditional news organizations while using their content for free. X, as a much smaller platform, has not faced the same level of scrutiny. — AFP

The protesters were accompanied by armed police and soldiers. Many businesses were closed Wednesday, including government offices, banks and markets. Only a few vehicles were on the roads as the workers marched towards the city centre. But in Lagos and other cities across the country of some 210 million people, the strike action was mixed, with some markets, shops and government offices remaining open in the sprawling city of over 20 million people. In the southern states of Abia, Ebonyi and Cross River striking workers took to major roads and headed to government offices to present their demands.

The oil-rich country imports the bulk of its petroleum products due to problems at four domestic oil refineries. Under the now-dropped subsidy scheme, the government covered the difference between the cost of import and prices at the pump. Last week both unions gave the government until Wednesday to restore the subsidy or faced nationwide action. — AFP

Ex-JPMorgan exec Garcia joins Azura in US wealth push

WASHINGTON: Wealth manager Azura hired former JPMorgan Chase & Co executive Jerry Garcia to buttress its presence in Miami, becoming the latest firm to ramp up expansion efforts in South Florida. Garcia, 53, started last month as head of Azura's Latin America business, according to a statement Wednesday. He previously helped lead JPMorgan's private bank for Latin America after working at the New York-based firm for more than a decade.

Companies including General Atlantic, Rothschild & Co and BNP Paribas SA have opened offices in Miami and surrounding areas within the past year, fueling a boom in the region as other parts of the US real estate market are roiled by rising interest rates. Meanwhile, billionaires like Ken Griffin, Dan Loeb and Josh Harris have scooped up waterfront Miami Beach mansions, helping to increase the number of high-net-worth individuals in the city by 75% over the past decade, according to investment migration firm Henley & Partners.



Azura Founder Ali Jamal

Latin American nations shifting left politically over the past year has also sparked a flood of money out of the region, strengthening Miami's reputation as a haven for super-rich Latinos. People and corporations in Latin America's five largest economies last year pulled about \$137 billion out of their countries, according to data from the Institute of International Finance. Azura, started by former Julius Baer Group banker Ali Jamal, 41, has about 40 employees globally. It's added more than 20 professionals since the start of 2021 from firms including Credit Suisse, Barclays Plc and UBS Group AG.

Focusing on billionaire fortunes, the wealth manager opened a New York office in March run by former Credit Suisse executive Anthony Kontoleon, adding to locations in London, Geneva and Monaco. Azura also opened a Singapore office in 2020 and one in Dubai last year. Garcia, who left JPMorgan last year, was a managing director and market manager for the firm's private-banking operations in Central America and South America. Jamal, a former Kuwaiti army officer, launched Azura in 2019 with about \$2 billion of assets under advisory after most recently working as Julius Baer's head of key clients for emerging markets. That amount has now grown to almost \$4 billion, according to the statement. — Bloomberg

Nigeria workers suspend strike

LAGOS: Nigerian workers have suspended a nationwide strike over the rising cost of living following the removal of a petrol subsidy scheme, the government and union leaders said Thursday. Hundreds of workers across all sectors went on strike on Wednesday in compliance with the directives of the two main unions - the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). The presidency said Thursday's strike had been suspended following talks between the two union leaders and President Bola Tinubu late on Wednesday.

"Consequent upon the fruitful and frank discussion with President Tinubu and their confidence in his ability to encourage open and honest consideration

of all the issues put forward by the Labor Movement, the Labor Leaders resolved to stop further protest," the presidency said in a statement. The presidency added that union leaders had "opted for further constructive engagement with the government to resolve all outstanding issues as they affect the working people and Nigerians in general." Union leaders confirmed the suspension of the strike to AFP.

Tinubu ended a fuel subsidy scheme - pushing up prices of food, transportation and other services - on May 29, during his inauguration as the new leader of Africa's most populous nation. In Abuja on Wednesday, some 400 protesters led by NLC leader Joe Ajaero and his TUC counterpart Festus Usifo, marched through the capital carrying placards and chanting slogans. They denounced low wages, lack of social amenities and adequate welfare as well as mass poverty. The protesters stormed the parliament and smashed one of the gates before presenting their petitions to Senate leaders.

Business

Austria farmers up in arms over Brussels GMO plans

Commission seeks to ease restrictions on genetically modified crops

SCHONFELD: The European Commission's proposal to ease current restrictions on genetically modified crops has riled up EU organic farming leader Austria and its farmers. "I think it's outrageous... They have a nerve even considering this," organic farmer Beate Brenner told AFP on her farm in a small village surrounded by grain and sunflower fields some 100 kilometers northwest of Vienna.

With about a fourth of all agricultural land certified as organic in Austria, the government has said it would lobby to block Brussels' proposal. Under the plan, the commission wants to allow gene editing with a plant's existing DNA to escape the tough restrictions that apply to plants which have been modified using genes from another organism (genetically modified organisms or GMOs) in terms of authorizations, labeling and monitoring.

'Danger'

"The Commission's proposal is a danger for the Austrian way of agriculture and also takes away consumers' freedom of choice," three Austrian ministers said in a statement last month, just after the commission put forward its plan. "We are doing everything we can in Brussels to ensure that strict rules for genetically modified plants and food continue to apply," they added. The commission says the rules need to be relaxed to grow crops that require fewer pesticides, are better adapted to climate change and need less water.

The text of the project calls for the existing GMO rules to not apply to genetically edited crops where the modifications could have come about naturally or through traditional cross-breeding procedures. EU agriculture ministers began discussing the proposal last week in Brussels. Though no produce coming from

these new genomic techniques (NGT) will be able to carry the "bio" label, Austria - known for its small-sized farms - worries that even organic produce could be "contaminated" under the new rules.

This could happen when genetically edited crops are planted next to organic ones or livestock is inadvertently fed with them, the government says. Hungary and Slovenia have also expressed some reluctance. Spain, which currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, hopes to conclude an agreement by the end of its term in December. This would be followed by final discussions with MEPs to try to finalize the text before the European elections in June 2024.

Grain farmer Brenner said Brussels should find better ways to address the challenges posed by climate change - with extreme weather threatening harvests. She actively tries to explain Brussels' proposal to her customers, who buy her bread, flour and other produce directly at her farm, online or in a few partner shops. "They can count on knowing what happens here," said the 47-year-old, who together with her husband took over his parent's farm in 2002, starting to grow grain organically on 60 hectares (150 acres) and milling it directly at the farm.

'Make noise'

Brenner's customers say it is important for them that farmers work without chemical fertilizers - and above all without gene editing. "It's about our health... I hope we can stop it (Brussels' proposal) if we make enough noise," care worker Susi Pofi, 64, told AFP. Powerful agri-groups have been calling for simplified rules to speed up sales of their products, with some EU member countries and lawmakers in the European Parliament's centre-right EPP grouping



SCHONFELD: Organic farmers Beate and Walter Brenner inspect a field at their organic farm in Schoenfeld an der Wild, Lower Austria. — AFP

backing that stance. As of early July, Brussels had received 90 authorization requests for NGT crops, a third of which are in advanced research stages. A few have reached the level of testing in open fields, such as corn in Belgium and potatoes in Sweden.

Leftwing lawmakers and environmental groups, including Greenpeace, are against a "GMO deregulation" by lawmakers demanding a systematic risk analysis, compulsory labeling, and the means to detect and trace such products. Bio Austria, which describes itself as Europe's biggest network of organic farmers, has slammed the commission's proposal as "a bow to the genetic engineering and seed companies and... a massive step backwards in the area of food transparency". — AFP

US credit downgrade 'entirely unwarranted'

MCLEAN: A US credit downgrade by Fitch was "entirely unwarranted," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Wednesday, pushing back against the second-ever decrease by a major ratings agency following repeated debt limit standoffs in Washington. Her remarks came a day after the world's biggest economy lost its top-tier credit rating from Fitch as the agency lowered it a notch from AAA to AA+, drawing fiery disapproval from the White House and Treasury. The action was on the back of the United States' growing federal debt burden and an "erosion of governance" resulting in multiple gridlocks over the debt ceiling, said Fitch Ratings on Tuesday.

But Yellen told an event in Virginia that "Fitch's decision is puzzling in light of the economic strength we see in the United States." Citing US economy's bounceback from the pandemic with a robust jobs market and cooling inflation, Yellen stressed that fiscal responsibility is a priority for herself and President Joe Biden. "At the end of the day, Fitch's decision does not change what all of us already know," she said. This includes the understanding that "Treasury securities remain the world's preeminent safe and liquid asset," she added.

'Long-term' fix

But a Fitch Ratings senior director told CNBC Wednesday that Washington needs to tackle the recurrence of debt limit impasses and find "long-term" solutions for growing fiscal issues if it seeks a credit upgrade. "We've seen a pretty steady deterioration in governance over the last couple of decades," Richard Francis said in an interview. Among the elements he highlighted was January 6, referring to the date in 2021 when supporters of Donald Trump stormed Congress in a bid to prevent certification of his rival Joe Biden's election victory.

Other factors, he added, included "constant brinkmanship surrounding the debt ceiling" along with Republicans and Democrats' inability to generate "meaningful, long-term solutions" on fiscal issues surrounding programs like social security and Medicare. While the US economy has so far defied predictions of a looming downturn, Francis noted that entering or skirting a recession "doesn't really move the needle" when it comes to underlying fundamentals Fitch is eyeing. It also does not stabilize debt or address governance issues, he added. — AFP

Lufthansa profits surge on booming demand

FRANKFURT: Lufthansa said Thursday second-quarter profits more than tripled on booming demand, putting the airline giant on course for one of its best annual results as it recovers from the pandemic. The German company reported a net profit of 881 million euros (\$964 million) from April to June, up from 259 million euros in the same period a year earlier.

It marked a turnaround from a net loss in the first quarter for one of Europe's biggest airline groups, when demand for flights was lower

due to normal seasonality. The group - whose carriers include Lufthansa, Eurowings, Austrian, Swiss and Brussels Airlines - said revenues rose 17 percent to 9.38 billion euros. The positive results were driven by surging demand for flights as well as a rise in ticket prices.

A total of 33.3 million passengers flew with the group's airlines in the second quarter. This was several million above the same period a year earlier but still below the figure seen in 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic. For the whole of 2023, Lufthansa now expects earnings before interest and taxes - its preferred measure of profitability - of more than 2.6 billion euros, one of the best results in its history. Lufthansa was hit hard by pandemic border closures, and had to be bailed out by the German government, but has since bounced back strongly. — AFP



LEINFELDEN-ECHTERDINGEN: Passengers queue with their luggage in front of a counter of German airline Lufthansa for check-in at Stuttgart Airport in Leinfelden-Echterdingen near Stuttgart, southwestern Germany. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 3 AUGUST 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	969	952	974	950	24	15,026,581	-18	-1.86%	-7.27%	940	958	14.4	1.84	3.5%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	269	257	269	256	13	18,245,075	-11	-4.10%	-14.06%	256	261	13.0	1.21	3.6%	1.31
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	168	165	168	164	4	17,779,709	-2	-1.20%	-7.90%	164	167	20.4	0.56	2.2%	1.13
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	208	199	210	197	13	6,954,476	-11	-5.24%	-4.59%	191	202	20.6	0.79	3.8%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	788	770	800	767	33	44,595,652	-16	-2.04%	2.92%	762	784	20.3	1.99	2.2%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	622	625	627	615	12	19,109,337	0	0.00%	-16.98%	618	642	41.0	2.54	0.9%	1.23
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	142	135	146	133	13	10,653,419	-7	-4.93%	-11.18%	133	141	-	0.64	3.6%	1.84
204	National Investments	Financial Services	251	239	254	239	15	7,922,025	-8	-3.24%	0.84%	237	244	-	1.00	11.5%	2.01
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	134	125	134	124	10	21,273,114	-8	-6.02%	11.61%	122	126	22.4	0.76	0.0%	0.99
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	147	142	150	139	11	72,709,870	0	0.00%	25.95%	139	145	13.7	1.04	2.7%	1.22
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	163	160	166	157	9	65,401,101	-1	-0.62%	20.30%	158	163	11.1	1.20	4.7%	1.70
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	69.8	68.7	72	67.4	4.5	9,032,426	-0.4	-0.58%	-8.28%	67.3	69.1	-	0.44	12.9%	1.30
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	139	149	151	139	12	65,185,188	13	9.56%	42.10%	143	151	13.8	1.03	2.0%	1.14
413	Mabaneh	Real Estate	866	865	885	855	30	1,941,082	-12	-1.37%	8.13%	856	872	18.3	2.00	1.5%	1.07
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	106	106	111	105	6	33,866,184	0	0.00%	10.39%	105	108	17.4	0.66	2.7%	0.59
501	National Industries	Financial Services	231	234	236	229	7	41,718,555	3	1.30%	13.23%	231	239	-	1.07	2.0%	1.60
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,200	1,228	1,233	1,200	33	281,958	15	1.24%	1.07%	1,226	1,260	13.3	1.14	4.9%	1.06
506	HEISCO	Industrials	691	694	700	691	9	276,786	-3	-0.43%	13.21%	668	700	24.3	1.76	2.9%	0.96
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	734	719	740	716	24	3,654,144	-14	-1.91%	-10.13%	716	732	11.0	1.40	8.2%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	645	628	649	623	26	10,201,805	-16	-2.48%	-12.78%	618	656	22.8	0.89	0.0%	1.52
605	Zain	Telecommunications	523	518	529	517	12	13,182,521	-3	-0.58%	-7.99%	512	528	11.1	1.75	6.7%	0.65
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,760	3,322	3,794	3,300	494	2,649,742	-429	-11.44%	-0.91%	3,315	3,400	9.1	2.92	11.5%	0.64
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	188	179	188	179	9	1,548,492	-7	-3.76%	-11.82%	178	184	-	0.79	0.0%	1.15
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	2,020	1,999	2,020	1,908	112	3,155,041	-11	-0.55%	5.21%	1,958	2,084	23.5	15.91	4.0%	1.43
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	85.1	82.5	86	82.5	3.9	56,046,722	-2.5	-2.94%	8.55%	82.1	84	10.0	0.99	5.7%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	215	207	216	205	11	18,885,530	-9	-4.17%	-9.27%	207	212	29.7	1.14	1.4%	1.12
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	535	525	540	525	15	2,769,063	-4	-0.76%	33.59%	519	541	-	1.53	2.3%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	415	395	416	394	22	4,303,186	-19	-4.59%	6.76%	390	400	37.4	1.59	3.7%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	201	194	202	194	8	3,376,817	-6	-3.00%	3.19%	193	198	16.4	2.01	8.5%	0.45
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,895	1,925	1,935	1,880	55	1,088,067	24	1.26%	-6.19%	1,900	1,971	22.4	7.26	4.5%	0.97
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,155	1,170	1,199	1,121	78	5,929,149	25	2.18%	45.34%	1,140	1,175	14.9	4.55	5.9%	0.28

* As of end of week closing

Brazil slashes interest rate by half-point, first in three years

Emerging economies turn toward monetary easing

BRASILIA: Brazil's central bank slashed its key interest rate by a larger-than-expected half-point Wednesday, making its first rate cut in three years as emerging economies start to turn toward monetary easing. The bank's monetary policy committee said its members had voted five to four to lower the benchmark Selic rate to 13.25 percent, kicking off an easing cycle long sought by leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who insisted high interest rates were stunting the growth of Latin America's biggest economy.

The four dissenting votes - unusual for the committee, which tends to vote unanimously - were for a smaller, quarter-point cut, in line with most analysts' forecasts. The committee "evaluated the alternative of reducing the benchmark interest rate to 13.5 percent, but considered it appropriate to adopt the pace of a 0.5 percentage point cut given the improving inflation situation," it said in a statement.

It said it was the start of a "gradual cycle of monetary loosening," and that its members "unanimously" anticipated another half-point cut "in the coming meetings," the next of which will conclude on September 20. Finance Minister Fernando Haddad hailed the decision.

"Inflation is under control, we're planning for the economy's future. Investors, consumers and families are going to be able to plan for a Brazil of fiscally, socially and environmentally sustainable growth," he said.

"We are committed to fighting inflation and also to fiscal responsibility and the (monetary) adjustment that's being undertaken, which will get easier from here." Analysts had been split over whether the bank - which is legally independent of the government - would cut the key rate by a quarter or half a percentage point, though most had forecast the former, given the bank's hawkish history. "The relatively dovish tone of the accompanying statement suggests that policymakers' inflation concerns are dissipating," consulting firm Capital Economics said in a note.

Politically charged debate

Brazil's central bank had last announced a rate cut in August 2020, lowering the Selic to an all-time low of two percent in a bid to contain the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, haunted by a history of hyperinflation, Brazil then went on one of the most

aggressive monetary tightening cycles in the world, as the pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent global prices on an upward spiral. From March 2021 to August 2022, the central bank rapidly raised the Selic to a six-year high of 13.75 percent, including three whopping hikes of 1.5 percentage points.

But Brazil's annual inflation rate has now eased from double digits to 3.16 percent, below the central bank's target of 3.25 percent. Lula, who took over in January from far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro, had repeatedly berated central bank chief Roberto Campos Neto for holding off monetary easing, saying the high interest rate was "irrational" and stunting Brazil's growth. In the event, Campos Neto voted with the majority for a half-point cut. Brazil's interest rate had been the world's highest in real terms, adjusting for inflation, according to financial research site MoneYou.

The Brazilian economy shrugged off recession fears to grow by a better-than-expected 1.9 percent in the first quarter of the year, boosted by a boom in the powerful agricultural sector. Analysts polled by the central bank currently forecast economic growth of 2.24 per-



RIO DE JANEIRO: Close up shot of a Brazilian one real coin, taken in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's central bank slashed its key interest rate by a larger-than-expected half-point on August 2, 2023, making its first rate cut in three years as emerging economies start to turn toward monetary easing. — AFP

cent for the year. As inflation pressures start to ease worldwide, experts expect a series of rate cuts across emerging-market economies, even as central banks in the United States and Europe

continue to tread cautiously. Brazil's cut comes after Chile's central bank slashed its benchmark rate by a bigger-than-expected one percentage point Friday, its largest cut in 14 years. — AFP

HUAWEI MatePad 11.5: Best tablet for students, professionals

KUWAIT: The tablet market has many players vying for the spotlight. That makes finding the perfect tablet a challenge. This is especially true if you want a versatile device that serves a variety of different purposes. Work, education, entertainment, gaming, you name it. Huawei has been a pioneer in the tablet market, offering a range of innovative products that cater to different user scenarios and needs.

The latest addition to Huawei's tablet family is the HUAWEI MatePad 11.5": a productivity powerhouse that features a stunning 11.5" screen with a high refresh rate, as well as versatile features that make it suitable for anything you want to do on a tablet. Buy now for the HUAWEI MatePad 11.5" in Kuwait for the price of 99.9 KD through Huawei's online stores and offline retailers.

A feast for the eyes

The cornerstone of any great tablet is its display, and that's precisely where HUAWEI MatePad 11.5" strikes gold. It boasts an impressively large 11.5"120Hz HUAWEI Full View Display that renders every detail in stunning clarity. The 120Hz refresh rate makes scrolling and swiping buttery smooth, and the support for DCI-P3 wide colour gamut further adds to the visual magic. With a screen-to-body ratio as high as 86% and a 3:2 productivity screen, the MatePad 11.5" offers a larger viewing area than a typical 16:9 screen. It features TÜV Rheinland-certified Flicker-Free technology

and Low Blue Light Certification to safeguard your eyes without compromising on the visual quality. So, whether you're sketching intricate designs, busy preparing for your exams, or simply bingeing the latest shows, this tablet transforms each interaction into a visual treat.

Smart way to be creative

With the HUAWEI MatePad 11.5", creativity is unlimited. With this tablet and the HUAWEI M-Pencil (2nd generation), you can bring your artistic visions to life with the precision and responsiveness that mirrors a pen-on-paper experience. The M-Pencil finely captures each line, dash, and brushstroke you make. And when it's time to write something, you don't have to bother switching to a keyboard. FreeScript enables you to directly handwrite text in apps, streamlining your creative workflow. That said, the tablet also works with the detachable HUAWEI Smart Keyboard, which has been optimized to enhance your productivity. It offers comfortable typing with 1.5 mm key travel and provides an intuitive experience, thanks to the AI Voice key and over 40 shortcut combinations.

Rich, immersive sound

Equipped with a quad-speaker system, the HUAWEI MatePad 11.5" promises to deliver powerful, resonant, and room-filling audio that captivates. Thanks to the brand-new HiSTen 8.1 audio algorithm, the tablet brings you rich bass, clear mid-range,



and vibrant treble response. This tablet tunes the audio to give you the best listening experience, ensures dialogues in movies are crystal clear, and filters out noise during calls. It's like having a personal sound engineer at your disposal.

Visionary super device

The MatePad 11.5" offers a whole new level of SuperDevice experience. Want to drag and drop files between your tablet and laptop? Easy peasy. The SuperHub makes Cross-device content editing and sharing a breeze without the need for a third party app. This feature eliminates barriers between your devices, so that you can copy and paste a bunch of images, videos, and even text by a simple drag-and-drop.

The tablet can serve as a hub, effortlessly connecting to a PC with a simple drag. Once connected, it can transform into a secondary display for the PC and seamlessly work with the keyboard and mouse. This lets you edit files on one screen while browsing reference documents or attending an

online meeting on the other. Furthermore, with drag-and-drop file sharing between the PC and tablet, you can be even more productive and multi-task like a champ.

A powerful performer

With all these amazing features, you may be wondering how the HUAWEI MatePad 11.5" handles in terms of performance. Well, this is where it truly impresses. It comes with a high-performance chip featuring a 4 nm process, delivering superior performance to similar tablets. This flagship chipset is a performance powerhouse, bringing the tablet to life with incredible speed and responsiveness. But that's not all. The tablet comes with a massive 7700mAh battery that keeps you powered all day long.

The HUAWEI MatePad 11.5" combines the ultimate visual experience, smart creativity, immersive sound, and top-tier performance. It doesn't matter if you're a student, a professional, or a creative: this tablet is definitely worth considering for your tech arsenal.

Russian crude price cap under scrutiny as prices rise

LONDON: When the West rolled out its unprecedented price cap on Russian oil late last year, it hoped to starve Moscow of much-needed revenue while minimizing the impact on other countries. Eight months on, it is seen in Western capitals as a successful part of the squeeze on Russian President Vladimir Putin, but a policy that has yet to be properly tested, according to energy analysts. With oil prices on the rise after months in the doldrums, the cap's impact - and limits - could now come into clearer focus.

"We also know, like with all of our measures, Russia will attempt to evade the price cap," Eric Van Nostrand, the US Treasury's acting assistant secretary for economic policy, said in a speech Thursday. "We remain vigilant in monitoring oil markets and the whole coalition remains focused on enforcing our sanctions." The mechanism, a price ceiling of \$60 per barrel on Russian oil, was agreed and introduced by the European Union, G7 and Australia, in early December. Companies based in EU and G7 member states and Australia are banned from providing services enabling maritime transport,

such as insurance, of oil above that price.

It aims to restrict Russia's revenue as punishment for its invasion of Ukraine, while making sure Moscow keeps supplying the global market. "Russia's revenue is, you know, nearly 50 percent lower than it was a year ago," a senior US official told reporters Tuesday. "We're not evaluating the success of this policy based on how many molecules of oil are actually traded under \$60," he added. "We're evaluating the success of this based on whether Russia's aggregate revenue is suffering relative to an unrestricted market."

'Not been tested'

"The G7 price cap has done what it was designed to do - restrict Russian revenues while keeping oil in the market," Matthew Holland, an analyst at Energy Aspects, told AFP. Helge Andre Martinsen, an analyst at DNB, noted Russian oil export volumes have been "surprisingly stable" and the price cap had "really not been tested due to a softening oil market". Moscow had taken its own steps to soften the impact of the price cap, including before its introduction eight months ago. The US official noted it had offered steeply discounted long-term contracts, around 30 percent below Brent Crude prices, to buyers in southeast Asia and India, ahead of December 2022.

Since then North Sea Brent Crude, the key benchmark for Europe, has remained below the \$90 mark, while its US equivalent, the West Texas Intermediate

outlook for the US economy.

Data from private payrolls firm ADP showing companies created 324,000 new jobs last month - smashing forecasts of 190,000 - suggested the labor market remained tight. That jolted optimism that the Fed might have announced its last rate hike in July, as a string of recent reports showed inflation continuing to fall and parts of the economy appearing to slow. The news sent 10-year US Treasury yields to their highest point since November, which was also blamed

on the Treasury selling more bonds than expected in an auction.

The so-called VIX "fear gauge" hit levels not seen since May. Wall Street's three main indexes all tanked, with the Nasdaq shedding more than two percent because tech firms are more susceptible to higher rates. And the selling seeped into Asia, though some markets swung through the day. Tokyo gave up more than one percent, while Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Seoul, Mumbai, Bangkok and Wellington were also off. — AFP

Turkey's inflation climbs to 47.83%

ISTANBUL: Turkey's annual inflation climbed in July to 47.83 percent, up sharply from 38.2 percent, official data showed on Thursday, a week after the central bank more than doubled its year-end forecast. The new figure, in line with expectations, comes as Turkey radically shifts its policies since the May election that includes an end to more than a two-year era of ultra-low interest rates.

Last week, the central bank revised its year-end inflation forecast to 58 percent from 22.3 percent after years of doubts from independent economists about the official rate. The official rate had been steadily dropping since reaching a more than two-decade high of 85 percent in October last year. The central bank and economists have forecast an upward trend from July.

The consumer prices skyrocketed by almost 9.5 percent on a month-on-month basis in July, according to the TUIK state statistics agency. Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said after the official figure was published - Turkey was in a transition process and assured that the disinflation process would start next year. "With the positive impact of the monetary policy stance, annual inflation will start to decline as of mid-2024," he said on Twitter, recently rebranded as X. "The main objective of our policies is to permanently reduce inflation to single digits in the medium term."

A separate study released by independent economists from the ENAG group who question the official data put the annual inflation figure at 122.88 percent. At her debut press conference last week, new central bank governor Hafize Gaye Erkan said inflation would increase "temporarily" due to the rising exchange rate of the lira as well as fiscal measures. Under the former Goldman Sachs and First Republic Bank executive, the central bank twice hiked its interest rates from 8.5 percent to 17.5 percent even though that was not found ambitious enough by markets.

'New policy'

"It's clear that interest rate hikes are just one part of the new policy shift under way in Turkey at the moment and that monetary tightening further ahead will be gradual," Liam Peach, senior emerging markets economist at London-based Capital Economics, said in a policy note. "We think a rise in the policy rate to 27.50 percent or so by year-end is needed to sustain investor confidence," he suggested. Economists welcomed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's turn to more traditional economics even though he still believes that high interests rates contribute to—rather than cure—growing consumer prices.

He began pushing the central bank to slash borrowing rates at all costs in 2021, setting off the worst inflationary spiral of his rule. But Erdogan said after being re-elected in May he would allow his economic team that includes Erkan and market friendly Simsek to take steps to fix the country's troubles. "The new team are impressive and can design a route out of crisis," BlueBay Asset Management economist Timothy Ash said. "We are seeing policy adjustment," he said, adding that would eventually help the inflation. — AFP

Stocks struggling to recover from selloff

HONG KONG: Asian markets fluctuated Thursday following a plunge on Wall Street as a forecast-beating US jobs report revived worries about the Federal Reserve's interest rate-hiking campaign. While the fallout from Fitch's US debt rating downgrade settled, profit-taking and

rising Treasury yields kept pressure on investors heading into what is considered a less appealing time of year for equities.

The ratings agency's decision to lower Washington's gold-plated AAA classification rattled markets, fuelling a race out of riskier assets, though analysts said there was unlikely to be much long-term impact from the move. Still, traders were struggling to get back in the saddle - having enjoyed a strong run-up in recent weeks - as they reassess what some consider to be too-high valuations and the



NANTONG: Workers produce medical supplies that will be exported to the US at a factory in Nantong, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on August 3, 2023. — AFP

Lifestyle



Aerial view of the "Chepe Express" train at the station in the town of Creel, Chihuahua state, Mexico.



Tourists board the "Chepe Express" train in Los Mochis, Sinaloa state, Mexico.



Tourists pose for a selfie at one of the bars of the "Chepe Express" train in El Fuerte, Sinaloa state, Mexico. - AFP photos

From the heartland of a notorious drug cartel to rugged mountains home to remote Indigenous communities, Mexico's "El Chepe" train takes adventure-seeking travelers on a spectacular journey through the Copper Canyon. The Chepe Express, recognized by National Geographic as one of the world's greatest rail trips, pulls out of Los Mochis in the northwestern state of Sinaloa, heading for the town of Creel in the mountains of Chihuahua. It was in Los Mochis that Sinaloa cartel founder Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, one of the world's most infamous criminals, was captured in 2016.

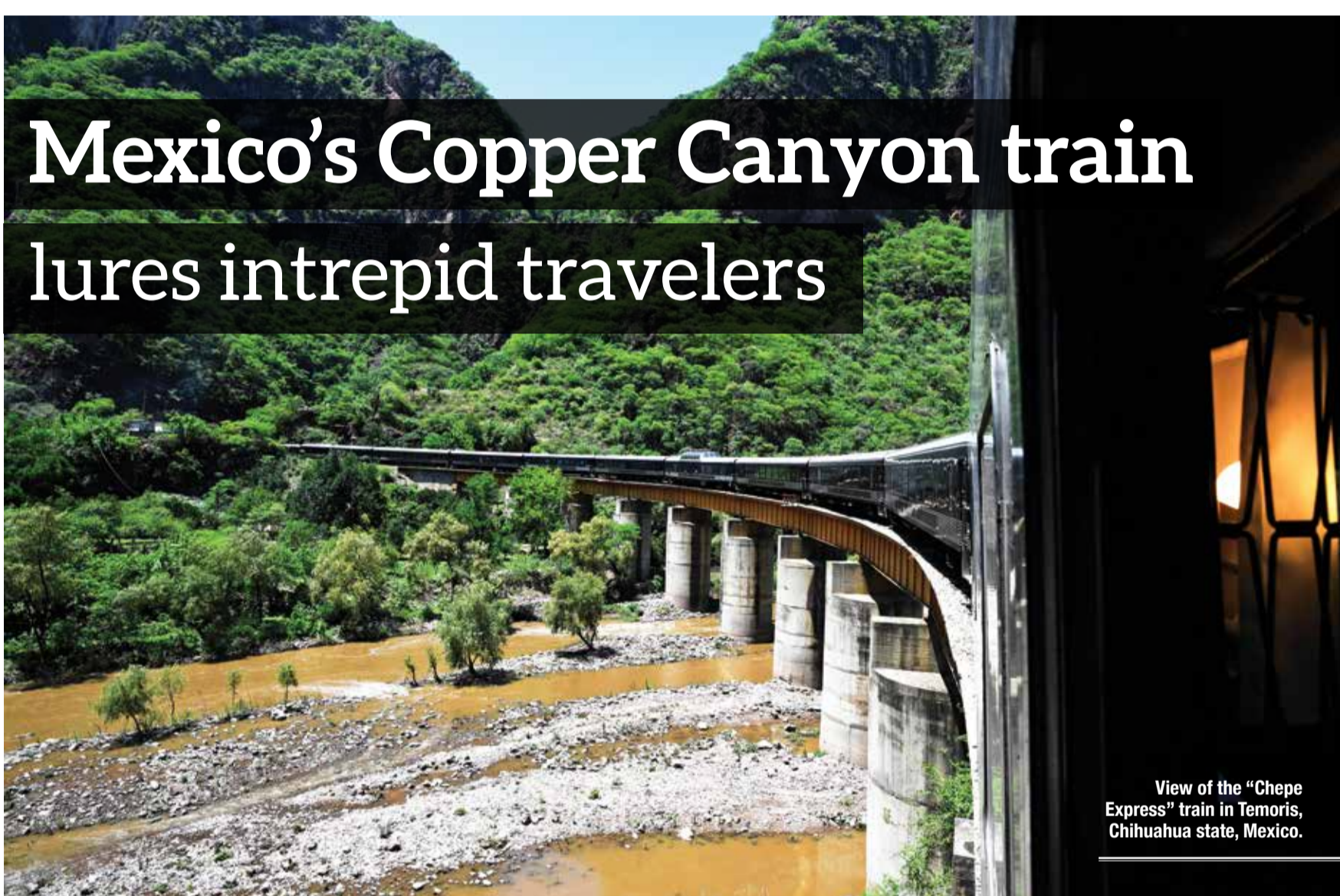


A tourist enjoys the landscape from the "Chepe Express" train in El Fuerte, Sinaloa state, Mexico.

The US government warns its nationals not to travel to Sinaloa — and to reconsider going to Chihuahua — due to the risk of crime and kidnapping. But that did not deter Adair Margo from making the trip with her family, including seven grandchildren aged two to 12, from her home in El Paso, Texas to ride El Chepe through the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains. "Life is filled with perils," the 69-year-old told AFP.

"You don't want to stop living. On tours like these you're not walking in the midst of drug cartel wars," she said. Several hundred people are usually on board the Chepe Express for the journey of around 350 kilometers (220 miles) through the Copper Canyon, said deputy train manager Emilio Carrazco, 46.

Four times bigger than the Grand Canyon in the United States, it takes its name from the copper hues of its walls. With the exception of urban rail systems and a short tourist service in the tequila-producing region of Jalisco, El Chepe is Mexico's only passenger train, though another is under construction in the Yucatan Peninsula. "It's another way of discovering Mexico," said Christophe Schild, 55, from France, who was traveling with his partner and 20-year-old twin daughters. "Of course, many people know the big Mexican cities like Cancun or Acapulco. But we want to discover it another way a little bit, so this train's the opportunity," he said.



Mexico's Copper Canyon train lures intrepid travelers

Raramuri
During the hot summer months most of the passengers are Mexican, but at other times of the year foreigners can make up as much as half of travelers, Carrazco said. "I get on the train and I

next to steep canyon walls, traversing 37 bridges and 86 tunnels. Views of meandering rivers are gradually replaced by glimpses of white water rapids, while cacti become mountain pines, until the Chepe Express pulls into Creel

Regional, with more stops. One of the attractions of the mountains are the Raramuri — also known as Tarahumara — Indigenous people, who are renowned for their running stamina. In March, hundreds of athletes including foreigners competed against locals in an ultramarathon in the canyon system, which is more than one mile (1.6 kilometers) deep.

don't steal from them. They don't assault them," Avila said. Enjoying the stunning views through the open windows of the Chepe Express's bar, Margo lamented the fact that so many people miss the experience. "I'm not sui-



View of the "Chepe Express" train in Temoris, Chihuahua state, Mexico.

feel in the safest part of the world. I come here to the Sierra and all the people here are very friendly, very grateful that tourists come," he added.

The train first crosses the fertile plains of Sinaloa, where farmers tend their corn fields, before ascending along tracks perched

station more than nine hours later. "It's a long journey, but it's worth it. We've had the chance to do it several times and we don't get tired of it," said Flor Corrales Chang, a 61-year-old doctor from Los Mochis traveling with her husband and teenage son. There is also a slower service, the Chepe

'Town died'

The region's natural and cultural riches used to attract many foreign tourists, some of whom even brought their motor homes on the Chepe train, recalled Javier Avila, a Jesuit priest who has worked in the region for decades. Then in August 2008, gunmen massacred 13 residents of Creel, including a baby. "The town died," Avila said. "Not a single tourist came." In the following years visitor numbers gradually began to recover, led by domestic tourism.

The revival suffered a setback in 2018 when a US tourist was murdered by suspected drug traffickers while hiking in the Copper Canyon. And in June last year, two Jesuit priests and a tour guide were shot dead inside a church in the region. In general, however, "the armed groups, until now, have respected tourists. They don't rob them. They



An indigenous woman with a child crosses the railway tracks at the train station in Creel, Chihuahua state, Mexico.

cidal. I don't want my grandchildren to be hurt, but I want them to experience life and you can experience a whole lot of life in Mexico," she said. — AFP



View of the "Chepe Express" train railway in Temoris, Chihuahua state, Mexico.



A cook prepares food at the "Chepe Express" train in El Fuerte, Sinaloa state, Mexico.

Lifestyle

Gaza open-air cinema a breath of fresh air for Palestinians

Gaza residents took their seats in front of a large projector screen set up on a sandy beach, a rare event in the Islamist-ruled blockaded enclave that has no operating cinemas. Over two weeks in summer, the "Cinema of the Sea" festival which ended Monday screened some 15 films, many of them with Palestinian actors or producers. Providing a respite from the heat, the waterfront "is the only outlet for the residents" in the impoverished territory, said Ali Muhanna, a theatre director involved in the initiative.

Around 2.3 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip, which has been under a crippling Zionist-led blockade since the Islamist group Hamas seized power in 2007. Sitting barefoot in a pink dress at the open-air cinema on Gaza City's beach, seven-year-old Salma Shamaleh was transfixed by the screen. "I have never seen a TV this size," she told AFP as she watched "Ferdinand", an animated blockbuster that tells the story of a giant but soft-hearted black bull.



Palestinian children watch a film at a pop-up open-air cinema in Gaza city. — AFP

The first film screenings in Gaza date to the 1940s, with the opening of the Samer Cinema, whose building now houses a car dealership. Cinemas were forced to close in the late 1980s during the first Palestinian uprising, or intifada. They reopened following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s but for years have largely been gathering dust.

In 1996, Islamists set a Gaza cinema ablaze. While not explicitly banned, Hamas authorities fear cinemas may amplify what they view as foreign or Western beliefs that go against Islamic traditions. There have been some outdoor screenings in recent years, most notably amid the rubble of buildings destroyed in Zionist air strikes during wars fought with Gaza militants.

Like across much of the eastern Mediterranean, Gazans have flocked to the seaside in recent weeks to escape soaring temperatures. Shamaleh was thrilled by the cinematic experience. "Our house is nearby, I'll ask my mum for us to come every day," she said.

'Happy'

The festival's program featured "Farha", a Jordanian film which, through a young girl's perspective, depicts atrocities committed against Palestinians during the 1948 conflict that led to the Zionist entity's creation.

The hard-hitting film resonated with Mona Hanafi, 50, who watched it with her daughter and dozens of other spectators. "The film is brilliant in addressing a realistic Palestinian story... The performance and directing are impressive," she said.

"Seeing the children and people watching the open cinema in Gaza made me happy," added Hanafi. Another audience member, Hadeel Haji,

said she had "never seen anything like that in my life". "I was with my family when I saw the screen from far away, so I came to watch," she told AFP. "Cinema of the Sea" was organized by Al-Bahr Elna Cooperative cafe in partnership with the culture ministry.

The cooperative was established in 2020 by a group of artists, with start-up funding from Palestinian institutions. Since that initial cash dried up, the group has relied on donations. For Muhanna, the cafe's founder, the festival has been an opportunity to show films which demonstrate how "Palestinians contributed to producing (cinema) and conveying the values of society". Atef Askoul, head of the Hamas-appointed body responsible for approving public art events, said Gazans who suffer from miserable living conditions under the blockade have "the right to watch films and cinema". — AFP

Hollywood A-listers donate millions to aid striking actors

A dozen of Hollywood's highest-earning stars, from George Clooney to Meryl Streep, have each donated \$1 million or more to support out-of-work actors as their strike enters its fourth week, their union's charitable foundation said Wednesday. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) walkout, and another strike by film and TV writers that began in May over pay and the threat of artificial intelligence, have brought US film and television production to a halt.



George Clooney and Meryl Streep

The Hollywood "double strike" of writers and actors — the first since 1960 — has cost the entertainment industry and the California economy several million dollars per day, as well as costing the striking unionists their paycheques. But wealthy A-list celebrities, from Clooney and Streep to Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, as well as Nicole Kidman, Julia Roberts, Oprah Winfrey and others, have each contributed \$1 million or more to the SAG-AFTRA Foundation's actors'

support fund.

The nonprofit foundation has raised more than \$15 million in the past three weeks to aid "thousands of journeymen actors" facing economic hardship, it said in a statement. "The entertainment industry is in crisis and the SAG-AFTRA Foundation is currently processing more than 30 times our usual number of applications for emergency aid," Courtney B. Vance, the foundation's president, said in the statement.

The organization's aid program is meant to "ensure that performers in need don't lose their homes, have the ability to pay for utilities, buy food for their families, purchase life-saving prescriptions, cover medical bills and more," Vance said. While some actors are highly paid, SAG-AFTRA president Fran Drescher said this week that 86 percent of the union's 160,000 members earn less than \$26,500 a year, The New York Times reported.

The strikes have meant movie productions are shut down, glitzy premieres are scrapped, and events such as the Emmys are delayed as stars are banned from promoting TV shows.

The unions' demands have focused on higher pay in the streaming era and the threat posed to members' careers and future livelihoods by artificial intelligence, while studios say they must cut costs to cope with economic pressures. While the writers' union appears poised to return to talks on Friday, actors remain at an impasse with major firms such as Netflix and Disney, which are represented by the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). "We have not heard from the AMPTP since July 12 when they told us they would not be willing to continue talks for quite some" time, SAG-AFTRA chief negotiator Duncan Crabtree-Ireland told trade outlet Deadline this week. — AFP



Tunisian singer-songwriter Emel Mathlouthi performs on stage during the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize Concert at the Telenor Arena in Oslo, Norway, on December 11, 2015.



Tunisian singer Emel Mathlouthi arrives for the screening of the movie "The Kid" on 5th day of the 4th edition of El-Gouna Film Festival, in El-Gouna, Egypt on October 27, 2020.



Tunisian singer Emel Mathlouthi sings during her concert in Baghdad on July 3, 2012. — AFP photos

Tunisian singer says show cancelled over Palestinian concerts

A Tunisian singer who rose to prominence during the Arab Spring revolution in her homeland announced Wednesday an upcoming show in Tunisia had been cancelled for supposed "normalization" with Zionist entity. In July, Emel Mathlouthi performed in Zionist entity-annexed east Jerusalem, as well as in Bethlehem and Ramallah, both in the Zionist-occupied West Bank. She did not perform in the Zionist entity.

Artists who perform in the Zionist entity often face fierce resistance from the BDS movement, which calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions of the country over what it describes as mistreatment of the Palestinians. Mathlouthi, 41, had been set to perform at the Hammamet International Festival in Tunisia next week. "I am very sorry to announce our much awaited concert in Hammamet has been cancelled with no official reason," Mathlouthi said in a statement posted on Instagram. "We believe that our latest tour in beautiful Palestine has sparked

an unjustified controversy accusing me of normalization." In a statement to AFP, Mathlouthi said she had been subjected to a "big misinformation campaign" and that she "just did shows with Palestinians for Palestinians."

Organizers of the Hammamet festival did not respond to AFP's request for comments. "They believe that going to Palestine anywhere is normalization," the singer told AFP. Her concerts were "in no conflict" either with BDS guidelines or those from the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Zionist entity, her Instagram statement said.

BDS backed Mathlouthi, saying in a statement that it "distinguishes between artists who entertain the oppressors, art-washing apartheid, on the one hand, and artists who stand with the oppressed." "Arab artists who respect the relevant BDS guidelines... contribute to our cultural resistance," the statement added.

Suhail Khoury, general director of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music at Birzeit University, who invited Mathlouthi to perform, said "she should be commended and not condemned for what she did". Khoury added: "She is a great singer and Palestinians love her. She was outstanding, probably one of the best performances that Palestine has ever seen."

The Ramallah concert concluded with Mathlouthi singing the Palestinian ballad "Wein a Ramallah" and waving a Palestinian flag, an AFP correspondent in attendance said. Mathlouthi told AFP the Hammamet cancellation is "clearly an attack against me personally and what I stand for... I grew up knowing about the Palestinian struggle, and I have always sung for Palestine." She said Palestinians "don't want to be isolated. They want artists like me that come from other Arab countries that speak Arabic" to perform for them. — AFP



Radmila Pesevska, the director of Laika, an animal welfare centre, poses in Skopje.



Dogs play in an outdoor enclosure at "Laika", an animal welfare centre, in Skopje. —AFP photos



Stray dogs sit on grass in Skopje.

Running wild: Stray dogs threaten rare Balkan lynx

For years, the Balkan lynx has struggled to survive as deforestation destroyed its habitat and poachers targeted the elusive mountain cat along with the animals it relies on for food. But now, scientists have uncovered another potent enemy likely adding pressure on the endangered species — wild dogs.

Feral dogs have been a long but growing problem across wide stretches of the Balkans, with large packs stirring public health fears in cities and harming livestock in rural communities. The problem has been particularly acute in North Macedonia, where an estimated 6,000 wild dogs are believed to populate the capital Skopje alone. There is no official data on the number of feral dogs nationwide.

The persistent problem is running headfirst into the years-long conservation battle to save the Balkan lynx, considered one of the region's most endangered animals. Experts estimate that there are approximately 40 of these solitary cats left in their habitat, which covers mountainous swaths of Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia.

"We realized that there is another

predator, that so to speak is not typical or natural. And those are wild dogs," said Dime Melovski from the Macedonian Ecological Society that has been monitoring the lynx in Mavrovo National Park since 2006. "They are another predator that the lynx has to compete with," the 42-year-old ecologist told AFP.

Melovski along with a network of other conservation outlets, volunteers, hunters and rangers have kept a close eye on the forests over the years, thanks in part to the use of trail cameras. Roughly four years ago, the group began to notice an emerging pattern. Wild dogs were consuming large amounts of the deer population in the lynx's habitat that make up roughly 70 percent of the cat's diet.

Government inaction

Experts admit that the extent of the problem is still hazy, with limited resources only allowing them to survey narrow strips of territory. Animal rights activists say issues involving stray dogs have been a long time coming in North Macedonia and the Balkans at large, due to chronic neglect by governments,

along with the actions of irresponsible pet owners.

"The source is irresponsible citizens — households that 'produce' dogs, abandon the dogs, especially in the rural areas where the dogs are freely wandering around," said Radmila Pesevska, the director of Laika — an animal welfare centre in Skopje. Laika is one of a handful of organizations



Dogs play in an outdoor enclosure at "Laika", an animal welfare centre, in Skopje.

dedicated to managing the population of strays through its "catch, sterilize, vaccinate, return" program. While Laika admits to making limited headway, Pesevska says only with effective government support will it be possible to address the issue. "The state has to jump in with measures," Pesevska told AFP. For years, animal activists in North Macedonia have been lobbying officials



Dogs are seen in a cage at "Laika", an animal welfare centre, in Skopje.

for the adoption of a law that will enforce obligatory sterilization of all pets.

In the face of government inaction, activists have taken a piecemeal approach — including the housing of 5,000 strays in the Skopje area in recent years. "We are trying to find a home for a portion of them... but unfortunately some of them end up in rural, mountain areas where they continue to live as wild animals," said Emilija Gogova, a 42-year-old animal rights activist based in Skopje.

Experts say the growing population of strays has led to myriad issues, including the dogs' ability to mate with wolves — creating hybrids that threaten to dilute the wolf population. All of these issues compound, experts argue, putting even greater pressure on endangered species like the lynx. "Every threat to a critically endangered animal, such as the lynx, has to be addressed," Melovski told AFP. "Because every threat leads to the lower possibility for the survival of this animal." — AFP

Lifestyle

Adidas books profit as it sells off Kanye inventory

Adidas said Thursday it booked a profit in the second quarter, showing tentative signs of recovery as it sells off its huge inventory of rapper Kanye West's Yeezy merchandise. The German sportswear giant reported a net profit of 84 million euros (\$92 million) from April to June, following two consecutive quarters of losses. But this was still substantially lower than in the same period a year earlier.

Adidas has endured a period of chaos since October last year when it ended its lucrative tie-up with rapper West—now known formally as Ye—after he made a series of antisemitic outbursts. The group ended production of the highly successful Yeezy line designed with West, and was saddled with a vast stock

of surplus trainers. Adidas also faced problems in China, long one of its key markets. But there were improvements on both these fronts in the second quarter. Adidas's first sell-off of Yeezy shoes, launched in late May, generated about 400 million euros in sales. "The sale of the first part of the Yeezy inventory did of course help both our top and bottom line in the quarter," said CEO Bjorn Gulden in a statement.

"We will continue to carefully sell off more of the existing Yeezy inventory. This is much better than destroying and writing off the inventory." It allows Adidas to make "substantial donations" to NGOs while "of course also helping both our cash flow and general financial strength," Gulden added.

Charity donations

Adidas is giving cash to organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Philonise and Keeta Floyd Institute for Social Change. Philonise Floyd is the brother of George Floyd, a Black American murdered by a white police officer who pinned him to the ground by kneeling on his neck for nearly 10 minutes.

Adidas set aside 110 million euros in the second quarter for donations to charities, of which 10 million has already been disbursed. The company is launching a second sell-off of Yeezy stock this month but does not expect it to be as profitable as the first, which was offering more expensive products.

Adidas already announced last week that the sale of the merchandise,

along with business going a bit better than expected, would help it post a lower annual loss than earlier penciled in. It now expects to end the year with an operating loss of 450 million euros, compared to its earlier forecast of a 700-million-euro loss.

In China, where sales had plummeted by a third in 2022 partly due to continued measures against the coronavirus, business showed signs of picking up, with revenues up strongly. "We see a positive trend on the China market," Gulden said. Adidas shares were up 1.4 percent on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange after the results were released.—AFP



Kanye West attends the 2020 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 92nd annual Oscars at The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills on February 9, 2020.—AFP



A dermatologist performs a laser treatment on Felix Rasko, an injured volunteer who joined the army at the start of the war, at Shupeniuk clinic in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.—AFP photos



Felix Rasko, an injured volunteer who joined the army at the start of the war, waits with cream on his hands for a laser treatment at Shupeniuk clinic in Kyiv.



Dermatologist Kateryna Bezvershenko performs a laser treatment on Felix Rasko, an injured volunteer who joined the army at the start of the war, at Shupeniuk clinic in Kyiv.

Scar tissue: Treating war's marks on Ukrainians

A laser beam moved slowly over Sergiy Pryshchepa's chest and stomach, treating numerous scars from burns he suffered when his car ran over an anti-tank mine close to Kyiv. The 34-year-old comes regularly to this private clinic in the Ukrainian capital for a program offering free treatment for civilians and military personnel with severe burns and scarring received in the war.



Dermatologist Kateryna Bezvershenko performs a laser treatment on Sergii Pryshchepa, who was injured after his car got blown-up by an anti-tank mine, at Shupeniuk clinic in Kyiv.

side, and she took the blow on herself. Our son was in the back, he was covered by the seat and was not wounded," but he "suffers from psychological trauma", said the commercial director of a company that makes lifts. "The first thing I asked at the hospital was 'How did I not lose my head?'," he said, showing a picture of his car, which was completely charred and torn apart.

Sixteen months later, he had skin grafts from his legs and several operations on his jaw and one hand. Now he attends the Shupeniuk clinic in Kyiv, which is one of 19 across the country offering the free treatment. "Before giving laser treatment, we use certain medications that soften the rough scar tissue... First injections, then laser resurfacing, and thanks to this (scars) become less thick, lighter, less rough", said Kateryna Bezvershenko, the dermatologist treating Pryshchepa.

"Half of our patients are civilians, and not only from the Kyiv region... There is a man who has just been hit by a drone in his apartment. His mother died. He survived but he is badly burned," she added.

'Hands were burning'

The dermatologist was also treating 35-year-old Felix Rasko, a volunteer who joined the military at the start of the conflict. His hands were seriously burnt in October in the eastern war zone, when the building where he slept was struck by Russians. He said he realized his hands were "burning".

"I woke up from a strong blow and everything around was burning, the walls were on fire," he recounted. He



Dermatologist Kateryna Bezvershenko performs a laser treatment on Felix Rasko.

has also had operations and skin grafts from a leg. After the latest laser session on his scars, streams of blood run down his fingers. "If you compare this to the treatments I had at the beginning... it's now like a mosquito bite," he said. His hands, however, "constantly itch".

'Lucky to be treated'

"I have been very lucky, starting from the moment when those missiles flew at us and lucky that I am treated like this. Not everyone is treated like this," he said. "Even for the ointments they give me, I don't pay anything. Everything is free and it really helps me," he added, expressing gratitude as a single laser treatment session usually costs hundreds of dollars. The project was conceived at the start of the Russian

invasion and launched last summer.

It is financed by private donations in partnership with the Ukrainian health ministry and has treated around 150 people. Bezvershenko has already treated around a dozen war victims since joining the project, saying she is helping them "with great joy".

"It's very important to me because I am a medical doctor and I do not take part in military operations. I have felt a great need to help our military and people who have been affected by the war," she said. "I don't get anything out of this except inner satisfaction and the joy of being able to help people because I see such stories."—AFP

Betrayal best served cold, with mint-choc, in Thai politics

Betrayal is a beverage best served chilled in Thailand, as an innocuous chocolate-mint iced concoction takes the limelight—an unlikely symbol of the kingdom's deep political divisions following May's election. The country is deadlocked after the Move Forward Party (MFP), buoyed to victory by promises to end nearly a decade of army-backed rule, failed to get its reformist candidate elected PM, forcing it to bow out and allow coalition partner Pheu Thai to try to form a government. But only last week Pheu Thai leaders were seen in talks with pro-military party figures, with an image of them toasting iced chocolate-mint drinks going viral.

Local media immediately dubbed it a "friend-betraying beverage" and some cafes and shops announced boycotts, even as interest in the drink soared. Devotees excitedly snapped pictures of the goopy green concoction at the ThinkLab cafe in Pheu Thai's Bangkok headquarters. Expertly drizzling chocolate over the minty liquid before topping it off with whipped cream, barista Pob Rujikiatkachorn said the 90 baht (\$2.60) drink had never been so popular. "It's our best-selling item since it became the talk of the town on social media," he told AFP.

He was initially surprised by the drink's popularity but thanked the politicians for his increased sales, saying he

has sold roughly 150 a day. "In the end, it's just a delicious drink that attracts a lot of customers and spreads happiness."

'Hurt your friend'

MFP supporters might disagree. In the wake of the viral image, several cafes have joined a mint-choc boycott, removing it from the menu and describing it as a "hurt-your-friend" drink. "I was suspicious of Pheu Thai when I saw that photo. Why did they hold talks with them?" Sasichom Krudhnark Pongphrom, who owns a cafe in Samut Songkhram, southwest of Bangkok, told AFP. The 42-year-old, wearing MFP's

signature orange colours, said she had removed the beverage from the menu.

"I don't have anything against the choc-mint drink, but I just wanted to show that I stand by the pro-democracy side of politics," she said. Thai politics has a long history of embracing color coding. About 10-15 years ago the country was deeply split between royalist "Yellow Shirts" and "Red Shirts" who supported Thaksin Shinawatra, founder of Pheu Thai's forerunner party. Some critics have condemned the moves by the junta-appointed senate to block MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat's bid for prime minister.—AFP



This photo shows an iced chocolate mint drink at ThinkLab Cafe, next to Pheu Thai Party's headquarters, in Bangkok.



This photo shows a customer drinking an iced chocolate mint drink at ThinkLab Cafe, next to Pheu Thai Party's headquarters, in Bangkok.



This photo shows the drinks menu featuring an iced chocolate mint drink at ThinkLab Cafe, next to Pheu Thai Party's headquarters, in Bangkok. — AFP



This photo shows a barista preparing an iced chocolate mint drink at ThinkLab Cafe, next to Pheu Thai Party's headquarters, in Bangkok.



Barista and Move Forward Party supporter Sasichom Krudhnark Pongphrom preparing an iced chocolate mint drink.

Australia's return of stolen artefacts 'rights a historical wrong'

Australia's national gallery said Thursday it will return three sculptures to Cambodia after an investigation found they were likely to have been "illegally exported" from the country. The bronze sculptures from the 9th-10th century were bought for \$1.5 million in 2011 by British art dealer Douglas Latchford, who was later "convincingly implicated in the illegal trade of antiquities", the gallery said. Latchford died in 2020, a year after being charged with trafficking in stolen and looted Cambodian antiquities. Charges have also been laid posthumously related to works of art he sold, the gallery said.

At a handover ceremony, Susan Templeman, Australia's special envoy for the arts, said handing the sculptures back to Cambodia was "an opportunity to put right a historical wrong". She said the Cambodian government had worked with Australia on the issue with a "cooperative spirit and graciousness".

Chanborey Cheunboran, Cambodia's ambassador to Australia, described the handover as "an historic occasion and an important step towards rectifying past injustices, reinforcing the value of cultural properties, and acknowledging the importance of preserving and protecting cultural heritage". The sculptures—Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Padmapani, Bodhisattva Vajrapani and Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Padmapani—will remain on display in Australia for up to three years while the Cambodian government prepares a new home for them in Phnom Penh.

Museums worldwide are returning stolen artefacts as they acknowledge the wrongs inflicted on many countries under colonial rule. Amsterdam's famed Rijksmuseum vowed last month to return hundreds of stolen Indonesian and Sri Lankan items, and late last year, London's Horniman Museum promised to hand some of its treasures back to Nigeria more than 100 years after they were stolen by British forces.—AFP

Sports

Japanese elderly 'gateball' players unbeaten by heat

90% of gateballers are aged 70 or more



TOKYO: Senior citizens play the croquet-inspired game of 'gateball' at a park in suburban Tokyo, as temperatures of 36C-plus (97F) scorched the Japanese capital. — AFP photos



TOKYO: Senior citizens enjoy cool popsicles after playing the croquet-inspired game of 'gateball' at a park in suburban Tokyo.

TOKYO: Under a scorching sun in Tokyo, octogenarian Katsuko Morita swings her mallet and whacks a ball through a small "gate". The diehard gateballer plays almost every day, even when the mercury soars. "Some of my friends in my generation tell me I must be crazy to go out playing gateball in this heat," Morita, 81, told AFP at a practice session of the croquet-inspired game. "When I'm playing the game, the heat doesn't bother me," she said, her face shaded by a wide-brimmed hat.

Near-record temperatures across Japan this summer have sparked frequent heatstroke alerts and warnings for people, particularly the elderly, to use air-conditioners and stay cool. Japan has the second-oldest population in the world after the tiny state of Monaco, and official data show the elderly made up more than 80 percent of heatstroke deaths in the past five years. Old people are among the most vulnerable during heatwaves because they are less able to control their body temperature.

While gateball requires little physical exertion, players have to spend time in

the punishing sun as two opposing teams carefully hit balls through gates. Morita and her fellow gateballers take precautions, such as standing in the shade when they can, wearing protective clothing, staying hydrated and using ice packs to cool their bodies. This year, training was moved to the mornings to avoid the dangerously hot afternoon temperatures. Play is stopped if the mercury reaches 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit).

Eat, sleep, gateball

Gateball gained traction in Japan after World War II. It was seen as a cheap pastime for children when most families were struggling to find food and other necessities. It remains hugely popular, particularly among the elderly. Around 90 percent of gateballers in Tokyo are aged 70 or more, said Toshiaki Koizumi of Tokyo Gateball Union.

Several times a week, Morita and other players meet at an outdoor gateball court in Tokyo's Sugunami district to train for official tournaments. It is a chance to socialize, but they take the training seriously as no one likes to lose. Wearing

hats and long sleeves to avoid sunburn, the players walk around the gravel court with surprising energy in the sizzling heat, taking turns hitting the ball through gates. Occasionally, someone even shouts "hit stronger!" or "think harder!" when a player botches a shot.

Some players put ice packs under their hats or around their necks while at least one had invested in a vest with two fans sewn into the sides. "The heat this year is insane. I've never experienced anything like this," said Makoto Kabe, 78, as an AFP thermometer showed the ground temperature at around 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit). Kabe said he used to deride gateball as an old people's game, but admitted he was now "hooked" on the strategic play. "If I just kept myself to an air-conditioned room watching TV all day, I would go senile," Kabe said, laughing. "The game helps keep your brain active."

After training, the players cool down by eating ice pops in the shade of nearby trees, the intensity of their rivalry melting away as they chat and laugh. "I'm coming here to expose myself to



TOKYO: Senior citizens play the croquet-inspired game of 'gateball' at a park in suburban Tokyo.

Kaizer Chiefs coach Ntseki feels the heat

JOHANNESBURG: New Kaizer Chiefs head coach Molefi Ntseki says he is under pressure for not being a "celebrity" ahead of the South African Premiership season kick-off on Friday. "If you are not a celebrity, people tend to think of you as being limited in terms of knowledge," he told the City Press newspaper. "It should be more of we wish you all the best being a South African coach in charge of a big team such as Kaizer Chiefs."

However, pre-season losses to Young Africans in Tanzania and Township Rollers in Botswana have heightened supporters' fears that the popular but struggling club have not made the right choice. Ntseki was fired as coach of South Africa after a loss to modest Sudan dashed hopes of qualifying for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations. He then became head of technical and youth development at Johannesburg-based Chiefs, winners of a record 53 national trophies and one of the biggest brands in African club football.

After eight seasons without winning a competition, Chiefs demoted head coach Arthur Zwane to an assistant role two months ago and promoted Ntseki. The move shocked many Chiefs supporters who expected Tunisian Nasreddine Nabi, coach of 2023 CAF Confederation Cup runners-up Young Africans, to be appointed. Nabi reportedly wanted to bring his own technical backroom team while Chiefs insisted he work with Zwane, once a star winger at Chiefs. As Chiefs prepare to face perennial strugglers Chippa United on Sunday in the first round of the richest African national league, Ntseki is upbeat.

'Something special coming'

"There is something special coming as long as we are confident and have belief. This is the time for a revival," he says. "But winning trophies is not only about me - it is about the staff, the club, the supporters and the players." A major problem for Chiefs last season was the lack of consistent goal scorers with the team finding the net just 32 times in 30 league outings as Zwane constantly lamented "missed chances". Burundian Bonfils-Caleb Bimenyimana was Chiefs' leading Premiership scorer with seven, but fell out of favor after a promising start to his debut season with the club.

The failure to score against Young Africans or Rollers suggests the problem has not been solved as a new league campaign beckons. Playing in Tanzania and Botswana did not go down well with some Chiefs fans either, who noted that 2023 champions Mamelodi Sundowns and runners-up Orlando Pirates prepared in Europe. Seeking a seventh straight title, Sundowns have been busy in the transfer market with the new signings including Argentine Junior Mendietta and Brazilian Lucas Ribeiro Costa. Mendietta moves from Stellenbosch, sixth in the Premiership last season, while fellow midfielder Costa played for Belgian outfit SK Beveren last season. "Sundowns are the benchmark for us because they have raised the bar again with the signings they made," says Brandon Truter, coach of Sekhukhune United, who ended seventh last season. — AFP



KINSHASA: Supporters cheer on a wrestler during a fight in a schoolyard in Selemenbao district in Kinshasa. — AFP photos



KINSHASA: A voodoo wrestler whispers incantations over his opponent during a fight in a schoolyard in Selemenbao district in Kinshasa.

DR Congo's 'voodoo wrestling' provides spellbinding fun

KINSHASA: There has been a power cut, and under moonlight in a poor quarter of DR Congo's capital, wrestler Maitresse Libondans explains how she invokes her ancestors to cast spells that rout her opponents. The 28-year-old, a figure wearing a dramatic red wig ahead of her fight and holding a cane that she says is imbued with mystical powers, Maitresse Libondans is a practitioner of voodoo wrestling - a wildly over-the-top Congolese sport where fighters grapple with each other and use magic to try to gain supremacy. She will only step into the ring if her ancestors, reached through spiritual rites, assure her of conquest.

A huge draw in impoverished neighborhoods of the Democratic Republic of Congo's sprawling capital Kinshasa, voodoo wrestling features men and women of all sizes, who use various degrees of magic in the ring. The precise origins of the sport are unclear, with wrestlers interviewed by AFP saying they had followed



KINSHASA: A voodoo wrestler Maitresse Libondans faces off with her opponent in a schoolyard in Selemenbao district in Kinshasa.

the example of their elders. But some experts say mystical confrontation dates to the 1970s and the era of the "Rumble in the Jungle" - the legendary boxing match in Kinshasa between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. Before her fight in the Selemenbao neighborhood, Maitresse Libondans, who is also a spiritual healer and whose real name is Ornella Lukeba, whispers incanta-

has already been retained.

Just Ardie Savea, Brodie Retallick and Will Jordan remain while Foster has introduced an uncapped trio - winger Shaun Stevenson, flanker Samipeni Finau and replacement back Dallas McLeod. Captain Sam Cane returns from injury as New Zealand aim to continue their rampant form this season, having notched emphatic wins in the Rugby Championship over Argentina, South Africa and Australia. Under mounting pressure after losing his first three games in charge, Jones said it was obvious that change was needed and did not rule out the possibility of McDermott leading the Wallabies at the World Cup, having initially named James Slipper and the currently-injured Michael Hooper as co-captains.

"We're definitely remodelling the team. We need to change the team from where we've been and part of it is definitely the leadership aspect," Jones said. "Tate's captain for this game but then we'll assess it at

the outside world. This is also the place where I get to see many of my friends," said Michiko Aoki, who prides herself on looking younger than her 81 years.

"When I lose in a game, I sometimes can't even sleep," she said. "Eating, sleeping and gateball are the three biggest parts of my life now." — AFP

Staged late in the evening on a rickety wrestling ring in a small school courtyard, the bouts attracted about two hundred people, paying 3,000 Congolese francs (\$1.24). A brass band and drummers blared a constant stream of lively music, energizing an enthusiastic crowd. Local cigarettes and plastic sachets of drinks were on sale. These raucous scenes are a far cry from the well-heeled centre of Kinshasa, which is currently hosting the Francophone Games, roughly the French-speaking equivalent of the Commonwealth Games. In the first bout, a male fighter in a woman's dress and Adidas boxing shoes downed his opponent with a spell, and conjured up a burst of flames in the ring. One fight later, Maitresse Libondans strode into the ring, parading to the music of the brass band.

Her contest with Masamba was tough. They flipped each other over. Under her spell, she made the hypnotized pair dance to the music as she walked away victorious, to roars of delight. "He should go home and better prepare his incantations," she said after the bout. — AFP

the end of the tournament and then we go into World Cup mode. "This has been a period we've been finding out a lot about the team, finding out what's good, what's not so good, where are we strong, where are we not strong. "The nucleus of any good team going forward is the leadership and the captain's obviously a massive part of that."

McDermott's appointment means Nic White is again on the bench alongside experienced half-back partner Quade Cooper, with Jones keeping faith in rookie fly-half Carter Gordon despite a nervy performance last weekend. The former England boss has made three changes to his pack. Pone Fa'amausili is at tighthead prop in place of Allan Alaalatoa, who suffered an injury while leading the team last week, while Richie Arnold replaces Will Skelton at lock. A reshuffle to the back row sees Fraser McReight recalled at openside flanker, pushing Tom Hooper to blindside flanker in place of Jed Holloway. — AFP

Sports

Zain partners with OCEAN PADEL Academy

Supporting unique sports projects and empowering padel enthusiasts



Announcing the partnership.



The academy boasts of world-class courts and facilities.

KUWAIT: Zain has partnered with OCEAN PADEL Academy, a unique local sports club with world-class facilities, to support the academy's various programs and services offered to padel enthusiasts in Kuwait, including fully equipped courts and facilities, kids camps, and seasonal championships. The partnership agreement was signed at the academy's headquarters in Salmiya, attended by Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaiibeh, OCEAN PADEL Academy Co-founder & Manager Abdullatif Al Asfour, and Academy Co-founder & Deputy Manager Hamad Al Asfour.

The partnership comes under the umbrella of Zain's sustainability strat-

egy, which closely focuses on contributing to growing the sports and youth sectors. The company supports local projects that serve athletes and enthusiasts of various sports in Kuwait, including padel, a sport that continues to gain popularity among Kuwait's youth.

OCEAN PADEL Academy is a unique local sports club that specializes in padel, covering over 3,000 square meters and overlooking the Arabian Gulf Street. The academy boasts several indoor and outdoor courts, the Zain Center Court with seats for 120+ spectators, state-of-the-art health and sports facilities, international trainers, and more. As a partner of the academy, Zain will also support a number of sea-

sonal championships and special padel camps for kids facilitated by world-class trainers. The company will also hold exclusive championships for Zain employees at the academy's courts to boost the spirit of competitiveness and teamwork.

Zain is always committed to empowering the next generation of professional Kuwaiti athletes so they can excel and compete at top international arenas. The company strongly believes that the private sector has an essential role in supporting and encouraging sports projects to enable local athletes, develop their skills, and empower them to raise the Kuwaiti flag high at regional and international arenas.



Al Musaiibeh and Al Asfour sign the partnership.

Murray beats Nakashima in Washington

WASHINGTON: Andy Murray held firm in a 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 victory over Brandon Nakashima in the ATP hard-court tournament in Washington on Wednesday, the British great's first match since an epic second-round exit at Wimbledon. The 36-year-old Scot, ranked 44th in the world, saved all six break points he faced against the 70th-ranked American to reach the third round. That included one in the final game, when a double fault left Murray down 30-40.

He responded with a deft, angled forehand drop shot to end a long rally and followed up with a service winner before closing out the contest with a booming forehand winner. "It got really tense toward the end," Murray said, thanking a vocal crowd for their support. "The adrenaline, butterflies, nerves, that makes you feel alive. I still enjoy that."

Three-time Grand Slam champion Murray admitted last month he didn't know if he'd be back at Wimbledon again after falling in five sets to world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas in the second round. He hasn't made the second week of a Grand Slam since reaching the quarter-finals at Wimbledon in 2017 as two hip surgeries threatened to end his career. His first match win in Washington since 2018 showed he's still relishing the fight. He trailed 5-2 in the first-set tiebreaker, winning five straight points to claim the set.

He broke Nakashima to open the second set and held on from there. "The courts and the balls are extremely slow here, so you're having to work really hard in all of the games, it's not easy to finish points," Murray said. "It was a good one to get through." Murray, who had a first-round bye, next faces top-seeded Taylor Fritz or fellow American Zachary Svajda. In other matches Wednesday, Japan's Yosuke Watanuki shocked third-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime 7-6 (12/10), 7-6 (7/3) and 11th-seeded



Andy Murray

Wimbledon quarter-finalist Christopher Eubanks beat Japan's Sho Shimabukuro 6-3, 6-4. At 12th in the

world, Auger-Aliassime is the highest-ranked player the 99th-ranked Watanuki has beaten. — AFP

Saudi Pro League 'determined' to succeed

LONDON: The Saudi Pro League is "determined to be a success" and will keep splashing the cash to attract some of the biggest names in football, according to one of its top executives. Clubs in the oil-rich Gulf state have lured global stars, with Karim Benzema, Jordan Henderson and Sadio Mane among those following in Cristiano Ronaldo's footsteps. Last month Al-Hilal made a 300-million-euro (\$328 million) bid for Kylian Mbappe, though the Paris Saint-Germain striker reportedly refused to meet with officials from the club.

The influx has taken place despite frequent criticism that Saudi Arabia's lavish spending amounts to "sportswashing" — an attempt to shift the focus from its record on human rights. British director Peter Hutton, who sits on the league's board, told the BBC: "I think the budgets are in place for a number of years — you know, I don't see this slowing down."

He added: "I've worked in sport for 40 years and I've never seen a project as big, as ambitious and as determined to be a success." Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said the Saudi league has "completely changed the market" and he expects more high-profile players to move there. Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp fears the late closure of the transfer window in Middle East nation could have a detrimental effect on European clubs.

But Hutton said it was "not necessarily a bad thing" if European football lost a little of its power, pointing out Saudi clubs had still only spent a quarter or a fifth of what Premier League clubs had during the current transfer window. "This doesn't necessarily mean that Europe isn't going to be as strong in world football going forward," he said. "But I would say that's not necessarily a bad thing. It's good that football has strength around the world."

Hutton said the Mbappe bid and the signing of 26-year-old Wolves and Portugal midfielder Ruben Neves shows it is not just older players who are being lured to Saudi Arabia. And he is confident that commercial success will follow. "When Ronaldo signed for Al Nassr we suddenly had this interest from international broadcasters," he said. "Last year, we ended up in over 170 territories once Ronaldo signed. It's clearly something that's caught the imagination of broadcasters worldwide." — AFP

Galthie names three new caps for WCup warm-up with Scots

MARCOUSSIS: Fabien Galthie named three new caps in his France team to play Scotland in the 2023 Rugby World Cup hosts' starting XV for Saturday's warm-up match at Murrayfield. Wing Louis Bielle-Biarrey, centre Emilien Gailleton and backrow forward Paul Boudehent get their chance to force their way into the final squad for the sport's quadrennial showpiece which runs from September 8 to October 28. Galthie will bid to achieve something none of his predecessors have managed and be crowned world champions. The French have been losing finalists three times - in 1987, 1999 and 2011.

Veteran full-back Brice Dulin will skipper the side,

winning his 37th cap but first since March 2021, after a superb season for European champions La Rochelle. "What an honor, what a happy moment for Brice Dulin!" purred France manager and former captain Raphael Ibanez. "This is not by chance, he is a totally legitimate choice. "And it is all down to him, his perseverance, to his determination. "He was a natural choice for us... he is the leader in his club, of the spine of the team that were crowned European champions."

Galthie has left on the sidelines several stalwarts of the team such as regular captain scrum-half Antoine Dupont and his half-back partner, fly-half Romain Ntamack. Bielle-Biarrey and Gailleton, both 20, and 23-year-old Boudehent slot into places normally filled by Damian Penaud, Gael Fickou and Charles Ollivon. "Twenty years old is very young, they are without doubt among the youngest players ever capped," said Galthie.

"But there are no question marks hanging over them: Louis and Emilien followed a normal route to this stage, Paul's was a little different as he came via

the sevens team. "French rugby can be proud to have produced players with such potential. "It is down to us now to help them develop." Only wing Ethan Dumortier remains in the starting XV of the one that thrashed Wales 41-28 in the final match of this year's Six Nations in March. For 33-year-old Dulin and fly-half Mathieu Jalibert it represents a chance to give Galthie selection headaches ahead of naming his final 33-man squad on August 21.

Dulin is way above the average age of the starting line-up which is 25 and a half. Only he, props Jean-Baptiste Gros and Demba Bamba, as well as Jalibert have over 20 caps. France have three further warm-up matches after Saturday's clash. They play Scotland again on August 12 at Saint-Etienne, Fiji a week later in Nantes and wrap it up with Australia on August 27 at the Stade de France. Galthie's side begin their World Cup campaign with a mouth-watering meeting with New Zealand on September 8, followed by less taxing games against Italy, Uruguay and Namibia. — 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, **Ahmed Khan**, holder of Indian Passport No. V9396678, having permanent address H.No 43/70 N R Peta, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh State, India - Pin code 518004, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) **Ahmed** and (Surname) **Abdul Salam Khan. (C 232) 3/8/2023**

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) **JAMM** (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name of **HOZEFA JAMM** 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**

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Germany crash out after 1-1 draw

Morocco book Women's World Cup last 16



PERTH: Morocco players celebrate their first goal during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group H football match between Morocco and Colombia on August 3, 2023. — AFP



BRISBANE: Germany's defender #17 Felicitas Rauch (left) kicks the ball during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group H football match between South Korea and Germany on August 3, 2023. — AFP

BRISBANE: A Women's World Cup full of shocks had its biggest yet when Germany were dumped out in the group phase on Thursday following a stalemate with South Korea, with debutants Morocco progressing instead. Germany's 1-1 draw with the Koreans coupled with Morocco's surprise 1-0 victory over Colombia saw the European side suffer their earliest exit in Women's World Cup history. The two-time former champions and one of the pre-tournament favorites follow Brazil, Italy and Olympic champions Canada out of the competition in double-quick time.

Colombia topped Group H despite losing and will face Jamaica in the last 16. Morocco progressed into the knockouts on their World Cup debut also with two wins and a defeat, and meet France next. Germany were third and condemned to an early flight home. "To be honest, it's still hard to understand," skipper Alexandra Popp, who scored the German goal and was their chief threat throughout, told German TV network ZDF. "I still can't quite understand what happened here."

Coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg said that there was "a lot of uncertainty today". "In the end you have to say that our performance was not enough." The

2003 and 2007 winners Germany came into the game in front of just under 39,000 in Brisbane knowing that a win over South Korea would put them in the last 16. But they started badly, conceding to a smart Cho So-hyun finish after just six minutes and looking shaky at the back early on. Colin Bell's South Korea looked nothing like the team that lost 2-0 to Colombia and 1-0 to Morocco.

Germany equalized just before half-time with a Popp header but for all their possession, last year's European finalists failed to get the second goal they desperately needed. Popp thought she had won it in the second half with another fierce header, but it was ruled out by VAR for off-side. Sydney Lohmann's effort went just over deep in stoppage time and Germany now needed a favor from Colombia. A draw would have been enough for Germany had Morocco not sprung a surprise of their own in Perth.

Anissa Lahmari's goal in first-half stoppage time, after captain Ghizlane Chebbak's penalty kick was spectacularly saved, won it for Morocco. With the Morocco game ending slightly before events in Brisbane, the Atlas Lionesses faced an anxious wait. When Germany's fate was sealed the Moroccan players went

wild on the pitch. The Koreans finished bottom of the group with one point but at least salvaged some pride.

England now favorites?

The United States are into the knockout rounds and a date with third-ranked Sweden on Sunday, but the Americans have looked nothing like a team capable of winning a third World Cup in a row. They scraped through with a 0-0 draw against tournament debutants Portugal, the Portuguese striking the post in injury time - a goal would have sent the US home. European champions England now look the team to beat. They were touted before the tournament as the biggest threat to the United States and after an indifferent start, they thrashed China 6-1 to progress in style.

Sarina Wiegman's side face Nigeria, who along with South Africa, Jamaica and Morocco confounded expectations by getting out of the group stage. South Africa scored an injury-time winner to send Italy out on Wednesday, then that same evening Jamaica strangled Brazil 0-0 to end the South Americans' hopes. The knockout rounds begin on Saturday when an impressive Japan face Norway and Spain - thrashed 4-0 by Japan last time out - play Switzerland. — AFP

Messi shines as Inter Miami beat Orlando

FORT LAUDERDALE: Lionel Messi made it five goals in three appearances for Inter Miami as he scored twice in a 3-1 win over Orlando City in the Leagues Cup round-of-32 on Wednesday. Messi scored twice from close range to maintain his 100 percent winning record with Miami, who were winless in 11 league games before his arrival. Messi will now head on the road with Miami for the first time with Sunday's match with FC Dallas in Texas offering a place in the quarter-finals of the tournament

for top flight teams from Major League Soccer and Mexico's Liga MX.

Wednesday's Florida derby was not a game which will be featured in the Messi highlight videos but despite being frustrated by tight-marking for most of the game, the seven-time Ballon D'Or winner emerged the decisive figure once again. A thunderstorm led to a 95-minute delay to the kick-off but when the game began, Miami picked up where they left off in their 4-0 win over Atlanta United last week - attacking with intent.

Robert Taylor, the Finnish winger, cut in from the left and chipped a perfect ball into the path of the on-running Messi who brought the ball down with his chest and volleyed home from six yards out. But Orlando responded strongly and they drew level ten minutes later when a low shot from Ivan Angulo was pushed out by Miami keeper Drake Callender and

Uruguayan Cesar Araujo pounced on the edge of the box to drive a low shot into the corner.

Frustration

Orlando were increasingly effective in closing down Messi and the Argentine showed the first signs of frustration when he picked up a yellow card for a foul on Wilder Cartagena. Orlando coach Oscar Pareja had clearly given his team instructions to sacrifice possession to Miami to ensure they had enough players to crowd out and neutralize Messi and Busquets, and the approach was working.

Openings were limited for Messi and when he did get some space near the goal in the 32nd minute, after good work from DeAndre Yedlin, he squeezed his left-foot shot wide. The Argentine had an opportunity with a free-kick from within his range, just before the break but his effort from over 25 yards out was comfortably tipped over by keeper Pedro Gallese. Messi looked unhappy as he left the field at the break, perhaps by the physical nature of some of the marking he had received as much as the lack of space he had found in the game.

But Miami found a way to restore their lead without the involvement of their star man - 18-year-old Benjamin Cremaschi slipped a pass into the box to Martinez who feeling a slight tug from Antonio Carlos went down and won a penalty. Orlando were unhappy with the decision but their protests were to no avail and Martinez, after a stutter and a shuffle, fired home. Miami made sure of the win and progression to the last 16 when Taylor broke down the left and picked out Martinez at the back of the box who chested the ball and found Messi with a clever chip which the Argentine gleefully tucked away.

Another former Barcelona star Jordi Alba made his debut for Miami, coming on as a 64th minute substitute and although Araujo had an effort disallowed in stoppage time, there was little trouble in the latter stages for Messi's team. Miami's right-back DeAndre Yedlin suggested that Orlando's approach had come from fear while Miami continued to play with belief. "He just gives everyone around him confidence. You can give him balls in difficult situations and know he's going to make something out of it. "The flipside is that for the teams we're playing against, it puts a bit of fear in their eyes. They're dropping back on their heels a bit and that gives us more space to play," he said. — AFP

Juventus stun Real; Weah off the mark

MIAMI: United States international Timothy Weah scored the first goal of his Juventus career as the Italian giants defeated Real Madrid 3-1 in a pre-season friendly in Florida on Wednesday. Weah, who joined Juventus from Lille last month, tucked away a close-range finish after collecting a pass from US team-mate Weston McKennie to give the Serie A side a 2-0 lead after 20 minutes in front of a sell-out 63,503 crowd in Orlando.

McKennie, who spent the second half of last season on loan at Premier League club Leeds where he struggled to make an impact, also had a hand in his team's opening goal which came inside the first 60 seconds. Neat approach play led to McKennie curling a shot against the foot of the post, with Moise Kean on hand to turn in the rebound. Real Madrid, who once again started new signing Jude Bellingham, were slow to get into the contest but eventually pulled a goal back seven minutes before half-time through Brazil international Vinicius Jr. — AFP



FLORIDA: Inter Miami's Argentine forward Lionel Messi scores his team's first goal during the round of 32 Leagues Cup football match between Inter Miami CF and Orlando City SC in Fort Lauderdale. — AFP



ORLANDO: A fan is tackled after running on to the field following a pre-season friendly match between Juventus and Real Madrid in Orlando, Florida. — AFP