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## MPs call to hike salaries of all citizens by KD 400

Lawmakers propose debt relief, cash handouts for Kuwaitis

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Less than a week after concluding the first term of the new National Assembly, shortened by snap polls, lawmakers on Sunday submitted a host of populist draft laws calling to raise salaries of all Kuwaitis by KD 400, debt relief for citizens and another proposal to distribute 20 percent of returns on the country's foreign assets to citizens over 21 every year.

Five MPs submitted a draft law calling to raise the salaries of Kuwaitis working in the government, private sector and pensioners by KD 400 to meet the sharp increases in the cost of living. The draft law also stipulates that the proposed increase will include all servicemen in the army, the police and the national guard. The lawmakers said in their bill that the proposed raises are necessary to enable Kuwaiti families to meet the

rise in the cost of living. Statistics have shown average salaries of non-Kuwaitis in the private sector increased from KD 324 to KD 342 per month, while expats in the public sector saw an average increase in their monthly salaries of around KD 19 to reach KD 741.

In another move, five MPs submitted a draft law calling for debt relief for Kuwaiti citizens, basically based on forgiving the interest on bank loans. The bill stipulates that banks and financial companies under the supervision of the Central Bank will reschedule loans of Kuwaiti citizens taken until Jan 31, 2021. The loans will then be repaid in instalments over a period of 12 years, including a two-year grace period, but without the incurring interest, which will be forgiven against the interest on government deposits in local banks. The main aim of the bill is to relieve debtors of high interest rates on their loans.

Also, five MPs have proposed the government should distribute 20 percent of returns on Kuwaiti investments abroad, estimated at around \$800 billion, to all Kuwaitis above 21 years of age every year. Similar proposals had been submitted repeatedly in the past but were never debated in the Assembly due to the government's opposition.

MP Hani Shams said on Sunday that he and a group of lawmakers submitted a proposal calling to impose a fee of KD 100 on every square meter annually on those who own two houses and more. The lawmaker said the proposal targets a group of real estate merchants who hold a monopoly over large areas of land, which has triggered a huge increase in the prices of plots and houses. He said the decision, if adopted, will increase supply of land and houses, causing their prices to drop.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 87,140 cars in violation

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry has found 87,140 vehicles registered to expatriates whose residencies have expired or who have died, it said in a statement Sunday. It urged anyone currently using such vehicles to refer to relevant traffic departments to transfer, cancel or renew their registrations as per an official power of attorney in accordance with the traffic law. Failure to comply subjects the driver to penalties, which include a traffic ticket and impounding the vehicle, the ministry warned.

#### Tug sinks in Suez collision

**CAIRO:** A Suez Canal tugboat sank and a crewmember was missing after the vessel collided with a Hong Kong-flagged LPG tanker on Saturday, the authorities in charge of the key waterway said. A salvage team rescued six of the seven crew from the sunken tugboat and a search was ongoing for the missing crewmember. The vessel involved in the collision was Chinagas Legend, which was heading from Singapore to the US. The 230-m ship was carrying 52,000 tons of liquefied petroleum gas. — AFP

#### Legal aid for X users in trouble

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Elon Musk on Saturday said his social media company X would provide monetary legal aid to users who face blowback from their bosses over posts on the platform. "If you were unfairly treated by your employer due to posting or liking something on this platform, we will fund your legal bill," he wrote on the site. "No limit. Please let us know." Musk gave no details on how users could claim their money. — AFP (See Page 8)

#### Iraq suspends Telegram

**BAGHDAD:** The Iraqi government on Sunday said it was suspending the popular Telegram messaging application across the country on "national security" grounds, drawing criticism on channels close to pro-Iran factions. The service was effectively blocked by midday on Sunday, with new messages not loading for users in Baghdad. Telegram is very popular in Iraq, and is notably used as a propaganda platform for groups associated with armed factions and pro-Iran political parties. — AFP

#### UAE sends military vehicles to Chad

**DUBAI:** The UAE has sent military vehicles and other security gear to Chad in support of anti-terrorism efforts and border protection, it said on Sunday. The UAE's official news agency WAM included a photo of several desert-colored armored vehicles, with Emirati and Chadian flags draped over two of them. — AFP

### 28 killed as train derails in Pakistan

**NAWABSHAH, Pakistan:** At least 28 people were killed Sunday when an express train derailed in southern Pakistan, the railway minister said, with an emergency declared at local hospitals struggling to deal with dozens of injured. Accidents and derailments occur frequently on the country's antiquated railway system, which has nearly 7,500 km of track and carries more than 80 million passengers a year.

"This is quite a big accident," railway minister Khawaja Saad Rafique told reporters. "According to the information so far, 28 passengers have been killed and many are injured." Rafique said at least 1,000 passengers were aboard the Hazara Express when it derailed on a section of track where no faults had been reported. "There can be two reasons: First that it was a mechanical fault, or the fault was created — it might be a sabotage. We will investigate it." The derailment happened near Sahara railway station close to Nawabshah city in the southern Sindh province.

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NAWABSHAH, Pakistan: Paramilitary rangers and volunteers inspect the carriages at the accident site following the derailment of a passenger train on Aug 6, 2023. — AFP

### Morocco minibus plunge kills 24

**RABAT:** A minibus carrying market-goers in Morocco plunged into a ravine on Sunday, killing 24 people in one of the North African country's worst-ever road accidents, officials said. The passengers were travelling a mountainous route to a weekly market in the town of Demnate, in the central province of Azilal, when the minibus overturned on a bend, the local authorities said. Images on public broadcaster 2M showed the vehicle crushed at the bottom of the ravine.

### Calls growing to broadcast Trump trial

**LOS ANGELES:** Calls are growing for Donald Trump's criminal trials to be broadcast live, as the United States grapples with the prospect of seeing a former — and possibly future — president in the dock. Lawyers and politicians are lining up to urge that cameras be allowed inside the courtroom, particularly when the one-time reality TV star faces a jury on charges that he tried to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

"Given the historic nature of the charges brought

"All the passengers are dead," Youssef Makhoulfi, director of the Demnate hospital, told 2M, which reported that at least two women and a child were among the victims. Local authorities said an investigation has begun. Accidents are frequent on the roads of Morocco and other North African countries, which see thousands of road deaths annually.

Eleven people, mostly agricultural workers, died in March when their minibus slammed into a tree after the driver lost control in the rural town of Brachoua, local officials said at the time. Many poorer citizens use coaches and minibuses to travel in rural areas. In August last year, 23 people were killed and 36 injured when their bus overturned on a bend east of Morocco's economic capital Casablanca.

An average of 3,500 road deaths and 12,000 inju-

ries are recorded annually in Morocco, according to the National Road Safety Agency, with an average of 10 deaths per day. The figure last year was around 3,200. Authorities have set out to halve the mortality rate by 2026 ever since the worst bus accident in the country's history left 42 dead in 2012.

In neighboring Algeria, 34 people were killed on July 19 when a passenger bus collided head-on with a pickup truck carrying fuel cans and burst into flames, deep in the southern Sahara region, officials said. Algeria's deadliest road crash in years also left 12 others injured, many with severe burns, Algeria's civil defense agency said. One of Tunisia's worst road accidents occurred in 2019 when a bus plunged into a ravine, killing at least 24 Tunisians and injuring 18 others. — AFP

forth in these cases, it is hard to imagine a more powerful circumstance for televised proceedings," read a letter signed Thursday by the California congressman Adam Schiff and dozens of his Democratic Party colleagues. "If the public is to fully accept the outcome, it will be vitally important for it to witness, as directly as possible, how the trials are conducted, the strength of the evidence adduced and the credibility of witnesses."

Trump has now been charged in three separate criminal cases: lying about hush-money payments to a porn star, mishandling secret documents, and trying to subvert the election. An indictment looms in a fourth, related to a phone call in which Trump pressured a Georgia election official to "find" the 11,780 votes that would reverse his defeat to Joe Biden in the southern state.

Continued on Page 6



COLUMBIA, South Carolina: Former US President Donald Trump speaks as the keynote speaker at the 56th Annual Silver Elephant Dinner hosted by the South Carolina Republican Party on Aug 5, 2023. — AFP



# Zain Innovation Campus hosts participants of KON Program

## Continuing to support LOYAC's unique social entrepreneurship initiative

**KUWAIT:** The Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted a special session for the participants of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program, held by the leading non-profit LOYAC in collaboration with Babson College in Boston. Zain sponsors the program as part of its long-term partnership with LOYAC, which extends for 19 years.

Zain's support to this unique educational program springs from its strong belief in the high value it presents to the local entrepreneurial community. The company continues to witness great enthusiasm and curiosity from hundreds of eager young people who participate in the program every year to make the most out of their summer vacation by learning new business skills, growing their talents, and fulfilling their future dreams.

The session hosted at ZINC centered around the basics and essentials of public speaking and business pitching, giving the students invaluable insights on how to pitch their businesses to investors to finance their projects and turn their ideas into profitable and sustainable startups. The session was attended by nearly 50 students from this year's KON program. KON targets students of 12-16 years and empowers them to learn the essentials of entrepreneurship and business, gain insights on social and environmental challenges faced by today's businesses, and learn how to plan and develop their own projects.

The program also guides students into making their own case studies of the market and specifying their target audience, while introducing them to successful experiences from local entrepreneurs. KON comes in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, one of the most prestigious entrepreneurship colleges in



KON students at the Zain Innovation Campus.

the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. Zain and LOYAC's strategic partnership extends to 19 years of successful programs and initiatives that empowered thousands of ambitious Kuwaiti youth in business, volunteering, and academic projects.

Zain considers this a great achievement that truly reflects the strength and resilience of the collaboration ecosystem between the private sector and non-profit organizations in empowering Kuwaiti youth. LOYAC is a non-profit organization established in Kuwait in 2002 with the aim of empowering the youth to become

impactful leaders in the society, offering a broad range of unique programs that fall under a model integrating community, professional, and life empowerments. LOYAC operates in Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, and Jordan, and has empowered over 3.5 million young people since its inception.

## Ministry to form committee to oversee digital transformation

**KUWAIT:** The Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and the Minister of State for Telecommunications Affairs, Fahd Al-Shula, issued a ministerial decision on Sunday to form a higher committee to oversee the preparation of the national strategy for digital transformation. Minister Al-Shula added in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this decision comes within the efforts of implementing the government's work program and supporting the efforts of the state in its projects with regards to digital transformation.

He explained that this committee comes as a complement to the efforts and steps aimed at achieving digital transformation in the country and to the efforts of the entities affiliated to the Ministry of State for Telecommunications Affairs in developing the digital system of services, business, and government operations in ministries, public bodies, and institutions. He added that the committee is an extension of the government's action plan, which will contribute to the state's efforts in the field of information technology and digital transformation projects.

He pointed out that the strategy is aimed at coordinating efforts and enhancing integration between government entities and institutions so as to accelerate and maximize the impact of comprehensive digital transformation. He stressed that it will represent a key step to achieving and completing the state's development vision and sustainable development goals. The digital transformation is a process of radically changing the way government institutions work using information and communication technologies "and can include radical changes in the culture of work of institutions, their services, processes, and what they produce".

He stressed that the digital transformation embodies a great opportunity to improve the performance and experience of beneficiaries in addition to increasing the efficiency of government institutions and reducing costs, explaining that the digital transformation is a continuous process and not a one-time event. "Government institutions must be ready to invest in digital transformation in the long term to achieve the benefits they hope to achieve, he said, adding that digital transformation can help government institutions innovate.

The minister stressed the importance of accelerating the development of a national digital transformation strategy to enable efforts to develop the government's digital system and channels and enhance flexibility, readiness, and alignment between different digital projects and systems in all government entities.

It is worth mentioning that, in accordance with the resolution, the committee will be concerned with the process of supervising the preparation of the strategy, coordinating the required actions, and proposing appropriate mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of the strategy after its adoption, in addition to following up and coordinating with all relevant authorities all the procedures required for the preparation of this strategy. — KUNA



## Interior targets wanted persons and violators

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah confirmed the continuation of the implementation of security plans targeting violators and wanted persons with the application of the law to everyone. The Min-

istry of Interior said in a press statement that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled chaired a security meeting of the ministry's leaders on Sunday, during which the security situation, the plans set for it, and the current and future action plans were reviewed, stressing the activation of measures to address any negative phenomena.

The Ministry added that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled stressed during the meeting held at the ministry's headquarters, which included undersecretary of the ministry Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Borges and a number of assistant undersecretaries, the need to find solutions. He pointed out that the next stage requires more effort, work, vigilance, and caution. — KUNA

## Romania ambassador visits Lulu, explores opportunities

**KUWAIT:** The Romanian Ambassador to Kuwait, Mugurel Loan Stanescu made a significant visit to the regional office of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait on August 6, 2023. During his visit, Stanescu engaged in productive discussions with Mohamed Haris, Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait, and other esteemed members of Lulu's top management to explore potential business collaborations, particularly focusing on the import of Romanian products into the vibrant Kuwaiti market.

The meeting commenced on a cordial note, with warm greetings exchanged between the Romanian Ambassador and the Lulu Hypermarket team. Expressing gratitude for the opportunity to visit the renowned retail giant, Stanescu acknowledged Lulu's prominence in the Kuwaiti retail landscape and its contribution to the region's economic growth. Ambassador highlighted Romania's prowess in various sectors, emphasizing the country's rich heritage of high-quality products and goods. He stressed the potential for Romanian products to captivate the discerning Kuwaiti consumers and cater to the growing demand for diverse and unique offerings in the Kuwaiti market.

The Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait extended a warm welcome to the Romanian Ambassador and expressed enthusiasm for exploring the prospects of importing Romanian goods. He affirmed Lulu's commitment to providing its customers with an extensive range of premium products from around the world, and he recognized Romania's offerings as an excellent addition to their product portfolio.

The discussions between the parties centered on identifying potential sectors and products for import from Romania to Kuwait. Both parties expressed a



KUWAIT: Romanian Ambassador to Kuwait, Mugurel Loan Stanescu visits the regional office of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait on August 6, 2023.



keen interest in further exploring these opportunities, aiming to enhance trade relations and strengthen economic ties between Romania and Kuwait. Stanescu expressed his appreciation for the warm

reception and hospitality extended by Lulu Hypermarket, and he conveyed his optimism about the potential for successful trade partnerships that will benefit both countries' economies.

## Saudi universities increase quota for Kuwaiti students

**RIYADH:** Seats for Kuwaiti medical students were increased in Saudi Arabia as part of the cooperation between the two countries, said a Kuwaiti official on Sunday. Ahmad Al-Khanfar, head of the Kuwaiti Education Ministry's Cultural Office in Riyadh, told KUNA that the effort to increase the enrollment of students in Saudi universities came to cover the needs of students after scholarships to Jordan and Egypt were suspended.

Seats for the 2023-24 semester at Al-Faisal University in Riyadh were increased to 100 as opposed to 31 last semester, he revealed. He said that the office would continue to seek an increase of seats in other universities for newly graduate Kuwaiti students and those transferred from other countries such as Canada, the UK, Australia, and others. Al-Khanfar revealed that the office was also in the process of signing an agreement with the King Saud University for the 2024-25 semester to further enroll Kuwaiti medical students. — KUNA



Ahmad Al-Khanfar

Local

# Importance of diversifying Kuwait's economy, encouraging investment

## Economist underlines importance of broadening economic horizons

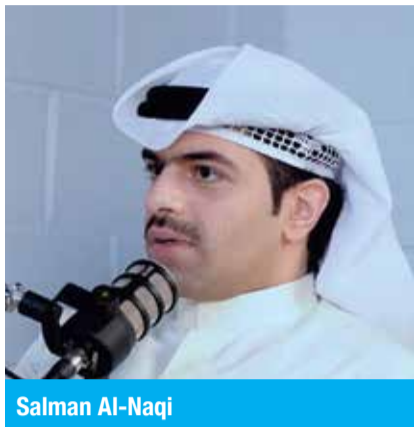
By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is known for its large oil reserves that fuel the state's economic security. However, with rising global uncertainties and the urgent need to mitigate environmental concerns, it becomes a necessity to shift towards diversification, especially since oil is non-renewable. Kuwait Times interviewed Kuwaiti economist Salman Al-Naqi for his perspective on going beyond oil and gas in Kuwait, and his opinions on encouraging investments in the non-oil sector.

"Kuwait has various economic strengths, such as a strong currency, relatively moderate inflation, large financial buffers, a strategic geographical location and well-educated local human capital. However, the dilemma Kuwait faces towards economic transformation can be attributed to the local regulatory and administrative environment," Naqi said.

Naqi further elaborated on the challenges that Kuwait faces in its economic development. "The constraints of achieving the ambitious old vision to turn the state into a regional financial and trade hub are illustrated clearly through the lack of certain policies in the commercial and financial sectors, as well as the barriers to doing business. Finite investment opportunities and monopolies in some sectors discourage the pathway to implementing this vision. As a result, optimal investments are restricted to real estate and the stock market. The COVID-19 crisis revealed the absence of supportive policies for businesses, particularly for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), which has caused significant setbacks among entrepreneurs," he said.

"Meanwhile, the government has taken serious steps to eliminate business barriers and bureaucratic patterns. The current mid-term government plan highlights



Salman Al-Naqi

important objectives such as launching free economic zones and focusing on financial technology. The former will boost trade activities and attract foreign enterprises, while the latter is intended to foster the financial sector and create a specialized model within the region for the proposed vision of the financial hub. The government should utilize the budget surplus from oil exports to increase its capital spending on new projects and reform existing policies to facilitate higher growth rates in the economy, consequently expanding the scope of businesses," Naqi added.

Thus, promoting technology driven industries and heading towards investing in sectors beyond the state's dependence on oil results in a thriving economy. Acknowledging the inherent risks of an overwhelmingly oil-dependent economy, Naqi spoke about the importance of broadening Kuwait's economic horizons. He emphasized on the significance of encouraging foreign direct investments (FDI) and the opportunities that it provides, besides the challenges it faced in the past, which hindered FDI progression in Kuwait.

"Before the oil era, Kuwait was a prominent regional destination for for-



This picture taken on October 27, 2022 shows an aerial view of the landmark Kuwait Towers and the Ras al-Ard cape of Kuwait City overlooking the Gulf waters. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ign investors engaged in trading and re-exporting commodities. They benefited from low tariffs and Kuwait's strategic location. However, since the 1960s and due to political turmoil, foreign investors have faced numerous restrictions, including high taxes and constraints in the immigration system. These challenging conditions have reduced the flow of foreign capital into Kuwait and reduced its attractiveness. Boosting FDI inflows is the

most critical element of the broad strategic vision for economic transformation," Naqi pointed out.

"While there have been notable official efforts in this regard, some past obstacles persist. Tax discrimination is one of these barriers, as taxation on foreign corporate profits is 10 percent higher than that imposed on local counterparts in Kuwait. Furthermore, reforms are needed in immigration and travel frameworks to in-

centivize foreign investors and facilitate their mobility.

Foreign investments will reduce the financial burdens on the public sector in Kuwait by generating new jobs for nationals and promoting public-private partnership projects in efficient and cost-effective ways. Additionally, the national workforce will benefit from the spillover effects of acquiring new technology and skills from foreign entities," Naqi concluded.



## Workshop creates awareness, offers training for minors

**KUWAIT:** The General Authority for Minors Affairs organized a workshop entitled 'Successful Youth' to raise awareness for the minors who are choosing a university specialization and setting up projects. The acting director general of the authority, Tamader Al-Omar, said in a press statement that the workshop is aimed at creating awareness, rehabilitating, and training about 120 minors between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

The workshop program includes several topics, including awareness of how to choose a university specialty, how to create projects, money management, digital transformation, and robot programming. She stressed the importance of these programs. The workshop is the first of its kind to be organized by the Minors Authority under the supervision of its team and in cooperation with the specialists. — KUNA



## Money versus passion: Students face dilemma

By Noor Abdulaziz

**KUWAIT:** High school gives students an insight into their future endeavors. By crossing paths with teachers, mentors and advisors who help them shape who they want to become, students end up with endless interests, as they are astounded by the options they have at hand. During their adolescence, students are most likely to shift their interests as they discover more career paths.

When students are in high school, it is hard to comprehend the idea of restricting themselves to only one path, as they feel choices are endless. However, as they mature and enter adulthood, they're forced to get a tighter grip on reality. Some are lucky to have an influential presence that helps guide them into unlocking their potential, like strong parental figures. These people are confident enough to decide what major they want to flourish in early in life.

However, there are those who still struggle to understand what skills they're competent in. This is because most schools lack the ability to establish a strong foundation and structure for their students. For 17-year-old Yusef, the whole process has been quite stressful. "I think for a lot of us, it is hard to come to terms with the idea that we cannot make jobs out of our hobbies or interests. You have what you enjoy doing and what you should be doing," he said.

"Realistically speaking, if I want to secure a well-paying job, I will have to choose what is in high demand right now. A lot of my older friends went on to major in engineering, but are struggling to find jobs because they went into their majors with great passion, but later realized how deluded they were, because they chose the type of engineering that wasn't needed in the current job market. Basically, you must be aware of all this despite being only 17. My future depends on what I choose at this age. No pressure!" Yusef said sarcastically.

Conversely, 20-year-old Jana, who is currently a junior in university, shared her experience in choosing her major. "When I was in high school, it was very hard to narrow down exactly what I wanted to do, because I was interested in so many things. I remember I used to joke about being a jack of all trades, master of none' kind of person, which basically translates to dabbling in a lot of skills rather than focusing on one. Luckily, my father guided me and helped me grasp what I really wanted to do," she said.

"Now, I realize how lucky I am to have my dad help me understand what I excelled in rather than pressuring me to choose a path that he wanted simply to live vicariously through me, as that is what tends to happen most of the time. My cousin was pressured into being a lawyer by a lot of relatives. It wasn't until he graduated and passed the bar exam that he realized he utterly despised it. So, make sure to ask for guidance without seeking validation as you will find yourself trying to fit a mold that does not suit you," Jana added.

Students face a multitude of challenges in their academic journey, one of them being choosing a major they both enjoy and that pays well, as these days, one tends to find oneself fighting an eternal debate of money versus passion.

## Oil Tanker Company gets ISO certificates

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Oil Tanker Company announced on Sunday that it has obtained three ISO certificates for its management system. The certificates are for quality management systems, Environmental Management systems, and Occu-

pational Health and Safety Management systems, in addition to the certificate of compliance with the international standard (ISO Risk Management). The management said in a press release that obtaining these certificates reflects its commitment to applying the Petroleum Corporation's strategy for the year 2040, which stipulates that the company performs its work efficiently and adheres to the highest standards of health, safety, and environmental performance.

It stressed the importance of an integrat-

ed management system in any organization or company that aims to improve its performance and achieve excellence in its services and products, as it aims to direct efforts towards achieving top quality and meeting customer requirements effectively. It pointed out the need to identify risks, assess the likelihood of an event associated with specific risks, and determine the severity of obstacles caused by the event in order to make better, more appropriate decisions. — KUNA

## Kuwait Boy Scout sets example for the region

CAIRO: Kuwait Boy Scouts Association is an example to be followed in the region, said Amr Hamdy, secretary general of Arab Scout Region at the World Organization of the Scout Movement Sunday. At the conclusion of the voluntary work management course, Hamdy said the Kuwaiti branch will move to a new stage of progress thanks to the determination in attending such events. — KUNA

## Military Service invites Batch 50

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Military Service announced that those assigned to active duty in the military service will be invited to join Batch 50. This includes those from the date of birth May 10, 1999 until March 31, 2001. The commission said in a press release on Sunday that the invitation will be made through the Kuwait Mobile ID app. This can be reviewed at the Mubarak camps (Gate No 4) or on its website. (www.kuwaitarmy.gov.kw). — KUNA



رئاسة الأركان العامة للجيش  
هيئة الخدمة الوطنية العسكرية

سيتم دعوة المكلفين للخدمة  
العامة بالخدمة الوطنية العسكرية للاحتضان

بالدفعة 50  
بدءاً من مواليد 10 مايو 1999  
وتغاية 31 مارس 2001  
وذلك عبر تطبيق هويتي

ملاحظة: المرجو من هيئة الخدمة الوطنية العسكرية في محاسنات المراكبية بوزارة (4)  
أو زيارة موقعها الإلكتروني WWW.KUWAITARMY.GOV.KW

KuwaitArmyGHQ

### Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A young boy plays in a fountain to cool off during a heat wave, at the Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# GCC 'fully committed' to ILO labor policies, rules

## Bahrain keen on strengthening joint GCC efforts

MANAMA: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries are fully committed to the policies and guidelines of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the bloc's chief Jasem Al-Budaiwi said on Sunday. This commitment stems from the wider Gulf Arab region's rigid traditions based on holy Islamic teachings, he said on the sidelines of the opening of the new headquarters for the GCC social and labor council in the Bahraini capital.

Kuwait's Al-Budaiwi spoke of a unified GCC vision aiming to regulate labor standards based on the guidelines of the ILO, emphasizing that such a measure is part of efforts to bolster "joint

work" and cooperation among Gulf Arab states. Addressing the gathering, GCC labor and social council chief executive Dr Amer Al-Hajri agreed that greater pan Gulf-Arab cooperation is a common objective, saying the council backs any initiative aiming to bring that goal to fruition.

Bahrain's Labor Minister Jameel Humaidan underlined that these GCC bodies, many of which are based in the Gulf Arab kingdom, aim to "unify the policies" of GCC member states, besides allowing an opportunity for the "exchange" of knowledge and expertise, he added.

### GCC efforts

Meanwhile, Bahrain Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa has affirmed the importance of further strengthening joint GCC efforts and cooperation to create a more prosperous future for all. The remarks were made when Prince Salman met earlier with the Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi and his accompanying delegation. Prince Salman emphasized the importance of building on the Council's efforts in line with the far-reaching goals and aspirations of GCC leaders.

The Bahraini Crown Prince welcomed the GCC Chief to Bahrain, and wished him success



Bahrain Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa meets Secretary General of GCC Jasem Al-Budaiwi. — KUNA

in his endeavors. Prince Salman underscored the importance of increasing integration and cooperation between GCC countries to meet the aspirations of their citizens and consolidate global peace and development. For his part, Al-Budaiwi expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to meet with Prince Salman, highlighting the Crown Prince and Prime Minister's ongoing support of the longstanding strategic partnership between member states of the GCC. — KUNA



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## Kuwait Sports TV to expand viewership

KUWAIT: Director of the Sports Channel at Kuwait TV Hamad Al-Dehani affirmed the channel's keenness on improving its work and acquiring rights to transmitting various global sporting events, as per the directive of information minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and in line with ministry's strategy. Al-Dehani told KUNA that this began with transmitting Argentinean championships exclusively in the Middle East, and added that last July the channel transmitted the International Champions Cup for football, which was watched by many as it included the world's largest clubs of Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester and so on. The Sports Channel, explained Al-Dehani, is



Hamad Al-Dehani

not solely concerned with football events, but covers all sorts of sporting events, pointing out that it had covered that hand ball tournament that took place in Germany and Greece last August. On the channel's preparations for this current local season, Al-Dehani commented that they have upgraded the analysis studio, and

will continue to implement further developments. Al-Dehani thanked the ministry's officials and employees for all their efforts that translated into tangible improvements. — KUNA



Philippines slams China Coast Guard for firing water cannon at its boats

## Ukraine faces new wave of attacks

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# Niger capital on edge as deadline nears

## Residents remain defiant amid threat of military intervention



NIAMEY, Niger: Nigerien youth gather at the Francophonie traffic circle in Niamey on August 4, 2023. — AFP

**NIAMEY, Niger:** An air of defiance, mixed with unmistakable disquiet: As a regional leaders' deadline ticks down to a threatened military intervention a week after a coup deposed Mohamed Bazoum as Niger's president, anxiety hung thick in the air in the capital Niamey on Sunday.

The capital is a stronghold for opposition to Bazoum, who has been confined to his official residence since July 26. In the dusty alleyways of Niamey's Boukoki neighborhood, the prospect of an armed intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was largely being met with flinty determination.

"We're going to fight for this revolution. We're not going to retreat faced with the enemy, we're determined," said Boukoki resident Adama Oumarou. "We were waiting for this coup for a long time. When it arrived, we breathed a sigh of relief," she said.

The combative attitude is widely shared in alleys echoing with the sound of whirring sewing machines coming from nearby shops. "If ECOWAS intervenes, that will make the situation worse. But the people are ready and the population is going to support the new leaders because we want change," said a textile

trader who gave his name as Jackou.

### 'We have confidence'

Small traders regard the military takeover as a means of freeing themselves from the quagmire of deep economic malaise in a country that ranks as one of the globe's poorest, after 12 years of rule by the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS). Whereas the political class is widely regarded as corrupt, the army has managed to retain its prestige — to the extent that Nigeriens have little doubt as to how their troops might measure up against ECOWAS forces should they need to test their mettle.

"We have confidence in our soldiers!" said Abdoulaye Issaka, half hidden amid a heap of fabric behind his sewing machine. Additionally, he said, "we have the backing of Mali, Burkina (Faso) - that has strengthened us a lot." Both neighboring states — which have experienced coups of their own in recent years — have warned that they would consider any military intervention against Niger "an act of war". For Amadou Bounty Diallo, an analyst and former soldier who said he was ready to don uniform again if

need be, an armed intervention would be doomed to fail. "How do you advance in a city where the entire population is hostile to ECOWAS? We are going to fight in every nook and cranny," he said.

### Deep ties

Though military defeat is seen as improbable here, nonetheless there is concern at the prospect of conflict with neighboring states. Many premises in Boukoki are owned by expats from neighboring Nigeria who say they fear reprisals should their country's troops show up. "We don't need this conflict," said Muhammad, a Nigerian couturier who has lived in Niger for five years.

"We know the people of Niger will be angry (in the event of conflict), they will see us as enemies. If something happens we shall return to Nigeria," he said. "My parents called me to tell me to come home, but I'm staying. I'm not afraid," said Mustapha Ousmane, a Nigerian who works for Issaka.

A Nigerian colleague makes a throat-cutting gesture with his thumb — before bursting out laughing. Even at this stage, some can afford to joke about the prospect of potential conflict between "brother" na-

tions which citizens of both see as unimaginable, not least given their close commercial and linguistic but also family ties. "If the ECOWAS states take up arms, they are going to kill their brothers and we also shall kill them. And after that how shall we look one another in the face? There's no sense to it," Jackou said.

And among those who do support Bazoum, many are not convinced that the spilling of civilian blood is a price worth paying to restore the ancient regime. "There's nothing for it but to allow a transition then move on to elections," said Indou, who works for a money transfer firm.

"War is not the solution. It could result in many deaths — and not just at the (presidential) palace but also in the neighborhoods," Indou said by telephone. "Where am I going to go? I don't have the means of defending myself." "We have only our fingers with which to pray," she said, putting her faith in divine judgment in a country where 98 percent are Muslim and where religion tends to bind when politics divides. It's a stance shared by Adama Oumarou.

"We pray Allah may protect our country. In the mosques, at home, in the street. Every moment," she said. "Only God knows... Inshallah." — AFP

## 'Slaughter' as 30 migrants missing off Italy in rough seas

**ROME:** At least 30 migrants are missing following two shipwrecks off the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to survivor testimony, as rescuers Sunday winched to safety others trapped on the rocks by rough seas. Around 28 people were reported lost at sea by survivors on one boat, while three were reported missing from the second, after both went down in stormy weather on Saturday, said the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Both were rickety iron boats believed to have set off from Sfax in Tunisia on Thursday. Italy's coastguard said it had saved 57 survivors from the two shipwrecks, and recovered the body of a woman and a minor. It released dramatic footage Sunday of the rescues, in which people could be seen carried high on the crests of vast waves, while a coastguard vessel soared and plunged nearby.

While some people tried to climb onto the vessel as it rocked, others, wearing black rubber rings,



LAMPEDUSA, Italy: This aerial view taken on July 28, 2020, shows the Italian island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean Sea, which in recent years has been an arrival point for migrants crossing from North Africa. — AFP

clung desperately to one another in a human chain.

Cultural mediators with the IOM believed there were "at least 30 people missing" after speaking to those pulled from the waves, press officer Flavio Di Giacomo told AFP. An investigation into the shipwrecks has been opened in Agrigento, on the nearby Italian island of Sicily. Agrigento's chief of police Emanuele Ricifari said the traffickers would have known bad weather was forecast. "Whoever allowed them, or forced them, to leave with this sea is an un-

scrupulous criminal lunatic," he told Italian media.

"Rough seas are forecast for the next few days. Let's hope they stop. It's sending them to slaughter with this sea," he said. As the stormy weather continued, an alpine rescue team and the air force were Sunday lifting to safety migrants trapped on a rocky part of Lampedusa's coastline. The Sicilian Alpine Rescue (CNSAS) said there were more migrants on the rocks than the 20 initially reported — perhaps as many as 40. — AFP

## 23 hurt, buildings collapse as quake hits east China

**PINGYUAN, China:** At least 23 people were injured and dozens of buildings collapsed, state media reported, after a shallow 5.4-magnitude earthquake struck eastern China in the early hours of Sunday. The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake struck at 2:33 am (1833 GMT Saturday), 26 kilometers (16 miles) south of the city of Dezhou in Shandong province, at a depth of 10 kilometers.

It was the strongest to hit the province in more than a decade, state-run tabloid the Global Times said. The quake was felt as far away as Beijing and Tianjin, as well as in Shanghai, about 800 kilometers (500 miles) from the epicenter.

Videos on social media showed shaking light fixtures, trembling ground and people evacuating their buildings, with one clip showing people walking past bricks scattered on the ground. "The tremor was so strong... during the earthquake my head was shaking on the pillow, I thought I was having a nightmare," one person posted on social media platform Weibo from Shandong's neighboring Hebei province. USGS's PAGER system, which provides preliminary assessments on the impact of earthquakes, issued a red alert, estimating extensive damage and some casualties were probable based on previous quake data.

By Sunday evening, the quake had caused 23 injuries in Pingyuan County, Dezhou City, "of which 10 people were hospitalized for minor injuries, and 13 people were slightly injured", the city's official Wechat account said, citing Earthquake Field Command.

An AFP team saw cracked walls and bricks strewn on the ground near the epicenter of the quake in the rural and sparsely populated county but the damage appeared relatively minor. Locals helped with the cleanup operation in one village, with a group of four elderly women putting a low brick wall back together outside an overgrown yard. Deng Hongqiang, 55, who lives outside the village but came back to prop up the wall on his uninhabited property, told AFP he had been jolted awake by the quake.

"At the time, all I knew was the ground was shaking... so I went outside," he said. There was "no way" to repair his old house in the area, he said. "We'll have to demolish and rebuild." Nurses tended to some of the injured at the nearby First People's Hospital. — AFP

## Pope winds up Portugal visit with big outdoor Mass

**LISBON:** Pope Francis celebrated an open-air Mass before a huge crowd on Sunday at a waterside park near Lisbon to wrap up an international jamboree of Catholic youth. Around 1.5 million people attended the service at the Parque Tejo park on the eastern outskirts of the Portuguese capital, the Vatican said.

The crowd waved national flags and cheered as the 86-year-old pope arrived at the park, which was built for the occasion on a former landfill site. Many had camped out overnight in sleeping bags or floor mats after attending a vigil in the park held by the pope. In his homily, Francis thanked the youth for taking part in the festival, calling them "the hope of a different world". He also urged the crowd to extend their "affection and prayers" to

those who could not come "because of armed conflicts and wars".

"There are many of them in our world. In thinking of this continent, I feel great sorrow for beloved Ukraine, which continued to suffer greatly," he added to applause. With little shade in the park, pilgrims protected themselves from the blazing sun with umbrellas or makeshift tents made from sheets. Portugal's state weather agency has issued a "red" alert — its highest level — for Lisbon on Sunday due to the heat, with temperatures forecast to hit 41 degrees Celsius (106 degrees Fahrenheit).

"It's extraordinary to be able to be here to see our Pope Francis who has managed to gather people from the whole world," Pimentel Gomes, a 52-year-old priest from Brazil, told



ALGÉS, Portugal: Pope Francis waves from the popemobile as he arrives for a meeting with volunteers of the World Young Day (WYD) dance in Alges, 10 km away from Lisbon, on August 6, 2023. — AFP

AFP as he sat for breakfast before the Mass. The pope, who now uses a wheelchair or walking stick to get around, will meet with the thousands of event volunteers on Sunday af-

ternoon to thank them before flying back to Rome. This was his first foreign trip since he spent nine nights in hospital after undergoing hernia surgery in June. — AFP

## International

## Ukraine faces new wave of attacks

## Russia hits airbases; Kyiv shoots down 30 missiles, drones

KYIV: Ukraine said on Sunday it suffered several waves of aerial attacks overnight, which Moscow said targeted military airfields, a day after a strike on a Russian tanker on the Kerch Strait. The Ukrainian air force said Sunday it shot down 30 out of the 40 cruise missiles and all Shahed drones launched by Russia.

"In total, the enemy used 70 air attack weapons in several waves" in the night between Saturday and Sunday. It added that Russia launched three Kinzhal hypersonic missiles but did not say if they had been destroyed. The Ukrainian armed force did not specify which sites were hit by the missiles that got through air defenses.

The Russian army however said it struck "Ukrainian armed forces airbases around the settlements of Starokostiantyniv in the Khmelnytskyi region and Dubno in the Rivne region."

Home to a major airbase, the western Khmelnytskyi region located hundreds of kilometers from the front lines of the fighting has been repeatedly targeted during the war. "Since yesterday evening, the Khmelnytskyi region has been attacked three times... most missiles were shot down" said local official Sergiy Tyurin. Several buildings and the bus station were damaged, he said on Telegram.

He also posted pictures of a crumbling building engulfed in flames, saying a corn waste warehouse had caught fire. Meanwhile in the Rivne region that Russia said it hit, "only a few private households were damaged" according to regional head Vitaliy Koval.

## 'All targets hit'

On Saturday Ukraine said Russian forces struck a blood transfusion centre in the Kharkiv region of northeast Ukraine. "This war crime alone says everything about Russian aggression," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. The reported strike came shortly after Zelensky said Russian missiles had hit a facility of the Ukrainian aeronautics group Motor Sich, one of several companies requisitioned by the government since Moscow's invasion.

On Sunday morning the Russian army said "all targets were hit" in the overnight strikes. It said that separately Russian air defense forces shot down a drone approaching Moscow. The Russian capital was almost never targeted since the beginning of the offensive in Ukraine, until a series of attacks in recent months. The drone was downed without any casualties or damage, and restrictions on flights at Moscow's Vnukovo airport were quickly lifted. There have been an increased number of drone attacks not only on regions bordering Ukraine, but also on Moscow. A Ukrainian drone hit a Russian oil tanker south of the Kerch Strait in the night between Friday and Saturday. On Sunday morning repair work was being carried out on the vessel that was still afloat, according to Russia's Federal Agency for Sea and Inland Water Transport.

Attacks have multiplied on both sides of the Black Sea since Russia exited a deal protecting grain exports there, brokered by the UN and Turkey. Russia has hit port infrastructure on the Black Sea and the Danube, while Ukraine has targeted Russia's Black



SOSNOVE, Ukraine: This photograph shows remains of railway station in Sosnove village, Donetsk region on August 5, 2023, amid Russian invasion in Ukraine. — AFP

Sea Fleet. While combat continues, the likelihood of securing peace looks extremely thin. Saudi Arabia nevertheless hosted talks on the Ukraine war Saturday in the latest flexing of its diplomatic muscles.

Organisers succeeded in bringing together rep-

resentatives of the four members of the influential BRICS bloc besides Russia: Brazil, India, China and South Africa. "We had an extremely honest, open conversation," a statement on the Ukrainian presidency website said Sunday. — AFP

## Ukraine replaces Soviet emblem with trident

KYIV: Ukraine's trident coat of arms glimmered on the shield of a gigantic statue overlooking Kyiv on Sunday, after construction workers winched it up to replace a Soviet hammer and sickle.

The operation to put the trident in place of the Soviet emblem on the 62-metre-tall steel figure of a woman, known as the Fatherland Mother, began last month, as Ukraine purges its public areas of reminders of Russian and Soviet rule. Workers lowered the hammer and sickle from the Soviet emblem that originally decorated the shield on Tuesday.

On a bright sunny morning shortly after 6 am (0300 GMT), construction workers and industrial climbers winched the 7.60 metre-tall trident into place, pending final adjustments. They posed waving the Ukrainian flag on top of the shield. The silvery monument stands high on the bank of the Dnieper River, brandishing a sword and shield.

The tallest monument in Ukraine measuring 102 meters including its base, it was erected in 1981 as a memorial to Soviet victory in World War II. Now it is part of a museum about Ukraine's role in World War II, which has changed its displays to reject Soviet narratives.

## 'It's just right'

The statue is also set to be renamed Ukraine Mother because its current name has Soviet associations. The hammer and sickle will become a museum exhibit. The museum's general director, Yuriy Savchuk, told AFP that he had received a message of congratulations from the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the raising of the tri-



KYIV: Steeplejacks operate to install the Ukrainian official coat of arms, also known as the tryzub, replacing the coat of arms of the former Soviet Union which was previously removed, on the shield of the 62-meter (102 meters with pedestal) Motherland Monument in Kyiv, on August 6, 2023. — AFP

dent and hoped the leader would attend an official opening.

"It's really nice that we've completed a certain stage of the work," he told AFP. "It's a beautiful, sunny day, the Dnieper (river) is sparkling, there is no air alert. The trident is on the shield. Glory to Ukraine!" he said, after shaking hands with the construction team and passing them Zelensky's message.

"Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes! Glory to the Armed Forces!", said the trident's sculptor Oleksiy Pergamenschchyk, waving a Ukrainian flag at the base. "I'm happy because it's just right—it's not too big, not too small, not too thin—it's just right," he told AFP. He said he was planning to go up later and work from a cradle to perfectly centre the trident and finish the steel surface so "it will look as (if) it was there originally". "I'm grateful that I was put on this task and I hope the Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian people will be happy with it." — AFP



HIROSHIMA: People release paper lanterns on the Motoyasu River beside the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, commonly known as the atomic bomb dome, to mark the 78th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb attack in Hiroshima on August 6, 2023. — AFP

## Japan slams Russia nuke threat on Hiroshima 'versary

TOKYO: Japan's prime minister hit out at Russian threats to use nuclear weapons as the country marked the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Sunday. Around 140,000 people died in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and 74,000 in Nagasaki three days later, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the two Japanese cities days before the end of World War II.

"Japan, as the only nation to have suffered atomic bombings in war, will continue efforts towards a nu-

clear-free world," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at a ceremony in Hiroshima.

"The path towards it is becoming increasingly difficult because of deepening divisions in the international community over nuclear disarmament and Russia's nuclear threat," he said. "Given this situation, it is all the more important to bring back international momentum towards realization of a nuclear-free world," he said.

"Devastation brought to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by nuclear weapons can never be repeated," said Kishida, whose family comes from Hiroshima. Kishida's comments echoed those of UN chief Antonio Guterres, who issued a statement on the Hiroshima anniversary saying that "some countries are recklessly rattling the nuclear sabre once again, threatening to use these tools of annihilation." — AFP

## 28 killed as train derails...

Continued from Page 1

"Eight coaches have derailed," Mohsin Syal, a railway official, told local HUM News. The railway minister said an emergency had been declared at local hospitals as doctors struggled to treat the injured.

There were chaotic scenes at the Nawabshah Trauma Centre as ambulances and private cars ferried the injured for treatment. One man leapt from the back of an ambulance clutching a child, his clothes soaked in blood, while a woman moaned in pain as she was carried in on a stretcher. "We don't know what happened, we were just sitting inside," said one dazed woman.

At the accident site outside Nawabshah, dozens of cars, tractors, rickshaws and motorcycles could be seen parked on a road that runs alongside the track. Volunteers were wading through a canal that sepa-

rates the road from the railway line to help, and lifting the injured to get them assistance.

Some passenger compartments were upright but off the tracks, while others lay on their side, mangled steel from the undercarriage twisted and buckled. Senior police official Younis Chandio told Geo News from the site that some passengers remained trapped in one carriage. Ijaz Shah, a provincial railway official, told AFP that a relief train had been dispatched to the site.

The Hazara Express is a daily passenger train that leaves the port city of Karachi in the south and takes around 33 hours to reach Havelian in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, some 1,600 km north. In June 2021 two trains collided near Daharki in Sindh, killing at least 65 people and injuring about 150 others. In that accident, an express derailed onto the opposite track, and a second passenger train crashed into the wreckage roughly a minute later. At least 75 passengers burnt to death in a fire aboard the Tezgam express train in Oct 2019, while a two-train collision at Gholki killed more than 100 people in 2005. — AFP

objective reality of what occurred at trial." While some state-level proceedings have been shown on US television — OJ Simpson's nation-stopping murder trial was a ratings blockbuster — federal trials cannot be photographed or broadcast, courtesy of rules dating to 1946. Neal Katyal, a law professor at Georgetown University, argued in the Washington Post it was time to update this "antiquated" edict. "We live in a digital age, where people think visually and are accustomed to seeing things with their own eyes," he wrote.

The decision on whether to allow cameras into the courtroom will ultimately rest with the Judicial Conference — the policy-making body of the federal court system, which is run by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts. Alternatively, Congress could change the law. Katyal, who was a prosecutor in the murder trial of Derek Chauvin, the white Minnesota police officer who killed African-American George Floyd, said the broadcasting of those proceedings had helped a highly divided public to accept the guilty verdict when it came. The same would be true of the Trump trial, Katyal maintained. "We have a right to see it. And we have the right to ensure that rumormongers and conspiracy theorists don't control the narrative."

The problem with putting it all on the small screen, said Christina Bellantoni, an expert in media and political journalism at the University of Southern California, is Trump's formidable ability to dominate discourse and bend the narrative. "My prediction... would be that his public opinion ratings would go up, no matter what evidence is presented," she told AFP. — AFP

## Saudi wealth fund company to attract top sports events

RIYADH: The Saudi sovereign wealth fund on Sunday announced a new sports investment company designed to draw "major global events" to the kingdom, which has spent recent months luring top football stars. The company, SRJ Sports Investments, "will invest in acquiring and creating new sports events IP (intellectual property), commercial rights of popular and prominent sports competitions and hosting major global events in Saudi Arabia," the Public Investment Fund (PIF) said in a statement.

It will "target businesses specialized in offering unique fan engagement activities and transformative sports technology across the industry, bolstering Saudi

Arabia's position as one of the world's leading sports and entertainment destinations." Sports have been a major focus of the oil-rich kingdom's effort to rebrand as a global business and tourism destination under the Vision 2030 reform agenda pursued by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the PIF chairman.

Football clubs in the Gulf state, the world's biggest crude exporter, have signed a host of major stars beginning with Cristiano Ronaldo last year and continuing with Karim Benzema, Jordan Henderson and Sadio Mane this year, though overtures to Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi have been unsuccessful. Saudi Arabia has also caused shockwaves in golf with its financing of the rebel LIV series and hosts a Formula One Grand Prix.

The ATP and the WTA, which run the men's and women's professional tennis tours, have been targeted by the Saudis, who hosted an exhibition for top men's players outside Riyadh last year. The Public Investment Fund is one of the world's largest sovereign wealth vehicles with more than \$620 billion in assets. — AFP

## Calls growing to broadcast...

Continued from Page 1

Despite extensive media coverage of Trump's alleged crimes, an overwhelming majority of Republican voters — 74 percent — and a third of all voters believe he has done no wrong, according to a poll by the New York Times and Sienna College. Trump himself insists he is innocent, the victim of a "witch hunt" by an establishment desperate to silence him as he runs again for the White House.

A Trump lawyer, John Lauro, said he would favor having a televised trial, but in several appearances on Sunday talk shows he emphasized this was merely his own opinion. "I personally would love to see that," he told Fox News Sunday, adding he believed the Biden administration "does not want the American people to see the truth".

Clarifying Trump's exact role and actions is a prime reason to show the trial to a wide audience, said Alan Dershowitz, a constitutional law specialist. "If the Trump trial is not televised, the public will learn about the events through the extremely biased reporting of today's media," he wrote in The Hill. "It will be as if there were two trials: One observed by reporters for MSNBC, CNN, the New York Times and other liberal media, the other through the prism of reporters for Fox, Newsmax and other conservative outlets. "There will be nowhere to go to learn the

## Huge blue whale washes ashore in southern Chile

SANTIAGO: An enormous blue whale has washed up onto a beach in southern Chile, probably after dying at sea, local authorities said Sunday. Residents of the city of Ancud, on Chiloe island, first spotted the giant marine mammal Saturday on a Pacific ocean beach some 1,000 km south of the capital Santiago.

Agents of the Chilean national fishing agency Sernapesca, sent to investigate, confirmed the carcass was that of "a large cetacean of the family of Balaenopteridae," they posted on the X platform formerly known as Twitter. "We helped identify the specimen and, based on preliminary evidence, it is a blue whale," the agency added. Sernapesca's regional director Cristian Hudson told local media that "given its condition, the whale must have died at sea some time ago and drifted in that state".

Environmental groups noted that the area's waters are heavily used by the fishing industry and maritime traffic, and they called for an investigation to determine whether the creature was the victim of a collision. According to the non-governmental Ce-



ANCUD, Chile: A blue whale is stranded on the beach on Chiloe island on Aug 5, 2023. — AFP

lcean Conservation Center (CCC) of Chile, the family of Balaenopteridae, or rorquals, includes a variety of species, ranging from the nine-meter minke whale to the blue whale — which at up to 30 meters is considered the largest animal on Earth. — AFP

## International

# Philippines slams China Coast Guard for firing water cannon at its boats

## US state dept says incident threatens regional peace and stability

**MANILA:** The Philippines condemned China's Coast Guard on Sunday for firing water cannon at its vessels in the disputed South China Sea, describing it as "illegal" and "dangerous".

China said it had taken "necessary controls" against Philippine boats that had "illegally" entered its waters. Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually, and has ignored a 2016 international court ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

The latest incident took place as the Philippine Coast Guard escorted boats carrying food, water, fuel and other supplies for Filipino military personnel stationed at Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands. The US State Department condemned the Chinese actions, saying in a statement they were carried out by the coast guard and "maritime militia", and that they directly threatened regional peace and stability.

Second Thomas Shoal is about 200 kilometers (124 miles) from the Philippine island of Palawan and more than 1,000 kilometers from China's nearest major landmass of Hainan island. China's coast guard and navy vessels routinely block or shadow Philippine ships patrolling the contested waters, Manila says.

### 'Dangerous maneuvers'

Saturday's incident was the first time since November 2021 that the Chinese coast guard had used water cannon against a Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. "The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) strongly condemns the China Coast Guard's (CCG) dangerous maneuvers and illegal use of water cannons against the PCG vessels," the Philippine Coast Guard said in a statement.

"Such actions by the CCG not only disregarded the safety of the PCG crew and the supply boats but also

violated international law." The Armed Forces of the Philippines said China's coast guard had "blocked and water cannoned" one of its chartered resupply vessels.

Due to the "excessive and offensive" actions, a second chartered vessel was unable to unload its cargo for the routine troop rotation and resupply operation, military spokesman Colonel Medel Aguilar said in a statement. "We call on the China Coast Guard and the Central Military Commission to act with prudence and be responsible in their actions to prevent miscalculations and accidents that will endanger people's lives," Aguilar said. The British, Australian, and European Union embassies all expressed concern. The Japanese envoy in Manila called the incident "totally unacceptable", while the Canadian mission said it "unreservedly condemns the dangerous and provocative actions" of the Chinese Coast Guard.

China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu said in Beijing: "Two repair ships and two coast guard ships from the Philippines illegally broke into the waters... in China's Nansha Islands."

Beijing "implemented necessary controls in accordance with the law and stopped Philippine ships carrying illegal building materials", he said. The Philippine foreign ministry said in response the Southeast Asian country "exercises sovereign rights" over the shoal, which is within its exclusive economic zone.

### Latest maritime incident

Manila and Beijing have a long history of maritime disputes over the South China Sea, although former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte was reluctant to criticize his more powerful neighbor as he sought closer ties with Beijing in the hope of attracting investment. However, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has insisted since taking power in June 2022



This undated handout released by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on August 6, 2023 shows a China Coast Guard ship (left) releasing water cannon on a Philippine Coast Guard ship near Second Thomas Shoal during a re-supply mission on August 5. --AFP

he will not let China trample on his country's maritime rights and has gravitated towards the United States as he seeks to strengthen defense ties.

Tensions between Manila and Beijing flared this year after a Chinese coast guard vessel allegedly used a military-grade laser against a Philippine coast guard boat near Second Thomas Shoal. Beijing accused the Philippine boat of intruding into China's sovereign waters without permission.

After China occupied Mischief Reef in the mid-1990s, the Philippines ran a derelict navy vessel aground on the nearby shoal to assert Manila's territorial claims in the waters. Members of the Philippine marines are based there.

In another incident in April, a Chinese coast guard ship cut off the Philippine patrol vessel Malapascua as it carried journalists near Second Thomas Shoal. -- AFP



LIMOGES, France: This photograph taken on August 6, 2023, shows a painted X representing the location of a body of one of the two men killed in an accident after a vehicle hit a scooter during the night between August 5 and 6, 2023, in Limoges, central France. -- AFP

## Two dead after police chase scooter in France

**LIMOGES, France:** A teenager riding a scooter and his adult passenger were killed in France after an encounter with police, during which officers said Sunday the pair fled a patrol and crashed into another vehicle. The incident comes just weeks after France was engulfed by its worst rioting for years following the police shooting of Nahel, an unarmed 17-year-old of Arab origin, during a road stop.

In the latest deadly incident, police sources say the moped fled at the sight of a police patrol that was preparing to stop it, with officers giving chase before abandoning the pursuit in Limoges, western France. Police claim the moped then jumped a red traffic light and collided with a car, killing the 16-year-old rider instantly and injuring the adult passenger, who later died of his injuries in hospital.

Limoges city hall said the car was carrying a father and his young children, who were "shocked and traumatized". On the city's General Leclerc avenue, a major thoroughfare lined with residential buildings, the roadway was strewn with sawdust and crosses indicating the positions of the bodies, according to an AFP journalist at the scene.

One of the crosses, surrounded by traces of blood, was 30 or 40 meters (yards) from the point of impact between the two vehicles. Police sources said that the pair were riding a powerful Yamaha TMAX scooter and that police "quickly put an end" to the pursuit, "judging the situation too dangerous". The regional authorities in Haute-Vienne declined to comment on the case, referring the matter to the Limoges prosecutor's office, which is expected to release a statement later.

"Our thoughts are obviously with the families of the victims to whom we offer our deepest condolences," the mayor of Limoges, Emile-Roger Lombertie, said in a statement. -- AFP

## Delhi halts plan to hide street dogs for G20 summit

**NEW DELHI:** India's capital has called a halt on plans to catch and hide thousands of stray dogs before world leaders arrive in the megacity for next month's G20 summit, a local official said Sunday. New Delhi's municipal government announced Thursday it would round up canines outside boutique hotels and popular tourist hotspots, and keep them at animal sterilization

## No sign of mass Pakistan protests after Khan's jailing

**ATTOCK, Pakistan:** Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's three-year sentence for graft prompted scattered rallies around the country, but there was no sign of any mass uprising Sunday despite his call for supporters to protest.

His imprisonment has raised fresh concerns of violence ahead of an election due later this year—that he is now disqualified from contesting—and has cast doubt on the fairness of any vote that excludes him. His lawyers complained Sunday they were being denied access to him for consultations so they can mount urgent legal challenges against his conviction.

They also raised concern for his confinement at Attock Jail, established 100 years ago on the outskirts of historical Attock city, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) west of the capital, Islamabad.

"He is a 70-year-old man and a former elected prime minister so legally he should be given a better class (of conditions) inside the jail," said Gohar Khan, a member of his legal team. Officials from his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said around 50 supporters had been detained overnight as police moved swiftly against protests after Khan was arrested and whisked into jail.

At a court hearing not attended by the ex-premier Saturday, a judge found him guilty of graft in relation to gifts he received while prime minister and sentenced him to three years in jail.

Anyone convicted of a criminal offence is disqualified from contesting elections in Pakistan, and parliament is likely to be dissolved in the next two

weeks, just before it completes its term. A general election is due to be held by mid-November, but there is speculation the polls could be delayed following the release on Saturday of the country's latest census results, which necessitates the redrawing of constituencies under Pakistani law.

Khan's arrest and detention for three days in connection with the same case in May, sparked deadly violence when his supporters took to the streets in the tens of thousands, clashing with police.

In the aftermath of his release, PTI has been targeted by a crackdown with thousands of arrests, reports of intimidation and muzzling of the press. Khan was prime minister until April last year, when he was ousted in a vote of no-confidence he says was engineered by the country's powerful military.

### 'Don't sit silently'

Soon after police picked him up from his home in Lahore Saturday, a pre-recorded video was released on Khan's social media accounts calling for his supporters to protest in force. "I have just one request and appeal, that you are not to sit silently at home," he said. "This is a war for justice, for your rights, for your freedom... chains don't just fall off, they have to be broken. You must continue peaceful protest until you get your rights." But party officials said Sunday there were no plans for a nationwide call to protest.

"As far as protests go, there's not a planned one as yesterday protesters were raided by the police and detained," an official, who asked not to be named, said.

Police were deployed in major centers across the country after Khan's arrest, and moved quickly to disperse gatherings of PTI supporters. Officials said around 35 people were detained in eastern Lahore, and 20 in the port city of Karachi. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the northern province that has long been a Khan stronghold, authorities said more than 150 PTI supporters had been picked up. -- AFP



QUETTA: Supporters of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan, shout anti-government slogans during a protest in Quetta on August 5, 2023. -- AFP

centers until the summit was over. But the policy was abruptly withdrawn over the weekend, a local official told AFP on Sunday, without explaining why. Local media reported that the dog-catching scheme had aroused opposition from Delhi residents and animal rights activists.

More than 60,000 stray dogs live on Delhi's streets according to India's Livestock Census of 2012, the most recent available government figures. Sterilization campaigns have been regularly employed by local authorities to keep the canine population in check, though dog packs remain present in parks and residential neighborhoods around the city.

Many of Delhi's strays are beloved by their adopted neighborhoods despite lacking formal owners, with some dogs clothed in special canine jackets to

keep warm during the city's harsh winters.

But they are also a hazard to humans, with local media regularly reporting on the mauling of young children by aggressive dog packs across the country. Roughly 17 million dog bites are reported across India each year and the World Health Organization says that nearly 20,000 people nationwide die of rabies annually.

The Delhi metropolitan area, home to around 30 million people, has been on an intense beautification drive since India assumed the G20 presidency last year. Authorities have cleared illegal slums near summit venues and revamped major arterial routes on the city's gridlocked roads ahead of September's summit, which will host leaders of the world's top economies. -- AFP

### News in Brief

#### NY teen arrested in hate crime death

**NEW YORK:** A 17-year-old high school student in New York has been charged with murder as a hate crime in the stabbing death of a Black gay dancer, authorities said Saturday, in a case that has attracted attention from stars like Beyoncé and Spike Lee. O'Shae Sibley, 28, a professional dancer and choreographer, was killed on July 29 by a single stab wound to the chest during an altercation at a Brooklyn gas station. "He could be my son," New York Mayor Eric Adams, who is Black, said at a news conference at the gas station where the suspect's arrest was announced. -- AFP

#### Kim inspects weapons factories

**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited several major arms factories this week, including facilities producing engines for strategic cruise missiles, and called for increased weapons production, state media reported on Sunday. The three-day inspection of the factories comes less than two weeks after Kim attended a major military parade with Russian and Chinese officials, showcasing North Korea's newest weapons, including intercontinental ballistic missiles and spy drones. Kim visited a factory producing engines for armed unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as production lines of shells for super-large-caliber multiple rocket launchers and transporter-erector-launchers. -- AFP

#### Six dead, four missing in China rains

**BEIJING:** Six people are dead and four are missing after torrential rain hit China's northeastern Jilin province, state media reported Sunday, the latest fatalities from more than a week of weather-related disasters across the country. China has been hit with record heavy rains in recent weeks, with Beijing saying Friday that natural disasters had caused 147 deaths or disappearances last month. And a further six dead and four were missing after heavy rain in the northeastern city of Shulan, state news agency Xinhua reported Sunday, citing local authorities. -- AFP

#### Seoul will hold next Catholic youth festival

**LISBON:** Seoul in South Korea will host the next World Youth Day, a major Catholic youth festival, in 2027, Pope Francis said Sunday at the close of this year's event in Lisbon. "The next World Youth Day will be in Asia, it will be in South Korea in Seoul, the pontiff told the faithful assembled to celebrate a Mass at a park on Lisbon's eastern outskirts. "And so in 2027, from the western border of Europe, it will move to the Far East, and this is a beautiful sign of the universality of the Church." -- AFP

#### Yameen barred from Maldives election

**MALE:** The highest court in the Maldives ruled Sunday that jailed former leader Abdulla Yameen cannot be a candidate at next month's presidential election. Yameen, 64, is serving an 11-year jail sentence after being convicted last December on corruption and money-laundering charges while president of the Indian Ocean archipelago nation best known for its upmarket beach tourist resorts. A full bench of the seven-member Supreme Court upheld a decision by the independent Elections Commission to bar Yameen from standing in the September 9 vote. -- AFP

MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 2023

# Pakistan's economic problems leave textile industry in tatters

## 30% of factories closed, nearly 700,000 jobs lost in a year



LAHORE: In this picture taken on July 20, 2023, textile workers arrange thread rolls at Kohinoor Mills in Lahore. — AFP photos

LAHORE: Factory worker Lubna Babar was made redundant at the beginning of the year, a victim of a crisis in the Pakistan textile industry that has seen it lose ground to more nimble Asian competitors. "When you lose your job, your life comes to a close," the 43-year-old from Lahore told AFP.

"We've been working in factories for years... the day you get sacked, the story ends there."

Pakistan's industrial manufacturing sector — like elsewhere in the world — has suffered from the slowdown in global consumption and the rise in energy costs following the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

But the difficulties of the textile sector, which accounts for 60 percent of Pakistan's exports, are compounded by the critical state of the economy and months of political chaos. In Pakistan, the industry was buoyed at the tail end of the coronavirus pandemic, when it was freed of restrictions earlier than regional rivals India and Bangladesh and benefited from government financial aid, including slashed energy rates. In 2022-2023, however, textile exports fell by 15 percent to \$16.5 billion.

"Two years ago, we were on a very high growth trajectory... we were confident that our exports this year would go to \$25 billion," said Hamid Zaman, managing director of Sarena Textile Industries. "Unfortunately, when you have political instability and things are not clear, and the policies of the government are reversed, this whole thing

has gone into a tailspin," he told AFP.

The political chaos started in April last year, when Imran Khan was dismissed as prime minister by a vote of no-confidence. His attempts to parlay popular public support into a movement to force an early election saw him arrested in May, leading to violence that only ended with a massive crackdown on his party and its supporters. He was convicted of graft on Saturday and sentenced to three years in jail.

### Factories shutting down

The textile and clothing sector employs around 40 percent of the country's 20 million-strong industrial workforce. The main export markets are the US, EU, the UK, Turkey, and the UAE, supplying cotton fabrics, knitwear, bed linen, towels, and ready-made garments to global brands such as Zara, H&M, Adidas, John Lewis, Target and Macy's. But many factories have closed in recent months — at least temporarily — or are no longer running at full capacity.

"Perhaps 25 to 30 percent of all textile factories have closed. It is estimated that perhaps 700,000 jobs have been lost in the last year or year and a half," said Zaman. Babar felt this keenly, having looked for work at other factories — but they were also laying off employees. "They said they were no longer receiving orders from abroad," she said.

After devastating floods in the summer of 2022, cotton production in Pakistan fell to an all-time low.

and still elevated inflation." "I also expect that additional rate increases will likely be needed to get inflation on a path down to the FOMC's two percent target," she added in her remarks. On Friday, Labor Department data showed that the world's biggest economy added 187,000 jobs in July and 185,000 in June — slowing from before.

But wage gains held steady at 0.4 percent, and were 4.4 percent higher than the same period a year ago in July. Analysts noted that this could still be too elevated for the Fed. "The demand for workers continues to exceed the supply of available job seekers, adding upward pressure on prices," said Bowman in her Saturday speech. She added that she would be seeking "consistent evidence" that inflation is on a meaningful path down toward the Fed's two percent target, when mulling how long the federal funds rate needs to remain restrictive.

"I will also be watching for signs of slowing in consumer spending and signs that labor market condi-

Musk gave no details on how users could claim their money. Since the tycoon bought the social media platform for \$44 billion last October, its advertising business has collapsed, in part because of its looser approach to blocking hate speech, and the return of previously banned far-right accounts.

Musk has repeatedly cited a desire for free speech as motivating his changes, and lashed out at what he sees as the threat posed to free expression by changing cultural sensitivities.

According to nonprofit organization the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), hate speech has flourished at the platform. X has disputed the findings and is suing the CCDH.

In December, Musk reinstated former US president Donald Trump's Twitter account, although Trump has yet to return to the platform. The ex-president was banned from Twitter in early 2021 for his role in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by a group of his supporters seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election. X recently reinstated rap-



LAHORE: In this picture taken on July 25, 2023, Lubna Babar, a former factory worker speaks during an interview with AFP at her house in Lahore.

The textile industry was unable to compensate by buying from abroad because of a freeze on imports imposed by the government to preserve its forex reserves. Thousands of containers filled with raw materials and machinery essential for the country's industries were held up for months in the southern port of Karachi. Textile companies also saw the cost of capital rise significantly, contending with interest rates of more than 20 percent as the central bank sought to curb record-breaking inflation.



Michelle Bowman

tions are loosening," she said. Officials are expected to assess the labor market report for August, along with upcoming inflation readings, before making their next rate decision in late September. — AFP



per and designer Kanye West around eight months after his account was suspended, according to media reports. Last fall, West, who now goes professionally by Ye, posted an image that appeared to show a swastika interlaced with a Star of David, and Musk suspended the artist from the platform. — AFP

### 'Not a solution'

Pakistan finally managed to consolidate its foreign exchange reserves with the approval in mid-July of a \$3 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and additional assistance from China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "But that's not a solution, it's just getting deeper and deeper into debt," said Kamran Arshad, managing director of Ghazi Fabrics International.

"The only way forward is enhancing Pakistan's exports and creating an environment that is investor-friendly that would incentivize industrial production and activity," he added.

One of the conditions of the IMF bailout was an end to subsidies on energy, leading to a sharp rise in the cost of electricity, which affects the competitiveness of textile companies. "Our biggest challenge going forward is having energy prices that are substantially higher than those of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China," said Arshad. "We're not asking for subsidies. Realistically we are asking for regionally competitive energy prices." In the face of these challenges, the country's textile manufacturers have lost customers globally.

"Pakistan's overall market share in the textile and garment industry was nearly 2.25 percent about two years ago. Now it's down to around 1.7 percent," said Amir Fayyaz Sheikh, CEO of Kohinoor Mills. — AFP

## More rate hikes 'likely' needed to lower inflation: Fed

WASHINGTON: A US central bank official said Saturday that more interest rate hikes "will likely be needed" to bring inflation down further, shortly after policymakers lifted rates to the highest level since 2001. Federal Reserve governor Michelle Bowman's prepared remarks to an event in Colorado also came after a mixed employment report on Friday showing that hiring in the United States has slowed but wage gains remained robust.

Bowman said she supported the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) decision for a rate hike in July given "strong economic data

## Musk offers legal aid for users in trouble at work over X posts

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk on Saturday said his social media company X would provide monetary legal aid to users who face blowback from their bosses over posts on the platform. Users, including many celebrities and others in the public eye, have occasionally found themselves in hot water with their employers over controversial things they have posted, liked, or retweeted on the platform, which was formerly known as Twitter.

"If you were unfairly being by your employer due to posting or liking something on this platform, we will fund your legal bill," he wrote on the site.

"No limit. Please let us know."

## UK announces tech partnership to curb migrant arrivals

LONDON: The British government on Saturday announced a new partnership between law enforcement and social media companies to crack down on online content encouraging migrants to arrive in the UK illegally using small boats. The Conservative government, struggling in the polls a year before the general election, has promised to end dangerous cross-Channel journeys from northern France in small boats but experienced a number of setbacks in delivering its plans.

Plans to controversially send illegal migrants to Rwanda have become bogged down in the courts, while the housing of asylum seekers on a barge in southern England to reduce accommodation costs has experienced several delays.

The announced partnership between Britain's National Crime Agency and companies including Meta, TikTok and X (former Twitter) will target content linked to people smuggling, such as offers of false documents, group discounts, free spaces for children and false claims of safe passage, Downing Street said. "To stop the boats, we have to tackle the business model of vile people smugglers at source," UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

"That means clamping down on their attempts to lure people into making these illegal crossings and profit from putting lives at risk. "This new commitment from tech firms will see us redouble our efforts to fight back against these criminals, working together to shut down their vile trade," he added. But the main opposition Labour party's home affairs spokeswoman, Yvette Cooper, said the action was "too little, too late", accusing the government of having "no idea how to fix the mess they created". — AFP



Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

# US labor market shows mixed signs amid Fitch downgrade

## Eurozone inflation eases amid falling energy prices

**KUWAIT:** In the US, the latest ISM manufacturing index came in at 46.4, well below 50, indicating that the manufacturing sector is still in contraction. The figure displays the eighth month of the US manufacturing sector coming in at contraction territory, albeit at a slower pace. Meanwhile, PMI in the services sector declined to 52.7 from 53.9 previously. Although economic activity in the US services sector continues to expand, July's reading shows a pullback in growth as the Fed look for signs of softening inflation in the services part of the economy.

Over in the US, the latest JOLTS job openings came in at 9.58 million, below the forecasted 9.61 million, dropping to its lowest level since April 2021. Nevertheless, the latest number comes to show that the labor market is still historically tight despite the aggressive interest rate hikes by the Fed. This decline is just what Fed doves needed to advocate for stopping interest rate hikes in the next meeting to not exert more pressure onto the economy.

It seems that a "soft-landing" is very much achievable in the United States. While the Fed started its vigorous rate hike increases, the fear of recession started to loom. However, the resilient labor market seems to have just done enough to fade away those fears, and that was evident once again in the latest ADP non-farm employment change data released. The latest reading showed that private payrolls increased by 324K, squashing the forecasted number of 191K. This comes as a breather for Fed officials as the latest data show that inflation is slowing down, without having the burden of dealing with the massive unemployment that usually comes with a recession.

### Unemployment claims

The number of Americans filing for unemployment claims increased

to 227,000 from 221,000 previously amid a series of mixed employment data coming over the week. Moreover, non-farm employment change came in at 187,000 versus an expected figure of 205,000. While both data points exhibit a possible softening in the labor market, the unemployment rate fell to 3.5 percent from 3.6 percent previously.

### Fitch Ratings downgrade

Fitch Ratings announced on Tuesday a downgrade on US credit from the highest AAA rating to AA+ amid a "steady deterioration" of governance and politics. The ratings agency stated that several debt ceiling gridlocks and last minute resolutions indicated an "erosion of governance" amid higher interest payments and debt burden. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen strongly disagreed with the decision stating that it is "arbitrary and based on outdated data." Moreover, white house press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said "we strongly disagree with this decision." The US dollar index ended the week higher at 102.017.

### Eurozone inflation

Over in the eurozone, annual headline inflation is down to 5.3 percent from 5.5 percent previously, largely due to the underlying drop in energy prices. Moreover, Food, tobacco and alcohol is expected to be at 10.8 percent annually this month, a notable drop from last month's figure of 11.6 percent. Despite this, core inflation remains sticky, coming in at 5.5 percent annually matching last month's figure. Services inflation also accelerated to 5.6 percent from 5.4 percent previously. While this is still a long way off the ECB's inflation rate target of 2.0 percent, the worry shown by ECB speakers regarding weakness in consumer demand as well as these figures might

### Rates - August 06<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0944	1.0933	1.1041	1.1010	1.0800	1.1120	1.1061
GBP	1.2712	1.2687	1.2792	1.2748	1.2600	1.3000	1.2757
JPY	142.56	141.54	142.88	141.75	141.00	144.00	139.70
CHF	0.8739	0.8697	0.8782	0.8727	0.8500	0.8900	0.8668

just be enough to allow the ECB policymakers to tolerate the idea of sitting and evaluating the effects of their rapid tightening. Markets are currently pricing in no hike for the September ECB meeting as officials vow to remain data dependent. The euro ended the week in decline, with the EUR/USD currency pair closing at 1.1010.

### BoE hikes by 25bps

The Bank of England (BoE) proceeded with an interest rate hike on Thursday of 25bps, sending its official bank rate to a 15-year high of 5.25 percent. The British economy has witnessed unintended records recently, with inflation reaching a 41-year high of 11.1 percent last year, and now modestly dropping to 7.9 percent, almost quadruple the intended BoE inflation target of 2 percent. Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey attributed the inflation in service prices to the economy's sticky inflation, stating that "continued strength in services price inflation may suggest high inflation will persist." The British economy's inflation of 7.9 percent is the highest of any major economy, and as a result, the BoE remains very hawkish in its statements with the most recent being that "the MPC will ensure that Bank Rate is sufficiently restrictive

for sufficiently long to return inflation to the 2 percent target." The sterling fell over the week, with the GBP/USD currency pair last trading at 1.2748.

### China manufacturing

The latest news coming out of China is not encouraging in the slightest, with the latest PMI data showing a drop in the non-manufacturing services sector all the way to 51.5 from 53.2 previously, and way off the forecasted 52.9 figure. Another similar drop in the services sector could well send the figure below the 50 threshold, sending the aforementioned sector into contraction, alongside the manufacturing sector that is still below the 50 mark, although it slightly rose up to 49.3. The majority of the non-manufacturing PMI components are already showing contraction, with the only component being well and truly above the 50 mark being the "expectations" component, raising concerns that the only reason behind the optimism in this component comes from the hope that the government will come up with some sort of stimulus that will bring life to the economy. The USD/CNY currency pair ended the week lower, last trading at 7.1706.


### RBA holds cash rate

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) decided to hold the cash rate at 4.10 percent. In their policy statement delivered by Governor Philip Lowe, the central bank declared that "inflation in Australia is declining but is still too high." Lowe added, "The decision to hold rates unchanged provides further time to assess the impact of the increase in interest rates to date and the economic outlook." Australia is still suffering from persistent inflation in the services sector as well as a historically tight labor market. This has prompted the central bank to leave open the possibility of further hikes when the statement read "Some further tightening of monetary policy may be required to ensure that inflation returns to target in a reasonable timeframe, but that will depend upon the data." Markets are currently pricing in no change for September's RBA meeting.

The Australian dollar is down on the week following the decision to hold rates steady, with the AUD/USD pair last trading around 0.6569.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30730.



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 3 AUGUST 2023

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,087	7,933.39	-1.9%	-1.6%	-2.2%	578,762,817	176,503,257	38,181	17.2	1.2	79.0%
Main Market	9,071	5,564.65	-0.5%	-1.2%	-0.6%	546,212,013	48,793,867	20,991	14.2	0.8	21.0%
All Share	43,158	7,145.07	-1.6%	-1.5%	-2.0%	1,124,974,830	225,297,124	59,172	14.7	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,841	1,736.53	-1.9%	-1.8%	-3.2%	151,993,454	77,007,602	15,126	20.0	1.2	59.88%
Basic Materials	489	866.25	-1.6%	-1.9%	0.1%	3,787,860	2,724,726	1,008	8.1	1.4	1.13%
Consumer Discretionary	1,155	1,721.07	1.0%	0.0%	15.8%	169,124,118	19,347,954	6,367	14.6	0.9	2.68%
Consumer Staples	187	614.15	-0.8%	-1.2%	28.0%	2,841,800	1,480,629	298	NM	1.1	0.43%
Energy	208	997.13	-0.4%	-0.2%	-12.4%	1,002,320	109,500	164	9.2	0.7	0.48%
Financial Services	4,466	1,273.46	-1.9%	-1.3%	1.3%	507,645,256	70,964,538	16,362	24.2	0.8	10.35%
Health Care	225	454.28	0.0%	0.0%	-1.6%	0	0	0	9.9	0.9	0.52%
Industrials	3,432	985.93	-3.2%	-1.5%	-8.6%	43,572,206	22,879,532	8,192	16.4	0.9	7.95%
Insurance	902	2,209.30	3.7%	1.4%	42.5%	2,056,707	748,661	240	10.3	0.9	2.09%
Real Estate	2,657	1,239.50	-0.1%	-0.8%	2.5%	225,102,569	21,777,726	8,361	15.1	0.6	6.16%
Technology	8	595.09	-1.2%	3.2%	-14.5%	220,124	17,127	37	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,375	1,104.48	-1.3%	-0.8%	-6.5%	14,251,599	7,567,163	2,671	11.0	1.3	7.82%
Utilities	213	510.53	-3.0%	-4.0%	3.2%	3,376,817	671,967	346	15.9	1.9	0.49%

#### Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AINS	650	22.64%	981,830	599,008	79
MASAKEN	24.5	18.36%	7,223,535	167,176	286
JIYAD	27.8	17.80%	143,240,851	3,768,790	2,992
TAAMEER	18.8	16.05%	20,596,926	399,769	743
KMEFIC	82	11.56%	377,762	30,077	53

#### Top Losers

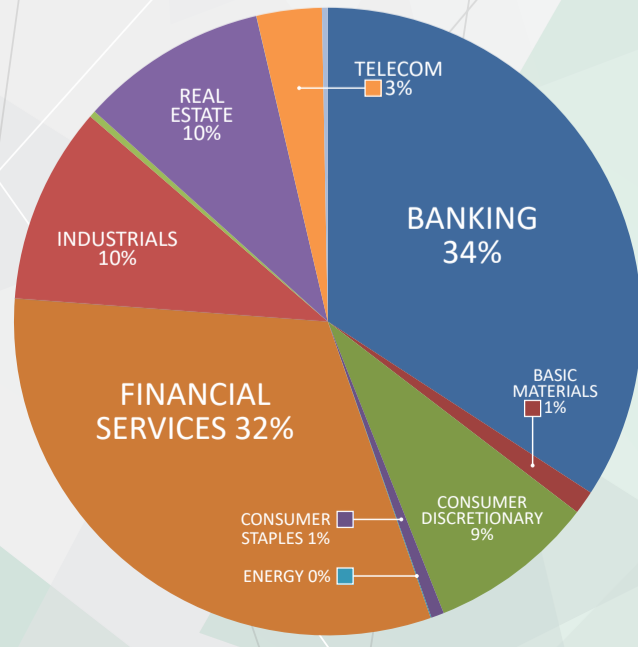
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
HUMANSOFT	3,322	-11.44%	2,649,742	9,042,255	3,430
TAMINV	539	-10.17%	124	66	5
SENERGY	37.1	-6.78%	212,147	8,038	39
MANAZEL	28	-6.04%	11,132,658	320,754	332
KPROJ	125	-6.02%	21,273,114	2,732,936	694


#### Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
JIYAD	27.8	17.80%	143,240,851	3,768,790	2,992
ARZAN	142	0.00%	72,709,870	10,497,787	1,799
IFA	163	0.00%	66,177,286	10,924,010	1,466
AAYAN	160	-0.62%	65,401,101	10,551,087	1,237
KRE	149	9.56%	65,185,188	9,452,464	1,982

#### Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	770	-2.04%	44,595,652	34,849,284	5,163
NBK	952	-1.86%	15,026,581	14,410,728	3,137
BOUBYAN	625	0.00%	19,109,337	11,834,840	2,734
IFA	163	0.00%	66,177,286	10,924,010	1,466
AAYAN	160	-0.62%	65,401,101	10,551,087	1,237





#### Market Summary:

- The Premier market dropped by 21% and 3%, while the Main Market volume and value increased by 74% and 32%, respectively.
- The Premier index still declining while the Main index is showing high volatility and is yet to stable.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7145, with support levels at 7105, 7085, and 7041, while resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7933, with support levels at 7899, 7864, and 7827, while resistance at 7945. The Main index closed at 5564, with support levels at 5550, 5526, and 5513, while resistance at 5575.

## Business

# Pakistan's population grows by 35 million to 250 million

## Annual growth rate of 2.5% presented a 'big challenge': Sharif

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's population has ballooned to 250 million, according to the results of the latest census published Saturday, growing by 35 million in just six years. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the annual growth rate of 2.5 percent presented a "big challenge" for the cash-strapped nation.

"Pakistan's population growth rate is more than Pakistan's economic growth," Sharif said. The country's first digital census was conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics throughout May 2023. Sharif has said the coming election — due by mid-November — will be conducted on the basis of the latest census, with the data used to outline constituencies.

There had been speculation the election could be delayed if the census results were not approved in time, or that any changes to constituencies required by the census could not be implemented. "Now it is up to the election commission how quickly it completes the (delimitations) of the constituencies," law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told a local television channel,

warning there could be a delay to polls of up to two and a half months. The four provincial ministers and the representatives of coalition parties agreed with the results of the census, according to Sharif's office.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement, a key ally, had earlier said that the census has undercounted the population of its main voter base, the mega port city of Karachi. The country's national assembly is expected to dissolve later this week, with an interim government taking control.

In a nation divided along ethnic lines, enumerating citizens is a politically charged act that can alter claims to power and scant state resources. Just over 37 percent of the population is expected to live in poverty, on less than \$3.65 a day, in 2023, according to the World Bank in April.

Added to the country's myriad of problems, including low literacy rates and a ramshackle health service, is the growing threat of climate change which scientists say is behind more frequent and intense heatwaves and heavier monsoon rains. — AFP



Pakistan's population has ballooned to 250 million, according to the results of the latest census published Saturday, growing by 35 million in just six years. — AFP

## Gulf Bank partners with Fexco to offer currency solutions

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced a strategic partnership with Fexco International — a global leader in innovative payment and currency exchange solutions — to expand its Dynamic Currency Solutions (DCC) to over 350 merchants across Kuwait. This collaboration marks the first time that Fexco's DCC solution will be available in the area, providing a ground-breaking platform for customers and merchants alike.

Fexco's DCC technology enables merchants to offer international customers the choice of paying in their home currency at the point of sale, providing a more seamless and personalized shopping experience. The platform also enables merchants to better manage currency risk and streamline payment processing.

The partnership between Gulf Bank and Fexco demonstrates a shared commitment to innovation and improving the customer experience. As the first bank in the country to offer DCC technology, Gulf Bank is cementing its position as a leader in the financial services industry. Mohammed Taqi, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, commented: "This partnership with Fexco is a significant milestone for Gulf Bank as we continue to innovate and provide the best solutions to our customers. We are committed to delivering a superior customer service experience and to supporting the growth and success of the local business community."

Alistair Batten, General Manager, Middle East, Africa and South Asia Fexco said: "We are delighted to partner with Gulf Bank to bring our Dynamic Currency Solutions to Kuwait for the first time. Now the country will benefit from DCC, which is an integral part of the guests' experience at world class hotels, fine dining restaurants and luxury brands all over the world. This expansion will empower merchants to provide a more personalized payment experience for their international customers and help businesses in the country to compete on a global scale."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Mohammed Taqi

## French billionaire Drahi to face investors

PARIS: French-Zionist billionaire Patrick Drahi is set to make a rare appearance in front of investors this week with his multinational business empire Alice in the grip of a corruption scandal. Swiss-based Drahi, whose empire spans telecoms and media in Europe, Zionist entity and North America, is expected to try to ease investor concerns weeks after one of his top lieutenants was detained in Portugal.

The authorities there have accused Portuguese billionaire Armando Pereira of 11 offences of corruption and money laundering, with a central allegation that he set up a network of bogus suppliers to embezzle money through Alice's procurement system.

Pereira denies the claims but the scandal has spread from Portugal to other parts of Drahi's empire, with executives in the United States and France being dismissed, suspended or stepping back. Drahi, who generally keeps a low profile, has amassed a fortune estimated at more than \$10 billion, making him France's 13th richest man, according to French magazine Challenge.

He pieced together a network of companies through leveraged acquisitions

and is now a major player in telecoms in France, the Zionist entity, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland. Drahi, who also owns broadband firm Altice USA and part of Britain's BT, is known as an art lover and bought the auction house Sotheby's in 2019. But his investment spree was made possible only by amassing a debt pile worth around \$60 billion. With interest rates rising and the corruption scandal making headlines, Drahi's calls with investors on Monday and Tuesday will be closely monitored by investors.

### Fundamental questions

The company has tried to play down the investigation, saying it is cooperating with the authorities and highlighting that several employees have been suspended. Pereira, despite being widely seen as Drahi's right-hand man, has no official post at the company. Arthur Dreyfuss, CEO of Alice France, told a meeting with trade unions on Wednesday that only a handful of the companies named in the Portuguese inquiry had trading relations with Alice.

"At this stage, this represents less



Patrick Drahi

than four percent of our annual purchases in terms of volume," he said. But Olivier Lelong of the CFDT trade union, who was at Wednesday's meeting, told AFP that the nature of the allegations suggested fundamental issues with the company.

"On a day-to-day basis, expenses are the most closely monitored thing in the group," he said.

"It's on such a scale... that there must have been a problem with the company's control and governance."

### Alice is 'victim'

Drahi, 59, was born in the Moroccan city of Casablanca and moved to France at 15, eventually studying at the country's top engineering school, the Ecole Polytechnique. After an early career spent working for fibre-optics companies, he set out on his own and

bought up several troubled cable and mobile operators, before hitting the big time in 2014 when he took control of SFR, France's second-biggest mobile operator.

From there he built his vast empire, with unions dubbing him the "cost killer" for his habit of streamlining the firms he bought. But with the corruption claims and rising interest rates forcing him to renegotiate the terms of his loans, Drahi is facing one of his biggest challenges to date.

"Patrick Drahi has built his success on access to low-cost debt," Denis Lafarge, a partner at PMP Strategy, told AFP. Drahi is known as a smart financial operator and has long relied on selling off infrastructure like telecoms masts and fibre networks to raise cash.

Lafarge said those options are getting thinner but he still has some sellable assets — the Meo operator in Portugal and some data centers could be sacrificed.

Sylvain Chevallier of the Bearing-Point consultancy added that rising inflation meant businesses like Alice will be able to raise prices and raise cash that way. But the immediate need is for Drahi to stem the damage from the corruption inquiry. "It's important for him to speak out," said Dreyfuss. "Until we have proof to the contrary, Alice is a victim of all this." — AFP

## Oil rises on Saudi, Russian pledges to extend supply cuts

LONDON: Oil prices bounced back from a mid-week dip to record their sixth week of gains in a row on Friday, after leading oil exporters Saudi Arabia and Russia pledged to extend supply cuts to support the market. Brent, the benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, rose 1.29 per cent, or \$1.10, to settle at \$86.24 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, gained 1.27 per cent, or \$1.09, to close at \$82 a barrel. During that stretch of gains, Brent added about 17 per cent, while WTI rose nearly 20 per cent. In the year-to-date, the benchmarks are up about 0.4 per cent and 3.2 per cent, respectively.

Prices had dropped on Wednesday on a strong dollar and after Fitch Ratings downgraded the US' credit rating. "On Thursday, Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, said it will be extending its voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels a day until September.

The production cut is in addition to the voluntary reduction previously announced by the kingdom in April, which will stay in effect until December 2024, the Energy Ministry said.

The cut, which first took effect in July, could be further "extended and deepened" and is aimed at supporting the stability and balance of oil markets, the ministry added. The kingdom said in July that it would extend its unilateral production cut of 1 million barrels a day until August.

On Friday, a day after Riyadh's decision, the OPEC+ alliance of 23 oil-producing countries agreed to stick to its current output policy, as the group's production cuts tighten supply and push oil prices higher, the group said after an online meeting of its Joint Ministerial Monitor-

bers, flights and cargo movement.

The figures confirm a significant increase of 67 percent in passenger traffic as 10,258,653 passengers passed through Abu Dhabi International Airport between 1st January and 30th June, 2023, compared to 6,158,376 passengers served during the same period last year, reports WAM.

Abu Dhabi International Airport also recorded 67,835 flights, a notable increase of 36 percent compared to 49,919 flights during H1 2022.

Abu Dhabi International Airport's network continues to expand rapidly

with 114 destinations served by 27 airlines during H1 2023. The destinations with the highest passenger traffic served by Abu Dhabi International Airport during the period included Mumbai (461,081), London (374,017), Delhi (331,722), Kochi (316,460) and Doha (261,117).

Frank McCrorie, Chief Operations Officer, Abu Dhabi Airports, said: "Our passenger traffic figures for the first half of 2023 highlights our extensive efforts to support Abu Dhabi's increasingly vibrant business, tourism, and aviation sectors. Sustained

increases in passenger numbers and flights also highlight Abu Dhabi Airports' growth plans, in parallel with exemplary operations, technological integrations, and ever-expanding partnership ecosystem. Our aim is to build on this momentum, reinforcing Abu Dhabi International Airport's position as a preferred airport in the region, with focus on delivering service excellence to our guests every day."

During H1 2023, the international airport handled 259,461 tons of air freight. Cargo is expected to gain momentum at Abu Dhabi International Airport which

is primed to emerge as a leading air cargo and logistics hub by forging new strategic partnerships. In April 2023, Abu Dhabi International Airport welcomed the inaugural flight of SF Express, signaling the global freight leader's launch of regional operations from the capital of the UAE.

This year, Abu Dhabi Airports was recognized for its enduring commitment to providing world-class customer experience, winning the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Service Quality (ASQ) award for 'Best Airport at Arrivals Globally'. — Agencies



An aerial view shows an oil factory of Idemitsu Kosan Co. in Ichihara, east of Tokyo.

ing Committee. OPEC+ has total production cuts in place of 3.66 million bpd, which includes a 2 million bpd reduction agreed on last year as well as voluntary cuts of 1.66 million bpd announced in April.

Russia, another top oil exporter, is also expected to reduce its crude exports by 500,000 bpd this month. "With the production cut extended, we anticipate a market deficit of more than 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in September, following an estimated deficit of around 2 million bpd in July and August," analysts at Swiss bank UBS wrote in a note.

Futures are seen to be recovering in the second half of the year after macroeconomic concerns and resilient Russian crude supply weighed on market sentiment over the past few months.

They were also supported by a record drop in US crude stocks: US crude inventories, an indi-

cator of fuel demand, fell by 17 million barrels to 439.8 million barrels last week, the lowest levels since 1985, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

Goldman Sachs has reaffirmed its Brent forecast of \$86 a barrel by December and expects prices to rise to \$93 in the second quarter of 2024. The investment bank also raised its 2023 oil demand estimate by 550,000 bpd. UBS expects Brent to trade in the range of \$85 to \$90 a barrel over the coming months and has attributed the recent rise in prices to OPEC+'s voluntary output cuts and production interruptions in Mexico, Nigeria and Libya. Oil demand is projected to breach 103 million bpd in August, driven by higher consumption in China and India, according to the bank. Lower possibility of a recession in the US and the EU has also improved the crude demand outlook. — Agencies

## Passenger traffic at Abu Dhabi Airport jumps in H1 2023

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi International Airport continues its upward trajectory as Abu Dhabi Airports on Saturday announced the airport's traffic results for the first half of 2023 which show healthy figures and outstanding growth in passenger num-



Freddie Mercury's signature crown and cloak ensemble, worn throughout Queen's 1986 'Magic' Tour, is pictured during a press preview ahead of the "Freddie Mercury: A World of His Own" auctions.



# FREDDIE MERCURY'S PRIVATE COLLECTION GOES ON SHOW IN UK

From fanciful costumes and working drafts of "Bohemian Rhapsody" to ashtrays and art, hundreds of items Freddie Mercury owned go on show in Britain on Friday before being sold next month. Sotheby's has transformed its central London gallery to resemble the Queen frontman's former home in the UK capital for the month-long exhibition, ahead of its six-stage sale of the more than 1,400 lots.

Crown and an accompanying cloak — in fake fur, red velvet and rhinestones — worn by the star on stage in the 1980s is also on display. He performed in both at the world-famous Live Aid concert in 1985 and the finale renditions of "God Save The Queen" during his last tour with the band in 1986.

The 16,000 square feet (1,500 sq m) multi-room showcase, which runs until September 5 — the late singer's

Garden Lodge home also forms part of the Sotheby's showcase. A worn kitchen table, ornate cutlery and distinctive crockery hint at the entertainment, and attention to detail, the Queen frontman lavished on his guests. A gilt-tooled leather-bound "dinner party guest and menu book", detailing seating plans, menus and refreshments — and annotated with doodles — helps complete the picture.

to call the hit "Mongolian Rhapsody". Meanwhile, the contents of his elaborate dressing room also feature, from jackets and sequined stage suits to shoes to glasses. A yellow "Champion" vest worn for the first half of his final Queen performance at Knebworth Park on August 9, 1986, is among them. Auction valuation: £6,000-£8,000.

A surviving school book with Fred Bulsara — Mercury's real name — inscribed at the front is among the rarer items. Dating back to the mid-1960s, it features the then 18-year-old's commentary and judgement on certain poetry, as well as a poem he composed entitled "Bird ('Feather flutter in the sky...')."



Freddie Mercury's hand-written lyrics for Queen's "Somebody to Love" song are pictured during a press preview.



A collection of Freddie Mercury's stage costumes are pictured during a press preview.

The singer-songwriter, who died in 1991, had assembled an array of "treasures" which had been left largely untouched at his one-time west London house in the three decades since, according to the auctioneers. They include a treasured Yamaha baby grand piano, revealed to be among the lots by Sotheby's Thursday, which Mercury composed numerous hits on. It is estimated to fetch up to £3 million (3.8 million).

The replica of Britain's St Edward's

birthday — also features numerous elements from his so-called Japanese collection. Mercury had collected Japanese decorative arts, glass, graphic arts, ceramics and other objects originating from the country during his life. "It constitutes an ensemble which is completely unique," Sotheby's Cecile Bernard told AFP during an exhibition preview.

Surviving school book Furniture once used at Mercury's

A multi-coloured, illuminated 1941 Wurlitzer jukebox, which Mercury kept in his kitchen and still operates on its original coinage, is another rare item. Loaded with records such as Ray Charles' "Hallelujah I Love Her So", Little Richard's "Rit It Up" and Bill Haley's "Shake, Rattle and Roll", it is estimated to net £25,000 at auction.

The musical manuscripts set for display and sale include 15 pages of working drafts for "Bohemian Rhapsody", and reveal Mercury initially planned

### 'Best tribute'

The vast array of items — being auctioned by Mary Austin, one of the icon's closest friends who cared for them at his former home — are expected to fetch at least £6 million (\$7.6 million) in total. Austin will be donating a portion of the proceeds to the Mercury Phoenix Trust—founded by fellow Queen members Brian May, Roger Taylor and their manager Jim Beach to support HIV/Aids initiatives — and to the Elton John Aids Foundation. For Bernard, helping to curate the exhibition has been a treasured experience itself, as the team tried to place pieces within Mercury's creative process and journey.

"When we went to Garden Lodge... we have been like archaeologists doing that, with so much fun," she recounted. Bernard added the sales — live events in the British capital on September 6-8 and online from Friday to September 11 — are "the best homage" to Mercury, given he "loved to collect" and buy at auctions. "He was himself very familiar with the process of collections going from one owner to another so it makes sense," she said. Some 30,000 to 40,000 items are available within the more than 1,400 lots, according to Sotheby's cataloguer Fenella Theis. "Every piece is so autobiographical," she told AFP. "So every piece resembles one of Freddie's many, many, many facets of his personality." — AFP



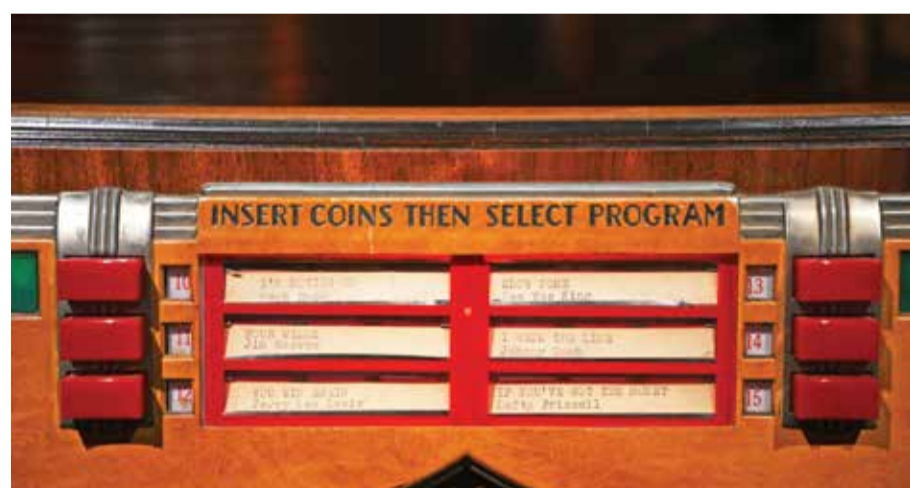
Freddie Mercury's red telephone is pictured during a press preview.



Freddie Mercury's Cartier 'Queen Number 1' gold brooch is pictured during a press preview.



Freddie Mercury's Tiffany & Co. silver mustache comb is pictured during a press preview.



Freddie Mercury's illuminated 1941 Wurlitzer jukebox, acquired by Mercury for his kitchen at Garden Lodge, is pictured during a press preview.



Freddie Mercury's Yamaha G-2 baby grand piano, is pictured during a press preview ahead of the "Freddie Mercury: A World of His Own" auctions, at Sotheby's auctioneers in London. - AFP photos



A lavish ceremonial military-style jacket created for Freddie Mercury's 39th birthday party is pictured during a press preview.



Freddie Mercury's illuminated 1941 Wurlitzer jukebox, acquired by Mercury for his kitchen at Garden Lodge, is pictured during a press preview.



A faux moustache is pictured above the entrance to Sotheby's auctioneers in London ahead of a press preview for their "Freddie Mercury: A World of His Own" auctions.

## Lifestyle



US DJ and producer Grandmaster Flash performs during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party" at Capital One City Parks Foundation Summer Stage in New York.--AFP photos



US rapper KRS-One performs during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party".



US rapper Chubb Rock (left) and DJ and producer Grandmaster Flash (right) pose backstage during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party".

# Icon Grandmaster Flash leads the Bronx in 70s-style hip-hop jam

As a teenager Grandmaster Flash began pioneering the turntable-as-instrument, playing the now iconic Bronx block parties that gave birth to hip-hop and revolutionized music. On Friday, he was back home, commemorating 50 years of the genre with a performance that had New Yorkers born in the mid-20th century reliving their youth—and hip-hop's. "This is not a concert—this is a jam!" Flash, now in his 60s, shouted from the stage, as hundreds of fans roared in applause in the South Bronx's Crotona Park.

The audience swayed with their hands in the air as Flash threw it back to the jams of the early 1970s, which ushered in the genre that's profoundly impacted music as well as fashion, dance and the culture at large. The community parties offered teens and families a lifeline in an era of financial crisis that left much of the borough in crippling poverty.

"It was the music that really resonated at the time in New York," said Quentin Morgan, 54, who rolled into the park on his bike to catch the event that's part of a series of festivities commemorating hip-hop's birth. "It was gritty in New York—barely any laws," he said with a chuckle. "It was a different era." Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in 1982 released "The Message," delivering a raw portrait of urban life and bringing a socially conscious element to the genre on a grand scale. On Friday night, the air was electric as Flash brought MCs Melle Mel and Scorpio on-stage where they delivered a rendition of the iconic hit.



Attendees dance during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party".

That preceded a fierce appearance from MC Sha-Rock, widely considered the first woman to MC during hip-hop's nascent years. And KRS-One, who also hails from the South Bronx, freestyled to a chorus of cheers as Flash scratched and transformed, manipulating the vinyl, using now standard techniques he pioneered half a century ago. Earlier in the evening as opening acts warmed up the crowd, Coke La Rock—who on August 11, 1973 joined DJ Kool Herc at the party many musicologists consider hip-hop's official conception—told AFP that for him, hip-hop and the Bronx are one and the

same. "I can't see no division of it," the 68-year-old said, calling offshoots of the genre across the United States and even the world "my kids." "They all my kids, if I'm the patent, they the product."

### 'Biggest music on earth'

Speaking to AFP backstage, Flash said Friday's event was meant to emulate the jams of his youth. "It was recreation—moms said go outside and play," he said. "Never... did I think it would become part of the biggest music on earth." Organizers also relayed a message from the mayor of New York, as the city officially

declared August 4 "Grandmaster Flash Day." Keisha Harmon joined the event with her partner of 27 years—"my Teenage Love," she said, quoting the rap classic by Slick Rick. She'll be 50 in October: she was born in the Bronx just months after the genre she grew up on. "I have chills, look, goosebumps," she told AFP.

"All the songs that are playing—I'm a mother of seven and I'm a grandmother of eight—and they take me back to No Kids." She described how the hip-hop jams of her childhood spread by word of mouth: "Hey, DJ-such-and-such is in the park, and we would have parties and sing, and it was just fun." "And this reminds me of that," Harmon added, motioning to the park crowded with partygoers on a humid August evening. The celebration "shows our talent" as citizens of the Bronx, she added.

"It shows what we contributed to the arts," Harmon said. "Hip-hop has a substance." "The artists were storytellers." "South South Bronx, South Bronx!" the audience shouted throughout the evening, singing the song by Boogie Down Productions produced by KRS-One and DJ Scott La Rock. According to city organizers, Friday night was Grandmaster Flash's first time playing the Bronx in two decades. Along with fellow hip-hop pioneers, he was joined by a troupe of breakdancers who wowed the audience with a throwdown. "Where's my old-schoolers at?" Flash asked the joyous crowd. "I wanna keep it in the 70s." "Somebody say Bronx!"—AFP



US rapper Coke La Rock poses during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party".



US rapper Sharon Green aka MC Sha-Rock performs with US DJ and producer Grandmaster Flash.



US DJ and producer Grandmaster Flash signs a fan's poster during the 50 years of Hip-Hop Grandmaster Flash and friends "Birth of a Culture: The Four Elements Block Party".



Informal waste collectors known in Tunisia as "barbeshas", pick up plastic bottles along the beach on the Kerkennah Islands, some 20km (12 miles) off the port city of Sfax.--AFP photos



Yarn provided by the Seaqual Initiative, an international consortium which buys marine plastic, is transformed into denim fabric at the Sitex plant in the coastal town of Ksar Hellal, southeast of the Tunisian city of Monastir.

## Tunisian brand turns sea plastic into green couture

The two men in bright overalls rooting for plastic on a Tunisian beach do so to make a living, but also in the knowledge that they are helping the environment. What they do not know is that the waste will become part of a synthetic plastic fibre used to make blue denim cloth to create a dress for the eco-friendly fashion label Outa. The pair are among around 15 "barbeshas", or informal rubbish collectors, taking part in the Kerkennah Plastic Free program, backed by the European Union.

This aims to recover the 7,000 tons of plastic waste each year that end up littering beaches on the Kerkennah Islands 20 kilometers (12 miles) off the port city of Sfax. Jean-Paul Pelissier, of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), is coordinating the EU-funded project.

He told AFP that on the archipelago, "we have an exciting environment in terms of nature and tranquility. It's ideal for green tourism". Pelissier said the islands were a passage point for migratory birds, and that its waters were abundant in Posidonia oceanica seagrass, or Neptune grass. "But there's one thing you never see in the pictures—the plastic," he said. Marine currents carry the waste from Europe into the Gulf of Gabes, and there it washes up to be collected by the barbeshas. They take their daily harvest to a sorter which passes it on to a collection company and then it is fed into a crusher to be baled. A partnership has been established with Seaqual Initiative, an international consortium which buys the marine plastic "at a remunerative and stable price all year round", Pelissier said.

### New opportunities

The initiative's website says it "works with ocean clean-ups around the world to bring value to the waste that they recover". Omar Kcharem is the boss of Kerkennah Plast, which compacts and crushes plastic, and he said working with Seaqual has created new opportunities, since marine plastic "does not have much value and does not bring in any money".



French fashion designer Maud Beneteau poses for a photo with her designs backstage at the Carthage Museum during a fashion show for the launch of the haute couture brand "Outa", completely made from recycled plastic.

The plastic granules recovered after grinding the waste are transformed into "Seaqual Yarn" nylon fibre in Portugal, in one of just four factories in the world equipped with the technology.

"This is innovative," said Pelissier. "Four or five years ago, you couldn't recycle marine plastic because of its lengthy exposure to salt water and the sun." He said Seaqual Yarn comprises around 10



Yarn provided by the Seaqual Initiative, an international consortium which buys marine plastic, is transformed into denim fabric at the Sitex plant in the coastal town of Ksar Hellal, southeast of the Tunisian city of Monastir.

percent of recycled marine plastic, but the aim is to increase this. Apart from the Portugal side of the operation, the rest is definitely "Made in Tunisia". In the coastal town of Ksar Hellal southeast of Monastir, a huge machine in the ultra-modern Sitex plant makes an infernal racket as it transforms the Seaqual Yarn into denim. Sitex is a denim specialist that has supplied brands such as Hugo Boss, Zara and Diesel. Now Anis Montacer, founder of the Tunisian fabric and fashion brand Outa, has entered into a partnership with it. He chose Sitex "for its sensitivity to the environment, because in 2022, 70 percent of their manufacturing was based on recycled fibres". "We worked together to determine the proper yarn strength and the right indigo dye," he told AFP, adding that their collaboration will continue to expand Outa's colour range to include natural dyes.

### Higher costs

"The entire process takes place in Tunisia, from the denim transformed in Ksar Hellal to the Tunisian seamstresses who work on the tailoring" for Outa, Montacer said. Production costs are 20 percent higher, though, than for denim without the marine plastic content. Despite this, Montacer believes he can "bring together other entrepreneurs and inspire designers to



A model presents a creation by French fashion designer Maud Beneteau during a fashion show at the Carthage Museum.

produce eco-responsible collections". He called on renowned French designer Maud Beneteau, formerly of Hedi Slimane, to design Outa's first haute couture collection. "We chose a high value collection because the production cost is higher than with normal thread to create denim fabric," Montacer said. Outa creations first graced the catwalk during Tunis Fashion Week in June.

Beneteau saw the first Outa collection as "a challenge, a human dimension in this wonderful project that aligns with the idea of saving the planet". She does say there were some difficulties working with a fabric that was "a little thick and stiff, originally designed for sportswear and ready-to-wear, rather than haute couture". More used to fine silks, linen and cotton, she admits having some qualms working with the new fibre, even though like her peers in the fashion industry she tries to recycle and buy back unsold stocks in the fight against over-consumption. But "when you think that this is recycled and ecological, that jobs have been created, people who pick up the plastic... it's a whole interesting chain," Beneteau said. It's also a great yarn. Plastic fantastic: from sea waste to see waist, you might say.—AFP

Lifestyle



US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler holds sheet music at his home in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi, a ranch located in the ejido Munerachi, municipality of Batopilas, Chihuahua, Mexico. - AFP photos



US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler chats with his wife Marichu at their home in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.

French novelist whose work sparked death penalty debate dies

French writer Gilles Perrault, whose "Le Pull-Over Rouge" novel helped spark debate over capital punishment in France, has died, his family said on Thursday. He was 92. "I can confirm that he died at 92 last night on August 3 from cardiac arrest", a source in his family told AFP. Born as Jacques Peyroles, he worked for several years as a lawyer before becoming a journalist and then a novelist, writing under the pseudonym Gilles Perrault. In 1978, he published "Le Pull-Over Rouge" (The Red Sweater), which called into question the conviction of a man, Christian Ranucci, who had been put to death by beheading two years prior for the abduction and killing of an eight-year-old girl in 1974.



French writer Gilles Perrault poses on November 23, 2008 during a local book fair in Cheux, Normandy.

The book, which sold some one million copies, sparked vivid debate about the death penalty, which France eventually abolished in 1981. Perrault was twice convicted of defamation of police over the case, once during an interview and then over material in another book on the case. He spent years trying to get Ranucci's case reopened, without success. "It's not a sprint, it's a marathon," he told AFP in 2006, still hoping for an eventual re-examination.

In another critically acclaimed work, he published in 1990 "Notre Ami Le Roi" (Our Friend the King), which shone a critical light on the 30-year reign of Morocco's Hassan II. "The books of Gilles Perrault are markers for my generation," said Pierre Haski, president of Reporters Without Borders. — AFP

Pianist dedicates music to Indigenous people who inspired him

Romayne Wheeler sits at his grand piano overlooking Mexico's Copper Canyon and plays music inspired by the mountains and remote Indigenous communities that he now dedicates his life to helping. The 81-year-old California-born composer no longer lives in the cave where he slept with his solar-powered portable piano after arriving several decades ago in the Sierra Tarahumara in northwestern Mexico. But he feels as close as ever to the nature and Indige-

made it impossible to travel to a Native American reservation near the Grand Canyon.

Leafing through a copy of National Geographic magazine, he came across pictures of the remote Mexican region and decided to see it for himself. "It was like coming home," he recalled, wearing the Indigenous-style shirt and traditional sandals that he now prefers to Western attire.

"The people that are most revered here are the musicians. They stand in

ered the person that is of most value is the one that helps others the most, and contributed something positive to humanity," he said. When he first arrived, the Raramuri — whose name means "light-footed ones" and who are renowned for their running stamina — showed Wheeler a small cave where he could practice and keep his electric piano dry.

"My friends said sometimes with the wind just right they could hear my little tiny instrument all the way across the

Wheeler's own. The dream to put a piano on a mountaintop was born in Austria where Wheeler, a keen mountaineer, studied and lived for 32 years, but where harsh winters made it impossible. In Mexico, he hired a professional moving company to bring the fragile musical instrument from the western city of Guadalajara as far as it could into the mountains.

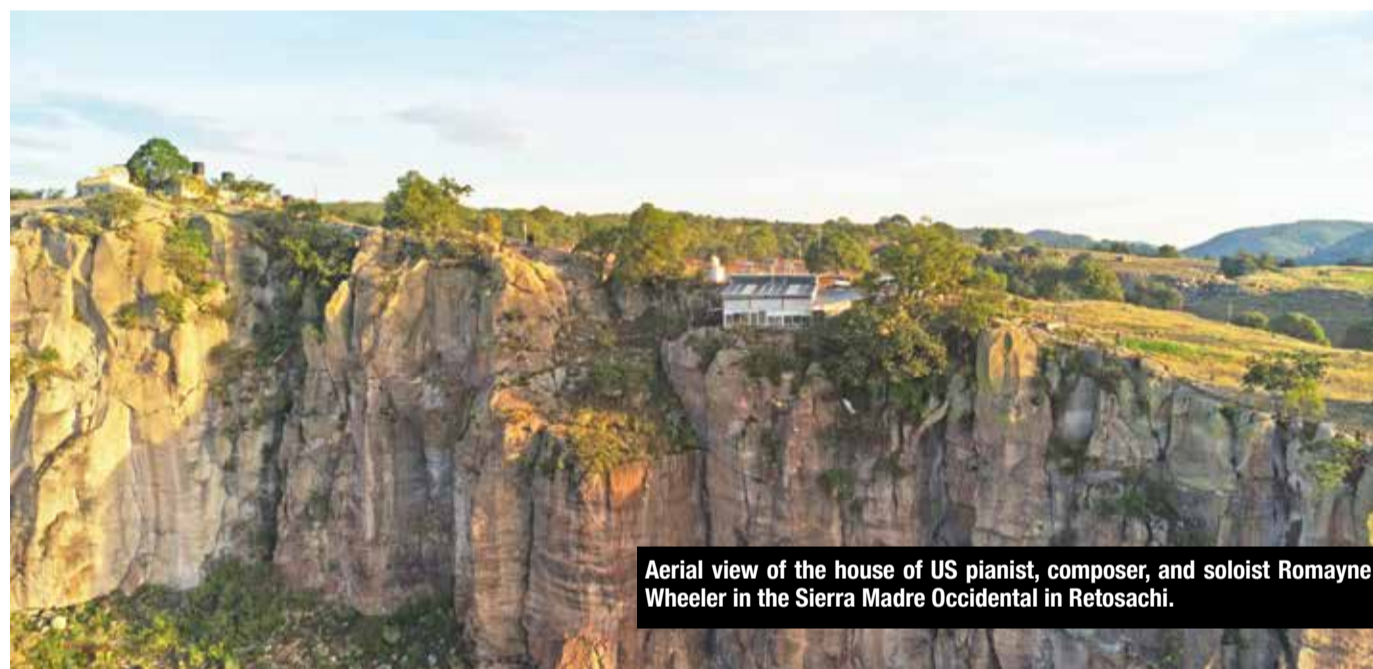
It then took 28 hours to reach Wheeler's home by truck along dirt mountain roads with the piano laid on its side, supported by piles of potatoes, he said. "We went at a walking rhythm for most of the way because of all the potholes," he added.

Helping humanity

Despite the remoteness of his home, affectionately named Eagle's Nest, visits from his neighbors and the company of his dogs mean that Wheeler never feels alone. "I feel more lonely in the city because of all the people around that have nothing to say to each other," he said. He has 42 godsons in the area, one of the poorest in Mexico, where limited access to clean water, sufficient food and healthcare pose major challenges to communities that rely mostly on subsistence agriculture.

In the early 1990s, Wheeler decided to use proceeds from the concerts he performs around the world to establish a school, a clinic and a scholarship program. "They're very good people. They help a lot," said one of his neighbors, Gerardo Gutierrez, who was a child when he first met Wheeler.

"They gave away blankets when it was very cold. And sometimes they got groceries for the people here," the 49-year-old added. Giving back to the community has also given Wheeler a deeper sense of purpose. "These years have been the most happy years of my life really because I feel like my music is doing something of value to help humanity," he said. — AFP



Aerial view of the house of US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.

nous Raramuri people who welcomed him into their lives, sharing their food, music and culture.

"I feel truly that all of this area around me is my studio," Wheeler told AFP in his stone house perched on the canyon's edge, several hours from the nearest significant town along winding mountain tracks. "Every tree, every plant, every flower — everything here has something to tell me," he said. Wheeler's love affair with the Sierra Tarahumara began in 1980 when he was in the United States studying Indigenous music and a snowstorm

high honor like the shamans," he said. The mountainous corner of Chihuahua state is part of the notorious "Golden Triangle," a region with a history of marijuana and opium poppy production as well as drug cartel violence.

Raramuri philosophy

Wheeler identified so much with the philosophy of the Raramuri — also known as Tarahumara — that he came back for several weeks each year before settling there permanently in 1992. They were "people who shared everything they had, who consid-

canyon," he remembered. One young child, a neighbor's son, showed particular interest, so Wheeler taught him to play and sent him to study in the Chihuahua state capital.

Now Romeyno Gutierrez, his protege, is an acclaimed pianist in his own right who performs abroad and accompanied Wheeler on two tours of Europe. "He's the first pianist and composer of Indian heritage that I know of on our continent," Wheeler said proudly.

Bringing his 1917 Steinway grand piano to the village of Retosachi was almost as much of an odyssey as



View of the bedroom of US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler at his home in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.



US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler plays the piano at his home in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.



Aerial view of the house of US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.



US pianist, composer, and soloist Romayne Wheeler plays the piano at his home in the Sierra Madre Occidental in Retosachi.



Gerardo Gutierrez, a Raramuri or Tarahumara Indigenous man, walks in the Sierra Madre Occidental.



A smooth-coated otter emerges out of the water at Kallang Basin in Singapore. — AFP

Otter attacks women floating down Montana river

An aggressive otter attacked three women floating down a river in Montana, with one victim helicoptered to hospital with severe bites to her face and arms, authorities in the western US state said. The group of swimmers was drifting along Jefferson River in inflatable ring tubes on Wednesday evening when they spotted one or two of the animals. "An otter approached and attacked them," Montana's Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) service said in a statement. "All three women were injured." FWP said otter attacks are rare but can be caused when the semi-aquatic animals are protecting their young, which take to the water in summer, or believe that a food source is under threat.

It advised people to keep their distance but, if attacked, to "fight back, get away and out of the water." FWP official Morgan Jacobsen told a local NBC affiliate that the women had telephoned for emergency help and that one victim was flown to hospital due to the bites on her face and arms. Several states away, surfers in California were the target of sea otter attacks last month when a five-year-old female tried to steal their boards.

In one social media video, the otter climbed on a surfer's board and hung on as he tried to shake it off. The otter lunged at him, and started biting the board. Authorities in Montana have posted signs warning of the danger from otters, the FWP said, but are not planning any other response. It added low water levels can bring humans closer to wildlife. Otters, members of the weasel family, were historically sought for their pelts, with hunting and habitat loss threatening the population of both river and sea otters. — AFP

## Sports

# American top seeds Pegula and Fritz suffer semi-final defeats

## Gauff keeps the star spangled banner flying

WASHINGTON: American top seeds Jessica Pegula and Taylor Fritz suffered semi-final defeats at the Washington Open on Saturday but Coco Gauff kept the star spangled banner flying by earning a place in Sunday's final. Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari upset top seed Pegula to capture her third victory in 26 hours and she will face another home favorite in the final after Gauff defeated Russian Liudmila Samsonova, the defending champion, in straight sets.

Fritz fell to Tallon Griekspoor 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 and the Dutchman will play for the title against Britain's Dan Evans, who beat Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 7-6 (7-4). Ninth-ranked Sakkari, forced to play twice Friday due to rain on Thursday at the WTA and ATP hard court event, reached her first final since losing to Pegula last October at Guadalajara. "It would have been ideal if I could be off the court an hour earlier," Sakkari said. "But at the end I got the win which is what I wanted the most."

Sakkari, who reached her seventh career final, won her only WTA title in 2019 at Rabat. Pegula, the 2019 Washington champion, was denied her fifth career final but will match her career high of third in the world rankings next

week. Sakkari improved to 5-3 in her career rivalry with Pegula, who won their most recent prior meeting in February's Doha semifinals. Sakkari dominated the first set and went up 4-1 in the second but Pegula broke Sakkari in the seventh game and held to pull level at 4-4.

A double fault handed Pegula a break chance in the ninth game and Sakkari swatted a forehand wide for a 5-4 edge. The American then held to force a third set. "Things were tricky in the second set," Sakkari said. "In the third, I just tried to stay in the present. I tried to overcome myself and take it as a new challenge." Sakkari broke early in the third set and again in the final game on a backhand winner to advance after two hours and three minutes.

Third-seeded Gauff was in dominant form as she won the opening set against Samsonova without facing a break point. She then took a 2-1 lead in the second set, winning her fifth break point of a marathon game with a volley winner before completing a 6-3, 6-3 win to reach her second final of the year. "She's a server and she has an amazing forehand so I wanted to see how I would do upon that battle and I think I did pretty well," said Gauff.

Gauff has lost four of her five meetings with Sakkari but says she has learned from those losses. "She's an incredible player. She has been the top of the game for a long time and it's going to be a difficult match," she said.

### Dutchman's top-10 win

Fritz, the highest-ranked American at ninth in the world, won the first set 6-3 after a break in the second game. But 12th seed Griekspoor fought, breaking when he was 4-3 up and forcing a third set, which was close fought until Griekspoor made the most of Fritz's errors to break in the fifth game.

The Dutchman won the last five games, with 20 of the 27 points, to grab his first win against a top-10 foe and give himself a chance at a third title this year. "The first Top 10 win was something I was really looking for. To beat Taylor playing at home is pretty special" said the Dutchman. "My serve is going really well this week; it's getting some pace, whether it's during the day or during the night. I'm moving great and the body is great, so there's not much to complain about," he added.

The 33-year-old Evans, who becomes the tournament's first British



WASHINGTON: Maria Sakkari of Greece (left) shakes hands with Jessica Pegula of the United States after beating her in three sets during Day 8 of the Mubadala Citi DC Open on August 5, 2023. — AFP

finalist since Andy Murray 17 years ago, produced some inspired and aggressive tennis in his win after playing two matches on Friday. After taking the first set, 30th-ranked Evans was pushed

hard by Dimitrov but emerged triumphant from the second set tie-break thanks to a magnificent drop shot to get to match point, which he won with a cross-court volley. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Swimmer fails doping test

NEW DELHI: India's anti-doping agency has provisionally suspended a 14-year-old swimmer from competing after testing positive for a banned substance ahead of next month's Asian Games in China. The swimmer, whose name was not disclosed, is among 36 athletes suspended by India's National Anti-Doping Agency this year, according to an updated list published on the agency's website this week. The minor tested positive for 19-norandrosterone, a banned performance-enhancing steroid that is known to increase muscle strength and help speed up recovery. This year the US anti-doping agency has suspended three athletes for taking the substance. Indian media first revealed the swimmer's suspension on Saturday along with Owais Sarwar Ahenger, a Wushu martial artist expected to compete at the Asian Games starting in Hangzhou on September 23. Ahenger tested positive for the same steroid as well as a banned stimulant. — AFP

#### Tsitsipas captures ATP title

LOS CABOS: Greek top seed Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Australian fifth seed Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-4 on Saturday to capture the ATP Mexico Open for his first title in 14 months. Tsitsipas, this year's Australian Open runner-up, claimed his first ATP outdoor hardcourt crown in his third final of the year, having fallen to Novak Djokovic at Melbourne and top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz at Barcelona in April. The 24-year-old Greek star captured his 10th career title and first since June of last year at Mallorca to snap a five-final win drought. World number five Tsitsipas improved to 10-0 all-time against 19th-ranked de Minaur, who was hoping for a Mexico double after winning the title at Acapulco in February. "It was a great match," Tsitsipas said. "I'm really happy we were able to deliver a great quality in the final match." The 24-year-old from Sydney was denied an eighth career ATP crown in his third final of the year. He also lost to Alcaraz in June's trophy match at Queen's. — AFP

#### Franca joins Crystal Palace

LONDON: Brazilian attacking midfielder Matheus Franca has joined Crystal Palace on a five-year contract, the Premier League club announced Saturday. The 19-year-old from Rio de Janeiro won both the Copa Libertadores and Copa do Brasil with Flamengo last year but will now be moving to Palace for an undisclosed fee. He follows Jefferson Lerma as a pre-season arrival at Selhurst Park, with Palace chairman Steve Parish telling the club's website: "Matheus is a young and exciting player whose impressive early progress we have followed with keen interest, and we are delighted to welcome him to the club. "Palace have a long history of attacking players with skill, pace, and tenacity, and I am sure Matheus will be another popular addition to the nucleus of this young and entertaining squad, packed full of international talent and potential, that we are building here in south London." Franca added: "I'm very happy to be here. I hope I can bring good results for our supporters, for the other players and everybody else in the team." — AFP

#### Ricky Rubio takes a break

MADRID: Spain's Ricky Rubio of the Cleveland Cavaliers announced on Saturday that he was taking a break from his NBA career to "take care of my mental health". His decision comes a few weeks before the Basketball World Cup, which Rubio won with Spain four years ago. "I have decided to suspend my professional activity to take care of my mental health," Rubio said. The 32-year-old, playing in the NBA since 2011, has had repeated cruciate ligament injuries. On Saturday he thanked the Spanish Basketball Federation for their support in his decision to step back. Rubio signed a new three-year deal with the Cleveland team in July 2022 with a contract reportedly worth over \$18 million. In 2019, La Roja won the World Cup in Beijing and Rubio was crowned MVP (best player) of the competition. — AFP

## British rider Hatton wins mountain bike world gold

GLASGOW: British rider Charlie Hatton produced a flying run to win the men's mountain bike downhill final at the world cycling championships in Down William on Saturday. As rain fell in the Scottish Highlands, the 25-year-old Hatton mastered the mud to post a time of four minutes 26.747 seconds. He set a pulsating time, finishing 0.6sec ahead of Austria's Andreas Kolb with another Briton Laurie Greenland finishing third. Defending champion Loic Bruni came in fourth and world number one Loris Vergier could only manage sixth. "I'm gobsmacked," the world number 17 said. "I'm not sure if I'm shaking because I'm cold or I'm nervous or all of the above."

The English rider has never won a World Cup race but can now don the rainbow jersey as world champion. "That was absolutely insane," Hatton said. "I knew I was riding well this weekend. But I never ever expected the win." Austria's Valentina Holl won her second consecutive women's mountain bike downhill title ending two seconds faster than any other rider. Five-time world champion Rachel Atherton, who dislocated her shoulder on Thursday, came in eighth.

The winding downhill track is made up largely of rocks and dirt with jumps and bumps marked out by tape on a barren mountainside at Fort William. The



FORT WILLIAM: Britain's Charlie Hatton competes in the men's elite mountain bike downhill final at the Nevis Range Mountain Resort, near Fort William in the Scottish Highlands, during the UCI Cycling World Championships. — AFP

mentally and technically challenging course of 2.8km drops 550m with a lively crowd welcoming each rider at the finish. In track cycling, Denmark won the men's team pursuit title by beating Italy in the final. Champions back in 2020, the Danes succeeded Great Britain who won last year but were eliminated in qualifying after a heavy fall suffered by Charlie Tanfield.

Denmark, made up of Niklas Larsen, Carl-Frederik Bevert, Lasse Leth and Rasmus Pedersen, gave little

chance to Filippo Ganna's Italy who also finished second in 2022. In the race for the bronze medal, New Zealand dominated Australia. In the women's team pursuit, the Britain took gold by defeating New Zealand in the final. Katie Archibald, Elinor Barker, Josie Knight and Anna Morris came out on top in a time of 4:08.771, more than four seconds of the Kiwis. France took third place after getting the better of defending champions Italy in the bronze medal clash. — AFP

## Big guns misfire as Marquez wins MotoGP sprint

SILVERSTONE: Alex Marquez woke up after a "sleepy" start to hold off a late charge from Marco Bezzecchi and win the British MotoGP sprint race at Silverstone on Saturday. Maverick Vinales completed the podium as world champion Francesco Bagnaia suffered a rare day off on his factory Ducati finishing down the field. "It's great to start the season again with a sprint win," said Marquez, with MotoGP resuming after its mid-season break. "I knew before that today was the day to win the sprint," added the Ducati-Gresini rider celebrating his first win since graduating to MotoGP in 2020.

The 27-year-old younger brother to six-time world champion Marc Marquez added: "I was a little bit sleepy in the first corner but later on I said I need to push as I was feeling really good." Bezzecchi, riding for Valentino Rossi's VR46 Ducati-satellite team, had battled atrocious conditions to claim pole in a rain-drenched qualifying in the morning. His runner-up spot moved him up to second in the riders standings, 27 points behind Bagnaia, ahead of Sunday's main event, the ninth round of the championship. Bezzecchi had been overtaken at turn two on the opening lap by Jack Miller's KTM as Bagnaia dropped from fourth to the middle of the field.

Marquez took control at the front on lap two of 10, around half a second clear of Bezzecchi as Miller's charge fizzled out. Marquez had doubled his advantage at the half-way stage yet Bezzecchi knuckled down, inching ever closer to set up a tense final lap but Marquez held on for his landmark win. "I kept focused and was able to finish very close to him (Marquez) so I'm very happy and hoping for a dry day tomorrow," Bezzecchi said. Bagnaia was not the only big name to fail to deliver, with Marc Marquez down in 18th and 2021 titleholder Fabio Quartararo beating one home in 21st.

### Deluge

The sprint had been officially declared a 'wet race' meaning riders could switch their bikes at any stage. The track was drying after the morning deluge had placed a premium on safety and the ability of riders to negotiate their way through puddles and spray at speed without losing control of the 157-kilo machine beneath them. Inevitably there were countless crashes in morning practice and the two qualifying sessions. Among those hitting the deck were Bezzecchi and Bagnaia who was second in



SILVERSTONE: First-placed Gresini Racing MotoGP's Spanish rider Alex Marquez and third-placed Aprilia Racing's Spanish rider Maverick Vinales celebrate after crossing the finish line. — AFP

the qualifying timesheets before losing control of his bike.

He rushed back to his garage in a frantic bid to get back out on the circuit but time ran out for the 2022 Silverstone winner. After setting the fastest time with a handful of minutes left on the clock Bezzecchi aquaplaned and hit the deck in the worst weather of the season so far. An indication of how tricky the conditions were came from the 18second-difference between Bezzecchi's lap time of 2mins 15.3590s and

the circuit record of last year's pole-sitter Johann Zarco of 1:57.767. Two of the fans in the crowd braving the wintry weather came well equipped - with snorkels. Quartararo endured a miserable morning, the Yamaha factory rider qualifying in last place - his worst grid result since joining MotoGP in 2019. "That wasn't the start of the day we were expecting. I made a mistake and had to stop in the pits. The tyres were cold and I was only able to complete one lap," reported a downbeat Quartararo. — AFP

## Swimming test in Seine 'cancelled' due to pollution

PARIS: Excessive pollution in Paris' Seine River forced organizers to cancel a pre-Olympics test swimming competition due to take place on Sunday, the sport's international federation said. Following recent heavy rainfall and analysis of the latest water samples, "water quality in the Seine has remained below acceptable standards for safeguarding swimmers' health," World Aquatics said in a statement on Sunday.

"Based on this weekend, it is clear that further work is needed with Paris 2024 and local authorities to ensure robust contingency plans are in place for next year." Friday's training for the World Aquatics Open Water Swimming World Cup had already been cancelled and the women's race was postponed from Saturday to Sunday in the hope the water quality would improve.

Heavy rains in Paris for the past week have caused sew-

ers to overflow, polluting the Seine with wastewater. Pierre Rabadan, a deputy to Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo responsible for the Olympics and the Seine, said he was "disappointed" for the athletes. Speaking to reporters in front of empty pontoons set up for the event, he said real-time readings by city hall indicated a "good" water quality on Sunday morning. But the excessive levels of E. coli were measured in water samples taken 24 hours previously, meaning the cancellation came down to a "few hours", he said.

World Aquatics president Husain Al Musallam said the body was "disappointed" by the cancellation. "But the health of our athletes must always be our top priority," he added. The federation said it "understands that further infrastructure projects will be completed to significantly improve water quality in the Seine" before next year's Olympics. "World Aquatics remains excited at the prospect of city-centre Olympic racing for the world's best open water swimmers next summer," it said.

The Paris Olympics organizing committee and local authorities have repeatedly said that recent rainfall in the French capital has been unusually high. The committee said it would continue to "attentively monitor" water quality in the Seine in the "confident hope" that athletes will compete in the river during a triathlon later this month.



PARIS: Photo shows a crane dismantling a venue to host a pre-Olympic swimming test competition on the river Seine in Paris after the event was cancelled due to pollution of the river. — AFP

Brigitte Legare, an official in charge of competitions in central Paris, said a spare day was available if the Olympic events had to be delayed but insisted the Seine would host them as planned. — AFP

Sports

# Ireland overpower Italy

## Injuries cloud Rugby World Cup warm-up win

**DUBLIN:** Caelan Doris scored two tries while Jack Conan suffered an injury scare as Ireland overpowered Italy 33-17 in their opening Rugby World Cup warm-up match in Dublin on Saturday. Back-row Conan left the field shortly before half-time and was later pictured in a protective boot on the bench. Full-back Jimmy O'Brien and scrum-half Craig Casey were also withdrawn for treatment to give Ireland coach Andy Farrell further cause for concern as his side eased to a 15th successive home victory.

Jack Crowley impressed in the absence of suspended Ireland captain Johnny Sexton, with the starting XV showing just three survivors from the team that clinched a Six Nations Grand Slam against England in March. But Ireland, top of the world rankings, still ran in three tries before the break to lead 21-3 at half-time. "It was a very enjoyable one - it's great to be up and running although it was far from a perfect performance," back-row Doris told Amazon Prime. "Hopefully the rust will come off and we'll put in better performances."

With star fly-half Sexton banned for all three of Ireland's warm-up games, Crowley started at stand-off and was partnered by Munster colleague Craig Casey in a team led by lock Iain Henderson. Ulster wing Jacob Stockdale made his first Test appearance in over three years after slipping

down the pecking order following injury. Tommaso Allan's early penalty gave Italy, beaten 25-13 by Scotland in a warm-up match last week, the lead before Ireland prop Dave Kilcoyne forced his way over for the first try of the game.

Doris and Stuart McCloskey also crossed Italy's line, Crowley converting all three tries. Italy's task was made harder when Danilo Fischetti was sin-binned shortly before back-row Doris scored. Ireland are one of the leading contenders to win the World Cup even though they will arrive in France next month having never gone beyond the quarter-finals. A much-improved Italy reduced Ireland's lead to 21-10 early in the second half after replacement Lorenzo Pani scored a try converted by Allan.

A driving maul led to Cian Healy scoring Ireland's fourth try, with Crowley missing his first conversion of the match. Tommaso Menoncello then crashed over for a converted try that just about kept Italy in the game at 26-17 down. But Doris's second try, seven minutes from time, put the result beyond doubt and an injured Menoncello then left the field in tears, clearly fearing for his World Cup hopes. Ireland now have a fortnight's break until their next warm-up match, at home to England on August 19. Italy play Romania on the same day. — AFP



**DUBLIN:** Italy's centre Tommaso Menoncello (center) dives to score the team's second try during the pre-World Cup Rugby Union friendly match between Ireland and Italy at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. —AFP

## Wales stun England in Rugby World Cup warm-up opener

**CARDIFF:** Wales launched their Rugby World Cup warm-up campaign with a 20-9 win against an uninspired England in Cardiff on Saturday. Second-half tries by scrum-half Gareth Davies and centre George North proved the difference at the Principality Stadium as Wales, without the retired trio of Alun Wyn Jones, Justin Tipuric and Rhys Webb, avoided a fifth successive home loss. A second-string England failed to cross Wales' line and didn't score a point in the second half.

"I was looking for a performance and that was a good start," Wales boss Warren Gatland told Amazon Prime. "It was the performance (not the result) I was interested in and I thought we looked comfortable in the last 20 minutes." Arguably, more England players harmed their World Cup chances in a lacklustre display featuring 22 turnovers and numerous handling errors than booked their place in a tournament squad due to be announced by coach Steve Borthwick on Monday.

"In the first half we created lots of opportunities, we turned over too much ball in the opposition 22, we can't do that in Test rugby," said Borthwick. "Immediately there are some areas for improvement, but the positives were how many entries we got into the opposition's scoring zone." The former England captain added: "Credit to Wales in that 50-65 minute period, they were very, very good."

Full-back Leigh Halfpenny won his 100th Wales cap in a side led for the first time by 23-year-old Ospreys flanker Jac Morgan and featuring three



**CARDIFF:** England's lock David Ribbans catches the ball in a line-out during the pre-World Cup Rugby Union match between Wales and England at Principality Stadium in Cardiff. — AFP

new caps in props Corey Domachowski and Keiron Assiratti and centre Max Llewellyn. England, 20-10 Six Nations winners at Cardiff in February, started with Marcus Smith at fly-half, rather than regular captain Owen Farrell. A host of new combinations contributed to an error-strewn start by both teams and Wales hooker Ryan Elias went off injured early on. England led 9-6 at half-time, Smith kicking three penalties to Halfpenny's two after both teams had gone close to a try.

But it was Wales who broke the game open in the 47th minute. Fly-half Sam Costelow's cross-

field kick found Aaron Wainwright, with the No 8 passing to Morgan, who beat two defenders and released Davies for a score Halfpenny converted. Wales pulled further clear with another converted try approaching the hour mark. Senior fly-half Dan Biggar, on as a replacement, produced a clever chip that bounced kindly for wing Louis Rees-Zammit. The ball was spread wide to the right and unmarked powerhouse midfielder North went in between the posts. Rees-Zammit went close to a third try late on as he chased his own kick but was ruled to have knocked on. — AFP

## Watford set Championship pace with QPR demolition

**LONDON:** Watford set the early pace in the race for promotion from the Championship with a 4-0 rout of QPR in their opening game of the season on Saturday. After a disappointing season ended in a mid-table finish, Watford have their sights set on a return to the top-flight and their dominant display at Vicarage Road was the perfect start. It was also the idea way for new boss Valerien Ismael to kick off his Watford reign.

The Hornets scored all four of their goals in the first half, including the opener after just 33 seconds. Tom Dele-Bashiru slotted past Asmir Begovic after a sublime reverse pass from the impressive Imran Louza. Louza doubled the lead with a curling effort from the edge of the box in the 20th minute. Matheus Martins darted in front of Paul Smyth to nod home Ken Sema's corner in the 38th minute. Bayo made it four two minutes before half-time when he fired home at the back post from Francisco Sierralta's cross.

Stoke also made a strong start to the season with a 4-1 win over Rotherham. They led in the fifth minute thanks to Ki-Jana Hoever's opener before Andre Vidigal scored twice in first-half stoppage-time. Lee Peltier got one back but Cafu's red card ended any hopes of an unlikely comeback, with Jacob Brown adding a late fourth for Stoke. Plymouth registered their first Championship victory since April 2010 as they beat Huddersfield 3-1. Last season's League One champions started the season in style as Morgan Whittaker put them ahead after just six minutes. Michael Helik equalized for the Terriers on the stroke of half-time but Bali Mumba and Ryan Hardie won it for Argyle in the second half. Two goals in two first-half minutes laid the foundations of Blackburn's 2-1 win over West Bromwich Albion. —AFP

## Walsh to return for Nigeria clash

**BRISBANE:** Keira Walsh will be available for England in their last-16 Women's World Cup clash against Nigeria on Monday as long as she shows no adverse reaction to returning to training. England's key midfielder was stretchered off in agony in a 1-0 group-stage win over Denmark with what was feared to have been a serious knee injury. But scans found the Barcelona star had not been badly hurt and just over a week on she resumed training on Sunday, in a huge boost to England's World Cup hopes.

Coach Sarina Wiegman declined Sunday to disclose the exact nature of the knee injury but said: "She's doing well. She started to rehab straight after we knew what was going on. "She was on the pitch and training today. "Now we'll wait to see how she recovers from that training session and if she does well then she's available for tomorrow."

Wiegman switched England's usual 4-3-3 formation to 3-5-2 against China because of Walsh's absence and it paid off with a handsome 6-1 win. Whether she retains the same set-up against Randy Waldrum's Nigeria remains to be seen given the threat of Barcelona goal machine Asisat Oshoala and the dangerous Uchenna Kanu in attack. Wiegman is especially wary of Nigeria - who defeated co-hosts Australia 3-2 in the group phase - on the counter-attack. "They're quick, they're pretty physical, so those are things we really need to be aware of," she said. —AFP

## Nigeria targeting 'transformational' win over England

**BRISBANE:** Nigeria coach Randy Waldrum believes knocking European champions England out of the Women's World Cup would be "transformational" for the sport in the country as the sides prepare to meet in the last 16 on Monday. The Super Falcons have appeared at every Women's World Cup going back to the inaugural edition in 1991 but their build-up to this year's tournament was overshadowed by a row with their national federation over bonuses.

They had even threatened to boycott their opening game but put that behind them to draw with Olympic champions Canada and then beat co-hosts Australia. A draw with the Republic of Ireland then ensured that they qualified for the last 16 at the expense of Canada and set up a clash with strongly-fancied England in Brisbane. "It would be a huge win, obviously," Waldrum said Sunday when asked about what knocking out England would signify.

"Already with what we have accomplished Nigeria is buzzing again, from what I understand. "I don't think people expected us to get out of the group and to get the results we have got, so I think it has already been a big success. "But obviously if you can not only beat the Olympic gold medalists but turn around and beat the European champions then it would be something extremely special back home for all the people in Nigeria, and more importantly for this squad, for what they have worked so hard to do. "So it certainly could



**BRISBANE:** Nigeria's defender #02 Ashleigh Plumtre heads the ball during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup football match at Brisbane Stadium. — AFP

be transformational in a lot of different ways."

It is the third time that Nigeria have made it out of their group at the World Cup but they have never won a knockout tie. Waldrum confirmed that star striker Asisat Oshoala is "fit and healthy" and said fellow forward Desire Oparanozie could feature for the first time since picking up an injury before the tournament. He also said he was preparing his team to face an England side

with, or without, Keira Walsh after the star midfielder missed the Lionesses' last group game with a knee injury. Walsh trained with the squad on Sunday for the first time since being stretchered off in England's 1-0 win over Denmark in their second group game. But England coach Sarina Wiegman could opt to stick with the three-woman defense which helped them outclass China 6-1 without Walsh, or revert to a back four. — 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, **MUHAMMED ALIYAR UNNEEN** holder of Passport No. L3462449 do hereby change my name to **MUHAMMADALI** (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **MUHAMMADALI** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C 3842) 6/8/2023**

## Netherlands tame South Africa

US face Sweden test; Netherlands set up Spain World Cup clash



SYDNEY: South Africa's forward #23 Wendy Shongwe (right) and Netherlands' midfielder #10 Danielle van de Donk (2nd right) contest a header during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup round of 16 football match on August 6, 2023. — AFP

SYDNEY: The Netherlands secured a spot in the Women's World Cup quarter-finals by ending South Africa's historic run with a 2-0 win in Sydney on Sunday, ahead of a blockbuster last-16 showdown between holders the United States and Sweden. The Dutch, runners-up in 2019, will now face Spain in the last eight but they suffered some anxious moments in front of 40,000 fans in Sydney and had goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar to thank for making several important saves in the first half.

Jill Roord scored after nine minutes to put the Dutch on their way against a team that sits 45 places below them in the world rankings and was featuring in the knockout rounds for the first time. South Africa goalkeeper Kaylin Swart then made a mess of an innocuous Lineth Beerensteyn shot midway through the second half to gift the Dutch a second.

The African champions will be kicking themselves after having numerous chances in the opening 45 minutes, almost all of them falling to their livewire captain Thembi Kgatlang. Midfielder Roord nodded in the opener from close range following a corner for her fourth goal of the tournament.

The Netherlands then stood firm before adding their second goal in 68 minutes when Swart's blunder let Beerensteyn's tame effort slip through her hands. "Daphne saved us a few times and I was happy to lead

1-0 at half-time," said Dutch coach Andries Jonker.

"We did much better in the second half and had much more control of the game. We deserved to score again and in the end deserved to win." His team will now return to New Zealand for Friday's last-eight game in Wellington against Spain, who outclassed Switzerland 5-1 on Saturday. South Africa coach Desiree Ellis was proud but felt her side should have won. "We had a lot of chances, especially in the first half, to kill off the game," she said. "The chances we created should have put us out of sight."

### 'Lucky USA'

The USA go into their meeting with Sweden in Melbourne, which kicks off at 0900 GMT, looking to improve on some lacklustre performances in the group stage as they chase an unprecedented third consecutive World Cup title. After Germany's shock group-phase exit, the top-rated Americans and Sweden, third on the FIFA list, are the two highest-ranked teams left standing.

The winners will go through to a quarter-final against Japan in Auckland on Friday. Vlatko Andonovski's USA have looked unconvincing, squeezing into the knockout phase with a 0-0 draw against debutants Portugal and also being held by the Netherlands. "The fact we are in, we are lucky, but we

are moving on," Andonovski said on the eve of the game. "Now we will do everything possible so that same situation doesn't happen again. We are doing everything we can to provide success and meet the expectations for everyone."

The United States and Sweden are familiar foes, having met six times before at World Cups, but never in the knockout stages. The USA won their last World Cup encounter 2-0 in 2019 on their way to the title, but Sweden were 3-0 winners when they last met at the Tokyo Olympics. Coach Peter Gerhardsson said history will mean nothing when they meet and is confident the underperforming champions can be beaten. "It's not something I look at, historical facts, I'm rooted in the present," he said. "There are a lot of new players in both line-ups so history is less important."

"(The Olympics) was two years ago, it's all about the physical and mental shape we are in now," he added. "I have great confidence in the squad. We believe in this, believe we can win." Japan have been the sensation of the tournament so far and the 2011 champions eased into the last eight with a 3-1 win over Norway on Saturday in Wellington. Monday's action sees European champions England take on Nigeria in Brisbane before co-hosts Australia face Denmark in Sydney. — AFP

## Simone Biles makes a triumphant return

HOFFMAN ESTATES: Four-time Olympic champion Simone Biles made a triumphant return to gymnastics after a two-year hiatus, dominating the US Classic on Saturday in her first competition since the Tokyo Olympics. Biles, a 19-time world champion, electrified a sellout crowd in suburban Chicago with a stunning performance, receiving an all-around judges' total score of 59.100 points. "Tonight went really well," Biles said. "Everything has fallen into place. I feel really good about where I am now mentally and physically."

"I still think there are some things to work on in my routine but, for the first meet back, I would say it went pretty well. I'm very shocked and surprised. I'm very happy now that that is out of the way." The meet was the last chance to qualify for the US nationals in three weeks at San Jose, California, and Biles is also hoping to compete for a title in Antwerp in October at the World Championships. Biles used the US Classic as her comeback meet in 2018 after a lengthy break following her starring role at the 2016 Rio Olympics, which included gold in all-around, vault, floor and team.

While Biles has not announced if she will be making a bid to compete at next year's Paris Olympics, her superb comeback spectacle at the Classic at age 26 could be a first stride in that direction. "We're still in the working steps," Biles said when asked about the Paris Games. "My main goal was this and then championships and after that we'll look on to worlds



ILLINOIS: USA's Simone Biles performs on the uneven bars during the 39th edition of the US Classic gymnastics competition in Hoffman Estates. — AFP

and then we'll see. "So far it's heading in the right direction but I still have to work on myself. I'm still going to do my therapy. I'm going to put myself first."

Biles struggled at the Games in Japan in 2021 with mental health issues and the "twisties" - a disorienting feeling while in mid-air that leaves gymnasts at greater injury risk when landing. She was affected early in the Olympic team competition, pulled out of the all-around plus the vault, uneven bars and floor exercise disciplines before taking bronze on the balance beam. "I always kind of knew (I'd return) as soon as everything happened in Tokyo," she said. "This time I'm doing it for me. I worked a lot on myself and I believe in

myself a little bit more. It's just coming back out here and starting those first steps again."

Biles and her issues in Tokyo put a new emphasis on mental health struggles for elite athletes. She still faces them but with cheering supporters yelling for joy at her every routine, she knows she's not doing so alone. "Everyone that was cheering - made posters, all of that in the crowd - it just made my heart melt that they still believe in me," Biles said. "It means the world because after everything that transpired in Tokyo, I worked on myself a lot," Biles said. "I still do therapy weekly and it has just been so exciting to come out here and have the confidence I had before."

"It means the world because I feel like I lost a part of that sometimes, so to come back out here and do what I did tonight and have that support from the fans and everybody watching, I just couldn't thank them enough," Biles said she was nervous but that the meet didn't feel much different than earlier ones. She began on the uneven bars, where her strong performance received a score of 14.000 points, third-best overall. She followed by going first on balance beam and delivering a spectacular 14.800, the meet's top score.

Biles went last in rotation three on floor exercise and drew cheers during and after every tumbling run, her flips and landings on incredible passes bringing a roar at the finish of an effort that was rewarded with a meet-best 14.900 points. She finished on vault and unleashed another epic performance, soaring high and landing well - showing no signs of rust from the long layoff in earning a meet-best 15.400 score. "After every routine, it got a little bit easier," Biles said. Leanne Wong, 19, finished second, five points off the pace on 54.100, with 17-year-old Joscelyn Roberson third on 54.050. — AFP

## Celtic mark Rodgers' return with a flying start; Rangers crash

GLASGOW: Champions Celtic marked Brendan Rodgers' return as manager with a 4-2 victory over Ross County, while Rangers crashed to a shock 1-0 defeat at Kilmarnock in the opening weekend of the Scottish Premiership season on Saturday. Rodgers is back in charge of the Glasgow club after Ange Postecoglou's departure for Tottenham in the close season. After leaving Leicester by mutual consent prior to their relegation from the Premier League last term, Rodgers has opted to return to Scotland's dominant force rather than stay south of the border in England.

The former Liverpool boss, confirmed as Celtic manager in June, won two Scottish titles, two Scottish Cups and three Scottish League Cups in his first spell at Parkhead between 2016 and 2019. With Postecoglou having led Celtic to the domestic treble last season, Rodgers will be expected to maintain the Hoops' dominance, while also looking to progress in the Champions League. On the evidence of their comfortable start to the new season against Ross County, Rodgers' side should be capable of emulating last season's success under his predecessor. Rodgers preferred David Turnbull to Reo Hatata in his first competitive match since returning and the midfielder vindicated his faith with two first-half goals.

The 24-year-old had not started a league game since November 12 last year. Kyogo Furuhashi was also on the scoresheet for Celtic, with Matt O'Riley completing the hosts' goal spree. "I spoke to him in pre-season and told him it would be a shame if you don't achieve what you can do at a club like this," Rodgers said of man of the match Turnbull. "You have the talent, but you have to be a working talent, and you have to be able to run and be aggressive in your game. If you can do that, then your qualities will come through."

County's players and manager Malky Mackay gave Celtic a guard of honor as they entered the field before Hoops substitute James Forrest raised the league flag to cheers from the sell-out crowd. While Celtic lived up to their billing as title favorites, Rangers endured a worrying start to their bid to dethrone their Old Firm rivals. Michael Beale's lackluster side had labored in the first half at Rugby Park and there was no improvement after the break before they were stunned by Brad Lyons' goal after 65 minutes. The 26-year-old Northern Irishman pounced inside the box to fire home and Rangers were unable to respond. — AFP