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July hottest month ever

EU climate observatory warns of dire consequences

Crown Prince receives GCC Chief

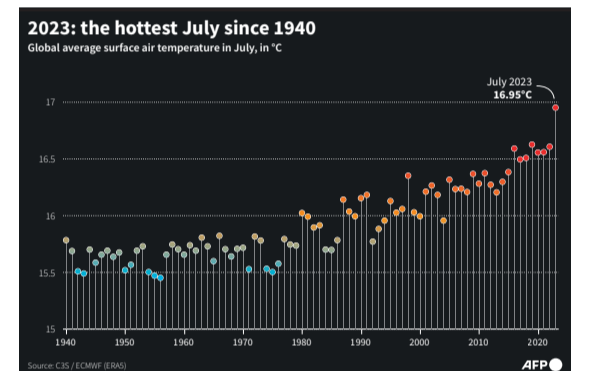


KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Aug 8, 2023. — KUNA

PARIS: July was the hottest month ever recorded on Earth, the European Union's climate observatory confirmed Tuesday, warning of dire consequences. Marked by heatwaves and fires all around the world, the previous month was 0.33 degrees Celsius higher than the record set in July 2019 when the average temperature was 16.63C, it said.

"It has not been this warm, combining observational records and paleoclimate records, for the last 120,000 years," said Samantha Burgess, Deputy Director of the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service. "The global average temperature for July 2023 is confirmed to be the highest on record for any month — the month is estimated to have been around 1.5 degrees warmer than the average for 1850 to 1900," said Burgess. The service stated that this July was 0.72C warmer than the 1991-2020 average for the month.

About 1.2 degrees Celsius of global warming since the late 1800s, driven by the burning of fossil fuels, has made heatwaves hotter, longer and more frequent, as well as intensifying other weather extremes like storms and floods. "Heatwaves were experienced in multiple regions of the Northern Hemisphere, including southern Europe. Well-above average temperatures occurred over several South American countries and around much of Antarctica,"



according to the observatory.

"The global mean for 2023 is the third highest on record, at 0.43C relative to 1991-2020, compared with 0.49C for 2016 and 0.48C for 2020. The gap between 2023 and 2016 is expected to narrow in the coming months, as the latter months of 2016 were relatively cool... while the remainder of 2023 is expected to be relatively warm as the current El Nino event develops."

Scientists had warned that July could hit a new record. The world's oceans also set a new temperature record, raising concerns about knock-on effects on

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Chances of light rain on Friday

KUWAIT: Meteorologist Fahd Al-Otaibi said there is a chance for sporadic rain on Friday in some areas of Kuwait, indicating humidity is constantly rising and will reach 70 percent, especially in coastal areas. He said August will continue to witness high temperatures during the day, but the heat will be less intense at night, especially with the increase in humidity, adding temperatures will remain high until the middle of the month, gradually decreasing with the beginning of September.

Airport traffic up 16% in July

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Airport witnessed a 16 percent increase in passenger traffic in July compared to the same month last year, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said Tuesday. Total passenger traffic at Kuwait International Airport in July 2023 reached 1,446,690 travelers, DGCA Acting Director General Emad Al-Jalvi said. Dubai, Cairo, Istanbul, Doha and Jeddah were the top destinations for travelers during this month, he added. (See Page 4)

Call to protect workers from sun

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower released a reminder on Tuesday that the outdoor work ban from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm is in effect daily until August 31. The authority urged employers to adhere to the ban and provide workers with safety and protection from exposure to sunlight.

Simon & Schuster sold for \$1.62bn

NEW YORK: Paramount Global said Monday it had reached an agreement to sell Simon & Schuster, a top US publisher, to private equity firm KKR for \$1.62 billion. The proposed sale, if it goes through, will end a years' long effort to sell the prestigious publishing house, whose authors include Stephen King, Colleen Hoover and Bob Woodward. — AFP

Zain Group's Q2 2023 net profit soars 14% to reach \$187m

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its consolidated financial results for the second quarter and six months ended June 30, 2023. Zain served 52.7 million customers at the end of the period, a 2 percent increase year-on-year (YoY).

In the second quarter of 2023 (Q2), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 461 million (\$1.5 billion), up 10 percent YoY. EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 182 million (\$594 million), up 10 percent YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent. Net income for the quarter amounted to KD 57 million (\$187 million), up 14 percent YoY, reflecting earnings per share of 13 fils (\$0.04).

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented: "The solid growth in Enterprise, Digital and Fintech revenues combined with operational efficiencies



Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih

across our markets was key to the impressive financial performance for the first half of 2023. On the back of these robust results combined with our strong balance sheet and financial solvency, and in accordance with our declared 35 fils per share minimum dividend policy for the next three years starting 2023, the Board is pleased to declare a third consecutive half-year dividend of 10 fils per share."

Commenting on the results, Chairman of the Board



Vice Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

of Directors of Zain Group Osamah Al-Furaih said: "This exceptional performance is a result of the board and management's focus on driving sustainable shareholder value through effective environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, network upgrades expansion, and growing new lucrative business verticals with a focus on providing customers with an exceptional telecom experience." (See Page 9)

Govt vows no return to old energy prices

KUWAIT: The government affirmed that reviewing subsidies on services is a priority for the authorities in the country, rejecting parliamentary proposals to revert to pre-2016 prices of fuel, electricity and water. Ministerial sources said such proposals are only

for media and electoral consumption and have nothing to do with governmental and parliamentary aspirations in addressing the imbalance in the state budget, indicating the government wants to improve living conditions, but not by reducing prices of electricity and fuel.

The sources added prices have a tendency to rise and not go down due to the enormous pressure these state-supported services cause on the public budget. The sources claimed the defect in Kuwait with regard to subsidies is that the majority

of benefits go to expatriates and not citizens. The sources said electricity prices will be increased in the coming period, with Kuwaitis to pay the electricity and water tariffs at old prices for one house, and if they own more than one house, the bills will be paid at the new rates. The sources indicated that all subsidies will be directed to citizens with low incomes, while those with high incomes will not receive support, including subsidized food rations.

Five MPs called on Monday for abolishing the increases made to

electricity and fuel prices in 2016 so that electricity charges would return to just 2 fils per kilowatt. Charges of electricity were raised in 2016 from 2 fils a kilowatt to 50 fils per kilowatt, applying mostly to expatriates and Kuwaiti citizens in a few cases. The proposal also called for cancelling the increase in fuel prices introduced in 2016, so petrol prices would return to under 100 fils per liter. The proposal came as part of a string of populist proposals by lawmakers who were elected to the National Assembly on June 6.

US slams Zionist 'terror'; home of Palestinian razed

WASHINGTON/NABLUS: The United States said Monday that West Bank settlers' killing of a 19-year-old Palestinian was "terror", sharpening its tone on far-right Zionist violence. The State Department's bureau in charge of the Middle East in a week-end post on Twitter, which has been rebranded X, strongly condemned the "terror attack by (Zionist) extremist settlers".

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller made clear Monday that the word choice was not an accident. "The thinking is that it was a terror attack, and we are concerned about it, and that's why we called it that," he told reporters. "We have also been clear that accountability and justice should be pursued with equal rigor in all cases of violent extremism, whoever the perpetrators are," he said.

He noted that the Zionist entity has made arrests, which he called "appropriate action". Qusai Jamal Maatan was shot dead in Burqah, east of Ramallah, on Friday as armed settlers clashed with villagers. Zionist media said that one of two suspects was a former aide to a lawmaker from the far-right Jewish

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NABLUS: A youth inspects the remains of a house demolished by Zionist soldiers at the Asker camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank on Aug 8, 2023. — AFP



Cabinet commends joint government-parliament coordination



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over the Cabinet meeting. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday expressed utmost appreciation for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's esteemed directives for executive and legislative branches to cooperate. It also commended the role of the joint government-parliament coordination committee in this regard; as means to approve bills that would be of benefit to the public and country, noted Deputy Premier, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Essa Al-Kanderi, after the weekly Cabinet meeting.

His Highness the Prime Minister instructed the Cabinet members to accelerate the extension of public utilities and services to the new cities of Al-Mutlaa and Sabah Al-Ahmad. He urged all government bodies to increase cooperation to remove all obstacles facing the execution of state development and entertainment projects. The Cabinet assigned Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Education Jasim Al-Ostad to provide schools and other educational facilities with all their needs to be ready for the new academic year. — KUNA



Parents are doctors' eyes on children's performance

'Parental training is the backbone of making successful progress'

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Parents' collaboration with doctors is crucial for the health and development of children with special needs. When working collaboratively with the doctor, parents can gain a better understanding of their child's specific needs and how to address them effectively. Kuwait Times interviewed Pediatric Occupational Therapist Eman Jafer Abdullah to further understand the vital role parents occupy in ensuring accurate medical information, early intervention, comprehensive care and successful decision making.

Abdullah told Kuwait Times that parental training is the backbone of making successful progress in the development of children with special needs. If the parents are motivated, willing and learn from the doctor to help their child, everything will become easier later. There are studies that say that when parents feel they have the competence of understanding their children, their needs and the goal that the specialists are working towards, their child's daily routine and performance will improve.

Also, when randomized controlled trials (RCTs) compared two groups — children who undertake therapy service in addition to parental training, and another group that lacked parental training — the studies found the groups with parental assistance were improving in motor and cognitive skills as well as emotional development. They also found that parenting skills and the relationship between parents and their children improved, benefiting both sides.

"Another reason to support parental training is because at the end of the day, as an occupational therapist, I'm focusing mainly on the real functional performance in real-life situations and real-life environments and challenges. So, parents become my eyes in such situations. When the parents understand what we are doing as occupational therapists and what are our goals, they become capable of applying what they have learnt outside the clinic. Parents monitor their children's behavior and achievements in real-life situations, not me, because in the clinic, I can only achieve the optimal performance as I'm controlling the situation inside the clinic, unlike in real life," Abdullah elaborated.

Abdullah shared a message with parents who have children that need special care. "You have the right to discuss with professionals their goals and priorities and see what is going on in the session and how we do it. You also have the right to discuss with us and show us videos and pictures that keep us updated and informed about the child's progress and give feedback on the sessions. Do not be afraid and do not underestimate your role in helping us see the progress of the child," she said.



Eman Abdullah



"I personally see that parents have the right to be there and visualize the session and how it goes in order for them to learn the techniques, because this will improve the experience between the child and the

parents. This will motivate me as well, as I will have a holistic picture about the child and the environment, which will help me evaluate the child and guide the parents based on evidence," Abdullah concluded.



Kids participate in 'Puppet Theater'

KUWAIT: Several children participated in the Puppets Theater, to make a beautiful toy, the size of their hands at Kuwait National Library, within activities of the children's summer camp from August 6th to August 8th. The workshop was presented by Iman Jawaheri. Children participated in the technical and imaginative idea to shape the toys in a design they like, starting with cutting and shaping the face and hands by using fabric after which they then color them. Children enjoyed making the entertaining characters as they learned how to use it at the theater. The workshop included a theatrical display of the puppets. — KUNA



Kuwait affirms the need for a nuke-free Mideast

KUWAIT: Kuwait affirmed on Monday that the goal of ridding the Middle East region of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and subjecting all nuclear facilities and programs to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency is an inalienable goal to achieve security, safety and stability in the region.

This was stated in a speech delivered by the permanent representative of Kuwait to international organizations in Vienna and advisor at the Embassy of Kuwait to Austria Bashar Al-Duwaisan before the first session of the preparatory committee for the 2026 review conference of states party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons currently held in Vienna. Duwaisan urged nations to adhere to the outcomes of the reviews, especially with regard to the establishment of a Middle East free of such weapons.

He underlined the importance of achieving the universality of the treaty and calling on all non-acceding countries to join the treaty as soon as possible, noting that Kuwait contributed to the efforts pushed by the Arab countries to implement the 1995 resolution and establish a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Duwaisan said the 2010 review conference unanimously approved an action plan for the implementation of the resolution on the establishment of the zone and tasked the UN secretary-general and the three countries sponsoring the resolution to convene a conference to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East to be the beginning of a negotiating path for the establishment of such a zone.

He expressed regret at the lack of political will and seriousness on the part of some parties tasked with holding the conference, which led to the failure of the conference to be held on time and postponed indefinitely, pointing out that the 2015 review conference of the treaty was prevented from reaching a final document

due to the rejection of some countries' proposals related to the Middle East.

Duwaisan stressed the need for the Zionist entity to join the NPT, especially as it is the only party in the region that is not a member and the obstacle that prevents the establishment of a zone free of these weapons, considering that the establishment of security and stability in any region does not come through the possession of nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction.

He added Kuwait stresses that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, on the basis of which the indefinite extension of the treaty was carried out, remains in force until its goals and objectives are achieved, and that the responsibility for implementing the resolution lies with all the states party to the treaty, especially nuclear states. "Despite the state of dissatisfaction with a lack of progress, Kuwait, in line with the Arab position, stresses the importance of committing to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and its mechanism adopted in 2010, which has not yet seen the light of day," he said.

Duwaisan pointed out the sessions of the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction witnessed success in launching an executive path for the establishment of the zone through the adoption of a political declaration and several resolutions reflecting the consensus witnessed at the sessions among the concerned participating states and their intention to complete this path in order to achieve its desired goal of establishing the free zone in accordance with the mandate of the Middle East resolution of 1995. This is based on the principles of consensus and the free will of the states concerned.

Duwaisan stressed the importance of considering this new path in parallel and not an alternative to the path of establishing the zone within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, reiterating Kuwait's call on all concerned countries in general and the three countries sponsoring the 1995 resolution in particular to move forward with this path until its goals are achieved, which is the establishment of the zone based on reaching a comprehensive legally binding agreement that includes the mechanisms agreed between all state parties. — KUNA

Local

Rising temperatures spark concern, expert weighs in

Climate change can no longer be denied: Bahzad

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The issue of rising temperatures has garnered significant attention due to growing concern over climate change. Rising global temperatures have led to more frequent and intense heatwaves, impacting ecosystems, human health and daily life. Jenan Bahzad, Director of Programs and Activities and Member of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Environment Protection Society, told Kuwait Times climate change in the world has begun to be obvious and cannot be hidden or denied. Truth about the rise in temperatures, intensity of storms, increase in droughts, rise in acidity of oceans and other events have raced around the world in the past few years.

"Scientists have repeatedly warned about the rise in global temperatures, and all recent research and studies have supported the damage and consequences of climate change on the world. Kuwait has to be aware of its impact," she said. "The upcoming impacts will be very costly, but the window of opportunity is still open to take the necessary measures to limit these effects. It is now necessary to rectify the situation and pay attention to developing strategic plans at a high level for changes in energy systems and changes in transportation, which has a significant impact on the emission of greenhouse gases," she added.

Bahzad indicated the main reason for the greater intensity of heat is the design of residential cities in and around Kuwait. "This includes the engineering design of the region, including population pressure and traffic congestion. The design of the city is made of untreated concrete and dark colors in asphalt roads and sidewalks, which are not suitable for the

environment of the region. These can be replaced by natural sandy rocks that are suitable for their light colors and lack of heat absorption," she explained.

"In addition, the city lacks green spaces and sustainable agriculture. This is one of the most important solutions to reduce the feeling of heat in the city crowded with cars and their emissions of gases and heat from engines, as they provide shade and increase air humidity. If we look at residential areas, we find they also produce heat because of air-conditioners, which increase the heat perceived in the area. In Kuwait, people use open spaces as car parking spots and neglect home and roof cultivations," she added.

Bahzad said all solutions are within reach and are simple and low cost, returning to nature and engineering design for the city to suit the dry environment. This will contribute to reducing heat and redirecting winds to pass without hindrance from interlocking buildings of inappropriate heights. She affirmed the government must be aware of the rise in temperatures and work on reducing energy consumption wasted due to operating unnecessary lights and devices at home, emphasizing environmental behavior at work and spreading a culture of reducing energy and water wastage.



Jenan Bahzad



KUWAIT: An electronic sign shows the temperature and humidity in Kuwait City. The issue of rising temperatures has garnered significant attention due to growing concern over climate change. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

"Today, the environment has become a social responsibility on the part of the government, individuals and society, because we are all partners in protecting it, especially since environmental laws and international agreements are nothing but a deterrent to the dangers that surround humans and a means to reduce human violations of the en-

vironment," she pointed out. Bahzad said future planning must include scenarios for the potential effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels or decreasing levels of freshwater, in addition to the unprecedented rise in temperatures and the subsequent possible effects such as drought, crop failure and the spread of wildfires.

FM, GCC chief discuss cementing joint action



KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday met Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi. During the meeting, they discussed means to boost joint GCC action to achieve more integration and unity among member states. They also touched on regional and international issues of common interest. — KUNA

Interior hunts drug dealers

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior stressed that its war on drug dealers will continue and urged everyone not to engage in the trade of narcotic substances so as to protect society and preserve it from those dangerous drugs. The ministry said in a press release that the criminal department represented by the General Directorate of Drug Control was able to arrest 15 suspects for being in possession of about 5.10 kilograms of narcotic substances (hashish, shabu, and marijuana).

Also, 8,130 tablets of psychotropic substances and a huge amount of money were seized. After interrogation, the suspects admitted that the banned substances belonged to them. The suspects have been referred to the appro-

priate authorities for legal action. Officials vowed to confront drug traffickers and smugglers to protect the youth of the country from the dangers of this devastating scourge. They urged people to call the emergency number (112) to report any negative phenomena.

In another development, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjis, discussed with the undersecretary of the Saudi Ministry of Interior, Dr Hisham Al-Falih, a number of security issues of mutual interest within the meetings of the military and security coordination committee. The Ministry of Interior said in a statement issued by the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media on Tuesday that the meeting discussed a number of initiatives put forward by the two sides for the committee. The meeting is aimed at harmonizing and exchanging views on the latest findings of the meetings. — KUNA

In my view

Who's to blame?



Fadia Al-Refai

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Recently, a part of my generation has been accused constantly of not valuing our country, of not having any belonging to our country. We've heard so many times that this generation is just rotten! Amid globalization, a rise in youth studying abroad, and constant criticism this generation keeps throwing at the government and administrations with no experience or enough knowledge most of the time, it is no surprise that these accusations have risen.

But the true question remains — are these accusations true? And if they are, who is to blame for this mindset in the youth of not belonging, negativity and constant criticism? According to French sociologist Gabriel Tarde and his theory of imitation, social behavior, including language and ways of thinking, is not created or destroyed; rather it is imitated from generation to generation and developed within the process of elimination. He divided imitation into three categories, and the one important to this article is the imitation of people of each other when a society is intertwined.

In Kuwait, the Kuwaiti population does not exceed two million, and social relationships are more than strong within society. Therefore, if my generation truly is unappreciative, pessimistic and ungrateful, this could be a logical series of imitation from the older generation, who constantly repeat the best Kuwait has ever been was in the '70s, and modern Kuwait is bland. This subconscious has been absorbed by our generation, to think that we are living a shallow life with no true accomplishments, even though in my opinion this generation is one of the most promising Kuwait has ever witnessed.

In the past, opinions were only heard when sitting with the owner of this opinion and chatting about it. But now, social media has played a crucial role in pivoting modern journalism and media and giving everyone a platform to express their opinions, whether they have enough knowledge and experience to do so or not. Therefore, journalism today, in all its forms, whether newspapers, social media or even radio stations, does not paint a true picture of Kuwaiti society of all generations.

Every time one opens a newspaper or even Twitter, the first thing, we see is depressing news or dark criticism, as if there are no positive aspects in the country we live in! Despite having so many glimpses of optimism, and so much news that can light a candle in the middle of a dark cave, these media platforms are stubbornly reporting only negative aspects, which has created an attitude that is ready to accept negative pessimistic news more than any positive optimistic news. This has created a new society blinded by the negatives. Not because positives don't exist, but because rarely is there anyone who talks about them!

The Kuwaiti society is a society of strong social ties. Hence, if the older generation really does want to paint a new picture and build a new youth, a youth that belongs to this country with all that that word holds in meaning, a youth that is eager to develop and not criticize, a youth that feels like they are in a country that is loved and not hated and hating, then the older generation must start to change themselves first and through all media platforms. Because in the situation we are in today, we are not the ones to blame!



KUWAIT: The Faculty of Law organized an enlightening meeting for new and transferred students. — KUNA photos

Faculty of Law holds orientation program

KUWAIT: The Faculty of Law organized an enlightening meeting for new male and female students transferred to the Faculty of Law for the academic year 2023/2024 in the presence and participation of the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Law, Dr Muhammad Al-Tamimi, Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud, Dr Latifa Al-Mir, Dr Ahmed AbdulKarim, and the Office of Guidance and Counseling. The Acting Dean of the Faculty of Law, Dr Muhammad Al-Tamimi, welcomed the new and transferred students, saying, "The importance of this meeting is to identify the mechanisms of work and teaching in the Faculty of Law and how to communicate with faculty members."

Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud spoke on the nature of the study, the materials taught at the faculty, and the scientific departments that make up the college. In the same context, Dr Latifa Al-Meer discussed the nature of the study in the college and the system, stressing the importance of exerting effort from the beginning in order to succeed and excel in the end. "The first year of study is the



year of construction and foundation on which the rest of the years are built," Dr Latifa said.

Dr Ahmed Abdel Karim gave some advice and guidance to students, urging them to search for information to obtain knowledge and pointing out how to obtain it by following the social media

accounts of the university and the college. "It is important to go to the Guidance and Counseling Office in the college to find out how to register subjects and test dates, and we also touched on the control system and regulations related to college tests," he said.

News in Brief

Mol nabs suspects of criminal network

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior announced that security officers from the criminal security department have busted a criminal network that illegally tampers with the meter reading systems of the Ministry of Electricity and Water and manipulates them for money. The suspects were referred to public prosecution. The Ministry of Interior said in a press release on Tuesday that based on the directions and direct order of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity and Water, officials launched an investigation, after which they tracked a criminal network consisting of expatriates of different Arab nationalities. The ministry stressed that it will not hesitate to enforce the law on those who engage in illegal activities. — KUNA

Ministry of Interior urges sea-goers to be careful

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry on Tuesday called on sea-goers to exercise caution because of a marine cable and ongoing maintenance work in Al-Bidda and Failaka Island. The General Directorate of the Coast Guard said that the ministry is carrying out maintenance work in those areas, which poses a danger to sea-goers. Officials urged everyone to be careful until the Ministry of Electricity and Water finishes its work. — Agencies

CBK issues tawarruq and bonds worth KD 160m

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced issuing new bonds and related tawarruq valued at KD 160 million (around \$528 million). The securities bear a 4.375 percent return rate with a three-month maturity rate, according to a CBK statement received by KUNA. Meanwhile, the price of Kuwait crude oil rose 63 cents to \$90 per barrel compared with \$89.37 pb on Friday. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the Brent crude oil went down 90 cents to \$85.34 pb and West Texas Intermediate crude went down 88 cents to \$81.94 pb. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The sun and its sunspots are pictured on Aug 8, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait International Airport witnesses increase in traffic

Passenger traffic hits 1,446,690

KUWAIT: The Kuwait General Directorate of Civil Aviation said on Tuesday that the total passenger traffic to and from Kuwait International Airport last July reached 1,446,690. The director general of civil aviation, Emad Al-Jalawi, said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Kuwait International Airport witnessed an increase in passenger traffic by 16 percent and an increase in aircraft traffic by 23 percent, while air cargo traffic increased by 3 percent during the month of July compared to the same period last year.

Al-Jalawi added that in July, the incoming passenger traffic reached 640,458 passengers, while the departing passenger traffic reached 806,232 passengers. He reported that the total number of passengers (transit) reached 166,465 passengers, an increase of 75 percent from July

last year, pointing out that the total movement of aircraft operated to and from Kuwait International Airport during the month of July amounted to 12,468 flights.

In terms of air cargo traffic, Al-Jalawi said that the total cargo traffic in July was about 1.16 million kilograms, while the incoming cargo traffic was about 7.12 million kilograms and the outgoing cargo traffic was about 3.3 million kilograms. He pointed out that the most popular destinations during the same period were Dubai, Cairo, Istanbul/Sabiha, Doha, and Jeddah. As for the percentage of market movement of airlines during July, Al-Jalawi said that Kuwait Airways Company reached a share of 29. The share of Jazeera Airways reached 26 percent, while the rest of the companies had a market share of 45 percent. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Photo shows passengers at the Kuwait International Airport.

Summer camp: Opportunity to learn, have fun



KUWAIT: In ten exciting weeks, children from age six to 12 join the Scientific Center Kuwait's (TSCK) summer camp for an opportunity to learn and have fun during their stay. Staff, tasked with supervising the children, bring to the younglings an assortment of activities that broadens their cultural and scientific horizons. — KUNA photos



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South America seeks roadmap to save Amazon at 'landmark' summit

World must 'wake up' to Taiwan security threats: Japan ex-PM

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RAQA: A girl sifts through garbage at the Sahlat al-Banat makeshift camp for internally displaced people set-up next to a waste dump on the outskirts of the northern Syrian city of Raqa, on July 10, 2023. - AFP

The 'forgotten' camps where Syria war displaced languish

Thousands of people struggle with poverty, disease without aid

RAQA: Thousands of people displaced by 12 years of war are stuck in squalid, unofficial camps in Syria's Kurdish-held northeast, languishing in extreme poverty and largely cut off from international assistance. "We've been completely forgotten," said Rahma al-Hammud, 33, standing at her tent — a shoddy patchwork of worn-out fabric, tarp and old fertilizer bags crudely sewn together. "Our children get sick over and over again. They get fever, diarrhea and vomiting," said the widowed mother of four. She lives in the Al-Yunani camp in the northern province of Raqa, where the Islamic State group had set up its de facto capital before its defeat in 2017 by US-backed Kurdish-led fighters.

Located near the Euphrates River, it is one of many informal camps inside Syria for people displaced by the conflict. Women can be seen carrying heavy buckets of water from communal tanks in heat that can exceed 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), while children in filthy clothes and bare feet play in the dirt. Sheikmous Ahmed, an official in the semi-autonomous Kurdish

administration, said tens of thousands of people live in dozens of informal camps in north and northeast Syria. Only 16 camps, housing around 150,000 people, are formally recognized and have access to international aid, including Al-Hol and Roj, which host suspected relatives of IS fighters, he said.

Lack of aid

While living and hygiene conditions can be dire even in official displacement camps, the situation in informal settlements is sometimes worse, with no semblance of organization and little or no humanitarian assistance. Tanya Evans of the International Rescue Committee said such informal camps "can be considered the 'forgotten camps' of Syria".

"Increased attention, funding, and sustained efforts by the international community are crucial" to ensuring such camps "receive the assistance they desperately need", she told AFP in a statement. Hammud, who is displaced from elsewhere in Raqa province, said aid

was "scarce" and that international organizations "do not recognize" the Al-Yunani camp.

"Even if they helped us every two or three months, people would have" better lives, said Hammud, a day laborer in the agriculture sector. Three of her children also work in an industrial area nearby to help make ends meet. Syria's war has killed more than half a million people and displaced millions since it broke out in 2011 with the regime's repression of peaceful protests. It spiraled into a deadly conflict that pulled in foreign powers and global jihadists.

'Hell forever'

According to Sheikmous Ahmed, Kurdish authorities are working "on a plan to transfer residents from informal to formal camps" in a bid to improve their living conditions. If this were to come true it could improve the life of residents of Sahlat al-Banat, a makeshift camp which sits next to a landfill on the outskirts of Raqa city. Residents spend their days scavenging the rubbish

tip for anything of value, such as scrap metal and bits of plastic, which they hope to sell. It is their main source of income. "The situation in the camp is tragic," said 30-year-old mother Shakura Mohammed, who was displaced from nearby Deir Ezzor province.

"People search through the rubbish for things they can sell in order to buy bread and earn a living," she said. "No aid comes to the camp," she added.

According to a report by the United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA, 79 percent of settlements in Raqa province are informal. A UN cross-border mechanism allowing aid to enter northeast Syria from neighboring Iraq was halted in early 2020 after pressure from regime ally Russia at the UN Security Council, worsening conditions for those in need. Umm Rakan, who lives at Sahlat al-Banat, said she had given up on the idea that things would improve. "We no longer count on anyone's help. We lost hope years ago," said the woman in her 40s, who was also displaced from Deir Ezzor. "We are destined to live trapped in this hell forever." - AFP

China drafts rules for use of facial recognition data

BEIJING: Firms using facial recognition in China will be required to obtain consent or legal permission before collecting personal information, draft regulations released Tuesday said, while stipulating the rules would not apply to some bodies.

China is one of the most surveilled societies on Earth, with thousands of CCTV cameras scattered across cities and facial recognition technology widely used in everything from day-to-day law enforcement to political repression.

Draft regulations released by China's Cyberspace Administration warned that use of the technology must "abide by laws and regulations, comply with public order, respect social morality, assume social responsibility, and fulfil duties to protect personal information."

Use of the technology to "analyze ... ethnicity or religion" is prohibited, and the processing of facial data can only be carried out with the individual's consent or written legal permission, the law said. It must also not be used to "endanger national security, harm public interests", or "disrupt social order", the regulations said.

Such technology may be used "only when there is a specific purpose and sufficient necessity, and when strict protection measures are taken", reads one article of the regulation. But, it stipulated, the rules would not apply to those "not required by laws and administrative regulations to obtain personal consent". It did not specify what those were.

The regulations will enter effect on September 7 following a public consultation period. A number of top Chinese facial recognition and surveillance firms have faced sanctions by the United States for their alleged role in repression. State-owned surveillance giant Hikvision was blacklisted in the United States for allegedly helping Beijing carry out a "campaign of repression". And Hong Kong-listed SenseTime was placed on a similar blacklist in 2019 over the use of its technology in mass surveillance in the western region of Xinjiang. — AFP



SAQQAI: A man inspects items in the rubble of a destroyed mudbrick house in the aftermath of a flood in al-Sagai north of Omdurman in Sudan on August 6, 2023. — AFP

Unburied corpses prompt fears of cholera in Sudan

CAIRO: War-torn Sudan is at risk of major disease outbreaks, with thousands of unburied corpses remaining out in the open and the country's health and sanitation infrastructure destroyed, Save the Children warned Tuesday.

Residents say Khartoum is littered with dead bodies from fighting between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. With thousands of corpses decomposing on the streets of the capital and morgues overflowing four months into the conflict, the London-based charity raised the alarm about "the risk of major disease outbreaks in the city".

Sudan has seen repeated cholera outbreaks in recent years, and doctors have warned of a renewed threat as a result of the war. "A horrifying combination of rising numbers of corpses, severe water shortages, non-functioning hygiene and sanitation services, and lack of water treatment options are also prompting fears of a

cholera outbreak in the city," Save the Children said.

Without a functioning public health laboratory for testing, the non-governmental organization said it was difficult to assess whether Sudan was experiencing a cholera outbreak. The conflict which erupted on April 15 has prevented victims and families from reaching hospitals, 80 percent of which the World Health Organization says are out of service.

In addition, "prolonged power shortages have left the city's morgues without refrigeration, leaving bodies to decompose in the heat", said Save the Children. "The inability to give those who have died a dignified burial is yet another element of the suffering of families in Khartoum," said Bashir Kamal Eldin Hamid, a doctor with the organization.

Fighting has killed at least 3,900 people nationwide, according to a conservative estimate by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. More than four million people have been uprooted from their homes, the UN's refugee agency said Tuesday.

The United Nations says more than six million people are "just one step away from famine", as aid groups struggle to deliver life-saving assistance through bureaucratic hurdles, security challenges and targeted attacks. Since the conflict began, Khartoum has not gone a day without the sound of heavy artillery, air strikes or gunfire rattling terrified civilians, trapped at home and rationing water and electricity. — AFP

Norway to fine Meta for data law breach

OSLO: Norway's data protection agency said Tuesday it would start fining Facebook and Instagram owner Meta nearly \$100,000 per day for defying a ban on using users' personal information to target ads.

The Norwegian watchdog, Datatilsynet, said Meta would be fined one million kroner (\$97,000) per day, starting August 14. Tobias Judin, head of Datatilsynet's international department, said the fine related to a decision made on July 14, where the agency had temporarily "imposed a ban on behavioral advertising on Facebook and Instagram."

"Meta's behavioral advertising entails intrusive surveillance of its users, negatively impacting their right to data protection and freedom of information," Judin told AFP in an email, adding that there were many vulnerable groups on the platforms, such as "young people, the elderly and people with cognitive disabilities." "We are also concerned that sensitive personal data may be used for advertising purposes. We have therefore found that Meta's practices are contrary to data protection law," Judin continued. Datatilsynet announced the ban on July 17 and originally said that Meta had until August 4 to take corrective measures. "The coercive fine is issued because Meta has not yet complied with our ban," Judin said. The social media giant said last week it intends to ask users in the European Union, EEA (European Economic Area) and Switzerland to give their consent before allowing targeted advertising on its networks. — AFP



This file photo taken on January 12, 2023 in Toulouse, southwestern France shows a tablet displaying the logo of the company Meta. — AFP

International

World must 'wake up' to Taiwan security threats: Japan ex-PM

'There should be no war in the region'

TAIPEI: Former Japanese prime minister Taro Aso warned a Taipei security forum Tuesday that the international community must "wake up" to the worsening situation surrounding the Taiwan Strait, a hotspot waterway separating the democratic island from China. Taiwan has in recent years been under increased political and military pressure from China, which claims the island as its territory and has vowed to retake it one day.

The past year has been especially charged with Beijing enacting two massive rounds of wargames around the island, simulating a blockade of Taiwan and missile strikes. The live-fire exercises also affected Taiwan's northeastern neighbor when ballistic missiles were launched near Japan's coastal waters, the 82-year-old ex-premier said.

"The important thing for us now is that there should be no war in the region, including the Taiwan Strait," said Aso, one of the keynote speakers at an annual security forum that gathers defense and maritime experts. "We need to wake up now. From Taiwan to the United States and other like-minded countries, it's time to demonstrate our will and determination to fight, and our power of deterrence."

As Taiwan's close neighbor, he said that Japan "should be the first to express our attitude and also to make the message clear in the international community, including China". "Maintaining a free and open international order based on universal values and abiding by the rule of law, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, is a major issue of life and death for Japanese security," said Aso.

Aso, a close ally of late ex-premier Shinzo Abe, remains a political heavyweight within the ruling



TAIPEI: Former Japanese prime minister and current Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) vice president Taro Aso (L) speaks during his meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen (R) during his visit to Taipei on August 8, 2023. — AFP

Liberal Democratic Party and is considered one of the "kingmakers" of the conservative bloc.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen told the forum that the Indo-Pacific region's growing influence comes with "frictions" between authoritarian regimes and democracies, creating a "critical juncture".

"Authoritarian regimes become more aggressive and assertive, they are also more convinced that their alternative model is better and more adaptive than democracy," she said, adding that

Manila of "illegal delivery of construction materials" to the grounded ship.

"The Philippine side has repeatedly made clear promises to tow away the warship illegally 'stranded' on the reef," a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry said Tuesday. "Twenty-four years have passed, the Philippine side has not only failed to tow away the warship, but also attempted to repair and reinforce it on a large scale to achieve permanent occupation of the Ren'ai Reef," they said, using the Chinese term for the Second Thomas Shoal.

"The Chinese side once again urges the Philippines to immediately tow away the 'stranded' warship from the Ren'ai Reef and restore the status of no one and no facilities on the reef," they said. The Philippine foreign ministry said Tuesday the "permanent station" on Second Thomas Shoal was in response to China's "illegal occupation" of nearby Mischief Reef in 1995. "The deployment of a Philippine military station in its own areas of jurisdiction is an inherent right of the Philippines and does not violate any laws," the ministry said.

'Illegal activities'

Second Thomas Shoal is about 200 kilometers (120 miles) from the Philippine island of Palawan and more than 1,000 kilometers from China's nearest major landmass, Hainan island. China's coast guard and navy vessels routinely block or

her administration is determined "to prevent authoritarian expansionism".

Tsai — who is hated by Beijing for her refusal to accept China's claim on the island — also reiterated that she does not take for granted the support of Taiwan's security partners. "While we don't seek military confrontation and hope for a peaceful, stable and beneficial coexistence with our neighbors, Taiwan is always ready to defend our democracy and way of life," she said. — AFP

shadow Philippine ships patrolling the contested waters, Manila says.

The Philippines has issued more than 400 diplomatic protests to Beijing since 2020 over its "illegal activities" in the South China Sea, the foreign ministry said. China appeared to be "trying to gauge our commitment to supply our troops" at the shoal, National Security Council spokesman Jonathan Malaya told reporters on Monday.

"For the record, we will never abandon Ayungin Shoal," Malaya added, using the Philippine name for Second Thomas Shoal. Saturday's "David and Goliath" incident showed the Chinese had established what appeared to be a "blockade" of the shoal, Malaya said.

Philippine military spokesman Colonel Medel Aguilar dismissed on Monday the China Coast Guard's request for Manila to tow away the BRP Sierra Madre. "Who is China Coast Guard to tell us what to do?" Aguilar said. Manila and Beijing have a long history of maritime disputes over the South China Sea but former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte was seen as cozying up to China in the hope of attracting investment.

Since succeeding Duterte, President Ferdinand Marcos has insisted he will not let China trample on his country's maritime rights, seeking to strengthen defense ties with former colonial ruler and longtime ally the United States. — AFP

Jailed ex-Pakistan PM's lawyers file legal challenge

ISLAMABAD: Lawyers for former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan filed an appeal Tuesday against his conviction for graft, as he languished in a small cell in a century-old prison at the start of a three-year jail term. The former international cricket star was arrested at the weekend and whisked to jail after being found guilty in one of the more than 200 cases he has faced since being ousted from office by a vote of no confidence in April 2022. Unless overturned, the conviction will rule him out of contesting upcoming elections. Pakistan's election commission on Tuesday issued a statement officially disqualifying Khan for five years.

He is being held at a colonial-era prison on the outskirts of historical Attock city, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) west of the capital Islamabad. "We've submitted an appeal... our plea requests a temporary suspension of the trial court's ruling and seeks bail," Khan's lawyer Gohar Khan told AFP.

"The court will take up the case tomorrow and because the sentence is short we hope that Imran Khan will be granted bail in (several) weeks' time." Another of his lawyers warned authorities would try to delay the process.

"Currently there is no rule of law in Pakistan, we are rushing from one court to another," said Mishal Yousofzai. On Monday, Khan's spokesman Raouf Hasan told AFP the ex-leader was being held "in deplorable conditions not fit for any human". "But he is in good spirits... he said to 'tell the people that I will not compromise on my principles'." — AFP



ISLAMABAD: Naeem Haider Panjutha (center), lawyer and legal team member of former Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, leaves the High Court building after filing petition against Khan's conviction in Islamabad on August 8, 2023. — AFP

Beijing demands Manila remove grounded ship

BEIJING: China renewed calls Tuesday for the Philippines to remove an ageing ship from a reef that Manila uses to press its stake in the Spratly Islands in defiance of Beijing's claim to nearly the entire South China Sea. The move comes after the Philippines accused the China Coast Guard of firing water cannon against boats on a resupply mission to its garrison stationed on the grounded vessel at the weekend.

The BRP Sierra Madre — deliberately grounded in 1999 in an effort to check the advance of China in the hotly contested waters — has long been a flashpoint between Manila and Beijing. The handful of Philippine marines deployed on the crumbling vessel depend upon resupply missions to survive their remote posting.

The Philippine military and coast guard accused the China Coast Guard of breaking international law by blocking and firing water cannon at the resupply mission, preventing one of the charter boats from reaching the shoal. Beijing has defended its actions as "professional" and accused

July hottest month ever...

Continued from Page 1

the planet's climate, marine life and coastal communities. The temperature of the oceans' surface rose to 20.96 degrees Celsius on July 30, according to European Union climate observatory data. The previous record was 20.95C in March 2016, a spokeswoman for Copernicus Climate Change Service earlier told AFP. The samples tested excluded polar regions.

"We just witnessed global air temperatures and global ocean surface temperatures set new all-time records in July. These records have dire consequences for both people and the planet exposed to ever more frequent and intense extreme events," said Burgess. "2023 is currently the third warmest year to date at 0.43C above the recent average, with the average global temperature in July at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Even if this is only temporary, it shows the urgency for ambitious efforts to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, which are the main driver behind these records," she said.

US slams Zionist 'terror'; home of...

Continued from Page 1

Power party, whose leader Itamar Ben-Gvir is public security minister.

The United Nations has warned of a dramatic spike in violence since the Zionist entity's most rightwing government in history took office late last year in a coalition led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. US President Joe Biden's administration has repeatedly criticized actions and statements from the coalition government while stopping short of countermeasures that could trigger public spats with Netanyahu, who is popular with the rival Republican Party.

The United States under president George W Bush waged a global "war on terrorism" following the Sept 11, 2001 attacks by Islamist extremists. His successor Barack Obama was more sparing in the use of the word "terrorism", preferring the less loaded "violent extremism".

Meanwhile, the Zionist army said Tuesday it demolished the home of a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank, which has seen months of violence. Clashes occurred during the overnight incursion to destroy the residence of Abdel Fatah Khroushah in the Askar camp for Palestinian refugees, in the northern city of Nablus, the military said. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said six Palestinians were wounded, including one by live ammunition.

Forest fires have ravaged swathes of Greece and burnt 30 million acres in Canada, while southern Europe, parts of North Africa, southern United States and pockets of China have been reeling under a punishing heatwave. Deadly rains that pummeled China's capital Beijing in recent days were the heaviest since records began 140 years ago.

Carlo Buontempo, Director of Copernicus, had earlier said the temperatures in the period had been "remarkable". Beyond these official records, he said proxy data for the climate going back further — like tree rings or ice cores — suggests the temperatures seen in the period could be "unprecedented in our history in the last few thousand years". Possibly even longer "on the order of 100,000 years" he said.

"This extreme heat shouldn't come as a surprise," said Chris Hewitt, World Meteorological Organization Director of Climate Services. "It really is consistent with what scientists have been predicting for years," said Hewitt, saying the coming year would unlikely bring any respite. UN chief Antonio Guterres recently put out an SOS call. "Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning," said Guterres, urging immediate and bold action to cut planet-heating emissions. "The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived." — AFP

The medical organization said Zionist forces directly targeted one of its ambulances with rubber bullets and tear gas. Zionist forces killed Khroushah, 49, during a raid in March. After the military blew up his residence, smoke billowed across the densely populated neighborhood and neighbors inspected the damage. "This is a brutal and barbaric act. They destroyed the house completely," said Ramzeyah Mustafa Khroushah, the wife of Khroushah, who lived at the family's third-floor home with two daughters. "We are now looking for a place to live," she told AFP, adding her three sons had been arrested by the army the day her husband was killed.

The Zionist entity regularly demolishes the homes of Palestinians it accuses of deadly attacks on Zionists, arguing such measures act as a deterrent. Human rights activists say the policy amounts to collective punishment, as it can render non-combatants, including children, homeless. Palestinian militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said such measures had proved to be a "failure" in the past. They would instead "push our people in the West Bank and Jerusalem to escalate the resistance", the group said in a statement.

Since early last year, deadly violence has rocked the northern West Bank, where the Zionist entity has stepped up military raids often in crowded neighborhoods. The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since 1967. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the territory is home to nearly three million Palestinians and around 490,000 Zionists who live in settlements considered illegal under international law. — AFP

Portugal, Spain battle wildfires amid heatwave

LISBON: Hundreds of firefighters were on Tuesday battling a wildfire that has burned for four days in Portugal, which, like neighboring Spain, is sweltering in a heatwave that has triggered widespread weather alerts. The Iberian Peninsula is bearing the brunt of climate change in Europe, witnessing increasingly intense heatwaves, droughts and wildfires.

The temperature rose to 46.4 degrees Celsius in Santarem, central Portugal, on Monday — a record for 2023 — according to provisional data from the meteorological office. Some areas of Portugal were forecast to hit 40C on Tuesday. The met office in Spain said the heat there was expected to top 44C on Tuesday and Wednesday, which is predicted to be the fiercest day of this heatwave, the third this year.

On Tuesday, around 900 firefighters backed by 10 water-bomber planes were battling a blaze that has already burned thousands of hectares in Odemira, southwestern Portugal, near the southern tourist mecca of the Algarve. Portugal's civil protection authority said the perimeter of the wildfire had been

"stabilized" overnight on Monday but there were still "two critical points" that required "a lot of effort".

Some 20 inland villages and a number of rural tourist sites were evacuated on Monday, bringing the number displaced since Saturday to 1,500. Around 40 people, including 28 fire officers, have been given emergency medical treatment.

Heatwave alerts

A separate wildfire that has already destroyed around 7,000 hectares in Leiria, central Portugal, calmed somewhat overnight on Monday. Across the country, nearly 2,800 firefighters and 16 water-bombers were in action on Tuesday. Weather warnings remained in place in both Portugal and Spain. Much of the southern half of Spain was on orange alert on Tuesday.

The Spanish met office (AEMET) issued maximum red alerts for parts of Andalusia in the south, the Madrid region in the centre and the Basque Country in the far north. More than 1,000 hectares of land were destroyed by flames in Spain over the weekend. A fourth large wildfire broke out on Monday in Estremadura, central Spain, near the border with Portugal. Firefighters were unable to contain it overnight. In total, wildfires have destroyed 100,000 hectares of land across the Iberian Peninsula this year, according to preliminary estimates. This is on top of the record 400,000 hectares destroyed last year. — AFP



REGUENGO, Portugal: Cattle are seen in a farm as a helicopter fights a wildfire on Aug 8, 2023. — AFP

International

South America seeks roadmap to save Amazon at 'landmark' summit

Cattle ranching wiped out one-fifth of rainforest in Brazil

BELEM: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva opened what he called a "landmark" summit Tuesday where South American leaders will seek a roadmap to save the Amazon rainforest. Lula vowed to seek ambitious pledges to stop the destruction of the world's biggest rainforest at the two-day meeting of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) in the northern city of Belem.

"This is a landmark meeting. It will mark a turning point in the history of protecting the Amazon and the green transition," the veteran leftist said before opening the gathering at the mouth of the Amazon river. It is the first summit in 14 years for the eight-nation group, set up in 1995 by the South American countries that share the Amazon basin: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

Home to an estimated 10 percent of Earth's biodiversity, 50 million people and hundreds of billions of trees, the vast Amazon is a vital carbon sink, curbing global warming. But scientists warn the destruction of the rainforest is pushing it dangerously close to a "tipping point," beyond which trees would die off and release carbon rather than absorb it, with catastrophic consequences for the climate.

The region's countries are determined "not to let the Amazon reach a point of no return," Brazilian Environment Minister Marina Silva told a ministerial meeting ahead of the summit. Lula wants the summit to strengthen the ACTO and produce a joint declaration with a bold action plan to stop deforestation. The summit is also something of a dress rehearsal for the 2025 UN climate talks, which Belem will host.

Brazil, Colombia: Competing priorities

Deforestation in the Amazon is driven mainly by cattle ranching, though it is fueled by a murky mix of corruption, land-grabbing and organized crime

whose tentacles extend to the illegal trafficking of drugs, arms, timber and gold. In Brazil, the world's top exporter of beef and soy and home to 60 percent of the Amazon, the destruction has already wiped out around one-fifth of the rainforest.

Environmental groups are pressuring all eight countries to adopt Brazil's pledge to eradicate illegal deforestation by 2030, though Brazilian officials have indicated those negotiations may need more time. Colombian President Gustavo Petro is meanwhile pushing other countries to adhere to his pledge to ban all new oil exploration — a touchy subject for oil-rich Venezuela and also Brazil, whose state-run oil company, Petrobras, is controversially seeking to explore new offshore blocs at the mouth of the Amazon River itself.

Ecuador is due to hold a referendum this month on whether to stop drilling for crude on a strategic oil block located within the Yasuni Indigenous reservation, the source of 12 percent of the country's oil output. Colombian Environment Minister Susana Muhamad for her part called for the final declaration to include a goal of preserving 80 percent of the Amazon by 2025, in line with Indigenous groups' demands.

Brazil is also calling for the summit to create an international police task force for the region and a scientific research group modeled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the advisory board to the UN climate talks.

Lula test

Lula, Petro, Bolivian President Luis Arce, and Peru's Dina Boluarte were all present for the summit. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, absent due to an ear infection, sent Vice President Delcy Rodriguez, while Ecuador, Guyana and Suriname were represented by high-level officials.

The summit is a key test for Lula, who previous-



BELEM: Brazilian Indigenous leader Tabata Kayapo walks at an Indigenous camp in Belém, Para State, Brazil, on August 7, 2023, ahead of the Amazon Summit IV Meeting of Presidents of States Parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACTO). — AFP

ly served as president from 2003 to 2010 and returned to office in January vowing "Brazil is back" in the fight against climate change, after four years of surging destruction in the Amazon under his far-right predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro.

The summit "should deliver concrete results if the region is serious about becoming a leader in climate action," said US-based activist group Avaaz.

Indigenous groups — whose protected reservations are crucial buffers against the destruction of the world's forests, according to experts — urged South American leaders to take bold actions. "The presidents here and around the world need to hear us," said iconic Brazilian Indigenous chief Raoni. "If they don't stop deforestation, we're going to face far bigger problems." — AFP

Storm leaves destruction in Scandinavia

STOCKHOLM: Heavy rains caused flooding and landslides in Sweden and Norway on Tuesday while strong winds caused a Danish wildfire to spread out of control, authorities said, with more heavy rain forecast. A storm dubbed "Hans" swept in over the Nordic countries over the weekend, leaving a path of destruction.

Residents of the ski resort town of Are in northwestern Sweden were advised to stay clear of the Susabacken stream after it overflowed, sending mud and rocks coursing through the town and causing damage to roads and houses, Sweden's crisis information website Krisinform reported. In the southwestern part of the country, fishmongers in Gothenburg found the market at the city's fishing harbour under water af-

ter the Gota river flooded.

On Monday, two wagons of a passenger train derailed in eastern Sweden after a railway embankment collapsed due to heavy rains, leaving three people injured. In neighboring Norway, police reported several landslides in the southeast on Tuesday, with media reporting that over 100 people had been evacuated as a result.

Weather agencies in Sweden and Norway both issued alerts for severe flooding in several parts of their respective countries. The heavy rains also caused traffic disruptions, with numerous roads closed and trains and ferries cancelled.

Denmark's meteorological agency DMI meanwhile warned of storm winds in the country's north. Danish police said in a statement



VALDRES: A firefighter wades through mud following a landslide in Valdres, Nord Aurdal, near Bagn, Norway on August 8, 2023, as extreme weather 'Hans' has hit eastern Norway. — AFP

that rescue services' efforts to put out a wildfire near the town of Klitmoller were "hampered" by strong winds. — AFP

Australian state axes law to protect Indigenous heritage

SYDNEY: Western Australia said Tuesday it is axing a five-week-old law to protect Indigenous sites, introduced after Rio Tinto blew up a 46,000-year-old sacred rock shelter in the state. The decision to repeal the legislation was condemned by Indigenous groups, who complained of insufficient consultation and said their needs were being ignored.

The resource-rich state brought in the Aboriginal Heritage Act after the Anglo-Australian mining giant admitted in 2020 that it had destroyed the rock shelter to expand an iron ore mine in Juukan Gorge, Western Australia. The site contained some of the oldest artefacts found in Australia and was considered sacred by the Indigenous Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) people of Western Australia.

Western Australia's premier, Roger Cook, said the

new law — which came into force on July 1 — would be scrapped because it was too complex. "The Juukan Gorge tragedy was a global embarrassment, but our response was wrong," Cook said.

"We took it too far, unintentionally causing stress, confusion and division in our community." Two months after being sworn in to the post following his predecessor's resignation, the center-left Labor party premier said it was "obvious" changes were needed. "The complicated regulations, the burden on landowners and the poor rollout of the new laws have been unworkable for all members of our community and for that, I am sorry," he said.

'Outraged'

The state government said it would repeal the new law and revert to the previous legislation that had been in place for 50 years. It would add some amendments, however, including an obligation on landowners to notify the government of any new information about an Aboriginal site.

Ordinary landowners would not be required to conduct their own heritage survey, the government said. Instead, the state will survey uncharted "high

priority" areas over the next decade and with the consent of landowners. Indigenous people were "outraged" by the decision to repeal the new heritage protection law, said the PKKP Aboriginal Council.

"The Cook government is reverting to laws that allowed (the) destruction of Juukan Gorge," said PKKP land and heritage manager Jordan Ralph. He lamented a return to an approvals process that "benefits industry over our country".

Kado Muir, chairman of the National Native Title Council, which advocates for Indigenous rights, said the state government had not properly consulted First Nations people before deciding to repeal the legislation. "We are left in a state of confusion and fear that cultural heritage sites are not going to be adequately and effectively protected in Western Australia," Muir told AFP.

"They seem to be offering concessions to farmers and others to be able to go out and destroy sites. The devil is in the detail — we don't know what the detail looks like." Muir said the state's actions showed the need for national legislation to act as a "backstop" to protect Australia's Indigenous cultural heritage. — AFP

Flights cancelled as typhoon skirts southern Japan

TOKYO: Flights were cancelled, bullet trains partially suspended, and factories shuttered on Tuesday as Typhoon Khanun headed past Japan's southernmost main island of Kyushu, bringing heavy rain.

The typhoon last week reportedly killed at least two people, injured more than 100 and cut off power for several hundred thousand people in the southern Okinawa region before barreling towards Taiwan. The weather system then swung back to the Okinawa area and on Wednesday was due to roar along the western coast of Kyushu towards South Korea, according to forecasters.

Japan Airlines on Tuesday cancelled 132 flights, which affected some 8,390 people, a spokeswoman told AFP. ANA also scrapped flights between Kagoshima in southern

Kyushu and Tokyo. The country's "shinkansen" bullet train was suspended in part of its southern route, while many other local commuter and express trains were cancelled, Kyushu Railway said in a statement. "Please be vigilant about landslides, floods in low lands, and increase and spillover of water in rivers, storms and high waves" at seas, Japan's weather agency warned local residents on its website.

Kagoshima prefecture issued non-compulsory evacuation orders to about 540,000 residents, setting up 314 shelters, officials said. Other regions north of Kyushu were also bracing for the violent weather system, with carmaker Mazda announcing its factories in Hiroshima and Yamaguchi would suspend operations on Wednesday and Thursday.

The storm forced Nagasaki, one of the main cities on Kyushu, to move indoors and delay its annual commemoration ceremony of the 1945 atomic bombing scheduled for Wednesday. — AFP

Typhoon Khanun



'Dramatic increase' in Myanmar war crimes: UN probe

GENEVA: UN investigators said Tuesday they had gathered strong evidence of surging war crimes in Myanmar, including mass executions and sexual violence, and were building case files to help bring perpetrators to justice.

The Southeast Asian country has been ravaged by deadly violence since a coup deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government in February 2021, unleashing a bloody crackdown on dissent that has sparked fighting across swathes of the nation. The United Nations' Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) said it had evidence that Myanmar's military and affiliated militias were "committing increasingly frequent and brazen war crimes".

It pointed among other things to indiscriminate aerial bombardments, the burning of villages and mass killings of civilians and detained combatants, as well as torture and horrific sexual violence. The investigation team warned in its annual report that "the number of incidents bearing the hallmarks of serious international crimes" had surged since the coup.

"Every loss of life in Myanmar is tragic, but the devastation caused to whole communities through aerial bombardments and village burnings is particularly shocking," Mechanism chief Nicholas Koumjian said in the statement. "Our evidence points to a dramatic increase in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country, with widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, and we are building case files that can be used by courts to hold individual perpetrators responsible."

'Highest level of cruelty'

The IIMM was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 to collect evidence of the most serious international crimes and prepare files for criminal prosecution. While the team has never been permitted to visit Myanmar, it said it had engaged with over 700 sources and had collected "over 23 million information items", including witness statements, documents, photographs, videos, forensic evidence and satellite imagery.

The team — already cooperating with the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court — said it "plans to accelerate its collection of evidence of the most serious international crimes".

The investigators said they were particularly looking for "linkage evidence" demonstrating responsibility of specific individuals, especially high-level officials. The IIMM report explained that military commanders have a duty under international law to prevent and punish war crimes committed by those under their command.

"Repeatedly ignoring such crimes may indicate that the higher authorities intended the commission of these crimes," the report said. It highlighted evidence of the use of child soldiers by "various armed actors", and said it was seeing "more and more evidence concerning torture, sexual violence and other forms of severe mistreatment at numerous detention facilities".

The evidence indicated that such crimes were "being committed with the highest levels of cruelty and harm to the victims, including rape with objects, other forms of humiliation, mutilation, gang or serial rape and sexual enslavement," the report said. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2023

Germany gets TSMC's first European plant

TAIPEI: Taiwanese chip giant TSMC agreed Tuesday to plough \$3.8 billion (3.5 billion euros) into a new semiconductor factory in Germany, lending a major boost to Europe's efforts to bring production onto the continent. Total investments in the factory, TSMC's first in Europe, are expected to exceed 10 billion euros, with "strong support from the European Union and German government", along with TSMC's partners in the project.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company

will set up a joint venture with German groups Bosch and Infineon and Dutch firm NXP to build the plant, the companies said, with construction to begin in the second half of 2024.

TSMC is a key player in the sector, controlling more than half the world's output of microchips.

The facility in Germany is expected to begin production by the end of 2027, with monthly capacity to reach 40,000 300mm (12-inch) wafers. It will also create about 2,000 direct jobs, the companies said.

Hailing the news, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's economic adviser Joerg Kukies wrote on X that "this is another major step to implement our strategy to make Germany a globally leading location for the global semiconductor industry".

Stung by the energy crisis unleashed by Russia's war in Ukraine, Germany and its allies have been racing to slash dependencies on countries such as China and ramp up domestic production of sensitive components such as semiconductor chips.

The ambition set by the EU under its "Chips Act" is to increase Europe's slice of global semiconductor production to 20 percent by 2030.

Such chips are necessary to power everything from computers to smartphones to missiles in an increasingly tech-dependent world.

Tension between China and Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its territory, has prompted the West to cast a wary eye on its reliance on TSMC.

The new German factory will be based in the eastern city of Dresden in a region known as Silicon Saxony for its high-tech manufacturing base.

"Europe is a highly promising place for semiconductor innovation, particularly in the automotive and industrial fields, and we look forward to bring-



Financial Results H1 2023



REVENUE

↑ 12%

930
KD Million

EBITDA

↑ 9%

348
KD Million

EPS

26
FILS

CUSTOMERS

↑ 2%

52.7
Million

The Board of Directors declared an interim dividends of 10 fils per share for the first half of 2023, to the shareholders already registered in the company's register on the record date of Sunday 10/9/2023.

The Corporate Action Time Schedule:

Cum Date*	5/9/2023
Ex Date	6/9/2023
Record Date	10/9/2023
Payment Date	14/9/2023

- Cash dividends will be transferred to the bank accounts of the shareholders, who are registered in the electronic transfer service for the distribution of profits, as of Thursday 14/9/2023.
- Shareholders who were not able to register in the electronic transfer service for the distribution of profits, shall contact the local banks to register in this service or through their electronic services, according to the instructions issued by the Kuwait Clearing Company.

* Cum-Dividend Date:

The last day on which the share must be purchased so that the shareholder is registered in the company's register on the record date and therefore is entitled to receive dividends.



HSINCHU, Taiwan: Visitors watch a wafer shown on screens at the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) Renovation Museum at the Hsinchu Science Park in Hsinchu. — AFP

ing those innovations to life on our advanced silicon technology with the talent in Europe," TSMC's chief executive CC Wei said in a statement.

But the German chip drive faces numerous challenges, ranging from high energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine to shortages of skilled workers. In June, Berlin and Intel signed a deal for the US chip behemoth to build manufacturing sites in the eastern city of Magdeburg after months of tense negotiations.

But the huge level of state support — Berlin is providing 9.9 billion euros for the 33-billion-euro project — has proved controversial, with some questioning whether the investment is worth it.

TSMC did not disclose the level of financial support from Germany but business weekly Handelsblatt reported on Monday that it would reach five billion euros. — AFP

US trade deficit narrows on imports pullback

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit narrowed in June on a bigger pullback in imports than exports, according to government data released on Tuesday.

The overall trade gap came in at \$65.5 billion in June, down from a revised \$68.3 billion figure in May, Commerce Department data showed. This came as exports fell by \$0.3 billion to \$247.5 billion, while imports dropped \$3.1 billion to \$313.0 billion.

While stronger than expected consumer spending has helped to boost US trade, analysts have noted that this could weaken going forward. "Overall, trade flows continued to slow in the second quarter, both imports and exports," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

"A weaker trend could persist owing to the effects of monetary policy tightening globally, which is likely to slow demand and economic activity domestically and abroad," she added.

To rein in surging inflation, central banks including the US Federal Reserve have been lifting interest rates rapidly to tamp down consumer demand. In June, imports of goods ranging from computers to industrial supplies declined, Commerce Department data showed. The goods trade deficit with China declined to \$22.8 billion, on a bigger drop in imports than exports. "Net trade was a huge swing factor in GDP growth last year, but we see few signs of another blowout in the trade deficit this year," said economists Ian Shepherdson and Kieran Clancy of Pantheon Macroeconomics in a recent report.

Trade has been a swing factor since the COVID-19 outbreak. The US trade gap widened to a record in 2022 on a surge in goods imports ranging from crude oil to consumer items such as pharmaceuticals and household products. — AFP

Business

Zain Group's Q2 2023 net profit soars 14% to reach \$187 million

Board declares interim dividend of 10 fils per share



Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih

- Board working closely with management in driving shareholder value through sound ESG practices, operational efficiencies and growing new business verticals
- Data revenue grew 9 percent to represent 39 percent of Total Group Revenue for H1 2023
- Enterprise revenue up 27 percent for H1 as ZainTech and local B2B teams secure key clients and enter strategic partnerships



Vice Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

- Impressive revenue growth of 10 percent for Q2 2023 reaching KD 461 million (\$1.5 billion)
- Zain Group receives a first-ever cash dividend of \$42 million from Zain KSA
- Solid growth in Enterprise, Digital and Fintech revenues boosts financial performance, reassures Board to declare a half-year dividend of 10 fils per share

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its consolidated financial results for the second quarter and six months ended June 30, 2023. Zain served 52.7 million customers at the end of the period, a 2 percent increase year-on-year (YoY).

In the second quarter of 2023 (Q2), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 461 million (\$1.5 billion), up 10 percent YoY. EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 182 million (\$594 million), up 10 percent YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent. Net income for the quarter amounted to KD 57 million (\$187 million), up 14 percent YoY, reflecting earnings per share of 13 fils (\$0.04).

For the first six months of 2023 (H1), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 930 million (\$3.03 billion), an increase of 12 percent YoY. EBITDA for the period reached KD 348 million (\$1.1 billion), up 9 percent YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 37 percent. Net income for the first six months amounted to KD 112 million (\$364 million), up 14 percent YoY, reflecting earnings per share of 26 fils (\$0.08).

Key operational notes for H1 2023

1. For the 3rd consecutive year, Board declares an interim dividend of 10 fils per share for first six months of 2023 that will be payable to entitled shareholders on 14 September, 2023.
2. Zain Kuwait wins the number range fees litigation amounting to KD 24.68 million (\$80.3 million)
3. Zain Group receives a first-ever cash dividend of SAR 158 million (\$42 million) from Zain KSA
4. Data revenue reaches \$1.2 billion, representing 39 percent of Group revenue
5. Over the six months, Zain Group invested \$178 million in CAPEX (tangible and intangible)
6. Operations in Kuwait, KSA, and Bahrain witness impressive growth in 5G revenues, and soft launch of 5G in Jordan
7. Establishment of Zain Omantel International (ZOI) set to revolutionize the international telecommunications wholesale landscape
8. Zain and TASC Towers Holding enter exclusive negotiations with Ooredoo to create a joint independent tower entity comprising of 30,000 towers
9. Fintech services witness exponential growth as total revenue increased 294 percent YoY, customers grew 73 percent to reach 1.3 million, with transaction value doubling YoY
10. Zain's "Tamam" platform in Saudi Arabia awarded 'Best Personal Finance Solution' in Middle East
11. Enterprise revenue up 27 percent as ZainTech and local B2B teams secure multiple deals offering compelling ICT services to businesses and governments across the region
12. ZainTech acquires Adfolks, a UAE-based cloud transformation services firm and enters strategic partnerships with UAE operator du and Mastercard
13. Dizlee API platform and VAS digital services witness healthy revenue growth of 15 percent
14. Zain's digital operator Yaqoot in KSA, and oodi in Iraq, report strong YoY growth in key KPIs
15. Playhera Max cloud gaming platform launched in KSA in June 2023
16. Zain wins World Finance Best Corporate Governance Award 2023 and Best Corporate Governance of a listed company in Kuwait by the Arab Federation of Capital Markets
17. Zain publishes 12th sustainability report entitled, 'An Inclusive Transition for Future Generations'

Commenting on Q2 and H1 2023 results, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group Osamah Al-Furaih said, "This exceptional performance is a result of the Board and management's focus on driving sustainable shareholder value through effective environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, network upgrades expansion, and growing new lucrative business verticals with a focus on providing customers with an exceptional telecom experience."

He added, "Our conducive relationships with the management of Omantel and government authorities across our markets is supporting us in our mission to reap the benefits of digital transformation as we drive systemic change and provide meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve and beyond."

On the ongoing situation in Sudan, the Chairman commented, "We are extremely proud of our people who are working 24/7 and making personal sacrifices in providing vital connectivity to the Sudanese community. The Board and group management are in constant and close cooperation with the management teams



Zain HQ building

Zain publishes its 12th sustainability report

- Bader Al-Kharafi: We have a firm commitment towards improving the lives of the communities we serve and to safeguard the planet for our future generations

KUWAIT: Zain Group published its 12th consecutive annual sustainability report, entitled 'An Inclusive Transition for Future Generations'. In the report, Zain details the progress and strategic efforts undertaken across the company's footprint in the past year as it continues to execute its five-year plan, '2025 Corporate Sustainability Strategy' centered on four pillars, Climate Change, Operating Responsibly, Inclusion, and Generation Youth.

Zain remains one of the most active organizations in the region with respect to delivering meaningful connectivity through social, economic, and environmental initiatives, with the company playing a crucial role in helping the markets in which it operates, to reap the benefits of digital transformation.

Through its sustainability activities in 2022, Zain

continues to address the digital literacy gap, deficits, and challenges across its footprint, conducting strategic stakeholder engagement dialogues to provide the necessary drive for socio-economic and environmental development.

Commenting on the 2022 sustainability report, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "This report reflects our firm commitment to improving the lives and conditions of the communities we serve, while also looking to preserve the planet and safeguard it for future generations." He added, "As part of its sustainability agenda, Zain is proactively embedding its shared values into its DNA to drive our business, sustainability, and inclusion program, while enriching our organizational purpose. Our commitment to meaningful connectivity is being showcased throughout a growing number of our activities, represented across everything we do."

there in supporting them on multiple fronts, taking all reasonable measures to protect our people, assets, and commercial operations during this turbulent time. We pray for the safety of all the people in Sudan and are hopeful that the conflict will end soon."

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented, "The solid growth in Enterprise, Digital and Fintech revenues combined with operational efficiencies across our markets was key to the impressive financial performance for the first half of 2023. On the back of these robust results combined with our strong balance sheet and financial solvency, and in accordance with our declared 35 fils per share minimum dividend policy for the next three years starting 2023, the Board is pleased to declare a third consecutive half-year dividend of 10 fils per share."

"The sound performance of all our operations is a testament to our firm commitment and success in executing our ambitious '4Sight' corporate strategy to drive growth through digital transformation and new lucrative business streams, as we methodically manage the continuing competitive and socio-economic challenges that several of our markets face."

"The \$42 million cash dividend received from Zain KSA for its 2022 financial year, is significant in that apart from being the operator's first ever-cash dividend distribution to shareholders, it is indicative of the successful achievement of Zain KSA's transformational turnaround in recent years whereby it reported record revenues and profits in 2022, and likewise for the first six months of 2023. We are very optimistic of the growth potential of Zain KSA in creating shareholder value and playing a key role in Saudi Vision 2030."

"Our pioneering Tower sale and leaseback strategy is making substantial progress and creating shareholder value on multiple fronts. We are quiet confident that our recently announced deal of Zain and TASC Towers entering exclusive negotiations with Ooredoo to create

a jointly owned independent tower entity comprising of 30,000 towers, will materialize and create enormous value for all our respective stakeholders. We are thankful of Ooredoo's board and management for their trust and genuine spirit of partnership to take these exclusive discussions forward."

"I'm very excited by the potential opportunities that the strategic establishment of 'Zain Omantel International' (ZOI), a first-of-its-kind joint venture will bring as it will revolutionize the telecommunications wholesale landscape. It will become the Middle East's premier wholesale powerhouse serving regional operators, international carriers, and global hyperscalers. The partnership will create new opportunities for growth and innovation, with Zain and Omantel customers benefiting from quality Internet connectivity, voice, roaming, and messaging. ZOI will manage all international wholesale requirements of Zain and Omantel operations in eight countries, serving over 55 million customers and benefiting both entities on financial, commercial and operational levels."

"Our enterprise solutions arm ZainTech is fast becoming the digital transformation partner of choice for governments and businesses across our markets, the UAE and beyond. The recent acquisition of Adfolks, a UAE-based cloud transformation services firm brings a wealth of expertise in developing bespoke and agile technology solutions that will enable ZainTech to drive even more value for its clients in the dynamic and constantly evolving technology landscape by streamlining their digital transformation journey, making it simpler and more seamless than ever before."

"Furthermore, the recent go-to-market strategic partnership between ZainTech and prominent UAE operator 'du' will unlock synergies while embracing ESG principles towards a Net Zero future. The collaboration will enable both companies to offer enterprise customers an innovative and comprehensive suite of

solutions across various areas, including Sustainability, IoT, Drones-as-a-Service (DaaS), Data Practice, Cloud Managed Services, and App Modernization, as well as international connectivity."

"Our fintech entities in KSA, Iraq, Jordan and South Sudan, as well as our pure digital operators in Saudi Arabia and Iraq are witnessing exponential revenue and customer growth, as are the Dizlee API platform and related digital VAS activities in all our markets. We will continue to foster and grow these lucrative areas of business across our footprint."

Al-Kharafi concluded, "As a leading entity listed on the Premier Market in Kuwait, Zain seeks to exceed the regulations issued by all financial regulatory bodies including the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait. Accordingly, it was a gratifying achievement to be recognized as possessing the 'Best Corporate Governance' practice in Kuwait for three years in a row by World Finance Publishing House as well as the award of the Best Corporate Governance of a listed company in Kuwait by the Arab Federation of Capital Markets. This milestone justly rewards our Investor Relations, Corporate Governance, and Sustainability teams' high ethical standards, transparency and professionalism towards all our stakeholders."

Financial KPIs of key markets for H1 ended June 30, 2023

KUWAIT: Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship operation of Zain Group saw its customer base grow 2 percent YoY, to serve 2.6 million customers. The Group's most profitable operation, revenue remained stable at KD 173 million (\$563 million), with EBITDA increasing by 39 percent to reach KD 90 million (\$295 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 52 percent, mainly due to the successful number range fees litigation of KD 24.68 million (\$80.3 million) which also impacted net income reaching KD 63 million (\$206 million). Data revenue represented 39 percent of total revenue. Despite the intense competition, the operator continues to expand and grow its leading nationwide 5G network capturing the largest 5G customer base and revenue market share in the country. Winning key corporate and government accounts through its unrivaled B2B offerings, as well as the continual introduction of new appealing digital services including Zain Max, a quad-play redefining a new generation of Internet and entertainment plans for postpaid customers, are key parts of the operator's focus.

Saudi Arabia: Revenue grew 10 percent YoY to reach \$1.3 billion, with EBITDA amounting to \$401 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 31 percent. Net income grew 220 percent for the six-month period reaching \$183 million. The operator's 5G network covering over 50 cities saw data revenue represent 41 percent of total revenue and customers served stood at 8.7 million.

Iraq: Revenue grew 17 percent to reach \$455 million, EBITDA reached \$166 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 37 percent, with net profit jumping nearly eight-fold to reach \$43 million compared to \$5 million last year. The operator's customer base reached 17.7 million customers maintaining its market leading position.

Sudan: Despite the ongoing conflict, revenue soared 46 percent to reach \$303 million, with strong EBITDA growth of 46 percent reaching \$154 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 51 percent. Net income for the period grew 23 percent reaching \$136 million. Data revenue grew by 67 percent representing 35 percent of total revenue, customer base increased by 3 percent to reach 16.9 million, maintaining its market leadership position.

Jordan: Revenue grew 4 percent YoY to reach \$261 million, EBITDA reached \$106 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent, with net income reaching \$38 million. With the ongoing expansion of FTTH and 4G services across the country and soft launch of 5G in parts of the Kingdom, data revenue grew 2 percent representing 49 percent of total revenue. Zain Jordan served 3.8 million customers (up 5 percent YoY) maintaining its market leadership.

Bahrain: Revenue grew 11 percent YoY reaching \$98 million, EBITDA for the period was stable at \$29 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 30 percent. Net income reached \$7.3 million, with data revenue growing 7 percent to represent 45 percent of total revenue.

Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the Q2 of 2023

Total Managed Active Customers	52.7 million
Revenue	KD 461 million (\$1.5 billion)
EBITDA	KD 182 million (\$594 million)
EBITDA Margin	40%
Net Income	KD 57 million (\$187 million)
EPS	13 fils (\$0.04)

Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for H1 of 2023

Revenue	KD 930 million (\$3.03 billion)
EBITDA	KD 348 million (\$1.1 billion)
EBITDA Margin	37%
Net Income	KD 112 million (\$364 million)
EPS	26 fils (\$0.08)

Business

Shares of Italian banks plunge on govt's surprise windfall tax

Rome unveils 40% tax on 'surplus profits'



MILAN: The UniCredit Tower in Milan. The bank's shares dropped 6.9 percent on Tuesday after the levy was announced. — AFP

MILAN: Italy's right-wing government has unveiled a surprise 40 percent windfall tax on "surplus profits" generated by the rise in interest rates, sending shares in the country's banks plunging Tuesday. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's ministers agreed the move at a cabinet meeting late Monday, vowing to invest the funds raised into helping households and businesses struggling with the cost of borrowing.

Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini told reporters the tax would be levied on banks' "surplus profits" generated by the European Central Bank's interest rate hikes. The hikes by the ECB—the central bank for the 20 countries that use

the euro, including Italy—has boosted banks' profits by "billions", he said, but increased costs for their customers.

The government was "using part of the banks' billion-dollar profits to help families and businesses affected by rising interest rates", Salvini added on X, formerly known as Twitter. Shares in Italian banks plunged on the news, which neither the sector nor analysts had expected.

Shares in Monte dei Paschi di Siena fell by 10.2 percent, Bper Banca by 10 percent and Banco Bpm by eight percent.

One year

Analysts at Banca Akros said the market was responding negatively to "this

unexpected bad news", estimating that banks' earnings per share would fall by an average of seven percent. The new levy will focus on the 2022 or 2023 financial years, a governmental source told AFP.

Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told the Corriere della Sera newspaper it would "only last one year". "We have been saying for months that the ECB was mistaken in raising interest rates, and this is the inevitable consequence," he said. "It is not a measure against them (the banks), but a measure to protect families" and those struggling to pay mortgages, he insisted.

Meloni is thus using the tax to raise funds for the draft budget for 2024,

after a surprise 0.3 percent decline in gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter of 2023.

The new levy could bring in more than two billion euros, according to initial estimates quoted in the Italian media.

Soaring profits

Italian banks, like their European counterparts, saw their net interest income soar in the wake of the rise in interest rates. Intesa Sanpaolo saw its net profit jump 80 percent to 4.2 billion euros in the first half, while UniCredit posted a half-yearly net profit of 4.4 billion euros. Spain's left-wing government has also introduced a similar tax on banks sched-

uled for 2023 and 2024, drawing criticism from the ECB.

Salvini, whose far-right League party is a junior coalition partner to Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy, said the levy was "common sense". The CISL trade union said it was a "fair" measure that should be extended to multinational companies in the energy, digital or even logistics sectors. But Francesco Galietti, from the Policy Sonar consultancy, said it was a "hugely controversial tax", also describing it as a "typical populist move".

Parliament now has two months to convert the cabinet's decree into law, during which time it can be significantly changed. — AFP



Glencore reaffirms interest in Teck coal business

ZURICH: Swiss commodities giant Glencore took advantage of the release of its half-year results Tuesday to reaffirm its interest in buying Canadian coal firm Teck Resources amid falling coal prices.

In a report detailing its results, the Swiss group said it wanted to ensure "a transaction with Teck would benefit Canada", once again reiterating its hostile takeover bid which the Canadian miner has rejected.

Glencore, which is active in both commodity trading and mining, had unveiled a nearly \$23 billion offer in early April for Teck Resources to combine their coal and metals activities, and then spin them off.

The Canadian firm twice rejected the offer, with support of its two largest shareholders. In June, Glencore made an alternative offer to buy Teck's steel-making coal business, known as Elk Valley Resources (EVR) for cash. During a conference with analysts, Glencore chief Gary Nagle declined to say whether the group would be prepared to join forces with other mining groups to take over the business. "If we are not successful with acquiring EVR, the coal business would remain within Glencore," he said.

Glencore's coal strategy is attracting fierce criticism, including from shareholders, some of whom are urging it to separate coal from the rest of its activities in order to concentrate on its other resources, such as copper and cobalt, which are in high demand for the energy transition. The firm's profits soared last year with the surge in oil and coal prices following the war in Ukraine.

But now with what Nagle described as a "normalization" of commodity prices, net profits contracted by 62 percent to nearly \$4.6 billion in the first half of 2023. The division specializing in commodities trading meanwhile saw operational profits fall by 52 percent to \$1.8 billion against the backdrop of "limited" growth in China, the group said. — AFP

Canada trade gap widens as prices a drag on exports

OTTAWA: Canada's trade deficit widened to Can\$3.7 billion (US\$2.7 billion) in June as a continuing drop in exports outpaced falling imports, the government statistical agency said Tuesday. Exports fell 2.2 percent in the month, largely reflecting lower prices, while imports were down 0.5 percent mostly on weaker imports of gasoline and crude oil.

Statistics Canada noted in its report a worker strike that disrupted operations in Vancouver—the country's largest port—and 30 other ports on the Pacific coast in July as well as severe flooding that cut off a rail line to the nation's main Atlantic port in Halifax are expected to further hammer trade. Data for July is scheduled to be released in September. In June, Canada also exported less unwrought gold, silver, and platinum; parts of industrial machinery and equipment; basic and industrial chemical, plastic and rubber products; and canola. Lower imports of consumer goods—notably ingredients for medications—were partially offset by an uptick in imports of unwrought gold, silver, and platinum group metals, and their alloys. Exports to Canada's largest trading partner the United States were down 1.2 percent in June, while imports decreased 0.7 percent. As a result, Canada's trade surplus with the United States narrowed to Can\$7.4 billion. — AFP



TUNIS: Employees at a bakery selling baguettes in Tunisia on August 7, 2023. — AFP photos



An employee works at a bakery in Tunisia on August 7, 2023.

Baguettes fall victim to Tunisia economic crisis

TUNIS: Around 200 Tunisian bakers staged a sit-in Monday after a government decision to stop selling them subsidized flour, a move threatening the closure of hundreds of bakeries. "We are being forbidden from producing baguettes," Mohamed Jamali, president of the Association of Modern Bakeries, told AFP in Tunis where the protest took place.

Last week the ministry of commerce banned some 1,500 privately-owned bakeries that produced European-style breads and pastries from purchasing subsidized flour, ending a practice that had lasted for more than a decade.

It came after President Kais Saied proclaimed in late July that there should be "one type of bread for all Tunisians" in an official video address. According to Jamali, the European-style bakeries which employ around 18,000 people have been

"unable to operate for a week" since August 1.

Demonstrators who rallied around him held up signs that read: "bread, freedom, national dignity," and "thousands of employees will be laid off".

"The people you see here today have not been able to carry out their regular activity, which is the production of bread," Jamali said. Abdelbeki Abdellawi, 43, warned that some bakers might end up "facing imprisonment" because they can't afford to pay their rent or loans.

Tunisia's "modern bakeries" sell baguettes and other kinds of breads and pastries in which they use part of the subsidized flour. "Why is there subsidized bread and unsubsidized bread? The purpose is to hit Tunisians in their purchasing power and threaten social peace," Saied had said on July 27.

The president criticized the "modern bakeries" for using subsidized flour to produce other types of bread sold at slightly higher prices. "It is over today for those who want to sell unsubsidized bread. Measures must be taken to provide bread to all Tunisians," Saied said. For several months, some 3,737 bakeries of a distinct network selling only subsidized baguettes at a cost of 190 Tunisian millimes (around \$0.07 cents)

— a price unchanged since 1984 -- have been facing a flour shortage.

This has led to long queues forming outside the shops from dawn. Economists told AFP that this "bread crisis" stems from an inadequate reserve of subsidized flour held by the Tunisian government, which centralizes all purchases of basic goods. Economist Ezzedine Saidane put the blame squarely on the government.

"The state did not buy enough cereals, so there isn't enough flour and therefore bread. There is a financial crisis and the government does not want to admit it," said Saidane.

He also insisted that the crisis will not be resolved "by imposing a unified price for bread".

Experts say the inflation-ravaged and heavily indebted country has been forced to stagger the flour supply to bakeries after suppliers started demanding payments up-front. Baker Hanene Bouguerra, who employs around 30 people, criticized Saied in a post on Facebook, saying his remarks showed "a lack of comprehension of the situation".

"We are not the rich," she said. "You speak about the rich and the poor to divide and starve us! I am ready to go to prison to defend my rights." — AFP

Global markets slip over banking sector concerns

LONDON: Markets fell Tuesday as concerns over the health of the US banking sector played out on Wall Street and an Italian windfall tax on lenders saw European bank shares plummet. The dollar continued to rise from talk of yet another US interest rate hike, while oil prices retreated following weak Chinese trade data and a lack of growth in US trade figures.

In Milan, share prices of Italian banks Intesa Sanpaolo to Unicredit and Monte dei Paschi di Siena lost between seven and 10.2 percent on news

of the windfall tax, adopted by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's ministers late Monday. Fallout spread to French and German banks, with Credit Agricole down 3.8 percent in afternoon trade in Paris and Commerzbank losing 4.87 percent in Frankfurt.

The Italian government was "using part of the banks' billion-dollar profits to help families and businesses affected by rising interest rates", Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said on X, formerly known as Twitter. Banks were also "under pressure across Europe after Moody's cut its credit ratings on 10 small to mid-sized US banks", noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

And it "warned it may do the same for some of the larger lenders such as BNY Mellon and State Street which

have been placed on review for a possible downgrade", she added.

Asia's major stock markets were mixed amid concerns that the Federal Reserve would hike rates again, while another weak batch of trade data compounded worries about the struggling Chinese economy.

The positive sentiment that fuelled a rally for stock markets through much of July has given way to nervousness that while US inflation is coming down, officials will keep tightening monetary policy to make sure they have prices under control.

Analysts also warned that while the US economy remained in rude health after more than a year of rate hikes, fears of recession remained. The US trade deficit narrowed in June to \$65.5 billion, compared with \$68.3 billion in

May, on a bigger pullback in imports than exports, according to government data released on Tuesday.

"A weaker trend could persist owing to the effects of monetary policy tightening globally, which is likely to slow demand and economic activity domestically and abroad," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics. On the disappointing trade outcome, analyst Patrick O'Hare of Page One noted: "One can see the growth worries in the commodities market."

West Texas Intermediate was down at \$80.81 per barrel, as was Brent North Sea crude to \$84.22 per barrel following Wall Street opening. The market's focus will turn to the release of US consumer price inflation later in the week. — AFP

Business

China reports steep drop in exports

Sluggish global demand, domestic slowdown batter economy

BEIJING: China last month suffered its biggest fall in exports for more than three years, official data showed Tuesday, as the world's second-largest economy is battered by sluggish global demand and a domestic slowdown.

The data will likely ramp up calls for leaders to do more to revive growth, having laid out a series of stimulus measures in recent weeks focusing on consumers and the troubled property sector. Sales of Chinese products to foreign markets sank 14.5 percent on-year last month, a third consecutive drop, according to the customs authority. The decline was bigger than expected and the heaviest since a 17.2 percent plunge in January-February 2020, when the economy came to a standstill in the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from a brief rebound in March and April, exports have been in constant decline since October. The threat of recession in the United States and Europe, combined with high inflation, has contributed to weakening international demand for Chinese products in recent months. Exports dived 12.4 percent on-year in June. Shipments to the European Union in the first seven months of the year came to 2.08 trillion yuan (\$288.9 billion), down 2.6 percent, the customs authority said in a separate statement on Tuesday. Meanwhile, imports shrunk a forecast-busting 12.4 percent, a ninth straight month of contraction and further evidence that domestic demand has fallen off a cliff.

"China trade figures for July disappointed again,"

Ken Cheung Kin Tai, an analyst at Mizuho Bank, wrote in a note. "The weak trade figures highlighted the sluggish external demand, while (importers) refrained from purchasing goods for domestic production and investment," Cheung said.

"In this context, renminbi depreciation could serve as a tool to support China exports and facilitate economic recovery," he added.

Domestic slowdown

The trade figures are the latest indication that China's post-COVID recovery has run out of steam, having enjoyed a brief surge after officials removed growth-killing zero-COVID measures at the end of last year. The economy grew just 0.8 percent on-quarter in April-June, while youth unemployment has reached record highs of more than 20 percent.

July's official manufacturing purchasing managers' index—a key measure of factory output—came in at 49.3, below the 50-point mark that separates expansion and contraction. And the property sector remains in turmoil, with major developers failing to complete housing projects, triggering protests and mortgage boycotts from homebuyers. Authorities have come under increasing pressure to introduce fresh stimulus after months of debilitating data. The top leadership, known as the Politburo, have pledged to provide much-needed support to the economy but warned it faces "new difficulties and challenges" as well as "hidden dangers in key areas". China's State Council last month released a 20-point plan to

agreed on July 25 to broad-based wage hikes and additional employee benefits in a negotiation that has been seen as a win for organized labor. Rank-and-file workers are voting on the new UPS contract through August 22.

However, the threat of a strike prompted some UPS customers to divert orders to competing services, adding to the effects of a shift among consumers towards services and travel, and away from goods after the heady consumption of the early COVID-19 period.

Profits in the second quarter dipped five percent to \$2.1 billion, while revenues dropped 11 percent to \$22.1 billion. UPS Chief Executive Carol Tome said she was "pleased" to reach the agreement with the Teamsters. "UPS is stronger than ever," Tome said. "Looking ahead, we will stay on strategy to capture growth in the most attractive parts of the market and make our global integrated network even more efficient." Shares of UPS fell 6.1 percent to \$171 in pre-market trading. — AFP



Employees work in a factory that produces LED lights for export in Jiujiang, in China's central Jiangxi province on August 8, 2023. — AFP

increase consumption across the board, touching on housing, culture and tourism, as well as green consumption such as electric vehicles. The central bank has also cut several interest rates in recent weeks in an effort to reinvigorate the economy. However, analysts have warned that vast local government debt piles and officials' determination to put the country

on a more sustainable growth trajectory, and away from state investment, mean the wide-ranging bazooka measures of the past are unlikely.

Beijing is aiming for about five percent growth this year, one of the lowest targets set by the Asian giant in decades, and one that Premier Li Qiang has warned will not be easy to achieve. — AFP

UPS lowers 2023 forecast after union agreement

NEW YORK: UPS lowered its full-year outlook on Tuesday, citing the volume effects and higher costs of its recent labor negotiation as the shipping company reported a drop in quarterly profits.

UPS, which reached a tentative new labor agreement last month with the Teamsters union to avert a strike, now expects 2023 revenues of about \$93 billion, down \$4 billion from the prior outlook. Shares fell in pre-market trading as the company also cut its adjusted profit margin by a percentage point to 11.8 percent. Facing threats of a bruising nationwide strike slated to begin August 1, UPS

Erdogan defends expansion of coal mine

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday dismissed environmental protests over the felling of trees to expand a coal mine in southwest Turkey, saying the campaign was led by "marginals".

Dramatic scenes have emerged since July 24 when Akbelen forest in the Milas district of the Aegean province of Mugla was occupied by villagers and activists trying to stop the trees from being felled by the mine's owner, an energy company close to the government. Mugla is home to three power plants and activists say the coal mines that supply them threaten the region's centuries-old olive groves, a vital part of the local economy. "This power plant, which produces almost two-thirds of the electricity consumed in the southern Aegean, contributes around one billion dollars annually to our country's economy," Erdogan said in a televised address after the weekly cabinet meeting.

He said the power plant needed to continue production with new coal basins as the existing reserves were close to depletion. "Coal power plants have become once again a major source of energy in European countries after the crisis that broke out with the Russia-Ukraine war," he said. Coal accounts for over a quarter of Turkey's primary energy and the industry generates over a third of the country's electricity.

Protesters are 'marginals'

Erdogan called the protesters "marginals" posing as environmental activists. "We just mind our business," he said. "It is a fact that we cannot explain the campaigns carried out in our country by the love of trees and environmental sensitivity." Tensions erupted last month when logging crews turned up in the forest, leading to violent scuffles between the villagers and the gendarmerie who fired tear gas and water cannon to push back the crowds. Some activists who managed to get past the security barricades, occupied the forests and hugged trees while several villagers were detained after they refused to heed the call to leave. Erdogan's comments come on the eve of a special session in parliament, currently on a summer break, to discuss the situation in Akbelen at the request of the opposition.

YK Energy, a joint affiliate of IC Holding and Limak Holding, which has close ties with the government, obtained permission in 2020 to cut down the trees in a section of the Akbelen forest to expand a mine. Erdogan compared the latest protests to demonstrations a decade ago over plans to redevelop Gezi park in the heart of Istanbul which snowballed into nationwide rallies that posed one of the biggest challenges to his government. "Although some are constantly and persistently trying to re-play the same scenarios with different skins, nobody is deceived by this game anymore," Erdogan said. — AFP



"This investment will be a boon for Kiwi businesses and make New Zealand a hub for renewable tech expertise," added Hipkins, who faces elections in October during which the climate is expected to be a significant factor for many voters. Flash flooding in Auckland in January left four dead while Cyclone Gabrielle just weeks later smashed into the North Island, killing 11 people and leaving a repair bill of about NZ\$14 billion.

Hipkins said the wild weather was a reminder that New Zealand needed to speed up its climate action.

BlackRock said it would draw on its financial expertise to create the fund, which would serve as a platform for state and private institutions to invest in



TOKYO: This picture taken on February 6, 2023 shows the logo of Japanese investment giant SoftBank at their mobile shop in Tokyo. — AFP

Japan's SoftBank sees shock \$3.3bn first-quarter loss

TOKYO: Japanese investment giant SoftBank Group reported a surprise net loss of more than \$3 billion in the first quarter on Tuesday after being hit by a drop in the share prices of major holdings as well as a weaker yen. The firm has made huge bets to find and grow hot new tech ventures around the world, but that has left its earnings vulnerable to market forces.

Results have lurched between dizzying highs and lows in recent years, with China's crackdown on its tech sector taking a toll on the company. On Tuesday it said it had lost an eye-watering 477.6 billion yen (\$3.3 billion) in the three months to June, badly missing a 73-billion-yen profit forecast by analysts in a Bloomberg News survey.

The company suffered investment losses "due to declines in the share prices of Alibaba, Deutsche Telekom, and T-Mobile US", it said in a statement.

However, SoftBank's Vision Fund unit, which invests in AI-related start-ups, swung to profit after five straight quarters of losses. Altogether, SoftBank Group invested \$1.8 billion in the first quarter, with CFO Yoshimitsu Goto telling reporters they had "resumed investment nervously" following a standstill in the previous fiscal year.

Goto added they would "go on the offensive, but carefully", as shares are steadily growing. SoftBank Group is going through a broad rethink to restore its financial health after taking a heavy hit from global economic disruptions caused by the pandemic. It is moving to list British semiconductor firm Arm in New York while selling down its stake in Alibaba.

Arm is hoping to raise as much as \$10 billion in its initial public offering, which would put its value at about \$60-70 billion, according to Bloomberg, making it the largest tech listing this year.

Going public "will be a positive factor if the IPO is done in fiscal 2023, as SoftBank will sell part of its shares in Arm at some point", Hideki Yasuda, analyst at Toyo Securities, told AFP ahead of the company's announcement. Goto was tight-lipped about the timing, only saying the "preparations are progressing smoothly". SoftBank initially hoped to sell Arm to US chip giant Nvidia, but the \$40 billion deal was scrapped over regulatory objections.

According to a report by the Financial Times last month, Nvidia is in talks to join a list of large "anchor investors" to support Arm's IPO as early as September. SoftBank is also reportedly planning to sell almost all of its stake in e-commerce giant Alibaba. SoftBank once held more than 30 percent of Alibaba, but it has already started offloading shares and is looking to reduce its stake to 3.8 percent, the FT reported. — AFP

New Zealand's transition to a low-carbon economy. New Zealand has a goal of creating net zero carbon emissions from across the economy by 2050.

"This is the largest single-country low-carbon transition investment initiative BlackRock has created to date," BlackRock chief executive Larry Fink said in a message on social media.

"It will enable New Zealand companies to access greater pools of capital to build out climate infrastructure across the country's energy system." New Zealand's transition to renewables-sourced electricity would require NZ\$42 billion in investment in power generation, distribution and storage, BlackRock said. — AFP



LONDON: House prices in Britain fell 2.4 percent last month, compared with the same month last year, according to Halifax.

British house prices drop 2.4% in July

LONDON: House prices in Britain fell 2.4 percent last month, compared with the same month last year, according to Halifax. The average UK house price fell by 0.3 percent in July, meaning prices have declined for four months in a row. The average house in the UK is now £285,044 (\$362,940).

"In reality, prices are little changed over the last six months, with the typical property now costing £285,044, compared to £285,660 in February," said Kim Kinnaird, director of Halifax Mortgages.

"The pace of annual decline also slowed to minus 2.4 percent in July, versus minus 2.6 percent in June. "These figures add to the sense of a housing market which continues to display a degree of resilience in the face of tough economic headwinds." The Halifax's calculations mirror those of the Nationwide Building Society, whose own survey last week showed prices in July 3.8 percent lower than a year previously — the largest fall in 14 years.

According to Halifax, prices have fallen 3 percent since they peaked in August last year. Nationwide puts the decline over the same period at 4.5 percent. The effect of the Bank of England's fourteen increases in interest rates is now reducing demand in the economy but house prices are still proving resilient

given the strength in wage growth and relatively low unemployment.

"Prospects for the UK housing market remain closely linked to the performance of the wider economy," Kinnaird said. "Several factors are providing support, notably strong wage growth, running at around +7 percent annually. And, while the uptick in unemployment is likely to restrain that somewhat, it seems unlikely to reach levels that would trigger a sharp deterioration in conditions.

"Expectations of further base rate increases from the Bank of England were tempered by a better-than-expected inflation report for June. "However, while there have been recent signs of borrowing costs stabilizing or even falling, they will likely remain much higher than homeowners have become used to over the last decade."

Some experts argue despite the support factors, the outlook for the UK housing market remains bleak. "It's worrying to see yet another decline in house prices this month, as the UK sits on the cusp of a housing market crash, the risks of which will have only been heightened by the most recent base rate hike which could push house prices down even further," said Kate Anderson, deputy editor and housing expert at finder.com. "It's likely that we're going to face big issues with the buy to let market and the impact that the rising cost of borrowing will have on renters. "Landlords may find it unprofitable to continue due to increasing interest rates and sell up, creating further downward pressure on house prices and leaving renters with even fewer options." — Agencies

cluding pension funds, the government and US-based BlackRock said in separate statements. The so-called New Zealand net zero Fund will invest in clean energy infrastructure, helping the country to reach its target of producing electricity fully sourced from renewables by 2030, up from 83 percent currently.

It targets sectors including wind, solar, batteries, electricity storage, vehicle charging, and "green" hydrogen projects, which produce the gas by using renewable energy. "This is a first of its kind fund in the country that demonstrates the huge economic potential of New Zealand being a climate leader and our goal of generating 100 percent renewable electricity," Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said.

NZ, BlackRock to create climate investment fund

WELLINGTON: New Zealand said Tuesday it is partnering with BlackRock to create a climate investment fund, aiming to speed the way to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030.

The fund is to seek NZ\$2 billion (US\$1.2 billion) from state entities and private-sector investors in-

Lifestyle



These photographs show the detail of a work by Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis.



Swiss paper cutting artist takes the scissors to old ways

Marianne Dubuis stared intently through a magnifying glass, using a slim cutter to make tiny incisions in paper as she carved out delicate tableaux of life and human emotions. The 64-year-old designer is reinventing the Swiss traditional art of paper cutting, which typically shows Alpine landscapes and cows heading to mountain pastures, by infusing a large dose of poetry and modernity. Dubuis, a florist by training, told AFP that she has devoted herself to paper cutting since childhood and now spends around six hours a day on her passion.

At her home studio in Chateau d'Oex, in the Pays-d'Enhaut area where the Swiss tradition was born around 200 years ago, she showed off her craft, using scissors or a cutter to carve out intricate scenes inspired by the surrounding woods and the people she meets. The works, either in black and white or in color, have been shown in Switzerland, France, Germany and Japan.

Some of them, more than a meter (three feet) high, are on display until September 6 at the new Swiss Paper Cutting Centre in Chateau d'Oex, a picturesque village in the pre-Alps of western Switzerland. "I am very proud of paper cutting, and what it represents of Switzerland. It is a way of representing our values, our roots," she said. However, "if we keep doing the same things over and over, the tradition dies", said

Dubuis, who wants to reinvent the art form in her own way.

Classic Alpine scenes

Paper cutting originated in Asia and spread to Europe around the 17th century. Johann-Jakob Hauswirth, a farm



Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis works on a piece at her home, in Chateau d'Oex, in the Prealps in western Switzerland.

worker who died in poverty in the 19th century, is considered the father of the art form in Switzerland. When the opportunity arose, he took his scissors to scraps of paper and began creating naive representations of Alpine scenes, and the annual "poya" ritual of driving cows up the mountain to graze. He would then leave them as a thank-you

gift after a meal. His works, as well as the more numerous creations of other masters in the field such as Louis Saugy and Christian Schwitzgubel, sell at auction for "several tens of thousands of francs (dollars)", according to Emmanuel Bailly, of the auction house

Beurret & Bailly Auktionen. Close to nature, Dubuis draws her inspiration from the forest. Her cuttings, some of which likewise sell for tens of thousands of francs, reflect her emotions and also tell a life story, like a biography in carved paper. "When I have a private commission, they come and tell me about their life," she said. "I put in

what I feel about this person; the essence of what they told me."

From William Tell to the UN

This approach has brought comfort, help and relief, she said, citing a work created for a father who lost his son, or one for a couple on the verge of splitting up but who thought again after seeing the cutting representing the journey of their years together. With Dubuis' work, "there is something spiritual", said Monique Buri, vice-president of the Swiss Paper Cutting Association, which has around 500 members. Dubuis weaves in modernity with tradition to carve out images of Switzerland today.

At the end of 2021, she created a 50-square-centimetre work representing historical heroes like William Tell as well as chocolate, mountain rescue helicopters or the international organizations based in the country, such as the United Nations and the Red Cross.

Pierre Mottier, head of the association running the museum that houses the Swiss Paper Cutting Centre, said: "It's very nice to make little cows and chamois, but it's also very interesting to cut out other things." Modernity also has its dangers, with an increasing number of companies making cuttings with lasers. But Dubuis says she is not worried. With laser machines, "the soul is missing". — AFP



These photographs show the detail of a work by Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis.



Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis poses next to one of her work at the Swiss Centre of Paper Cut in Chateau d'Oex, in the pre-Alps in western Switzerland.



This photograph shows little paper cut-out cows for a work by Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis.



A visitor looks at large works by Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis during an exhibition at the Swiss Centre of Paper Cut.



This photograph shows a detail of a work by Swiss paper cutting artist Marianne Dubuis.

Escaped dog treks 160 km across Switzerland in one night

An escaped Border Terrier named Lucky made an epic 160-kilometre journey across Switzerland on the eve of the country's national holiday, media reported Friday. Her owners had left her in kennels in Bern canton, but the 14-year-old dog broke out Monday evening. The following morning she turned up in Geneva 160 kilometers (100 miles) away, the RTS public broadcaster reported. "There was a hole in the fence" at the kennel, Lucky's owner Jennifer Wagner told RTS.

The dog was found near Lake Geneva, on the morning of August 1, as a sprinkling of fireworks began sounding for the Swiss national holiday. A Geneva resident spotted the animal on the side of a road and alerted the authorities, RTS said.

Since Lucky was microchipped, police swiftly tracked down her owners, who were in Berlin frantically awaiting news of their escaped pet. Besides a few ticks in her coat, Lucky did not appear to have been hurt during her journey. "I feel lucky that she is healthy, and did not die, and

was not injured," Wagner told RTS. "It was a big fright for us."

Wagner however thinks her dog had a little help for her epic journey. She believes someone must have picked up the very friendly dog and driven her to Geneva. "I don't think it is possible she ran (the whole way). It is 160 kilometers (99 miles)," she said. "That is impossible for a dog in such a short time." — AFP



Scores of horses suffer sunstroke at Japan samurai event

Organizers of an annual horse festival in Japan where riders dressed as samurai re-enact battles said Tuesday they were considering changing dates for the gathering next year, after sunstroke affected 111 animals, killing two of them. Japan has recorded its hottest average July temperatures in over 100 years, and on Tuesday heatstroke alerts were in place in 26 out of 47 prefectures, with the mercury forecast to hit 38 Celsius (100 Fahrenheit) in places.

At least 111 horses - and dozens of people - needed treatment for sunstroke at the Soma Nomaai festival in Fukushima prefecture from July 29 to 31, after temperatures touched 35 degrees, the hottest in five years, organizers said.

Two of the animals died, they said. The annual three-day event, which features more than 400 participants dressed as medieval samurai warriors fighting on horseback over flags that are shot overhead by fireworks, attracted more than 120,000 people, reports said. Yoshichika Hirata, a member of the festival's executive committee, told AFP that changing the date of next

year's event to a cooler period would be discussed at a meeting on Thursday. "We sprinkled water on the track for the first time, as extreme heat was expected. We used three water-sprinkler cars, but water dried up quickly,"

Hirata said. One horse died during last year's festival, after which a majority of riders supported a plan to change the date, according to a survey done in December. — AFP



People wearing samurai armour race horses during the annual Soma Nomaai Festival in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture. — AFP

Lifestyle



A video of Irish singer-songwriter Sinead O'Connor is projected on a giant screen as a crowd waits for US President Barack Obama to deliver a speech at College Green in Dublin on May 23, 2011.



An undated photo from the late 1980's shows Sinead O'Connor performing in Vancouver, Canada.



Irish singer Sinead O'Connor performs during the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient, in Lorient, western France on August 11, 2013.



Irish pop singer Sinead O'Connor performs 05 August, 2007 in Lorient, western France, during the 37th International Celtic Festival (FIL). --AFP photos

Ireland bids farewell to singer Sinead O'Connor

Mourners and fans gathered Tuesday in the Irish town once home to singer Sinead O'Connor to pay their last respects ahead of her burial. The musician's funeral cortege will pass along the seafront in the town of Bray, 20 kilometers (13 miles) south of Dublin, where she lived for 15 years.

The Grammy award-winning singer, best known for her cover of "Nothing Compares 2 U", died last month after being found unresponsive at her London home. She was 56. The musician, who rose to international fame in the 1990s, will be mourned at a funeral attended by family and friends before a private burial. Her family offered the public the chance to pay their final respects by organizing the cortege through Bray, saying she loved the town and its residents. "With this procession her family would like to acknowledge the outpouring of love for her from the people of (County) Wicklow and beyond since she left last week to go to another place," O'Connor's family added in a weekend statement.

Dozens of people, some bearing flowers, were already in place hours before the funeral—due to begin at 10:30 am (0930 GMT) -- and subsequent procession. Some left tributes outside O'Connor's former home, named "Montebello", which the cortege is set to pass by. One message left on the gatepost



Singer Sinead O'Connor makes an appearance at Borders to promote her new 2-CD release "Theology" on June 26, 2007 in New York City.

read: "Sinead, thank you for hearing us and responding... sorry for breaking your heart." Others pinned the Irish flag and pictures. On a coastal hilltop overlooking Bray, a World War II navigational sign for pilots spelling Ireland in Irish—"Eire"—was decorated with a heart and "Sinead" in tribute to the singer.

Tributes

O'Connor's death prompted a surge of public sympathy around the world and in Ireland, where her willing-

ness to criticize the Catholic Church, in particular, saw her vilified by some and praised as a trailblazer by others. During her career she revealed she had been abused by her mother as a child and in 1992 protested the abuse of children by the church, tearing up a picture of Pope John Paul II while performing on US television program "Saturday Night Live".

Tributes streamed in from political leaders, pop stars and others following the news of her death, lauding



People lay flowers and tributes outside the former home of Irish singer Sinead O'Connor, in Bray, eastern Ireland, ahead of her funeral.

her powerful voice and willingness to court controversy. Ireland's President Michael Higgins, Bob Geldof, Alison Moyet, Annie Lennox and Russell Crowe were among those to have offered their condolences.

Her agents have said at the time of her death, O'Connor was completing a new album and planning a tour as well as a movie based on her autobiography "Rememberings". Gatherings in Dublin, Belfast and elsewhere in Ireland have been held in remem-

brance of the singer, often featuring spontaneous renditions of "Nothing Compares 2 U", which she released in 1990. The Irish Times reported last week that an autopsy had been carried out to determine the cause of the singer's death, which London police have said they were not treating as suspicious. --AFP

Scout jamboree SOS issued to BTS megastars

With national embarrassment building over the World Scout Jamboree evacuations, a South Korean lawmaker has issued an SOS to supergroup BTS. The K-pop megastars are currently on a hiatus with two members—Jin and J-Hope—performing their mandatory military service, and another member, SUGA, set to enlist shortly. South Korea's military should give them a leave pass so they can briefly reunite and perform for the thousands of mostly teenagers from around the world left stranded by the jamboree fiasco, according to lawmaker Sung Il-jong.

"For these precious guests, it is necessary to fill the lack of schedule... with the power of Korean culture," Sung wrote on his Facebook page. He asked Seoul's defence ministry to "take all necessary measures" to allow BTS to perform at a K-pop concert in Seoul on Friday for the scouts. Doing so "would help elevate South Korea's national prestige."

Sung, also a member of the parliament's national defence committee, said the jamboree had "tarnished our country's reputation due to inadequate preparation and poor management". The defence ministry told AFP that it had "nothing to comment" on Sung's request. About 43,000 people had gathered on South Korea's coast last week for the World Scouts Jamboree.

But it was plagued by problems, initially with a heatwave that led to mass sunstroke casualties. Poor sanitation was another problem. An approaching typhoon led organizers to scrap the campsite proceedings completely this week.

Thousands of students were being evacuated to Seoul and other parts of the country on Tuesday. Even before the typhoon warning, Korean media had called the jamboree "a national disgrace". But Sung's request prompted angry responses from some BTS fans online. "Please don't use BTS to cover yourselves up!" one wrote on Twitter, which is now being rebranded to X.

"Isn't it absurd that (the South Korean authorities) are putting the responsibility on BTS to clean up the mess they produced—by not adequately preparing for the Jamboree?" wrote another. BTS has played a significant role in promoting South Korea's culture, once even serving as the country's presidential envoys.

Last year, they threw a free concert in Busan in support of South Korea's bid to host the World Expo 2023 in the southern port city. It was their last concert as a group before the members started joining the army for mandatory military service. --AFP



US film director William Friedkin attends his Walk of Fame ceremony in Hollywood, California, on August 14, 1997. -- AFP photos



A member of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce leaves flowers on the star of director William Friedkin on August 7, 2023 in Hollywood, California.

'The Exorcist' director William Friedkin dies aged 87

William Friedkin, the groundbreaking US director of "The Exorcist" and "The French Connection," died on Monday, a family friend told AFP. He was 87. Friedkin passed away in Los Angeles after suffering unspecified health issues in recent years, said Stephen Galloway, a former Hollywood Reporter executive editor. "He died this morning," confirmed Galloway, after speaking with Friedkin's wife. The director had "been working until a few weeks ago," but "had been in declining health," he added. Oscar-winning director Guillermo del Toro led the tributes on Monday, calling Friedkin "one of the Gods of Cinema." "Cinema has lost a true Scholar and I have lost a dear, loyal and true friend," he wrote on social media.

Fellow horror director Eli Roth posted a tribute on Instagram to "one of the most impactful directors of all time" who "set the course of my life in a different direction." Actor Elijah Wood described Friedkin as "a true cinematic master whose influence will continue to extend forever."

Friedkin was among a crop of influential young "New Hollywood" directors in the 1970s who fundamentally reshaped the US film industry, upsetting a long-established system in which powerful studio producers had reigned supreme. Alongside fellow auteurs such as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, Friedkin exploded onto the Hollywood

scene in 1971 with the gritty cop drama "The French Connection."

It won five Oscars, including for best director and best picture. Friedkin followed that up with "The Exorcist," in 1973. It was a huge commercial and critical hit, as well as being deeply controversial. The shocking film about a 12-year-old girl possessed by the devil was nominated for 10 Oscars, winning two, and grossed an eventual \$440 million.

The movie has spawned multiple sequels, including an upcoming trilogy from horror producer Jason Blum in which Ellen Burstyn returns as the original film's heroine. In a statement Monday, Blum said he was "personally indebted" to Friedkin. "More than any other filmmak-

er, he changed both the way directors approached horror films and also the perception of horror films in the broader culture," he said in a statement obtained by trade website Deadline.

"We are deeply saddened to hear of his passing and intensely grateful for the body of work he has left behind." Following the stratospheric success of "The Exorcist," Friedkin's career went into sharp decline. He released "Sorcerer" in 1977 -- a hugely expensive flop in its time, although fans such as bestselling horror author Stephen King praised the film in tributes Monday.

"Very sorry to hear of the passing of William Friedkin, a deeply talented filmmaker," King wrote. "THE EXORCIST is great, but for me the real classic was SORCERER." Friedkin continued directing well into his 80s. His final film, "The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial," starring Kiefer Sutherland, is set to premiere at this year's Venice Film Festival.

"Working with William Friedkin was one of the great honors of my career," Sutherland said in a statement. "My condolences go to Sherry and his family." Friedkin, who was once married to French actress Jeanne Moreau, is survived by his fourth wife, Sherry Lansing—a former Paramount Pictures studio chief—and two sons. --AFP



US film director William Friedkin and his wife Sherry Lansing attend the Pioneer of the Year dinner at the Century Plaza hotel on December 5, 2002 in Los Angeles, California.



Sports

Record-breaker Lavreysen dominates cycling worlds

Dutchman makes history, wins 5th consecutive world title

GLASGOW: Dutchman Harrie Lavreysen made history in Glasgow on Monday by winning his fifth consecutive world title in the sprint, the premier event in track cycling, at the World Cycling Championships. Britain's Kieran Reilly earlier claimed the hosts' first gold of the championships winning the BMX Freestyle Park title. Lavreysen, 26, was in imperious form as he destroyed the field, beating Trinidad & Tobago's Nicholas Paul in the final, to become the first sprinter in history to win five world championship titles in a row since the start of the professional era in 1992.

Lavreysen now has 13 world titles in total and will be the overwhelming favorite to win three gold medals next year at the Paris Olympic Games. The two-time Tokyo Olympic champion, who came to the track after starting out in BMX, now has five titles in individual competition, five in team sprint, where the Netherlands reclaimed their crown on Friday, and three in keirin, another Olympic discipline.

European champion Reilly, meanwhile, had a spectacular run to finish ahead of Olympic champion Logan Martin of Australia in the final of the BMX Freestyle Park competition. Martin, the last man to go after the competition resumed following a rain-delay, came up half a point short of Reilly's winning score of 95.80. "It's the next level," said a jubilant Reilly. "This is the biggest competition in the world outside the Olympics and this is the perfect stepping stone for me. I won the Euros a couple of months ago and to have those two jerseys at the same time shows the hard work is paying off."



GLASGOW: Netherlands' Harrie Lavreysen wins the men's Elite Sprint Final race during the UCI Cycling World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland on August 7, 2023. - AFP

Having laid down a solid first run, Reilly landed everything he attempted in the second. "That was pure and utter relief for me," said Reilly. "It's not as often as you'd like that you come off a course knowing you've done everything. To be one of the few guys still doing the double flair in competition, it's

such a high-risk trick and it's taking that risk at the end of the run. I could have thrown it all away with that one trick but I'm glad I had that belief in myself and that it paid off." American Nick Bruce finished third just ahead of former champion Rimu Nakamura of Japan. - AFP

Rugby thrives in Roman suburbs

ROME: If Idrissa Di Porto hits the headlines as a star of Italian rugby in a future World Cup, Azzurri supporters will surely offer up a prayer of thanks to a club which has been beaver away in the unfashionable southern suburbs of Rome for over 40 years. Arvalia Villa Pamphili Rugby Roma, to give the club its full title, was founded in 1980 by PE teacher Salvatore Gallo. Some saw it as an act of futility in a city dominated by the football clubs of Roma and Lazio but the rugby club has become an important nurturing ground for the game in an unlikely setting.

In 2007 it set up shop in the Corviale district, best known for its forbidding 1970s housing complex, 60 hectares of cement and social problems and it's where Di Porto and his teammates train and play. The club, however, has gained in strength, rising last season to Serie A - Italy's second division. Rugby has been played in Italy since the late 19th century with an Italian XV from Milan making its first bow against French opponents in 1911. The national team stepped on to the stage with two matches against Spain in 1929 but it was not until a series of strong results in the 1990s took them into the Six Nations that it began to gain any kind of traction.

Even today, however, with over 1,000 clubs and 70,000 registered players rugby is still the poor relation to the round ball. Italy have qualified for every World Cup since the inaugural edition in 1987 but they have yet to make it out of the pool stage. This year, even with former All Blacks World Cup winner Kieran Crowley at the helm, they face yet another struggle. They should be good enough to beat Uruguay and Namibia but their other two opponents in Pool A are hosts France and the mighty New Zealand.



ROME: Idrissa Di Porto controls the ball during a rugby training session at the 'Arvalia Villa Pamphili Rugby Roma' in the Rome's Corviale outskirts. - AFP

Italian rugby may need to wait a while longer for Idrissa and his friends to deliver some World Cup glory. Ahead of the Rugby World Cup in France, Agence France-Presse asked 20 aspiring photographers from each country qualified for the competition to show one aspect of the rugby union culture in their homeland, with the help of Canon cameras who are sponsoring the tournament. From Namibia to Fiji via Georgia and Scotland this photo essay gives us a glimpse of the core values of rugby on five continents. - AFP

Young US NBA stars rout Puerto Rico in World Cup tuneup

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Edwards and Cameron Johnson each scored 15 points to lead a young United States NBA squad over Puerto Rico 117-74 on Monday and conclude Basketball World Cup training camp. Mikal Bridges scored 14 points, Jaren Jackson Jr. added 12 points and Jalen Brunson, Bobby Portis and Brandon Ingram each contributed 11 as the Americans launched a five-game exhibition tour in Las Vegas with a blowout. "We've jelled really fast as a team. It shows the way we play the game," said Los Angeles Lakers guard Austin Reaves, who had nine points, four rebounds and four assists. "We know we have a lot of talent and we can do a lot of great things but it's all about becoming one unit and going and playing for one another."

NBA All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton of Indiana passed off a game-high 12 assists while New York guard Brunson grabbed a game-high 12 rebounds. NBA All-Star guard Edwards of Minnesota made a game-high four steals while Brooklyn forward Johnson had six rebounds. Reigning NBA Defensive Player of the Year Jackson of Memphis, the league's top shot blocker each of the past two seasons, had seven rebounds and two blocks. NBA 2022 All-Defensive Team swingman Bridges of Brooklyn had three steals and five rebounds in a team-best 23 minutes. New Orleans forward Ingram, the NBA's 2020 Most Improved Player, had five rebounds and three assists. The squad also includes 2023 NBA Rookie of the Year Paolo Banchero, a forward for Orlando, and forward Portis, who helped Milwaukee win the 2021 NBA crown. - AFP

News in Brief

Newcastle, Livramento ink deal

LONDON: Newcastle completed the signing of defender Tino Livramento from Southampton on Tuesday for a reported initial fee of £32 million (\$41 million). Livramento, 20, impressed during the 2021/22 season shortly after moving to St Mary's from Chelsea. However, he missed most of last season due to an anterior cruciate ligament injury sustained in April 2022 as Southampton were relegated from the Premier League. The BBC said the total fee could rise to £40 million should performance-related bonuses be met. Newcastle boss Eddie Howe has now added three new players to his squad during the transfer window following the arrivals of Italian international midfielder Sandro Tonali and winger Harvey Barnes. "At 20, he already has lots of attributes that I admire but he also has the potential and drive to really grow with this team," said Howe in a club statement. - AFP

Fiji World Cup squad named

SUVA: Fiji head coach Simon Raiwalui named his squad Tuesday for next month's Rugby World Cup, but warned his in-form side they would face a big test of their credentials in warm-up matches against France and England. The high-flying Fijians brushed aside Japan 35-12 in Tokyo at the weekend for a third straight Test victory, after seeing off Tonga and Samoa in previous weeks. The run has seen them move back into World Rugby's top 10 rankings for the first time since 2019. But they face stiffer tests on August 19 against France, the World Cup hosts, in Nantes and seven days later against England at Twickenham. Fiji will begin their World Cup campaign against Wales in Bordeaux on September 10 before also facing Australia, Georgia and Portugal in Pool C. "We've had an amazing build-up," Raiwalui said. "We got to try different combinations against Tonga, Samoa and Japan and were able to come away with victories." - AFP

Hibino wins Prague title

PRAGUE: Japan's Nao Hibino completed a fairytale journey from lucky loser to champion as she beat Czech teenager Linda Noskova in straight sets on Monday to win the rain-hit Prague Open. Hibino, 28, swept aside fourth seed Noskova 6-4, 6-1 in the final disrupted by rain. She added a third WTA title to her previous wins at Tashkent in 2015 and Hiroshima in 2019. "I'm really grateful to have made it to the final today," said Hibino. "It was a tough week with all the rain." The final had to be suspended when Hibino, the world number 136, was 4-1, 30-0 up in the second set because of rain plaguing the tournament since Saturday. Hibino already had to complete her semi-final against Romania's Jaqueline Cristian on Monday morning, but she only spent five minutes on the court. The rain washed out Saturday's program and the semi-finals were postponed to Sunday, which were further delayed due to rain. - AFP

MLB suspends 6 over brawl

NEW YORK: Chicago White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson was suspended for six games and Cleveland third baseman Jose Ramirez received a three-game ban on Monday from Major League Baseball for their roles in a Saturday brawl. One-game suspensions were also issued to Cleveland pitcher Emmanuel Clase, Cleveland third base coach Mike Sarbaugh, Chicago manager Pedro Grifol and Guardians manager Terry Francona from the benches-clearing melee during Chicago's 7-4 victory. All six were also fined undisclosed amounts, as were White Sox pitcher Michael Kopech and Guardians outfielder Gabriel Arias. The incident took place in the bottom of the sixth inning at Cleveland, touched off when Ramirez slid into second base on a double. Ramirez and Anderson squared off near second base, sparking players from both teams to race onto the field. - AFP

Ramos signs for PSG

PARIS: Portugal attacker Goncalo Ramos has joined Paris Saint-Germain from Benfica on a one-year loan deal with an option to buy, the French champions announced on Monday. Ramos, 22, came through the Portuguese club's academy and scored 19 league goals in 30 matches last season. At the 2022 World Cup he scored a hat-trick and made an assist in his first international start in the last 16 win over Switzerland. "It's a big moment of pride and immense joy to join Paris Saint-Germain," Ramos said in a PSG statement. "PSG are one of the biggest clubs in the world with one of the best squads," he added. Ramos is the Parisians' eighth summer signing after the arrivals of the likes of France defender Lucas Hernandez and Spain attacker Marco Asensio. They missed out on Harry Kane with the England striker being heavily linked with Bayern Munich. - AFP



Goncalo Ramos



BUCHAREST: Cristina Stan (center), 16 and team colleagues lift the rugby ball at the end of the training session. - AFP photos

Rugby World Cup dreams for the girls of Romania

BUCHAREST: At the entrance to the changing room of CSM Bucuresti women's rugby team there is a large poster. One corner is peeling back and flaps uncertainly in the breeze but it doesn't change the message. "Doesn't matter who you have in the front of you," it reads in Romanian. "It matters who you have next to you." Togetherness, unity is the name of the game here as rugby attempts to rediscover the strength it held in Romania in the 1980s.

Back then, Romania was the sixth best side in Europe, ahead of Italy, and clocked up notable wins over

Wales, Scotland and France, the country that nurtured the sport there in the early 20th century. The 1989 revolution changed everything. Florian Murariu, who had played in the inaugural World Cup two years earlier, became an emblem for the lost game when he was shot dead at a roadblock and the state money that propped up the game disappeared. It has been a long and painful road back — a 134-0 defeat by England in 2001 was ugly for all who watched — but for youngsters like Cristina Stan, rugby represents a clear and positive future.

"I first started playing with the boys rugby team before CSM decided to found a girls' team," the 16-year-old centre told AFP. "I would like to have a career in rugby, to reach a certain performance level, to play for the Romanian national team." Cristina is on a mission. She trains three times a week at the stadium, which involves a two-hour round-trip from her village Ciorogarla, and every day at home, based on a personal plan developed by her coach.

"Next year I see myself in the national team," adds the ambitious teenager. The women have yet to play at a full World Cup — they are focused on Sevens — but the Stejarii (The Oaks) will be in France for this year's men's global showpiece which starts on September 8. Up against Six Nations Grand Slam winners Ireland and defending champions South Africa, not to mention a hungry Scotland, Romania are unlikely to get close to the knockout phase.

They will, however, eye up their final match against Tonga in Lille as a chance to climb another rung on the ladder back towards the higher branches of the game. Ahead of the Rugby World Cup in France, Agence France-Presse asked 20 aspiring photographers from each country qualified for the competition to show one aspect of the rugby union culture in their homeland, with the help of Canon cameras who are sponsoring the tournament. From Namibia to Fiji via Georgia and Scotland this photo essay gives us a glimpse of the core values of rugby on five continents. - AFP

France thrash Morocco 4-0

Colombia edge Jamaica, set up England World Cup quarter-final



ADELAIDE: Morocco's defender #17 Hanane Ait El Haj and France's defender #13 Selma Bacha collide during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Morocco on August 8, 2023. — AFP

ADELAIDE: Eugenie Le Sommer scored twice as France eased to a 4-0 win over Morocco at the Women's World Cup on Tuesday and set up a quarter-final with co-hosts Australia. Morocco had upset the odds to qualify for the last 16 at the expense of Germany in their debut appearance at the tournament but they never managed to lay a glove on Herve Renard's French side in Adelaide. Kadidiatou Diani opened the scoring on the quarter-hour mark and it was 3-0 just after the midway point in the first half as Kenza Dali and Le Sommer added further goals.

Veteran striker Le Sommer, who is France's all-time top scorer, netted again 20 minutes from time before a crowd of 13,557 as Les Bleues advanced to the last eight with a minimum of fuss. They will now play Australia in Brisbane on Saturday, with the winners of that going on to play either England or Colombia in the semi-finals. "We fulfilled our objective. You always want a little bit more, but it's fine," Renard told broadcaster M6.

France were knocked out in the quarter-finals as hosts in 2019, losing to eventual winners the United States. A win against Australia will see them equal their best-ever performance at the World Cup, when they got to the last four in 2011. "Now we can start thinking about the quarter-final against the host nation," Renard added. "We have matched our performance of four years ago, but our objective was to do better than we did in 2011, so we know what we have left to do." Asked if his side could beat the Matildas in front of a hostile crowd, he said: "We are capable of doing it but it won't be easy, albeit not easy for either team."

Gulf in class

While France are desperate to win a first major women's international title, Morocco came into this game with the pressure off, their World Cup already



ADELAIDE: Morocco's defender #03 Nouhaila Benzina reacts at the end of the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Morocco on August 8, 2023. — AFP

a huge success. Their coach, the former French international midfielder Reynald Pedros, named an unchanged starting line-up following the 1-0 win over Colombia that sealed their place in the knockout phase. Renard made five changes from the France side that beat Panama 6-3, including recalling Sakina Karchaoui at left-back.

Karchaoui, whose parents are Moroccan, set up the opener with a great run down the left flank, a quick exchange of passes with Selma Bacha, and a cross for Diani to nod in. It was Diani's fourth goal at the tournament after her hat-trick against Panama in the final group game. The second goal arrived in the 20th minute as Diani cut the ball back for Dali to sweep home a first-time finish in off the far post.

And it was 3-0 three minutes after that following a defensive error, with Nesryne El Chad trying to clear but only succeeding in playing the ball off Diani, who set up Le Sommer. At that point Morocco might have feared an even heavier defeat than the 6-0 hammer-

ing they received from Germany in their first game. However, France took their foot off the pedal after that and only scored once more. In the 70th minute substitute Vicki Becho crossed from the right for Le Sommer to head in her 92nd international goal at the back post.

Colombia beat Jamaica

Nelson Abadia said his Colombia team were "playing for all the Americas" after a 1-0 win over Jamaica on Tuesday set up a Women's World Cup quarter-final clash with European champions England. Colombia failed to qualify for the 2019 World Cup but topped their group in Australia - stunning Germany along the way - and are now into the last eight for the first time. In front of a raucous crowd in Melbourne, the 25th-ranked South Americans ground down a resolute and physical Jamaica side who had not conceded a goal all tournament.

Colombia's intense, attacking ethos under Abadia finally paid dividends in the 51st minute when captain Catalina Usme got the breakthrough with a composed finish inside the box to unlock a previously impenetrable defense. It set a cagey game alight and sent the pumping pro-Colombian crowd into deafening delirium. Colombia will now play England in Sydney on Saturday for a place in the semi-finals.

Jamaican pride

Having crashed out of the 2019 tournament with three heavy defeats, 43rd-ranked Jamaica, like Colombia, came to Australia with few expecting them to get this far. And despite defeat they will leave with their heads held high after a historic first World Cup victory - a 1-0 win over Panama - and goalless draws against France and Brazil. Jamaica's run to the last 16 came against a backdrop of rows with their federa-

tion over a lack of support and resources. The team had also complained about lack of warm-up games. "I give credit to Colombia, they were better than us tonight," said Jamaica coach Lorne Donaldson.

"But coming in (to the tournament) with no games I feel very happy for the players that they could perform at this level. They gave everything tonight. They should be proud of themselves and I'm proud of them." Jamaica's Manchester City striker Khadija Shaw, who was too often starved of service, added: "If you believe and you work hard, anything is possible and we came out here tonight and held our own."

Clumsy challenges

In front of riotous fans who booed whenever Jamaica touched the ball, both sides pressed early in a stop-start opening that saw several players go down under heavy challenges. There were few chances in the opening 20 minutes with Colombia's Diana Ospina having the best - and only - shot on target, but it didn't have enough power to trouble the keeper. Colombia began to find some rhythm, with Leicy Santos and Usme both going close. With Colombia assuming control, Jamaica resorted to some clumsy challenges and Chantelle Swaby and Drew Spence both picked up yellow cards.

The breakthrough came six minutes after the restart with teenage World Cup debutant Ana Guzman ping-pong a beautiful ball to Usme, who took one touch before side-footing home. Fired up, Jamaica almost had an immediate reply with Jody Brown's shot cleared off the line. Colombia then broke on a counter-attack which nearly led to Real Madrid sensation Linda Caicedo doubling the score. Behind for the first time at the World Cup and facing the exit door, Jamaica abandoned their defensive posture and threw players forward in search of an equalizer. — AFP

Greek football fan stabbed to death

ATHENS: A Greek football fan was stabbed to death on the outskirts of Athens during a brawl between rival club supporters, with 96 people arrested in violent clashes, police said Tuesday. The 22-year-old man was transported from the stadium in the suburbs to an Athens hospital where he died, police said. The fight between fans broke out Monday evening and the tragic outcome has led to UEFA postponing the Champions League qualifying third round first leg match between hosts AEK Athens and Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb.

"A serious incident took place outside the Nea Filadelfeia stadium," Greek police said. "A young Greek man was stabbed to death and six other injured people are in hospital." At least eight people have been injured, including three Greeks and five Croats. Those injured include a minor who was hospitalized after being hit in the head by a stone, according to public television channel ERT. UEFA

deplored "in the strongest possible terms the appalling incidents" and expressed their sympathy to the victim's family.

"Following yesterday's violence and in consultation with the local authorities, UEFA has decided that the conditions for the match between AEK Athens FC and GNK Dinamo to go ahead tonight are not met," UEFA said in a statement. "The match planned to be played tonight at Agia Sofia Stadium in Athens is hereby postponed." UEFA, though, said the second leg due to be played in Zagreb next Tuesday would go ahead while an alternative date will be found for the postponed match -- August 18 or 19 being the suggested possibilities.

'Preventative measures'

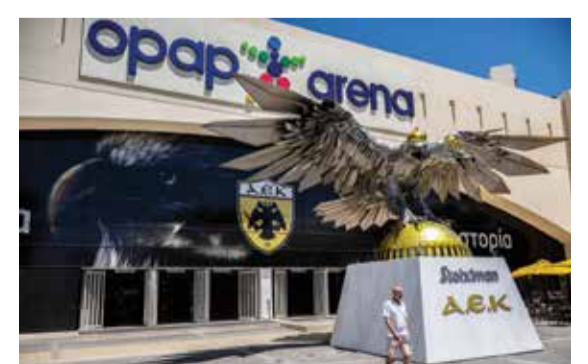
The ministry of citizen protection said a group of fans from both sides clashed in the area near the stadium, throwing stun grenades, stones, incendiary devices and other items, with some carrying bats. It said the violence started about an hour and a half after the visiting team had completed training, and left the pitch under police escort. Greek news agency ANA said an investigation had been

opened and those arrested would appear before the state prosecutor on Tuesday.

Dinamo Zagreb's board of directors condemned the violence. "We recall that UEFA took the decision, along with the police, that the two matches would take place without the supporters of the away club attending," they said. "We urge Dinamo supporters not to travel to Greece." Greece's left-wing opposition party Syriza criticised the police, saying they failed to control Dinamo supporters.

"The Croatian hooligans, who have a long history of links with the far right and violent attacks, crossed the country with one thing in mind - to cause trouble," Syriza said. "Were they kept under surveillance by the Greek authorities? Were any preventative measures put in place along their route?" Violence has marred a number of previous Greek football matches, and last year the government increased the maximum sentence for crimes of fan violence from six months to five years after another stabbing death.

Alkis Kampanos, 19, was killed in February 2022 in the northern city of Thessaloniki during a fight between supporters of the city's rival clubs Aris Thessaloniki and PAOK. Last month, seven defendants



ATHENS: A man walks outside AEK Athens' OPAP Arena on August 8, 2023 after a Greek football fan was stabbed to death on the outskirts of Athens during a brawl between rival club supporters, with 96 people arrested in violent clashes. — AFP

were found guilty of his murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Five others received sentences of more than 19 years for complicity. It was the third death as a result of fan violence in a three-year period in Thessaloniki alone. — AFP