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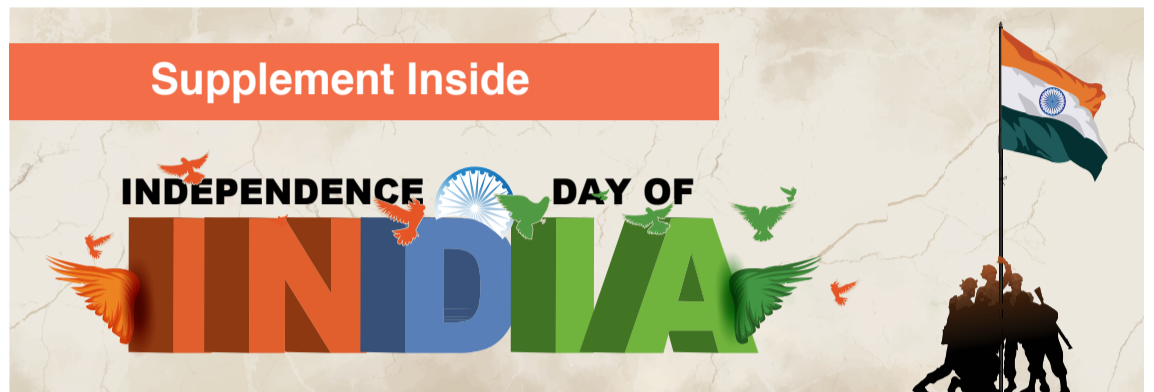
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2 Survey finds Kuwait least expensive place to live in



6 Little-known senator Kakar sworn in as new Pakistan PM



Cabinet approves allowances for microentrepreneurs, freelancers

BBQ to be allowed on beaches • KD 800 salary condition for family visas mulled

KUWAIT: The Cabinet agreed to pay monthly labor support allowances to Kuwaiti microentrepreneurs and freelancers, First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah announced on Monday. The decision to approve the allowance - which is similar to the pay citizens in the private sector receive - was made to support Kuwaiti youth and improve the local business environment, the minister explained.

The move follows a decision by Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth

Affairs Mohammed Al-Aiban in this regard. The Cabinet said it approved the amendment of resolution no. 391 of 2001 to add a new item on allowances. The amendment of the decision aims to improve the business environment in Kuwait, encourage young people to engage in microentrepreneurship and enable them to practice activities of a private nature with ease by reducing the financial burden on the state and reducing the number of applicants for employment at the Civil Service Bureau.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Municipal Af-

fairs Fahad Al-Shula issued a ministerial decision approving the new municipal waste management and public hygiene regulation, which included 33 new articles. The most prominent of the new regulations stipulates it is permissible to barbecue on public beaches according to controls and sites determined by the municipality. The new regulation prohibits barbecuing on sidewalks, streets, roads, public squares, public facilities, state-owned land and public parks.

Separately, sources said the interior ministry

could resume the issuance of family reunion visas by the end of this year for certain professions such as doctors, teachers and jobs needed by government sectors and departments. They said the minimum salary of an expatriate applicant must be at least KD 800 and not KD 450 as it was previously, meaning the salary condition has nearly doubled. The sources added only children under 16 will be eligible, while parents will require an annual health insurance plan. Expats will not be able to apply for visas for their siblings. — Agencies

Another Trump indictment looms



BEDMINSTER, New Jersey: Former US President Donald Trump throws signed hats into the crowd on the 18th hole during the LIV Golf-Bedminster 2023 tournament at the Trump National on Aug 13, 2023. — AFP

ATLANTA: Prosecutors investigating Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election in the US state of Georgia were expected to begin presenting evidence to a grand jury Monday for what could be a sprawling, multi-defendant indictment. The case would be the fourth brought against the 77-year-old Republican this year and could lead to the first televised trial of a former president — a watershed moment in US history — featuring charges typically used to bring down mobsters.

"There will be multiple co-defendants more likely than not, showing a pattern of unlawful conduct to overturn the election in Georgia: hacking, false statements, harassment, etc.," Georgia State University political analyst Anthony Kreis said in a social media post. Judicial analysts expect an indictment by the end of Tuesday, predicting that Atlanta-area prosecutor Fani Willis will wrap the allegations against Trump and multiple co-defendants into one case under Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law.

The southern state, which President Joe Biden won by fewer than 12,000 votes in 2020, presents perhaps the most serious threat to Trump's

Continued on Page 6

Heavy rain kills 60 in north India

DEHRADUN, India: At least 58 people were killed, nine of them in a temple collapse, and dozens more were feared missing after intense rains caused floods and landslides in India, officials said Monday. Days of torrential downpours have washed away vehicles, demolished buildings and destroyed bridges in the northern Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Flooding and landslides are common and cause widespread devastation during India's treacherous monsoon season, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity. In Himachal Pradesh, 50 people were killed in the past 24 hours, up from an earlier toll of 41, an official toll showed. That included at least nine killed in the collapse of a Hindu temple in the state capital, Shimla. At least 13 others were missing, it said.

"The local administration is diligently working to clear the debris in order to rescue individuals who may still be trapped," chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said in a statement.

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SOLAN, India: A security personnel carries the belongings of a villager from the site of a landslide after heavy rains in Jadon village of Himachal Pradesh state on Aug 14, 2023. — AFP

Baghdad zoo animals suffer in 50C heat

BAGHDAD: A pair of Siberian tigers pant incessantly beside a pond at their zoo enclosure in the scorching summer heat of the Iraqi capital. Temperatures on Monday breached 50 degrees Celsius in Baghdad for the second day in a row — making life outdoors unbearable for both humans and animals. The orange, striped felines from far-eastern Russia are more suited to living "where temperatures drop to as low as minus 20 degrees" than in one of the hottest cities

in the world, said Wassim Sarih, the veterinarian at Baghdad's only zoo.

Underfunded and run down by years of unrest and mismanagement, the zoo's dilapidated facilities make matters worse for its roughly 900 animals, including lions, exotic birds, bears and monkeys. Most of the enclosures are open air and "suit animals that live in hot climates", said Sarih. "We don't have ones for animals accustomed to the cold."

In an attempt to lower the temperature, air coolers have been installed in front of the lion cages, and pools are provided for the bears and tigers. Iraq is unable to provide sufficient electricity to meet domestic needs and is consequently plagued by power cuts that can last up to 10 hours a day. — AFP (See Page 13)



BAGHDAD: Siberian tigers cool off amid sweltering temperatures at Baghdad Zoo on Aug 8, 2023. — AFP

Zuck and Musk throw verbal jabs over cage match

WASHINGTON: Billionaires and social media business rivals Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk threw new online jabs at each other Sunday, with the Meta founder declaring the owner of X — formerly known as Twitter — was not treating a proposed charity cage match seriously. "I think we can all agree Elon isn't serious and it's time to move on," Zuckerberg

wrote on his Threads social platform. "I offered a real date... Elon won't confirm a date, then says he needs surgery, and now asks to do a practice round in my backyard instead."

Musk quickly responded on X, the platform he bought last year that was previously called Twitter. "Zuck is a chicken," Musk posted. The Tesla boss said he would head to Silicon Valley Monday: "Can't wait to bang on his door tomorrow." When an X user suggested Zuckerberg was getting cold feet about the match, Musk referred to a popular US fast food chain known for its chicken offerings. "He can't eat at Chick-fil-A because that would be cannibalism," Musk posted.

The two tech titans have gone back and forth on



social media about fighting each other in a much-hyped charity match. Musk said Friday the fight would take place in Italy, as authorities there

Continued on Page 6



Kuwait 'least expensive country,' survey shows

Abu Dhabi ranked 2nd on list of cheapest cities to live

KUWAIT: A survey conducted by Workyard Research showed that Kuwait ranked first on the list of the world's cheapest cities to live in, with average per capita monthly income in the country of \$6,199, while the cost of living reaches \$752.70. An individual in Kuwait can keep a large portion of his salary after covering his basic expenses, making Kuwait the lowest-cost city to live on the list, the report said. Despite rising wages, New York came out as the least affordable city to live in due to the high cost of living.

On the other hand, Abu Dhabi ranked second on the list of the cheapest cities to live in the world in terms of high income and low cost of living, with an average monthly income of \$7,154 there, while \$873.10 is spent on living costs. Riyadh ranked third in terms of affordable prices, with an average monthly

income of \$6,245 and a living cost of \$814.90. Dubai and Sharjah come in fourth and fifth place on the list, with average monthly incomes of \$7,118 and \$5,229 per month respectively, while living expenses are \$1,007 and \$741.30 respectively.

Workyard experts analyzed data from 20 cities to determine where people earn good money but don't have to spend much on living costs such as rent, food and utilities. Data was compiled from government sources, comparing the average monthly income of each city to the average monthly living expenses for 2023. The list reveals cities that offer great opportunities for individuals looking for a low-cost, high-income lifestyle.

Workyard Research said its data highlights significant differences in the balance of income and the cost of liv-

ing in different cities around the world. Away from the cities of the Middle East, the Australian city of Melbourne is a good place to earn a good monthly income and live in it, with an average monthly income of \$7,312 and a cost of living of about \$1,079.20.

Next comes the city of Oslo, which has an average monthly income of about \$7,543, while its people spend about \$1,121.50 on the cost of living. London and San Francisco occupy the eighth and ninth places on the list, with monthly incomes of \$ 8,411 and \$9,249 respectively, while the cost of living in these two cities is \$1,260.80 and \$1,440.10 per month respectively. According to the survey, New York City faces the toughest challenge of balancing income and the cost of living. There an individual earns about \$4,205 a month, but spends \$1,448 on the cost of living.



KUWAIT: Photo captures Kuwait's coastline. A survey conducted by Workyard Research showed that Kuwait ranked first on the list of the world's cheapest cities to live in, with average per capita monthly income in the country of \$6,199, while the cost of living reaches \$752.70. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Gang members jailed for manipulating bills

KUWAIT: The Public Prosecution has ordered a 21-day detention for members of a criminal network who altered the electricity and water systems. Seven defendants (of Arab nationality) were sent to the central prison. The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity, arrested the gang members while working in one of the meter readings after the electricity department noticed attempts to penetrate into the systems during the evening period.

The Department of Combating Cybercrime spotted an illegal entry on the electricity and water systems. The gang members include an Egyptian fugitive. Investigations revealed that the gang members were managing the business in full order and coordination. They were in contact with the owners of apartments. Investigations indicated that some of the beneficiaries of these illegal acts were aware that their bills were less than what they are supposed to pay.

Gulf committee sets out visions

RIYADH: The advisory committee of the athletes committee assisting the Executive Office of the Council of president of the Olympic Committees of the first Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held its meeting on Monday at the headquarters in the Saudi capital Riyadh to develop its visions for the development of joint work.

The representative of Kuwait, Mishaal Al-Ajmi, said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that "the meeting reviewed the foundations of organizing and following up on the Joint Gulf sports work and promoting it at various Olympic Games". Al-Ajmi, a former international ice hockey player, added that "the Gulf sports work regulations have been discussed to develop them in line with the next stage, which requires intensifying activities for various games that will raise the level of performance of Gulf Sports Youth and strengthen the relations."

He explained that it was agreed to hold the second meeting of the committee in Oman next October, ahead of the meeting of the heads of the Gulf Olympic committees scheduled for the same month to issue its recommendations aimed at improving Gulf sports work. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Academic Advising Department at the Dean of Student Affairs organizes field tours for new students.



KU organizes field tours for new students

KUWAIT: Field tours for new students in Kuwait University were organized by the Academic Advising Department at the Dean of Student Affairs. The program began on Sunday for the faculties of Medical Sciences, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Allied Medical Sciences on Jabriya campus.

The university's public relations department clarified: "These tours are aimed at introducing the new student to the facilities of the colleges, classrooms, laboratories, and various halls, as well as to visit the guidance and counseling office. Representatives of the guidance and counseling offices introduced the students to the most important regulations and systems for



withdrawal, addition, and registration processes and introduced them to everything that concerns the university identity and the various activities at Kuwait University and facilities."

They also assured the students on the need to obtain information from reliable sources pro-



vided by Kuwait University, namely the Deanship of Admission and Registration, the Deanship of Student Affairs, and the guidance and counseling offices in the colleges, which are "keen to guide and assist students during their university career." The tours will last for a week.



KUWAIT: Pakistan Embassy organized a flag hoisting ceremony to commemorate the 76th anniversary of Pakistan's Independence on 14 August, 2023. The ceremony was well attended by a large number of Pakistani community members, including women and children.

Pakistan Embassy marks Independence anniversary

KUWAIT: To commemorate the 76th anniversary of Pakistan's Independence, the Embassy organized a flag hoisting ceremony at the Chancery on

14 August, 2023. The ceremony was well attended by a large number of Pakistani community members, including women and children. Messages from the President as well as Prime Minister of Pakistan were read out; wherein the leadership stressed that the entire nation must work with utmost devotion for the development and progress of the country.

In his remarks, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, Malik Muhammad Farooq paid tribute to the forefathers of the Nation for their relentless services and sacrifices, which led to the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent.

He stressed that as a nation, Pakistan has witnessed serious challenges and measured-up to each one with resilience, resolve and pride.

Referring to the historic day of 76th Independence anniversary, the Ambassador extended felicitations and urged the community members to work diligently and wholeheartedly for the progress and development of Pakistan. He acknowledged the contribution of Pakistanis residing in Kuwait towards progress and development of both the nations.

As part of series of events to observe the 76th anniversary, the Ambassador also appeared in Ku-

wait National Television KTV2 show 'Good Morning Kuwait' to highlight the significance of the day. An exclusive documentary by KTV Arabic channel in collaboration with the Embassy was telecasted featuring the sixty years of the diplomatic relations between the Pakistan and Kuwait. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conveyed their congratulatory messages to the leadership of Pakistan.

Zain joins in celebrating future entrepreneurs at KON ceremony

Company supports 8th season of LOYAC's youth empowerment program



From the awards ceremony.

KUWAIT: Zain recently joined in awarding the winning projects of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program's eighth season during the ceremony held at the American University in Kuwait. The renowned youth empowerment program was organized by the leading non-profit LOYAC in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, and Zain has supported the program under its long-term, 19-year partnership with LOYAC.

During the event, Ammar Alastad, Zain's representative in the KON judges panel, praised the bright students for their hard work and teamwork spirit to transform their ambitious ideas into profitable, sustainable projects. The students showed outstanding dedication to achieve KON's goals, which are well aligned with Zain's social sustainability strategy towards empowering the youth and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Alastad also joined in recognizing one of the four winning teams on-stage.

Zain continued to support the eighth season of this unique educational program in line with its strong belief in the high value it presented to the local entrepreneurial community. The company continues to witness great enthusiasm and curiosity from hundreds of eager young people who participate in the program every year to make

the most out of their summer vacation by learning new business skills, growing their talents, and fulfilling their future dreams.

During this year's program, the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted a special session for KON students about the essentials of public speaking and business pitching, giving them invaluable insights on how to pitch their businesses to investors to finance their projects and turn their ideas into profitable and sustainable startups. The session was attended by nearly 50 students. KON targeted students of 12-16 years and empowered them to learn the essentials of entrepreneurship and business, gain insights on social and environmental challenges faced by today's businesses, and learn how to plan and develop their own projects.

The program also guided students into making their own case studies of the market and specifying their target audience, while introducing them to successful experiences from local entrepreneurs. KON came in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, one of the most prestigious entrepreneurship colleges in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education.

Zain and LOYAC's strategic partnership extends to 19 years of successful programs



Ammar Alastad awards one of the teams.

and initiatives that empowered thousands of ambitious Kuwaiti youth in business, volunteering, and academic projects. Zain considers this a great achievement that truly reflects the strength and resilience of the collaboration ecosystem between the private sector and non-profit organizations in empowering Kuwaiti youth.

LOYAC is a non-profit organization es-

tablished in Kuwait in 2002 with the aim of empowering the youth to become impactful leaders in the society, offering a broad range of unique programs that fall under a model integrating community, professional, and life empowerments. LOYAC operates in Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, and Jordan, and has empowered over 3.5 million young people since its inception.

NBK conducts social media class for KT Summer Program

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) conducted an interactive class on Sunday for participants of the Kuwait Times Summer Program titled "Mastering the Social Media Game". NBK's class came as part of the Kuwait Times Summer Program, in its second edition in 2023, held in strategic partnership with Bursa Kuwait. During the interactive class, NBK Digital Communications Manager Farah Bastaki delivered a presentation on the importance of social media as an integral part of modern business strategies due to its significant impact on brand visibility, customer engagement and overall business growth.

Bastaki explained how social media has become the metric against which every business is measured, saying that there are 4.31 million Internet users in Kuwait, with 93 percent of the total population social media users. Internet users increased by 54,000 between 2021 and 2022. She indicated people spend between three to six hours on their phones daily, and two and half hours of those are on social media, which is in-



Digital Communications Manager of NBK Farah Bastaki



KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait conducted an interactive class for participants of Kuwait Times Summer Program titled 'Mastering the Social Media Game'. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

creasing every year. "The top social media channels in Kuwait are YouTube with 3.62 million users, then TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and lastly LinkedIn," she said.

Regarding NBK's presence on social media, Bastaki said: "NBK shares content on several channels with over 2 million followers on seven different channels." She said NBK's Instagram account has 640,000 followers, and the content focuses on sharing photos and videos of competitions, community-related events (CSR and International Days), products and services, and offers and discounts, in addition to videos/Reels of TVCs, products and services and campaigns.

"On Twitter (now rebranded as X), NBK focuses on sharing short messages to 593,000 followers about the bank's news, salary deposits, informative threads and

financial news. Facebook is a popular social network mainly used by expats, so the bank posts offers tailored to expats, with 269,000 followers," Bastaki added. On LinkedIn, Bastaki revealed this platform is a professional network that allows NBK to connect with 279,000 individuals on a professional level.

Meanwhile, NBK recently joined TikTok, which has now 23,000 followers, to offer its services to an important segment of the Kuwaiti community — the youth — along with Snapchat, which offers live coverage and NBK reward offers with total views of 2,000 per snap. "YouTube is also present in NBK's strategy, where the bank uses it to share videos of TVCs (Ramadan, National Day, etc), business tutorials and campaigns and initiatives with total followers of 217,000," she concluded.

Indian ambassador, Kuwait's Navy Chief discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika on Monday called on Chief of Naval Forces of Kuwait Brigadier General Hazza Al-Alati. They discussed means of further strengthening cooperation in the field of defense between Kuwait and India. The visit takes place against the backdrop of the upcoming visit of the Indian naval ship INS Vishakhapatnam to Kuwait on August 19.

The ambassador thanked Brig Gen Al-Alati for the Kuwait Navy's support for the visit of the Indian naval ship, according to a tweet by the Indian embassy, Kuwait on Monday. Earlier this week, Dr Swaika reaffirmed the strong bilateral relations between Kuwait and India underlining the importance of further strengthening the defense partnership between the countries by taking the bilateral cooperation be-

yond training and medical cooperation.

Four Indian ships visited Kuwait in July and October last year. INS Visakhapatnam is the lead ship and the first of the Visakhapatnam-class stealth guided-missile destroyers of the Indian Navy. The ship, commissioned on November 21, 2021, is one of the largest destroyers in service with the Indian Navy. Indian community members in Kuwait can visit the Indian ship after taking prior appointment on Aug 19 and 20.



In my view

My experience with corruption



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

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Some time ago, I received information about "corruption" in purchasing devices at one of the medical councils in which I was a member. I contacted a strong and honest man, who in turn spoke to ministry leaders. A committee was formed that met and reviewed the requests and purchase orders for the devices, then following lengthy meetings, the committee confirmed that grave violations took place and wrote its report of which I still have a copy. But the corrupt employees were not sent to prosecution and were only removed from their jobs.

I am sure this incident is repeated a lot in Kuwait, and has led to the continuation of corruption, as punishment is not equal to the crime. Whenever the scale of justice is disturbed, thefts and bribes will continue. That incident that I personally suffering from gave me experience about corruption methods in Kuwait, as there are always corrupt people, a corrupt environment and corrupt influentials from behind a veil.

Corrupt people twist any government decision in favor of influentials and receive the price of their corruption directly or indirectly. In a corrupt environment, corrupt employees defend their corrupt seniors, and being anti-reformist, write letters to officials, publish articles in newspapers, use social media and even contact members of parliament to ask questions to doubt reformers instead of the corrupt, all this to support corruption and defame the righteous. As for corrupt influentials, they ensure lighter punishments in case the hidden is revealed, and contact leaderships to justify the actions of those bribed, saying "those are our children and let bygones be bygones".

Financial corruption has attracted major attention due to the identity of the persons involved and the size of the amounts. Kuwait's financial integrity has been hit in many establishments and fields, including the Public Institution for Social Security, army fund, defense purchases, interior ministry hospitality fund, some government ministries, sports, ports authority, municipality, petrochemical industry, oil sector and others.

What makes things worse is that those involved in corruption are not held legally accountable. This is what makes many Kuwaitis unsatisfied. The reason is not the absence of supervising and monitoring entities — as there are 12 entities that are fighting corruption; but a large number of them lack effectiveness or suffer from inability. Fighting corruption faces obstacles such as interference by authorities, lack of laws and weak performance based on the absence of a comprehensive vision to fight corruption.

All these were among signs of corruption in old governments. Today the scene has changed, as I think and hope senior leaders have begun to realize the harm of financial corruption on development programs and the relation between corruption and the crises Kuwait faces, whose main cause is corruption. My experience taught me not to trust social media. Sometimes I feel those who are attacked and defamed could be righteous. The solution to fight this foggy situation comes from the direction of wise governance and from the judiciary. Wise ruling means a good choice of leaders and holding them to account, while the judiciary's role is to dispense justice quickly, give people their rights and maintain their reputation.

There is no doubt corruption is attached to humanity, as evil is the mirror of the dark side of the human being, while goodness and justice is the bright side on this earth. The struggle between them continues and will not stop, and the more people are successful in employing the law and spreading justice, reform tools will become stronger, people's lives will improve and good will prevail, and the opposite is correct too.

Any observer can easily link the spread of corruption and a nation's backwardness, and countries do not advance unless they succeed in making justice prevail and spread freedom and equality. As for backward countries, they are immersed in a corrupt environment, which does not convince a sane man and cannot change reality. Whoever looks for development must contain corruption and rely on reformists, the strong and honest, and only with these countries will progress and go ahead without the need of flattering poems or sounds of singers.

KAAA to organize workshop for high school students

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Accountant and Auditors Association (KAAA) will organize a free awareness workshop for high school students on the importance of the accounting and auditing professions and their increasing role in the business environment. KAAA board member Fahad Mutlaq Al-Jafour said these workshops reflect the society's belief in the importance of accounting and auditing in the business environment. KAAA encourages students to study the course in the university.

He said the workshop will be held on 21 and 22 August at the new association building and will discuss the importance of the profession in the market and the increasing needs of companies in various sectors for accountants. He said the workshop will include accounting and its fields, its definition, accounting future, analysis of financial processes, reading financial lists, and explaining elements of financial lists.

He said the workshop's importance is due to the multifaceted nature of accounting jobs in both the government and private sectors, adding that the job of any facility will not be complete without a financial administration, as accounting and auditing are the backbone of any economy. Since its establishment in February 1973, the association has organized many programs and training courses that meet the needs of its members and practitioners.

Gold down \$1,914

KUWAIT: Gold prices fell down to \$1,914 an ounce by the end of last week's trading, stabilizing to the monthly lowest of \$1,920 per ounce backed by the dollar's strong performance and US treasury bonds revenue. A report by Kuwaiti-based Company Dar Al-Sabaak on Sunday contributed the fall to the greenback's strength amidst doubts in global market towards the US Federal Reserve, especially after the recent release of US economy interest rate data. Federal Reserve officials affirmed that keeping inflation prices under control requires more work, which reflected on prices of precious metals resulting in prices to fall. As to the local market, the report pointed that price of a 24-carat gram of gold amounted to KD 19,085, while a 21-carat gram was KD 17,500 and silver at KD 270 per kilogram. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti youths prepare to sail aboard traditional dhows on a pearl diving expedition, from the shore of Kuwait City. Pearl-diving trips are held annually in summer under the patronage of Kuwait's Amir, in order to keep alive an ancestral heritage that was crucial for the country's economy prior to the discovery of oil. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Municipality approves new regulation, removes abandoned vehicles and boats

KUWAIT: The Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and the Minister of State for Communications Affairs, Fahad Al-Shula, issued a ministerial decision approving the Municipal Waste Management and Public Hygiene Regulation. The new regulation includes 33 articles and cancels the Ministerial Resolution 190 of 2008 regarding the Hygiene and Hygiene Transport Regulation and its amendments.

Among the highlights of the new regulation is that it is permissible to allow barbecue on public beaches according to the rules issued by a decision of the Director General of the Municipality. Barbecue is prohibited on sidewalks, streets, roads, squares, public squares, public facilities, state-owned land and parks.

On the other hand, the municipality put the eastern and western chalets in Doha on the radar for monitoring. They began a campaign to remove violations, infringements, abandoned vehicles and boats. The municipality indicated that leaving vehicles and boats in places other than the designated areas will attract legal action. He explained that a number of vehicles and boats have been removed.



KUWAIT: Municipality workers remove abandoned vehicles and boats.



Pak Donors celebrates anniversary with 22nd blood donation drive

KUWAIT: On a day that exemplified community spirit and the enduring bond between nations, Pak Donors proudly hosted its 22nd blood donation drive at Al-Adan Hospital Blood bank. The event was an emblematic celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The community's heartfelt participation was evident with over 180 benevolent individuals stepping up to donate blood.

The occasion was magnified by the attendance of distinguished personalities: Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, Malik Muhammed Farooq; Community Welfare Attache, Farrukh Amir Sial; The eminent Dr Ah-

mad Al-Shatti, and several Pakistani community dignitaries. Their presence symbolized the deep-seated ties and mutual respect shared between our nations. Pak Donors wishes to extend its profound appreciation to every blood donor. Their contributions reinforce the values of unity, compassion, and humanity that our community holds dear. A special note of gratitude is reserved for IEC Youthwing, who consistently stands by our side as a cause partner.

Their unwavering support and dedication have been invaluable to our mission. Furthermore, our sincere thanks go out to our sponsors, community backers, and media partners whose belief in our cause and continued assistance played an indispensable role in the success of this event. As we reflect upon the rich, six-decade history of Kuwait-Pakistan relations, this blood donation drive emphasizes our nations' collective commitment to community welfare and mutual collaboration. Looking forward, we anticipate further milestones and shared successes in this longstanding partnership.



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Afghans on life
two years under
the Taliban

Britain blames 'criminal gangs' for Channel migrant deaths



TARHUNA: In this file photo Libyans walk around graves dug on the ground from which bodies were recovered in the western town Tarhuna on February 9, 2022. — AFP

Families of Libya mass grave victims demand justice

Military court verdict against perpetrators 'unjust and insufficient'

TARHUNA: A photograph of Mourad Allafi hangs in the family farmhouse in western Libya three years after he was found in a mass grave. His father wants his killers dead. Mohamad Allafi believes the prison terms of six years to life handed down by a military court in February to 30 people convicted of murder are not enough. And relatives of the hundreds of others who were tortured, killed and dumped in row upon row of mass graves in Tarhuna agree with him.

The families who lost relatives in the mass killings say that only the death penalty can ease the pain of those who have lost children murdered "in cold blood". Capital punishment is still legal in Libya, but the ultimate penalty is not often applied. Many families in Libya are still reeling from the years of violence and injustice that followed the toppling and killing in 2011 of Moamer Kadhafi.

The dictator's demise plunged the North African country into chaos. Tarhuna, a town some 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of the capital Tripoli with a population of 40,000, stands out because of the atrocities committed there. A feared militia called the Kaniyat, named after the six brothers who ran it, seized Tarhuna in 2015 and set about systematically

silencing opponents and often their entire families. Lions that the Al-Kani brothers kept during their reign of terror were rumored to feed on the flesh of their victims. Mohamad Allafi will never forget the day the Kaniyat abducted his 30-year-old son in 2019. "I called him dozens of times that night, but in vain," he said in a trembling voice.

Searching for bodies

Mourad had "stayed well away from politics and militias", his father insists. His only crime, in the Kaniyat's eyes, was holding an ID card that showed he belonged to the Na'aji tribe which opposed the militia's violent grip on the town. For a time, the Al-Kani brothers sided with militias based in Tripoli. But when eastern-based military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an assault on the capital in 2019, the clan switched sides and offered him Tarhuna as a rear base.

When Haftar's forces were routed a year later, the Al-Kanis disappeared. Three of the brothers, including Mohamed their leader, were killed, and locals in Tarhuna believe the other three are now hiding out in Benghazi, Egypt or Jordan. With the Al-Kanis gone

from Tarhuna, residents started looking for mass graves. They chipped away at the hard ochre earth with spades, desperate to find signs of the many disappeared. The body of Mourad Allafi was one of 350 to be discovered.

Libya's authority for the disappeared has so far identified 226 sets of remains and is still searching for more in three main sites. A second trial of dozens of others suspected of involvement in the Tarhuna killings is expected to conclude in the coming weeks, the justice ministry said. But many of the townspeople are skeptical that this will bring them closure.

Three demands

"The military prosecutor's office tried people for the crimes in Tarhuna and delivered unjust and insufficient verdicts," said Mossab Abou Kleich of an association of victims' families, referring to February's verdict. "They should have been sentenced to death," he said.

"No family is satisfied with just prison sentences for those proven to be directly responsible for murdering hundreds of civilians," Abou Kleich added. He called for punishment "commensurate with the crime

that was committed". Abou Kleich said the families' three main demands are "finding the missing, pursuing and prosecuting the criminals, and reparations".

He says the government should prioritize compensating the families whose property was destroyed, which will help ease tribal tensions in Tarhuna and bring an end to this bloody chapter in the town's history. Whatever the outcome of the court proceedings, the tragedy of Tarhuna will continue to affect people's lives.

"Since Mourad's killing, my wife and I have been sick. I have diabetes and hypertension, and my wife is bedridden from the unbearable pain," said Allafi, his younger son Abdelhakim by his side. Four years later, Mahmoud al-Marghani still can't explain to his nieces and nephews — aged seven, 10 and 14 -- why their father Khaled disappeared in June 2019. The 59-year-old was abducted by three unidentified men from his home and forced into a large 4X4. He is still missing. "He went on a trip," Marghani tells them when they ask about their father. He cannot bring himself to tell them that one of the "criminals admitted torturing and killing him". — AFP

Leaders cleared of organizing 2019 Hong Kong protest

HONG KONG: Seven of Hong Kong's most prominent democracy figures, including media tycoon Jimmy Lai, were cleared Monday of the charge of organizing a massive rally in 2019. While the appeals court struck down one conviction, it upheld another, for participating in the August 18 demonstration, which drew an estimated 1.7 million people — one of the largest gatherings during the height of democracy protests that have since been crushed by Beijing.

The group was convicted in 2021 of organizing and taking part in an unauthorized assembly, and later appealed. According to Monday's ruling, the suggestion that the seven were at the front of the procession was "not a realistic or suitable substitute for evidence that they were involved in its organization". But the court upheld their participation conviction, as "they each knew they had embarked on an activity which was unauthorized".

In addition to Lai — the founder of now-defunct Apple Daily — the group includes veteran unionist Lee Cheuk-yan, prominent leftist Leung Kwok-hung, rights lawyer Albert Ho, former lawmaker Cyd Ho, Civic Party founder Margaret Ng and Democratic Party founder Martin Lee. The seven are among the most recognizable faces of Hong Kong's now-quashed democracy movement.

Their conviction in 2021 was seen as a blow to the right to peaceful assembly in the city, coming after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law that effectively silenced dissent. The August 18 rally was peaceful, and during the initial trial, police told the court that no violence was observed nor were any arrests made. Ng told reporters they would study the judgement before deciding their next move. — AFP

Iran arrests 8 'foreigners' after fatal shooting

TEHRAN: Iranian security forces have arrested eight foreign suspects after detaining a gunman in the killing of one person at a Shiite Muslim shrine, authorities said on Monday. The attack on the Shah Cheragh mausoleum in Shiraz, capital of Fars province in Iran's south, came less than a year after a mass shooting at the same site later claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group.

"Eight people suspected of links with the terrorist attack ... have been arrested," according to the judiciary's Mizan Online website, quoting Fars province chief justice Kazem Mousavi. "All the people arrested are foreigners," Mousavi said, without elaborating. The main suspect was arrested on Sunday night shortly after the attack, and Mizan identified him as Rahmatollah Nowruzof from Tajikistan.

Sunday's shooting killed one person and wounded eight others, the official IRNA news agency reported. Windows were left shattered by bullets,

UAE denies sending weapons to Sudan

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates Sunday denied a report claiming weapons were found in its shipments to refugees of the Sudan war, arguing it "does not take sides" in the conflict. Fighting since April 15 between the forces of rival Sudanese generals vying for power has killed at least 3,900 people, according to conservative estimates by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

Observers say that both army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), are supported by foreign powers,

and blood stained the ground in a courtyard of the arched and colonnaded complex after the shooting. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Fars provincial governor Mohammad Hadi Imanieh blamed IS extremists.

He told state TV that the assailant sought "to take revenge for the execution of two terrorists" hanged over last year's shooting at the shrine. On Monday, Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi told state TV during a visit to the site that the "terrorist" was collaborating with a "network operating" outside Iran. The European Union and several countries including Iraq, Russia and France have condemned Sunday's shooting and expressed their condolences.

Baghdad rejects "terrorism in all its forms" and stands "with the international community in confronting terrorism", said foreign ministry spokesman Ahmed al-Sahhaf. On October 26, a mass shooting at the shrine in Shiraz left 13 people dead and 30 wounded. IS later claimed the attack. Iran hanged two men in public on July 8 over the killings after their conviction for "corruption on earth, armed rebellion and acting against national security," Mizan said at the time. Three other defendants in the case were sentenced to prison for five, 15 and 25 years for being members of IS, according to Mousavi. In November, Tehran said 26 "takfiri terrorists" from

with neighboring Egypt backing Burhan and the UAE providing support for Daglo. In a statement on Sunday, UAE foreign ministry communications director Afra Al-Hameli said: "The UAE has not supplied arms and ammunition to any of the warring parties in Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict".

A report on Thursday by US publication the Wall Street Journal cited officials in Uganda who said they had discovered weapons on an Emirati aid flight to Sudanese refugees in Chad on June 2. Hameli "expressed the UAE's categorical refutation of the claims and allegations in the story", the statement said.

"The UAE does not take sides in the current conflict engulfing Sudan, and seeks an end to the conflict and calls for respecting Sudan's sovereignty." According to the Wall Street Journal, "instead of



SHIRAZ: Bullet holes riddle windows at the site of a shooting attack at Iran's Shah Cheragh mausoleum in the Fars province capital Shiraz, on August 13, 2023. — AFP

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan had been arrested in connection with the mass shooting. In Shiite-dominated Iran, the term takfiri generally refers to jihadists or proponents of radical Sunni Islam.

The Shah Cheragh mausoleum is home to the tomb of Ahmad, brother of Imam Reza — the eighth Shiite imam — and is considered the holiest site in southern Iran. Last year's shooting occurred as nationwide protests gripped Iran following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, arrested for an alleged breach of strict dress rules for women. — AFP

the food and medical supplies listed on the aircraft's manifest, Ugandan officials said they found dozens of green plastic crates in the plane's cargo hold filled with ammunition, assault rifles and other small arms".

The Ugandan officials told the newspaper the Emirati plane, stopping in Entebbe on the way to its final destination, "was allowed to continue its trip to Amdjarass International Airport in eastern Chad". The officials later "received orders from their superiors to stop inspecting flights stopping over from the UAE", according to the report. The four-month conflict in Sudan has displaced nearly four million people, according to UN figures. Since the fighting erupted, the oil-rich UAE has sent aid including medications and has also helped to evacuate foreigners, official news agency WAM noted. — AFP

International

Britain blames 'criminal gangs' for Channel migrant deaths

France, UK deal effective in deterring small migrant boats: Sunak

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak blames the "criminal gangs" facilitating small boat Channel crossings for the "horrific" weekend deaths of at least six migrants, his spokesman said Monday. Six Afghan men died and dozens more required rescuing after a small vessel bound for the southeast English coast from France sank in the Channel in the early hours of Saturday.

"The blame for the tragedy we've seen in the Channel in recent days lies squarely in the hands of criminal gangs who are exploiting people's lives for profit," Sunak's spokesman told reporters. "This is a horrific tragedy and his thoughts first and foremost are with the families and friends of those who lost their lives," he added.

"It's a stark reminder of how dangerous these crossings are and how vitally important it is to disrupt these criminal gangs, and it is right the government acts urgently and takes all possible steps to close down this route." Sunak's government has faced strong criticism from migrants' rights groups for its policies towards the small boats, after recently barring arrivals from claiming asylum and pursuing plans to deport them immediately to Rwanda.

Both plans are on-hold pending a court challenge to send the migrants to east Africa. They have also been criticized for planning to house up to 500 migrants in a barge off the coast of

southwest England, and others at similar sites in future. The first few dozen migrants were placed on the "Bibby Stockholm" last week, but in an embarrassing setback had to be removed within days after Legionella bacteria was found in the water on board.

However, Sunak's spokesman insisted the government's policies aimed at deterring small boats was working, pointing to fewer arrivals so far this year compared to at the same stage in 2022. He said a deal struck between Britain and France in March, which sees London send Paris hundreds of millions of euros annually to step up patrols and other deterrent measures, was effective.

"Obviously we think there's more to do on both sides but it's true that since we improved and enhanced our relationship with France we have seen more people who would wish to make those crossings being intercepted and that's a positive step," the spokesman added. More than 100,000 migrants have crossed the Channel on small boats from France to southeast England since Britain began publicly recording the arrivals in 2018, official figures revealed last Friday. The route across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes has repeatedly proved perilous, with numerous previous capsizes and scores of migrants drowning in the waters over the last decade. — AFP



Calais: A woman lights a candle in tribute to migrants who died crossing the English Channel during a rally in Calais, northern France, on August 13, 2023, after six people died after a boat carrying migrants heading to Britain sank in the Channel on August 12. — AFP

Senator Kakar sworn in as Pakistan PM

ISLAMABAD: Little-known senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was sworn in Monday as Pakistan's caretaker prime minister to see the country through to an election due in months. Kakar, 52, takes charge of a country that has been wracked by political and economic instability for months, with Imran Khan — Pakistan's most popular politician — in jail and disqualified from elections for five years.

Kakar was sworn in by President Arif Alvi on Pakistan's Independence Day in a ceremony carried live on TV, having resigned from his post as senator on Sunday. "I Anwaar-ul-Haq, do swear solemnly ... that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Pakistan," he said. Kakar's first task will be to choose a cabinet to run the country as it heads into an election period that could last for months. Parliament was officially dissolved last week, with elections due within 90 days according to the constitution.

But data from the latest census was finally published earlier this month, and the outgoing government said the election commission needed time to redraw constituency boundaries. There has been speculation for months that a vote would be delayed as the establishment struggles to stabilize a country facing overlapping security, economic and political crises.

"I am relinquishing heavy responsibility after 16 months ... We came constitutionally and leave as per the direction of the constitution," outgoing premier Shehbaz Sharif said in a farewell address to the nation on Sunday. "I have confidence in the caretaker prime

minister's ability to conduct free and fair elections." Pakistan has been in political turmoil since Khan was dismissed as premier by a no-confidence vote in April 2022, culminating in him being jailed last weekend for three years for graft. He has been disqualified from standing for office for five years but is appealing against his sentence and conviction.

Cracked down

Authorities have cracked down hard against Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in recent months, crushing his grassroots power by rounding up thousands of his supporters and officials. Political analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi told AFP at the weekend that Kakar "has a limited political career and not much weight in Pakistani politics", but that could work in his favor. "This can be an advantage because he has no strong affiliation with the major political parties," he said.

"But the disadvantage is that being a lightweight politician, he may find it difficult to cope with the problems he's going to face without the active support of the military establishment." Analyst Ayesha Siddiqi noted that Kakar had done courses at the National Defence University — formerly the military's war college — and said he would be close to the establishment.

"It seems that the establishment has struck and they have found somebody who will be watching over their interests rather than that of politicians," she said. Last month, parliament rushed through legislation that gives the caretaker government more power to negotiate with global bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, another clue it may be around for a while.

Some analysts think the delay could give time for the main coalition partners — the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — to figure out how to address the challenge of Khan's PTI. "But in reality, delaying the election could simply



ISLAMABAD: In this handout photograph taken and released by the Pakistan's Press Information Department (PID) on August 14, 2023, Pakistan's President Arif Alvi (center) administers the oath to Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar (left) as caretaker Prime Minister during an oath-taking ceremony while outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (seated R) looks on at the President House in Islamabad.

anger the public more and galvanize an opposition that has already suffered through months of crackdowns," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center.

The United States said last week it was watching with concern the prospect of election violence. Behind any election in Pakistan lurks the military, which

has staged at least three successful coups since the country was forged from the partition of India in 1947. Khan enjoyed genuine widespread support when he came to power in 2018, but analysts say it was only with the blessing of the country's powerful generals — with whom he reportedly fell out in the months before his ousting. — AFP

New twists in lethal mushroom mystery grip Australia

SYDNEY: A mushroom mystery gripping Australia began to unravel Monday, with an amateur cook saying she accidentally put lethal fungi in a beef Wellington dish now linked to three deaths. Rumors are swirling around a close-knit community in rural Australia after a family mushroom lunch ended with three people dead and a local preacher fighting for his life.

Police believe the dish was tainted with "death cap" mushrooms, which grow freely in the rolling foothills surrounding Leongatha — a small town about two hours' drive southeast of Melbourne. The meal was cooked by community newsletter editor Erin Patterson, who has been named as a suspect because she appeared to remain in good

health despite her four guests falling violently ill.

The investigation has fueled intense speculation as police try to separate clumsy cooking from an alleged act of malice. Patterson stressed on Monday she had unwittingly brought the mushrooms from an Asian grocery store and that the poisonings were accidental. "I am now devastated to think that these mushrooms may have contributed to the illness suffered by my loved ones," she reportedly said in a statement provided to Australian media. "I really want to repeat that I had absolutely no reason to hurt these people whom I loved."

Patterson prepared the beef Wellington for her estranged parents-in-law Don and Gail Patterson on the afternoon of Saturday, July 29. She was married to Don and Gail's son Simon but the couple had been living separately for some time. Local Baptist pastor Ian Wilkinson and his wife Heather rounded out the guest list. Later that night the two couples started experiencing food poisoning symptoms and, with their health rapidly deteriorating, they sought the help of doctors at local hospitals. — AFP

of heavy rains" and offered her condolences to the families who have suffered in Himachal Pradesh. Rescue teams in Uttarakhand raced to remove debris after people were feared buried when heavy rainfall triggered landslides. Five people were buried under the debris after a landslide hit a resort near the popular yoga retreat of Rishikesh on the banks of the river Ganges.

District police superintendent, Shweta Choubey, told AFP that a girl had been rescued from the site but that the rest of her family was still under the collapsed building. Several riverside towns and villages in both states were at risk of flash floods from the heavy rain forecast in the region.

The monsoon brings South Asia around 80 percent of its annual rainfall and is vital for both agriculture and the livelihoods of millions. But it also brings destruction every year in the form of landslides and floods. Days of relentless monsoon rains killed at least 90 people last month, while the capital New Delhi saw the Yamuna river — which snakes past the megacity — record its highest levels since 1978. — AFP

Another Trump indictment...

Continued from Page 1

liberty as he seeks his party's nomination to bid for reelection in 2024. Even if he is returned to a criminal Office, he would have none of the powers in Georgia that presidents arguably enjoy in the federal system to self-pardon or have prosecutors drop cases.

Trump posted a number of messages to his Truth Social platform calling the matter "ridiculous" and urging a local election official whom he identified by name and called a "loser" not to testify to the grand jury. "THOSE WHO RIGGED & STOLE THE ELECTION WERE THE ONES DOING THE TAMPERING, & THEY ARE THE SLIME THAT SHOULD BE PROSECUTED," Trump said.

Infamous phone call

RICO statutes are usually used to target organized crime, and anyone who can be connected to a criminal "enterprise" can be convicted if there is a pattern of crime committed through that enterprise. But the broader Georgia law allows prosecutors to string together charges committed by different defendants without proving the existence of a criminal organization.

One incident highly likely to feature among the charges is a now infamous phone call Trump placed to

Georgia officials asking them to "find" exactly the number of votes he would have needed to overturn Biden's victory. Analysts are also expecting individuals — possibly including the former president — to face charges over a scheme to send bogus certification of a supposed Trump victory in Georgia to the US Congress.

And the sweeping case may well bring in harassment of two Fulton County poll workers and the accessing of sensitive data from an election office in a rural county south of Atlanta, one day after the 2021 Capitol riot. A separate "special" grand jury heard from 75 witnesses last year and produced a secret report in February that, according to the foreperson, recommended numerous indictments. The Georgia case looks on the surface like a narrower version of the Justice Department's election interference case against Trump, which focuses on multiple states — but it differs in other crucial aspects beyond the RICO element. The federal case listed six co-conspirators but didn't indict them, sparking speculation that they will likely be dealt with separately, and leaving Trump as the sole defendant.

In Georgia, Willis sent target letters to former Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, who pressured local legislators at several committee hearings held after the election, and the 16 bogus electors, half of whom are said to have immunity deals. CNN reported that Willis is expected to seek charges against more than a dozen people. These could also include former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and other aides who weren't a focus of Trump's federal indictment. — AFP

Heavy rain kills 60 in north...

Continued from Page 1

At least eight others have been killed since Friday in neighboring Uttarakhand state, officials said. Images from hard-hit areas in Himachal Pradesh showed bodies being pulled out of thick piles of dark earth that had crushed buildings and smashed roofs.

Thousands of people have been stranded, with key roads, power lines and communication networks disrupted. Railway lines were seen dangling in midair, with the ground beneath them washed away. Sukhu, who posted on social media a "disturbing" video of a raging torrent swamping roads, appealed to residents to stay indoors and avoid going near rivers. Schools in the state had been shut, he said.

The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, said she was "hurt with the loss of lives in accidents because

assume anything he says has not been agreed on."

Italian Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano confirmed speaking to Musk about "how to organize a great charity event evoking history" but said any match "will not be held in Rome". Sangiuliano said any event with Musk would raise "a huge sum, many millions of euros, (that) will be donated to two important Italian pediatric hospitals."

The two tech tycoons, who have occasionally jostled from afar, became direct competitors after Zuckerberg's Meta launched its Twitter-like Threads platform in early July. Musk noted on Friday that he may need to undergo "minor surgery" to resolve a "problem with my right shoulder blade rubbing against my ribs". "Recovery will only take a few months," he added. The world's richest person has a titanium plate holding two vertebrae together but said Friday it is currently "not an issue". — AFP

Zuck and Musk throw verbal jabs...

Continued from Page 1

confirmed talks about hosting a "great charity event". "I spoke to the PM of Italy and Minister of Culture," Musk wrote, referring to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. "They have agreed on an epic location."

In response, Zuckerberg posted a photo of himself shirtless and pinning down an opponent in his "backyard octagon". A martial arts enthusiast who has taken part in jiu-jitsu competitions, Zuckerberg said, "I love this sport and I've been ready to fight since the day Elon challenged me. If he ever agrees on an actual date, you'll hear it from me. Until then, please

International

Worry, relief, despair: Afghans on life two years under the Taleban

Drastic life changes leave economy, education in crisis



KABUL: In this photo taken on July 31, 2023, owner of Safe Path Prosperity Social Enterprise Arezo Osmani speaks during an interview with AFP in Kabul. — AFP photos

KABUL: Two years since the Taleban stormed back to power in Afghanistan after 20 years of war against the United States and its allies, life has changed dramatically for many Afghans, particularly women. Ahead of the August 15 anniversary of the fall of Kabul, four Afghans — a businesswoman determined to keep her factory open, a farmer relieved by the war's end, a former Taleban fighter proud to serve the new government and a medical student forced to give up her studies — told AFP how the changes have impacted them.

Keeping business afloat

Arezo Osmani was "terrified and sad" when the Taleban returned to power, promising the imposition of a stringent interpretation of Islam that has seen women barred from many avenues for work and education. "I didn't leave my room for 10 days, I thought that everything was over for me, and that it was the same for all Afghans," said Osmani, 30, who started a company producing reusable sanitary pads in 2021.

"But when I went out and saw that people were still going about their lives, it gave me hope and I told myself that I had to stay here too," she said. She shuttered her business, which had employed 80 women at its peak, amid the uncertainty that gripped the country in the wake of the Taleban takeover. But she reopened its doors two months later as it was one of the few remaining places "where women could work".

Under the Taleban, women have been pushed out of most NGO and government jobs. Last month, beauty parlors — another key source of income for women breadwinners — were also shut down.

"We slowly adjusted to the conditions, and fortunately, as we are a company and work in the health sector, we were able to continue our work, I feel good now," she said. But a reduction in NGO activity in the country under Taleban authorities has hit her business hard, she said. She still employs 35 women, but buyers are scarce.

"At the moment, we have no contracts, no buyers ... if we are not able to sell the pads, it will be difficult to continue the work, but we are trying to stay on our feet," said the mother-of-two. Despite the challenges, she is determined to do what she can for her country, its women in particular. "Afghanistan and our society need people like us who stay," she said.

Making ends meet

Rahatullah Azizi is grateful for the improved security that has come with the end of the fighting. Now, as the 35-year-old tends his small farm in Parwan province, north of Kabul, he can "move around day and night without worries, thank God". "There's been a lot of change" since August 2021. "Before it was war, now it's calm."

As a result of the armed conflict, around 38,000 civilians were killed and over 70,000 wounded between 2009 and 2020 alone, according to an annual report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). However, the father-of-two is still weighed down by worry. Afghanistan's economy, already battered by decades of war, has been mired in crisis after billions of dollars in international aid were cut following the Taleban government's takeover. Economic output has collapsed and nearly 85 percent of the country lives in

poverty, according to the latest report from the UN Development Programme. Drought and locusts have also plagued the country's crops.

"People don't buy much of our produce anymore," said Azizi, who farms just over one hectare of rented land. "I used to sell seven kilos of tomatoes (15 pounds) for 200 afghanis (\$2), but now I only sell that for 80 afghanis." He used to earn an income from cereal crops, he said, but no longer. "I now have just enough to eat, I can't put any money aside," added the farmer, who holds out hope he can send his children to university to get the education he never had.

'Thank God they're back'

For 23-year-old Lal Muhammad, the return of the Taleban to power has brought more economic stability. He joined the group four years ago when membership meant being a rebel fighter regularly away from home. Now, he is a police officer in the country's second-largest city, Kandahar, and earning a salary of around 12,000 afghanis (\$142) per month — "enough" for his family.

He's happy to have a regular wage but said he "didn't dream of having cars or making money". "My dream was to study and serve in the Islamic Emirate government. I'll stick with it till the end," said Muhammad, using the Taleban authorities' name for the government. "Thank God they're back."

The Taleban movement, birthed in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, controlled the country from 1996 to 2001. "We are very happy. We don't have any problems, there is no war and no fighting," he said. "We are serving the Emirate and our people."



Taleban security personnel Lal Muhammad reads a religious book at the police headquarters in Dand district of Kandahar province on August 1, 2023.



Hamasah Bawar, a medical student, poses for a photograph at her house in Mazar-i-Sharif on August 6, 2023.



Afghan farmer Rahatullah Azizi sprinkles fertilizer in an eggplant field in Tilanchi village of Parwan province on August 3, 2023.

Searching for new future

Hamasah Bawar once envisioned her future in Afghanistan in the medical field. Since the Taleban took over and barred women from universities, she only sees hope outside the country. "The closure of universities was devastating, not only for me but all my classmates. We are broken and it's the worst thing we could have imagined happening to us, but it happened," said the 20-year-old resident of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan.

"If a girl is educated, her whole family will be educated, if a family is educated, the whole society will be educated ... If we are not educated a whole generation will be left illiterate," said the young woman, who had won an internship at

a clinic quickly closed down under the Taleban government. "Because I want a better future, for my education, I have no other choice but to leave Afghanistan."

Bawar said there was "a big difference" between the previous US-backed government and that of the Taleban, which has not been recognized by the international community. "There used to be a lot of freedom, today we can't even go to the Blue Mosque (a famed shrine surrounded by gardens) for enjoyment ... Most activities are banned for girls and women now." Bawar's mother is a teacher at a primary school, the level at which girls' education now stops. "It's not only what I want, all the girls and women of Afghanistan want their freedom back." — AFP



OMAGH: Kevin Skelton, who lost his wife Philomena, in the Omagh attack, speaks during an interview in front of the Memorial erected in tribute of the victims of the bombing, on August 2, 2023. — AFP

N Ireland's peace still haunted by Omagh bombing

OMAGH: On a bright Saturday in August almost 25 years ago, Kevin Skelton was re-joining his family shopping for new school shoes in Omagh's town centre when a massive bomb went off. Amid the ensuing carnage, he clambered through a hole in the shop's storefront trying to reach his wife Philomena and their three girls.

"I found Mena lying face down in the rubble," said Skelton, who recalled checking her for a pulse. "I could find nothing." Philomena, who was aged 39, was one of 29 people killed when the car bomb planted by the Real IRA exploded next to the shop on August 15, 1998. The dead included two unborn twins. Skelton's daughter Shauna was among the more than 200 people who were injured, while his other two girls escaped physically unscathed. It was the deadliest attack in three decades of violence in Northern Ireland known as "The Troubles".

Skelton is still haunted by the apocalyptic scene and "the cries of pain" as he searched for his family that day. "What in God's name was it all for?" the 68-year-old asked. Although Northern Ireland has re-

mained largely peaceful during that time, he fears a similar attack by paramilitary groups, which are vastly diminished but remain a serious threat. "You always have that fear. You only need one lunatic to put a bomb in the boot of a car... and park it in a main street and walk away," Skelton told AFP.

'Galvanizing effect'

The Omagh bombing came four months after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which aimed to end "The Troubles". It was perpetrated during an IRA ceasefire by dissident Republicans opposed to the deal.

"Despite that terrible tragedy, it actually had a galvanizing effect on the peace process because it came so soon after the Good Friday Agreement," Queen's University Belfast academic Peter McLoughlin said. But the political historian noted "hard-core" remnants remain within both pro-UK loyalist and pro-Ireland republican communities, with police noting around a third of organized crime is also directly linked to paramilitaries. "There will always tend to be groups who have this extreme position, that violence is the way forward and will try and exploit the political difficulties," McLoughlin said. Northern Ireland has been without a devolved government for much of the past six years, amid multiple breakdowns in power-sharing between the two communities. — AFP

Armed intervention in Niger laden with risks, experts say

NIAMEY: The West African bloc ECOWAS is mulling military intervention to restore Niger's elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, after he was detained by members of his guard on July 26. But experts say any such move is freighted with operational and political hazards — from mustering an intervention force to inflicting civilian casualties. These, they say, are the main issues:

Mobilizing the force

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) last Thursday mandated the deployment of a "standby force to restore constitutional order" in Niger. The force has intervened six times among ECOWAS members since 1990, in such events as civil war or political chaos. But, today as in the past, there is no clear agreement among ECOWAS members on the force's parameters, said Marc-Andre Boisvert, a Sahel specialist affiliated to the Centre FrancoPaix think tank in Montreal.

"Basically, the African standby force wasn't conceived to restore constitutional order in a country where there has been a coup," said Elie Tenenbaum of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). Gathering the force "depends on the will of the contributors," said Boisvert — an effort that requires lengthy negotiations and overcoming "enormous suspicion".

Out of 15 ECOWAS members, three — Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso — have been suspended from the organization's ranks because of military coups. Of the others, West Africa's superpower Nigeria as well as Benin, Ivory Coast and Senegal say they are willing to send troops, although they also face strong opposition at home for this.

Force numbers

"An operation of this kind needs to mobilize between 3,000 and 4,000 soldiers," said a Senegalese general, Mansour Seck. So far, only Ivory Coast has publicly named how many troops it would commit — around a thousand. "African states gen-



NIAMEY: A young man wears a Nigerien flag adorned with the picture of General Abdourahmane Tiani at a concert in support to Niger's National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) at the General Seyni Kountche Stadium in Niamey on August 13, 2023. — AFP

erally keep a jealous grip on their sovereignty when it comes to security and defense," Tenenbaum said. Also, "it's hard to muster troops in armies which are already fragile and under-equipped."

Niger's own armed forces number around 30,000, of whom 11,000 are deployed fighting jihadists, according to figures given by Bazoum last year. The military regimes in Mali and Burkina Faso have also said that any intervention in Niger would be considered a "declaration of war" against them. On the other hand, their armed forces are weak and already embroiled with fighting jihadist insurgents.

Operational risk

Ousting the regime in Niger, a vast arid nation, means focusing on its capital Niamey. A land offensive would mean having to cross several hundred kilometers (a couple of hundred miles) of hostile terrain. In this light, specialists say a key lies in air mobility, possibly using Niamey's airport as a staging point for targeting the presidential palace where Bazoum is being held.

ECOWAS military chiefs "want to take Niamey airport and bombard the presidential palace, but we have modern anti-aircraft defense which is able to shoot down their aircraft," said Amadou Bounty Diallo, a Nigerien analyst and former soldier. Seck said:

"The landing strip is easy for the putschists to occupy — all you need to do is put thousands of young people on it" to discourage pilots from opening fire to seize it.

"It won't be a simple military operation ... one of the risks is that it could get bogged down, and that depends on the determination of the people on the spot," he warned. Resistance to intervention will be based on the Presidential Guard, an elite force of 700 men, although the willingness of other army units to fight is a matter of debate.

Other components of the army outwardly endorsed the coup "in order to avoid bloodshed — they don't want to be in a war," a Bazoum advisor said. "As soon as things start getting serious, you will see many units break away." In contrast, a Nigerien security source predicted that foreign intervention would cause the armed forces "to close ranks".

Civilian casualties

High civilian casualties is one of the big risks, said Tenenbaum. Pro-coup supporters have rallied several times in the capital, many of them declaring they are willing to come to the help of their army if it were attacked. "All this to free a president that putschists have said they will execute in the event of ECOWAS intervention," Tenenbaum said. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2023

Ruble plunges past 100 against dollar

Russian central bank to meet on Tuesday amid currency crisis

MOSCOW: The Russian ruble slid past 100 against the dollar Monday, its lowest level since March 23, 2022 -- weeks after Moscow unleashed full-scale hostilities in Ukraine. The ruble has shed around 30 percent of its value against the dollar since the beginning of the year, as the country imports more and exports less. Russia's central bank said it will meet on Tuesday to discuss the key interest rate, as the ruble earlier tumbled past 100 versus the dollar—its lowest level since March 2022.

"On Tuesday, 15 August 2023, the Board of Directors of the Bank of Russia will hold a meeting to consider the level of the key rate," the central bank said in a statement on Monday. Data from the Moscow Exchange showed the ruble trading at 101.01 to the dollar at 11:33 am (0833 GMT), while against the euro it tumbled to a near 17-month low of 110.73.

The ruble could sink further to 115-120 per dollar, Alor Broker analyst Alexei Antonov warned in a note published by financial firms on Monday. "For the decline in the ruble to end," Antonov said, "we need to wait for a reduction in imports or decisive steps by the monetary authorities."

Russia's central bank already hiked its key interest rate to a greater-than-expected 8.5 percent in July, and last week set aside its budget rule in a bid to stabilize the currency. The decline in the ruble has prompted fears ordinary Russians' standard of living could take a hit, as inflation creeps up.

Kremlin aide Maxim Oreshkin blamed what he called "loose monetary policy" in an opinion piece published by the state-run TASS news agency Monday. He said the central bank had all the "necessary tools" to address the situation and predicted the ruble exchange rate would return to normal in the near future. While many Russians appear publicly stoic and receptive to the Kremlin's narrative, data show they are increasingly worried about their livelihoods.

Fearing for their savings, Russians withdrew one billion rubles in cash (\$10.3 million) in the three days after the Wagner mercenary group staged a mutiny, according to central bank figures. The number is some five times higher than the average of a normal three-day period in Russia. Sofya Donets, chief



MOSCOW: A man examines the rates at a currency exchange office in Moscow on August 14, 2023. — AFP

economist for Russia at Renaissance Capital, said the weakening of the ruble presented no risk to the country's financial stability.

Analyst Arnaud Dubien meanwhile said the drop in the ruble was expected, reflecting the country's foreign trade. What is not expected, he said, is that "the ruble is weakening even as the price of oil increases again." The Russian economy relies heavily on oil and gas exports. He warned that the government must be careful not to let the ruble slip past 100 dollars to 1 ruble.

"This could fuel speculation in society that the country has fallen by the wayside," he added. Despite the currency crisis, Russia's economy grew year-on-year by 4.9 percent in the second quarter of 2023, the country's statistics agency Rosstat said, the first increase in a year. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) shrank on the same measure in the previous four quarters, finishing with a 1.9-percent drop in the first quarter of 2023. Friday's improved figures for April to June came in comparison with the same period last year, when GDP fell by 4.5 percent.

Last year's sharp contraction came as the economy was hit with a raft of sanctions from Western countries in response to the offensive in Ukraine. Despite the increase, the Russian economy was still smaller than it was before the start of the conflict in February 2022. Rosstat did not provide a breakdown by sector in its most recent release. The second quarter of 2023 has seen Russian inflation tick upwards, due in part to the weakness of the ruble. On Friday, the currency was trading at 108 rubles to the euro and 99 rubles to the dollar. —AFP

OPEC+ production at lowest since August 2021: S&P

WASHINGTON: OPEC+ cut its crude oil production to a near two-year low in July as a major voluntary cut by Saudi Arabia took effect, according to a Platts survey by S&P Global Commodity Insights.

The latest Saudi cut as well as disruptions in Kazakhstan and Nigeria more than offset gains in Iran and Iraq, contributing to an almost 1 million b/d fall in OPEC+ output month on month. OPEC's 13 members pumped 27.34 million b/d, while Russia and eight other allies added 13.06 million b/d, for a total of 40.40 million b/d, the survey found. That was the group's lowest since August 2021, when major cuts implemented

during the pandemic were still being unwound. With many parts of the global economy now on a wobbly footing, the OPEC+ alliance has returned to a strategy of aggressive supply restraint to support slumping oil prices, with several members announcing 1.2 million b/d in collective cuts from May through the end of the year and Saudi Arabia unilaterally declaring an extra 1 million b/d cut for July, which has been extended through September.

Saudi Arabia dropped its production to 9.05 million b/d—the lowest level since June 2021, the survey found. The decline was not as steep as its pledged cut, with production falling 940,000 b/d on June volumes. Elsewhere Nigeria saw a 100,000 b/d drop to 1.32 million b/d on an outage at Forcados from mid-month that contributed to a sharp drop in exports. Offsetting the Saudi cut to some extent were increases in output by sanctions-hit Iran and Venezuela. Iranian production was at its highest level since December 2018, at 2.76 million b/d, while Venezuela's was at the highest level since February 2019 at 810,000 b/d, according to

Around half of the Ryanair flights out of Charleroi are piloted by non-Belgian crews, and the company said these went ahead as planned. In response to the impending pilot strike, Ryanair has issued a travel advisory for passengers who are scheduled to fly to Charleroi today and tomorrow, SchengenVisaInfo.com reports. Although the airline revealed that 75 percent of its flight schedule would proceed without disruptions, it is preparing for the possibility of having to cancel 40 out of the 170 flights that were initially planned. In this regard, the budget airline has stated that it extended an offer to the Belgian pilots that mirror the agreement recently reached with most other Ryanair pilots' unions across the European Union. The same also mentioned that it sent these proposals on July 25.

During the strikes on July 15-16, over 80 percent of Ryanair's pilots participated, resulting in the cancellation of 120 flights at Charleroi Airport. At the same time, the next round of strikes on July 29-30 led to the cancellation of nearly 100 flights. These strikes notably impacted flights to several countries, including Bosnia, Croatia, France, Italy, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden. — AFP

Belgian pilots strike, cancelling 88 Ryanair flights

CHARLEROI, Belgium: Belgian pilots staged their latest strike against Ryanair on Monday, forcing the Irish operator to cancel 88 flights through Charleroi, one of its busiest European hubs. The strike, the third during this summer season, hit 15,000 travellers planning to fly on Monday or Tuesday, Belgium's mid-August Assumption Day public holiday, the airport said.

Pilots based in Belgium have accused Ryanair of failing to implement an agreement signed during the COVID-19 pandemic to give them extra days off in exchange for accepting a salary cut. Ryanair has previously urged the pilots to negotiate rather than strike and noted it had reached deals on working conditions with its Italian, French and Spanish staff.



Passengers embarking on a Ryanair flight. Ryanair pilots in Belgium have gone on a new strike on Monday.



Foxconn boss sees potential to invest billions in India

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant and key Apple supplier Foxconn said Monday it sees the potential to invest "several billion dollars" in India, with the firm looking to diversify its manufacturing away from China. Foxconn—also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry—is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for many companies, most notably Apple's iPhones.

It operates in more than two dozen countries but the bulk of its operations is based in China—a dependence it is looking to reduce, with media reports of major investments in India.

"From the perspective of India's potential market size and if we can fully implement our plans there, I think several billion dollars in investment is only a beginning," Foxconn chairman Young Liu said when asked during an earnings call if the firm planned to invest \$2 billion in India. Foxconn in May announced the purchase of a huge tract of land on the outskirts of Indian tech hub Bengaluru for \$37 million.

It currently operates about nine production campuses and has more than 30 factories in India, with "turnover of business size of roughly \$10 billion annually", according to Liu. The company is planning to expand its India operations to "critical components" for consumer electronics and electric vehicles to boost its competitiveness, he said, without giving more details. "Shipping (for critical components) will probably have to wait till next year but this year, relevant constructions have started," Liu said, adding the operations will take place in three states in India.

Last month, Foxconn withdrew from a \$19.4 billion deal with India's Vedanta to make semiconductors in Gujarat state—dealing a blow to New Delhi's plan to boost self-reliance in the tech supply chain. Foxconn posted a one percent drop in second quarter net profits on Monday, while revenues fell 14 percent on-year to \$1.3 trillion Taiwan dollars (\$40.8 billion) -- an indication of a worsening market for global electronics during an economic downturn. —AFP

the survey. The increases were a possible sign the US has been relaxing sanctions enforcement as it ramps up pressure on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. Venezuela has also been benefiting from looser US sanctions, with imports of diluent helping boost its heavy oil output.

Russian production was flat on the month at 9.42 million b/d, as it continued to shift its flows eastward in response to an EU embargo and the G7 price cap. Though its output has held up much higher than many forecasters had expected at the start of the war, it has now pledged to reduce its crude exports by 500,000 b/d in August and 300,000 b/d in September, as it seeks to bolster prices.

But because a reduction in exports can be offset by higher domestic demand or moves into storage, it was unclear what impact the declaration will have on Russia's production in those months. Kazakhstan, the second largest non-OPEC member of the alliance, saw a 50,000 b/d fall in production in July, after a power outage hit production and refining volumes.



BUENOS AIRES: Argentine monetary authorities on Monday devalued the peso by around 20 percent.

Argentina devalues peso after shock primary poll result

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine monetary authorities on Monday devalued the peso by around 20 percent in anticipation of a market backlash to the strong performance of far-right politician Javier Milei in a presidential primary election.

The Banco Nacion state bank showed the peso trading at 365.50 to the dollar, up from 298.50 on Friday. The libertarian Milei, a political outsider who has proposed dollarizing the country's battered economy, performed much better than expected in Sunday's vote, in what local media referred to as a "political tsunami."

In a unique format, Argentines voted for their favorite among 22 potential candidates, allowing parties to pick their frontrunner while providing a key popularity test ahead of the October election. Milei scored 30 percent of votes, ahead of the right-wing opposition candidate Patricia Bullrich who scored 28 percent, and the ruling center-left coalition's candidate Economy Minister Sergio Massa, who came third with 27 percent. The Latin American giant is gripped by deep economic malaise, with annual inflation at 115 percent, and poverty at 40 percent. —AFP

Business

Oman posts \$1.7bn budget surplus in first half of 2023

Muscat expects a budget deficit of 1.3bn Omani rials in 2023

MUSCAT: Oman recorded a budget surplus of 656 million Omani rials (\$1.7 billion) in the first six months of 2023 on the back of higher oil revenue, according to Oman's ministry of finance. Oman recorded a surplus of 784 million rials in the corresponding period last year.

Net oil revenue grew to 3.2 billion Omani rials in the first half of 2023, up two per cent from the same period in 2022, the ministry said in its fiscal performance bulletin.

Average oil prices amounted to \$83 per barrel while average oil production reached 1,061,000 barrels per day, it said. The sultanate's public revenue for the six months stood at 6.3 billion rials, a decline of 6 per cent annually, while public spending for the period dropped 4 per cent on an annual basis to 5.6 billion rials, the ministry said. "By the end of H1 2023, the Ministry of Finance did not withdraw from reserves as planned, as a result of generating additional revenue," it said.

Oman expects a budget deficit of 1.3 billion Omani rials in 2023, or 3 per cent of its gross domestic product. The revenue and spending estimates for the year are based on an oil price assumption of \$55 per barrel. Oman's economy is on a strong footing as it presses forward with its economic diversification initiatives, buttressed by favorable oil prices and fiscal reforms at a time when inflation remains contained, the International Monetary Fund said in June.

Real GDP grew by 4.3 per cent in 2022, primarily driven by a strong expansion of the hydrocarbon sector, it said. Oman predicted a fiscal deficit of 1.5 billion rials (\$3.9bn) in 2022, down about 32 per cent from the previous year.

Oman began weighing up plans to introduce income tax on high earners two years ago, as part of the finance ministry's 2020-2024 economic scheme and efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit. Plans for an income tax on high earners were mentioned in a bond



MUSCAT: A salesman waits for customers at a traditional beads stall in Muscat. - AFP

prospectus published by the ministry in 2020, when the sultanate raised \$2 billion in external financing. Economic growth is projected to slow to 1.3 per cent in 2023 and then rebound to 2.7 per cent in 2024, amid oil production cuts by OPEC+ and moderate growth in the non-hydrocarbon sector.

Fitch Ratings expects the sultanate's economy to

expand 1.1 per cent in 2023, slowing from 4.3 per cent in 2022 on lower oil production. It estimates non-oil sector growth of 2.3 per cent, driven by the recovery of the construction industry. By the end of the first half of 2023, the Ministry of Finance said it repaid more than 1.5 billion rials against public debt, reducing the total public debt to 16.3 billion rials, it said.

Oman's public debt increased to 29.1 per cent of GDP in 2016 from 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2014 and peaked at 67.9 per cent of GDP in 2020. "Despite oil prices remaining low and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, Oman has succeeded in reducing public debt to 40 per cent in 2022," it said. - Agencies



Oil prices fall amid strong dollar, fears over China economy

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Monday after recording gains for seven straight weeks as a strong dollar and concerns about China's economic growth weigh on demand growth. Brent, the benchmark for two-thirds of the world's oil, was trading 0.99 per cent lower at \$85.95 a barrel at 8.30 am Kuwait time. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was down 1.02 per cent at \$82.34 per barrel. On Friday, Brent settled 0.47 per cent higher at \$86.81 a barrel, while WTI rose 0.45 per cent to settle at \$83.19. The US Dollar Index - a measure of its value against a weighted basket of major currencies - extended gains on Monday after a bigger-than-expected increase in US producer prices for July.

Last month, the Fed raised interest rates by 25 basis points, its 11th increase since March 2022, and said further rate increases would be data driven. Meanwhile, China, the world's second-largest economy and top crude importer, is expected to release data on national retail sales, foreign direct investment and industrial output on Tuesday.

Global oil demand is set to expand by 2.2 million barrels per day this year, with the Asian country accounting for more than 70 per cent of the growth, according to the International Energy Agency. However, growth in crude consumption is expected to slow to 1 million bpd next year as the post-pandemic economic rebound runs out of steam, the IEA said in its monthly oil market report last week. Meanwhile, global oil supply plunged by 910,000 bpd to 100.9 million bpd in July amid a sharp reduction in Saudi Arabia's output. Earlier this month, the world's largest oil exporter said it would extend its voluntary oil production cut of one million bpd until September. - Agencies

Jordan-India trade grew by 63% in one year, says envoy

AMMAN: India-Jordan bilateral trade was valued at an all-time high of \$4.425 billion in financial year (April 2022 - March 2023), recording an exceptional growth of 63 percent, said India's Ambassador to Jordan Anwar Halim. In an interview with the Jordan News Agency (Petra) on the occasion of his country's 77th Independence Day, the envoy said that India is a long-rooted partner for Jordan in the supplies of food items, mechanical and electrical goods, engineering products, gems and jewelry, oil products and leather, while Jordan is a long and reliable supplier of fertilizers, phosphates, phosphoric acid etc for India, which is the biggest single buyer of phosphates from Jordan.

The two countries, he continued, have set a trade

Iran's oil output hits 3.2m bpd, says oil minister

TEHRAN: Iran is producing nearly 3.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil, despite sanctions imposed on the oil-rich country by the US, said Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji on Sunday. The minister stated Iran's production of crude oil will surpass 3.3 million bpd by late August.

Referring to his ministry's plans for investment in oil and gas industry projects, up to the end of the current Iranian calendar year, he added semi-finished civil projects valued at \$15 billion will be operational.

On Wednesday, Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr (NIOC) confirmed that Iran will reach a milestone oil production figure of 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in late September. Khojasteh Mehr said Iran's oil output will increase by 150,000 bpd within the next week and by another 100,000 bpd by the end

of the month to September 22 to reach a total of 3.5 million bpd.

The figure would be a major increase from 2.2 million bpd of oil production reported in August 2021 when the current administrative government led by President Raisi took office, he added.

The official stressed the growth in oil output will entirely serve Iran's plans to increase its oil exports. In quitting the 2015 nuclear deal, former President Donald Trump restored sanctions on Iran as part of what he called the "maximum pressure" campaign against the country. Those sanctions are being enforced to this day by the Joe Biden administration, even though it has repeatedly acknowledged that the policy has been a mistake and a failure.

Iranian officials say US attempts to disturb Tehran's trade through sanctions have failed. They state Washington has been defeated in the maximum pressure policy against their country. In mid-June, a Reuters report quoting consultants, shipping data and a source familiar with the matter said Iran's crude exports and oil output have hit new highs in 2023 despite Washington's harsh sanctions aimed to zero down Tehran's crude sales, adding to global supply when other producers are limiting output. - Agencies



TEHRAN: Iran is producing nearly 3.2 million bpd of crude oil, despite sanctions imposed on the oil-rich country by the US, said Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji on Sunday.

target of \$5 billion to reach by 2025 and have also agreed to further diversify the trade basket. He pointed out that Indian investment in phosphates and textiles amounts to more than \$1.3 billion, adding that the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) and Indian Farmers Fertilizers Cooperative (IFFCO) established a joint venture project worth \$860 million for manufacturing Phosphoric Acid. This was jointly inaugurated by King Abdullah II and then President of India Pranab Mukherjee during the latter's visit to Jordan in 2015.

The JPMC and Arab Potash Company signed memoranda of understanding and agreements with a number of Indian fertilizer companies and manufacturers worth \$2.5 billion, he indicated, pointing out that over 15 garment companies, owned by Indians, with cumulative investment of around \$500 million are located in the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) and all finished products being exported outside Jordan which amounts to more than a billion USD worth of garments.

India, the envoy stressed, considers Jordan an important partner in the region as the two countries

strive for global peace and stability, are committed to multilateralism and share common concerns in international forums. He underscored the importance of King Abdullah's visit to India and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jordan, which have led to the signing of several memoranda of understanding and agreements during these visits to strengthen bilateral cooperation in a number of areas. "In recent years, the two countries have been further strengthening their ties in the field of technology and education. One of the most notable examples of this cooperation is the India-Jordan Center of Excellence in Information Technology (IJ-CoEIT). The IJ-CoEIT is a state-of-the-art IT facility that was established by the Government of India in Jordan at the Al-Hussein Technical University. The center is equipped with a super computer and provides training to Jordanian experts and professionals in a variety of IT fields. It is envisioned that 3000 Jordanian experts/professionals would be nurtured at the center in premium technological fields in a span of five years," Halim said.

When asked about the Indian Community in Jor-

Global stocks fall; traders eye China property risks

LONDON: Global stocks mostly fell and oil prices sank on Monday as concerns over China's property sector dampened investor sentiment. Developer Country Garden missed bond payments and warned of multi-billion-dollar losses, deepening concerns over China's heavily indebted real estate sector and the potential fallout on the world's number two economy. Wall Street opened flat, while London and Paris traded down and Frankfurt made modest gains.

Asian markets had posted sharp losses, with shares in Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai and Manila ending in the red. Country Garden's shares were down more than 18 percent at the close, days after its boss Yang Huiyan said the firm was "facing the greatest difficulties since our establishment". Privately owned Country Garden is on Forbes' list of the 500 largest companies in the world and has long been deemed financially solid. But last week it was unable to make two bond payments. After a 30-day grace period, it risks defaulting in September if it still cannot pay.

Like heavily indebted competitor Evergrande, any collapse of Country Garden would have catastrophic repercussions for the Chinese financial system and economy. "Concerns surrounding the perilous financial state of some of China's largest property developers and the nation's post-pandemic economic struggles have dented investor sentiment," noted market analyst Fawad Razaqzada.

Oil prices also fell on fears of weakened Chinese demand. The market "still has many uncharted challenges", said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management. Uncertainty surrounds Russia's pledge to follow through on its production cut pledges given its worsening economic situation, he added. The ruble slid past 100 against the dollar on Monday, its lowest level since March 23, 2022 - shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine and the imposition of Western sanctions.

Elsewhere in the foreign exchange market, the dollar at one point was fetching more than 145 yen on Monday, its strongest level against the Japanese currency since November. Traders were also watching US inflation risks after data on Friday showed a bigger-than-expected rise in wholesale inflation. The coming US retail sales report for last month and the minutes of the July 26 Federal Open Market Committee meeting are likely to indicate the probability of further interest rate hikes this year. - AFP

dan, the envoy noted that there are over 17,000 Indians residing in Jordan and are primarily employed in textile, construction, manufacturing, fertilizer companies, health care sector, universities, IT, finance and multilateral organizations.

On co-operation in the field of Counter Terrorism, the envoy pointed out that the two countries have been active partners in collaborating on initiatives on counter terrorism co-operation, underlining that India is an active participant of Aqaba process and that it greatly appreciate the importance of Aqaba Process in facilitating regular, comprehensive dialogue on counter-terrorism among global stakeholders.

He stated that India would be hosting the G-20 summit in September 2023 under the theme, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', symbolizing hope and our goal to bring the world together for global good to shape a new paradigm - of human-centric globalization. "India is keen to be the voice of the developing countries on the G20 platform on issues such as Sustainable lifestyles, food security, energy transition, use of digital technology for development and inclusion and inclusive development," he said. - PETRA

Business

Chinese giant Country Garden's shares plummet on default fears

Losses deepen worries about China's indebted real estate sector

BEIJING: Shares in Chinese property giant Country Garden plunged on Monday after it missed bond payments and warned of billions of dollars in losses, deepening fears about the country's heavily indebted real estate sector. Like its troubled competitor Evergrande, any collapse of Country Garden would have catastrophic repercussions for the Chinese financial system and economy.

The privately owned firm estimated its debt at some 1.15 trillion yuan (\$159 billion) at the end of 2022, and had said on the weekend that it would suspend trading of onshore bonds from Monday.

"We're facing the greatest difficulties since our establishment," Country Garden boss Yang Huiyan said in a statement on Friday. Its shares plummeted more than 18 percent in Hong Kong on Monday.

Country Garden is on Forbes' list of the 500 largest companies in the world, and Yang was until recently one of the richest women in Asia. The firm has long been deemed financially solid but was unable last Monday to make two bond payments, and after a 30-day grace period, it risks defaulting in September if it still cannot pay. Additional liabilities mean other estimates of its overall debt are as high as 1.4 trillion yuan (\$193 billion), according to Bloomberg.

Adding to the pressure, 31 billion yuan (\$4.27 billion) in the firm's bonds are set to mature in 2024, according to rating agency Moody's, which last Thursday downgraded its rating for the group to "Caa2", indicating "very high credit risk". Country Garden said this month that it expected a net loss for the first half of this year of 45 billion to 50

billion yuan (about \$6.2 billion to \$7.6 billion).

"Due to the recent deterioration of sales and refinancing environment, the available funds in the book of the Company have been continuously reduced, resulting in a phased liquidity pressure," Country Garden said in an announcement at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. In the last month, 42 percent of the company's value has been wiped out.

Boom and bust

Housing reform in China during the late 1990s unleashed a boom in the real estate sector, spurred by social norms that consider owning a property a prerequisite for marriage. But the massive debt accrued by the industry's biggest players has in recent years been perceived by Beijing as an unacceptable risk for China's financial system and overall economic health. To reduce the sector's indebtedness, authorities have since 2020 gradually tightened conditions for developers' access to credit, drying up sources of financing for firms already in debt.

A wave of defaults followed — notably that of Evergrande — which undermined the confidence of potential buyers and reverberated through the industry. The downturn in the once-thriving sector has occurred against a backdrop of a general economic slowdown in China.

Country Garden is particularly susceptible to weak demand because it focuses on the lower end of the property market, launching ambitious projects in secondary cities where local buyers wield less purchasing power. — AFP



ZHENGZHOU, China: This aerial photo taken on August 14, 2023 shows buildings of China's developer Country Garden Holdings in Zhengzhou, in China's central Henan province. — AFP

Oil output cuts drive short seller exodus

By Ole Hansen

The energy sector, excluding natural gas, has risen strongly this quarter with sentiment experiencing a major positive turnaround as aggressive voluntary production cuts from Saudi Arabia continue to tighten the market. In addition, concerns about the global economic outlook have yet to impact demand in any meaningful way, and together these two developments have seen WTI and Brent reach four-month highs.

Just like last year, when prices shot higher following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the rally has been led by tight diesel markets which have sent prices for gas oil futures in London and Ultra-light Sulphur Diesel (ULSD) in New York surging to \$123 and \$131 dollars per barrel, the highest levels since January. In WTI crude oil, the premium the prompt futures contract, currently CLU3, commands over the next has reached a November high of around 70 cents, and the tightness or backwardation of this magnitude has been adding to the bullish sentiment.

Crude oil production from the OPEC+ group of producers fell to a two-year low in July according to the latest Platts OPEC+ Survey carried out by S&P Global Commodity Insights. While OPEC pumped 27.34 million barrels/day, non-OPEC allies produced 13.1 million barrels/day, with the bulk of the reduction being driven by Saudi Arabia's aggressive voluntary production cut which so far has been extended to include September. The one million barrel-a-day cut has seen the Kingdom's production slump to a two-year low just above 9 million barrels a day, some two million barrels below what it pumped last September. Ahead of their pledge to cut August exports, Russian production held steady, thereby overtaking Saudi Arabia's position as the biggest OPEC+ producer.

At the beginning of June managed money accounts held a 231k contract combined net long in Brent and WTI, and apart from the March 2020 COVID-19 outbreak slump, this was the lowest belief in higher prices since 2014. The Saudi energy ministers' vocal threat to hurt speculators seems to have been successful after the mentioned production cut helped drive a six-week buying spree that according to the latest Commitment of Traders Report covering the week to August 1 helped lift the combined net long by 82 percent to 421,000 contracts or 421 million barrels. While the WTI contract has seen the biggest jump in net length, the main driver behind the overall change has been short covering with the Brent and WTI gross short down 116k contracts to 88k, a three-month low.

However, the fact the gross long has only risen by 74k contracts or 17 percent during the mentioned six-week period where prices rallied by more than 17 percent, in the process breaking several key technical levels, highlights a current hesitancy about getting too extended. Not least considering the rally has not been driven by rising demand but by a politically and economically motivated production cut which at best can be considered temporary. For that to change and prices move even higher, the global economic outlook needs to improve and with our CIO's bold call for stagflation to emerge in the coming months, this according to our expectations looks increasingly unlikely, potentially preventing Saudi Arabia from adding barrels back into the market while raising the risk of prices revisiting support, in Brent towards \$82 and WTI towards \$77.50.

In Brent, the key level of support can be found around the 200-day moving average, currently at \$81.54, and while looking increasingly stretched the price is currently challenging to April high at \$87.50 and while having enough momentum to break it may struggle to challenge, let alone break the January high at \$89.

Note: Ole Hansen is head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank

NBK enables complaint submission via NBK Mobile Banking App

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to be closer to customers by providing innovative digital services that help serve their needs and promote financial literacy and awareness among them. In this context, the bank now allows customers to file an official complaint through the NBK Mobile Banking App. Through the new service, customers can submit complaints digitally through the NBK Mobile Banking App anytime, anywhere, and to receive a written response within 15 working days. They can also print the bank's response letter in case they wish to file a grievance with the Central Bank of Kuwait.

Using its social media accounts, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, NBK intensifies awareness campaigns by posting educational and awareness material

including text communications and video clips to familiarize customers with the best ways to benefit from the new services, as well as sending notifications about these services via the NBK Mobile Banking App.

Commenting on these new updates, Mohammed Al-Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are always keen to be closer to our customers and to keep constant communication with them; relying on digital channels which are instrumental in this regard, by enabling us to deliver all customers' needs quickly and easily."

"Achieving the highest customer satisfaction levels is a deeply-rooted culture among the NBK team and at strategy level. Customer satisfaction is also fundamental in all the bank's business practices," he emphasized.



Mohammed Al-Dakheel



"Digital channels, especially the NBK Mobile Banking App, have become instrumental, not only in making transactions, but also in communicating with our customers, giving them a comprehensive banking experience, which makes us always work on enhancing the advanced products and services provided by these channels," he explained.

"NBK focuses on leveraging its tremendous data analytics and AI capabilities to enhance its ability to provide products that live up to customers'

needs and exceed their expectations," he concluded. In line with its leading position as the largest banking institution in Kuwait, NBK continues to support the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation, reflecting its belief in the importance of promoting financial inclusion among all segments of society, as well as increasing awareness on the best ways to benefit from the various services provided by banks.

S&P: India's energy transition reflects its robust growth

WASHINGTON: India's energy transition reflects its robust economic growth, with a fast-expanding middle class and rapid urbanization. The nation is the third-largest consumer of energy globally, according to data from S&P Global Commodity Insights.

India is critical in the global push toward net-zero because of its large and growing energy demand. Its efforts to reduce emissions will also be a model for other emerging economies, the report said.

Any path to global net-zero emissions will have to travel through India due to the country's energy use, its projected demand growth and the commensurate increase in greenhouse gas emissions. India's development trajectory will also influence countries in the Global South that are trying to provide secure, reliable and affordable energy to their citizens while reducing emissions. India's policymakers and companies can use many technologies, policy and finance levers to deliver the energy required to meet the nation's economic aspirations while mitigating the impacts of climate change, the report said.

Total primary energy demand more than doubled from 2000 to 2020, surging to 937 million tons of oil equivalent (Mtoe) from 417 Mtoe. Still, India's energy consumption per capita is less than 1/10th of the US'. How India meets its growing energy demand and changes its primary energy mix over the coming decade will substantially influence global energy markets and help determine if, and when, global emissions targets are reached.

Country Garden: Under-pressure property giant

BEIJING: Concerns are mounting in China around Country Garden, a major property developer whose colossal debt raises fear of a bankruptcy that could spell wider economic turbulence, two years after the unraveling of its competitor Evergrande.

Country Garden shares plunged by more than 18 percent in Hong Kong on Monday after it missed bond payments and warned of multibillion-dollar losses. Its billionaire boss Yang Huiyan has said the firm is "facing the greatest difficulties since our establishment".

Here's what you need to know about Country Garden:

Family business

Country Garden is run by Yang Huiyan, who until recently was one of the richest women in China and Asia. Yang, now in her early forties, became a billionaire when she inherited shares from her father in 2005, two decades after he founded the company.

But her fortune has dwindled since 2021 as China's real estate crisis dramatically weakened the sector. Yang, who lost nearly \$29 billion in two years according to a Bloomberg ranking of billionaires, has an estimated wealth of \$5.3 billion. To support Country Garden, she and her family have chipped in the equivalent of \$4.9 billion in personal funds, according to the group.

Real estate heavyweight

The top seller of real estate in China last year, Country Garden was named in Forbes' list of the 500 largest companies in the world. Based in the southern Chinese city of Foshan, the group employed nearly 70,000 "full-time" staff members at the end of 2022, according to the most recent figures from the company, which has long been

deemed financially solid. It also has operations abroad, including a gigantic real estate project in Malaysia involving artificial islands.

Under pressure

But recent sluggishness in the Chinese real estate market has caught up with the company. According to media reports, Country Garden was unable to make two bond payments on August 6. It has a 30-day grace period, but if it does not pay within that time it risks default. Adding to the pressure, 31 billion yuan (\$4.27 billion) in the firm's bonds are set to mature in 2024, according to rating agency Moody's.

Another Evergrande?

Like its competitor Evergrande, which owes more than \$300 billion, any collapse of Country Garden would have damaging repercussions on the Chinese financial system and economy.

It is due to publish its half-year results by the end of the month, and says it expects a net loss of 45 to 55 billion yuan (about \$6.2 billion to \$7.6 billion). And its situation is particularly precarious



without steps to reduce this import dependence. Higher imports will put a further burden on government finances. Ensuring secure and affordable supplies of oil and gas is the highest energy priority for the government. There are several opportunities to reduce import dependence.

* Upstream oil and gas: Domestic exploration has yielded mixed results over the last decade with no new major discoveries. Renewed interest in India from international oil and gas companies is likely to have limited impact because these companies are reducing oil/gas investments while transitioning to a broader fuel mix. Still, there is potential to boost output at Indian oil/gas fields using secondary and tertiary recovery technologies. Average recovery factors in India are 20 percent-30 percent compared with global averages of 35 percent-40 percent.

The application of new technologies, including digital technologies, machine learning and data analytics, provides a further impetus to focus on improving recovery factors. High oil prices are another incentive for increasing domestic oil and gas production.

Robotics

In addition to its core focus on real estate, Country Garden has been developing robots for the catering industry since 2019. The firm has produced designs for different types of mechanized food processors, and last year it opened an expansive, fully automated restaurant in Foshan. The restaurant, which accommodates up to 600 people, is staffed by 20 robots that can prepare three types of dishes including Chinese hot pot, the firm said at the time. — AFP

Lifestyle



Weeds are seen growing uncut around the tombs at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



Funeral urns are seen at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



Vegetation dislodges the structures at the Pere Lachaise cemetery.

The Pere Lachaise in Paris, the most visited cemetery in the world thanks to celebrities buried there, is welcoming crowds back after years of COVID restrictions with a back-to-nature setting that helps them keep cool in the summer heat.

Doors frontman Jim Morrison, Irish writer Oscar Wilde, French singer Edith Piaf and composer maestro Frederic Chopin are among the 70,000 more or less famous people resting at the necropolis, with some graves turned into shrines by worshipping fans.



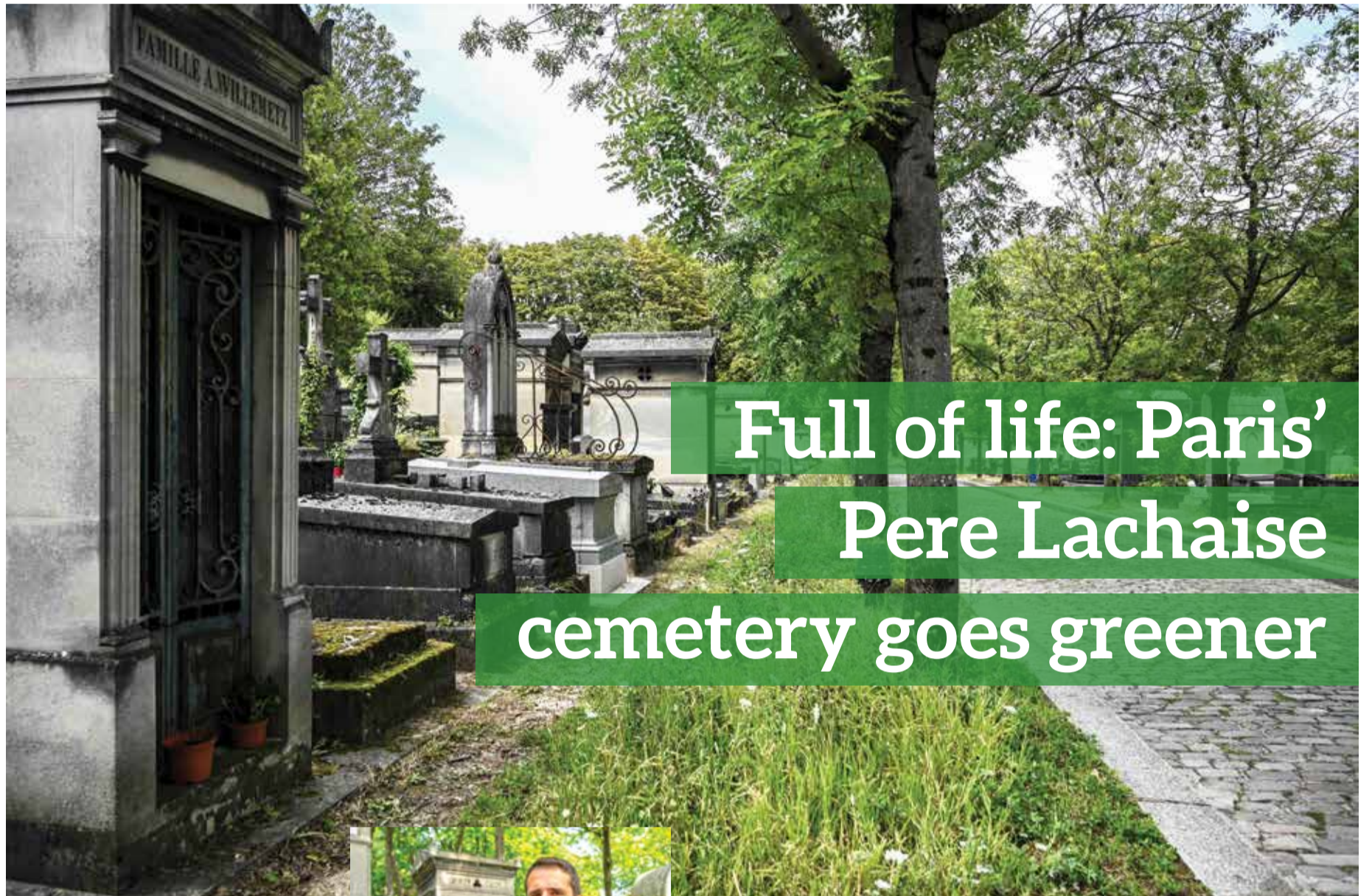
The tomb of Polish composer Frederic Chopin is seen at the Pere Lachaise cemetery.



The tomb of French playwright Moliere is seen at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

As the Paris summer has turned sunny again, visitors are flocking to the cemetery, happily wandering and often getting lost among the headstones and the grassy paths, AFP reporters observed, putting the Pere Lachaise back on track for its usual 7,000 daily visitor average.

Most starstruck tourists have eyes for little else but their maps as they seek out specific graves, but some will have noticed that the cemetery is much greener than it was before the global coronavirus pandemic forced visitors away. The cemetery authorities have



started a major drive to "re-naturalise" the site, said park curator Benoit Gallot, who has held the job since 2018. Dandelions, wild orchids and clover are sprouting among headstones and on the cobbled paths, and there are new patches of lawn where there was only gravel.

'Much more nature'
"There is much more nature than before, more foliage and wild plants on the paths," said Florence Masson, 44, on her first visit to the cemetery in two decades. "That anarchical side of the cemetery is part of what this place is about," said Gallot, who had a moment of social media fame in 2020 when a family of foxes was discovered in the Pere Lachaise.

He said "every square metre" of green gained was "precious" because of the plants' cooling effects on a hot



The curator of the Pere Lachaise cemetery Benoit Gallot poses for a photograph at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

day. But some regular visitors complain that the cemetery is not as tidy-looking as it used to be. "I'm disappointed," said Luc Morel, a pensioner visiting from the southern city of Avignon. "Many of the graves have been neglected."

Gallot acknowledged that graves get damaged, often as a direct result of the abundant flora in the 43-hectare cemetery, the French capital's third big-

gest green space with 4,000 trees.

Falling trees damage around a dozen graves every time a storm hits, he said. The cost of fixing them is usually covered by the families, city hall and insurance companies.

But the cemetery is still short of money, and will create opportunities to make some on the back of strong demand for plots here. Only about a hundred applications for funerals are approved each year, Gallot said.

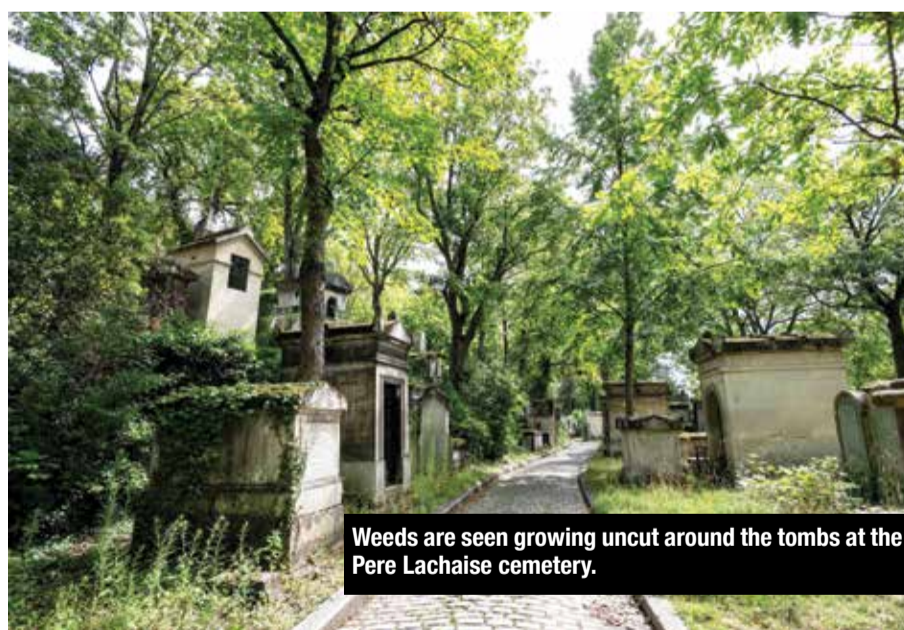
In future, he said, families of the recently deceased could be asked to pay for a full restoration of a site before being allowed to lay their loved ones to rest there. The Pere Lachaise was Paris's first municipal cemetery, opening in 1804. The cemetery creates new space often by grouping the remains of families into a single grave.—AFP



The tomb of French writer Honore de Balzac is seen at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



Visitors stand in front of the tomb of Polish composer Frederic Chopin at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



Weeds are seen growing uncut around the tombs at the Pere Lachaise cemetery.



People sit on a bench at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



A visitor looks at the tomb of French actor Gaspard Ulliel at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris.



Celebrated Argentine pianist Martha Argerich (seated) and pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim (left) are pictured during a free concert at Plaza Vaticano square in Buenos Aires on July 29, 2017.—AFP

Piano great Argerich scraps more concerts over illness

Piano virtuoso Martha Argerich has cancelled further concerts in Austria and Germany in August due to illness, organisers of the events said on Monday. The 82-year-old musician, considered one of the world's best pianists, was scheduled to play a series of concerts with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra conducted by Argentinian-Israeli maestro Daniel Barenboim.

Last week she scrapped two of the planned engagements but kept two concerts in Salzburg and Berlin on the programme. "The pianist had hoped for a recovery soon," the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra said. But Argerich has now also dropped the remaining appearances "for health reasons".

German pianist Igor Levit is taking her place at the concerts. No details were provided about Argerich's illness. Dubbed the "lioness" for her impressive long, grey mane of hair, Argerich was born on June 5, 1941 in Buenos Aires and began playing the piano at the age of three.

She gave her first concert with an orchestra aged eight. She moved to Europe with her family in 1955, learning from some of the continent's top pianists. At the age of 16, in the space of 10 days, she won two major music com-

petitions in Bolzano, Italy and in Geneva, later becoming a naturalised Swiss citizen.

She was invited to concert halls around the world and started releasing now legendary recordings of concertos and other works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Prokofiev, Ravel, Schumann and Tchaikovsky. In 1965, she won Poland's prestigious Chopin piano competition.

For nearly two decades from the 1980s, Argerich largely shunned solo performances, saying they made her feel lonely. She played almost exclusively with orchestras and chamber ensembles until a sold-out recital at Carnegie Hall in New York in 2000 in aid of a cancer charity. She suffered from cancer in the 1990s and cancelled a series of concerts for health reasons in 2017.—AFP

Lifestyle



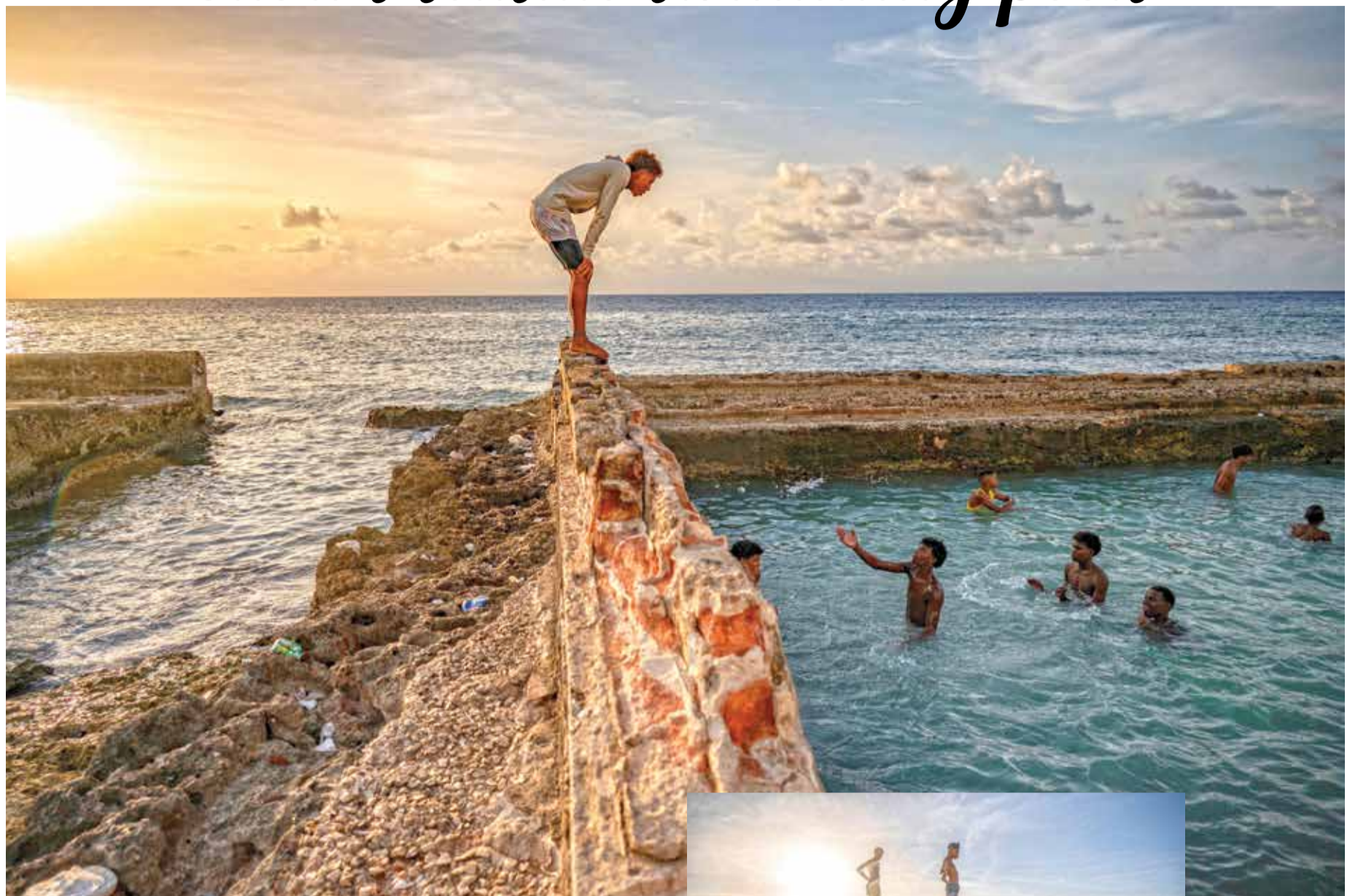
Cubans swim in a natural swimming pool off the coast of Havana.

When summer temperatures start to sizzle in Havana, in-the-know locals head not to the beach but to seaside pools built by wealthy Cuban families in the first half of the last century. Now abandoned and filled with seawater, the pools that survived the 1959 revolution are in the western Havana neighborhood of Miramar that flourished in the 1940s and 1950s with lavish mansions and luxury hotels.

"These swimming pools are a tradition. From generation to generation, we come here," said Boris Baltrons, 44, accompanied by his daughter, sister and nephew. "These houses belonged to rich people. At the time, everyone had their own little pool," he explained, pointing to traces of Spanish tiles that originally lined the walls.

Known only to locals, the pools are at the end of a rubbish-strewn walk. Swimmers sometimes share the pools with fish, crabs and even small octopuses. "It's not a beach like Varadero, but children can have fun here," said Alberto, a 38-year-old scientist, referring to the seaside resort east of the capital.

He came on foot with his family, before sunset, to take a dip in one of the open-air swimming pools. Havana's closest sandy beaches are about a 20-minute drive away, a luxury not everyone can afford on the Communist island where fuel shortages are common.



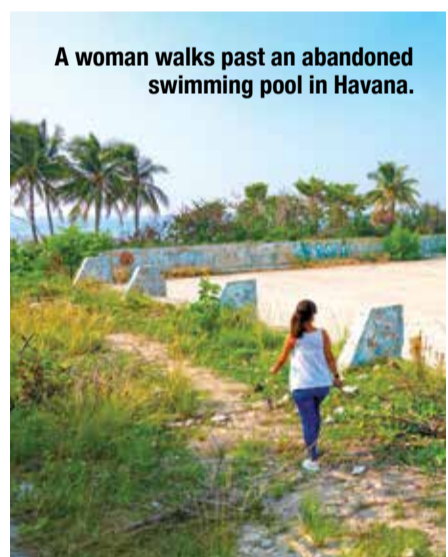
Many of Cuba's swimming pools that require fresh water have fallen into oblivion, including ones built within sports facilities during the first decades of the revolution. These days they are used by skateboarders, graffiti artists, videographers and children playing soccer.

One of Cuba's most famous pools is the "Giant Pool"—measuring 5,000

square meters (54,000 square feet) -- inaugurated by Fidel Castro in the 1970s in Alamar, a Soviet-influenced housing complex in Havana. Today, the island's lush vegetation has begun to devour parts of this vast slab of blue concrete, now deserted.—AFP



Cubans swim in a natural swimming pool off the coast of Havana.



A woman walks past an abandoned swimming pool in Havana.



A man with his camera walks inside an abandoned swimming pool in Havana.



Cubans swim in a natural swimming pool off the coast of Havana.

Greek islanders are fed up this summer -- not with the holidaymakers that flock to their beaches but with the hawkers who cram the sands with sunloungers and parasols, to the point where it's sometimes impossible to get down to their own sea.

Locals on the Aegean island of Paros got so annoyed this season that they set up a "reclaim our beaches" movement, posting photos and videos on social media of sands carpeted with "ridiculously pricey" loungers and petitioning the authorities to clamp down on rookie touts.

The movement has touched a nerve, spreading to other islands, beaches on the mainland and online, where the hashtags "kinima petsetas" ("beach towel movement") and "free beaches" are top trends. "We want public spaces like the seaside to be unencumbered, accessible, free and clean. Nothing less," says the "Active citizens" group on Twitter, which has been rebranded as "X". The protest movement has gained such traction that the central government and local authorities are feeling forced to step in.

According to Greek law, at least 50 percent of every beach must be kept clear to allow people access to the sea. Paros mayor Markos Koveos said deckchair hawkers and beach bars had been breaking the rules "for decades".

"But now, thanks to this citizens' movement, there are more checks," he



Greek islanders refuse to throw in the towel over sunloungers

told AFP by telephone. Even the Supreme Court has got involved. In early August, Court prosecutor Georgia Adilini asked magistrates on the little island of Syros, the administrative capital of the Cyclades, to step in.

They must, he said, make sure everyone had "access to public spaces" like the seaside, a right enshrined in the Greek constitution. The finance ministry has already clamped down on tourist

touts on the islands of Naxos and Zante, fining several for "illegally occupying" beaches.

"It's a funny turn of events when ordinary citizens are checking up on the authorities, rather than the other way round," investigative website Inside Story commented at the weekend. It has even published a handy "Guide for Indignant Bathers". —AFP



This aerial photograph shows beach-goers that walk, lay and bathe on the Oceanis beach, as the area is covered by umbrellas and sun loungers, at Vouliagmeni.

'Barbie' retains top spot at North American box office for fourth week

Warner Bros.' hit "Barbie" dominated North American box offices for a fourth consecutive week, industry estimates showed Sunday, as director Greta Gerwig continues to bust industry records. Gerwig, who with "Barbie" had already become the first solo woman director to rake in more than \$1 billion at the global box office, this week became the highest-grossing woman director of all time in the domestic market, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Industry watcher Exhibitor Relations estimated this weekend's haul for "Barbie" at \$33.7 million, bringing its domestic total to \$526 million. Gerwig is currently vying against Jennifer Lee, who co-directed the animated sequel to Disney's "Frozen" with Chris Buck, to be the highest-grossing woman director of all time at the global box office.

Starring Margot Robbie as the iconic doll and Ryan Gosling as boyfriend Ken, "Barbie" has earned a whopping \$1.2 billion worldwide. Universal's "Oppenheimer," a historical drama about the development of the atomic bomb, regained its second-place position, with the other half of the "Barbenheimer" phenomenon taking in an estimated \$18.8 million over the weekend.

Last week "Oppenheimer" had been beaten by the Warner Bros. monster flick "Meg 2: The Trench," which fell to fourth this week with an estimated \$12.7 million. The success of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" has come amid a backdrop of turmoil in Hollywood, as a historic double-strike by writers and actors has brought productions to a halt.

Both unions are renegotiating their collective contracts with studios to demand better pay, guarantees to limit the use of artificial intelligence and other working conditions. While on strike, union rules prohibit actors from promoting their films, imperiling the marketing events for

upcoming releases as talks show no end in sight.

Third place this weekend went to Paramount's animated "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem," up one spot from the week before with \$15.8 million. In its debut weekend, Universal's vampire film "The Last Voyage of the Demeter" took a frighteningly distant fifth place, at just \$6.5 million.



Based on Bram Stoker's classic "Dracula," the period film takes place on a doomed ship transporting the blood-sucker from his Eastern Europe home to England. "This is a weak opening for a horror film based on a chapter of the legendary Dracula story," said analyst David A. Gross. With poor reviews and an estimated budget of \$45 million, the film is a "difficult sell under any conditions," he added.

Rounding out the top 10 were:
"Haunted Mansion" (\$5.6 million)
"Talk to Me" (\$5.1 million)
"Sound of Freedom" (\$4.8 million)
"Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One" (\$4.7 million)
"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" (\$900,000)—AFP

Lifestyle



A pair of white lions lie in their cage amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo.

A zookeeper checks on a pair of lions being cooled by an air-conditioner amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo in the Iraqi capital.—AFP photos



A Siberian tiger cools off amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo.

Baghdad zoo animals suffer as mercury hits 50 degrees

A pair of Siberian tigers pant incessantly beside a pond at their zoo enclosure in the scorching summer heat of the Iraqi capital.

Temperatures on Monday breached 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in Baghdad for the second day in a row -- making life outdoors unbearable for both humans and animals.

The orange, striped felines from far-eastern Russia are more suited to living "where temperatures drop to as low as minus 20 degrees" than in one of the hottest cities in the world, said Wassim Sarih, the veterinarian at Baghdad's only zoo.

Underfunded and run down by years of unrest and mismanagement, the zoo's dilapidated facilities make matters worse for its roughly 900 animals, including lions, exotic birds, bears and monkeys. Most of the enclosures are open air and "suit animals that live in hot climates", said Sarih. "We don't have ones for animals accustomed to the cold."

In an attempt to lower the temperature, air coolers have been installed in front of the lion cages, and pools are provided for the bears and tigers.

Iraq is unable to provide sufficient electricity to meet domestic needs and is consequently plagued by pow-



Flamingos stand in the water amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo.

er cuts that can last up to 10 hours a day. Baghdad Zoo hasn't seen major renovations since the 1970s, said its director Haider al-Zamili, who is forced to make do with the meagre funds the authorities allocate.

Under such conditions, Sarih said "the lifespan of our animals is shorter compared to other zoos". The zoo's Siberian tigers live for 17 or 18 years while their counterparts in other zoos

have a life expectancy of 20 to 25 years, with the heat making the difference, he said. The veterinarian said the zoo has lost bears, lions and birds in recent years, some of them because of the soaring temperatures caused by climate change.

Years of drought

The United Nations says Iraq is one of the five countries in the world

most touched by the effects of climate change. Currently the country is facing its fourth consecutive year of drought.

Not a single visitor was seen at the zoo as it's far too hot to venture outside. Only the cries of monkeys and singing of birds can be heard. Karrar Jassem, a zoo employee, is one of the few people seen wandering around the garden under the punishing sun as he feeds the animals.

Like the many outdoor workers in Iraq exposed to the heat, the 32-year-old said he must provide for his family. He earns only 250,000 Iraqi dinars a month (about \$165 or 150 euros).

Employees' wages are "very low and don't correspond to the hazards they face, such as potential injuries or joint pains", said Sarih. The veterinarian said he had contacted the authorities, including the municipality of Baghdad, which is responsible for the zoo, but had yet to come across "any receptive ears".

Sarih predicted the zoo will soon have to close its doors in the absence of an ambitious renovation plan. "Then the whole community will be a loser," he said.—AFP



A zookeeper looks on as a lion reacts in its cage amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo.



A lion looks on in its cage amid sweltering temperatures at the Baghdad Zoo.



A picture shows empty tourist facilities by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.



A picture shows empty tourist facilities by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.



A picture shows empty tourist facilities by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.

Iraqi merchant Mohamed has never seen such a grim tourist season: years of drought have shrunken the majestic Lake Habbaniyah, keeping away the holidaymakers who once flocked there during summer.

"The last two years, there was some activity, but now there's no more water," said 35-year-old Mohamed, asking to be identified by his first name only. He laid out inflatable water floats, nets and shirts in front of his lakeside shop, but expected few if any customers.

"This year, it's dry, dry!" Mohamed told AFP, his shirt soaked in sweat in the inhospitable heat of nearly 50 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit).

Shorelines at Habbaniyah, about 70 kilometres (45 miles) west of the capital Baghdad, have receded by several dozen metres after four consecutive years of drought ravaged parts of the country.

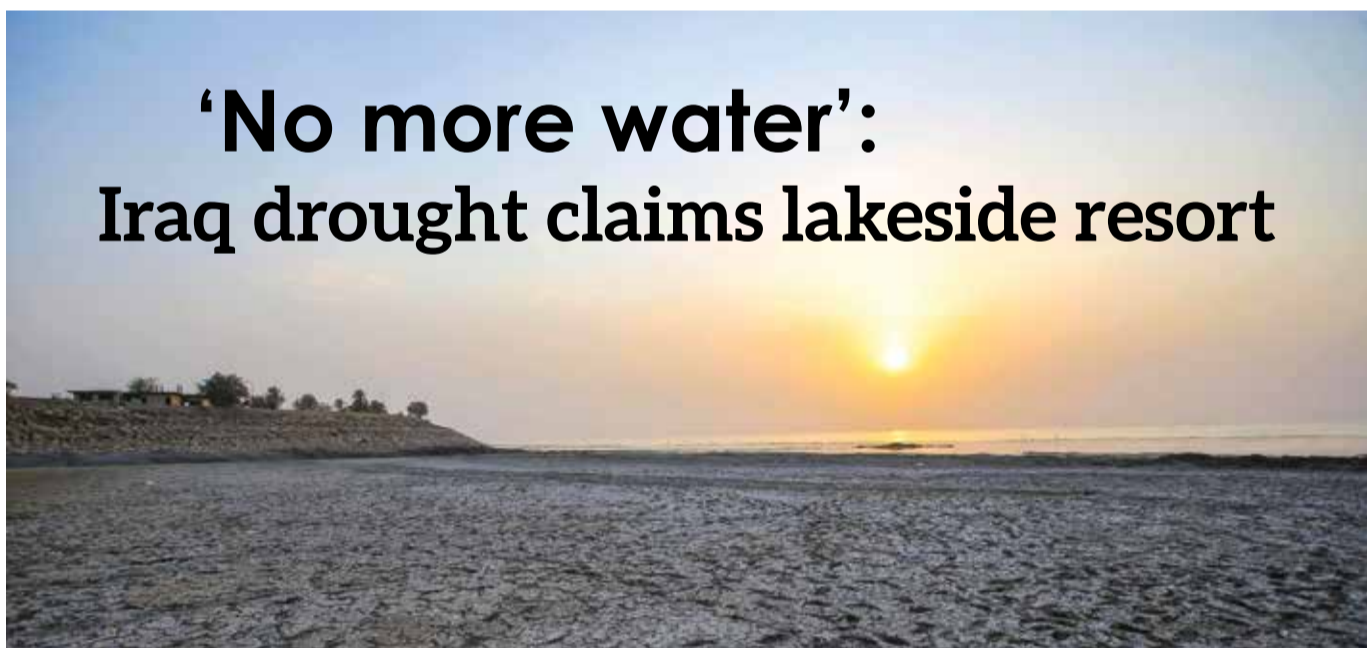
The United Nations ranks water-stressed Iraq as one of five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change. When full, as it last was in 2020, the lake can hold up to 3.3 billion cubic metres (117 trillion cubic feet) of water, said Jamal Odeh Samir, director of water resources in Anbar province, where Habbaniyah is located.

But now "the lake contains no more than 500 million cubic metres of water", he told AFP. Shops like Mohamed's and holiday homes by the lake now sit empty in the height of summer. On the beach, stray dogs wander between unused umbrellas. To get to the water, visitors must walk through foul-smelling mud that was once submerged under the lake surface.

'Only place to relax'

The resort was created around the artificial lake in 1979, becoming a popular destination for tourists from across the Middle East in the following years.

Declining rainfall over the past four years and rising temperatures have hit



'No more water': Iraq drought claims lakeside resort

Habbaniyah -- alongside much of the rest of the country -- hard.

Baghdad blames upstream dam construction by Turkey on a staggering low water level in the Euphrates river, which feeds the lake and also runs through Syr-



A picture shows dilapidated touristic installations by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.

ia. "The strategic water reserves in Iraq are at their lowest point" in nearly a century, Khaled Shamal, spokesman for the water resources ministry, has warned.

Last week during a visit to Baghdad, United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk warned that "rising temperatures plus the drought, and the fact that the loss of diversity is a reality, is a wake-up call for Iraq and for the world".

Sada'a Saleh Mohamed, a local official overseeing finances at the Habbaniyah resort, said "the lake has receded" and tourism has become "really very weak". "The lake has become a pond of stagnant water, unsuitable for consumption or for swimming," he said. When evening fell and temperatures dropped slightly, a few people finally arrived to barbecue on the beach.

Qassem Lafta came with his family from the nearby city of Fallujah. "Before, we would come here and it was much better, the water was higher," said the

45-year-old merchant. He said he hoped authorities would revive the lake. "It's the only place where people from Anbar, southern Iraq and Baghdad can come to relax."—AFP



A picture shows dilapidated touristic installations by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.



People swim in the receding waters of the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.



A picture shows empty tourist facilities by the Habbaniyah lake affected by severe drought in Iraq's Anbar province.—AFP photos

Sports

Majestic King leads West Indies to T20 series win over India

We are not just playing to put smiles on our faces but for the people

LAUDERHILL: Brandon King's superb unbeaten 85 led West Indies to an eight-wicket win over India on Sunday to secure a 3-2 victory in their T20 series. Set a target of 166 to win the fifth and deciding contest, in Lauderdale, Florida, West Indies reached their target with two overs to spare with Nicholas Pooran scoring 47 in a partnership of 107 with King. The win was a morale-booster for West Indies cricket after the one-day team failed, last month, to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in their history.

"Adjectives are inadequate for our feelings. It's a big series. It's a very big series for us to beat India at home with everything going on," said West Indies captain Rovman Powell. "After we got defeated badly (on Saturday) we sat down and talked. We are not just playing to put smiles on our faces but for the people," he added.

King's highest T20 international score came from 55 balls with six sixes and five fours and he kept his focus despite a delay to the game following a lightning warning. Shai Hope, who steadied the ship after Pooran was removed by Tilak Varma, with the spinners second ever ball in international

cricket, clinched the victory with a straight six off Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Suryakumar Yadav struck 61 as India made 165 for nine while Romario Shepherd took 4-31 in his four overs as West Indies' bowling attack delivered a much better performance than in their emphatic defeat on Saturday which left the five-match series at 2-2.

West Indies made two changes with off-spinner Roston Chase and pace bowler Alzarri Joseph coming in for Odean Smith and Obed McCoy and there was a better balance and performance from that line-up. Opening pair Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, who put on a match-winning 165 run partnership on Saturday, were both dismissed cheaply by left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein.

Tilak Varma looked dangerous before he went for 27 off 18, caught and bowled by Chase but Yadav's innings kept India's hopes alive. Medium pacer Shepherd took care of the lower middle order as West Indies were set a target of 166 to win the series.

West Indies had led the series 2-0 before India fought back to set up Sunday's clincher and captain Hardik Pandya said they had time to get things right before the T20 World Cup next June in



LAUDERHILL: West Indies players celebrate their victory during the fifth and final T20I match between West Indies and India at the Central Broward Regional Park in Lauderdale, Florida. — AFP

the Caribbean and the United States.

"It's a long way. We have the ODI WC coming up and sometimes losing

is good. You get to learn a lot," Pandya said. "And special mention for all the boys. They showed great character.

Winning and losing is a part of the process and we are going to make sure we learn from that," he said. — AFP

News in Brief

Everton sign Harrison on loan

LONDON: Everton signed Leeds winger Jack Harrison on a season-long loan on Monday. Harrison returns to the Premier League following Leeds' relegation to the Championship last season. The 26-year-old becomes Everton's fourth signing since the end of last season after spending the last five years at Leeds. "Jack Harrison passed his medical with the club yesterday before completing the necessary paperwork this morning," Everton said in a statement. "He will now continue his rehabilitation from a minor hip injury before being available for Sean Dyche's squad." Dyche had signed Arnaut Danjuma from Villarreal, Ashley Young from Aston Villa and Youssef Chermiti from Sporting Lisbon since his team narrowly avoided relegation last season. Everton opened the Premier League season with a disappointing 1-0 home defeat against Fulham on Saturday. Harrison, who joined Leeds from Manchester City, is the ninth player to leave the Elland Road club following their relegation. — AFP

Real Madrid sign Chelsea keeper

MADRID: Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga has joined Real Madrid on a season-long loan to replace the injured Thibaut Courtois, the two clubs announced on Monday. "Real Madrid and Chelsea FC have agreed on the loan of player Kepa Arrizabalaga until June 30, 2024," the Spanish club said in a statement. Belgian star Courtois, 31, will miss most of the season after rupturing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee. Kepa, 28, had been close to a transfer to Bayern Munich, but will instead return to his native Spain. Bayern board chairman Jan-Christian Dreesen had said on Sunday that the Bavarian club were thinking of presenting Kepa "today or tomorrow, but the offer from Real Madrid has arrived. Kepa is Spanish, that's normal that he accepts it". The former Athletic Bilbao keeper came close to signing for Real in 2018 but instead joined Chelsea for £71 million (\$90 million) and lifted the Europa League trophy in his first season. The Spaniard was also involved in Chelsea's Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA World Club Cup triumphs in 2021. — AFP

Bangladesh referee 'resigns'

DHAKA: A top Bangladeshi cricket referee said Monday he had "resigned" after taking part in anti-government protests, with supporters alleging he was pushed out under pressure. Debabrata Paul, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) match referee coordinator, took part in a rally of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Friday, sparking criticism from other officials at the influential board. "I found the situation really uncomfortable, so I resigned," Paul told AFP, declining to comment further. But supporters close to Paul said he had been castigated by BCB directors in players' messaging groups for taking part in the protest and that he felt "abused". Paul, who represents Bangladesh in the FICA, the global cricket players' association, had been serving as a match referee in local leagues since 2006, and has overseen 134 domestic matches. BCB umpires committee chairman Iftekhar Rahman said that he had spoken to Paul over his participation in the protest, but denied he had been forced to quit. "We are also shocked at his resignation," Rahman told AFP. "We did not put any pressure on him." — AFP

S Africa name 18 for one-day games against Australia

JOHANNESBURG: Cricket South Africa on Monday named 18 players for a five-match one-day international series against Australia next month, the team's last outings before the Cricket World Cup in India. But not all the players will be travelling to India for the tournament in October and November.

A 15-man World Cup squad will be named on September 5, two days before the first one-day international. Some of the squad will be hoping to impress in three Twenty20 internationals before the one-day series. They include Dewald Brevis, 20, who is set to make his international debut during the T20 series.

A hard-hitting batsman and leg-spin bowler, he will also be part of the one-day squad. Brevis has only played in four first-class matches but has already been signed up by T20 franchises in India, South Africa, the West Indies and the United States.

Murray back for Britain's Davis Cup campaign

LONDON: Andy Murray is back in the Great Britain Davis Cup team for next month's matches against Australia, France and Switzerland. Former Wimbledon champion Murray was left out of Britain's 3-1 qualifying round win against Colombia on clay in February.

British captain Leon Smith suggested the surface was not conducive for Murray, who had at the time played just three matches on clay since 2017. But the former world number one was named in the squad on Monday for the September dates in Manchester.

Murray takes his place alongside Cameron Norrie, Dan Evans and Neal Skupski for the Finals Group Stage as Britain attempt to qualify for November's knockout

stage. Only two of the four nations will advance from Group B for the Davis Cup quarter-finals in Malaga. Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion, was integral to Britain ending a 79-year wait for glory in the team competition when they triumphed in 2015.

His most recent Grand Slam appearance ended in a second round exit at Wimbledon against Stefanos Tsitsipas. "It's been a long time since we played in the north-west (of England) and I'm sure we are going to feel and hear a lot of energy from the fans," Smith said. "We have a great team with a lot of Davis Cup experience who will be ready to give it everything in a tough group with Australia, Switzerland and France."

Meanwhile, Carlos Alcaraz has put his quarter-final loss at the Toronto Masters behind him as he prepares to renew his rivalry with Novak Djokovic in Cincinnati next week. The Spanish world number one made a surprisingly early exit in

Canada, bundled out of the last eight by Tommy Paul in three sets to end a lacklustre campaign.

But the 20-year-old was in no mood to dwell on that loss on Sunday as he looked ahead to the Cincinnati Masters, the last warm-up before he launches the defence of his US Open crown later this month. This week's tournament in the Midwest carries added intrigue with a field that contains 23-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic.

The pair last met in the Wimbledon final, with the Spaniard prevailing in a five-set classic. Djokovic has not played since that defeat a month ago, and Alcaraz can't wait to lock horns with the Serb once again.

"I like those battles. I like to know that I can lose, and I can recover it at the same time," Alcaraz said on Sunday. "You must enjoy (it) when the battle is against one of the legends from our sport, against Novak. I feel I'm (the) main opponent; for me, it's something crazy, and I'm trying to enjoy." — AFP



Bader Al-Abdullah

Al-Abdullah grabs third spot in Arab tennis tourney

BEIRUT: Kuwaiti tennis player Bader Al-Abdullah on Sunday came third in the Arab men's tennis tournament organized by the Lebanese Tennis Federation at Broumana Sports Club. Al-Abdullah made this achievement after defeating Egyptian player Mohamad Gomaa with two sets to zero (6-4) (6-2). He also won the Best Sportsmanship Cup in the tournament.

Tunisian player Moez Al-Sharqi was ranked first after beating Lebanese player Hadi Habib in the final match, with two sets to zero (6-4) and (7-6). Al-Abdullah told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that his participation in the Arab tournament gave him the opportunity to play with the best tennis players in the Arab world. Eight elite players from Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia, Jordan and Syria partook in the tournament. — KUNA

Former England fast bowler Finn retires

LONDON: Former England fast bowler Steven Finn retired on Monday after the three-time Ashes winner accepted "defeat" in his battle against a host of injury problems. Finn took 125 wickets in 36 Test appearances for England at an average of 30.4 between 2010 and 2016.

The 34-year-old also played in 69 one-day internationals and 21 Twenty20 internationals for England. Hampered by various injuries, Finn slipped out of the England squad and has not played red-ball cricket since July 2022. "I have been fighting a battle with my body for the last 12 months and have admitted defeat to it," Finn said.

Finn made his county debut with Middlesex aged 16, emerging as a rising star for England following his maiden Test appearance against Bangladesh in 2010. But after helping England to three Ashes triumphs, Finn's injury problems took their toll. He signed for Sussex last year, but a setback in his attempt to recover from a long-running knee problem forced him to bring the curtain down on his 18-year career.

"I retire with some amazing memories with England, Middlesex and Sussex, shared with fantastic



Steven Finn

people. Those will live with me forever," he said. "Cricket has given me a lot and I hope to give back to the game in some capacity in the future. "But,

for now, I'll enjoy watching on without wondering whether my body will be able to make it through another day's cricket." — AFP

Sports

American Lilia Vu wins second major at Women's British Open

'It sounds almost unreal to hear my name announced as champion'

WALTON-ON-THE-HILL: American Lilia Vu sealed her second major title of the year with a dominant six-shot victory over Charley Hull at the Women's British Open on Sunday. The 25-year-old posted a final round 67 to finish on 14-under par, and is now set to replace Nelly Korda as the new world number one. "It sounds almost unreal to hear my name announced as champion," said Vu, breaking down in tears after her triumph. "I've had a tough couple of months and I just wanted to be in contention this week." Vu won her first LPGA tournament in Thailand in February and then claimed her first major in April at the Chevron Championship.

But she missed the cut at the next two majors - the LPGA Championship and the US Women's Open. "I thought my two wins were just a fluke, I lost confidence," she said as the tears began to flow. "But I've got a great family and team around me and they gave me belief." Vu appeared very calm as she plotted her way to the trophy, but she continued: "I wasn't calm inside. Even on the last putt (she holed from 25 feet for birdie at the 18th) my caddie just told me how to hit it."

Vu was also grateful to the British fans. Playing alongside Hull, who started the day tied with the eventual winner but had to settle for second place, she was always going to come second best in the cheer stakes. "But the crowd was great," said Vu. "I love playing with Charley and I understood that most people wanted her to win. But there were cheers for me too and it was very fair." Hull, who also finished second in the US Women's

Open, admitted she felt a bit deflated after a closing 73. "But I'm going to work even harder to win a major."

Protest on 17th

"I came from behind at the US Open and here I was tied for the lead going into the final round. I now can't wait for next year." Even a demonstration by climate activists Just Stop Oil at the short 17th - powder was thrown onto the green - could not spoil Vu's march to victory. She made the perfect start with a 10-foot birdie putt at the first. By the time she had added more birdies at the fourth and 10th her lead had been extended to a comfortable five shots. Hull, who dropped shots at three and four, raised hopes of mounting a comeback when she holed out of a bunker for an eagle three at the 11th. But Vu immediately hit back with an unanswered tap-in birdie at the 12th. The Californian made her only bogey after driving into heather at the 15th, but Hull also dropped a shot and it was all but over.

Vu has not had an easy road to the top. She turned professional in 2019 but made only one cut in nine starts on her first season on the LPGA Tour. She then stepped back to the Epson Tour and won three events in 2021 to regain her LPGA card.

After landing a first LPGA title in Thailand at the start of this year, she followed it up with her major breakthrough at the Chevron. On that occasion she won via a play-off, but major number two was more straightforward. — AFP



WALTON-ON-THE-HILL: US golfer Lilia Vu (L) holds the winner's trophy and England's Charlotte Heath holds the winning amateur's trophy, as they pose for a photograph after the 2023 Women's British Open Golf Championship at Walton Heath Golf Club in Walton-on-the-Hill. — AFP

Glover beats Cantlay to win St Jude title

WASHINGTON: Lucas Glover parred the first playoff hole to defeat Patrick Cantlay in a playoff on Sunday to win the St Jude Championship, sealing his second title in as many weeks in the PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoff opener. The 43-year-old American, who won last week in Greensboro just to qualify for the playoffs, became the first over-40 winner of consecutive PGA Tour events since Fiji's Vijay Singh in 2008. "You work hard no matter what, whether you are fighting something or you're playing great, because you never know when it can turn," Glover said. "It has turned very quickly for me and luckily I've been in a good frame of mind to take advantage of it."

Glover, the 2009 US Open champion, sank several dramatic long putts on the back nine while Cantlay, the 2021 playoff champion, charged late to force a playoff, which began at the 18th hole at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee.

Cantlay's tee shot went into water left of the fairway. He blasted his third onto the green just inside 22 feet and just inside where Glover's ball sat after two shots. Glover two-putted for par, leaving Cantlay a must-make putt. Cantlay's ball rolled past the right edge and Glover had the victory. "I was fortunate to get into a playoff," Glover said. "I said the guns would be coming and they came and I was just last man standing this week." Cantlay fired a six-under-par 64 and Glover shot 69 to each finish 72 holes on 15-under 265.

Glover won his sixth career PGA title and became the first over-40 playoff winner since Tiger Woods in 2018. The 70-player showdown advanced the top 50 in season points to next week's BMW Championship, from which only the top 30 qualify for the Tour Championship in two weeks at Atlanta. Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy, last year's playoff champion from Northern Ireland, fired 65 to share third with England's Tommy Fleetwood on 266. American Taylor Moore was fifth on 268. Second-ranked McIlroy would have overtaken world number one Scottie Scheffler with a victory.

Cantlay chipped in at 10 to pull within two of Glover, who sank a clutch seven-foot pat putt at 11. Cantlay made an eight-foot birdie putt at 15 to move within one but Glover answered with a tense 20-foot par putt at the 13th. Glover then sent his tee shot at the 14th into water, falling into a share of the lead despite salvaging bogey on a 30-foot putt. Cantlay seized the lead with a birdie at the par-5 16th while Glover missed a seven-foot birdie putt at 15. Glover's tap-in birdie at 16 gave him a share of the lead but he made yet another intense par putt from just inside 12 feet at 17 and parred 18 to force the playoff. — AFP

Ben Yedder leads Monaco, Strasbourg win on Vieira bow

PARIS: Monaco captain Wissam Ben Yedder scored twice in a 4-2 win at Clermont on Sunday after he was charged with rape this week, while Strasbourg made a winning start to life under Patrick Vieira by beating Lyon. France international Ben Yedder on Friday was charged with rape, attempted rape and sexual assault over an alleged incident that happened on the Cote d'Azur in July. He has been placed under judicial supervision and had to pay bail of 900,000 euros (\$987,000). But the 33-year-old forward started his team's opening game of the season, striking in both halves as Monaco made a winning start under new Austrian coach Adi Hutter.

"I congratulate him (Ben Yedder), he had a very good reaction," said Hutter. "I have purely a sporting relationship with him, from coach to player. We only speak about the pitch and my job is to put the best players out there and he's among them." Mateusz Wieteska put Clermont ahead before Vanderson equalized, with Ben Yedder firing in a rebound off the post to give Monaco the lead shortly before half-time.

Muhammed Cham brought Clermont level at 2-2 but Ben Yedder netted again with 20 minutes to play and Maghnes Akliouche added a fourth in injury time. Vieira made the perfect start to his first job since being sacked by Premier League club Crystal Palace last

season as Strasbourg saw off Lyon, coached by Vieira's 1998 World Cup-winning France teammate Laurent Blanc, 2-1.

The hosts took a 63rd-minute lead when Jean-Ricner Bellegarde's free-kick from the left flew all the way into the far corner. South Africa striker Lebo Mthiba, who was given the nod to start after a strong pre-season, added a second 15 minutes from time, with Nicolas Tagliafico's goal just a consolation for Lyon. "We wanted to play a little more, but the quality of Lyon prevented it," said Vieira. "We are starting a cycle with players who don't have much experience of Ligue 1."

Lens stumble

Last year's runners-up Lens came unstuck, blowing a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 at Brest earlier in the day. In spite of losing their influential captain Seko Fofana and striker Lois Openda during the summer break, Lens made a dazzling start to the new season with Florian Sotoca and Deiver Machado putting them two up after just 22 minutes.

Brest, however, hit back just before half-time when Romain del Castillo netted the first of his two penalties. Brest took the reins in the second half and equalized through Kenny Lala in the 56th minute.

The game appeared to be heading for a draw before Lens substitute Adrien Thomasson was sent off in the 82nd minute and five minutes later Mahdi Camara gave away another penalty. Up stepped Del Castillo to bury his second spot-kick and snatch the points for Brest.

"What's disconcerting is to play 40 minutes of this quality, when with a bit more accuracy we should have been leading 3-0 and when there's only one team on the pitch... and then let certain things go," said Lens coach Franck Haise. — AFP

Spain 'goosebumps' on eve of historic first WCup semi-final

AUCKLAND: Spain's first Women's World Cup semi-final in their history on Tuesday is reward for years of sacrifice, veteran forward Jennifer Hermoso says, admitting to "goosebumps" at the thought of reaching the final. Opponents Sweden are regulars at this stage of the World Cup — without ever going on to lift the trophy — but for Spain they are into uncharted waters. "If you don't feel any nerves before a game like this then something is not right," the 33-year-old Hermoso said on the eve of the semi-final in Auckland.

"It gives you goosebumps thinking about how close we are to the final, but first of all we have the game tomorrow and Spain will come out more determined than ever," Hermoso, who plays her club football in Mexico, has been representing her country for more than a decade and won her 100th cap earlier in the tournament.

"Tomorrow's game is the consequence of millions of training sessions, of so many moments we have been through, of spending time far from our families and loved ones, of so much sacrifice," she said. "We have worked so hard to get here and I just want to enjoy it. I want the whole team to enjoy it and for the whole of Spain to be behind us." Spain and Sweden drew 1-1 in a friendly last October, just after 15 Spanish players told their federation they no longer wished to be considered for selection in protest at coach Jorge Vilda. Vilda survived the rebellion and brought three of the rebels with him to the World Cup.

"We have a (federation) president who reacted bravely, who backed me and my staff," he said on Monday. "Now there is unity in the squad, everyone is getting on, they are ambitious and trying to enjoy every day." One of the players who returned to the squad is midfielder Aitana Bonmati and she has been one of the standouts at the tournament. Sweden coach Peter Gerhardsson believes it would be a mistake to focus too closely on trying to stop the Barcelona playmaker.

"The difficulty with Spain is that they have so many skilled players, whereas other teams might have just one or two stars, so that means making sure we mark them is very important," he said.

Swedes bank on experience

Sweden captain Kosovare Asllani believes her team's far greater experience of going far at major tournaments will give them the edge at Eden Park. The Swedes have become regulars in the latter stages at recent competitions, having reached the last four at the 2019 World Cup and at last year's European Championship. They also made the final at the Tokyo Olympics before losing to Canada. "We have the benefit of experience," Asllani said. "We have gone far in the last few tournaments but I am particularly pleased with the way we have done it this time. "We have won our matches in different ways and it shows the strength of this team." Sweden reached a third semi-final in the last four World Cups by winning all three group games, ousting holders the United States on penalties and then beating Japan 2-1 in the last eight. — AFP



CLERMONT-FERRAND: Clermont-Ferrand's French midfielder #08 Bilal Boutobba (C) fights for the ball with Monaco's Belgian midfielder #15 Eliot Matazo (L) and Monaco's French midfielder #41 Soungoutou Magassa (R) during the French L1 football match between Clermont Foot 63 and AS Monaco at Stade Gabriel Montpied in Clermont-Ferrand. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507

Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, Ramandeep S/o Chaman Lal R/o Vpo. Muthada Kalan Teh-Phillaur (Jalandhar) changed my name to Ramandeep Mehmi. (3843) 14/8/2023

I, Mahamad Abid Chand Saheb S/o Abdul Qadir Chand Saheb R/o D. No. 240-3, Main Road, Gandlapenta, Ananthapur, Pin Code : 515521 Andhra Pradesh, India corrected my name from Mahamad Abid Chand Saheb to Mu-

hammad Abid Chand Saheb S/o Abdul Qadir Chand Saheb. (3844) 14/8/2023

I, KASHIM holder of Indian. Passport No. R5455215 having permanent address H. No. 559, Gali. No. 19, Saurabh - Vihar, Jaitpur, South- Delhi-110044, residing in Kuwait at present do hereby change my name to (given name) Kashim and (Surname) Khan for all future purposes. (3845) 14/8/2023

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Getafe frustrate champions Barca

Both sides see red in bad-tempered goalless draw



GETAFE: Barcelona's Brazilian forward #11 Raphinha (R) controls the ball during the Spanish Liga football match between Getafe CF and FC Barcelona at the Col. Alfonso Perez stadium in Getafe. — AFP

GETAFE: Spanish champions Barcelona began their La Liga title defence with a frustrating 0-0 draw at Getafe on Sunday, with both sides reduced to 10 men in a bad-tempered clash. Barca winger Raphinha was sent off for an elbow in the first half and Getafe's Jaime Mata was dismissed early in the second for two yellow cards.

Xavi Hernandez earned a red card himself for touchline complaints as his Barcelona side battled to find a late winner but, like last season, they started their domestic campaign with a goalless draw. The coach handed debuts to summer signings Ilkay Gundogan and Oriol Romeu as Barcelona began their campaign with one of the most uncomfortable away trips of the season.

The Catalans had failed to score in their three previous visits to the Coliseum Alfonso Perez and Getafe got into Barcelona's faces from the start. Xavi complained about the length of the grass at Getafe last season, saying it ruined the spectacle of the match, and this time it was repeated fouls which disrupted the champions' rhythm.

"It's normal that people don't want to watch football, this has barely been a game," Xavi told reporters. "A point for us is not sufficient but this was a very difficult game for us to play." Damian Suarez winded former Manchester City midfielder Gundogan with a barge in the chest, among other challenges which crossed the line between fair and foul.

Raphinha was targeted on multiple occasions too and eventually he snapped, flinging an elbow into Gaston Alvarez's head, earning a red card. The Brazilian had been Barcelona's brightest player, drawing two saves from Getafe goalkeeper David Soria, but left his team in the lurch.

After Ousmane Dembele's departure this week to Paris Saint-Germain, the onus was on Raphinha to step up and show his quality on the right flank after a mixed first season. "It's obvious that it's a clear red card and it can't happen," Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen told DAZN.

"We played well, we didn't want the match to stop so much, and tried to play as quickly as possible, but it was very difficult because of the opponents."

'This is shameful'

Xavi made an attacking change at half-time, throwing on winger Ez Abde by Andreas Christensen, with Frenkie de Jong dropping into central defence. Getafe's Mata levelled the playing field before the hour mark when he tripped the ram-paging Ronald Araujo to earn a second booking.

Xavi brought on 16-year-old starlet Lamine Yamal and Ansu Fati to try and snatch a late winner and they quickly combined, but the latter fired over. After 10 minutes of stoppage time had been added on in the first half, nine further minutes were signalled in the second, with 16 actually played after a VAR review for an Araujo penalty claim.

The Uruguayan was felled in the box but no penalty was awarded because of a Gavi handball in the build-up. Xavi was also unimpressed with the long periods of stoppage time as a solution to time wasting.

"This is also shameful, in my opinion," he said. "With 'effective time' (stopping the clock) in football you put a stop to this. I've said it a thousand times

already—we're making fools of ourselves." Barcelona could not find a breakthrough and will be playing catch-up after rivals Real Madrid's convincing 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

"We knew it would be a tough game," said Getafe goalkeeper Soria. "They have a lot of attacking talent and we had just enough players—it told in the second half that they had a lot more on the bench."

Elsewhere Real Betis snatched a late win at Villarreal through Willian Jose's stoppage-time strike. Ayoze Perez put the visitors ahead after fine work by Luis Henrique, but Jorge Cuenca pulled the Yellow Submarine level before Jose's late winner.

Betis's Isco started a La Liga match for the first time since November 2022, having left Sevilla by mutual consent in December and joined their rivals this summer, and was bright despite his time out of the game. Last season's Copa del Rey runners-up Osasuna won 2-0 at Celta Vigo, inflicting defeat on the Galicians in veteran manager Rafa Benitez's first game at the helm. — AFP

Neymar 'in negotiations' over Saudi move

PARIS: Neymar was "in negotiations" on Sunday to become the latest football superstar to decamp for Saudi Arabia, leaving Paris Saint-Germain just as Kylian Mbappe was brought back in from the cold by the French champions.

A source close to PSG told AFP that 31-year-old Neymar "no longer figures in the club or manager's plans" with the Brazilian immediately linked to Al-Hilal in the Gulf kingdom. Another source in Saudi Arabia said that "direct negotiations" between Neymar's agents and the Public Investment Fund (PIF) were ongoing.

"If we reach an agreement with him in the coming hours, we would start negotiating with PSG immediately. He would play for Al-Hilal if a deal is sealed," said the source. Neymar joined PSG for a record 220 million euros (\$241m) from Barcelona in 2017. Some media reports on Sunday claimed that Al-Hilal would offer in the region of \$80 million for the Brazilian.

Last month Al-Hilal made a 300-million-euro bid for Mbappe, though the striker reportedly refused to meet with officials from the team. Neymar underwent surgery on his right ankle in early March, only returning to join PSG on their pre-season tour of Asia. His time at PSG has been blighted by a catalogue of injuries.

Although he helped the club to the 2020 Champions League final he has often been sidelined for key games. If Neymar does end up moving to Saudi Arabia he will join a growing list of top players lured to the oil-rich kingdom since Cristiano Ronaldo moved to Al-Nassr in January. Al-Hilal have traditionally been one of Saudi Arabia's top clubs and have been crowned Asian Champions League winners on four occasions.

They are coached by Portugal's Jorge Jesus, who is in his second spell at the club, while the squad currently boasts four international players recently lured from Europe—Ruben Neves, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, Kalidou Koulibaly and Neymar's Brazilian compatriot Malcom.



Neymar Jr

Neymar's anticipated departure from PSG would follow that of Lionel Messi who now plays for Inter Miami in the United States. In a sign of the growing impact of the Saudis in world football, Roberto Mancini was reported Sunday to be the man lined up to become the manager of the country's national team after his shock resignation from European champions Italy.

It has been a rocky build-up to the new Ligue 1 season for champions PSG with both Mbappe and Neymar left out of new coach Luis Enrique's team for Saturday's underwhelming opening goalless draw against Lorient.

After being sidelined for several weeks amid an ongoing contract dispute Mbappe watched from the Parc des Princes stands. But the club's prize asset is now back in the fold, for the time being at least, said PSG on Sunday. "After very constructive and positive discussions between Paris Saint-Germain and Kylian Mbappe before the PSG-Lorient match, the player was reinstated in first team training this morning," PSG said in a statement.

After a summer of flux at the Parc des Princes filled with new arrivals, doubts over Neymar's future and Messi's departure, it is the Mbappe stand-off that dominated the headlines. The France captain has refused to sign an extension to his PSG deal, meaning he can leave for free next year, with Real Madrid long seen as his preferred destination. — AFP

Australia, England primed for blockbuster World Cup clash

SYDNEY: Australia and England clash in the Women's World Cup semi-finals on Wednesday in Sydney in the latest installment of a long-standing sporting rivalry between the countries. Co-hosts Australia have the nation behind them for the first World Cup semi-final in their history and Stadium Australia will be heaving with an anticipated crowd of about 80,000.

Their heart-stopping penalty shootout win over France in the quarter-finals on Saturday was one of the most-viewed television sporting events in Australia in almost two decades. But England are the European champions and will be favourites to reach the final of the World Cup for the first time, even if they must face down a hostile crowd.

It was put to England's Dutch coach Sarina Wiegman that she probably did not fully appreciate the enormity of a match between Australia and England. "It's going to be really big," she said, with Spain or Sweden awaiting the winner.

"But now I've had a couple of questions about that so it's probably going to be bigger than I imagined now. I'll talk to my players and staff and see what that rivalry is." The storied sporting rivalry between Australia and England has already witnessed several episodes this year.

Australia won both the men's and women's Ashes cricket series. Australia's netball team then rubbed salt in English wounds by beating them in the recent World Cup final. England football captain Millie Bright understands how much it means to fans of both countries.

"I don't think you can't look forward to that game," she told reporters after England came back from a goal down to defeat Colombia 2-1 in the quarter-finals. "This is the biggest tournament in the women's game to date so what a game to be a part of."

She added: "We're not just coming here to compete, we're coming here to get the job done and we've shown that in our mentality and character in every single game." Team-mate Lauren Hemp, who scored the equaliser against Colombia, said: "Australia, bring it on."

"It's going to be a packed stadium with so many Australian fans, but we know if we play at our best we are unstoppable." England will again be without the banned Lauren James, but they did not miss her in a convincing performance against Colombia in front of a crowd roaring on the South Americans.

Perfectly primed

England may be ranked six places above the Matildas in the FIFA rankings but the home side are riding on a wave of excitement and acclaim. They have used the support to lift them in difficult moments and will be banking on more of the same at the imposing Stadium Australia.

They also go into the game after defeating England 2-0 away in an April friendly, ending the Lionesses' proud 30-match unbeaten run. Australia also have striker and skipper Sam Kerr back in the frame after a calf injury.

Coach Tony Gustavsson's biggest decision will be whether to start the prolific Chelsea forward. He has named an unchanged side in their last three games, but Kerr played 65 minutes against France and it looks increasingly likely she will play a full part.

"What's good is that we have continuity in what we're doing," said Gustavsson. "We have a clear playing style, so we don't really need to train to be tactically prepared. It's more about making sure we're mentally and physically prepared for the semi-final. These players are on a mission." — AFP