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## Speeding, disabled parking fines cannot be paid at airport, online

Expats may have to clear all debts before travel • PAM to establish shelter for male expats

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Crown Prince ratifies laws

**KUWAIT:** HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has approved amendments to a number of laws agreed by the joint government-parliament committee, a minister announced on Sunday. These laws deal with health insurance for Kuwaiti retirees and changes to legislations pertaining the constitutional court, in addition to parliamentary election laws and development of residential areas, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet and National Assembly Affairs Essa Al-Kandari said. — KUNA

#### Spat over broadcasting rights

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Football Association declined to give the ministry of information rights to televise Kuwait football league matches for the 2023/2024 season following disputes over pay for the broadcast rights. "KFA requested increasing broadcast fees as a condition to grant the rights, which goes against regulations that the ministry has followed with all sports federations since the start of TV broadcasts of sporting events in Kuwait," the ministry explained in a statement on Sunday.

#### Baghdad shuts ad screens

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi authorities on Sunday ordered the shutdown of LED advertisement screens installed across Baghdad after a hacker managed to show a pornographic film on one, security forces said, announcing the arrest of a suspect. On Saturday evening, "a person managed to hack into an advertising screen in Uqba bin Nafia Square", a major intersection at the center of the Iraqi capital, a security source said. The hacker "showed a pornographic film for several minutes before we cut the power cable," he said. — AFP

#### 18 killed in Pak bus crash

**ISLAMABAD:** At least 18 people burned to death on Sunday when an overnight bus smashed into another vehicle carrying diesel in eastern Pakistan, officials said. The accident took place on a motorway at around 4:30 am near the town of Pindi Bhattian in eastern Punjab province. Within five minutes, the whole bus was engulfed in flames. — AFP

#### 11 killed in Pak bomb attack

**ISLAMABAD:** Eleven laborers were killed in a bomb blast in northwestern Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan, a local government official said Sunday. The device exploded after being attached to the vehicle they were travelling in on Saturday evening, Rehman Gul Khattak, senior government official for North Waziristan, said in a statement. "The laborers were working at an under construction post for the Pakistan army," Khattak said. — AFP

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The traffic department warned expats on Sunday that tickets for speeding and using parking spots allocated for the handicapped must be paid in person at traffic department offices and cannot be paid online or by any other method. The announcement came as the traffic department began on Saturday applying a new rule requiring expats leaving the country to settle all traffic fines either online or at traffic department offices at the airport.

The department said tickets for speeding and parking in handicapped places cannot be settled

at the airport or online and must be paid at traffic offices "well before the departure date". The traffic department had warned that expats who fail to pay their traffic tickets will not be allowed to leave the country at the airport, border crossings or at ports. Local media reported on Sunday that airport authorities have already turned back at least 10 expats who failed to pay their traffic tickets.

MP Khaled Al-Tammar welcomed the traffic department decision, praising the interior minister for issuing such a regulation that aims at collecting government funds. Another decision is expected to prevent expatriates from leaving the country without addressing their

financial obligations, thus avoiding any potential financial losses to the state. The decision will safeguard the financial interests of creditors.

According to sources, upcoming decisions will pertain to expatriates who have outstanding loans with banks. They will be prohibited from traveling unless they can provide a letter from their bank demonstrating that their debt is secured, either through a guarantor or mortgage. Additionally, an automated system will be established to link the airport with banks, allowing authorities to verify whether the bank consents to an expatriate traveling before collecting its owed funds.

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### Russia's Luna-25 probe crashes on the Moon

**MOSCOW:** The Luna-25 probe, Russia's first Moon mission in almost 50 years, has crashed on the Moon after an incident during pre-landing maneuvers, Russian space agency Roscosmos said on Sunday. Communication with Luna-25 was lost at 2:57 pm (11:57 GMT) on Saturday, Roscosmos said. According to preliminary findings, the lander "has ceased to exist following a collision with the Moon's surface".

"Measures taken on August 19 and 20 to locate the craft and make contact with it were unsuccessful," the space agency added. It said a ministerial investigation would be launched into the causes of the crash, without giving any indication of what

technical problems might have occurred. With Luna-25, Moscow had hoped to build on the legacy of its Soviet-era Luna program, marking a return to independent lunar exploration in the face of financial troubles and corruption scandals at the program and growing isolation from the West.

The 800-kg Luna-25 probe was to have made a soft landing on Monday on the lunar south pole—the first in history. Russia has not attempted to land on a celestial body since 1989, when the Soviet Union's ill-fated Phobos 2 probe to explore the moons of Mars failed due to an onboard computer malfunction. Roscosmos boss Yuri Borisov had said the venture would be "risky", telling President Vladimir Putin in June that the probability of it succeeding was "around 70 percent".

Luna-25 had been successfully placed in the Moon's orbit on Wednesday after being launched from the Vostochny cosmodrome in the Russian Far East.



This handout photo taken by the Luna-25 rover and released by Roscosmos on Aug 17, 2023 shows the Zeeman lunar impact crater on the far side of the Moon. — AFP

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### Illegal logging turns Syria's forests barren

**KUWAIT:** On a riverbank in war-ravaged Syria's north, felling has reduced what was once a lush forest to dispersed trees and decimated trunks poking out from dry, crumbly soil. Twelve years of conflict that led to a spike in illegal logging, along with the effects of climate change and other factors, have eroded Syria's greenery. The dwindling forest on the shores of the Euphrates river "is shrinking every year", said Ahmed al-Sheikh, 40, a supermarket owner in the village of Jaabar, in the Kurdish-held part of Syria's Raqa province.

Before, "the forest would attract tourists, birds, purify the air and protect the area from dust storms", he said. But fuel shortages and rampant poverty during the war have pushed many Syrians to chop the trees to sell or use for heating, dealing a blow to the nature surrounding Jaabar. Its ancient citadel had made the village a popular pre-war tourist attraction, with a reforestation project launched in the mid-1990s offering rare respite from the searing heat.

"Some people cut down the trees to sell them and earn money, others to keep warm during the winter," Sheikh said. "If this goes on, desertification will follow." Residents told AFP they hear loggers riding motorbikes into the forest at night to cut down trees. Even in broad daylight, young men

Continued on Page 6



HASAKEH, Syria: A boy leads a donkey carrying wood from trees cut at the Mount Abdulaziz nature reserve in northeastern Syria on Nov 19, 2022. — AFP

### Race to link brains to computers is hotting up

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Brain implants have long been trapped in the realm of science fiction, but a steady trickle of medical trials suggests the tiny devices could play a big part in humanity's future. Billions of dollars are flowing into a clutch of specialist companies hunting for treatments for some of the most debilitating ailments.

And pioneering studies have already yielded results. In May, a Dutchman paralyzed in a motorcycle accident regained the ability to walk thanks to implants that restored communication between his brain and spinal cord. That experiment was one of several eye-catching trials that have helped spark a huge buzz around the industry.

In the decade to 2020, investors poured more than \$30 billion into neurotechnology more widely, according to UNESCO. And the money has continued to flood in thanks, in part, to rapid improvements in artificial intelligence (AI), used by researchers to interpret the data from the implants. Tech titan Elon Musk has refocused some energy on his Neuralink firm after it received permission in May to test its implants on humans, helping it to raise \$280 million in funding.

And other firms with less prominent bosses are proliferating, offering hope for sufferers of ailments from rare nerve diseases to severe epilepsy. Synchron, a company formed more than a decade ago, raised \$75 million this year with backing from the likes of Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Amazon's Jeff Bezos. The firm got permission from the US authorities in 2021 to test its implant, and has since rolled it out to nine people with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) — the motor neuron disease that physicist Stephen Hawking suffered from.



NEW YORK: CEO & Founder of Synchron Thomas Oxley holds a stent in his office on Aug 9, 2023. — AFP

Its implant allows patients to use messaging apps or browse online using only eye movements and thoughts. One of the big selling points is that, unlike other implants, it does not require invasive surgery.

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# The 'Tishala' and its captain

## A look into the life of a Kuwaiti seafarer



Ali Hassan Al-Jasmi



KUWAIT: The 'Tishala', a vessel meticulously crafted by skilled Al-Qallalif craftsmen in Kuwait. — Photos by Mohammad Hamadah

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Ali Hassan Al-Jasmi, the son of one of Kuwait's revered captains, embodies the maritime spirit deeply embedded in Kuwait's heritage. He takes us back to an era before technology's prominence, when society's identity was closely intertwined with the dedication and hard work of its people in service of their homeland.

Al-Jasmi paints a vivid portrait of his father, Hassan Al-Jasmi, who embarked on his maritime journey at the tender age of 10, commencing as a "tabbab", a role usually reserved for older individuals. Over time, he ascended to the esteemed position of chief helmsman, known as a "sakoomi", aboard trading vessels that ventured as far as India and Zanzibar. Hassan Al-Jasmi's life was an unwavering commitment to the sea, from start to finish.

Reflecting on his own childhood in the 1950s, Ali Al-Jasmi fondly recalls accompanying his father to the "Tishala", a vessel meticulously crafted by skilled Al-Qallalif craftsmen in Kuwait. This architectural marvel was primarily responsible for transporting incoming trade from ships at the Hamal Bashi cargo station to Kuwait's bustling main port. "My father, Hassan Al-Jasmi, was the 'noukhada' (captain) of the ship, which belonged to Hamal Bashi," he proudly recounts.



Young Ali also accompanied his uncle, who held the esteemed title of noukhada, of a "leng", a vessel smaller than the Tishala. Later, he witnessed the operations of a "tek", a steel ship designed for the purpose of lifting other ships to the primary storage station.

In this intricate maritime hierarchy, the noukhada, led the "mjadimi", who oversaw the ship's workers and conveyed instructions from the noukhada to the labor force. These directives ranged from optimizing cargo organization to ensuring the ship's equilibrium. "The ship's laborers were known as 'mzouri', with many hailing from Basra or the Gulf,"

Al-Jasmi explained. He further elaborated on the presence of a gatekeeper, or "ja'cedah", tasked with safeguarding the goods while the ship remained anchored in the harbor.

"When the ships arrived at Hamal Bashi, the Tishala diligently transported the goods, which belonged to Kuwaiti businessmen, to temporary storage facilities before their rightful owners claimed them," Al-Jasmi added. He warmly recalled visiting the "falka", a ship's section where an assorted array of goods, freshly unloaded from the crane, found their temporary abode. "I would often hear the cry of 'Bo Ali, Bo Ali' from workers seeking the



captain's assistance," he said, evoking nostalgic memories. In recollecting his father's unwavering commitment, Al-Jasmi notes: "If my father ever came across poorly packaged products, he wouldn't return home to rest. Instead, he would sleep close to the cargo, ensuring it reached the businessmen in impeccable condition."

Following his tenure as the noukhada of the ship, Hassan Al-Jasmi returned it to Hamal

Bashi. Subsequently, the vessel changed hands, finding new owners in a Gulf nation, and ultimately becoming part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) maritime museum in Sharq.

Ali Hassan Al-Jasmi's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of Kuwait's rich maritime history and the enduring dedication of individuals like his father, who made profound contributions to the nation's development.

## PAHW completes 3 Sabah Al-Ahmad City projects

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) in Kuwait has affirmed its commitment to overseeing and coordinating three infrastructure projects in Sabah Al-Ahmad City.

The Authority has designed and completed these projects to the highest standards and has handed them over to the relevant authorities.


Currently, the authority is closely monitoring the progress of three projects in Sabah Al-Ahmad City. The first project involves the construction, completion, and maintenance of 20 vertical housing buildings comprising a total of 390 apartments in the investment district. The Authority anticipates receiving these 20 residential buildings, housing 390 apartments, this month. An initial inspection committee assessed the project's status on July 31.

The second project concerns the construction of a power plant in the industrial district. As of July, the completion progress reached 28.3 percent, surpassing the schedule by 13.6 percent. The third project involves the supply and installation of terrestrial cables to support a major transformer station in the city's industrial suburb. Site work commenced in May, and the project is expected to be completed by July next year.

Additionally, the authority reported a 36 percent completion rate for connecting the city to the treated water network line, specifically the


300-mm line on Mina Abdullah-Wafra Road. The monthly completion rate stands at 7.2 percent, with expectations for the project to conclude in November.

The authority emphasized its dedication to working alongside specialized engineering teams to oversee the remaining site work and services for the city, in line with the recommendations of the Cabinet. They expressed readiness to collaborate with government agencies to ensure the well-being of the city's residents and citizens.

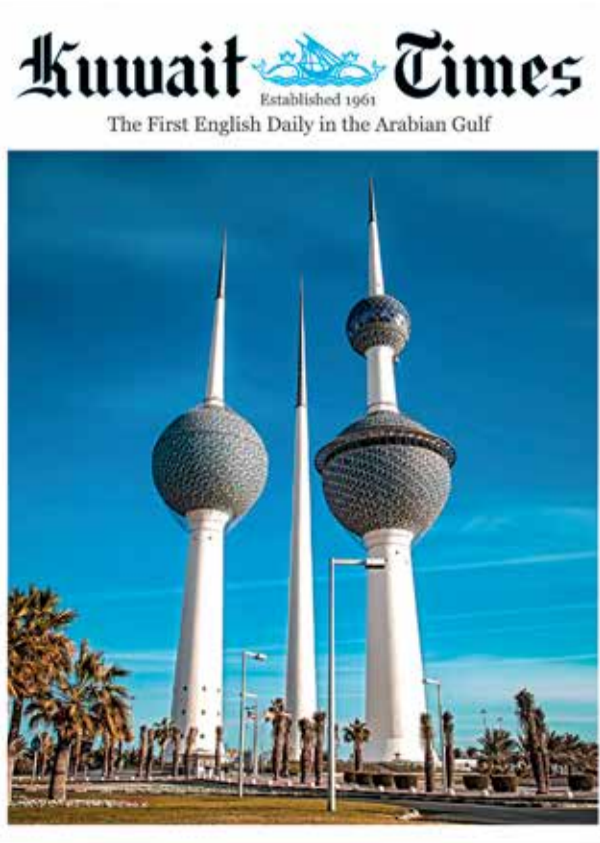


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## WHO commends Kuwait's Children's Hospital

KUWAIT: A World Health Organization official commended the medical services provided by the National Bank of Kuwait Specialized Hospital for Children and the qualified cadres who work with it.

Dr Hanan H Balkhy, WHO's first Assistant Director of Antimicrobial Resistance, made the statement on Sunday after visiting the hospital. She lauded the performance of the national medical cadres namely treatment, psychological and social care for children, as well as the cooperation with the Kuwait government that succeeded in working out a national plan for resisting antibiotics.

On campaigns to boost awareness of the antibiotics' harmful effects, she indicated that national



Dr Hanan H Balkhy



Sondos Al-Sherida

plans in this respect are based on social awareness, expanding knowledge and data tracking and research plus using antibiotics soundly.

Meanwhile, Sondos Al-Sherida, the head of the blood, children cancer and cells transplants at the hospital, said Dr Balkhy's visit aimed at examining the services at the hospital, indicating at a plan to build the therapeutic aphaeresis ward for children soon. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Dr Hanan H Balkhy visits the Children's Hospital. — KUNA photos



Local

# Zain holds insightful session on smartphone photography

Zainphonic held at its Innovation Campus in celebration of World Photography Day



The session was joined by many photography enthusiasts.



The workshop presented theoretical and practical approaches.

KUWAIT: The Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted Zainphonic, an insightful session that covered the essentials of photography and videography by using smartphones. The workshop, which the company held in celebration of World Photography Day on Aug 19, was presented by the talented Kuwaiti photographer and content creator Abdulaziz Al-Suraya.

The workshop was well-received, having featured wide participation from photography enthusiasts from both Kuwait and the GCC. The participants varied in their skill levels, with beginners, intermediate, and advanced photographers successfully enrolling to upskill their passion in art, photography, and videography. The session presented a combination of theoretical and practical methods to efficiently upskill the participants and add the best value to their skillsets.

Zain's workshop adopted a unique approach, in that it not only focused on the general essentials of photography and videography, but also focused on the highly specialized world of smartphone cameras. Today's smartphones are equipped with high-quality, professional-level camera systems, and their technical capabilities can even match those of traditional cameras.

During the session, Kuwaiti photog-



Zain's team with Abdulaziz Al-Suraya and the participants.

rapher and content creator Abdulaziz Al-Suraya focused on a number of topics, including innovative approaches to photography and videography using smartphones, how to use specialized apps to

professionally edit photos and videos, understanding colors and light and how to utilize them in visual content, how to reflect your personal touch on your work, and more. Zain continues to cultivate a

culture of creativity within the community by empowering talented people to take advantage of technology and enrich the local art scene. The company continues to collaborate with local content creators

to offer programs, workshops, and sessions to encourage the public – especially young people – to pursue their passions and foster their innovation, creativity, and technology skills.

## Boost field capacity of Kuwait forces: Interior Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has affirmed necessity of boosting capacities and readiness of field personnel for sake of preserving the homeland security. Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled, also the First Deputy Prime Minister, made the statement during a meeting he chaired of the Ministry of Interior assistant undersecretaries, attended by the MoI Undersecretary Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Bajras.

Participants in the meeting examined latest domestic security developments. The minister of interior lauded the MoI personnel for maintaining the country's security and reviewed with the officials relevant plans. Sheikh Talal was briefed about intensive security and traffic campaigns aimed at penalizing offenders. Sheikh Talal Khaled expressed gratitude to the personnel for their intensive efforts, made some remarks and presented guidelines for enhancing capacities and preparedness of the various field units. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior heads the security meeting. — KUNA

## Suicide prevention: Fostering hope and healing

By Ahmed Sabeeh



Counselor Ali Tareh

KUWAIT: Suicide has become an increasing health concern in the mental health field and mental health officials are trying to tackle it by providing suicide hotlines 24/7. Kuwait Times spoke with Counselor Ali Tareh to break the silence by highlighting the crucial importance of suicide prevention while igniting sparks of hope and healing for those trapped in suicidal thoughts.

Tareh said suicide is a complex and deeply concerning issue that impacts millions of lives worldwide, noting that the somber shadow of suicide looms large over global public health, extracting a profound toll on numerous lives. However, within this grim reality, discussions surrounding this grave issue often get caught up in a web of stigma and silence.

According to Tareh, mental health awareness continues to grow, while psychologists play a crucial role in understanding and preventing suicide, which is crucial to recognize. "Suicidal thoughts are often the result of a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors," he said.

Tareh revealed suicide is a complex landscape, where people have to delve into the essential aspects of suicide prevention and explore risk factors, recognizable signs of distress and vital support systems, saying it is important to assess the risk of suicide by building preventive strategies like creating a supportive environment, enhancing coping skills, safety plans and crisis hotlines. "In a world marked by increasing pressures and complexities, the role of mental health professionals in suicide prevention is more critical than ever," he said.

"Kuwait must empower individuals with the knowledge to initiate conversations on this crucial topic and embed personal stories of resilience and triumph, serving as vivid testimonials of the potential for healing even in the depths of despair," Tareh pointed out. He called for accessible mental health assistance to envision a society where individuals act compassionately as support pillars to rescue precious lives from despair.

Suicidal thoughts may include mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or substance abuse. Childhood trauma, relationship issues, financial stress and a history of family suicide can also contribute to a person's vulnerability.

News in Brief

### Charred corpse found in Zahra

KUWAIT: A charred and extensively mutilated body was discovered on a walkway in Zahra. Rescue patrols promptly arrived at the scene and found the severely burned and mutilated remains. Prosecutors were summoned to the site to examine the crime scene, request fingerprint analysis and order the body's transfer to forensic medicine for identification. Detectives have been assigned to determine the perpetrator of this gruesome crime.

### Two killed in Jahra collision

KUWAIT: A collision involving four vehicles resulted in the deaths of two individuals and injuries to three others in Jahra governorate on Sunday afternoon. A fire brigade from Jahra immediately responded to the scene. All victims have been handed over to relevant authorities for further investigation.

## Al-Dukhan: Kuwait Airways reduces losses to 50% in '22

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Chairman Captain Ali Al-Dukhan announced on Sunday that Kuwait Airways reduced its losses to 50 percent from KD 107 million (\$347 million) to KD 55 million (\$178.4 million) in 2022.

"Kuwait Airways has achieved positive results which were better than what was expected in 2022 as total passenger revenues reached KD 289.1 million, showing an increase of 11 percent. The number of passengers reached 3.5 million, which is an increase of 2 percent," Al-Dukhan said in statement after the corporation's Annual General Assembly meetings.

Kuwait Airways operated approximately 25,000 flights, marking an increase of 5 percent with the percentage of occupied seats reaching 69.7 percent, which is an increase of 2 percent, he added. "Kuwait Airways has extended the contract for the lease of seven A320 aircraft up to the year 2024, which increases the number of flights, operations to new desti-



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Chairman Captain Ali Al-Dukhan (right) and CEO Maen Razouqi during the annual general assembly meeting on Sunday. — KUNA

nations and meets the requirements of valued customers."

Kuwait Airways CEO Maen Razouqi said the company's debt is now less than KD 50 million, noting that profits exceeded KD 400 million (\$1.3 billion) by the end of 2022. He expected that Kuwait Airways passengers will increase to 5.5 million as it now operates to 58 direct destinations with 105 flights per day. — KUNA



## Local

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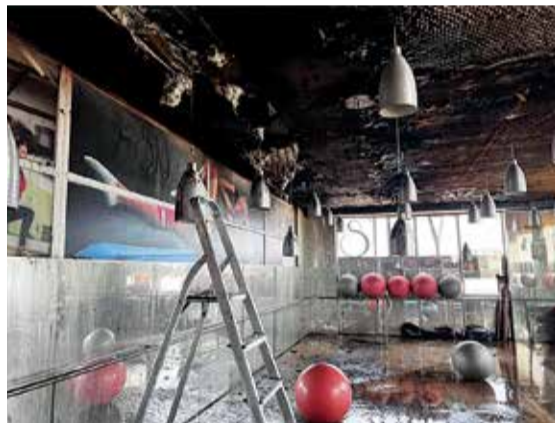
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Kuwait condemns  
church burnings  
in Pakistan

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses the state of Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the burning and vandalism of a number of churches and homes in the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan by a group of extremists.

The ministry commends the efforts and measures taken by the competent authorities in the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan to address these acts. The ministry reaffirmed the position of Kuwait that it rejects all practices that contradict the moral and human values and international laws. It calls for the need to spread the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all peoples of the world and to renounce any form of violence and extremism.

Fire erupts in  
Egaila health  
institute

KUWAIT: The Public Relations and Media Department of the Kuwait Fire Force announced that a report was received at the Central Operations Department on Sunday stating that a fire broke out in a commercial complex in the Egaila area.

The administration explained that the Central Operations directed fire brigades from the centers of Mangaf and Al-Bayraq to the site of the fire. "Upon the arrival of the teams, it was found that the fire was in a health institute inside the commercial complex on the fifth floor. The fire was controlled and extinguished without any major injuries," the administration added.

## News in Brief

Criminal court postpones  
Al-Rashidi murder case

KUWAIT: The Criminal Court postponed the trial of the defendant in the case of the murder of citizen Mubarak Al-Rashidi to next October 10, in order to summon the incident officer. The lawyer for the first defendant attended and asked the court to bring the second defendant from Egypt. The murdered victim's defense, lawyer Nasser Al-Ajmi, also appeared and claimed KD 5,001 temporarily for the victim's heirs, namely his wife, five children and parents. Al-Ajmi said: "In this case we represent the entire community, not just the victim's family, because everyone participated in the search for him until he was found dead."

Fishing ban on 'Kanaad'  
fish to stay until mid-Oct

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fishermen Union said the ban on fishing "Kanaad" fish became effective on Wednesday and will last for two months, as fishing will resume in the middle of October. The union said the market is still missing the "Maid" fish, as areas of its fishing are limited by decision 787/2017. It said the union is keen on complying with laws and decisions issued by concerned entities. He said it is necessary to preserve the fish wealth for sustainability.

Students eligible for domestic  
scholarships announced

KUWAIT: Acting Secretary General of the Secretariat General of Private Universities Council Adel Al-Bader announced the names of students accepted in the domestic scholarships plans by Ministry of Higher Education for school year 2023-2024. Al-Bader said Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Acting Education Minister Dr Jassim Al-Ustad approved admission of 6075 students within domestic scholarships plan for the Bachelors of Science and Diploma programs for the year 2023-2024. Al-Bader said approved students for domestic scholarships should follow up to complete the admissions and registration procedures and to submit the original high school certificate.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait is witnessing low and medium clouds, along with cumulus cloud formations, accompanied by rain. — KUNA

How Kuwaiti intellectuals defied  
aggressors during Iraqi invasion

## Writers prove 'pen is mightier than the sword'

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti intellectuals had proven the truth of the adage "the pen is mightier than the sword" through various works of literature that defied the aggressors during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Speaking on the occasion, a number of Kuwait intellectuals pointed out that the fight against the Iraqi invasion was not only physical; the written word had also an important role in defying those committing this heinous crime. Intellectual Dr Sheikhha Suad Al-Sabah affirmed, during an interview with KUNA, that literature and arts were a haven for many during Kuwait's darkest hours. Whether written, drawn, acted, or sung, the arts played a crucial role in defending the homeland, she affirmed.

Dr Sheikhha Suad indicated that she had published a book under the title "Will you allow me to love my country" and many literary works during the invasion to highlight Kuwait's justice cause regionally and internationally. Her publishing company Dar Suad Al-Sabah for Culture and Creativeness also opened its doors for the youth to exert their poetic and story-telling outputs during the invasion. She affirmed that literature could be considered a type of soft power for the tremendous impact of words on people.

On his part, Taleb Al-Refaei, another Kuwaiti intellectual, stressed the importance of literature in fighting against injustice. Kuwaiti intellectuals

Late poet Fayeq  
AbduljalilDr Sheikhha Suad  
Al-Sabah

Taleb Al-Refaei



Waleed Al-Rujaib

fought against the Iraqi invasion since its onset, said Al-Refaei naming several intellectuals including late poet Fayeq Abduljalil who was killed by the Iraqis, novelist Ismail Fahad Isamil and others for their patriotic stance against the Iraqis. Intellectuals had exposed the brutal nature of the invasion, which affected all sectors of society and even the environment was not safe, he added. Providing a similar input, intellectual Waleed Al-Rujaib affirmed that literature could be considered as a historical document that could provide insight into happen-

ings in certain eras including the Iraqi invasion. He asserted that most literary works were produced by individuals within Kuwait during the invasion, saying that individuals like Layla Al-Othman, Thuraiya Al-Baqami, Sulaiman Al-Shatti, and others all put their lives on the line for their works during the invasion. The Iraqis had targeted cultural icons and tried to distort the educational system to wipe out Kuwait during their heinous crime, but they failed due to the brave stance of the Kuwaiti people and intellectuals, Al-Rujaib said. — KUNA

LuLu financial  
holdings opens 34th  
branch in Kuwait

KUWAIT: LuLu Financial Holdings – a global financial services conglomerate specializing in cross-border payments and foreign currency exchange, on Sunday opened its 284th global branch and 34th LuLu Exchange branch in Kuwait at Warehouse Mall. The new branch marks the company's expansion strategy for Kuwait, in line with the region's economic progress.

The branch was inaugurated by Dr Matar Hamed Hlais Almkasafa Al-Nehyadi, Ambassador of UAE to Kuwait in the presence of MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman & Managing Director of LuLu Group International, Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, and other senior management of the country operations.

The event was also attended by other dignitaries including Belinda Lewis, Ambassador of UK to Kuwait, Dr Manelisi George, Ambassador of South Africa to Kuwait and Dr Saleh bin Amer Alkharusi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait.

Sharing his thoughts on the sidelines of the inauguration, Adeb Ahamed said, "Kuwait has been a cornerstone of our operations from the very beginning, and the unwavering trust and support we've received from our valued customers continues to drive us. Our commitment to Kuwait is resolute as we expand our presence, aligning with the nation's aspirations to achieve financial inclusion. This new branch not only brings us closer to our customers but also serves as an engagement hub, facilitating their seamless transition to digital payment solutions.



KUWAIT: Dr Matar Hamed Hlais Almkasafa Al-Nehyadi, Ambassador of UAE to Kuwait, inaugurates LuLu Financial Holdings' new branch in the presence of MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman &amp; Managing Director of LuLu Group International, Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, and other senior management of the country operations.

We extend our gratitude to the government and regulators for fostering an environment that nurtures digital innovation and advances sector growth."

LuLu Exchange – which is among Kuwait's leading financial services providers, presently provides cross-border payments, currency

exchange and value-added services in a timely, transparent and reliable manner through its network of branches and mobile payments app – LuLu Money. The app is highly rated for its security and convenience and is fully aligned with Kuwait's digital transformation efforts.







**Dangerous Hurricane Hilary hits Mexico, California with heavy rain**

## Niger leader warns against foreign intervention

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**KELOWNA: A helicopter drops water as the McDougall Creek wildfire continues to burn. — AFP photos**

## Canada wildfires spread, evacuations continue

### Tens of thousands urged to leave home in northern, western regions

**KELOWNA:** Two huge and fast-moving wildfires merged overnight in western Canada, threatening hundreds of homes and forcing continued evacuations in British Columbia province, officials said. With flames now threatening the 3,500 homes near Shuswap, 150 kilometers (93 miles) north of the larger city of Kelowna, a total of tens of thousands of residents have now been ordered or urged to leave.

With northern winds continuing to fan the flames, two huge fires in the region merged overnight, destroying several structures in a region popular with tourists. Across the province, with a state of emergency still in force, some 30,000 people have been ordered to evacuate while 36,000 others have been told to prepare to leave if necessary.

Bowinn Ma, the British Columbia minister of emergency management, emphasized the seriousness of evacuation orders. "It is a matter of life and death," she said, not only for the residents affected but for emergency personnel who have to go into danger zones to persuade reluctant residents to leave.

Canada's Northwest Territories, north of British Columbia, are also facing a grave fire threat. The territorial capital, Yellowknife, has been surrounded by wildfires for days. Nearly all the city's 20,000 people have left. The region saw some respite after overnight rains Saturday brought a sharp drop in temperatures, but the fire threat was expected to grow again on Sunday, the authorities said.

Shane Thompson, environment minister for the Northwest Territories, emphasized Saturday that even when flames might not be visible, the fire "is active and enormous." Canada is experiencing a record-setting wildfire season, with official estimates of more than 14 million hectares (34.6 million acres)

already burned—roughly the size of Greece. Four people have died so far. Scientists say human-caused global warming is making natural hazards both more frequent and more deadly.

#### 66% of population displaced

Officials in western Canada's British Columbia implored tens of thousands of residents to heed evacuation orders Saturday as wildfires threatened large parts of the scenic Okanagan Valley, including the city of Kelowna. Blazes in the neighboring Northwest Territories have meanwhile prompted the evacuation of regional capital Yellowknife, leaving the remote city of around 20,000 largely a ghost town.

Overnight rains brought some relief to Yellowknife on Saturday, however, "a little rain does not mean it's safe to come back home," warned Northwest Territories environment minister Shane Thompson. "Though the surface may not show fire, it's still active and it's huge," he said at a Saturday evening news conference, noting that temperatures are expected to rise again Sunday.

Yellowknife official Chris Greencorn praised the work crews were doing to build defenses around the city, with large areas cleared to create firebreaks and pipes laid for sprinklers and water cannon. "Basically this represents approximately two full Yellowknife construction seasons completed in less than six days," he said. The exodus from Yellowknife and elsewhere means two-thirds of the near-Arctic territory's population has been displaced, Thompson said. The fires have caused "terrible loss," Trudeau told reporters after meeting Yellowknife evacuees Friday as they arrived in Edmonton, Alberta, with no idea when they may return home.



**KELOWNA: Evacuees Shay Nicole and Paryss Nicole stay with their family and pets at the Jim Lind Arena while the McDougall Creek wildfires continue in West Kelowna, British Columbia on August 19, 2023.**

Crystal Sangris barely slept for three days as wildfires threatened her hometown in northern Canada, and when she was ordered to evacuate, her anxiety turned to anguish. "I never, never thought that this day would come," she told AFP on Friday at Calgary airport, after she left her home in Yellowknife. "I didn't want to leave home, I was tearing up," Sangris, of First Nations origin, told AFP. The 33-year-old housewife was evacuated Friday along with her husband and three children on one of several flights

that landed in Calgary, more than 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from the fires. Calgary's airport in the neighboring province of Alberta has become a reception center for the evacuees, in a massive operation without precedent in the region.

Evacuees are registered as soon as they land in Calgary's domestic flight terminal, some arriving with their pets. Volunteers and local officials offer food and water before transferring them to nearby hotels serving as shelters for the displaced. — AFP

## Ukraine hails 'historic' F-16 transfers

**EINDHOVEN:** Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed Sunday a "historic" decision by the Netherlands and Denmark to supply US-made F-16 fighter jets, the latest move by Western allies to bolster his country's efforts to fend off Russia's invasion.

Zelensky had sought the advanced jets for months to strengthen Ukraine's Soviet-era air force as it pursues a grinding counter offensive against Russian forces in the east. Washington announced its approval of the F-16 transfers on Friday, and training of Ukraine pilots is set to begin this month, potentially allowing Ukraine to begin deploying the jets in early 2024.

The decision is "absolutely historic, powerful and inspiring for us," Zelensky said alongside Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte during a visit to the air force base in Eindhoven in the Netherlands on Sunday. The Dutch air force has 42 F-16s and Rutte said the number provided to Kyiv will be finalized after talks with allies.

"The Netherlands and Denmark commit to transfer F-16s to Ukraine once the conditions for such a transfer have been met," Rutte said. Zelensky arrived after a visit to Sweden on Saturday, when he discussed joint production of CV90 combat vehicles and training of Ukraine pilots for Gripen fighter jets with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. Later Sunday, he travelled to Denmark to meet Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen to discuss her country's offer of F-16 deliveries.

"Denmark fully supports Ukraine and is ready" to do so "for as long as necessary," Frederiksen said in a statement ahead of Zelensky's arrival and a joint press conference later Sunday. The long-sought approval to supply the jets drew a warning from Russia, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying that Moscow would



**EINDHOVEN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte shake hands during a visit to the Eindhoven Military Air Base, in Eindhoven, on August 20, 2023. — AFP**

consider the F-16s a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic weapons.

Russia also said it prevented Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow and its region on Sunday, the second such incident in two days. Both sides have reported regular drone incursions during the conflict, with strikes on Russian territory becoming increasingly regular. "At around 4:00 am (01:00 GMT), an attempt by the Kyiv regime to carry out a terrorist attack by drone on infrastructure in Moscow and the Moscow region was thwarted," the Russian defense ministry said.

The Moscow-bound drone was destroyed by "electronic warfare" and crashed into an uninhabited area after losing control, the ministry said, reporting no victims or damage. But a Ukrainian drone raid hit a railway station in the western Russian city of Kursk, injuring five people, the regional governor said early Sunday. In the southern region of Rostov that borders Ukraine, Russian air defense intercepted two Ukrainian drones, its governor said. — AFP

## Schools shut as Zionists hunt for shooting suspect

**HUWARA:** Schools were shut Sunday in the occupied West Bank town of Huwara as troops searched for the suspected killer of a Zionist father and his son who were shot dead over the weekend. The two men were gunned down Saturday at a car wash in Huwara, in the latest attack to rock the territory where violence has surged this year. Zionist media identified the two as Shay Silas Nigrekar, 60, and Aviad Nir, 28. Nablus's acting governor Ghassan Daghlis ordered the closure of Huwara's schools "after requests from parents who are afraid of reactions from settlers", he told AFP.

Huwara, a Palestinian town near the city of Nablus, has seen a number of attacks on Jewish settlers or the Zionist military since early last year. Settlers have also responded with revenge attacks on the town and surrounding villages. "Whenever an attack occurs that negatively affects the residents of Huwara ... settlers break in, hurl rocks and smash cars," local resident Ashraf Odeh told AFP. "The army can do nothing for you because its priority is to protect the settlers before it protects us." On Sunday, Zionist forces also blocked access to the nearby villages of Beita and Aqraba as their manhunt continued, an AFP correspondent reported from the area. "Our security forces are currently looking for the murderer ... this terrorist's day will also come and sooner than he thinks," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting on Sunday.

It was not the first time that Nigrekar had visited Huwara, his relatives said. "Apparently, he knew the



**BEITA: Zionist security forces block a road in Beita village on August 20, 2023, during the search for the suspected perpetrator of an attack a day earlier which killed two Zionists in Huwara village in the occupied West Bank. — AFP**

car mechanics there," his relative Yitzhak Nigrekar told Army Radio. "He was going often to Huwara. He had friends there and I too had gone with him sometimes," Rina, a long-time companion of the victim, told a Zionist television channel.

In a separate incident on Sunday, a Zionist man was injured in the West Bank when troops fired at a group of "masked suspects" who turned out to be citizens of the Zionist entity. The incident happened near the settlement of Maale Levona, not far from Nablus. The army said a number of "masked suspects" were seen in the area of Maale Levona at around 03:00 am on Sunday.

"The soldiers opened fire according to standard operating procedures, during which one of the suspects was injured," the army said. "It was later revealed that the suspects are citizens who were masked." The army did not provide further details and said the incident was under investigation. — AFP



## International

# Pro-coup rally in Niger after leader warns against foreign intervention

## An attack against new leadership won't be 'walk in the park': Tiani

NIAMEY: Several thousand people demonstrated in the capital of Niger on Sunday in support of last month's military coup, whose leader has warned against outside intervention and proposed a three-year transition of power. The demonstrators chanted slogans hostile to former colonial power France and West African regional bloc ECOWAS, which is considering a potential military operation to reinstate elected president Mohamed Bazoum if ongoing negotiations with coup leaders fail.

The Sahel state's new military leaders have officially banned demonstrations but in practice, those in support of the coup are allowed to go ahead. The demonstrators waved placards saying: "Stop the military intervention" and "No to sanctions", in reference to the financial and trade restrictions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) four days after the coup on July 26.

Sunday's pro-coup rally was accompanied by musicians praising the new military regime, AFP journalists reported. The latest in a string of pro-coup rallies came a day after the new military ruler in Niamey warned that an attack on Niger would not be a "walk in the park". General Abdourahmane Tiani also said in a televised address on Saturday that he did not wish to "confiscate" power and a transition of power back to civilian rule would not go beyond three years.

Niger's new leaders have accused France, a close Bazoum ally, of being behind the anti-coup stance taken by ECOWAS, which on Saturday made a fresh push for a diplomatic solution. After ECOWAS chiefs

of staff met in the Ghanaian capital Accra on Friday, the 17-nation bloc said it had agreed on a date for a potential intervention.

### Diplomatic push

It nonetheless sent a diplomatic delegation to Niamey on Saturday, led by former Nigerian leader Abdulsalami Abubakar. Niger television showed delegation members shaking hands with Bazoum, who remains in detention. It also broadcast footage of Abubakar speaking to Tiani but the content of the exchange has not been made public. In his televised address on Saturday, Tiani alleged that ECOWAS was "getting ready to attack Niger by setting up an occupying army in collaboration with a foreign army", without saying which country he meant. But he added: "If an attack were to be undertaken against us, it will not be the walk in the park some people seem to think." Tiani also announced a 30-day period of "national dialogue" to draw up "concrete proposals" to lay the foundations of "a new constitutional life".

ECOWAS leaders say they have to act now that Niger has become the fourth West African nation since 2020 to suffer a coup, following Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. The bloc has agreed to activate a "standby force" as a last resort to restore democracy in Niger. The Sahel region is struggling with growing jihadist insurgencies linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Those behind the military takeovers have pointed to frustration over the violence to justify seizing power. — AFP



NIAMEY: Niger's Army sergeant and artist Maman Sani Maigochi gestures as supporters of Niger's National Council of Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) gather at Place de la Concertation in Niamey on August 20, 2023. — AFP

## Disinformation an 'easy sell' in post-coup Niger

LAGOS: Following a July coup, Niger has become the latest hotbed of disinformation in the troubled Sahel region as West African powers grapple with crafting a response to the political crisis. From false rumors and misleading videos to manipulated audio clips, AFP has debunked over a dozen social media claims either backing or discrediting the coup leaders after they toppled President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26. Soon after his ousting, amateur footage of a large march surfaced online purporting to show a pro-Bazoum rally in Niger's capital Niamey on August 6. In reality, the clip was filmed on the day of the president's removal from power.

Another viral video allegedly featured Niger's deposed finance minister crying after coup leaders gave him an ultimatum to account for missing funds or face death. But AFP found the clip, from 2021, in fact showed Niger's former justice minister Marou Amadou expressing his gratitude to ex-president Issoufou Mahamadou. Misleading reports about foreign interference in the crisis abounded as uncertainty mounted over the possibility of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) using military force to reverse the coup.

The regional bloc, chaired by Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, was quick to condemn Bazoum's ouster

and piled sanctions on Niamey days after the takeover, with Nigeria — Niger's main electricity provider — cutting off supplies. There were also false claims about French fighter jets landing in Senegal to support a possible ECOWAS intervention, or about fighters from the Russian mercenary group Wagner and Burkinabe troops arriving in Niger to support the new leaders.

### 'Popular' anti-Western views

Landlocked Niger joined neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso to become the third Sahel country in three years to experience a coup. Like elsewhere in the region, anti-French sentiment has been on the rise in Niger. Its new military leaders have the support of fellow ex-French colonies Mali and Burkina Faso, which have turned their backs on Paris in favor of closer Moscow ties. In May, Bazoum told British newspaper The Independent that Wagner had been sponsoring "disinformation campaigns against us".

Some analysts, however, said there were few signs of organized, large-scale offensives aimed at spreading false content as seen in other African nations. Disinformation about post-coup Niger did not seem "particularly well-coordinated or centrally managed", said Ikemesit Effiong, an analyst at the geo-political consultancy SBM Intelligence in Nigeria. Nonetheless, coup supporters have "largely amplified the threat of conflict with ECOWAS, particularly Nigeria as well as France, to mobilize support online and on the ground" in a region where "anti-imperialist and anti-Western views are popular and an easy sell", Effiong said.

Experts told AFP that the spread of disinformation targeting Niger mirrored a pattern already witnessed elsewhere on the continent: it usually originates on encrypted platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp before being shared on other social media apps. Moreover, several anti-French and pro-Russian accounts that post propaganda about Mali and Burkina Faso have also promoted false claims about Niger.

One such actor is the Pan-African Group for Trade and Investment (GPCI), a media firm founded by pro-Russian businessman Harouna Douamba, originally from Burkina Faso. The GPCI is at the heart of a vast network of websites and Facebook pages pushing disinformation to further stoke tensions, according to the All Eyes on Wagner investigative consortium. For instance, AFP found that one of its accounts recently alleged that France was preparing a "plot to destabilize" Niger and arm "terrorists".

The GPCI also posted warnings about an imminent military intervention on "suspicious sites involved in spreading disinformation" in Chad and Nigeria for example, according to a French analyst who runs the well-known Casus Belli account on X (formerly Twitter), which monitors suspicious content in Africa. The analyst, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity for safety reasons, said the pan-Africanist TV channel Afrique Media was also involved in the disinformation drive. The Cameroon-based broadcaster has partnered with state-owned Russia Today and regularly reports on Wagner operations in Africa. On August 9, the channel shared a video purporting to show Bazoum looking relaxed after allegedly signing a resignation letter. — AFP



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis blesses the crowd from the window of the apostolic palace overlooking St. Peter's square during the weekly Angelus prayer on August 20, 2023 in The Vatican. — AFP

## Pope calls for peace in Niger

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday urged a diplomatic solution to a political crisis in Niger, sparked by a coup that threatens stability in the region. "I am following with concern what is happening in Niger and join the bishops' call in favor of peace in the country and stability in the Sahel," said Pope Francis, addressing the faithful in St Peter's Square after his Angelus prayer.

"I join with prayer the efforts of the international community to find a peaceful solution as soon as possible for the good of everyone," said the 86-year-old. Army officers ousted President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26, making Niger the fourth West African nation to suffer a coup since 2020. — AFP

## Speeding, disabled parking fines...

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, these decisions will require expatriates to produce a letter confirming that they have no outstanding financial liabilities in their workplace before they are permitted to travel. The implementation of these measures is currently under discussion and coordination between the ministry of interior and various government agencies. The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representing the private sector, is also involved.

These measures aim to prevent complaints from both government and private agencies regarding outstanding funds when expatriates leave the country without settling their financial obligations. It is worth noting that many government agencies have faced issues with expatriates leaving for good before paying their debts. Additionally, banks have reached agreements with government and private agencies to withhold end-of-service dues of expatriates until they confirm the status of any outstanding loans with the banks.

## Race to link brains to computers...

Continued from Page 1

The first goals of the Synchron test, said Dr David Putrino, who oversaw the medical trial at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, were to make sure the implant was safe and could monitor the brain over long periods.

On both fronts, he said, the trial had been a success. Synchron founder Tom Oxley thinks the technology, known as brain-computer interface (BCI), is now at a "turning point". The industry must aim to make the implants widely accessible, he told AFP. There are still pretty hefty impediments before that can happen, not least that the most powerful results often come from the most invasive implants.

For example, a patient in the US, Ian Burkhart, who was left paralyzed from the neck down after a diving accident, told AFP that getting an implant that allowed him to control his arms and hands again was a "magical moment". But he was only ever able to do that in a lab and the implant, known as a Utah array, was far from comfortable.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) announced on Sunday it is seeking to establish a shelter for male expatriates who have legal issues with their employers. The PAM shelter currently houses female expatriates in response to personal requests or requests by embassies or relevant authorities, said Dr Fahad Al-Murad, acting deputy director general for expatriate workers' protection, who affirmed on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day that these women enjoy legal, social and health care.

The center, he added, is seeking to establish an identical section to receive male expatriates facing similar conditions and issues. The center, since its establishment in 2014, has hosted more than 13,000 female workers. This year, it has received 960 women laborers, in addition to eight children accompanied by their mothers. Most of them have returned home and only 35 remain at the center.

Meanwhile, Khaled Al-Ajmi, Chairman of Kuwaiti Human Rights Society, said in remarks to KUNA the society has inked an accord with the center to educate expatriates about their rights and duties according to Kuwaiti laws. The society, he added, this year distributed leaflets and booklets in seven languages as part of efforts to help them.

"The brain doesn't like having stuff inside it," said Michael Platt, professor of neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania. "And so the immune system of the brain will attack these devices," he said of the Utah arrays. As the implants get covered by cells, they are less able to transmit signals from the brain and they function less well.

Although far less advanced, some researchers are pinning their hopes on techniques that do not involve implants. In May, scientists at the University of Texas at Austin said they had used brain scans and AI modelling to glean "the gist" of what people were thinking. The technique relied heavily on the GPT models developed by OpenAI, which are capable of analyzing massive chunks of data increasingly quickly. But such research is at the very earliest stage and involves patients spending as much as 16 hours each time in an MRI scanner.

While most players in the field are exclusively concerned with medical uses for neurotechnology, Musk is different. The maverick tycoon is touting the possibility of telepathy, using the technology to store memories or to enable humans to continue their existence without their bodies. "In the future you will be able to save and replay memories," he told a Neuralink event in 2020. "You could potentially download them into a new body or into a robot body." — AFP

## Russia's Luna-25 probe crashes...

Continued from Page 1

But on Saturday, Roscosmos said an "emergency" had been detected during a maneuver by the probe prior to its Moon landing, preventing the operation from being carried out.

Luna-25 had been expected to stay on the Moon for a year, collecting soil samples and looking for water — an ingredient enthusiasts hope could be used to make rocket fuel for future launches and support potential colonies living there. Cameras installed on the lander have already taken shots of the lunar surface. Doubts have overshadowed Russia's long-running space

## Illegal logging turns Syria's...

Continued from Page 1

sneak into the woods to chop trees, evading the handful of forest guards patrolling the vast, green spaces. Syria's war has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions. It has also devastated the environment, triggering an "alarming" loss of forest cover across the country, Dutch peacebuilding group PAX warned in a report earlier this year. The country has witnessed a "26-percent decrease in tree cover since 2000", according to data from Global Forest Watch.

Ten kilometers from Jaabar, the same fate has befallen the trees of Tuwayhina. "In my childhood, we used to come here with friends to sit under the shade of eucalyptus and pine trees," said Mohammed Ali, surrounded by tree trunks scattered across the sun-scorched earth. "But now it is a barren land," said the 30-year-old nurse. "Now, there is no shade left, only the heat of the sun everywhere." "The dust storms never stop, the lake is drying up and there are no trees left," Ali said, referring to Lake Assad, Syria's largest freshwater dam reservoir.

Water levels have dropped and pollution has worsened in the Euphrates and the reservoir it feeds, with the river's flow further impacted by upstream dams in

cooperation with the West over its military campaign in Ukraine. While Russia has said it intends to use the International Space Station until 2028, the European Space Agency (ESA) has dropped plans to co-operate with Moscow on Moon and Mars missions.

Moscow last landed a probe — Luna-24 — on the Moon in 1976 and then shifted away from lunar exploration in favor of missions to Venus and building the Mir space station. Landing Luna-25 successfully would have paved the way for further Russian missions to the Moon, at a time when India and China are launching their own probes and the United States returns to manned missions. India's competing space probe, Chandrayaan-3, entered the Moon's orbit earlier in August and also hopes to land on the south pole. Only Russia, the United States and China have previously achieved a controlled landing on the Moon. — AFP

Turkey. Deforestation in Syria is largely attributed to logging and thinning for firewood, according to the PAX report. "Soaring fuel prices combined with massive displacement form the main driver for large-scale deforestation throughout Syria," it said. "Civilians are cutting down trees for cooking and heating, while there are clear indications that armed groups also use illegal logging and wood sales as a source of income."

The once-dense forests of Syria's west "have suffered the most degradation caused by the war", mostly from tree felling and wildfires, PAX said. Latakia, Hama, Homs and Idlib provinces lost at least 36 percent of their trees in the decade following 2011, when the conflict erupted, according to PAX. In the north-east, authorities have "no precise data" about the damage but its impact is "obvious", Ibrahim Asaad, who co-chairs the Kurdish semi-autonomous administration's environment body, told AFP.

The area was the country's breadbasket in prewar times, but has witnessed severe droughts and reduced rainfall in recent years. On the outskirts of Hasakeh, a city further east, the Mount Abdulaziz reserve has been plagued by dry spells and some illegal logging. The trees had provided a "blanket of greenery", said Hussein Saleh al-Helou, a 65-year-old resident of the village of Al-Nasari. But now "there is no water, the trees near the village have withered... and people have started cutting them", he told AFP, surrounded by vast barren lands and hills. "Logging has had a huge impact on the village," Helou said. "The temperature has risen, and the weather is not the same any more." — AFP



## International

# Dangerous Hurricane Hilary hits Mexico, California with heavy rain

## Hurricane remains cause for worry despite downgrade



LOS CABOS: General view of the Medano beach in Los Cabos, Baja California State, Mexico, during the passage of Hurricane Hilary, on August 19, 2023. — AFP photos

CABO SAN LUCAS: Hurricane Hilary weakened to a tropical storm Sunday as it barreled up Mexico's Pacific coast but was still likely to bring life-threatening flooding to the typically arid southwestern United States, forecasters said. Authorities reported at least one fatality in northwestern Mexico, where Hilary lashed the Baja California Peninsula with heavy rain and strong winds.

At its peak, Hilary reached Category 4 on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale but was downgraded to a tropical storm as it headed towards southern California, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said. Hilary was packing maximum sustained winds of around 70 miles (110 kilometers) per hour as it moved north just off the west coast of Baja California, the NHC said.

"Catastrophic and life-threatening flooding likely over Baja California and portions of the southwestern US through Monday," the US government agency warned in its latest bulletin Sunday. And US Federal Emergency Management Agency admin-

istrator Deanne Criswell urged people to take the dangers seriously. "Hurricane Hilary is going to be a serious impact and threat to southern California," she said on CNN.

### 'Very, very dangerous'

One person died in Mexico after a vehicle was swept away by a rising stream, Mexico's Civil Protection agency said, while warning of landslides and road closures in Baja California. Hilary was expected to track inland and north, depositing up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain on parts of Mexico, California and Nevada, according to the NHC.

Tornadoes were possible in southeast California, western Arizona, southern Nevada, and far southwest Utah, it said. FEMA deployed teams to areas in Hilary's path, while California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency for much of the state's southern area. Nancy Ward, director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, said Hilary could be one of the worst storms to hit



CABO SAN LUCAS: A man walks along a street in Cabo San Lucas, Baja California State, Mexico, as rain and gusts of wind of Hurricane Hilary reach the area, on August 19, 2023.

the state in more than a decade. "Make no mistake," she told a press conference Saturday. "This is a very, very dangerous and significant storm."

### 'Waiting for the weather'

As large waves crashed ashore and winds lashed the Mexican tourist resort of Cabo San Lucas on Saturday, residents and workers put up protective boarding and laid thousands of sandbags. Military personnel were seen patrolling the beach, a popular destination for both Mexican and foreign tourists. "We took all the precautionary measures last night," Omar Olvera told AFP at the Cabo San Lucas beachfront restaurant where he works.

With sandbags piled protectively around the restaurant, he said. "We're just looking out for the workers and waiting for the weather to come." The Mexican government deployed almost 19,000 soldiers in the states most affected by the storm, while the federal electric utility sent 800 workers and hundreds of vehicles to respond to any outages.

US President Joe Biden, who was at a rented vacation home with his family on Lake Tahoe along the California-Nevada border, was briefed Saturday by senior staff on preparations for the storm, the White House said. Biden and his wife, First Lady Jill Biden, are planning to visit Hawaii on Monday to survey wildfire damage as recovery operations continue. In San Diego, the US Navy said ships and submarines would be heading out to sea ahead of the storm's arrival. Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer rescheduled games planned for Sunday in the US region. Hurricanes hit Mexico every year on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Although the storms sometimes affect California, it is rare for them to strike the state with much intensity. Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer with climate change. "We have to also look at what is the change in the climate doing to these severe weather events," Criswell, the FEMA administrator, told CNN Sunday. "What is the risk going to look like into the future." — AFP

## Firefighters make gains against Tenerife wildfire

LA OROTAVA: Firefighters made gains in their battle against a vast wildfire on Tenerife on Sunday after better-than-expected overnight weather helped them keep the blaze from destroying homes on the Spanish holiday island, regional officials said. The blaze broke out late Tuesday in a mountainous northeastern area, quickly morphing into the Canary Islands' biggest-ever wildfire.

So far, the fire, which now has a perimeter of 84 kilometers (52 miles), has burned through 11,600 hectares (28,700 acres) of land, which is nearly six percent of Tenerife's overall surface area. And it has forced more than 12,000 people to flee their homes, the regional government said, citing police figures. Despite expectations of a difficult night, things went "much better than expected", Canary Islands leader Fernando Clavijo said.

"We warned of a complex situation, with rising temperatures and wind ... and it's true the night started very hard with many calls saying the fire was very close to people's homes," he told reporters early Sunday. But the firefighters "worked very intensively" and got through the night without losing a single home to the blaze, he said, describing it as "almost a miracle".

Montse Roman, technical head of the operation, said overnight operations were "mainly focused on defending infrastructure and homes on the northern flank of the fire", confirming there had "not been any more evacuations or confinement orders". However, officials on Sunday ordered the evacuation of the luxury state-run Parador hotel next to Mount Teide volcano, Spain's highest peak, the emergency ser-



ARAFU: Helicopters fly over the area of Pico Cho Marcial in Arafa to drop water over a huge wildfire raging through forested areas that surround the Mount Teide volcano natural park, on the Canary island of Tenerife, on August 20, 2023. — AFP

vices said. It was not immediately clear how many people were evacuated from the hotel, which is located in the middle of the Teide national park at 2,000 meters above sea level.

On Sunday, some 610 people were involved in the massive operation to battle the blaze and help those affected by it, with 20 aerial units backing up the firefighting efforts. On Saturday, the airborne units staged 930 sorties, dropping 1.5 million liters of water onto the flames, the emergency services said.

### 'It will ruin us'

As the fire spread down the mountainside towards the northern town of La Matanza de Acentejo on Saturday afternoon, Candelaria Bencomo Betancor, a farmer in her 70s, looked on in anguish. "The fire is close to our farm, we've got trucks, vans, chickens,

Media reports suggest that the discharge of some of the 1.34 million tons of water, which Japan insists is safe, could begin as soon as this month, despite anger from China and concern elsewhere.

Speaking at the Fukushima site, wrecked by a tsunami in 2011 in one of the world's worst atomic accidents, Kishida said he would first meet fishing industry officials to discuss their concerns. "I must refrain from commenting on a concrete timing of the release into the ocean at this point, as the decision has to be made after the government as a whole looks at measures to do with safety and

everything ... it's a business that is going well but if the fire comes, it will totally ruin us," she told AFP TV, on the verge of tears. "They have to do something because the fire is right there."

So far, the fire has affected 11 municipalities on Tenerife, the largest of the seven Canary Islands, with the emergency services saying air quality was affected across much of the island "due to the smoke generated by the fire". Pedro Martinez, who is in charge of firefighting efforts, said the blaze was "behaving like a sixth-generation wildfire" — a term referring to a mega forest fire, and efforts to tackle the flames were being hampered by the huge clouds of smoke and the wind. The blaze has generated a vast pillar of smoke that now stretches some eight kilometers into the air, rising far above the summit of Mount Teide. — AFP

reputational damage (for the fishing industry)," Kishida told reporters.

"I hope to meet with fishermen, led by chairman (Masanobu) Sakamoto of Japan's fisheries cooperative federation, as early as tomorrow," the prime minister said. Many Japanese fishermen are against the release, fearing that it will undo years of efforts to improve the industry's image in the wake of the 2011 catastrophe. The water, equivalent to more than 500 Olympic swimming pools, has accumulated in the past 12 years from water used to cool three melted-down reactors combined with groundwater and rain.

Plant operator TEPCO says that dangerous radioactive elements have been filtered out and that the water it plans to release is safe, a view backed by the UN atomic agency. Japan has spent months trying to win over public opinion at home and abroad, with everything from livestreaming fish living in the treated water to efforts to counter online disinformation.

Public concern about the plan remains high in South Korea but its government said its review of the plan found it in line with international standards. But China, which has frosty relations with Japan, has banned food imports from 10 Japanese prefectures and has imposed stringent radiation tests on food from the rest of the country. The release of the treated water — a maximum of 500,000 liters per day, TEPCO says — is just one stage of the clean-up. The far more dangerous task remains of removing radioactive debris and highly dangerous nuclear fuel from the three reactors that went into meltdown. — AFP

## Invasive grass turns Hawaii into tinderbox

WASHINGTON: After a catastrophic wildfire that killed more than 100 people in Hawaii, eyes have turned toward an unexpected culprit: invasive grass species that have spread massively over the archipelago for decades, serving as the perfect fuel. Drought-resistant, capable of invading difficult terrain, and gradually muscling out local species, they are also a growing threat in the western United States, where devastating fires are increasing.

"Invasive grasses are very ignitable. They change the landscape," Carla D'Antonio, a professor of ecology at the University of California, Santa Barbara told AFP. "They make conditions that are more conducive to more fire, and all of a sudden, we just have a lot more fire."

Rather than decomposing when they die, they stay "standing there for a long time, dry as a bone," said D'Antonio, who has been studying these species for more than 30 years. They're also hardy, surviving fires better than native species and gradually replacing them. Most of these grasses — buffelgrass, Guinea grass, molasses grass — came from Africa, and were introduced as pasture for cattle, without knowing the danger they would come to represent decades later.

In Hawaii, the demise of sugar cane plantations in the 1990s as a result of globalization had disastrous consequences: huge tracts of land were abandoned, allowing the invasive species an opening. "Yes, many parts of Hawaii are trending towards dryer conditions, but the fire problem is mostly attributable to the vast extents of non-native grasslands left unmanaged by large landowners as we've entered a 'post-plantation era,'" said Clay Trauernicht, a fire ecologist at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Trauernicht said the annual area burned in Hawaii has increased by 300 percent in recent decades. A 2021 fire prevention report by Maui County described fires as a growing threat due to increasing temperatures and prolonged periods of drought because of climate change, and the growing menace of intrusive grasses. Hawaii, despite its tropical reputation, is getting drier: a 2016 study found 90 percent of the state received less rain compared to a century earlier. — AFP



This undated handout photo provided by Carla D'Antonio shows invasive molasses grass (Melinis minutiflora) filling in spaces between remnant native shrubs and trees in burned areas of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. — AFP

## Fukushima water release date still undecided: PM

TOMIOKA: Japanese premier Fumio Kishida said Sunday his government has not yet decided when to begin releasing treated water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.



NAMIE: This long exposure picture shows a damaged house (front) with the facilities of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant (back) are seen from Ukedo fishing port in Namie, Fukushima prefecture on August 20, 2023. — AFP



## Business

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 2023

## Bread-short Tunisia to restore flour supply to some bakeries

Deal could help ease severe bread shortage



TUNIS: People queue in front of a bakery selling subsidized bread in Tunis' Halfaouine district, on August 19, 2023. — AFP

**TUNIS:** Tunisia will again supply flour to more than 1,000 non-subsidized bakeries in the North African country after most of them ceased operating, government and industry officials said on Sunday. The deal could help ease a bread shortage that has worsened over the past two weeks. Since the beginning of August, European-style bakeries selling baguettes in the formerly French-ruled country had been prevented from accessing their quota of subsidized flour, after President Kais Saied said there should be "one type of bread for all Tunisians".

Days later those same bakeries also stopped receiving non-subsidized flour and semolina from the

state, which controls the supply of all such essential goods in the country. Known as "modern bakeries", the shops sell at a higher price and also offer pastries and other breads. More than 3,700 other bakeries sell only subsidized baguettes at a cost of 190 Tunisian millimes (around \$0.07 cents), a price unchanged since 1984.

"It has been decided to resume the supply of flour and semolina to the non-subsidized bakers from August 19," after which they committed to "respect the laws on the production and sale of bread", the commerce ministry said in a statement. Economists attribute the bread shortage partly to speculation but,

more broadly, to the lack of cereals. Tunisia's debt is around 80 percent of gross domestic product and the country lacks liquidity. It is unable to buy enough grain on global markets, economists say.

Around 200 bakers in the capital Tunis held a sit-in after the subsidy cut, and then authorities also disrupted the supply of regular flour. Another such protest planned for Monday in Tunis has been cancelled after the government's latest announcement, Salem Badri, president of the Association of Modern Bakeries in the coastal city of Sfax, told AFP.

Ninety percent of the 1,443 association members, which employed almost 20,000 people, "had to

close their doors" as a result of the earlier decision, Badri said, which made bread queues even longer at the other, state-supported outlets. He said that, beginning Monday, discussions would continue with authorities to allow the modern bakeries to resume production of subsidized bread, but "on the basis of criteria set by President Kais Saied".

Saied staged a power grab in July 2021 and has since ruled by decree in what his opponents call a "coup". Last year he rammed through a constitution giving his office unlimited powers and neutering parliament. In the early 1980s riots over bread killed a total of 150 people in Tunisia. — AFP

## China's youth worry about tough job market

**BEIJING:** Freshly graduated psychology major Zhang has failed to find a job in her chosen field of market research despite sending out thousands of CVs to Chinese employers. The months-long search has taken an emotional toll on the 23-year-old, who had ironically conducted a survey on job-seeking anxiety as part of her university studies.

"After graduating, I've found that the pressure is really huge," she told AFP at a recruitment fair in Beijing this weekend, declining to provide her full name for fear of repercussions.

"For every ten resumes I send out I get one response," she said. Zhang is one of millions of graduates entering China's job market at a time of soaring youth unemployment. Recently, the figure has hit a record every month, with 21.3 percent of people aged 16 to 24 jobless in June.

Authorities on Tuesday abruptly said they would stop publishing age-related employment data, prompting public skepticism and concern over youth joblessness in the world's second-largest economy. At career fairs in Beijing this week, attendees described a challenging landscape for inexperienced candidates hoping to land their first or second jobs.

Yang Yao, an unemployed 21-year-old with experience in media, was disappointed after browsing advertisements at a fair in central Beijing on Thursday where employers mostly sought staff for low-paying sales and administrative positions. He had quit his previous job in eastern China's Zhejiang province to move closer to his family in Beijing, and was now wracked with anxiety about his prospects after a fruitless few weeks of searching. "Every night I find myself worrying, what if I can't find a job what will I do about living costs? And I can't sleep at night," he told AFP.



BEIJING: This photo taken on August 19, 2023 shows people attending a job fair in Beijing. Millions of graduates are entering China's job market at a time of soaring youth unemployment. — AFP

## Post-COVID slump

China has released a raft of indicators in recent months pointing to a slowdown in the country's post-COVID economic rebound, with weak consumer demand making firms reluctant to hire. "Recent activity data generally came on the weaker side, suggesting that the recovery is stalling," Jing Liu, Greater China chief economist at HSBC wrote in a note this week.

"This has been reflected by the labor market data," she added. Xie Wei, a 39-year-old hiring manager at a telecommunications services firm, told AFP that companies that had survived three years of disruption during China's zero-COVID pandemic restrictions were now more selective when taking on new employees. The companies that have bounced back "will pick a direction, and this direction is first of all that the company must survive," he said.

He also said he felt that young workers, especially those born after the mid-1990s, "are lacking psychological pressure, so they might be lazier" — echoing the government's stance that the youth should be willing to endure hardship.

However, Li Xiangyang, a 26-year-old former social media manager looking for a new job, said that "maybe in terms of promoting employment we are somewhat

lacking". "If you're in a second or third-tier city... there would be very few development opportunities in my industry," he said. "I feel like the policies have not caught up."

China has in recent weeks announced a series of measures to boost consumption, including large-scale festivals and sporting events, as well as an increase in spending on services involving catering and healthcare. But economists have said the government needs to do more to boost consumers' and employers' confidence. In one industry — insurance — positions appear to be plentiful, albeit without a guaranteed income. Over a third of the booths at a job fair in northern Beijing on Saturday were taken up by insurance companies hoping to hire new sales representatives, with company staff trawling the premises for promising recruits. "For insurance representatives, we can always expand our teams, so there is no limit on how many we recruit," said Yang, an insurance salesperson in her 40s.

After waves of layoffs in other industries like education, "relatively more talent is pouring into this market", she added. Recruiters at Saturday's fair showed AFP bank records proving that some teammates had made over a million yuan (\$137,300) in half a year, promising limitless wealth from the commission-based jobs. — AFP

## Ukraine crisis: Rebuilding in midst of war

**KHARKIV:** Picking her way through charred ruins with a flashlight, Tetiana Bezasosna returned to her apartment after it was pummeled by Russian bombardment. The Ukrainian mother-of-two has little hope it will ever be rebuilt.

Her home in the northeastern city of Kharkiv is among hundreds of thousands of war-damaged civilian properties in Ukraine, with recovery at vast expense expected to take decades.

Fixing the colossal damage — unlike anything seen in Europe in decades — is further complicated by the non-stop bombardment of Ukrainian cities as Russia grinds through the second year of its invasion.

Highlighting what residents call the slow pace of recovery in Bezasosna's Saltivka suburb — a hellscape of shell-pocked buildings and ravaged shops — jackhammers and cranes hovering over the damaged sites lie largely idle. "We are not expected to return here soon," Bezasosna, 44, told AFP as she walked up to her ninth-floor apartment. "It's very hard and painful to look at all this."

Broken glass crunched under her shoes as she walked past scorched

apartments, pointing her phone's flashlight at the possessions residents had left behind — abandoned books, mold-covered kitchenware, Lego toys. On one floor, a makeshift column propped up the staircase where the concrete had been riddled with holes.

## 'It's dangerous'

Bezasosna fled Saltivka, a once-thriving Kharkiv suburb with hundreds of thousands of people, after it bore the brunt of Russia's initial assault when the invasion started in February 2022. Her family returned when much of Kharkiv region was liberated last September. Forced to rent another place, they plucked whatever they could salvage from their apartment, including a half-burnt washing machine and a bathtub.

A sign hung at the entrance of the building read: "Do not enter, it's dangerous." Displaced residents, who put up the sign mainly to ward off burglars, were torn between two difficult options.

Some are desperate to move back despite the hazardous conditions and urged the government to make urgent repairs. Others, including Bezasosna, are demanding that the unstable building be torn down and a new one built in the same place. "Ukraine must start rebuilding during the war to support its home front," Orysia Lutsevych, deputy director for the Russia and Eurasia programme at the London-based Chatham House, told AFP. — AFP



KUPIANSK, Ukraine: Tatyana Skrypnikova, 60, who sustained light shrapnel wounds, stands among debris of the house of her neighbors destroyed following a shelling in the village of Zaoskillya, near Kupiansk, Kharkiv Oblast. — AFP



NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

# US dollar gains amid safe haven demand; China data fuels fears

## American labor market remains tight as job growth slows

**KUWAIT:** The latest month-on-month retail sales reading came at 0.7 percent, significantly higher than the previous reading of 0.3 percent, and well above the forecasted 0.4 percent. The core retail sales index also soared to 1.0 percent from 0.2 percent previously, with both readings at their highest levels since January. This indicates that high wages from the ever so tight labor market have kept demand high despite the vicious interest rate hikes by the Fed. The data showed that the main driver behind the increase was online sales, which soared by 1.9 percent. Retail sales are highly valuable indicators for potential GDP figures, and this unexpected rise leads markets to believe that GDP figures will come in substantially higher. The current narrative is that the US will be able to achieve a "soft landing," and such data adds to that narrative as inflation is cooling in the US, accompanied by a robust labor market.

### FOMC meeting minutes

During the Federal Open Market Committee meeting, Federal Reserve officials expressed their concerns over the path of inflation. Officials said that an additional rate hike might be necessary in the future, unless current economic conditions change. The two-day meeting resulted in a quarter-percentage point rate hike that the market expects to be the last in this current cycle. During the meeting, most Federal officials showed that there is still a need for higher interest rates, while some officials are worrying about over tightening. The minutes were largely consistent with Powell's press conference, with a hawkish tone that left further tightening on the table, though avoided any firm commitments given the emphasis on data dependence.

The latest increase brought the Federal funds rate to its current target range of 5.25 percent - 5.50 percent, which is considered the highest level in more than twenty-two years. Markets are pricing an 88.5 percent probability of no hike in the Fed's next meeting on September 20.

### Unemployment claims

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits fell last week, pointing to continued tightness in the labor market even as job growth slows. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 11,000 to a seasonally adjusted 239,000 for the week ended Aug 12, reversing half of the surge in the prior week, as per the Labor Department. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 240,000 claims for the latest week.

Rates - August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0942	1.0843	1.0959	1.0867	1.0695	1.0960	1.0923
GBP	1.2688	1.2614	1.2787	1.2735	1.2530	1.2905	1.2739
JPY	144.92	144.65	146.56	145.37	144.40	147.15	143.30
CHF	0.8769	0.8742	0.8827	0.8815	0.8610	0.8920	0.8732

The labor market is only showing marginal signs of a slowdown, with job gains in July being the second-smallest since December 2020. The unemployment rate is around levels last seen more than 50 years ago. There were 1.6 job openings for every unemployed person in June. Claims, relative to the size of the labor market, remain below the 280,000 level that economists say would signal a significant slowdown in job growth.

The US dollar index traded higher across the board supported by safe haven demand on concerns over China's economy and expectations that US rates will stay higher for longer. The US dollar index reached a three-month high of 103.68 on Thursday. The index closed slightly lower at 103.433 as market participants turn their focus to Jerome Powell's speech in next week's Jackson Hole Symposium, looking for signals on the future of interest rates in the US.

### Europe

German investor confidence improved unexpectedly in August but it remains firmly in negative territory as the mood in Europe's largest economy remains opaque. ZEW's economic sentiment index rose to -12.3 points from -14.7 points in July. Analysts expected sentiment to stagnate in August with a reading of -14.7 as per a Reuters poll.

The main driver behind the euro's decline last week was elevated worries over China, fueling demand for the US dollar safety. The euro closed the week lower at 1.0867. Despite the drop, some analysts were expecting a lower euro given the region's economic exposure to China.

### UK inflation remains sticky

The latest inflationary data to come out of the UK

showed that annual headline inflation dropped from 7.9 percent in June all the way to 6.8 percent. Core inflation on the other hand remained unchanged at 6.9 percent, unfortunately proving that the significant drop in headline inflation is mainly due to the drop in energy prices. Additionally, services have become more expensive, with services inflation rising to 7.4 percent from 7.2 percent previously. Meanwhile, wages in the UK have seen a 7.8 percent increase, hitting a figure that has not been seen since 2001. That along with the recent surprise economic growth, add more worries for the Bank of England (BoE). Additionally, Retail sales showed a monthly drop of 1.2 percent and 1.4 percent for the core figure. The figures are weaker than market expectations which could indicate that higher interest rates are starting to slowdown the economy.

It now seems inevitable that the BoE will hike interest rates once more in their next meeting as they continue to fight stubborn inflation, with markets now pricing in an 84 percent probability of a rate hike. Sterling showed resilience against the dollar as expectations of an imminent hike by the BoE continues to support the pound. Nevertheless, the GBP/USD pair remained range bound for the most part of the week and closed at 1.2735.

### Japan GDP figures

Japan's economy exceeded market expectations in April-June figures, due to the rapid growth in auto exports and tourism. The annual growth in Japan came in at 6 percent, but on a quarterly basis the economy gained 1.5 percent while it was expected to be at 0.8 percent. It is considered the fastest expansion since the first quarter of 2020.

The recent depreciation in the Japanese Yen co-


incides with a rise in US treasury yields amid expectations that support higher US rates for longer, combined with an ever so dovish Bank of Japan. The pair reached a 9-month high of 146.56 on Thursday. The USDJPY eased on Friday and closed at 145.37. The move in the market indicates that traders are concerned that the pair's current level (above 145) could trigger an intervention by the authorities similar to the intervention late last year.

### China economic outlook

The world's second largest economy, China, reported economic data that considerably missed expectations, sending the Yuan to a 9 month low. The country's industrial production rose by 3.7 percent annually, significantly below the forecasted and previous figure of 4.4 percent. Furthermore, retail sales came in at 2.5 percent, down from 3.1 percent previously and widely off the expected figure of 4.5 percent. China's fixed asset investment grew by 3.4 percent annually, falling short of the previous and forecasted figure of 3.8 percent. Additionally, the urban unemployment rate ticked up to 5.3 percent from 5.2 percent previously. Unlike prior reports, the National Bureau of Statistics did not include youth unemployment this time, which has soared to record highs in recent months. The People's Bank of China (PBOC) unexpectedly cut rates following the disappointing economic releases, with the one year medium term lending facility falling by 15bps from 2.65 percent to 2.5 percent. The central bank also cut the seven day reverse repo rate to 1.8 percent, a fall of 10bps from what could be seen as a start for further easing measures in an economy that is battling deflation and weak consumer demand.

The Yuan continues its downtrend following weak economic figures and a surprising cut from the PBOC early last week. The yuan fell to 7.3098 in offshore trading, bouncing back from a nine month low of 7.3494, after the PBOC set a much higher fixing of the official mid-point at 7.2006. The currency pair closed the week at 7.3068. Meanwhile the Australian dollar, which often trades as a proxy for China and has tended to track the yuan in recent days, reached a nine-month low of 0.6365.

**Kuwait**  
Kuwaiti dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30790.



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 17 AUGUST 2023

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	33,623	7,823.53	-0.5%	-2.9%	-3.6%	402,212,763	114,118,434	30,275	17.0	1.2	78.1%
Main Market	9,454	5,792.99	0.2%	2.9%	3.5%	374,828,398	44,935,837	16,727	13.3	0.7	21.9%
All Share	43,078	7,124.00	-0.3%	-1.8%	-2.3%	777,041,161	159,054,271	47,002	14.2	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,814	1,733.13	-0.5%	-2.0%	-3.4%	104,649,727	51,852,614	12,153	18.4	1.2	59.92%
Basic Materials	482	854.19	0.4%	-3.3%	-1.3%	3,903,012	2,751,683	628	9.7	2.0	1.12%
Consumer Discretionary	1,120	1,669.83	-1.5%	-3.0%	12.3%	49,815,882	9,598,959	3,770	13.3	1.0	2.60%
Consumer Staples	186	611.06	8.1%	-1.7%	27.3%	4,456,930	2,282,937	642	77.0	1.1	0.43%
Energy	206	987.83	-2.1%	-1.1%	-13.2%	1,556,290	102,466	190	9.5	0.7	0.48%
Financial Services	4,496	1,274.74	-0.1%	-1.2%	1.4%	360,099,916	49,473,964	12,665	25.2	0.8	10.44%
Health Care	237	478.19	5.0%	5.3%	3.5%	7,398	3,429.69	15	12.9	1.0	0.55%
Industrials	3,384	973.20	-1.5%	-2.8%	-9.8%	46,341,777	17,304,778	6,119	17.0	0.9	7.85%
Insurance	909	2,226.60	1.3%	2.2%	43.6%	1,714,946	676,082	216	10.1	0.9	2.11%
Real Estate	2,642	1,232.71	-0.1%	-1.4%	2.0%	193,151,357	19,728,240	7,727	15.0	0.6	6.13%
Technology	8	566.72	-4.9%	-1.8%	-18.6%	137,329	10,557	40	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,379	1,105.80	0.5%	-0.7%	-6.4%	9,008,763	4,847,700	2,488	11.0	1.4	7.84%
Utilities	213	510.53	0.0%	-4.0%	3.2%	2,197,834	420,862	349	15.9	1.9	0.50%

#### Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
OULAFUEL	160	17.65%	4,101,604	634,626	232
SOOR	155	14.81%	460,974	67,534	132
TAHSSILAT	23	14.50%	17,739	380	12
KCIN	1,186	10.12%	57,325	66,449	18
KMEFIC	88.8	8.96%	250,600	22,230	17

#### Top Losers

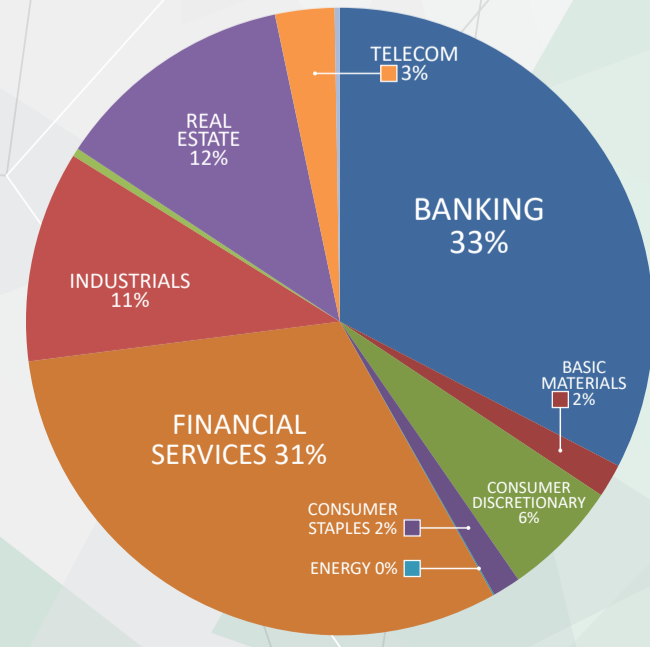
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAAMEER	14.1	-21.67%	20,337,460	302,468	70
EQUIPMENT	20	-17.70%	1,710,482	36,483	90
HAYATCOMM	66.2	-12.89%	13,060	947	7
GFC	58	-10.77%	27,750	1,591	14
PAPCO	81	-9.90%	815	66	3

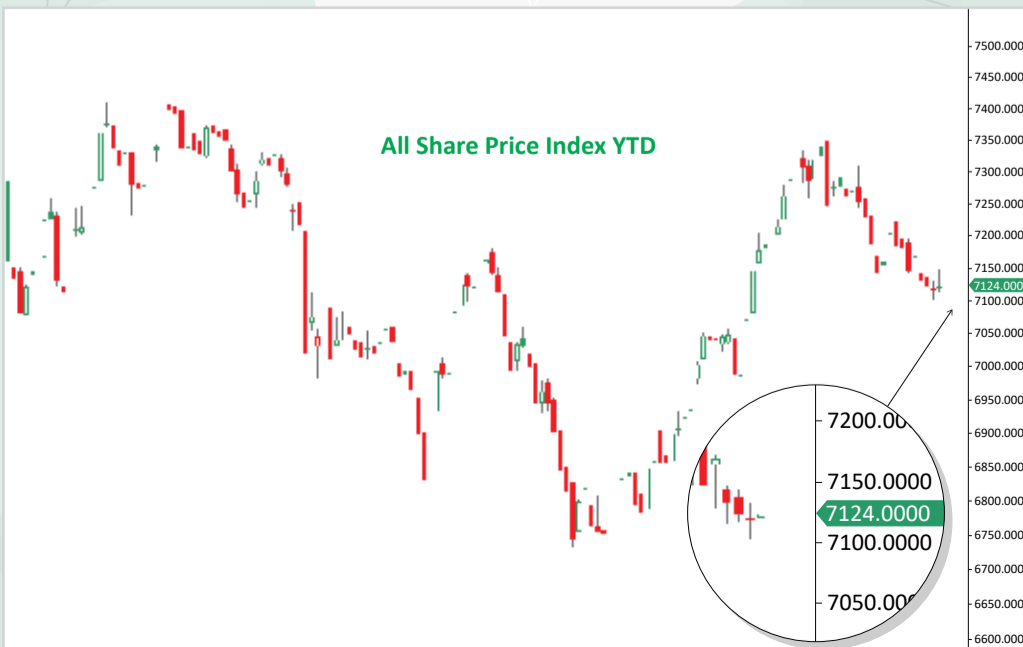
#### Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	83	-3.60%	84,069,569	7,062,155	2,896
KRE	163	-3.55%	65,018,165	10,584,565	1,912
IFA	174	0.58%	61,939,246	10,779,058	1,488
ARZAN	151	-2.58%	46,605,152	7,137,002	900
NCCI	126	-3.08%	39,730,142	5,105,879	713

#### Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	757	-1.05%	29,847,215	22,690,178	4,519
NBK	934	0.43%	15,194,705	14,177,468	2,989
IFA	174	0.58%	61,939,246	10,779,058	1,488
KRE	163	-3.55%	65,018,165	10,584,565	1,912
ARZAN	151	-2.58%	46,605,152	7,137,002	900





#### Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value dropped 28% and 31%, respectively. Main Market volume dropped 24% while value increased by 6%
- The Premier index still declining while the Main index showed stability and moving horizontally.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7124, with support levels at 7105, 7085, and 7041, and resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7823, with support levels at 7767 and 7730, while resistance was at 7827 and 7864. The Main index closed at 5792, with support levels at 5780, 5750, and 5723, and resistance at 5813.



## Business

## BRICS nations eye global geopolitical shift

## Johannesburg summit to look to widen bloc's influence

**JOHANNESBURG:** Leaders of the BRICS emerging economies, which account for about a quarter of the world's wealth, meet in Johannesburg this week looking to widen the bloc's influence and push for a shift in global geopolitics.

South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa is expected to host China's President Xi Jinping, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for the annual three-day summit starting on Tuesday. Russian President Vladimir Putin also will join remotely.

Putin decided against attending in person as he is the target of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant that South Africa is in theory bound to enforce if he sets foot in the country.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will travel to Johannesburg instead. Representing billions of people across three continents, with economies undergoing varying levels of growth, the BRICS share one thing in common — disdain for a world order they see as serving the interests of rich Western powers. "The traditional global governing system has become dysfunctional, deficient and missing in action," Chen Xiaodong, the Chinese ambassador to Pretoria said at a briefing on Friday, adding the BRICS are "increasingly becoming a staunch force in defending international justice".

There is growing interest in the bloc — at least 40 countries have expressed interest in joining, and 23 of those have formally submitted applications to become BRICS members.

**'Polarized world'**

Anil Sooklal, South Africa's ambassador-at-large for Asia and the BRICS, told AFP on Friday that one of the reasons countries are

lining up to join is "the very polarized world we live in, that has been further polarized by the Russia-Ukraine crisis, and where countries are being forced to take sides". "Countries in the South don't want to be told who to support, how to behave and how to conduct their sovereign affairs. They are strong enough now to assert their respective positions," added Sooklal.

The BRICS have raised hope for countries looking to restructure the global "architecture", he said. "The major markets are now in the Global South... but we are still on the margins in terms of global decision-making." Lebogang Legodi, international politics lecturer at the University of Limpopo, agrees that many states keen on joining the group "are seeing BRICS as an alternative to the current hegemony" in world affairs. Around 50 other leaders will attend a "friends of BRICS" program during the summit, which will be held at a convention centre in the heart of Johannesburg's Sandton, historically referred to as the richest square-mile on the continent. This year's gathering is themed "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism".

It comes at "a critical inflection point," said Steven Gruzd of the Africa-Russia Africa project at the South African Institute of International Affairs. "The current multilateral system is under strain," he said. A decision on expanding the BRICS membership is expected at the end of the summit, according to Sooklal.

An upbeat Ramaphosa told a meeting of the ruling ANC party in Johannesburg on Saturday that "we are going to have a fantastic BRICS summit". He said the presence of so many heads of state



**JOHANNESBURG:** People walk past a banner outside the venue for the 2023 BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Johannesburg, on August 20, 2023. — AFP

"goes to show the influence and the impact that South Africa" has in the world. But experts closely watching the BRICS aren't very optimistic about the meeting's outcomes.

"I don't think this summit will yield those dramatic results because the power is still with Western

countries. China is rising, but is not the dominant power yet," said SAIIA's Gruzd. Formally launched in 2009, the BRICS now account for 23 percent of global GDP and 42 percent of the world's population. The combined bloc represents more than 16 percent of the world's trade. — AFP

## Five things to know about BRICS

**JOHANNESBURG:** The BRICS countries, an acronym of the five members Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, meet for three days for a summit in Johannesburg starting Tuesday. Representing 23 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and 42 percent of the world's population, they are seeking to dull Western economic domination in global affairs.

Here are some facts and figures about the BRICS:

**A new world order?**

A group of emerging economies, it was formally launched in 2009 and it meets yearly at a summit hosted in rotation by one of the member countries. The meetings aim to assert their position particularly in relation to the United States and the European Union.

It promotes the recognition of a multipolar global order with economic and political balance, with the aim of breaking away from organizations formed in the post-World War II era, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Aspirants**

The bloc whose economic growth is mainly driven by China and India, is now open to expansion. Twenty three candidates have applied to join the BRICS, and an almost similar number have expressed an interest - among them Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran and Saudi Arabia. One of the attractions of the group is the New Development Bank, created in 2015 with the aim of offering an alternative to the World Bank and the IMF. The Shanghai-headquartered bank has since invested \$30 billion in infrastructure development projects in member states and other developing economies.

**The Putin dilemma**

Preparations for the summit saw diplomatic tensions rise on the global stage after host President Cyril Ramaphosa invited Russia's President Vladimir Putin who is the target of an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant over the war in Ukraine. Following months of speculation, Pretoria finally said Putin will attend the summit via video link.

South Africa, whose ruling ANC party forged relations with Moscow during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union backed its fight against apartheid, has refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Down with the dollar**

The five countries account for 18 percent of international trade, the majority of which is transacted in dollars. Critical of the greenback's predominance in world trade, one of their goals is to free themselves from the dollar. The bloc supports the increased use of members' national currencies for trade and the introduction of a common payment system in the long term. Brazil and China earlier this year signed a bilateral agreement to settle their trade in their local currencies.

**University rankings**

A meeting of BRICS education ministers last month announced their intention to create their own international university rankings. Moscow believes that Russian universities are being excluded from existing international rankings for political reasons. — AFP

## Gulf Bank sponsors Influencer program organized by LOYAC

**KUWAIT:** As part of its efforts in consolidating the principles of social sustainability, and its continuous support for youth, Gulf Bank concluded its sponsorship of The Influencer program, organized by LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) — an affiliate of the non-profit organization LOYAC. The program aims to provide distinguished training opportunities that help empower young people with mass communication skills, in order to qualify them to become effective leaders in the future.

The Influencer program targeted youth aged 15 to 19 years and focused on three main categories: The basics of effective communication, improving presentation skills, and creating professional content.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications, and member of the judging panel in final performance evaluation competition, Fatemah Al-Habib, said: "We are pleased to cooperate with LOYAC in supporting and developing youth, and to enhance their self-confidence, increase their communication and dialogue abilities, and help them master the art of persuasion. The program's intensive training helped guide and teach different age groups on how to create smart,



**Fatemah Al-Habib**



impactful and engaging content."

Al-Habib stressed Gulf Bank's keenness to support youth as part of its commitment to encourage and develop their professional skills and talents — as this aligns with both Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, which places youth at the forefront, and Kuwait's Vision 2035, which emphasizes the importance of investing in youth. Al-Habib further pointed the importance of such training programs, as they align with the requirements of the current social media era, especially amongst young people — indicating that programs like Al-Moather can help to enhance the capabilities of new content creators, in order to create and provide professional and purposeful content.

Furthermore, Al-Habib reviewed Gulf Bank's Corporate Communications teams' experience in creating content for social media, and their outstanding capabilities in effectively highlighting Gulf Bank's

## Crude oil: Demand worries return to weigh on prices

**KUWAIT:** The energy sector is experiencing ongoing consolidation, influenced heavily by concerns over potential US rate hikes and an uncertain outlook in China. As China is the leading importer of crude and the primary force behind demand growth in 2023, its impact on the oil market cannot be understated. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's role in the supply side is crucial, especially with their voluntary production cut of 1 million barrels per day, which has been instrumental in recent price surges. Thus, for insights into the current oil market, it's essential to closely monitor developments in China for demand and Saudi Arabia for supply. 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 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.

Overall, the current market tightness remains on clear display through the elevated backwardation shown across the time spreads, an example being WTI which has seen its front month spread rise from a 10 cents discount (contango) in late June to a current 45 cents premium, albeit down from 75 cents earlier this month. Among the ma-

commodities, the energy sector continues to command some of the highest backwardations as seen below through the twelve-month spreads below. They show Brent and WTI trading around 6 percent above their respective one-year forward prices, with gasoil, given the recent diesel tightness, somewhat higher near 15 percent.

In Brent, a close below the 21-day moving average, currently at \$84.38, will be needed to signal a pause in the bullish momentum that has prevailed since late June. A break could open for a move towards the 200-day moving average line, which is currently offering support at \$81.25, while above the market, a band of resistance exists between \$87.50 and \$89.

Markets extended their sell-off while the dollar climbed, weighing on commodities as FOMC minutes were hawkish at the margin. The China concerns now extended to the shadow banking sector, and USDCNH is moving above 7.34. The Japanese yen is also on intervention watch as USDJPY rose to fresh YTD highs. Oil slumped and gold slid below \$1900. A data-light day ahead, but Australia's July labor data will be in focus.

Gold dropped below key \$1,900/oz level as the FOMC minutes were hawkish at the margin keeping the door wide open for more rate hike. Higher yields and a two-month high in the USD dented investor demand for the precious metal. Better-than-expected economic data has also weighed on safe haven demand. June lows of \$1891.80, which also coincide with the 38.2 percent retracement, will be the first target now ahead of key support at \$1865.

The S&P 500 Index dropped by 0.8 percent while the Nasdaq 100 Index plunged by 1.1 percent on higher Treasury yields and concerns about the spill-over effect on global demand from weakness in the Chinese economy. Consumer discretionary, communication services and real estate were the worst-performing sectors within the S&P500. Target (TGT:ny) surged as much as 8.2 percent to end an earnings beat but paired some of the gain to end 2.9 percent higher. Walmart (WMT:ny) reports on Thursday. After the close, Cisco (CSCO:nas) reported quarterly revenue and EPS beating consensus and rose around 2 percent in the extended hour trading.

*Note: Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank*

## Trading dynamics on Wall Street undergoes shift

**NEW YORK:** The trading dynamics on Wall Street underwent a shift in the early hours of Friday's session. This followed Appleayd Materials (AMAT) and Ross Stores (ROST) leading the gains in US stocks yesterday. Meanwhile, Wall Street indices continued their descent yesterday, coinciding with the ongoing rise in Treasury bond yields to their all-time highs. The Dow Jones index dipped below the 50-day moving average, joining the Nasdaq and the S&P 500 in their losses.

It's worth mentioning that the yield on the US 10-year Treasury bond had surged in 1987, reaching its peak on October 16th of that year, a day known as "Black Monday" due to a 22 percent drop in the US stock market in a single day. The rise in yields and the collapse of bond values led to the crash of the US stock market. A similar situation is unfolding today as the 10-year bond yield reaches its highest level since 2007. Will "Black Monday" repeat itself?

Yesterday, leading stocks suffered further losses, appearing bearish even as the main Wall Street indices remained stable. Stocks of homebuilders and real estate companies saw a sharp decline. On the other hand, Nvidia (NVDA) managed to maintain its gains substantially, and I believe it will continue its path toward profits in the coming week. However, nearly all other artificial intelligence stocks are trading in the negative zone.

I don't believe a repeat of "Black Monday" is likely, as the 10-year Treasury bond yield dropped a few basis points to 4.25 percent yesterday. This came after the giant Chinese real estate company, Evergrande, filed for bankruptcy in New York last Thursday night. Meanwhile, the markets are anticipating the earnings results of Palo Alto Networks (PANW) later today on Friday, after it dropped yesterday to its lowest level since late May.

*Note: Rania Gule is market analyst at XS.com*





Chang Juben, chairman of Taiwan's Association of Jade Collectors, displays a Yuan dynasty (1217-1368) jade belt ornament showing a carving of a dragon among clouds in Taipei.



A jade ring from the early Qing dynasty era (1636-1911) on display at the shop of jade trader Lee in Taipei.



Items for sale at a jade shop at the Metropolitan jewelry and antiques centre in Taipei. — AFP photos

# Taiwan's antique jade dealers see trade losing lustre

Tracing a palm-sized jade pig resting on its haunches, an antique trader in Taiwan said the ears on the nearly 400-year-old piece are a marker of its authenticity. "The folds in the pig's ears show the handiwork, the ancient handicraft" of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), said the 60-year-old trader, who would only provide his last name as Lee. "It takes very careful carving. If it were duplicates, they wouldn't make it that delicate and detailed."

Lee's shop in Taipei's Da'an district holds ancient treasures worth more than a condominium located in the same neighborhood. The value of his merchandise represents just a fraction of an industry that the island's jade association says brought in nearly \$16 million annually in recorded pre-pandemic antique jade sales. But dealers warn the sector is flagging post-COVID. With the global economy in tatters, buyers are more cautious about taking a chance on expensive items, especially with the market awash with counterfeits.

Taipei's worsening ties with Beijing have also meant restrictions are still in place for visitors from mainland China, effectively cutting out the industry's biggest buyers. Relations have plummeted since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who refuses to accept Beijing's claim that the self-ruled island belongs to China, was elected in 2016.

"About seven to 12 years ago, it was very good times for people in Taiwan who are in the antiques or jade trade," said Liu San-bian, who runs a store in Metropolitan Jewelry and Antiques Emporium, a treasure trove of ateliers. "It declined when cross-strait politics slowly affected travel between both sides," he said, summing up the dilemma in four Chinese characters meaning: "Hard to buy, hard to sell." "Chinese people stopped coming in and rich people in Taiwan are not buying. There is no supply in the market... and collectors here are not willing to release their items for sale."



People browse items on display at the Jianguo jade market in Taipei.

## 'Ingrained in our DNA'

Taiwan was the go-to place for hunters of Chinese relics long before it became a powerhouse for hi-tech semiconductors. Collectors said most were carried out of mainland China during the Cultural Revolution, ending up on the island and nearby Hong Kong.

The Chinese government generally considers the trade of antiques from historical eras to be illegal if they were not passed down through inheritance or bought from authorized venues, such as cultural relic stores.

But there is a grey area in Taiwan, where col-

lectors say they have obtained the items through legitimate means, especially if the items were personal belongings. "To the Chinese, it is ingrained in our DNA," Chang Juben, chairman of Taiwan's Association of Jade Collectors, told AFP. "Collectors in Taiwan began collecting when they realized that these were valuable national treasures... Taiwan has a reputation in the Greater Chinese community, that you can come here to see, touch and buy good jades here."

The antique jade market took off around 2011, when Beijing-friendly Ma Ying-jeou was president, bringing in "an endless stream of buyers from China and other countries", Chang said. Now Taiwan's market is about a quarter of its former annual value — roughly \$9.4 million to \$15.7 million in the boom years — and it is easy to be steered towards inauthentic "artefacts".

"It relies on word of mouth," Chang said. "You have to walk the right path and find the right person." Most reputable collectors are also "protective" about their stock, refusing to show their best items to a novice who won't appreciate it or to a buyer simply looking to resell for profit.

## 'Build a reputation'

A two-hour flight to Hong Kong — a hub for Chinese antiques sold in both sprawling markets and upscale auction houses — tells a different story. Pola Antebi, deputy chairman at Christie's auction house in Hong Kong, said she is seeing a trend in which antique collectors are releasing long-cherished collections held for up to five decades.

"We've sold several substantial collections from Taiwan in Hong Kong in recent years, including the notable Chang Wei-Hwa collection of early jades," Antebi told AFP. That portfolio of jades from the Qin and Han dynasties fetched \$9.3 mil-



A Qing dynasty era (1636-1911) royal family jade item with a relief depiction of a phoenix at the shop of jade trader Lee in Taipei.

lion in November, while three previous auctions of Chang Wei-Hwa's collection brought in \$24.7 million from 2019 to 2021. Taiwan's jade "players" remain confident the trade "will survive no matter what", said the trader Lee.

His unique shop, which houses aquariums of iridescent corals, gets visitors via word of mouth. One trip can turn into several before any transaction is made — if at all. "It takes very long to build a reputation, but it is very easy to ruin it. If one item you sell turns out to be fake... that's all it takes to ruin you," he said. — AFP



People browse items on display at the Jianguo jade market in Taipei.



Jade items on display in a shop window at the Metropolitan jewelry and antiques centre in Taipei.



## Iran realtor in dog house over sale to canine

Iranian police have arrested the head of a real estate agency after a viral video showed his firm selling an apartment to a dog, officials said on Sunday. In the video, which spread widely over the week-

end, an Iranian couple signed a contract transferring title of their apartment to their furry, white, small-breed dog.

The animal, named "Chester", placed its paws on an ink pad with the help of a woman before the contract was stamped. She said in the video that the couple had no "heirs and that they wanted to sell the apartment to the dog."

There is no law banning dog ownership in Iran but, as in many Muslim countries, they are considered unclean. Conservative clerics have advised against keeping them as pets. On Sunday, ISNA news

agency reported that the "police launched an investigation" following the video.

"The police arrested the head of the real estate agency and shuttered the firm on Saturday," the judiciary's Mizan Online website said, quoting deputy prosecutor general Reza Tabar. Tabar said the sale seeks to "normalize the violation of the society's moral values", and has "no legal basis". Mizan did not identify the arrested realtor. Many Iranians, especially among the upper and middle classes, have in recent years embraced the trend of pet ownership, usually dogs and cats. — AFP



## Lifestyle



This photo shows people using umbrellas and parasols to seek relief from the heat while walking outside Shinjuku station, as temperatures of 35C-plus (95F) have scorched the Japanese capital Tokyo for weeks. — AFP photos



This photo shows clothing made with special cooling fabric by Freeze Tech, during the "Tokyo Extreme Heat Countermeasures Exhibition".



This photo shows workmen (left) wearing special jackets with built-in cooling systems to beat the heat, outside Tokyo station, as temperatures of 35C-plus (95F) have scorched the Japanese capital Tokyo for weeks.

# JAPANESE TURN TO WEARABLE TECH TO BEAT THE HEAT

Selling jackets with built-in fans, neck coolers and T-shirts that feel cold, Japanese firms are tapping into a growing market for products to help people handle the summer heat. Japan—like other countries—is seeing ever-hotter summers. This July was the warmest in 100 years, with at least 53 people dying of heatstroke and almost 50,000 needing emergency medical attention. Workman, which makes clothes for construction workers, launched a version of their fan-fitted jackets adapted for the high street in 2020 as demand grew.

The mechanism is simple—two electric, palm-sized fans powered by a rechargeable battery are fitted into the back of the jacket. They draw in air to then deliver a breeze—at variable speeds—onto the wearer's body. The jackets retail for 12,000 to 24,000 yen (\$82-164). "As the weather gets hotter, people who have never worn fan-equipped clothing before want to find ways to cool down... so more people are interested in buying it," Workman spokesman Yuya Suzuki told AFP. "Just like you feel cool when you are at home with a fan, you feel cool just by wearing (the jacket) because the wind is blowing through your body all the time," he said.

### Ageing population at risk

Japanese summers are known to be hot and humid, but this July Tokyo really sweated. The average temperature was 28.7 Celsius (83.7 Fahrenheit), the highest on record since 1875. Heatstroke is particularly deadly in Japan, which has the second-oldest population in the world after Monaco.

More than 80 percent of heat-related deaths in the past five years have been among senior citizens. "Some people die from heatstroke," said Nozomi Takai of MI Creations, a company selling neck-cooling tubes mainly to factory and warehouse workers. "Individuals as well as companies are putting more and more effort into measures against it every year," Takai said.

The gel inside his firm's brightly colored tubes—priced at 2,500 yen—is cool enough to use after 20 minutes in the fridge. Wearing it on the neck will "considerably cool the whole body" for about an hour, she said. Takai's company joined an expo this year on "measures against extreme heat" in Tokyo to showcase new products that help users stay cool in the scorching heat.

At another booth, Tokyo-based company Liberta had a series of clothing including T-shirts and arm sleeves using prints that make users feel cool—especially when they sweat. The prints use materials such as xylitol that feel cool when reacting with water and sweat, they said. Chikuma, an Osaka-based company, has even created office jackets and dresses equipped with electric fans.



This photo shows a staff member adjusting lifestyle clothing designed to battle heat on display by Chikuma & Co, during the "Tokyo Extreme Heat Countermeasures Exhibition" during Techno Frontier 2023 at the Tokyo Big Sight venue in Tokyo.

"We developed them with the idea that it could be proposed in places where casual wear is not allowed," Yosuke Yamanaka of Chikuma said. Regular fan-fitted clothes can make the wearer look puffy, as they need to be zipped up, and cuffs are tight. But jackets developed jointly by Chikuma, power tool maker Makita and textile giant Teijin do not need to be buttoned up, thanks to a special structure that sandwiches the fans in two layers and keeps the cool air in, Yamanaka said.

### Men adopting parasols

Parasols, which are commonly associated in Japan with skin-tone-conscious women protecting against a summer tan, are now proving more popular with men too. Komiyama Shoten, a small, luxury

umbrella maker in Tokyo, began making parasols for men around 2019 after the environment ministry encouraged people to use them. Before, many male customers thought parasols "were for women and they were embarrassed", the owner Hiroyuki Komiyama said. "Once you use it, you can't let go," he added.

On the busy streets of popular tourist destination Asakusa, Kiyoshi Miya, 42, said he decided to "use his umbrella as a parasol". "It's like I'm always in the shade and the wind feels cool," he said. Another visitor, Shoma Kawashima, wore a wearable fan around his neck to stay cool under the blazing sun. "It's so hot I want to be naked," the 21-year-old said. Gadgets are helpful, but "not a solution" to rising temperatures, he added.—AFP



These photos show the staff members displaying special cooling fabric by Freeze Tech, during the "Tokyo Extreme Heat Countermeasures Exhibition".

## 'Losing Old Sanaa': Historic city reels from Yemen war



A camel operates a traditional press producing natural oils at a shop in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa.



Vendors sell natural oils at a traditional press in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa.

Doaa Al-Waseai spent many happy years working as a tour guide in the Old City of Yemen's capital Sanaa, showing foreigners its hidden hammams and markets teeming with silver and spices. After nearly a decade of war, that life feels like a distant memory. The Old City itself—Waseai's childhood home—feels cut off from the world, its warrens of thousand-year-old rammed-earth buildings falling into disrepair.

"Tourism opened my eyes to my own culture," Waseai, 40, told AFP, reflecting on how she had gained a deeper appreciation for Yemeni clothing and food by explaining them to outsiders. She once comfortably spoke English and German, but now her foreign language skills are wasting away, though she reckons it's just as well.

"There are no words to express our catastrophe—in English or German or even French." A UNESCO World Heritage site for nearly four decades, the Old City has been classified as "in danger" since 2015, shortly after Saudi Arabia spearheaded a military intervention to prevent the complete collapse of Yemen's beleaguered government. Inhabited without interruption for more than 2,500 years, the area's iconic mosques and burnt-brick tower-houses have faced both direct threats from air strikes and indirect threats associated with lack of upkeep. As she waits impatiently for the war to end, Waseai has kept painstaking records of the Old City's



A view of UNESCO-listed buildings in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa. — AFP photos

decline, her spreadsheets listing collapsed homes and battered hotels. Determined to make use of her downtime, she is pursuing a master's degree in tourism at Sanaa University in hopes she can one day aid the Old City's recovery—which can't come soon enough. "We're losing Old Sanaa," she said. "I'm so sad to say that."

### 'Destroying our history'

In the war's early months, air strikes rained down on the Old City, reducing houses and gardens to rubble. Waseai had heard stories of bombing raids during an earlier civil war in the 1960s but never thought she would one day witness them herself. "Why are they attacking our city?" she recalls thinking. "There are no weapons in Old Sanaa, and it's forbidden to attack our history. They are destroying our history."

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control the capital denied responsibility at the time. The hazards have grown as the war has dragged on. The Old City's houses, with their distinctive white gypsum trim, "are very fragile and require constant maintenance", said UNESCO associate project officer Mohammed Al-Jaberi.

But that has proved impossible for many families during a wartime economic crisis marked by unpaid salaries and rising food prices. "Traditionally the homeowners would carry out the maintenance," Jaberi said. "People are making a hard choice between putting food on the table and maintaining the roof over their heads."

Drainage infrastructure has also suffered from neglect, making Old City buildings vulnerable to collapse during flash floods. Fighting has dropped off considerably in much of Yemen since a truce took effect in April 2022, even though it expired last October. The absence of a lasting ceasefire, however, has left many of the country's institutions at a standstill, including the public preservation body tasked with saving historic sites. Like other government bodies, it is starved of funds.

The growing desperation was on grim display in April when more than 80 people were killed in a crush



A view of UNESCO-listed buildings in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa.

at a cash handout for the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan at an Old City school. The handout amount was 5,000 rials, or about \$8.

### 'We will recover'

These hardships aside, Old City residents hold out hope its past glories can be revived. "This farm was once like a heaven... you couldn't even walk through it because of the grass, it was all green before the war," said 28-year-old Abdullah Asaba, gesturing towards his rows of tomatoes, leeks, shallots and basil.

The field sits near a block leveled by an air strike in

2015, but Asaba, whose family has raised crops on it for decades, says they are "trying to rehabilitate it, step by step". Near the Old City's historic Yemen Gate, in the shop where he sells traditional healing oils, Salah Aldeen labors underneath a picture of then French president Francois Mitterrand visiting the Old City in the 1990s—a time when foreigners were a common sight. He said he was confident those days would return, and compared the Old City to a hospital patient. "Sooner or later, it will recover, you know. War is a disease, but we will recover."—AFP



A man works in a field next to UNESCO-listed buildings in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa.



# ALL PAWS ON DECK: SINGAPORE COMPANY LAUNCHES LUXURY CAT CRUISES



Visitors pet a cat on the Royal Albatross, a luxury tall ship that hosts sailing and dining experiences around the waters of Singapore with pets allowed.



Visitor poses for a photo with her cat in front of the Royal Albatross. — AFP photos



A visitor sitting with her cat on the Royal Albatross.



A visitor arrives with her cat to get on the Royal Albatross.



Chefs prepare food for diners the Royal Albatross.

Cat owners in Singapore can now take their pets on luxury sunset cruises, perfect for pampered kitties who enjoy the finer things in life. Onboard the tall ship Royal Albatross, the animals can lounge in custom-built “cat-bana” cages as their owners enjoy a four- or seven-course dinner beside them on deck.

The ship’s operator introduced the cat-friendly sailings this month after dog cruises launched in 2021 proved popular. For two-and-a-half hours, up to 15 feline and 130 human passengers sail along the resort island of Sentosa, enjoying views of Singapore’s skyline and a short fireworks display.

“I think they’re doing very well... they’re enjoying the view and I guess the perceived freedom that they get,” said Marissa Ng, a 28-year-old human resources professional whose five-year-old ragdolls Coco and Bobo sat looking out at the sea from a cage beside her table. The ship has hosted over 2,000 dogs since 2021, and the cat cruises may soon catch up, with more than 200 tickets for human passengers—priced at Sg\$225 (\$166) each—having already been sold.

The cat and dog cruises have different sailing days. While the canines are served

an onboard three-course dinner at the table, cat owners take their pets’ meals home since the finicky creatures tend to turn down food when they are outside of their comfort zone. The company running the cruises, Tall Ship Adventures, says it consulted with experts and cat welfare organizations such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to ensure a safe experience on board.

Precautions include making sure cats are securely harnessed and leashed at all times. They are also required to be vaccinated and sterilized, and to be transported in carriers while boarding.

Four-month-old British shorthair kitten Mahmud appeared calm even though it was his first time in a harness, snoozing on a bench beside his family as they ate dinner. “This is a good time to spend the day as a family, since we just got Mahmud,” said Aziana Aziz, a 41-year-old teacher sailing with her son and husband. “He’s enjoying it... he’s curious, he’s looking around, so yeah, happy cat, I guess.”—AFP



Visitors take pictures with a cat on the Royal Albatross.



Visitors enjoy dinner on the Royal Albatross.



Chefs prepare food for diners on the Royal Albatross.



Visitors take pictures of a cat on the Royal Albatross.



A visitor holds her cat on the Royal Albatross.



A cat is pictured on the Royal Albatross.



The Royal Albatross, a luxury tall ship that hosts sailing and dining experiences around the waters of Singapore with pets allowed.



## Sports

# Fraser-Pryce, Warholm cruise but too soon for Miller-Uibo

## Fraser-Pryce gets record-equalling bid off to impressive start

**BUDAPEST:** Jamaican Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce ensured her quest for a sixth 100m title continued Sunday as a slew of world and Olympic champions safely negotiated heats at Budapest's National Athletics Centre. In sweltering conditions, Fraser-Pryce clocked 11.01 seconds in her heat to advance to Monday's semi-finals (1640 GMT), with the final slated for two hours later the same night.

"I think I have the strength to give my best in the semis and hopefully in the final as well," the 36-year-old said. In-form American rival Sha'Carri Richardson set the fastest qualifying time of 10.92sec while another Jamaican favorite, Shericka Jackson, also cruised through her heat.

Norway's Karsten Warholm coasted through to Monday's semi-finals of the 400m hurdles, along with main rivals defending champion Alison Dos Santos of Brazil and American Rai Benjamin. "Of course, the expectations are always high and people would like to see me winning races," said Warholm, whose world record-setting performance when winning Olympic gold in Tokyo remains one of the stand-out moments in recent Summer Games history.

A loaded morning of qualifiers saw two-time former world champion Wayde van Niekerk, who also set a world record when winning gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics, win his heat to advance into the semi-finals of the men's 400m on Tuesday. "These championships are just about putting my best foot forward and seeing what happens," said the South African, beset by injuries since his victory in Rio.

"I've been running some solid times so I feel I'm coming back towards my best. Only time can tell when I get back where I was." Progressing alongside him were a raft of contenders in what is expected to be

one of the hardest-fought events at the worlds in the absence of defending champion Michael Norman.

Reigning Olympic champion and 2019 world gold medallist Steven Gardiner of the Bahamas, Grenada's former Olympic and world champ Kirani James, multiple relay medallist Vernon Norwood of the United States and Britain's world bronze medallist Matthew Hudson-Smith all safely negotiated their heats.

Norwegian prodigy Havard Bentsdal Ingvaldsen, 20, sent out a warning shot as he set a national record of 44.39sec to win his heat, the fastest time of the morning. Qatar's joint Olympic champion Mutaz Essa Barshim, seeking a fourth world title, will also get his chance to add to his honors after topping qualifying in the men's high jump.

### Holloway cruises, Broadbell out

Defending two-time world champion Grant Holloway came through his heat of the 110m hurdles, but there was no such luck for fancied Jamaican Rashheed Broadbell, who clipped a hurdle and crashed out. And competition came too early for two-time Olympic champion and defending 400m gold medallist Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas.

Just four months on from giving birth to a baby son, the 29-year-old failed to advance from her heat, but insisted it had been a positive experience so close to childbirth. "I feel proud," she said. "I was training hard only for the past two weeks, so coming here and running 52 seconds feels awesome."

Britain's 2019 world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson threw a personal best of 46.14m in the javelin to take control of the heptathlon, on 5,710 points, with just the event-ending 800m to come, scheduled for 1600 later Saturday. Anouk



**BUDAPEST:** Algeria's Amine Bouanani, USA's Daniel Roberts, Brazil's Gabriel Constantino, France's Just Kwaou-Mathey, and Britain's Tade Djora compete in the men's 110m hurdles heats during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest on August 20, 2023. — AFP

Vetter of the Netherlands is hot on her tail, just 26pts adrift. Spain had earlier made it two from two in the 20km race walk as Maria Perez followed up on Alvaro Martin's success by claiming gold in the women's race. The Spaniard broke clear of the peloton at the 16km mark and kicked on to clock 1hr 26.51sec.

Australia's Commonwealth champion Jemima

Montag, with Italy's Antonella Palmisano rounding out the podium. "Yesterday evening I felt so nervous I could not fall asleep and was forced to call to our doctor for help and medicines to help me take the final rest before the event," admitted Perez. "Thank God it helped and I felt more or less fresh in the morning." — AFP

## Equestrian Club removes encroachments

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of Farwaniya Equestrian Club Fahad Al-Daihani lauded the joint committee for removing encroachments, through responding to the club's call to remove some violations and encroachments in pins belonging to the club.



Fahad Al-Daihani

He said we laud this step that shows cooperation between government and private entities, hoping that such violations are not repeated, which the club nor the committee accept.

Al-Daihani added "what we see today from the joint committee with the pins inspector of the club is only carrying out their duty and follow up by the authority, and we thank the committee for its quick response and taking all the necessary action to remove the encroachments.

## Haido Sports Academy holds soccer tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** As part of the "Sport is the Best Prevention" campaign, organized by the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness "C.A.N" which started in May 2023, Haido Sports Academy organized a football tournament under the management of Abdallah Saleh, with the participation of 300 players for four weeks.

Competition between players over 17 years old was strong while maintaining mutual respect which reflected a positive image among youth at this age, proving that football is a game of cooperation, and that what is making it so popular. The tournament ended with Haido - C.A.N team winning first place.

Director of Haido - C.A.N Academy Abdallah Al-Saleh said youth at this age must maintain their fitness and health through participating in various sports activities, and we along with parents must encourage them to do so and



The winners with the trophy.

practice the sport they like.

He said the Academy plans a swimming tournament for buds (girls) in cooperation with Ku-

wait School Sports Association, and will be held on Thursday, August 24, 2023 at Suad Mohammad Al-Sabah School Swimming Pool in Mansouriya.

## Borthwick keen for swift end to Vunipola, Farrell red cards

**DUBLIN:** England coach Steve Borthwick was left hoping for a rapid finish to rugby's often lengthy disciplinary procedures after Billy Vunipola joined Owen Farrell as a Rugby World Cup doubt by being sent off during a 29-10 warm-up loss to Ireland in Dublin on Saturday.

As happened to Farrell last weekend, Vunipola saw his initial yellow card upgraded to a red by the recently introduced bunker review system. Vunipola was dismissed for a head-high challenge on Andrew Porter early in the second half at Lansdowne Road.

That offence threatens Vunipola's involvement at a World Cup where he is the only specialist No. 8 in England's squad for a tournament they start against Argentina in Marseille on September 9.

England kicked off without Farrell, the son of Ireland coach Andy Farrell, after Borthwick left the fly-half out of his matchday 23. Farrell faces an independent disciplinary panel on Tuesday after World Rugby appealed against the controversial decision to downgrade his red card for a high shoulder-led challenge on Taine Basham during a 19-17 warm-up win over Wales at Twickenham to yellow.



**DUBLIN:** Ireland's centre Keith Earls scores a try during the pre-World Cup Rugby Union match between Ireland and England at Aviva stadium in Dublin. — AFP

Borthwick, refusing to be drawn on Vunipola's dismissal, said: "I'm not going to comment upon the incident specifically because it goes into a disciplinary process this coming week. "Prob-

bly as every England fan, I feel disappointment in the game today and I said beforehand we want 15 players on the pitch for 80 minutes of every game. — AFP

## Bagnaia produces flawless display at Austrian MotoGP

**SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD:** Ducati's world champion Francesco Bagnaia produced a flawless display to dominate the Austrian MotoGP at Spielberg on Sunday and take another step towards a second successive title.

Bagnaia was in a class of his own with Brad Binder (KTM) a distant second and Marco Bezzecchi (Ducati-VR46) in third. For Bagnaia this was a third dream double weekend of the season after winning both Saturday's sprint and Sunday's main event.

Maximum points at the Red Bull Ring circuit in what was his 50th grand prix podium lifted him 62 points clear of Jorge Martin in the 2023 standings with 10 of the 20 races completed. "I was expecting a stronger pace but conditions were tough for everybody," beamed Bagnaia.

"I was struggling a bit with the front but then I understood how to improve the lap times. "We managed everything well and demonstrated our potential from yesterday, I'm very happy," added 'Pecco', the nickname that has stuck ever since his sister struggled to pronounce Francesco when he was born.

For Binder it was another runner-up spot 24 hours after his sprint second in front of his Austrian KTM team's home fans. "I did everything I could," said the South African. "There was a moment when the rear grip said goodbye so I knew I had to be intelligent and bring the bike home and get on the podium twice this weekend."

Bagnaia set off from pole for the gruelling 28 laps in front of a 94,000-crowd braving blistering heat in the Styrian mountains. The Italian had the perfect launchpad to gain his fifth race win of 2023 and move a significant step closer to back-to-back world championships.

He sped off the line on his trusty factory Ducati to hold off Binder to turn one as Maverick Vinales, who qualified in second, suffered another poor start as he had done 24 hours earlier in the sprint. That sluggish getaway thwarted the Aprilia rider's quest to make MotoGP history by winning a grand prix with three different teams after wins with Suzuki and Yamaha.

Binder went all out for a quick pass on Bagnaia as the front pair drew over a second clear of the chasing pack headed by Jack Miller on the other KTM. On lap three Martin came in to serve the long lap penalty for irresponsible riding for his role in a seven-rider turn one crash in Saturday's sprint. — AFP

## Football fever hits rebel-held northwest Syria

**IDLIB:** Thousands of fans in Syria's last opposition bastion have packed into a stadium for the frenzied final of a football cup — an escape valve amid years of conflict and misery. "I'm really happy today," said Mohammed al-Zeer, 28, from the northwestern city of Idlib. "Between the war and the destruction and explosions and the problems", events like a football match are "a great joy".

Syria's rebel-held Idlib region is home to about three million people, around half of them displaced from other parts of the country. Many live in poverty, including in overcrowded displacement camps.

Friday night's match pitted the Omaya team from the heart of the opposition-held city against Homs Al-Adiya, composed of players originally from the regime-held city of Homs. The stadium was packed with cheering spectators who set off flares and



**IDLIB:** Supporters cheer in the stands during the final match of a local football tournament at the municipal stadium in Syria's rebel-held city of Idlib. — AFP

yellow revolutionary anti-regime slogans as well as football chants.

Supporters waved Syrian opposition flags along with the red-and-green colors of the Idlib team or

the blue-and-yellow of the Homs club. "Whenever I watch matches with a big, enthusiastic crowd, it means a lot to me," said Zeer, who is also a fan of Barcelona and Argentina's national team. — AFP



Sports

# Neymar gets rapturous welcome at big-spending Saudi Pro League

## Neymar expected to make his debut at Al-Raed on Thursday

**RIYADH:** Brazilian superstar Neymar was greeted by thousands of adoring fans at Al-Hilal on Saturday as he became the latest world-famous footballer to join the big-spending Saudi Pro League. Flame-throwers and a volley of fireworks lit up the Riyadh sky as the flamboyant forward appeared in Al-Hilal's blue kit at Riyadh's 68,000-capacity King Fahd International Stadium.

The 31-year-old, who became the world's most expensive footballer in when he joined Paris Saint-Germain in 2017, waved and smiled to the crowd as a drone display spelled "Neymar is blue" above the venue. After his unveiling, along with fellow new signings Malcolm and Yassine Bounou, the stadium lights came on and the Muslim call to prayer rang out over the loudspeakers.

Excitement has been high for Neymar, who joins a string of huge names approaching the twilight of their careers to be lured by oil-rich Saudi's giant contracts. Neymar joined Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain from Barcelona six years ago for a world-record fee of 222 million euros (\$242 million), scoring 118 goals in 173 matches despite a series of injuries.

He will earn 100 million euros a season in Saudi Arabia, according to a source close to the negotiations, while PSG will pocket 100 million euros in the deal. Neymar will sit out Al-Hilal's game against Al-Fayha later on Saturday, and is expected to make his debut at Al-Raed on Thursday.

### Jaw-dropping transfers

Cristiano Ronaldo set the Saudi Pro League's plans in motion when he joined Al-Nassr in January in a two-and-a-half-year deal said to be worth 400 million euros. It opened the floodgates for a jaw-dropping summer transfer window when the previously unheralded Saudi league snapped up some of the biggest names in the sport.

Real Madrid superstar Karim Benzema was a gala signing for Al-Ittihad in June, followed by Riyadh Mahrez, Sadio Mane, N'Golo Kante, Roberto Firmino and Jordan Henderson. Al-Hilal are the second biggest spending club worldwide in the current transfer window, trailing only Chelsea, and four Saudi teams—Al-Hilal, Al-Nassr, Al-Ahli and Al-Ittihad—have splashed out nearly more than 560 million euros between them, according to website Transfermarkt.com.

The four clubs are owned by the Public Investment Fund, a sovereign wealth vehicle, which has been snapping up assets as part of an aggressive drive to diversify the economy of the world's biggest oil exporter.

Two global superstars resisted the Saudi advances: Lionel Messi, who opted for Inter Miami, and his former PSG team-mate Kylian Mbappe, who reportedly refused to meet Al-Hilal officials.

Off the field, Liverpool legend Steven Gerrard joined Al-Ettifaq as coach, ex-Chelsea technical director Michael Emenalo became the Saudi league's director of football and Roma boss Jose Mourinho joined the board of Saudi's Mahd Sports Academy.

The buying spree has understandably caught the attention of other leagues, with Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp expressing concern that the Saudi transfer window closes on September 20 -- three weeks after Europe.



**RIYADH:** Brazilian superstar Neymar enters the pitch during his unveiling ceremony at Al-Hilal in Riyadh as he becomes the latest world-famous footballer snapped up by the big-spending Saudi Pro League. — AFP

Al-Hilal are coached by Portugal's Jorge Jesus, who is in his second spell at the club, while the squad has five internationals recently lured from Europe—Ruben Neves, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, Kalidou

Koulibaly, Malcom and Bounou. Al-Hilal, nicknamed "The Boss", are Saudi Arabia's most successful team and have won the Asian Champions League a record four times. — AFP

## Alcaraz, Djokovic line up all-star Cincinnati final

**CINCINNATI:** Carlos Alcaraz saved a match point on the way to a three-set victory over Hubert Hurkacz Saturday as he lined up title clash with Novak Djokovic at the ATP Cincinnati Masters. World number one Alcaraz held on for a 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 victory over Hurkacz, rallying to beat the big-serving Pole for the second time in as many weeks.

World number two Djokovic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 to reach the final, which will be a repeat of last month's epic Wimbledon final won by Alcaraz. Alcaraz has won two of three career meetings with Djokovic, but the Serb was looking forward to their first hard court clash.

"It's the ultimate challenge at the moment for me," Djokovic said, noting he'd beaten Alcaraz on clay at the US Open this year before falling in five sets on grass at Wimbledon. "Now it's going to be the first encounter on a hard court. It's a very good test prior to the US Open," Djokovic said. "Obviously different conditions."

"It's still facing the top player of the world now who is in form. It's the biggest challenge I could get, so I'm looking forward to it." Djokovic was trying for a second time to serve out the match against Zverev when he was distracted by a nearby amusement park's fire-

works display, but managed to regain his focus and finish it off.

He'd dropped his serve two games earlier, only to come back with a break of his own. "I played a very poor game, but I bounced back and sealed the deal in the 12th game of the second set," Djokovic said. "I could have done some things better, but I'm pretty happy about winning in straight sets."

Alcaraz's victory, after two hours and 18 minutes over Hurkacz, ensures the 20-year-old will remain atop the world rankings heading into the US Open, which starts a week from Monday. He notched his 53rd match win of the season against five defeats, but it was another hard slog for the Spaniard.

"It's been a really tough tournament for me, all my matches going three sets," Alcaraz said. "But I'm happy to win these kind of matches by staying strong mentally. I've grown up a lot with these experiences. It's great to be in the final," he added.

After dropping the first set, Alcaraz was on the brink in the 10th game of the second, but Hurkacz fired wide on a match point and they went to a tiebreaker.

### Mental battle

Hurkacz took a 4-1 lead in the de-



**MASON:** Carlos Alcaraz of Spain returns the ball during the semifinal match against Hubert Hurkacz of Poland on Day 7 of the Western & Southern Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center on August 19, 2023 in Mason, Ohio. — AFP

cidier, but Alcaraz stormed back to square the match, converting the first of two set points. In the third, an Alcaraz break for 3-1 proved to be decisive and the youngster advanced on a drop volley winner.

"It was a mental battle, I had to stay present and positive all the time," he said. "I knew I would have chances, I just had to take them. I'm happy I was able to win it." Alcaraz will aim for his third Masters trophy of the season after Indian Wells and Madrid.

Cincinnati will be his eighth final of 2023. He is the youngest Cincy finalist

since a 19-year-old Pete Sampras in 1991. Djokovic, 36, could become the oldest Cincinnati champion in the Open Era, surpassing Ken Rosewall who was 35 when he won in 1970.

The Serb, winner of the Australian and French Opens this year, is playing in the United States for the first time in two years. He'd been denied entry to the US after declining to be vaccinated for COVID. On Sunday he'll be gunning for a third Cincinnati title to go with those he won in 2018 and 2020, and seeking a record-extending 39th Masters 1000 crown. — AFP

## Saudi football rise 'long-term project', says top official

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's extraordinary football expansion is a "long-term project" with strong government support, unlike the short-lived Chinese boom, a senior league official told AFP. The Saudi Pro League has a years-long commitment from the oil-rich kingdom's rulers in its goal to become one of the world's top competitions, chief operating officer Carlo Nohra said.

Nohra was speaking at Al-Hilal's unveiling of Brazilian superstar Neymar, who joins Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and a host of other big names in a spending binge costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

"It's not something that we expect will happen overnight. It's not a one-weekend event—this is a long-term project, and everybody accepts that that's what it's going to take," Nohra said at the King Fahd International Stadium late on Saturday.

"And it's not a function of throwing money at it and it will happen," he added. "It is ensuring that we do all the right things along the way to bring everything and everybody and the ecosystem up together." The Saudi league's rapid expansion has drawn comparisons with the Chinese Super League, which sucked in players for exorbitant sums until clubs hit financial problems.

At one stage, Guangzhou Evergrande made little-known Argentine Dario Conca one of the world's best-paid players, and Shanghai Shenhua was lavishing a reported 730,000 euros (\$795,000) a week on an ageing Carlos Tevez. "These comparisons are inevitable," said Nohra.

"But for us, the fact that this project is part of a transformation project that's moving this country where it wants to go... provides the sustenance that we need in order to keep moving forward."

### 'No end to ambition'

The no-expense-spared revamp is part of 37-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitious Vision 2030 project, which aims to reshape the economy of the world's top oil exporter. Also part of the de facto ruler's plans are Neom, a futuristic new city costing \$500 billion, plus tourist resorts and sports events including Formula One and the upstart LIV Golf, which has effectively seized control of the US PGA Tour and Europe's DP World Tour.

"Ultimately what we're really trying to do is deliver, through football, entertainment for the Saudis," Nohra said. "The strategy is 360 degrees, many elements to it. At the heart of it, one of those objectives set for us is how do we improve performance on the pitch, with world-class sports performers." — AFP

## Mbappe scores on PSG return

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe won and converted a penalty on his Paris Saint-Germain return on Saturday in a 1-1 draw at Toulouse after being reinstated to the first team following a contract dispute with the French champions.

The France captain started on the bench but came on in the 51st minute and promptly broke the deadlock, drawing a foul from Rasmus Nicolaisen and tucking away the resulting spot-kick just past the hour mark.

Zakaria Aboukhalil equalised with a penalty three minutes from time after he was tugged back by Morocco team-mate Achraf Hakimi, leaving Luis Enrique still searching for his first win as PSG coach. "The result is a disappointment. The draw is mainly down to a lack of luck," said the Spaniard,

refusing to be drawn into a debate over Mbappe beginning the game as a substitute.

"I know you (the media) like these controversial questions but my staff and I are going to keep managing things how we see fit." Mbappe's appearance was his first for PSG since a friendly on July 21 after not being invited to the pre-season tour in Japan and South Korea and then missing the opening 0-0 draw against Lorient.

He had been made to train with players the club are trying to offload after he refused to sign an extension to his PSG deal, but the 24-year-old was brought back into the fold last Sunday after holding "constructive and positive discussions" with the club.

The U-turn came just two days before Neymar was sold to Saudi side Al-Hilal for a fee believed to be close to 100 million euros (\$109 million). French media reported Mbappe made Neymar's departure one of the necessary conditions for him to sign a new contract in 2022, when the former was strongly linked with a move to Real Madrid. — AFP



**TOULOUSE:** Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe and Toulouse's Cape Verdean defender #06 Logan Costa (R) fight for the ball during the French L1 football match between Toulouse FC and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at The TFC Stadium in Toulouse. — 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, HUSSENA** holder of Indian Passport No. T8196641 having permanent address 131, Naya Pura Bakhhal, Vallabh Bhai Patel Marg, Ujjain, Pin 456006, Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **HUSSAINA** and (surname) **BAWAJAN**. (4202) 21/8/2023

**I, Shabbar** s/o Fakhruddin Inayat Husain Jiwawala holder of Indian Passport No. Z3017154 having permanent address Mohammedipura

Temba, Sagwara, Pincode No. 314025, Rajasthan, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Shabbar Fakhruddin** (Given Name) and **Jiwawala** (Surname). **18/8/2023**

**I, Ibrahim**, Passport No. Z3343992, do hereby change my name to Ibrahim Sajjad Hussain (new name) Musaji wala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will be known in the name **Ibrahim Sajjad Hussain Musaji wala** in future for all purposes. **(#3848) 18/8/2023**



## Spain win Women's WCup for first time

Spain are the fifth team to lift World Cup since tournament began in 1991



SYDNEY: Spain's players and officials celebrate with the trophy after winning the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup final football match between Spain and England at Stadium Australia in Sydney on August 20, 2023. — AFP

SYDNEY: Spain won the Women's World Cup for the first time in their history with skipper Olga Carmona sweeping in the only goal for a deserved 1-0 victory over England in Sunday's final. In front of a crowd of nearly 76,000 at Stadium Australia in Sydney, Spain were the more accomplished side and had more chances, including missing a second-half penalty.

Spain's triumph is vindication for Jorge Vilda and the Spanish football federation, who stuck with the coach even after 15 players last year said they no longer wanted to represent their country under him. England coach Sarina Wiegman, who has now suffered back-to-back defeats in the final, and her European champions can have few complaints.

Spain are the fifth team to lift the World Cup since the tournament began in 1991, joining outgoing champions the United States, Germany, Norway and Japan. In front of Spain's Queen Letizia, defender Carmona rampaged from left-back to thrash home the winner low and hard on 29 minutes. "It was a really tough game, we knew it would be tricky, England

have a great team, but I think it was our game," Carmona told Spanish national broadcasters La 1. "We had the feeling we were going to do it."

An emotional Millie Bright, skipper of the Lionesses, said her side had not been at their best as their dreams of a first World Cup melted away. "Really proud of the team to come this far and to play in a World Cup final, not many players do that," she said. "This is not from us, we will bounce back I'm sure, but for now, it's hard to take."

### Carmona sweeps in

Wiegman resisted the temptation to recall Chelsea attacker Lauren James after her two-match ban and kept faith with the team that beat co-hosts Australia 3-1 in the semi-finals. England had the first sniff of a chance but Lauren Hemp shot weakly at goalkeeper Cata Coll. There was little to choose between them in the opening exchanges before both teams had golden opportunities on the quarter-hour mark. Manchester City forward Hemp struck the bar with

a curler that had Coll well beaten. Spain went up the other end and should have scored but Salma Paralluelo — in for Alexia Putellas — missed the ball in the six-yard box. Alba Redondo then hit a first-time strike straight at goalkeeper Mary Earps with the England goal gaping.

Spain, who had never won a knockout game at the Women's World Cup until this tournament and had lost 4-0 to Japan in the group phase, went ahead just before the half-hour mark. Mariona Caldentey threaded an inch-perfect pass for Carmona, who came flying unmarked down the left before lashing into the bottom corner.

Vilda, who recalled three of the 15 mutineers for the World Cup, did not even raise a smile on the sidelines. England looked uncharacteristically rattled and the 19-year-old Barcelona attacker Paralluelo, who was a constant threat, shaved the post with the last kick of the half.

Wiegman, who suffered agony in the final four years ago when her Netherlands team lost 2-0 to the

United States, made a double change at the break. James and Chloe Kelly replaced Rachel Daly and Alessia Russo as Wiegman switched from a back-five to a flat back-four.

But it was Spain who nearly doubled their lead soon after half-time, Caldentey dinking inside and forcing Earps to turn the ball around the post. Hemp was booked for clipping Laia Codina as England's frustration mounted.

Midfield schemer Aitana Bonmati, one of the players of the tournament and one of the three refuseniks recalled by Vilda, along with Caldentey, fired narrowly over Earps' bar. With 20 minutes left, Spain were awarded a penalty after a long VAR review decided Keira Walsh had handled in the box. But Jennifer Hermoso's penalty was weak and Earps saved comfortably to keep England hopes alive. But despite 13 minutes of injury time, England rarely threatened and it was an assured Spain who held on comfortably, looking the more likely to score. — AFP

## Messi leads Miami to first trophy with Leagues Cup win

NASHVILLE: Lionel Messi scored a screamer and won his first trophy in North American soccer as Inter Miami beat Nashville on penalties (10-9) after their final ended 1-1 in 90 minutes. The Argentine World Cup winner had put Miami ahead in the 24th minute with a wonder strike into the top corner but Fafa Picault levelled for Nashville in the second half.

After Messi hit the post and Leonardo Campana missed a last second chance to win the game in regulation for Miami, the game went to a shoot-out which ended in a duel between the two keepers and Elliot Panico's shot being saved by Miami's Drake Callender.

Messi and his team-mates rushed to celebrate with the American goalkeeper, who had made some key saves late in the game to keep his team alive. Miami, in their third season of existence, were rock bottom of Major League Soccer when Messi joined them a month ago but Messi, along with Spanish pair Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, has utterly transformed the team leading them on a seven game unbeaten run to the Leagues Cup title.

Co-owner David Beckham, who created the club, said he was stunned by the way the former Barcelona trio had been able to bring about change so quickly. "It is like a movie, you watch these players play and it is, emotionally, everything about their play is beautiful," he said.

Seven-times Ballon d'Or winner Messi has now scored 10 goals in seven games in the pink shirt of his new club and on Wednesday has the chance to reach another final when his team take on Cincinnati in the semi-final of the US Open Cup. This was not the dominant, entertaining Miami that in the past month has lit up the tournament, featuring MLS and Mexican Liga MX clubs, but the win was sweet nonetheless. "I am very happy to win our first title in just one month, the club's first. The team is growing by leaps and bounds and we are very happy," said midfielder Busquets.

"We have infected the team with our spirit, our work, our character and experience. We are making



NASHVILLE: Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi and teammates celebrate with the trophy after Inter Miami won the Leagues Cup final football match against Nashville SC at Geodis Park in Nashville, Tennessee. — AFP

a solid team ... And then we have Leo, who makes a difference because he's the best in the world." Nashville set out with the clear intention to limit the impact of Busquets and by extension Messi and they were effective in forcing Miami to play a slower type of possession football, deeper in their own half.

Gary Smith's side sent an early warning that they could trouble Miami at set-pieces with Walker Zimmerman's header from a Lukas MacNaughton corner forcing Callender into a low save.

Miami were probing, with Messi dropping deeper and looking for gaps in the home defense. But with Walker Zimmerman marshalling the back line well chances were hard to come by until Robert Taylor spun and turned and fired a fierce drive which Nashville keeper Elliot Panico did well to keep out.

Three minutes later, Miami had the lead - and the source of their breakthrough was no surprise. Taylor's attempted pass inside was blocked and the ball fell to

Messi who zipped past Zimmerman, opening enough space to his left to unleash an unstoppable drive from over 25 yards out which flew into the top corner past the helpless Panico.

Miami looked in total control, playing with confidence bordering on swagger, but it was a different story after the interval. From a corner Picault won a header at the back post which ricocheted in off the foot of Benjamin Cremaschi and Callender.

Suddenly Nashville had the belief and their German forward Hany Mukhtar came alive, testing Miami with his speedy runs and Callender with a blast from the right. Messi went close to another Hollywood ending with a 71st minute shot from just outside the box which shaved the outside of the post.

But in the final seconds, his Ecuadorian team-mate Campana should have won the game for Miami, when he rounded Panico but from a tight angle could only hit the post with the goal at his mercy. — AFP

## Villa crush woeful Everton to secure first win this season

BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa won for the first time this season as they routed Everton 4-0 on Sunday to erase the bitter taste of last weekend's thrashing at Newcastle. Tipped to improve on last season's strong finish, Villa were hammered 5-1 on Tyneside in a shockingly bad start to their Premier League campaign.

But Unai Emery's side got back on track in the Villa Park sunshine as goals from John McGinn, Douglas Luiz, Leon Bailey and Jhon Duran brushed aside woeful Everton. Emery will hope Villa's biggest victory of his reign kick-starts a season in which they will compete in Europe for the first time in 13 years after qualifying for the Europa Conference League.

Everton have less lofty ambitions after narrowly avoiding relegation last season and Sean Dyche's men already look destined for another grim fight for survival. Beaten 1-0 at home by Fulham last weekend, Everton have lost their opening two games in tame fashion.

It is only the third time Everton have been beaten in their first two league matches without scoring a goal and the first since 1956. As if that wasn't bad enough, Dyche also had to contend with the sight of Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Alex Iwobi both coming off injured.

The injury-plagued Calvert-Lewin was fit to start in place of Neal Maupay, but the striker's return was short-lived. Hampered fitness and form issues, Calvert-Lewin had managed only four goals since August 2021 and scored just two last season.

Incredibly, his injury woes resurfaced when he needed lengthy treatment on a facial cut following a collision with Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez early in the first half. Calvert-Lewin was able to continue but Everton fell behind in the 18th minute. — AFP