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MP questions impact of reported oil slick on fish

Lawmaker calls on KAC board to resign • MP calls for Dhaman probe

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Mubarak Al-Tasha on Monday asked Minister of Oil Saad Al-Barrak about reports saying that a large oil slick has formed off southern Kuwait's coast and its possible impact on fishery in the country. The lawmaker said reports have indicated that the spill developed into a large oil slick over an area of 30 sq km (12 km long and 3.9 km wide), east of Fintas coast in the south.

Tasha said that the slick could cause a huge pollution catastrophe and endanger the fish resources. He asked the minister about the truth in these reports and if Environment Public Authority stations have

monitored the reported spill. In case the report of the spill is correct, the lawmaker asked about its size and its possible impact on sea life.

He added the environment authority said in a statement on Aug 18 that it has received information from the Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME) and the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Center (MEMAC) about monitoring a slick suspected to be an oil spill in Kuwaiti territorial waters based on satellite images.

EPA added the area was surveyed in cooperation with the coastguard and no pollution or slick was detected until that date. Kuwaiti oil companies also surveyed the area without spotting any pollution. The lawmaker

asked the minister if the environment authority updated its information later to verify if the slick is present.

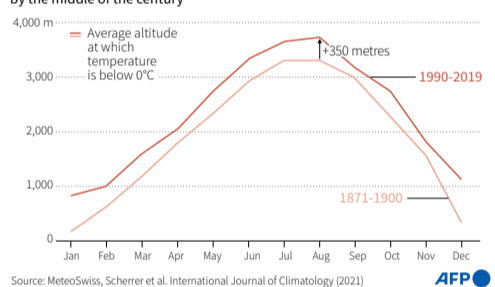
Meanwhile, MP Shuaib Shaaban on Monday called on Kuwait Airways' chairman, CEO and the entire board to step down for failing to manage the state airline properly and for not appointing Kuwaiti citizens in top posts. Shaaban said KAC Chairman Ali Al-Dukhan and CEO Maen Razouqi and other board members held a press conference a few days ago to justify the appointment of an Arab national as an advisor with a high salary. He said KAC officials have failed miserably in encouraging nationals to participate in running the state carrier and instead

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Northern Switzerland: increase in zero-degree limit

Meteorologists predict the threshold could rise to 400 to 650 metres by the middle of the century



'Zero-degree' line at record height

GENEVA: A hot spell enveloping Europe has pushed the zero-degree line — the altitude at which the temperature dips into the minus — to a record height of nearly 5,300 m in Switzerland. The zero-degree line is determined by meteorologists using weather balloons that take off twice a day from Payerne in western Switzerland. MeteoSwiss said the new height was clocked overnight from Sunday to Monday at 5,298 m, "which constitutes a record since monitoring began in 1954". The previous record of 5,184 m was set on July 25 last year. — AFP

Rickets hits Scotland's poorest

GLASGOW: A disease linked to poverty and malnutrition that once crippled the crowded slums of 19th-century Britain is on the rise in Scotland, according to data published at the weekend. A total of 442 cases of rickets — a skeletal disease caused by a sustained lack of Vitamin D — were recorded in 2022 compared to 354 in 2018, data from 13 of 14 Scottish health boards showed. Other so-called Victorian-era diseases such as tuberculosis and scarlet fever are also increasing in Scotland. Data collated by The Sunday Times newspaper showed 112 cases of tuberculosis in 2022 and a sharp rise in scarlet fever diagnosis, with 223 cases in 2022 compared with 39 the year before. In England there had been 171 cases of scurvy in 2022, with three recorded in Scotland. — AFP

Cancer advice on underwear

LONDON: UK supermarket chain Morrisons said on Monday it had joined forces with the state-run National Health Service to put advice labels on underwear about the early warning signs of breast and testicular cancer. Morrison's will initially place the advice labels in boxer shorts in its Nutmeg clothing line, followed by crop-top bras in coming months. NHS guidance about early symptoms including changes to the look and shape of breasts or painless swellings in testicles will be accompanied by a QR code linking customers to more detailed information on the NHS website. — AFP

UK baby-killer nurse handed life in prison

LONDON: A British nurse was jailed for life on Monday, with no prospect of release, for murdering seven newborn babies and attempting to kill six others while they were in her care. Lucy Letby, 33, was convicted of killing five baby boys and two baby girls, making her the UK's most prolific child serial killer in modern history.

She was arrested following a string of baby deaths at the neonatal unit of the Countess of Chester Hospital in northwest England between June 2015 and June 2016. The prosecution said Letby attacked her vulnerable prematurely born victims, often during night shifts, by either injecting them with air, overfeeding them with milk or poisoning them with insulin.

"Today's sentence means Letby will never again be able to inflict the suffering she did while working as a neonatal nurse," said Senior Crown Prosecutor Pascale Jones. Following a trial that started in October, a jury at Manchester Crown Court ended more than 100

hours of deliberations on Friday. Letby was in the dock as the jury returned the first guilty decisions earlier in August.

But she refused to come up from the cells for her sentencing on Monday. "You acted in a way that was completely contrary to the normal human instincts of nurturing and caring for babies," judge James Goss said, addressing Letby in her absence. He said there was "premeditation, calculation and cunning" in her actions, with a "deep malevolence bordering on sadism".

"You have no remorse," the judge said, ordering her to be given a written copy of the sentencing remarks and

Continued on Page 6



Lucy Letby

Syrians recall chemical attack 10 years on

AFRIN, Syria: Syrians in the country's rebel-held north on Monday marked the 10-year anniversary of chemical attacks that killed more than 1,400 people near Damascus, one of the conflict's many horrors that went unpunished. "I was in such shock. I smelt death," said Mohammed Sleiman, a paramedic from Zamalka in Eastern Ghouta who lost five members of his family that day.

On Aug 21, 2013, regime forces attacked Eastern Ghouta and Moadamiyet al-Sham, rebel-held areas outside the capital. The opposition accused the regime of using toxic gas in the attacks, which killed around 1,400 people, including more than 400 children. The government denied the allegations. Speaking from the northern city of Afrin, held by pro-Turkish rebels, Sleiman recalled rushing to the scene after hearing news of the attack. He wrapped his face with a piece of cloth to protect himself from the gas.

Continued on Page 6



DAMASCUS: A Syrian couple mourns in front of bodies wrapped in shrouds ahead of funerals following a toxic gas attack by pro-government forces in eastern Ghouta in this Aug 21, 2013 file photo. — AFP

50 years on, the enduring myth of Stockholm Syndrome

STOCKHOLM: "Get down to the floor! The party begins!" Shouting in English, Jan-Erik Olsson walked into a Stockholm bank on August 23, 1973, high on drugs, agitated and waving a submachine gun. So began a hostage drama that would go on to last six days, and birth the term "Stockholm Syndrome" — a concept now known around the world whereby captives develop an emotional bond with their captors.

Olsson, known by his nickname "Janne", took four employees hostage — three women and one

man. Police and media quickly swarmed the square outside Kreditbanken, with snipers perched in surrounding buildings, their weapons pointed at the bank. Olsson used two hostages as human shields and threatened to kill them. "Afterwards, I've often thought of the absurd situation we found ourselves in," recalled hostage Kristin Enmark, then 23, in her book "I Became the Stockholm Syndrome". "Terrified and stuck between two death threats, on one side the police and on the other the robber."

Olsson made several demands, asking for three million kronor (almost \$700,000 at the time), and that Clark Olofsson, one of the country's most notorious bank robbers in prison at the time, be brought to the bank. To calm things down, the Swedish government agreed.

Continued on Page 6



STOCKHOLM: This file photo taken on Aug 28, 1973 shows five police officers with gas masks taking away Jan-Erik Olsson in handcuffs after the resolution of a hostage drama at a bank. — AFP



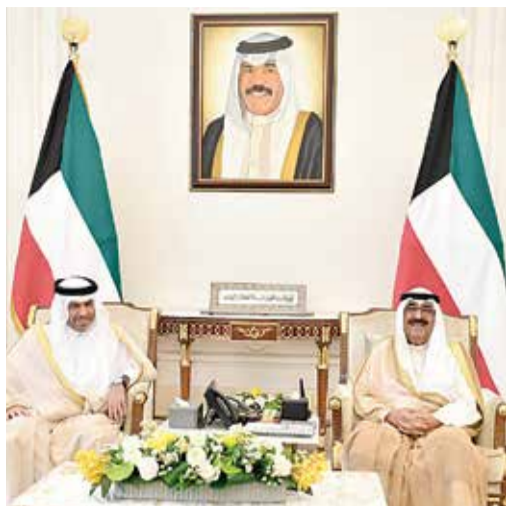
Local

Amir receives invitation to attend Doha Expo 2023

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received an invitation directed to his Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, from the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani to attend the opening ceremony of Doha Expo 2023 (Green Desert, Better Environment).

Qatar's ambassador to Kuwait Ali Al-Mahmoud delivered the invitation to his Highness the Crown Prince.

The meeting was attended by Head of the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Director of His Highness the Amir's office Ahmad Al-Fahad, Director of His Highness the Crown Prince Office Jamal Al-Theyab, Undersecretary of His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan for Foreign Affairs Mazen Al-Essa. — KUNA



Kuwait 'keen to enhance cooperation with WHO'

WHO official lauds Kuwait's efforts, high professionalism

KUWAIT: Kuwait is keen to enhance joint cooperation with The World Health Organization (WHO) in all health services, Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Monday. During his meeting with WHO's Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Dr Hanan Balkhy, Al-Awadhi said in a statement that the two side discussed means of cooperation in many fields. The statement added that the two officials also tackled Kuwait's capability in retorting health challenges and comprehensive planning for attentiveness to medical emergencies.

Al-Awadhi pointed out to Balkhy's admirations of Kuwait efforts to provide the necessary support and its ongoing quest in saving lives of millions of people during global humanitarian crises as a partner to (WHO) and as part of Kuwait's moral obligation to the United Nation's charter. Balkhy visited yesterday National Bank of Kuwait Children hospital and praised the scale of medical services and high professionalism. The minister of Health expressed Kuwait's aspiration to continue strengthening joint cooperation with the World Health Organization in various fields of Health and medical services and care.

The World Health Organization appreciated its cooperation and partnership with Kuwait,



KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi receives WHO's Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Dr Hanan Balkhy and other officials. — KUNA photos

which resulted in many programs and initiatives over the years, especially establishing WHO's office in Kuwait. Establishing the office allowed WHO to enhance cooperation with the Ministry of Health to develop healthcare in the country,

and saving millions of people through vaccinating children, he noted. The World Health Day commemorates the establishment of WHO in 1948, with the "health for everyone" as this year's slogan. — KUNA

WHO's representative in Kuwait Dr Asad Hafeedh said during the World Health Day. The past decades saw many achievements in the health sector, including eliminating smallpox, reducing the rate of polio by 99 percent

and saving millions of people through vaccinating children, he noted. The World Health Day commemorates the establishment of WHO in 1948, with the "health for everyone" as this year's slogan. — KUNA

Enigma of loneliness

By Ahmed Sabeeh

KUWAIT: Life coach Oraib Al-Fouzan has highlighted the intriguing fact that some individuals, even when married or part of a family, experience a sense of loneliness deep within them. In an age of digital interconnectedness, it's astonishing to discover that human loneliness still lingers. This article delves into the often overlooked realms of solitude, revealing its profound impact on mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Within this exploration, we uncover the intertwined causes and consequences that shed light on the far-reaching effects of this seemingly silent companion on both individuals and society at large. To truly understand loneliness, we must ponder

whether we are genuinely alone or if it's merely an unpleasant emotional response to perceived isolation.

According to Fouzan, self-analysis can help us navigate this question. One useful tool for self-analysis is the "Wheel of Life", where one of the points is the path towards positive distraction. Fouzan advises that coping with loneliness involves fostering a positive mindset and stepping out of one's comfort zone. He suggests setting small goals, such as making a cup of tea or tidying your bed, as a way to engage with activities and promote kindness.

This article delves into the enigma of loneliness by weaving together insights from psychological research and personal anecdotes. It unravels the intricate origins of this emotion, influenced by societal shifts, technological advances and changing modes of interpersonal connection. By exploring these strategies, readers are encouraged to fortify themselves against lone-



ness and nurture meaningful relationships. Social well-being emerges as a guiding principle in response to our increasingly isolated lives.

Surprisingly, loneliness can sometimes have a positive impact on one's life. Spending time alone can provide an opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth. As a psychotherapist Amy Morin points out, "Alone time in-

creases empathy." It allows individuals to develop a greater sense of compassion for those outside their immediate social circle, fostering a more inclusive mindset. As our narrative approaches its conclusion, an inspiring vision emerges: A united community empowered to bridge gaps between individuals and foster connections that diminish the pervasive influence of solitude.

Meteorologist predicts scattered rain, wind

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Meteorological Department said Monday, that the country is affected by scattered rains, sometimes thundery, accompanied by wind activity that may reach speeds of more than 60 kilometers per hour. The winds would lead to a decrease in horizontal visibility in some areas, and sea waves rise of more than six feet, the department added in weather warning. Last Friday, the country witnessed sporadic rain, sometimes thundery, accompanied by hail, with strong winds. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Vehicles make their way through a flooded road following heavy rain in west of Kuwait City on August 18, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Minister begins procedures for land transfers

KUWAIT: The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Minister of Finance, Dr Saad Al-Barrak, announced the process of procedures for transferring ownership of three land properties to the General Organization for Social Insurance. Al-Barrak said in a press statement on Monday that the transfer of ownership of the three lands with an area of 842,000 square meters is under the directives of the political leadership to strengthen

the financial and economic position of the institution, ensuring its sustainability, and reducing the actuarial deficit restricted to the budget of the institution.

He explained that this high initiative came as a confirmation of the support of continuous political leadership and its keenness on the stability and durability of the public institution for social insurance and the fulfillment of its obligations to secure the living requirements of citizens in general and pensioners in particular. It is noteworthy that the institution was launched as an official institution in 1977 under the Amiri order of Law No. 61 of 1976 to be the competent authority to provide sustainable insurance and social services for citizens working in the country and abroad and to secure a decent living after retirement or cessation of work. — KUNA

Kuwait participates in Arab youth forum

CAIRO: The Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr Ashraf Sobhy, opened the activities of the second edition of a forum (Arab youth talk to build awareness) with the participation of 22 Arab countries, including Kuwait, under the slogan "youth and promoting Arab economic integration". In his speech during the opening session, the Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports stressed his country's keenness to support all efforts aimed at promoting awareness in the implementation of the initiative of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to consider 2023 the year of Arab youth.

In this regard, he stressed the importance of concerted efforts to promote this category of society and involve them in development efforts. Sobhy said that the forum aims to promote Arab economic integration and economic citizenship in addition to the methodology of Joint Arab Action and achieving sustainable development in the fields of scientific research.

He stressed the need to communicate and consolidate the use of technology and artificial intelligence in the face of global changes. The minister praised the support provided to all youth movements at all levels and the initiatives that were carried out within the framework of a national strategy to promote them and enable them to face all global challenges. Sobhy also called for focusing on the empowerment and economic development of youths through the dissemination of the culture of self-employment and empowering them for the labor market. — KUNA

In my view

A new civilization dawns



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Human life is fleeting, too short to witness the full spectrum of historical shifts. Yet, those who study history diligently can experience these transformations vicariously. Today, we stand on the precipice of profound change, a transformation poised to reshape global power dynamics. Europe, the venerable old continent, no longer wields absolute control over its destiny. Confidence in the United States, once considered the world's policeman, is waning. Even its closest allies question its capacity to shepherd us into the next era of history.

After the demise of the Soviet Union in the closing decades of the last century, Western intellectuals proclaimed that history had bowed to the supremacy of Western influence. But in the ensuing years, Russia relinquished its Eastern territories, took unilateral control of Syria, and asserted its dominance in the Middle East. It brazenly challenged the European Union, which could only issue empty threats in response.

Today, Africa rises against its former colonial masters, despite Hollywood's continued glorification of a fading power. Is the United States becoming a phantom, a land of daydreams? Western intellectuals may cling to these dreams, but Eastern powers such as China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and the Arabian Gulf states have seized control of production sources and rapidly advanced in technology, imposing their economic agendas.

Meanwhile, the United States has contented itself with exporting fast food, championing LGBTQ+ rights, and advocating for children's rights — rights it denies them by undermining traditional family structures consisting of a mother and father. The United States appears to be moving against the tide of history. If its leaders fail to acknowledge this shift, history will repeat itself, and future Western generations may drown undertaking perilous journeys across the Pacific Ocean in search of Eastern civilization.

In our Middle Eastern countries, we remain a perennial bridge for steering the wheel of history toward the East. Every time I listen to critical debates in the United States, I become increasingly convinced that they talk much but act little. The wheel of time spins faster than our ability to comprehend and adapt. Even the voices of reason that sound the alarm seem resigned to an inevitable fate.

Superficial changes will not stave off the inevitable decline, as all the historical signs of a nation's fall are manifest in the Western world today. This echoes Ibn Khaldoun's insights on the rise and fall of civilizations, a concept history has repeatedly validated. Ibn Khaldoun's observations hold true, their echoes reverberating through time.

Those who seek to prolong Western civilization through media campaigns are deluded. When our leaders recognize this reality, they will turn away from the losers and reach out to the winners. History will then script a new chapter with them as the architects of a fresh beginning — a beginning whose end has not yet been written.

Local

Newly-enacted laws a testament to govt's cooperation with MPs

Health situation stable in Kuwait despite emergence of COVID subvariant



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over a Cabinet meeting on Monday. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: A quartet of newly-enacted laws is a testament to the Kuwaiti government's cooperation with parliament, the Cabinet said on Monday, thanking the country's political leaders for their approval of the new legislations. The new laws entail alterations to legislation dealing with health insurance for Kuwaiti retirees, in addition to a separate law on the formation of construction firms tasked with ensuring the economic development of residential areas.

The Kuwaiti government has also approved new electoral laws dealing with parliamentary elections, while amendments to legislation pertaining the constitutional court were also given the thumbs up, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari told reporters after the weekly Cabinet session chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In the wake of the spread of the

COVID-19 variant known as EG.5, or Eris, Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said the health situation in Kuwait is stable despite the emergence of this new strain, calling on the public to remain vigilant and continue to take precautions. The Cabinet went on to refer a draft law, over some alterations pertaining the electoral constituencies in municipal elections, to His Highness the Crown Prince, pending his approval. — KUNA



A group photo of the students at ZINC.

Zain concludes summer program with HS Store to upskill university students

KUWAIT: The Zain Innovation Campus hosted a special ceremony to mark the successful conclusion of the company's Summer Internship Program with HS Store. During the event, 40 outstanding trainees were recognized for completing the fourth edition of the renowned program that targeted university-level students and aimed to upskill and prepare young talents for their future careers.

Attended by Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh and HS Store Founder and General Manager Fahad Al Mithin, the ceremony featured special moments and unique segments, creating a family atmosphere that reflected the students' passions throughout the program. This came perfectly in line with Zain's brand identity: "A Wonderful World."

During the event, all trainees who joined the fourth edition of the program were recognized for their outstanding efforts and determination in pursuing new life, business, and technical skills. In addition, three of the top-performing trainees had a special honoring after excelling above all and being praised by Zain and HS Store officials and the customers whom they served. At the end of the event, a special video that documented the entire experience replayed the wonderful memories the

students created by being a part of this journey.

In its four editions, the Zain HS Store Summer Program was a huge success, having attracted hundreds of eager and dedicated young people who were keen on making the most out of their summer vacation. The students who joined gained invaluable insights, soft skills, and professional competencies that added value to their CVs and helped accelerate their new career journeys.

This year, the program was joined by 40 trainees who were all university students, giving them the opportunity to work for 5 weeks at several HS Store branches across Kuwait. The trainees were responsible for a number of key tasks related to communications, business, technical, and administrative skillsets.

This initiative provided students with a range of workplace skills, such as customer service and engagement, product sales and marketing, electronics maintenance and smartphone repairing, and more. The trainees worked for 4 hours daily within a part-time schedule, and each participant received a cash reward at the end of the program.

The Zain HS Store Summer Program came under the umbrella of Zain's Future University Network (FUN), a youth-tailored social program for university-level students



Al Musaibeeh and Al Mithin recognize a trainee.

that bridges the gap between studying and a unique experience at the Zain workplace by recruiting youth as the brand's main ambassadors. FUN is one of the largest sustainable projects that Zain has been developing over the years since its first edition in 2008. It offers students an invaluable opportunity to benefit from a real-world work experience to develop many skills and gain expertise on both professional and personal levels, including project management, public relations, social media management, customer engagement, and more.

Zain continues its long-term partnership with HS Store to offer this annual program under its wider community strategy that largely focuses on shouldering the youth and education sectors. This strategy is made possible by leveraging on Zain's vast network of partners from the com-

munity's top youth-centered entities and organizations.

The company dedicates more efforts and projects that invest in Kuwait's human capital, especially by focusing on developing the youth's business competencies to prepare them for their future careers. Zain strongly believes in strengthening the bond between the private sector and the local community, given that it is one of the sector's biggest players.

HS Store was established in 2011 with the aim of offering tech enthusiasts with a wide range of high-quality products with a hassle-free shopping experience. The store ensures the satisfaction of its customers in Kuwait and throughout the GCC by providing top-in-class devices and accessories and offering specialized maintenance and repair workshops for the most popular smart devices.

Perspective of the younger generation on arranged marriages

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The passage of time, shifts in beliefs and the profound influence of the Internet have empowered individuals to adopt ideologies that resonate with them. These factors have contributed to a generation of individuals with distinct ideas and personalities, setting them apart from their predecessors. For some young people today, these changes have led them to question the relevance of traditional arranged marriages, believing they have become obsolete.

In their view, shaped by the factors mentioned above, it has become imperative to establish a deeper understanding and communication with a potential life partner before committing to a serious and long-term relationship such as marriage. This shift in mindset reflects the growing emphasis on personal choice, compatibility and shared values in the

context of relationships. In an interview with Kuwait Times, two youths, Abdullah Hasan and Zainab Dashti, shared their perspectives on arranged marriages from a younger generation's viewpoint.

"Despite the prevailing collective mindset in Kuwaiti society, the digital revolution and the widespread influence of the Internet have infused a degree of individualism into individuals within our society. Consequently, premarital acquaintance allows individuals to evaluate compatibility across various dimensions, including emotional, intellectual and social aspects. It facilitates the development of a deeper understanding, trust and connection between partners, ultimately leading to stronger and more fulfilling relationships," Hasan said.

According to Hasan, marriage is no longer solely about starting a family and procreation. People now perceive their spouse as a life companion and a collaborator in various aspects of life, valuing them on both material and emotional levels. Consequently, ensuring harmony in terms of thoughts and emotions has become paramount.

"Personally, I do not believe that the concept of traditional arranged marriage holds validity in our current era. Our society has transcended the confines of limited thinking, customs and traditions passed down

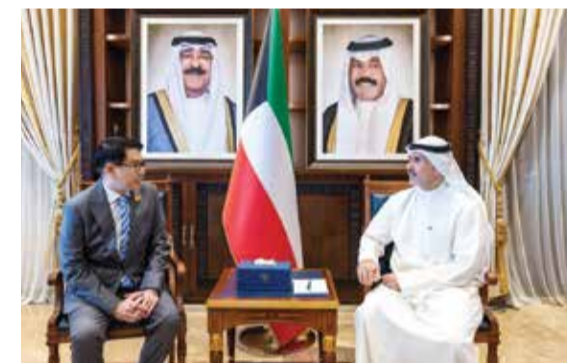


from our ancestors who lived in this region. With the presence of the Internet, social media platforms and widespread access to education, individuals today possess greater intellectual depth and understanding, making them distinct and resistant to conforming to a collective mentality," Dashti said.

In Dashti's perspective, the decision to marry is a deeply personal one. This viewpoint underscores the evolving values and priorities of today's youth, who seek a higher level of compatibility and potential that extends beyond the traditional goal of finding a spouse and starting a family.

Deputy FM receives Iran, Thailand ambassadors

KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonchi. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to bolster them. Later on, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad received Thai Ambassador Eka-pol Poolpipat. — KUNA



News in Brief

Camera found in toilet

KUWAIT: A female Kuwaiti citizen found a camera inside the women's toilet of a bank's branch in Farwaniya, and filed a complaint against the bank. The woman said she saw something strange at the corner of the female's bathroom of the bank. When she looked closely, she found a small camera that pictures anyone who enters the bathroom.

Court cancels rulings

KUWAIT: A court has issued a final ruling, canceling all violations registered by the Ministry of Health against some private clinics and considering them null and void. The court justified the ruling by saying the citations were signed by a committee. The court said these violations are no longer official, and clinics are not obliged to carry out the punishments against them. If the punishment is financial, they do not have to pay, and if it is a closure, the clinic will reopen and resume their work. The court emphasized that penalties must be implemented against any clinic if they are within the conditions mentioned in the supervision and inspection rules and by approved teams authorized to supervise and issue penalties; otherwise, all procedures will be of no legal significance.

Climate change awareness

CAIRO: The Arab Network for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and The Arab Gulf Program for UN Development Organizations (AGFUND) have launched a media platform specialized in climate change issues. The two organizations said in a joint statement the platform, to be known as Green, aimed at raising awareness among Arabs about climate change and how it was affecting public health. It quoted Huda Al-Baker, Executive Manager of the Arab Network, as saying the Arabic language platform would use multimedia, graphics and infographics to raise awareness about impacts of climate change and how it was affecting planet earth. Nasser Al-Qahitani, Executive Member of AGFUND, said the Arab Network was one of AGFUND's development arms that focus on sustainable development and climate change. — KUNA

News in Brief

Ministry pledges to harness potentials, support sports

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Information has affirmed its tireless efforts in supporting Kuwait's sporting activities and its work to harness all available potentials. It has spared no effort towards contributing to the desired development. The ministry said in a press statement about what is being circulated regarding the "purchase of TV transmission rights for the activities of the Kuwaiti football federation for the 2023-2024 sports season" that it received a letter that included the Federation's apology for granting the Ministry of Information the rights to TV transmission at a time when the ministry has completed all technical and technical equipment in preparation for the start of the sports season. The Ministry of Information stated that in order to continue cooperation and not deprive viewers of their rights to follow the sports competitions of the Kuwaiti football federation and highlight the sports activity, it calls on the officials of the federation to ensure permanent and joint cooperation. — KUNA

Arab parliament calls for supporting terror victims

CAIRO: Those affected by the evil claws of terrorism in the Arab world must be supported financially and economically to overcome their tragedies, said the Arab Parliament on Monday. On the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, Speaker of the parliament Adel Al-Asoomi asserted that taking care of victims of terrorism was a crucial part of the fight against such menace. He went on to say that laws and legislations on the Arab and international level must come about to protect the legal, economic, social, financial, and health rights of those suffering from terrorism. Rehabilitating victims of terrorism is also important, indicated Al-Asoomi who touted the Arab parliaments' efforts in this regard. He called on all nations to uphold the rights of victims and enable them to regain their lives ravaged by unjustifiable violence. — KUNA

Photo of the day



This picture taken on August 21, 2023, shows a partial view of the Sheikh Jaber Causeway in Kuwait City.

Ministry prepares for new academic year

Shortage of staff major issue • 1,200 new teachers needed

KUWAIT: The ministry of education has started preparations for the new academic year (2023/2024). The ministry distributed books and school furniture to all schools. Acting director of the supply and warehousing department at the ministry Nashmiya Al-Duaihi said in a press release on Monday that the process of distributing books is nearing completion for all schools in different educational districts. Duaihi added that these preparations come within the framework of the ministry's keenness to provide an optimal educational environment that contributes to achieving a fruitful academic year.

Meanwhile, the ministry of education emphasized that provision of workers in schools is one of the major issues facing preparations for the upcoming academic year. This state-

ment was made in a circular distributed by Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Osama Al-Sultan to educational zones, religious education authorities and special education school administrations.

"We urgently request reporting any staff shortages in all schools in the educational regions or any negligence by companies in carrying out their assigned tasks. This should be done through continuous coordination and communication with the public services monitoring department in the educational regions regarding the provision of necessary staff. Please also record your daily observations on this matter through the electronic form that has been provided to the follow-up and readiness teams for the new academic year. This is to assess the preparedness

of schools in relation to the upcoming academic year, with an emphasis on the importance and urgency of the matter," Sultan said in the circular.

Sultan, along with some ministry staff, departed on Monday to recruit teaching staff from Palestine. Sultan specified that the committee's work will span 12 days, and its tasks include conducting interviews with teachers and finalizing contracting procedures. The ministry of education requires approximately 1,200 teachers for the 2023/2024 academic year. So far, around 350 of them have been recruited locally, and 120 on external contracts (from Jordan), with efforts ongoing to fulfill the remaining positions both locally and externally.

Before this committee's departure to Palestine, another committee com-

pleted its work in Jordan, where it contracted 120 Jordanian teachers, despite the initial need being 200 teachers. This recruitment involved interviews and tests for the applicants.

In a related context, the ministry of education has accepted all applicants who meet the criteria, including Kuwaiti nationals, Kuwaiti women, bedoons and female Gulf residents for subjects such as mathematics at the middle and high school levels, and physics at the high school level, in addition to specialties in the need for male teachers. They have been exempted from the experience requirements.

Their procedures have been conducted in accordance with regulations and rules, and they will commence their duties at the start of the school year on Sept 10.



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KUWAIT: LuLu Group, leading retailer in the region inaugurates its latest hypermarket in Kuwait.

LuLu opens new hypermarket

KUWAIT: LuLu Group, leading retailer in the region, opened its latest hypermarket in Kuwait. The store which is also 14th in the country was officially inaugurated by Ahmad Gaid Al Enaizy, Assistant Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development at The Warehouse Mall in Sabahiya in the presence of Dr Matar Hamid Al-Neyadi, UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman of LuLu Group and other dignitaries. Also present on the occasion were Adarsh Swaika, Indian Ambassador, Manelisi Genge, South African Ambassador, Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador, Aung Gyaw Thu, Charge d'Affaires, Myanmar, Mugeurel Loan Stane-cu, Romanian Ambassador, Saleh Amer Al-Kharusi, Omani ambassador to Kuwait and large number of diplomats, government officials and other dignitaries. Spread over 48,000 sq. feet, the hypermarket will offer a wide range of fresh fruits, vegetables, grocery food, non-food items, health and beauty products, meat and seafood, In-house kitchen & delicatessen and a special area for local agri produces.

In addition, the product range at the new branch encompasses children's toys, seasonal party supplies, electronic and mobile devices and accessories, IT products and peripherals, as well as premium cosmetics and perfumes under the brand BLSH. All items on the hypermarket's shelves have been curated from the best products worldwide and are made available at the most competitive prices, so as to fulfill and exceed the expectations of the brand's valued customers.



The inauguration of the new premium outlet serves as an affirmation of LuLu Hypermarket's continued commitment to provide customers the best shopping experience in the country. Also present on the occasion were Adeen Ahamed, LuLu Financial Group Managing Director, Mohamed Haris, LuLu Kuwait Director, Sreejith, Regional Director of LuLu Kuwait and other senior officials.



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NORTH HOLLYWOOD: A car drives through a flooded street in North Hollywood, California on August 20, 2023. — AFP

Hilary brings record rain to California

Highways flooded, schools closed in 'unprecedented weather event'

LOS ANGELES: Tropical Storm Hilary drenched Southern California with record rainfall, shutting down schools, roads, and businesses before edging in on Nevada on Monday. California Governor Gavin Newsom had declared a state of emergency over much of the typically dry area, where flash flood warnings remained in effect until Monday morning. The Los Angeles branch of the National Weather Service said overnight that multiple daily rainfall records in the region had been broken. With people already on edge ahead of the storm's arrival, a 5.1-magnitude earthquake jolted the southern California town of Ojai, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The deluge from Hilary swamped roads, transforming highways into rivers and stranding some motorists. The start of the public-school year was widely delayed for a day, with class postponed in several school districts, including San Diego, Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Palmdale. At its peak a Category 4 hurricane — the second-most powerful on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale — Hilary was downgraded to a tropical storm as crossed

into the United States from Mexico and later to a post-tropical cyclone. As of Monday morning, Hilary's core was located in Nevada, which it was expected to quickly move across, while also glancing the states of Oregon and Idaho with rain, according to the latest advisory from the US National Hurricane Center (NHC). "Life-threatening and locally catastrophic flooding" continued to be expected over portions of the southwestern United States, it added. The storm was moving at the brisk pace of 35 miles (55 kilometers) per hour, with stronger gusts.

'Unprecedented weather event'

A local ABC affiliate broadcast video of intense flooding in parts of Palm Springs, where the police department announced an outage of the emergency 911 call line on Sunday night, advising people to head to the nearest fire or police station in person. Beaches were ordered closed, and people rushed to stores to stock up on water and other essentials. Flash flood and even tornado warnings were issued for some areas.

"This is an unprecedented weather event," Los

Angeles Mayor Karen Bass warned. Despite the storm's weakening as it tracked inland, US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administrator Deanne Criswell urged people to take the dangers seriously, warning it posed a "serious impact and threat to southern California." Authorities opened five storm shelters and deployed more than 7,500 personnel, including several hundred National Guard soldiers as well as swiftwater rescue teams, the California governor's office said. In San Diego, people filled sandbags to prepare for possible flooding, while lifeguards warned people to stay out of the sea.

'Very, very dangerous'

One person died in Mexico after a vehicle was swept away by a swollen river, Mexico's Civil Protection agency said, while warning of landslides and road closures in Baja California. The Mexican army opened 35 shelters providing refuge to 1,725 people affected by the storm. "Large swells will continue to affect portions of the Baja California Peninsula and southern California," the NHC said.

Nancy Ward, director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, said Hilary could be one of the worst storms to hit 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." Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer rescheduled games planned for Sunday in the US region.

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. 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

Trump says too popular for Republican debates

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said Sunday he will skip this week's first Republican presidential debate, arguing that Americans know him well so there's no need for a public showdown with his rivals for the White House. In a message on his platform Truth Social, Trump touted what he called a hugely successful record as president and what he described as his popularity among the American people.

"I WILL THEREFORE NOT BE DOING THE DEBATES!" he said. The first debate in the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination is scheduled

for Wednesday in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In his post, Trump noted the latest in a wave of polls showing him far, far out ahead of the Republican field, this one by CBS News published Sunday. It said 62 percent of those polled for the survey would vote for him even though he has been indicted four times this year, including on charges he tried to subvert US democracy by scheming to overturn the 2020 election and stay in power despite his loss to Joe Biden.

Trump's closest contender in the CBS poll was Florida Governor Ron DeSantis at 16 percent. The rest of those in the field are polling in the single digits. Trump wrote that DeSantis is "crashing like an ailing bird." "The public knows who I am & what a successful Presidency I had," Trump said, citing issues including energy, border security and the military, and the economy. The 77-year-old former president, who is rarely out of the headlines,

had been vocal about possibly skipping the debate in the midwestern city of Milwaukee, wary of sharing the limelight with lower-polling rivals. The New York Times reported Friday that Trump had told aides he was planning to upstage his rivals by skipping the event, organized by Fox News, and instead sit for an online interview with one of Fox's former hosts, Tucker Carlson.

Even in his absence, Trump will be ripe for broadsides from opponents over the four criminal and three civil trials he faces involving allegations before, during and after his scandal-plagued presidency. "Obviously, his legal issues are affecting this race," Fox News host Bret Baier, who will be moderating the debate, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "All these candidates have been asked non-stop about what's happening in courtrooms around the country. So he'll be a part of this debate whether he's there or not." — AFP



DES MOINES: In this file photo former US president and 2024 Republican Presidential hopeful Donald Trump arrives to speak at the Republican Party of Iowa's 2023 Lincoln Dinner on July 28, 2023. — AFP

Jakarta mandates work from home for better air quality

JAKARTA: Thousands of public employees in Indonesia's capital, or half of its civil servants, were told to work from home starting Monday in a two-month trial aimed at improving the city's air quality, a government notice said. Jakarta and its surrounding cities form a megalopolis of about 30 million people, and its airborne concentration of the tiny particles known as PM2.5 recently surpassed other heavily polluted cities such as Riyadh, Doha and Lahore.

Activists blame the high levels of toxic smog on clusters of factories and coal-fired power plants near the capital, but the government has dismissed such claims, arguing that Jakarta's recent worsening air pollution was mainly due to weather and traffic. The official notice, a copy of which was seen by AFP, says that the work-from-home scheme was related to efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the city during the ASEAN summit next month as well as to "decrease air pollution levels in Jakarta".

It ordered 50 percent of civil servants employed by the Jakarta administration to work from home between August 21 and October 21, and said up to 75 percent of the capital's government workers would work from home during the ASEAN summit between September 4 and 7. Jakarta employed around 50,000 civil servants as of July, according to the regional civil service agency.

Acting Jakarta governor Heru Budi Hartono told reporters on Sunday that local governments in satellite cities surrounding Jakarta were also consider-



JAKARTA: An aerial view shows traffic during morning rush hour in Jakarta on August 21, 2023, the first day the local government began a remote working scheme for 50 percent of its employees to help reduce air pollution. — AFP

ing similar work-from-home arrangements for civil servants, although for a shorter period. The Jakarta government would monitor the policy's implementation and could scrap it earlier than planned if it's deemed unsuccessful, he added.

"If it's effective, then I have to report to the Home Ministry," said Hartono. "If before October 21, it was not effective, for example, the civil servants who work from home are not disciplined, I will revert (the pol-

icy)." The trial scheme is one of several government measures aimed at improving Jakarta's air quality.

In an Instagram post last week, coordinating maritime and investment affairs minister Luhut Pandjaitan said the focus of the government's emission control policies included zeroing in on the industrial and power-generation sectors. "As an effort to control emissions, we will require industries to use 'scrubbers' and to cut coal-fired power plants." — AFP

China slams US, S Korea, Japan statement

BEIJING: China said Monday it had lodged complaints over a statement released at a first-of-its-kind summit of the leaders of the United States, South Korea and Japan in which they criticized Beijing's "aggressive behavior". US President Joe Biden hosted the summit — described as launching a "new chapter" of close, three-way security cooperation — at the Camp David presidential retreat.

The three leaders said in a joint statement on Friday they opposed the "dangerous and aggressive behavior" of China in maritime disputes in the East and South China Sea. Beijing hit back on Monday, saying the leaders had "smeared and attacked China on Taiwan-related and maritime issues, grossly interfered in China's internal affairs and deliberately sowed discord between China and its neighbors".

It also expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition and has lodged solemn representations with relevant parties", foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a regular news briefing. Camp David marks the first time the leaders of the United States, Japan and South Korea have met for a standalone summit, rather than on the sidelines of a larger event.

Biden praised the "political courage" of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in turning the page on historical animosity. Such a summit would have been unthinkable until recently due to the legacy of Japan's harsh 1910-1945 occupation of the Korean peninsula. — AFP

International

Zimbabweans brace for tense vote

Citizens pinning hopes on election amidst economic troubles

HARARE: A large banner featuring Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa hangs from a rundown apartment block in Mbare, a poor suburb of Harare, encouraging voters to give the 80-year-old another term. It overlooks an unpaved road — part of it submerged by sewage surging from a broken pipe — lined with vendors selling charcoal for cooking stacked in empty paint cans for \$1 apiece. Zimbabwe is battling economic troubles and many in the southern African country are pinning their hopes for a better future on Wednesday's presidential election. The vote — for which 6.6 million Zimbabweans are registered — is predicted to be divisive.

Urban areas have in recent years been opposition strongholds and Mbare, the city's oldest suburb, is considered a battleground. "The roads are not good, the schools are not good, our economy is not good. We are expecting (the election) to change all those things," said Tendai Kativhu, a carpenter at the market in Mbare with his two children. While few say it openly, "change" here often means Nelson Chamisa, the opposition leader whose portrait is painted on small yellow posters plastered next to the president's campaign ads.

But in a nation dominated since independence by the late Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF and burdened by a history of tainted elections, few believe the 45-year-old lawyer will emerge the outright winner. A recent Human Rights Watch report said the ballot would be held under a "seriously flawed electoral process", incompatible with international standards for freedom and fairness. Chamisa's Citizens Coalition for Change has long complained about being unfairly targeted by authorities, its members arrested, dozens of events blocked and little or no airtime on national television. The party is nonetheless hoping to ride

a wave of discontent so large as to make a strong and possibly victorious showing undeniable. "People are struggling. Maybe after the elections things will be better," said Tawanda Gwanzura, a 28-year-old chef.

'Most winnable election'

A gifted orator, Chamisa is not new to disputed elections. He narrowly lost to Mnangagwa in 2018, a poll he condemned as fraudulent, and which was tainted by a deadly crackdown on post-election protests. That first election after the end of Mugabe's 37-year rule had raised hopes for a new, free, and democratic Zimbabwe, after years of mismanagement that had dragged the economy into the ground and driven investors out.

But analysts say things have worsened since 2018, with parliament passing laws that rights groups say muzzle civil society and curtail criticism of the government. The economy has struggled to take off, despite Mnangagwa's promise that Zimbabwe is "open for business" and his "leaving no-one behind" mantra. An opinion poll in June showed the economy and unemployment were voters' top concerns. An overwhelming majority of respondents said the government has done a bad job.

Inflation in this agriculturally- and mineral-rich country of more than 15 million people officially stood at 101 percent in July but some economists say the real figure is higher. Were it not for election tinkering, the presidential race "represents the most winnable election for the opposition" in 15 years, said Zimbabwean political analyst Brian Kagoro.

Jobs and violence

Chamisa has promised a new Zimbabwe "for everyone", tackling graft, relaunching the economy and pulling



HARARE: Followers of the Stowdard Sect of the Zion Church of God, sing and dance during a service in the historic neighborhood of Mbare in Harare on August 20, 2023. — AFP

the country out of international isolation. But critics say he is scant on details about how he plans to do so. In an attempt to revamp his reputation as a go-getter, Mnangagwa has been on a ribbon-cutting spree in recent weeks, delivering new fire engines and opening coal mines, power plants and clinics.

"The economy is built by its own people," reads a slogan in the Shona language on ZANU-PF posters plastered across Harare. Supporters point to new infrastructure as

evidence that the president has been delivering on his promises. To clinch re-election, Mnangagwa must win an absolute majority of votes. If he doesn't gain at least 50 percent plus one of the votes, he will face a run-off.

If he obtains a "shock" result that is hard to manipulate into a "convincing victory", Mnangagwa could see heightened opposition from within his own party, where some might start to consider him a liability, said Nic Cheeseman, a democracy expert at Brit-

ain's Birmingham University. "The big question for the opposition will be: Do they risk protests when they know that those protests could lead to loss of life?" he said. As for the government, "How much are they going to repress that resistance?" Addressing supporters in a rural area in central Zimbabwe on Saturday, Mnangagwa vowed the election would be free, fair and without violence. "ZANU-PF is unstoppable. Victory is certain," he said. "We never entertain defeatism." — AFP

Guatemala dark horse becomes president

GUATEMALA CITY: Social democrat Bernardo Arevalo swept to victory in Guatemala's presidential election on Sunday, with his anti-corruption message firing up weary voters. The 64-year-old sociologist is the son of an ex-president but his win is still a massive upset, defying opinion polls, court battles and attempts to have his party disqualified. "The people of Guatemala have spoken forcefully," Arevalo told the media in his first comments after winning by a wide margin. "Enough with so much corruption." He added that outgoing President Alejandro Giammattei had called to congratulate him and together they had agreed "to draw up a timetable for the transition plan."

Arevalo scored 59 percent of the vote, with 95 percent of ballots counted, according to official results from the TSE national election body. His rival, former first lady Sandra Torres — who enjoyed the backing of the incumbent as well as the elite — came second with 36 percent of the vote. Ambassadors from the United States and European Union have expressed willingness to work with Arevalo, who said the presidents of neighboring Mexico

and El Salvador had already offered their congratulations. However, he is viewed with apprehension by members of the political and business elite that dominate Guatemala. "Arevalo's victory means a defeat of the old politics, of the ruling party and those nostalgic for the Cold War. A different era is beginning for our country," independent analyst Miguel Angel Sandoval told AFP. Thousands of Arevalo's supporters celebrated with rallies in squares in the capital and cities around the country. "This triumph represents the defeat of a corrupt system," said Jorge Mendoza, a 41-year-old sociologist.

'Political persecution'

Ahead of Sunday's vote, observers and foreign allies sounded alarm about meddling and efforts to undermine the electoral process, after a top prosecutor tried to have Arevalo disqualified and ordered raids on his party offices and the election body. The Supreme Court on Friday overturned the order to disqualify Arevalo's Semilla political party, which had prompted protests.

On the campaign trail, Arevalo claimed to be the victim of "political persecution by a corrupt minority that knows it is losing power by the day." After a first round marked by low turnout and invalid votes, the TSE reported "historic turnout" at the close of Sunday's voting, without giving details. Fed-up voters expressed despair over the poverty, violence and corruption that have gripped the Central American nation, pushing thousands of its citizens to emigrate in search of better lives, many to the United States.

"You can no longer live anywhere, because there is so

much crime," said 66-year-old housewife Maria Rac, an Indigenous Mayan who voted in the town of San Juan Sacatepequez, 30 kilometers (20 miles) west of the capital. Arevalo, the son of Guatemala's first democratically elected president, Juan Jose Arevalo, has slammed the political establishment. "We have been the victims, the prey, of corrupt politicians for years," Arevalo, a former diplomat, said. "To vote is to say clearly that it is the Guatemalan people who lead this country, not the corrupt."

'New faces'

Torres, from a traditionally center-left party, had promised welfare programs and various subsidies for the poor. She also won the backing of the right and evangelicals, increased her socially conservative rhetoric and was seen as representing the establishment. Mayan farmer Brigido Chavix, 57, said he did not support Arevalo, "but I voted for him because we want new faces."

"That lady (Torres) has already been around for a long time talking about policies, policies, and she has never carried them out," Torres, the ex-wife of late leftist president Alvaro Colom, denounced "some irregularities" during Sunday's voting, without giving evidence. Before the election, she raised doubts about the objectivity of the country's electoral board, accusing it of leaning toward Arevalo's party. The prosecutor who has targeted Arevalo, Rafael Curruchiche — sanctioned by Washington for corruption — has said he did not rule out more raids and possible arrests after the elections.

Arevalo will replace unpopular right-wing president



GUATEMALA CITY: Guatemalan presidential candidate for the Semilla party, Bernardo Arevalo, celebrates the results of the presidential run-off election in Guatemala City, on August 20, 2023. — AFP

Giammattei, who is constitutionally limited to one term. Under Giammattei, several prosecutors fighting graft have been arrested or forced into exile. He had also cracked down on critical journalists. The corrupt "have progressively taken control of all state institutions," former attorney general Claudia Paz y Paz — who is now in Costa Rica — told AFP.

Guatemala has some of the worst poverty, malnutrition and child mortality rates in Latin America, according to the World Bank. The murder rate is one of the highest in the world, with many killings attributed to gang violence related to drug trafficking. — AFP

MP questions impact of...

Continued from Page 1

are appointing foreigners in key posts. The lawmaker called on the entire board to step down and called for holding them accountable for allegedly failing to manage the loss-making airline.

Also, MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf claimed on Monday that the government is preventing the Audit Bureau from investigating the state of affairs at the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman), which is several years behind its operation date. The

agreement to establish the company was signed in 2014 to provide full healthcare services to a majority of the 3.3 million expats living in Kuwait. But the company has delayed operations for several years now although most of its facilities are ready.

Mudhaf said the National Assembly voted unanimously, with the approval of the government, to assign the Audit Bureau to launch an investigation into the company, reasons for its delayed start and any possible impact on public funds. He added that it appears the government is preventing the bureau from launching the investigation and held the government responsible for any consequences. The start of Dhaman company will relieve state health services from dealing with over 1.8 million expats, making it much easier for citizens to receive medical care.

The father of two brothers killed by the nurse, who were part of a set of triplets, said: "Lucy Letby has destroyed our lives". "The anger and the hatred I have towards her will never go away," he said in a pre-recorded video statement. After the death of the two triplets in June 2016, Letby was removed from the neonatal unit and placed on clerical duties. She was arrested for the first time in July 2018. On her third arrest in Nov 2020, Letby was formally charged and placed in custody.

Letby's motives remain unclear. During the trial, the prosecution said Letby "gaslighted" her colleagues into believing the rise in baby deaths was "just a run of bad luck". The court heard that Letby took an unusual interest in the families of her victims, making searches for them on social media. She also sent a sympathy card to the grieving parents of a child she was later found guilty of murdering.

Handwritten notes found during police searches at Letby's home were among the evidence seen by the court, one of which had "I am evil I did this" written in capital letters. The jury cleared Letby, who denied all the charges, of two counts of attempted murder and were unable to reach decisions on six other counts. The government has announced an independent inquiry into the case and will look at how the concerns of clinicians were dealt with by hospital management. The hospital's executives have come under fire for failing to act sooner on concerns about Letby, which were reportedly raised by senior doctors as early as 2015. — AFP

Syrians recall chemical attack...

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"I found a large number of people hurt or dead. It was like the apocalypse. The scene was indescribable," the 40-year-old told AFP ahead of the anniversary.

When he went back to his family home, he found it empty. With one of his brothers, he went to look for them at a nearby medical facility. "I found my father and all the neighbors, all of them just with numbers, no names. I remember my father was number 95. I identified the bodies of the people I knew," he said.

Syria's civil war broke out in 2011 after President Bashar Al-Assad's repression of peaceful demonstrations escalated into a deadly conflict that pulled in foreign powers and global jihadists. The war has killed more than half a million people and forced around half of the country's pre-war population from their homes.

Sleiman later learned that his other brother, his sister-in-law and their two children had also been

50 years on, the enduring myth of...

Continued from Page 1

The entire country was mesmerized by the unfolding drama, one of the first major news events broadcast live on Swedish television.

"When Clark Olofsson arrived, he took control of the situation, he was the one who did the talking with the police," recalled now 73-year-old Bertil Ericsson, a news photographer who covered the crisis, in an interview with AFP. "He had a lot of charisma. He was a good speaker." Olsson calmed down as soon as Olofsson arrived. And Kristin Enmark quickly saw in Olofsson a savior. "He promised that he would make sure nothing happened to me and I decided to believe him," she wrote. "I was 23 years old and feared for my life."

She spoke on the phone to authorities several times during the hostage drama, shocking the world when she came out in defense of her captors. "I'm not the least bit

killed in the attack. "We dug a communal grave for hundreds of people and buried them close together," he said. "When I tell the story, I can see it all in front of me as if it was now," he said, adding that he was receiving psychological counselling because of the trauma.

Activists in 2013 posted dozens of amateur videos on YouTube said to show the effects of the attack, including footage of dozens of corpses, many of them children, outstretched on the ground. Other images showed unconscious children, people foaming at the mouth and doctors apparently giving them oxygen to help them breathe. The scenes provoked revulsion and condemnation around the globe. A United Nations report later said there was clear evidence sarin gas was used.

Despite insisting the use of chemical weapons was a red line, then US president Barack Obama held back on retaliatory strikes, instead reaching a deal with Russia on the dismantlement of Syria's chemical arsenal under UN supervision. Eastern Ghouta returned to regime control in 2018. Survivors and activist gathered at several sites in Syria's opposition-held north and northwest Syria on Sunday to mark the anniversary. — AFP

afraid of Clark and the other guy, I'm afraid of the police. Do you understand? I trust them completely," she told then prime minister Olof Palme in one phone call. "Believe it or not but we've had a really nice time here," she said, adding that they were "telling stories" and "playing checkers". "You know what I'm afraid of? That the police will do something to us, storm the bank or something."

The crisis ended on the sixth day when police sprayed gas into the bank, forcing Olsson and Olofsson to surrender, and freeing the hostages. Psychiatrist Nils Bejerot was a member of the negotiating team. His job was to analyze the robbers' and hostages' behavior, and he ultimately coined the term "Stockholm Syndrome". At the time, the women were believed to be behaving as if under a spell, similar to being brainwashed.

Psychiatrists have since dismissed that notion. Stockholm Syndrome is "not a psychiatric diagnosis," says Christoffer Rahm, a psychiatrist at the Karolinska Institute and author of the scientific article "Stockholm Syndrome: Psychiatric Diagnosis or Urban Myth?". Rather, the term is used to describe a "defense mechanism that helps the victim" cope with a traumatic situation, he told AFP. — AFP

UK baby-killer nurse handed...

Continued from Page 1

the families' victim impact statements. "There are no mitigating factors," Goss said that "because the seriousness of your offences are exceptionally high, I direct that the early release provisions do not apply". "The order of the court therefore is a whole life order on each and every offence and you will spend the rest of your life in prison," the judge said.

Letby is just the fourth woman in England and Wales to receive a whole life term, with notorious serial killers Rose West and Myra Hindley among those handed the harshest sentence. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was "cowardly that people who commit such horrendous crimes do not face their victims". The leader of the main opposition Labour party, former chief prosecutor Keir Starmer, promised to close the "shamefully exploited loophole" if elected to government.

However, legal experts suggested that practical issues involved in bringing unwilling defendants to court could scupper such plans. Letby's absence on Monday meant she did not hear the families' victim impact statements. "You thought it was your right to play God with our children's lives," the mother of a twin boy and girl who were attacked in June 2015 said in a statement read to the court. The baby boy was murdered while his elder sister survived.

International

Parched Egypt struggles with water loss

26.5% of clean water unused, leaked underground

CAIRO: At the foot of an 800-year-old Cairo mausoleum, weeds rise from a murky green pool — a sign of massive loss of clean water that often goes to waste instead of reaching Egyptian consumers. Beneath intricate Quranic inscriptions, the thick shrubbery crawls upwards from waist-deep water towards the 13th-century Al-Ashraf Khalil dome in the Egyptian capital's historic quarter. But "it's not natural" nor the result of spring water, said heritage management expert May Al-Ibrashy.

In a country already suffering from severe water scarcity, official figures show that more than a quarter of clean water produced never makes it to consumers. Egyptians already consume slightly over half of what hydrologists consider the cut-off for water poverty at 1,000 cu m per person annually, with the United Nations warning Egypt could "run out of water by 2025".

In several heritage sites in Cairo's historic Al-Khalifa neighborhood which have not undergone renovation, Ibrashy's team "tested the water, and the results are consistently that it's drinking water mixed with sewage". That, she told AFP, "means there's leakage" in the massive network of pipes that serves Greater Cairo's 20 million inhabitants.

Sunk cost

The iconic mosques and mausoleums of historic Cairo — some submerged in up to a meter of water — lie lower than street level and are more permeable to groundwater than modern, insulated buildings. These sites are also more susceptible to water damage because they are "near the Nile", according to Mohamed Hassan Tawfik, a water resources management expert and PhD researcher at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

But the problem extends well be-

yond the centuries-old domes of historic Cairo. Nationwide, official figures show 26.5 percent of Egypt's clean water in the 2021-22 fiscal year was lost — a conservative estimate, according to experts. "The water company is producing that water, but... it goes into the ground," Tawfik told AFP.

Globally, so-called non-revenue water drains hundreds of millions of cubic meters daily from faucets. "You see these leakages happening in a system like ours that is itself very dilapidated and full of cracks," Tawfik said, also pointing to "theft", where people tamper with water meters or illegally reroute pipes. The national Holding Company for Water and Wastewater does not disclose a breakdown of the loss by causes — leaks or illegal connections — and could not be reached for comment.

In major cities like Cairo, where 23.5 percent of clean water is lost, Ibrashy said many of the leaks occur in "the underground no-man's land" between main pipes and buildings, where often neither authorities nor residents pay for maintenance. "Because most of the network is very old" pipes cannot handle high pressure, which reduces efficiency and "causes leakages", Tawfik explained. The Suez Canal governorates of Port Said, Suez and Ismailia have the highest rates of water loss in the country, with over two thirds of clean water going down the drain.

Swamp to garden

Egypt simply cannot afford to be "paying to produce water that no one is using", Tawfik said. Hani Sewilam, Cairo's irrigation and water resources minister, said this year individual consumers have access to around 550 cubic metres, a figure which officials expect to drop to 500 cu m by 2025. With most leaks happening underground, water loss is an expensive problem to



CAIRO: Boys play near thick shrubbery crawling upwards from waist-deep water towards the 13th-century Al-Ashraf Khalil dome in the Egyptian capital's historic quarter on August 9, 2023. — AFP

fix. "Overhauling the system would cost billions," according to Tawfik, as the country faces a punishing economic crisis and budget cuts.

Other possible solutions, including technologies that identify exact locations of leaks, require funding and political will from municipal authorities who have been largely reluctant to update practices, according to Ibrashy. "The current approach in a lot of heritage sites is dewatering systems that take the water out to prevent water and

salinity damage, and then feed it back into the sewage system," she said. "It's a vicious cycle," Ibrashy added, proposing instead "to take the water and use it".

Across the street from Al-Ashraf Khalil, a canopy of trees hangs from a raised platform that houses Al-Khalifa Park, a 3,000-sq-m community garden and playground that was now "fed completely by groundwater" from the mausoleum and the nearby Fatima Khatun dome, Ibrashy said. "Of course, you can't use it to plant anything edible because

there's a risk of contamination," she added, but it has provided a new green space in the densely populated neighborhood of Cairo where such areas are scarce and shrinking.

The park's irrigation system filters and reuses water that would have otherwise slowly risen to claim more of the centuries-old stone. But as more water still seeps in across the street, such solutions are a drop in the ocean for the country of 105 million people, whose clean water needs continue to grow each year. — AFP

France sizzles in late summer 'heat dome'

PARIS: Tens of millions of people in France sweated through a late summer heatwave on Monday, with record temperatures expected in the wine-growing Rhone valley region and a forest fire also blazing in the southeast. Temperatures are expected to peak on Tuesday and Wednesday, with the most intense heat in the southern parts of the country where the mercury is already pushing past 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

Health authorities have placed 50 out of 96 departments in mainland France in the second-highest heat warning level, with some areas expected to be placed in the maximum red category in the coming days. "Some records could be broken, notably on Tuesday in the Rhone valley with 40-42C expected," national weather service Meteo France said.

The heatwave is "intense and long-lasting" and "particularly late in the season", it added, with a period of high pressure creating a "heat dome" over the country. After a suffocating summer of record temperatures and forest fires in 2022, France has for the most part experienced a typical holiday period this year, escaping the intense heat that scorched southern Europe in July.

The current high temperatures were the hottest of the season, Meteo France said. Many people headed to municipal swimming pools, fountains or the beach to cool off. "We went to the pool, so it was a cheap and easy way to fight the heat," Nathalie Chopin told AFP in the southeastern city of Lyon. "It's very hot. Otherwise, we stay in in our apartments, close the shutters and shut ourselves in."

Fire fears

After several weeks of dry weather, local authorities in the southern Gard area of France restricted access to forests due to the high risks of fires. Around 260 firefighters were battling a fire near the village of Chanousse in the foothills of the Alps in southeast France, according to the Association for the Prevention and Reporting of Forest Fires.

It has consumed around 120 hectares (nearly 250 acres) of woodland, according to local authorities. The high temperatures have also interfered with the scheduled re-starting of a nuclear power plant in Golfech in southwest France and could also lead to restrictions at a plant in Bugey in the Ain area, power group EDF said.

Heatwaves frequently affect France's river-side nuclear power plants which suck in river water for cooling purposes before discharging it downstream. They are forced to reduce their water usage during hot spells to guard against excessive warming of rivers which could affect local ecosystems. The highest temperature ever recorded in France was 46C, registered in June 2018 in the village of Verargues in southern France. — AFP



COLMAR: Children cool off as they run through a public fountain in Colmar, eastern France, on August 21, 2023, as France experiences a late summer heatwave. — AFP

Two US soldiers arrested after Germany murder

BERLIN: Two US soldiers have been arrested in Germany over the death of a young man at a funeral in the west of the country, German police said Sunday. "Following the murder of a 28-year-old man, two suspects were arrested ... They are American servicemen", police in the western city of Treves said in a statement.

The death occurred when an altercation broke out between several people at a funeral in the small town of Wittlich, in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate between Treves and Koblenz, on Saturday night. During the fight the victim "was stabbed to death", and "four people, two men and two women, ran away from the scene of the crime", police said, citing witnesses.

Two members of the fleeing group were quickly identified, as a 25- and 26-year-old whom police arrested before handing them over to US authorities, who will take charge of the case "in accordance with NATO statutes", the police added.

"We've never experienced anything like this here", said Wittlich mayor Joachim Rodenkirch when interviewed by the local press. The United States has had troops stationed in Germany since World War II, but their numbers have declined since the fall of the Berlin Wall from around 200,000 soldiers in 1990 to 34,500 today. — AFP

N Korea abruptly cancels first flight since COVID

BEIJING: North Korea's national airline was set to make its first commercial flight in over three years on Monday, only for it to be abruptly cancelled at the last minute. North Korea has been largely closed off from the outside world since early 2020, when it shut its borders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Journalists gathered on Monday at Beijing's Capital International Airport to await Air Koryo flight JS151 from Pyongyang, due to arrive at 09:50 am (01:50 GMT). But almost two hours after its scheduled arrival, a signboard in the terminal unexpectedly signaled it had been cancelled, prompting groans of disappointment from media waiting to see some of the isolated North's first international travellers in years.

Beijing airport customer service told AFP that Air Koryo — Pyongyang's beleaguered national air carrier — had not given a reason for the cancellation. Asked about

the cancellation Monday, China's foreign ministry only said that it had approved restarting commercial flights between Beijing and Pyongyang. "During the summer and autumn flight season ... the Chinese side approved flight plans for passengers such as the Pyongyang-Beijing and Beijing-Pyongyang routes of Air Koryo," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told a regular briefing.

AFP reporters who knocked on the bolted glass doors of Air Koryo's Beijing office on Monday afternoon startled a vest-clad man dozing on the sofa inside the darkened room. A second man who opened the door responded to AFP's questions by repeatedly saying "we don't know". He referred reporters to North Korean ruling party newspaper the Rodong Simun for "accurate" information, as a third man slipped inside, his shirt bearing a badge with portraits of the country's two former leaders.

After three years of COVID-induced isolation, there are increasing signs Pyongyang may be becoming more flexible on border controls. Chinese and Russian officials attended a military parade in the North Korean capital last month — the first foreign dignitaries to visit the country in years. Last week Pyongyang allowed a delegation of athletes to attend a taekwondo competition in Kazakhstan.

The Yonhap and Kyodo news agencies reported that a group of people, believed to be North Korean athletes,

fender GN Saibaba is an inhumane and senseless act," the independent expert's statement said. "His continued detention is shameful. It bears all the hallmarks of a State seeking to silence a critical voice," she said. Saibaba, a former English professor at Delhi University who is bound to a wheelchair after suffering from a spinal disorder and polio as a child, was arrested in 2014.

He was sentenced to life in prison three years later for multiple offences under India's Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, although various UN rights experts have raised grave concerns about his prosecution, Lawlor pointed out. She and other UN rights experts are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, but do not speak on behalf of the United Nations.

Lawlor pointed out that apart from two short periods on bail, Saibaba had been held in Nagpur Cen-

航班号	计划	始发/经停站	ETA	状态	Remarks
HU7986	08:50	Moscow 莫斯科	10:26	Arrived	
HU7966	08:50	Saint Petersburg 圣彼得堡	10:48	Arrived	
JS151	09:50	Pyongyang 平壤	09:50	Cancelled	
CZ7824	10:30	Seoul Gimpo 首尔金浦	10:10	Arrived	
	11:05	Seoul Incheon 首尔仁川	12:21		
			14:25		

BEIJING: The cancelled status of an Air Koryo flight from North Korea's capital Pyongyang is seen in red on an information board at Beijing Capital international airport on August 21, 2023. — AFP

had crossed the land border into China last Wednesday before travelling on to Beijing, then flying to Central Asia. Monday was expected to see Air Koryo conduct its first commercial flight in over three years. Seoul's Unification Ministry, which manages relations with the North, told AFP there was "absolutely nothing we are aware of" regarding the cancellation of the flight. — AFP

Lawlor, who said she was in contact with the Indian government regarding the case, stressed that countries have an obligation to uphold prisoners' right to health and dignity. "Prison authorities must ensure that prisoners with disabilities are not discriminated against, including by ensuring accessibility and providing reasonable accommodation," she said. The expert warned that Saibaba's health "has severely deteriorated in detention."

"He should be released." — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2023

China CB cuts key interest rate to support economy

Traders remain unimpressed by the move, stocks drop

BEIJING: China's central bank on Monday cut a key interest rate in an attempt to counter the post-COVID growth slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

Activity has been dragged down recently by uncertainty in the labor market and global economic sluggishness, weakening demand for Chinese goods.

Financial troubles in the real estate sector, with several leading developers on the verge of bankruptcy and struggling to complete projects, also pose a major obstacle to growth. The People's Bank of China said on Monday cut the one-year loan prime rate, which serves as a benchmark for corporate loans, from 3.55 percent to 3.45 percent.

However, the five-year LPR, which is used to price mortgages, was held at 4.2 percent. Closely followed by the markets, the two rates are now at historic lows, after previous reductions in June. The decision is intended to encourage commercial banks to grant more loans and at more advantageous rates. Monday's measures—which run counter to rising interest rates around the world as other major economies work to curb inflation—aim to indirectly support economic activity as growth flags. The long-awaited post-COVID recovery following the lifting of health restrictions at the end of 2022 has run out of steam in recent months.

In another sign that the recovery is faltering, loans to households fell last month to their lowest level since 2009. To reinvigorate the economy, the central bank reduced the rate for its medium-term lending facility to financial institutions last Tuesday.

And financial regulators agreed Friday on the

need for "financial support", while avoiding "risks and hidden dangers", state media reported. Analysts polled by Bloomberg expected a bigger cut to the LPR following the Friday meeting. In a note following the Monday announcement, Goldman Sachs economist Maggie Wei described the LPR cut as "disappointing", adding that it "would not help with building confidence" as Chinese authorities pursue an economic recovery.

The move "can even backfire if market participants interpret these easing measures as policymakers' unwillingness to deliver even moderate policy stimulus", wrote Wei.

Markets down

Traders appeared unimpressed with the move, with Hong Kong stocks down 1.4 percent and Shanghai off 0.6 percent. The central bank's decision comes as a crisis at property giant Country Garden, long deemed financially sound and now ultra-indebted, raises fears of a bankruptcy that could have dire consequences for the domestic financial system.

Country Garden's problems are building just two years after a crisis erupted at major rival Evergrande, which is struggling with huge debt. In addition to the real estate woes, growth is also hampered by sluggish consumption amid uncertainty in the labor market and a global economic slowdown.

That is weighing on demand for Chinese goods, slowing the activity of thousands of factories. China suspended the monthly publication of its detailed youth unemployment figures last Tuesday, after it hit a record high of 21.3 percent in June, according to



BEIJING: This photo 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

official data. The unemployment rate is calculated for urban areas and therefore provides only a partial picture of the situation.

The series of gloomy figures in recent weeks has ramped up pressure on officials to introduce a vast economic recovery plan, but debt-averse policymakers in Beijing are reluctant. Authorities have instead announced various steps to boost the private sector, which was hit particularly hard during the pandemic, and consumption, though they have yet to take effect. The economic slowdown threatens a

growth target set by authorities at around five percent for this year.

If achieved, that would already be one of China's lowest annual growth rates in decades, outside of the COVID period. Beijing last Wednesday acknowledged economic "difficulties" but castigated the pessimism of Western commentators who doubt its continued ability to support global growth. "Eventually, they will for sure be proven wrong," said Wang Wenbin, a spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — AFP

Apple iPhone 15 launch likely by mid-Sept

CUPERTINO, US: Apple hasn't revealed the official launch date of the upcoming Apple iPhones. However, reports have pegged the iPhone 15 launch to happen on September 12 or 13. The tech giant is planning to release a total of four iPhone 15 models in the same sizes as the iPhone 14 models, including two 6.1-inch iPhones and two 6.7-inch iPhones, according to the reports.

The event is also expected to see the launch of the new Apple Watch and AirPods. The purported listing of iPhone 15 on the BIS database was spotted by MySmartPrice. This falls in line with the speculated launch timeline of the device. The phone is expected to be revealed officially in less than a month.

One of the 6.1-inch iPhones will be the standard iPhone 15, while one of the 6.7-inch models will be an iPhone 15 "Plus." The other 6.1 and 6.7-inch iPhones will be higher-end and more expensive "Pro" models, and they could be even pricier this year, according to the reports. As with the iPhone 14/14 Pro lineup, the best features will be reserved for the iPhone 15 Pro models to make the extra cost worth it. Apple in September 2022 released the iPhone 14 and iPhone 14 Pro models, but rumors have taken rounds about the iPhone 15 since well before the latest iPhones became available for purchase. Now that launch is approaching, rumors are again picking up. — Agencies



Taiwan slams China's ban on mango imports

TAIPEI: Taiwan accused China on Monday of "arbitrarily interrupting trade" after Beijing slapped a fresh ban on its mangos as relations worsen. The import ban came after Beijing conducted military drills around the island on Saturday, a day after Taiwanese Vice President William Lai returned from a visit to Paraguay with two stopovers in the United States. China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, op-



CHANDIGARH: Vegetable and fruits sellers at a gain market at Chandigarh.

India slaps export duty, but vegetable prices remain high

NEW DELHI: Consumers are unlikely to get any relief from the high prices of vegetables in India, especially tomatoes and onions even in August. After tomatoes, costly onion rates will pinch the household budgets of the common man, according to the report by Crisil Market Intelligence and Analytics.

The government on Saturday imposed an export duty of 40 percent on onions with immediate effect to check price rise and improve supplies in the domestic market. The government banned the export of all varieties of onions with immediate effect, a move aimed at increasing the availability and checking the price of the commodity in the domestic market. The export duty is valid till December 31, 2023.

The onion prices continued to rise in August and experts were saying that prices are likely to rise more in September. Beating past records, the Centre has procured 2.50 lakh tons of onion for the buffer in 2022-23. However, despite the ample stock of onions in the country, due to a prolonged period of excessive summer heat this year has affected the quality of the merchandise and pushed up the prices of good quality onions. According to wholesale traders, the tomatoes price are likely to touch INR 300 per ki-

poses other countries' official exchanges with the self-ruled island and often reacts angrily to Taiwanese leaders' US transits. Beijing said the ban went into effect on Monday, after stating it found pests in mangos imported from Taiwan.

"In accordance with relevant laws, regulations and standards on the mainland, the decision... was taken as a scientific and reasonable biosecurity precaution," said Zhu Fenglian, spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. In Taipei, the agriculture ministry said the ban violated international norms and urged Beijing to find a "reasonable solution" via dialogue. "We deeply regret China's repeated practice of arbitrarily interrupting trade without scientific dialogue, which is inconsistent with in-

ternational practice," the ministry said in a statement. China has imposed import bans on various Taiwanese agriculture products in recent years. In 2021, Beijing suspended imports of pineapples from Taiwan after saying it discovered pests in the fruits, prompting a rebuke from Taipei which called the move an "ambush" and "politically driven". Last year, China staged huge military exercises around Taiwan in response to a visit to Taipei by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, while also banning certain fruits and fish products from the island.

Beijing has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, as she rejects its stance that the island is part of China, and to be reclaimed by force. — AFP

gram in the coming days and the prices of other vegetables are also likely to shoot up. Tomato prices have been under pressure for more than a month now. Besides, rain fury has worsened the supply, causing further price increases.

As per the data by the consumer affairs ministry, the all-India average retail price of onion was ruling at Rs 30.72 per kg on Saturday, with a maximum price at Rs 63 per kg and a minimum at Rs 10 per kg. Rating agency Crisil in its report on August 4, had warned that onion could be the next casualty.

According to the report, prices of onions are likely to skyrocket in September. Onion prices are likely to start shooting up in the retail market towards the end of August before going up further to around Rs 60-70 per kg next month due to tightened supplies.

Crisil report said, "The supply-demand imbalance is expected to reflect in onion prices towards end-August. As per our ground interactions, prices are expected to show a significant increase from early September in the retail market, reaching up to Rs 60-70 per kg during the lean patch. However, prices will remain below the highs of 2020". Onion supplies will improve once Kharif arrivals start in October, it said. The price movement in the festive months (October-December) is expected to stabilize, the report stated.

Meanwhile, the sale of subsidized onions began on Monday through National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India (NCCF) outlets and vans in 10 select locations in the national capital. The move to sell subsidized onions comes at a time when the market price of onions has started to go up in some key markets in the country. — Agencies

CB: No recovery yet for 'lackluster' German economy

FRANKFURT: Germany's "lackluster" economy will likely stagnate again in the third quarter, the Bundesbank central bank said Monday, as weak demand from abroad and high interest rates take their toll on Europe's industrial powerhouse.

After preliminary estimates suggested that the economy recorded zero growth in the second quarter of 2023, the outlook for the July-September period was not much better, the Bundesbank said in its monthly report. "German economic output will probably remain largely unchanged again in the third quarter," it said.

Europe's largest economy is "still lackluster" and "still experiencing a period of weakness", it added. The gloomy outlook adds to concerns that Germany will drag down the eurozone's economic performance this year, with the International Monetary Fund predicting it will be the only major advanced economy to shrink in 2023. National statistics agency Destatis will release final data for the second quarter on Friday.

The German economy shrank over the two preceding quarters, meeting the technical definition of a recession. Germany's key industrial sector, traditionally a driver of growth, has been hit particularly hard in recent months as exports have plummeted against a backdrop of high inflation and subdued global activity.

Even though supply chain bottlenecks have eased, "industrial output looks set to remain weak", the report said, "as foreign demand has been on a downward trend of late". While economic activity in the United States, a major trading partner, was in "comparatively good shape," the bank noted that key client China's post-COVID recovery had "quickly lost momentum". Higher borrowing costs as a result of the European Central Bank's interest rate rises, aimed at bringing down inflation, will also continue to weigh on investment and the construction sector, the Bundesbank added.

On a brighter note, private consumption was likely to shore up the economy in the third quarter thanks to stable employment, higher wages and declining inflation. Germany's annual inflation rate slowed to 6.2 percent in July, mainly on the back of lower energy prices.—AFP



Saudi launches \$200m fund to invest in high-tech firms

Kingdom to turn research into economically beneficial innovations

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has launched a \$200 million fund to invest in domestic and international high-tech companies as part of the kingdom's economic diversification plan. The fund as announced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is part of the new strategy of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), the Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday. The strategy focuses on "increasing the likelihood of turning research into economically beneficial innovations", through three major drives, the report said. The initiatives include the launch of the National Transformation Institute for Applied Research (NTI) to boost technology development and commercialization; the restructuring of research centers to align with national priorities for research, development and innovation; and the creation of the new fund.

The fund "will enhance economic diversification and contribute to the creation of high-quality technical jobs", the report said. "The new strategy builds on KAUST's scientific and academic achievements and represents a new era for the university to become a beacon of knowledge and a source of inspiration and innovation in line with Vision 2030 aspirations," Prince Mohammed said.

The kingdom is diversifying its economy from oil as part of its Vision 2030 strategy, with technology one of the key pillars of the plan. Saudi Arabia has introduced several projects and is investing heavily to develop the

sector. The kingdom is projected to spend \$34.6 billion on information and communications technology in 2023, making it the top-spending nation for the category in the Middle East, Turkey and Africa, the IDC said this year. Saudi entities also announced nine funds worth a combined \$2.4 billion during the event to support the growth of start-ups in the Arab world's biggest economy, with a focus on technology.

As part of KAUST's new strategy, it will continue to collaborate with some of the largest domestic and global companies, including Aramco, SABIC, Acwa Power, IBM, Dow and Boeing, the SPA report said. It will also team up with academic and commercial institutes in the Chinese city of Shenzhen to work on applied research across fields such as aerospace, robotics and microelectronics.

"One of the most prominent initiatives of the strategy is to strengthen international partnerships and develop co-operation frameworks with leading academic institutions and technology pioneers in the world," the report said. "Through these initiatives and partnerships, KAUST will contribute to developing the higher education ecosystem, nurturing the future scientific research pioneers in the kingdom, promoting research and global innovation, and stimulating the growth of advanced technology start-ups. This will enhance the competitiveness of the kingdom's economy," it added. — Agencies



King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Thuwal, Saudi Arabia.

Britain approved \$61bn merger of Broadcom-VMware

LONDON: Britain gave its final approval on Monday to Broadcom's planned \$61-billion takeover of cloud computing firm VMware, which the US chipmaker said should be completed by the end of October.

The Competition and Markets Authority last month gave its provisional approval to the deal announced in May 2022, and said on Monday that "its final decision is that the deal does not substantially reduce competition — clearing it to proceed in the UK". Broadcom is seeking to expand into the software market to boost its server business and has already acquired two complementary firms, CA Technology and Symantec.

VMware's key product allows different clients to share computer servers by creating what is called a virtual server. British regulators conducted a more in-depth probe into whether the merged company would have an interest in hobbling rivals by making its products work less well or be incompatible.

It also examined whether the merged company would gain undue advantage by rivals needing to submit information to make their products interoperable. The CMA found that restricting

product interoperability would cause the merged company greater financial losses than gains, and that it would not gain competitive advantage when rivals provided it with product information to ensure that interoperability.

"In this case, having carefully considered the evidence and found no competition concerns, we have concluded the deal can go ahead," said Richard Feasey, chairman of the independent panel that carried

out the in-depth probe of the merger. The European Union gave its approval to the merger last month and Broadcom said on Monday that United States authorities did not take action to block the deal during the statutory waiting period.

In a statement, Broadcom "affirmed its expectation that its acquisition of VMware, Inc... will close on October 30, 2023", adding: "There is no legal impediment to closing under US merger regulations." — AFP



Nigeria set to release Q2 GDP data

ABUJA: The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is expected to release a report on selected food prices and transport fare watch for July 2023. The bureau also intends to publish a report on Nigeria's capital importation for the second quarter (Q2) of 2023.

In addition, the NBS will, on August 25, publish a report to show the country's gross domestic product by output for (Q2) of the current year. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), last week, released fresh operational mechanisms for the sale of forex by Bureau De Change (BDCs) operators within the country.

This is coming 25 months after Godwin Emefiele, the suspended CBN governor, announced the discontinuance of foreign exchange sales to that segment of the forex market. According to the apex bank, "The spread on buying and selling by BDC operators shall be within an allowable limit of -2.5 percent to +2.5 percent of the Nigerian Foreign Exchange market window weighted average rate of the previous day".

Since June, the CBN has introduced policies to

strengthen the naira. One of which is the unification of all segments of the FX market as part of efforts to engender transparency in the markets and boost investors' confidence.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Limited has secured a \$3 billion emergency crude repayment loan to support the naira and stabilize the foreign exchange market. NNPC Limited secured the crude-for-cash funding from the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.

Commenting on the development, Ajuri Ngelale, special adviser to President Bola Tinubu on media and publicity, said the new FX accretion is to enable NNPC to defray taxes and royalties in advance.

Ngelale said the funds would also provide the federal government with dollar liquidity to stabilize the naira via incremental releases based on the federal government's needs.

The consumer price index (CPI), which measures the rate of change in prices of goods and services, rose to 24.08 percent in July 2023 — up from 22.79 percent in the previous month. The latest figure is the seventh consecutive rise in the country's inflation rate this year and also the highest since 2005. The NBS captured the nation's inflationary trend in its CPI report for July 2023, released on Tuesday.

The report also said the food inflation rate in July 2023 hit 26.98 percent on a year-on-year basis.

Libya's rival central bank branches reunite

TRIPOLI: Libya's central bank announced on Sunday that its two rival branches in the west and east are reuniting after nearly a decade apart. The North African country is currently split between Abdelhamid Dbeibah's UN-backed government in the west and another in the east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. Libya has seen 12 years of stop-start conflict since the 2011 NATO-backed revolt that toppled strongman Muammar Gaddafi. On Sunday, the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) said it has "again become a unified sovereign institution", in a statement issued by the governor and his deputy. The bank had been split since 2014, between the internationally recognized headquarters in Tripoli and another in Bayda in the Haftar-controlled east.

Al-Seddik Al-Kebir, governor of the Tripoli-based bank, and Marii Moftah Rahil, governor of the rival branch in the east, made the announcement after a meeting attended by consultants and directors of both branches. The statement said they would "continue efforts to overcome the consequences of the division".

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya said in a statement it "hopes the CBL's reunification will create momentum towards unifying all the country's political, security and military institutions as the people of Libya have long yearned for". The US embassy in Libya also welcomed the move which it called a "show of unity" that "sets an important example for reconciliation across all state institutions".

"We encourage CBL leadership to follow... with concrete measures toward full integration of financial and oversight systems, including by activating the CBL board," the embassy said on X, formerly Twitter.

Tumbling currency

A process to reunify the central bank began in December 2021 after the split caused by power struggles between rival camps, as was also the case with other state institutions. Rahil became deputy governor as part of the reunification process, and was in Tripoli on Sunday on his first visit to the capital since being appointed head of the Bayda branch by the eastern government's parliament in November 2022.

The Tripoli-based CBL oversees the substantial oil revenues of Libya, which boasts the most abundant oil reserves in Africa. The financial institution is responsible for determining the distribution of funds among state and government entities. The United Nations said in July 2022 it had finalized the process for launching an independent international audit of the two branches, seen as a major step towards reunification. — AFP

CBK issues bonds, related tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Monday the issue of new bonds and related tawarruq valued at KD 240 million (around \$792 million). The securities bear a 4.375-percent return rate with a three-month maturity rate, according to a CBK statement. — KUNA

Stocks rebound; China rate cut fails to ease worries

LONDON: European and US stocks rebounded on Monday but Asian markets ended mixed after a Chinese rate cut failed to reassure investors worried about the outlook for the world's number two economy.

In afternoon trading, Paris stocks climbed 0.7 percent, Frankfurt rose 0.4 percent and London added less than one tenth of a percent. On Wall Street, the Dow edged higher at the opening bell, with the S&P 500 rising 0.3 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq climbing 0.5 percent.

"The upside buying has been driven by an inclination to buy on the weakness" after three straight weeks of losses on Wall Street, said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com. "It doesn't seem to be any more than that considering that market rates are moving higher, the People's Bank of China disappointed with a smaller-than-expected cut to its one-year loan prime rate and no change to its five-year loan prime rate, and Tropical Storm Hilary has inundated Southern California with a load of disruptive rainfall," he added.

Market sentiment has taken a hammering this month from a string of weak data out of Beijing indicating the post-COVID recovery has run off track, while there are concerns that the US Federal Reserve could raise interest rates further and keep them elevated for longer as it tries to bring inflation down to its two-percent target. The focus turns this week to a symposium of top central bankers and business leaders at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, with dealers hoping for some guidance on rates. "From recent commentaries, it appears that central bankers will keep the flexibility to hike rates further, while clearly avoiding committing to cut rates soon," said Redmond Wong at Saxo.

But Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya said fears of a hawkish Fed have already been largely priced in by the market. "If there is no more hawkish surprise from this week's Jackson Hole meeting, tensions among investors could ease by next week and give markets some breathing room," she added. Wall Street stocks took a pounding last week as data showing the US economy to be resilient — which increases pressure on the Fed to raise interest rates further — while borrowing costs for companies are already rising and yields on risk-free US government bonds rose to 4.3 percent. — AFP



NEW YORK: The Dow edged higher at the opening bell on Monday with the S&P 500 rising 0.3 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq climbing 0.5 percent.



AJEGUNLE, Nigeria: Busy Streets bustling with commercial activity.

Business

Oil demand set to hit record on falling inventory, says IEA

China remains key driver of price moves

LONDON: Despite lingering concerns about China's economy, global oil demand hit a record high in June and could be on track for another record in August, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its latest monthly report. The cuts from OPEC+ and Saudi Arabia, coupled with expected continued strength in demand, are set to result in inventory draws for the rest of the year, supporting oil prices, analysts and forecasting agencies say.

China, of course, will be the key driver of price moves either up or down, depending on how its economy fares and how much stimulus authorities are ready to unroll to help a much-awaited rebound after the reopening early this year. So far into 2023, weaker-than-expected Chinese economic data have stopped price rallies in their tracks. US economic prospects have turned somewhat brighter, with the Fed and investment banks no longer expecting a recession.

Macroeconomic fundamentals of the world's largest and second-largest economies — the US and China — are turning more bullish to support oil prices with oil demand possibly heading to a fresh record this month, forecasts by the

International Energy Agency (IEA) said.

Analysts said market fundamentals also favor a sustained bull run for oil, especially with the OPEC+ gearing up to put a huge deficit into the market in the second half.

The oil market continues to be cautious about China's economy and until market participants see additional measures to prop up the economy in the world's top crude oil importer, and results from these measures, concerns about China will not abate. China's woes and a weak European economy have likely translated into only modest oil market tightening since June, Reuters market analyst John Kemp argues. However, demand and the market tightness may have been underestimated.

Global oil demand hit a record 103 million bpd in June, and August could see yet another peak, the IEA said in its closely-watched Oil Market Report (OMR) for August. World oil demand is set to grow by 2.2 million bpd this year, with China accounting for more than 70 percent of growth, the agency noted. Fuel demand in Europe is also strong in the summer.

Energy consultancy FGE estimates that European gasoline demand rose by 3 percent year over year in June and by

5 percent annually in July, to the highest level since 2011.

Bank ING assumes that US oil demand will be largely flat year-on-year. "But this may be too conservative, given that implied gasoline demand has been tracking above last year's levels for much of the year," Warren Patterson, Head of Commodities Strategy at ING, wrote in a note on Thursday.

After ending a seven-week rally last week, prices rose about 1.0 percent on Friday on signs of slowing US output. Both crude benchmarks ended their longest weekly rally of 2023 on mounting concerns about global demand growth.

The IEA estimated that global oil demand, which hit a record 103 million barrels per day in June, could scale another peak in August. Output cuts from Saudi Arabia and Russia set the stage for a sharp decline in inventories over the rest of 2023, which the IEA said could drive oil prices even higher. Some analysts are even not ruling out the prospects of prices hitting \$100 per barrel in the second half.

Saxo Bank analysts said with most of the oil demand growth expected from China, any trouble there may sour sen-



timent. Ole Hansen, head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank, said last week that having run out of steam above \$87.50 last week, a long overdue period of consolidation may now emerge with the news from China hurting sentiment. Some analysts believe that downside risks remain limited as long as Opec+ maintains production at current tight levels, not least considering IEA's forecast from Friday that oil demand

surged to a record high in June and may rise even further.

Market pundits argued that estimated high stock levels in China allow its refiners to draw crude from inventories and slow purchases when oil prices rise, thus undermining the ongoing efforts of the OPEC+ group and its leader Saudi Arabia to tighten the market and prop up prices. — Agencies

Kalyan Jewellers opens 200th showroom globally at Jammu

KUWAIT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the largest and most trusted jewelry brands recently announced the launch of its 1st showroom in Jammu, India which was inaugurated by Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan. The launch celebrations marked the momentous milestone of the company's 200th showroom globally. T S Kalyanaraman, Managing Director of Kalyan Jewellers along with the Executive Directors – Rajesh Kalyanaraman and Ramesh Kalyanaraman were present at the inauguration. The brand new showroom promises a luxurious shopping experience with an extensive array of exquisite jewelry designs in a world-class ambience. The city of Jammu came to a standstill as crowds jostled to catch a glimpse of the iconic superstar. Addressing the enthralled crowd, Hrithik Roshan said, "I am delighted and honored to be part of the 200th showroom launch festivities of Kalyan Jewellers.

With a legacy spanning over three decades, Kalyan Jewellers has time and again, revolutionized India's jewelry industry with its pioneering initiatives. It is a matter of pride for me, to represent this iconic brand that is built on the core pillars of trust, transparency and customer centricity. This magnificent Kalyan Jewellers' showroom is a testament to the company's unwavering commitment to providing an unparalleled shopping experience to patrons. I am confident that the patrons here will warmly welcome and wholeheartedly support the jewelry brand."

The extravagant launch celebrations also encompassed the unveiling of Kalyan Jewellers' e-commerce platform – Candere's 3rd Experience Centre in India. Following a phygital model, the company had introduced this first-of-its-kind concept in September 2022. The Experience Centre is designed to work seamlessly alongside its online platform, offering next-gen consumers with a distinctive shopping experience.

Talking about the 200th showroom launch, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director of Kalyan Jewellers, said, "As we inaugurate our 200th showroom, we extend gratitude to our customers, partners and employees, who have been an integral part of this three-decade long journey that has been marked with trust and transparency. This significant milestone echoes our unwavering dedication to not only creating exquisite jewelry but also nurturing relationships with patrons across the country that shine as timeless treasures. At Kalyan Jewellers, we have taken major strides in creating a holistic ecosystem to offer an enhanced service-backed shopping experience to patrons across the country. As we move ahead, our customer-centric approach remains key to our continued growth, building upon the very essence that defines our brand."

To mark the occasion, Kalyan Jewellers has launched its 'Celebrating 200 Showrooms' campaign, which encompasses unique offers to ensure that patrons gain maximum benefits on all their jewelry purchases. At Kalyan Jewellers, patrons also receive Kalyan Jewellers' 4-Level Assurance Certificate, which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information, and transparent exchange and buy-back policies. This certification reflects the brand's commitment to offering the very best to its loyal customers.

Hyperinflation continues in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Inflation in Lebanon hit an annual 252 per cent in July as the term of central bank governor Riad Salameh ended last month and a political impasse over the election of a president persisted amid the country's worst economic crisis.

Hyperinflation continued for the 37th consecutive month as the country's currency continued to lose value on the parallel and official markets since it was devalued by 90 per cent at the start of February.

The increase in the cost of living was led by the soaring cost of housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, as well as a surge in the price of food, non-alcoholic beverages and transport, the Central Administration of Statistics' Consumer Price Index showed. The CPI increased by about 7 per cent from June 2023.

Food prices which account for 20 per cent of the consumer price index, soared by 279 per cent while housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels – which have a 28 per cent weighting – were up 234 per cent. Health costs, which represent about 8 per cent of the index, rose 257 per cent and transport, which has a 13 per cent weighting, leapt 222 per cent. Lebanon's inflation rate began to decline after hitting 171 per cent last year, the highest in about four decades, and 155 per cent in 2021.

However, it started to pick up early this year as the

Thailand posts lower than expected growth

BANGKOK: Thailand registered lower than expected economic growth of 1.8 percent in the second quarter, official data released Monday showed.

Officials blamed a slowdown in exports, which fell 5.7 percent year-on-year, for the weak pace.

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) cut its forecast for 2023 to between 2.5 and 3 percent, citing poor global conditions. "The growth in the second quarter is lower than expected due to the slowdown of exports which fell for three quarters respectively since last year," said Danucha Pichayanan, secretary-general of the NESDC.

Output from manufacturing fell 3.3 percent and government spending also

dropped 4.3 percent, the data showed. The kingdom is stuck in a political deadlock three months after a national election, with no prime minister able to form a government.

Danucha sought to calm investors' fears of looming instability, noting political demonstrations so far have been small and peaceful. Just three years ago violent street protests brought capital the Bangkok to a standstill for months. "If the transition (of government) runs smoothly, investors will be confident and come to invest," he told reporters. The figures were released ahead of a key vote in Thailand's parliament due Tuesday that could see the deadlock broken, and a new prime minister finally elected. — AFP

Saxo Bank MENA Weekly Report

US inflation risks return to haunt, China in focus

WASHINGTON: Crude oil prices trade up for a third day on Monday, supported by tightness in the physical market as supply curbs from OPEC+ continue to support prices. In addition, a softer dollar has also helped offset growing demand risks in China and the US and a general loss of risk appetite as global stock markets continue to lose altitude.

Concerns about the trajectory of China's economy and financial system and less-robust than anticipated response continue to dog sentiment in Asia. Jackson Hole and Nvidia earnings will also be key for sentiment this week, and Japanese yen still in focus with reports suggesting a large wage increase in Japan. Crude oil closed lower after seven straight weeks of gains.

The focus of this week turns to PMIs and Powell's speech at Jackson Hole on Friday. EU natural gas prices meanwhile trade back above €40/MWh as strike action at major LNG export facilities in Australia could begin as early as Sept 2 if new talks between Woodside Energy Group Ltd. and union officials on pay and conditions fail to resolve disputes. Ballots are also taking place on potential walkouts by workers at Chevron Corp facilities.

Gold prices remain on the defensive amid the recent dollar and not least yield strength as the FOMC fight against sticky inflation raises the prospect of more rate hikes to come. Spot gold dropped to a fresh five-month low over-

night at \$1885 with focus this week turning to Fed Chair Powell's Jackson Hole speech on Friday.

Risk sentiment took a beating last week on China concerns, but US inflation risks were also back on the radar amid strong economic data. While both of these themes will be put to further test in the markets this week, US focus primarily turns to Fed Chair Powell's comments at the Jackson Hole symposium. The Federal Reserve's Economic Policy Symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is scheduled for August 24-26 and Chair Powell speaks on Friday, August 25 at 10am ET. This year's theme is "Structural Shifts in the Global Economy".

From recent commentaries, it appears that central bankers will keep the flexibility to hike rates further, while clearly avoiding committing to cut rates soon. However, a hawkish shock remains unlikely at this point and there will be little new signals for the September rate hike, given that there is more key data due ahead of that meeting. July PCE inflation data comes out on August 31 and nonfarm payrolls are reported on September 1, and these will hold the key to whether we get a September rate hike or not. Rather, the Jackson Hole symposium will be key to assess Powell's dovishness meter. If he raises concerns on the economic momentum or the rising credit risks, that may prompt the markets to price in rate cuts to start earlier, and could be dollar negative.

This Wednesday's earnings from Nvidia after the close of the US market are poised to serve as a pivotal moment for the markets, particularly for the cluster of AI-related stocks that have experienced substantial gains throughout this year. Analysts are anticipating revenue to reach \$11 billion, marking a remarkable 65 percent year-over-year increase. Additionally, the projected EBITDA stands at \$6.3 billion, a significant jump from the \$924 million reported a year ago. This surge in finan-

country's central bank devalued the Lebanese pound in February. The official exchange rate changed to 15,000 pounds to the US dollar, compared with the peg in place since 1997 of 1,507.50 to the dollar.

Since 2019, the country has been in the grip of an economic crisis described by the World Bank as one of the worst in modern history. It has yet to enforce critical structural and financial reforms required to unlock \$3 billion of assistance from the International Monetary Fund, which could also pave the way for billions more in aid from other international donors.

Lebanese politicians did not appoint a successor to Salameh, who was at the helm of the central bank since 1993 and is now blamed by many Lebanese for the economic collapse of the country. Under Lebanese law, first deputy governor Wassim Mansouri is now overseeing the financial regulator in acting capacity supported by three deputy governors. While the immediate takeover avoids adding further uncertainty to Lebanon's precarious position, the country still needs to appoint a president.

Lebanon has been without a president since the end of October 2022, when the six-year term of Michel Aoun ended. It is being run by a caretaker cabinet led by Prime Minister Najib Mikati, with limited powers. The election of a president requires the consensus of the country's political elite.

Political vacuums have stalled Lebanon's economic progress and the existing one is salient because it threatens the enactment of reforms deemed necessary for the nation to emerge from its worst financial crisis. The country was without a president for two and a half years until Aoun's election by the 128-seat parliament in 2016.



BEIRUT: Hyperinflation continued in Lebanon for the 37th consecutive month as the country's currency continued to lose value on the parallel and official markets since it was devalued by 90 percent at the start of February.

His predecessor, Michel Sleiman, was elected in 2008 with the help of Qatar and after 19 postponements in parliament, ending an 18-month political crisis. In June, the IMF warned that further delay of reforms would keep confidence low while cash dollarization of the economy would increase, causing the national currency to depreciate further and keeping inflation high. Lebanon's economy contracted by about 58 per cent between 2019 and 2021, with gross domestic product falling to \$21.8 billion in 2021 from about \$52 billion in 2019, according to the World Bank. It was the largest contraction on a list of 193 countries. The World Bank estimates that real gross domestic product declined by 2.6 per cent in 2022 and is projected to contract 0.5 per cent this year. — Agencies



BANGKOK: This photo taken on September 20, 2022 shows customers shopping for rice and canned goods at a supermarket in Bangkok. — AFP

cial performance can be attributed to the skyrocketing demand for AI research and implementation, which has surged following the successful launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT.

BRICS summit

The leaders of BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – are scheduled to hold talks this week Tuesday to Thursday. Key agenda is expected to center around the group's expansion, with some 40 other nations lining up to join including Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Egypt. This could mean internal conflict as South Africa seems open to the idea but Brazil is worried about its influence getting diluted. Meanwhile, Russia is attempting to ward off currency pressures at home and Xi is trying to find the most appropriate response to pressures on China's property sector and economy at large. But a larger group could mean more opposition to the West and a larger pursuit against the dominance of the dollar. This could, however, be positive for Gold which acts as an alternate store of value and central banks continue to ramp up Gold purchases in order to hedge against the dollar. Russian invasion of Ukraine and food security issues could also be discussed.

The persistent stress in the Chinese property sector and the shadow banking sector, as well as local government financial vehicles, continues to cast a shadow over market sentiments. The Chinese authorities are seemingly inclined towards a strategy of deleveraging and restructuring rather than bailing them out. This approach aims to proactively tackle potential issues and brace for impactful headlines that could potentially trigger market volatility. Nevertheless, it's important to recognize that concurrently addressing the solvency concerns within these sectors and enhancing the overall allocation of capital across the economy could yield positive outcomes in the long run.

Lifestyle



Xander Johnson (left) of Bagel Tours takes the Messenger family from San Francisco around Midtown Manhattan to sample some on New York's finest bagels. - AFP photos



Andrew Martinez, owner of Bo's Bagels, boils bagel dough balls in his store.

New York bagels: An evolving classic

Bagels are as synonymous with New York as pizza and the Statue of Liberty. Although there is no official count of New York's daily bagel production, Sam Silverman, chief executive of the trade group BagelUp, estimates there are about 500 specialty shops across the city's five boroughs. The ring-shaped bread has evolved and been re-invented since its arrival more than a century ago thanks to Polish Jewish immigrants. Here are some key points in New York bagel history:

The early days

While there is debate over just when the first bagels appeared, historians agree that the bread originally arrived in New York in the late 19th century. The bagel grew in popularity in Manhattan's Lower East Side in neighborhoods populated by Jewish immigrants from Poland, where it had been made for centuries.

By 1900, the industry had already expanded to 70 bagel shops, although working conditions were "terrible," according to Maria Balinska's book, "The Bagel: The Surprising History of a Modest Bread." Balinska chronicles a triumphant 1909 baker strike that upgraded pay and working conditions, helping to propel the broader labor movement in the early 20th century.

Lox and cream cheese

The iconic sandwich — a bagel with cream cheese and lox, or cured salmon that may or may not be smoked — became popular in New York in the period between the World Wars and has been a mainstay ever since.

Author Jeffrey A. Marx dates the dish to the late 1920s, about a half century after cream cheese was invented by New York state dairy farmer William Lawrence. The combination took off during a banner period for New York Jewish delicatessens, which specialized in expensive smoked and pickled meats, spawning new concoctions including the Reuben sandwich.

Going mainstream

Balinska points to the 1960s as the period when bagels attained broader popularity beyond the Jewish community. Innovations such as the rotating oven enabled bakers to significantly increase output. That led to the arrival of shops touting "hot" bagels directly to consumers; before, they were only available wholesale.

Central players in the further "bagelizing" of America were the Lender brothers, who successfully mass marketed the frozen bagel — pre-sliced, of course — in the 1960s, expanding nationwide by 1977.

Everything juggernaut

Over the years, bakers began coating bagels with toppings including salt, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, onion and garlic. At Bo's Bagels, all of these play second fiddle to the "everything bagel," which includes a smattering of all these toppings. Bo's sells more everything bagels than all of the other types combined, said owner Andrew Martinez.

The origin of the everything bagel is "disputed," with claims to fame made by New York restaurateur Joseph Bastianich and Long Island advertising businessman David Gussin, who told The New Yorker in 2008 that he experimented with the seasonings during a stint at a Queens takeout shop in around 1980. While the everything bagel reigns in the Big Apple, it ranks third nationally behind blueberry and cinnamon raisin, according to Silverman, noting the popularity of sweet foods outside the bagel's US hometown.

The foodie era

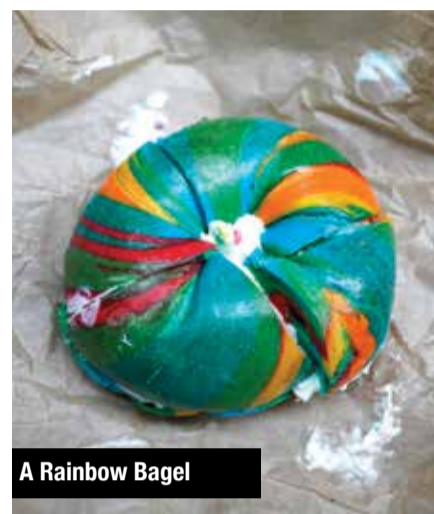
The mainstreaming of foodie culture has led to increasingly ambitious bagel sandwiches in the twenty-first century, making the traditional lox sandwich look quaint, with sushi and pulled pork in the mix. Funky, newer bagel flavors include French toast and cheddar jalapeno, while blueberry, avocado garlic and red velvet cream cheese are now available. — AFP



Ashley Dikos, wife of Andrew Martinez, shows cream cheese and salmon bagels.



Andrew Martinez, owner of Bo's Bagels, sprinkles sesame and poppy seeds on boiled bagels at his shop.



A Rainbow Bagel

Andrew Martinez was not born into a New York bagel empire and didn't start baking the Big Apple's quintessential ring of doughy goodness until he was in his 40s. Yet the Queens-born Martinez, his wife Ashley Dikos and their growing business, Bo's Bagels, are regularly mentioned among the top producers of the ring-shaped bread products, a breakfast and lunch staple. For Martinez, his ascent into the bagel elite is a happy accident. "Sometimes I walk in here and say, 'I can't believe this is my life,'" Martinez told AFP. "This is New York. It's incredibly difficult to succeed here."

Martinez's unexpected road to the bagel big leagues began in 2014 when the longtime restaurant industry professional found himself stuck in the hospital for two months, nourished with a feeding tube. Martinez decided the first thing he would do when healthy again was to eat a classically delectable New York bagel, with its crusty exterior and dense, chewy interior.

But upon returning to his Harlem home, he realized there were no decent bagel shops within walking distance. Annoyed at needing to take the subway to get his fix, Martinez began researching the bread. Bagels, he learned, originally arrived in New York's Jewish neighborhoods on the Lower East Side thanks to Polish immigrants.



Making dough: Unlikely Harlem bagel shop thinks big

kid in Queens, and that's the flavor I was looking for."

Thinking bigger

His culinary quest began to expand, however, when Martinez served the bagels to family members who urged him and Dikos to think bigger. Small-scale catering morphed first into a farmers market stall; then in 2017 the couple opened Bo's Bagels — a 1,200-square-foot (110-square-meter) retail space on a corner of 116th Street in West Harlem near several African restaurants.

Consumers have lined up at the door from the start, but the couple admits the journey has included some comical missteps. Before their first farmers market weekend, Martinez and Dikos converted their kitchen into a production factory, putting hundreds of unbaked bagels in the refrigerator the night before.

But after a two-hour nap, they awoke to find a growing, yeast-fueled ball had popped the fridge door open.

"It was just one giant blob of dough," recalled Dikos. The couple were forced to postpone their market debut, instead working well into the night to cut the ru-

ined dough into pieces small enough to fit in the trash chute without raising the suspicions of apartment staff.

Labor of love

Creating great bagels begins about 48 hours before baking, when flour, yeast and water are combined and set out overnight. Other key steps include an overnight refrigeration to slow the fermentation process and a 2-minute boil. Not all New York bagel makers go through this painstaking process — and it shows, industry experts say.

"There are a lot of mediocre bagels," said Sam Silverman, chief executive of the trade group BagelUp. Silverman nonetheless considers this a golden era for bagels, with legacy names such as Ess-a-Bagel and Utopia Bagels jostling with newcomers, like Bo's, who fill a surprising number of "bagel deserts" across the city's five boroughs.

No green bagels

Bo's, which has won raves from the Food & Wine and Eater websites, credits its success to a scrupulousness in following time-tested processes, an avoid-

ance of cheap ingredients and a throw-back approach to a crustier, smaller bagel. The Harlem store produces about 3,000 bagels a day, an output that will be at least doubled when Bo's opens a second shop later this year in Washington Heights, another neighborhood with few bagel options.

The couple eventually plans to open shops outside New York. While Martinez was the driving force behind the original recipe, the Michigan-born Dikos has taken the lead on some options including the cinnamon raisin variety.

Pleasing traditionalists is central, but the couple has also embraced some newer flavors such as the blueberry and three-cheese bagels that were first made popular outside New York. "Nowadays you have to provide a lot of variety for all the different kinds of people," said Dikos. The couple are not opposed to gluten-free bagels, though they have yet to develop a recipe that measures up, she said. But they shun "gimmicks" — so there will be no green bagels on St. Patrick's Day. — AFP



The inside of a bagel room is pictured during a Bagel Tour around Midtown Manhattan to sample some on New York's finest bagels.

Reading whatever he could find about the boil-and-bake process and picking the brains of experts, Martinez experimented for about six months before producing something resembling the bagels of his youth. "People eat with their memories," he said. "I was dreaming about the bagels I ate when I was a



Andrew Martinez sprays water on freshly boiled bagel dough at his shop.



Employees prepare bagel dough balls at Bo's Bagels.



Andrew Martinez, owner of Bo's Bagels, boils bagel dough before his store opens.



The inside of an uncooked Rainbow Bagel is pictured during a Bagel Tour.



Ashley Dikos spreads bagels with cream cheese at Bo's Bagels.



A Rainbow Bagel

Lifestyle



Rodney Gorham, a recipient of a Synchron brain implant, working on a computer at his home in Melbourne.



Rodney Gorham (left), a recipient of a Synchron brain implant, working on a computer at his home in Melbourne with clinical field engineer from Synchron, Zafar Faraz.

— AFP photos

ALS patient pioneering brain-computer connection

As a rare form of Lou Gehrig's disease paralyzes his body, Rodney Gorham hopes a pioneering link between his brain and a computer will help others after he is gone. The 63-year-old Australian shared his thoughts by using his eyes to pinpoint letters on a screen and "clicking" on words with his mind.

Thanks to an eight-millimeter stent implanted in his brain to detect neural activity, Gorham hopes to continue going online, sending messages and playing video games for a long time to come. US company Synchron has been testing the "stentrode" for the past two years, getting cleared for human trials before Elon Musk's attention-grabbing Neuralink startup.

Gorham's implant connects to a small receiver and transmitter unit under the skin in his chest, and he credits it with changing his life. Several years ago, Gorham was diagnosed with ALS, which causes progressive paralysis of the respiratory muscles, trunk, arms and legs. The disorder is expected to gradually disable his movement, but not to kill him, according to his wife, Carolyn. "So he could live for another 20 years. So think about if your body didn't move at all, your brain still firing at the same rate," she said.

"And you can't scratch your nose. You can't tell somebody you want to scratch your nose." The brain implant gives her husband a "slice of life", letting him at least communicate or play a



Rodney Gorham, a recipient of a Synchron brain implant, working on a computer as he is seen past framed family photographs at his home in Melbourne.

game, Carolyn Gorham added. Rodney Gorham has given up on video games that require quick reactions typically made with handheld controllers or a computer mouse, but is still playing turn-based ones such as city-building games, according to his wife. Without the experimental technology, the life of the sports car- and travel-loving former salesman "would be pure torture", Carolyn Gorham said.

Language of the mind

Synchron hopes to get approval next year from health authorities to market a final version of the device. The startup said clinical tests have been conclusive but there is still a lot of work to do, notably in decoding brain signals and trans-

lating them into a universal language to command computers. While eye-tracking tech enables a patient to target icons on a computer screen, the user must think of a motion—like kicking their foot or making a fist—to "click" an icon.

The software must be trained to recognize the brain signal that sends the command to the body, but people's minds "speak" in different ways. Computers need a common neural language to understand the intent no matter who is thinking it, Synchron founder Tom Oxley said from his office in New York. "That's a very interesting challenge we are facing now," Oxley told AFP. "Building a system that is not just for one person, but for millions of people."

At his home in Melbourne, Rodney

Gorham tells an AFP journalist that he was able to quickly learn to type using his mind. While going through exercises to tune the software, he moves his feet as instructed. His hand moves an imaginary computer mouse on a tabletop. At the start of the trial it took about two and a half seconds for Gorham's thoughts to prompt an on-screen click, but now it's a half second, Synchron engineer Zafar Faraz recalled while sitting next to the patient.

Independence

Gorham's contribution to improving the brain-computing interface has been "monumental", according to Faraz. "I don't think we would be anywhere if he hadn't taken the brave step of volunteering and pioneering this technology," Faraz said. Families of patients testing brain implants proudly compare them to astronauts bravely exploring a new world, said David Putrino, who oversees the stentrode's clinical testing in the United States and is director of rehabilitation innovation at New York's Mount Sinai Health System.

"We select patients who hope to advance science for others more than for themselves," Putrino told AFP. The doctor sees implants like stentrodes improving overall health of patients whose conditions drastically limit social interaction, leaving them isolated. "Recent studies show that solitude has the same effect on health as smoking 17 cigarettes a day," Putrino said.



A photo shows Synchron clinical field engineer Zafar Faraz securing an interface device that connects to a receiver and transmitter unit under the skin in the chest area of brain implant recipient Rodney Gorham, as the latter works on a computer at his home in Melbourne.

The technology remains far from enabling real conversations, but it gives her husband much-needed autonomy, Carolyn Gorham said. "Without the software... his life would be torture. I think that's the only way to describe it. It would be hell on earth. "With this software the freedom that it will give him, just to be able to make decisions and look at things without asking somebody to do it for them. Just that little bit of independence is incredible."—AFP

From Furby to Grimace, brands cash in with nostalgic reboots

Furby and Polly Pocket are making a comeback—and don't forget Surge soda and McDonald's Grimace—as businesses deepen bets around consumers' nostalgia for decades-old brands. In the most recent quarter, McDonald's pointed to the fuzzy purple blob Grimace as a particular source of better-than-expected profits.

A berry-flavored milkshake built around the character, who first appeared in the 1970s, lit up social media and boosted sales in the United States where the limited-edition drink was available. "Grimace has been everywhere the past few months—all over the news, and more than three billion views on TikTok," McDonald's Chief Executive Chris Kempczinski said last month.

The strong sales are evidence of the "knock-on" benefits to McDonald's from the advertising blitz, according to Matt Smith, a trends manager at audience insight company GWI. "It was not only a success online but it drove people to buy the shake in the restaurant and to buy other products," Smith told AFP. Popular characters like Grimace are also easy candidates for T-shirts, which amount to "free advertising, essentially, for McDonald's," said Neil Saunders of GlobalData Retail. "That's the icing on the cake."

'Comfort' in the past

Within the marketing universe, this type of revival is known as "brand resurrection." "It brings the consumers back to their youth, their old good times," said Purvi Shah, a marketing professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. Such products may also give an adult "the opportunity to eat or

play with something they maybe could not afford when they were young," said Shah, who noted that parents might also enjoy sharing the experience with their children.

"There is a bit of comfort in the past," said Saunders. "The present is very uncertain. We've been through a global pandemic, we now have economic uncertainty, there are wars." Memories of an earlier time can produce positive chemicals like serotonin and dopamine and reduce stress, said Shah—as often happens when a person plays a game. Businesses have long employed nostalgia to sell products, but social media have pushed this trend into overdrive.

Shah considers Coca-Cola's reboot of Surge to be a textbook case. The citrus-flavored fizzy drink was launched in 1997 but left the market in 2003, with some fans still longing for a reboot years later. A "Surge Movement" Facebook group with hundreds of thousands of followers eventually helped prod Coca-Cola to revive the beverage in 2014.

Furby refurbished

Mattel's Barbie dolls have never left the shelves since the 1960s, but many observers view this summer's blockbuster movie as another sign of the nostalgia trend. The "Barbie" film, which has earned over \$1 billion at the global box office, emphasizes the dolls' different eras and recognizes their deeper meaning for older generations. Mattel retired its Polly Pockets dolls in 2012, only to revive them six years later.

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of Furby, Hasbro on July 15 launched a reboot of electronic robotic toys. The goal is to "ignite the same excitement for this new generation by harnessing Furby's power of nostalgia while giving Gen Alpha everything they crave," said Hasbro, noting that it sold more than 40 million of the original version within three years.—AFP



Ian Burkhart poses for a portrait in Columbus, Ohio.



Ian Burkhart holds his wheel chair with his hand that was once controlled by a brain implant in Columbus, Ohio.

From 'magical' to 'rip it out': Different brain implant experiences

Ian Burkhart looked down at his hand and imagined closing it. To his amazement, it closed. That moment, back in 2014, was the first time in history that a paralyzed person had regained the ability to move their arm using just their thoughts—with a little help from a device implanted in their brain. "That was the magical moment that proved that this is possible, this isn't just science fiction," Burkhart said.

He had volunteered to be part of an experimental trial of a brain-computer interface (BCI), which connects human neural activity to technology. The rapidly growing field, which includes leading BCI firms Synchron and Elon Musk's Neuralink, aims to use implants and algorithms to restore lost movement or communication and treat neurological disorders such as epilepsy.

But while some people enjoy the advantages of being plugged in to a computer, it can be traumatic for others. Two people who had brain implants spoke to AFP about their different experiences.

Nothing to be 'scared about'

After a diving accident in 2010, doctors told Burkhart he was paralyzed from the shoulders down. "At 19, that was a big struggle to hear," Burkhart told AFP via a video call from his home in Columbus, Ohio in the United States. So he leapt at the chance to be part of a trial called NeuroLife conducted by US non-profit firm Battelle that aimed to restore hand movement.

It involved invasive surgery to implant a pea-sized device containing around 100 electrodes near his brain's motor cortex, which controls movement. The device recorded his brain activity, send-

ing it to a computer which used an algorithm to decipher exactly how he wanted to move his hand.

That message was then relayed to an electrode sleeve on his right forearm which stimulated the relevant muscles. Over time, Burkhart became so adept that he was able to tap out guitar solos on the video game Guitar Hero. But after seven and a half years, funding for the trial ran out, and he had to have the device removed in 2021. "It definitely was a sad time," said Burkhart, now 32.



Ian Burkhart shows a scar above his ear from a previous brain implant that he had removed which helped him control his hand.

The blow was softened by the fact that he was only ever able to use the technology in the lab, which he visited a couple of times a week. His scalp had also become infected.

"The device is screwed into your skull" with a connector sticking out, leaving an "open wound", he said. "Your scalp is trying to close the whole time—but it can't because there's a piece of metal in the way." Despite the trial's end, Burkhart is positive about the experience.

He has become an advocate for BCIs, pushing for the experience of patients to be prioritized. "The actual truth of using

these devices right now is they can do a lot less than what a lot of people are thinking," he said, adding that it was not something that people need to be "scared about". "I look forward to getting some sort of device in the future," he said, adding that next time he would prefer one that is permanently implanted.

'Weird robot inside me'

Hannah Galvin was far less enthusiastic. At the age of 22, the Australian had seen her dreams of becoming a ballet dancer dashed by crippling epileptic seizures, when she was offered the chance to get a brain implant to help treat the condition. "I would have done anything. It seemed like an opportunity to get my life back," Galvin, now 35, said from the Australian state of Tasmania.

An electroencephalography (EEG) device, which records electrical activity, was implanted into her brain as part of a trial by the US company NeuroVista. The idea was that the device would warn Galvin if she was about to have a seizure, giving her time to prepare.

But after being implanted, the device went off almost constantly, leading Galvin to believe it was malfunctioning. It was not. It turned out she was having more than 100 seizures a day. Galvin and her doctors had no idea they struck so often. She felt embarrassed in public by the constant flashing and beeping of the device. "I started to regret the whole thing," she said. There was a growing feeling that "there's somebody in my head and it's not me", she said. "It was this weird robot inside me, and I really wanted to just rip it out of my head," she said.—AFP



Lifestyle



Young Maasai men wearing traditional clothes and a ceremonial headdress made of ostrich feathers gather in front of several ceremonial cows during the Eunoto ceremony in a remote area near Kilgoris, Kenya. — AFP photos



Young Maasai men wearing a ceremonial headdress made of ostrich feathers take part in the Eunoto ceremony in a remote area near Kilgoris, Kenya.

With beaming smiles, their hair dyed a red ochre and adorned with a ceremonial headdress of ostrich feathers, the young Maasai men are busy taking selfies. They have just completed the first day of Eunoto, a traditional ritual marking the transition from young warrior to adulthood. "Today we are becoming men," 22-year-old medical student Hillary Odupoy says proudly, wearing sunglasses and a string of pearls across his bare chest.



A young Maasai man paints the head of his friend using a stick and the traditional red ochre pigment as they prepare to take part in the Eunoto ceremony.

Aged between 18 and 26, the young men came in their hundreds to the village of Nailare in southwestern Kenya, all from the same generation of "morans" ("warriors" in the Maasai language), a status they have held for a decade. Many left their homes in the region to work or study in the cities of Kisii or Nairobi, or like Odupoy, further afield in the town of Machakos that lies more than seven hours away by road. "It is one of the biggest ceremonies we have in our life. We can never meet in such multitude. It unites the Maasai community," explains Odupoy. All wear red, the sacred color of the Maasai—from their hair which is coated in a mixture of ochre and oil to their traditional plaid cloth shukas.

This rite of passage brings together the families of the morans as well as local inhabitants and officials, in all several thousand people. For five days, the Eunoto ceremony features traditional guttural chants, single-file dances on one leg, and the adumu—the famous Maasai jump.

Cows are sacrificed and their blood drunk by the young men, whose hair is shaved from their heads by their mothers. They then abandon the warrior's sword for the fimbo, the walking stick of the "elders".

Maasai women wearing traditional clothes and red ochre pigment on their faces sing and dance during the Eunoto ceremony.

Kenya's young Maasai reconnect with their culture at Eunoto ceremony



Abandoned rituals

For centuries, Maasai men have gone through three rites of passage which have been inscribed since 2018 on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage in need of urgent safeguarding. Enkipaata is the transition from boyhood to moran status, Eunoto, the passage to "young elder", and finally Oling'esherr marks the start of eldership status.

But such traditions of the Maasai, originally semi-nomadic herders living in southwestern Kenya and northern Tanzania, have had to adapt to the changes and demands of modern life.

The morans no longer spend two years in an isolated village, called "emanyata", but meet there during school holidays to learn Maasai history and traditions, as well as the rules of life in society.

"Apart from having the Western education, traditional education also matters," says agriculture student Peter Ledama Ntuntai, 24. "Our culture teaches us good behaviour." Olerina Karia is one of the elders teaching these life lessons to the young Maasai.

"We teach them to be responsible citizens and members of society," says 52-year-old Karia. "But all the traditions

that were not the best for the survival of our community, such as killing a lion or the circumcision of girls, we teach them to get rid of them, especially if they collide with the law."

The killing of lions was to prove the bravery of the Maasai men, but has been illegal in Kenya for decades to protect the threatened animal. The decline of the lion population was also threatening tourism, a precious source of income in the southwestern region of Kenya which is notably home to the emblematic Maasai Mara wildlife park.

"Dynamics of society have changed" In theory, young Maasai men can only marry after Eunoto, and their bride must have been circumcised. But female circumcision, or female genital mutilation (FGM) has been banned in Kenya since 2011 and is officially no longer practiced or recommended. "You can be a Maasai without killing a lion and without going through FGM," says Hillary Odupoy. Nowadays, some morans do not wait for Eunoto to marry. "The dynamics of society have

changed. When they go to school, sometimes they meet their fiancées there, they marry," says Olerina Karia. "We adapt, we adjust." For many, it is a matter of survival to preserve the traditions and culture of the most famous of Kenya's 45 tribes.

The Maasai are the 10th largest tribal grouping in Kenya with a population of less than 1.2 million, according to the last census in 2019. "It is our greatest fear that in the near future we may not be able to practice this culture," says Olerina Karia. "Other communities and other people are commercializing it, while the real owners who know how to practice it are not in the limelight."—AFP



A young Maasai man wearing a ceremonial headdress made of ostrich feathers gets ready to take part in the Eunoto ceremony.



A young Maasai man plays a traditional horn during the Eunoto ceremony.



A Maasai man stands next to ceremonial houses decorated with colourful flags.



A Maasai woman sits on a motorbike parked next to ceremonial houses decorated with colorful flags at the ceremonial site during the Eunoto ceremony.



Young Maasai men hold the horns of a ceremonial bull during the Eunoto ceremony.



Young Maasai men wearing a ceremonial headdress made of ostrich feathers take part in the Eunoto ceremony.



Three young Maasai men and a woman take a commemorative photo at an itinerant photo studio during the Eunoto ceremony in a remote area near Kilgoris, Kenya.

Sports

Rohit to lead India for Asia Cup

Rahul, Iyer return for Asia Cup

NEW DELHI: India's Rohit Sharma has been named captain for the Asia Cup, with all-rounder Hardik Pandya as his deputy for the last major tournament ahead of the cricket World Cup. The selectors in New Delhi on Monday announced the return of K.L. Rahul and Shreyas Iyer after long injury layoffs in the 17-member squad for the six-nation Asia Cup in Sri Lanka and Pakistan beginning on August 30.

Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and rookie Prasidh Krishna, who returned after recovering from back injuries during the ongoing T20 series against Ireland, have also been selected for the longer white ball format ahead of the World Cup in India from October 5. Both Rahul, who still carries a niggle, and Iyer made the 17-member squad, led by Rohit Sharma, for the six-nation Asia Cup in Sri Lanka and Pakistan beginning on August 30.

"Shreyas has been declared completely fit. Rahul, not his original injury but there's a niggle, which is why Sanju (Samson) is travelling (as reserve)," chief selector Ajit Agarkar told reporters in New Delhi.

"We'll get a report from the physio at some stage but we all expect him (Rahul) to be fit. If not at the start, by the second or third game, but he's on track."

Rahul has not played any competitive cricket since he was injured during this year's Indian Premier League. Iyer has been out since Australia's tour of India in March.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna, who returned after recovering from back injuries during the ongoing T20 series against Ireland, have

been selected for the longer white ball format ahead of the World Cup in India from October 5.

Up and coming left-hand batsman Tilak Varma, a 20-year-old who is yet to play a one-day international, has also been picked to boost India's batting, which includes Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and vice-captain Hardik Pandya.

'Not just Pakistan'

Rohit said the team will need its youngsters to be flexible. "Flexibility is important," Rohit said. "But we don't go crazy. Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan (not in team) have opened for India in the last seven years. Kohli bats at three. New boys who bat at number four or five, they should be open to bat anywhere." India begin their Asia Cup campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan in Pallekele on September 2 before taking on minnows Nepal in their second outing. "We will work on shortcomings in our upcoming five-day-long camp in Bangalore ahead of the Asia Cup," said Rohit.

On the prospect of meeting Pakistan thrice in the tournament — including in the final — Rohit said: "It's not just Pakistan, there are other teams. Sri Lanka won the Asia Cup (T20 format) last year. So there are other teams who are playing good cricket and will challenge us."

India have suffered a world title drought since the 2013 Champions Trophy, and last won a 50-over World Cup on home soil in 2011. Rohit played down his team's chances in the tournament when it returns

ball's most promising players." Wahi watched his new side take a third-minute lead against Rennes through Deiver Machado, but the away side equalized early in the second half courtesy of Benjamin Bourigeaud's penalty after a foul by Salis Abdul Samed.

Andy Diouf hit the bar for the hosts with a deflected effort just past the hour, but Lens had to settle for a point — their first of the season after losing 3-2 at Brest last weekend. "I don't know if it's a good point or not," said Lens coach Franck Haise, who believes the addition of Wahi will give his side extra options.

"We're able to do a number of things in attack, but there comes a time you need speed, to attack the spaces in behind," said Haise. "He (Wahi) is capable of bringing us things that we couldn't do. He's what we were looking for."

Minamino provides Monaco spark

Monaco are the early pacesetters after they swept aside Patrick Vieira's Strasbourg in one of two games in Ligue 1 this weekend pushed back because of high temperatures. Japan international Minamino drilled



OLYMPIA FIELDS: Viktor Hovland of Norway poses with The Western Golf Association Trophy and BMW Trophy after winning the BMW Championship at Olympia Fields Country Club in Olympia Fields, Illinois. — AFP

greens," Hovland said. "It just kind of worked out that way. "It was more of a mindset thing. I think instead of, 'Oh my God, I've got a chance to win, I need to birdie this hole and this hole to have a chance,' it was more, 'What's the right decision right here right now?' and then commit to it." The top 30 in season points advanced to next week's Tour Championship in Atlanta, Fitzgerald jumping from 40th to 10th to qualify and

"Afghanistan have developed into a good side," said Azam of a team which beat Bangladesh 2-1 in an ODI series last month. "We are not going to take these matches lightly," said Azam, despite Pakistan having won all four ODIs against Afghanistan since the countries first met in 2012.

"We have good players who can deal with spin bowling so it is going to be an exciting series." Afghanistan are captained by batsman Hashmatullah Shahidi and have new faces in fast bowlers Abdul Rahman, Mohammad Saleem Safi and Wafadar Momand. Tuesday's match is being played in Hambantota, with the remaining two in Colombo on Thursday and Saturday.

Squads

Pakistan: Babar Azam (capt), Shadab Khan, Mohammad Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman, Abdullah Shafique, Imam-ul-Haq, Saud Shakeel, Agha Salman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Usama Mir, Haris Rauf, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Tayyab Tahir, Mohammad Haris, Faheem Ashraf, Mohammad Wasim

Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (capt), Rahmatullah Gurbaz, Ikram Alikhil, Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Rahmat Shah, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Abdul Rahman, Mohammad Saleem Safi, Wafadar Momand. — AFP



NEW DELHI: India's chief cricket selector Ajit Agarkar (R) and player Rohit Sharma attend a press conference in New Delhi on August 21, 2023. Sharma has been named captain for the Asia Cup, with all-rounder Hardik Pandya as his deputy for the last major tournament ahead of the cricket World Cup. — AFP

home. "There is no such thing as favorites or underdogs," Rohit said when asked whether India would be considered the team to beat in the World Cup.

He added: "As our prep is concerned this (Asia Cup) is the right tournament for us to go and perform well. Test ourselves, try and put ourselves under pressure and respond to that pressure."

Monaco ahead from distance at the Stade Louis II and then doubled the lead with a header from Caio Henrique's cross later in the first half.

Wissam Ben Yedder added a third for the hosts after he was set up by Minamino, rounding off a second successive victory for Monaco under new coach Adi Hutter. "It's a good start to the season," said Hutter. "We're on the right track." France forward Ben Yedder has scored three goals in two games since being charged with rape just before the start of the new season. Jonathan David and substitute Adam Ounas got the goals for Lille in a 2-0 victory over Nantes as they held on despite finishing the match with 10 men. David, scorer of 24 goals last season, got his first of this campaign when he turned home the rebound from a Remy Cabella header. Paulo Fonseca's side had Brazilian defender Alessandro sent off on 78 minutes for bringing down Abdoul Kader Bamba as the last man. Lille conceded a goal soon after, but it was disallowed after a VAR review for offside. Algeria winger Ounas eventually made sure of the points for the home side deep into stoppage time. — AFP

bumping out American Chris Kirk in the only change of players from last week.

Scheffler took over as season points leader and will start at 10-under next week at East Lake while Hovland, who jumped from seventh to second in points, will start on 8-under, one stroke ahead of McIlroy and two atop reigning Masters champion Jon Rahm, who had led when the week began. "My ball-striking has just been very consistent this year and my chipping around the green has improved massively," Hovland said of his season, which also included a victory at the Memorial in June. "Just makes it so that even when I'm not on my game I can still scrap it around at even par and make it to the weekend."

No Ryder for Koepka yet

The BMW also was the final US qualifying event for next month's Ryder Cup and the first six spots were decided on points as Scheffler, Wyndham Clark, Brian Harman, Patrick Cantlay, Homa and Xander Schauffele made the squad.

LIV Golf's Brooks Koepka, the PGA Championship winner ineligible for PGA Tour events, had been in the top six but was nudged out of an automatic qualifier spot by Homa and Schauffele and will need a captain's pick to make the squad.

US captain Zach Johnson will reveal six captain's picks on August 29 to complete the squad that will defend the trophy next month against Europe in Italy. Hovland dropped his approach inches from the hole at the par-5 first and opened with a birdie, added another on a putt from just inside 20 feet at three and birdied the fifth from just outside 15 feet.

After his lone bogey at seven, Hovland tapped in for birdie from three feet at 10, sank a 12-footer to birdie 11 and birdied 12 from just inside five feet. Hovland put his approach inches from the hole at 14 to set up a birdie, rolled in an eight-foot birdie putt at the par-5 15th and another from just inside nine feet at 17 before his closing record-setter. — AFP

NZ rebound to claim T20 series win over UAE

DUBAI: New Zealand bounced back from their shock loss to the United Arab Emirates to win the third and final T20 in Dubai on Sunday by 32 runs to clinch the series 2-1. The UAE had romped to a seven-wicket victory on Saturday to register their first victory over New Zealand in any format, but the hosts slumped to 53-5 in pursuit of 167 in the finale.

Aayan Afzal Khan, the 17-year-old who starred with the ball in the second match, put up spirited resistance with 42 off 36 balls but the run rate ultimately proved too steep for the UAE. New Zealand's left-arm medium pace bowler Ben Lister claimed 3-35, including the wickets of captain Muhammad Waseem and Aayan, and effected a run out as the UAE ended well short on 134-7.

Will Young made 56 and Mark Chapman (51) hit his second successive half-century to guide New Zealand to a total of 166-5 after they were put in to bat. "It was a better innings from us. We were able to build a partnership there with Chapman and Will Young, so that was pleasing," said New Zealand captain Tim Southee. — AFP

India squad: Rohit Sharma (capt), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Mohammed Shami, Ishan Kishan, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Prasidh Krishna Reserve player: Sanju Samson (wicketkeeper). — AFP

US men, Canadian women qualify for Paris Olympics rugby

LANGFORD: The United States men's rugby sevens squad and Canada's women's sevens team each booked berths at the 2024 Paris Olympics on Sunday at the North American qualifying tournament in Langford, Canada.

In the men's semi-finals, the Americans blanked Jamaica 30-0 while Canada ripped Mexico 54-5. In the final, the US Eagles outlasted the hosts 24-14 to earn their trip to France. "It's a dream come true," US wing Kevon Williams said. "We've sacrificed a lot to go and be able to represent our country, so to be able to get that blue check and get out of here and go to the Olympics, it means a lot."

The favored US side's advance was a relief for US Sevens men's head coach Mike Friday. "It's a huge relief if I'm honest," Friday said. "We had everything to lose, nothing to gain apart from the actual qualification." "Credit to the boys. They've sacrificed for each other and they've got their rewards." The Americans plan to take some time off before the World Sevens tour sets the stage for the trip to France. "The most important thing is we give the boys some proper rest now so we can take advantage of the opportunity and prepare for the World Series and for Paris next year," Friday said.

Runner-up Canada and Mexico, which edged Jamaica 10-7 in the third-place match, advanced to a repechage men's qualifying event. On the women's side, Canada blanked Mexico 53-0 in the women's final to book a berth at the Paris Games next year. Mexico and third-place Jamaica, which beat St. Lucia 27-12, will compete in the women's repechage.

Meanwhile, Australia's women's rugby team have slammed Rugby Australia over inequality and lack of investment in the game, highlighting the different treatment afforded to the men's team, the Wallabies.

In a coordinated move, almost every current women's Test player posted the same statement on social media late Sunday demanding that the governing body address their concerns. Their anger appears to have been triggered by wives and girlfriends of Wallabies players being flown to Sydney to "say goodbye" to the men's team last week as they departed for the World Cup in France.

"You told us flying anything beyond economy was too costly. Then you flew the Wallabies business class on a trip shorter than ours," they said. "You continually say we don't have enough resources and yet we all saw the World Cup send off for the Wallabies." No expense has been spared for Eddie Jones's under-performing men's team ahead of the World Cup, with training camps and a trip to northern Australia before their departure. The women's team, the Wallaroos, are employed part-time and also took exception at the number of assistants given to Jones, with the former England coach accumulating an 11-strong backroom team.

They also criticized Rugby Australia's decision this year to recruit rugby league star Joseph Suaalii on reported Aus\$5 million (US\$3.2 million) contract. "You told us full-time contracts were in the pipeline, that there wasn't enough money to keep the men in the game, let alone us. Then you paid \$5 million for an NRL player," they said.

"You said our program would go professional, and our coach would be full-time. How many coaches has Eddie taken to the World Cup? "We've seen the impact that women's sport has had on the Australian sporting landscape, thanks to the @matildas," they added, referring to the groundswell of support for the Australian football team at the just-completed Women's World Cup.

"It's time for the chairman, board, and CEO to prioritize the future of Australian women's rugby and allocate adequate resources. It's time to acknowledge that we are not promoted equally, even on a free platform." "The future of our games hangs in the balance. It's your move, Rugby Australia." Rugby Australia did not address any of the specific issues in a statement, but admitted it needed to do more. "Rugby Australia will continue to involve the Wallaroos playing group ... in all planning and developments regarding investment in women's rugby," it said. — AFP

Pakistan, Afghanistan begin ODI series

HAMBANTOTA: Pakistan face Afghanistan in a three-match one-day international series in Sri Lanka starting Tuesday, with skipper Babar Azam seeing it as good preparation for the Asia Cup and World Cup. The first bilateral ODI series between the two teams will be followed by the six-nation Asia Cup, in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, beginning on August 30 and the World Cup in India from October 5. It is a home series for Afghanistan who cannot stage international cricket in their own country because of security fears.

"These three matches are a good opportunity for us to test our players in the match situation," Azam told AFP. Azam is the top-ranked ODI batsman and leads a strong side that also boasts openers Fakhar Zaman and Imam-ul-Haq — ranked three and four respectively. They are backed up by a potent pace attack of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf. Afghanistan have world-class spinner Rashid Khan fit again after he withdrew from The Hundred competition in England.

Sports

Lyles hopes 100m success is start of sprint dynasty

'It's now about running faster 100s to make the first 100m of the 200m a faster time'

BUDAPEST: Noah Lyles says he hopes his victory in the 100m at the World Athletics Championships will be the "start of a dynasty" as he bids to become the first man to achieve a world sprint double since Usain Bolt in 2015.

Lyles, who already has two world 200m titles and will go for a third in Budapest, clocked 9.83 sec—equaling the fastest 100m time of the season—for victory on Sunday. In a perfectly-timed piece of sprinting, the 26-year-old kept his nerve after a quick start by teammate Christian Coleman to outstrip a field deprived of defending champion Fred Kerley and Olympic gold medallist Marcell Jacobs after both failed to make the final.

"The goal was to make sure I was the first to 60 metres, then do Noah Lyles things, use my topping speed," Lyles said of his race strategy. "When I got there I believed I was the fastest guy and I kept believing that until I crossed the line." The American has made his name over 200m rather than the shorter sprint, but vowed that that would now be altered. "Last year made this the right year" to target the 100m, he said.

"After having such a strong hold on the 200m it really freaked me out to be, like, OK no matter where I am in the season I can go back to the 200m and it will be fast. "Now it's only a matter of time of continuously working on the 100m, the worst part of my race and getting it faster. "It's now about running faster 100s to make the first 100m of the 200m a faster time. "The craziest thing is that we've got so much more to improve on and that's a scary thought."

'A long journey'

Lyles admitted that his experience with the 100m had been "a long journey". "That's the first time I've set a personal best since 2019," he said. "I always remember that race and how I felt, believing in myself so much I thought I was crazy that day, believing in myself so much that someone might have thought I was crazy, might have put me in an insane asylum!"

Lyles, who is being filmed for an NBC Sports documentary by an Emmy-winning producer and will also feature heavily in a Netflix series on the 100m cur-

rently in production, added: "I've so much more to give to this event, but I've been giving a lot of it to the 200m."

"As people look back at this year, they're going to be like this is the year Noah won the 100, 200 and 4x100 and that is the start of a dynasty." Lyles' attention now turns to the 200m as he bids to become only the fifth man to achieve the 100/200 metres double at the World Athletics Championships.

Now-retired Jamaican superstar Bolt completed the sprint double three times at these championships, in 2009, 2013 and 2015. With a best time of 19.31sec in the 200m, Lyles is the third fastest man in history though still some way off Bolt's world record of 19.19 set in 2009.

"To be honest, I am not worried," Lyles said of potentially stiff competition in the 200m, notably from the silver and bronze medallists in the 100m, Letsile Tebogo of Botswana and Britain's Zharnel Hughes respectively. "I know Letsile and Zharnel are going to give their 100, and best believe that I'm going to give my 100!" Lyles said. — AFP



BUDAPEST: USA's Noah Lyles celebrates winning the men's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP

Minister condemns Rubiales for kissing Spain star

MADRID: Spain's sports minister on Monday condemned the kiss football federation president Luis Rubiales planted on the lips of star player Jenni Hermoso after Spain won the Women's World Cup.

"I think it is unacceptable to kiss a player on the lips to congratulate her," acting minister Miquel Iceta told Spanish public radio. "The first thing he has to do is to give explanations and make apologies, it

is the logical and reasonable thing to do," Iceta said.

The minister added that while the 1-0 victory over England on Sunday in Sydney was "a moment of intense emotions", public officials "have to be extremely careful because we are giving a message to society and the message is equal rights, it is respect".

Rubiales, 45, kissed Hermoso on the lips after she collected her medal, provoking an immediate global reaction. Sources in the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) responded on Sunday by telling AFP that "it was a spontaneous celebration that comes out like that, the two are very close friends."

The player posted a video on Instagram showing the celebrations in the changing room in which she responded to teasing from team-mates by saying: "I didn't like it, eh!" while laughing. Later on Sunday the RFEF released their own quotes from Hermoso.

"It was a totally spontaneous mutual gesture because of the immense joy that winning a World Cup brings," Hermoso was quoted as saying. "The president and I have a great relationship. His behaviour with all of us has been outstanding and it was a natural gesture of affection and gratitude."

"A gesture of friendship and gratitude cannot be gone over so much, we have won a World Cup and we are not going to deviate from what is important." Spain's preparations for the World Cup were thrown into disarray last September when 15 players sent an email to the RFEF saying they did not want to be considered for selection.

Their protest was aimed chiefly at coach Jorge Vilda and his methods, including complaints that he was too strict. Rubiales supported Vilda and only three of the 15 were recalled for the World Cup. — AFP

US hurdler Ali hopes to satisfy harshest critics

BUDAPEST: Nia Ali will have her three children who she says are her "toughest critics" in the stadium as she bids to regain her 100m hurdles world title in Budapest, beginning with the heats on Tuesday. The 34-year-old 2019 world champion's chances of doing so have become even more difficult with Nigerian world record holder and defending champion Tobi Amusan being cleared last week of a doping offence by the Athletics Integrity Unit, allowing her to run.

"I look forward to seeing her on the start line," said Ali of Amusan. "All the better for us as it means faster times." Amusan adds to a top-quality field which also includes former world record holder Kendra Harrison and Olympic champion Jasmine Camacho-Quinn.

Ali is in sublime form—she is the world leader this year with a time of 12.30sec at the Monaco Diamond League meet and was crowned US champion at the trials. Ali, who missed the delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 after giving birth to her third child in May that year, says her professional life and her domestic one are easily compartmentalized.

However, she is prepared to get a flea in her ear if she fails to meet her kids' expectations. "They keep me very humble," she said on Friday. "They are straight shooters when they see me race and they get the video immediately after. "If I do not win they ask 'what happened? You fell last time, perhaps you did not recover from this?' "They are my toughest critics."

'Putting pressure on me'

Ali, though, says the trio—the father of the youngest two is Canada's Olympic 200m champion Andre de Grasse—are equally supportive of her. "When I come home from training they say how proud they are," she said.

"They then give me space and go and play. "They understand the competitive nature of the sport and they show the true strength of family values. "They keep me strong. I am excited they will be here, they will be getting their hair done and then putting pressure on me."

Camacho-Quinn, though, will look to give herself a late birthday present as she turns 27 on Monday. The Puerto Rican comes into the championships desperate to turn last year's bronze medal into a gold. —AFP

Juventus ease to win at Lecce, Belotti, De Ketelaere end droughts

MILAN: Juventus got their Serie A season off to a perfect start with Sunday's 3-0 stroll at Udinese which suggested they will be in the title mix, while Lecce struck twice late to beat last year's runners-up Lazio 2-1. Massimiliano Allegri's Juve did all the damage in the first half with an early strike from Federico Chiesa, Dusan Vlahovic's penalty and a header from Adrien Rabiot just before the break.

The away side then sat on their lead and comfortably held out for the win, and the return to form of injury-prone Chiesa will give Juve a boost as they try to bounce back from last season's scandals. "I wanted to do the knee slide as it had been a long time since I'd last done one," joked Chiesa, who has suffered a series of knee problems, about his celebration after drilling home his second-minute opener.

"Like the manager said our aim is to get back into the Champions League, after that we'll see." Points deductions over transfer irregularities led to Juve finishing seventh last term and then a ban from European football by governing body UEFA.

Without continental competition and with a fit squad Juve have been tipped to challenge for the Scudetto, and on Sunday's evidence they will be a tough team to beat as they try to move towards a more aggressive, attacking style of play. "We played very well today, espe-

cially in the first half. That's how we need to play, a modern style of football," added Chiesa. "We have to go out and get after teams, we can't just sit back and play on the counter."

With 84 minutes gone at Lecce, Ciro Immobile's 197th Lazio goal seemed to be the decisive strike. But after the Italy forward had a shot tipped onto the post, Lecce new boy Pontus Almqvist levelled with a superb left-footed finish from the edge of the penalty area.

And seconds later Federico Di Francesco sent the 30,000 home fans wild with joy when he reacted quickest to lash in a low drive which left Ivan Provedel with no chance. "We were unacceptably bad in the second half," said a visibly angry Lazio coach Maurizio Sarri. "We had chances to win the game but it wouldn't have been deserved as there was only one team on the pitch."

Goal droughts ended

Earlier, Andrea Belotti and Charles De Ketelaere both ended long scoring droughts as Roma were held 2-2 by Salernitana and Atalanta ran out 2-0 winners at Sassuolo. Italy forward Belotti scored his first Serie A goals for Roma, breaking a league duck which stretched back to May last year when he opened the scoring in the 17th minute at a packed Stadio Olimpico.

And after Antonio Candreva put the away side in the lead with two beautiful



ROME: Roma's Italian forward #11 Andrea Belotti fights for the ball with Salernitana's Polish midfielder #99 Mateusz Legowski during the Italian Serie A football match Roma vs Salernitana at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

strikes either side of half-time, Belotti then powerfully headed Roma level from Leandro Paredes' corner with eight minutes remaining. Roma are looking for a new striker as Tammy Abraham will be out until January but Belotti underlined his desire to battle whoever is brought in as competition.

"All I know is that when I'm on the pitch I need to help my team to win. Regardless of who arrives, I'll be ready to play," Belotti told DAZN. De Ketelaere failed to score a single goal for AC Milan last season after signing for 35 million euros from Club Brugge.

But the Belgium international got off to the perfect start as an Atalanta

loanee, heading in the opening goal in the 83rd minute before Nadir Zortea lashed in the dominant away team's second in stoppage time. "I always want to play as well as possible, and this year is the same as any other. I like our style of play and that's one of the reasons why I came here," said the 22-year-old.

Sassuolo were without star winger Domenico Berardi whose hoped move to Juve fell through in the week. CEO Giovanni Carnevali said before kick-off that Berardi will not be leaving for Juve as Sassuolo would not have time between now and the end of the transfer window to find a replacement. — 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
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Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

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Djokovic survives to beat Alcaraz

'It was the toughest match I've ever played in my life'



MASON: Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates with the trophy after defeating Carlos Alcaraz of Spain during the final of the Western & Southern Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center on August 20, 2023 in Mason, Ohio. — AFP

CINCINNATI: Novak Djokovic needed five match points and nearly four hours to pull off a gritty victory over Carlos Alcaraz and claim a third ATP Cincinnati Open title on Sunday. A titanic struggle between the world's top two players saw Djokovic — who looked out on his feet in the second set — save a match point before coming through on his own fifth match point for a 5-7, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4) triumph.

"It's crazy, I don't know what I can say," said 23-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic, who was seen by the doctors early in the second set for heat illness in a battle that lasted three hours and 44 minutes.

"It's tough to describe. It was the toughest I've ever played in my life. From start to finish we both went through highs, lows, incredible points, bad games, heatstroke, comebacks. Overall this was the toughest and most exciting match I've ever been a part of."

"It's matches like these that I continue to work for." It was another epic chapter to the budding rivalry between 20-year-old top-ranked Alcaraz and

the 36-year-old Serb star, who avenged his loss to the Spaniard in a five-set Wimbledon final last month.

The two — who have traded the number one ranking six times this year — are now level on two wins apiece in their head-to-head rivalry. "I feel proud of myself, honestly. I don't know why I was crying because I fight until the last ball," Alcaraz said. "I almost beat one of the greatest of all time in our sport. I left the court really happy with what I did."

The 20-year-old unleashed everything he had at Djokovic and found it wasn't enough. "It was really, really difficult playing. Novak returns five, six, seven balls on every point," Alcaraz said. "So fighting and running from one corner to the other one on every point is really tough to deal with for almost the whole match."

"I left everything on court. I'm working very well. But today, it was tough to deal with everything that Novak had," Djokovic, who earned a record-extending 39th victory at the elite Masters

1000 level, secured the first break of the opening set at love for a 4-2 lead.

Alcaraz broke back and broke again for a 6-5 lead then held to take the set before Djokovic left the court for a seven-minute change of clothes. Djokovic, clearly affected by the hot, muggy conditions, was visited by the trainer and doctor in the second set. He was broken to trail 2-1, Alcaraz grabbing a 4-2 edge with a drop shot that Djokovic couldn't touch.

But the 23-time Grand Slam winner broke Alcaraz to pull level 4-4 on the way to a tie-breaker. Djokovic saved a match point at 5-6 and forced a third set when Alcaraz dumped a shot into the net on Djokovic's second set point.

Never in doubt

Djokovic headed off to the locker room for another clothing change while Alcaraz pounded his right hand on his bench in frustration as he sat down. The Spaniard — who then needed to have a finger taped

up — was broken in a nine-minute seventh game that featured five break points.

The back-and-forth battle continued, Djokovic unable to convert serving for the match at 5-4 but putting it away two games later after the longest best-of-three set final in ATP Tour history. A weary Djokovic dropped to the court in relief, then bounced up and ripped his shirt down the middle as he let out a roar of triumph or agony — or perhaps a bit of both.

"I was never in doubt that I could deliver the match when it mattered the most," he said, adding that the rivalry with Alcaraz "is just getting better and better." "Carlos is an amazing player, I have tons of respect for him," Djokovic said. "He is so poised at such a young age."

Alcaraz will remain number one in the world and will be the top seed while defending his title at the US Open, which starts on August 28. Djokovic, who declined to be vaccinated against Covid-19, was playing his first US tournament in two years. — AFP

Pochettino rocked as 10-man West Ham sink Chelsea

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino urged Chelsea to "believe in the process" after Michael Antonio's superb strike and Enzo Fernandez's penalty miss condemned the Blues to a 3-1 loss against West Ham on Sunday.

After last weekend's 1-1 draw against Liverpool, Pochettino's side wasted a lively performance as they paid the price for sloppy defending and wasteful finishing at the London Stadium. Antonio blasted West Ham's decisive second goal after half-time and Lucas Paqueta added a late penalty to leave Pochettino still waiting for his first Premier League win since taking charge in the close-season.

Chelsea teenager Carney Chukwuemeka had scored an eye-catching first half equalizer to cancel Nayef Aguerd's early opener for West Ham. But the turning point came when Fernandez's penalty was saved by Alphonse Areola just before the break.

Antonio netted soon after the interval and Chelsea couldn't respond despite Aguerd's dismissal for a second booking midway through the half. Paqueta, reportedly the subject of an FA probe into betting breaches, applied the knockout blow in the final seconds.

"Teams like us, we need to get the right balance. I think there were a few actions we didn't manage well and we conceded," Pochettino said. "We create many chances and should have won the game with our first half."

"It was the frustration when we miss the penalty. We were playing well and we didn't get the reward. "Disappointed but this is only the beginning. We need to believe in the process." Dating back to last season, Chelsea have won just five times in 31 league matches, while their only victory in their last 14 top-flight games came at Bournemouth in May.

They have also lost four successive top-flight London derbies for the first time since 1990. Much of the blame for those dismal statistics lies with Pochettino's predecessors Graham Potter and Frank Lampard, who struggled through a turbulent campaign that ended with Chelsea's lowest finish since 1996.

Pochettino has been tasked with cleaning up the mess, but despite recent signings of Moises Caicedo



LONDON: Chelsea's English midfielder #07 Raheem Sterling challenges West Ham United's English midfielder #07 James Ward-Prowse during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Chelsea at the London Stadium, in London. — AFP

and Romeo Lavia taking Chelsea's total spending under owner Todd Boehly to more than £850 million (\$1.08 billion), the squad remains a work in progress.

Putting his faith in a largely youthful team is a gamble from Pochettino, whose side's lack of experience was exposed in the seventh minute. James Ward-Prowse's corner was whipped to the far post, where Morocco defender Aguerd easily evaded Conor Gallagher and Chukwuemeka to nod home from six yards.

Debut to forget

Dominating possession after that setback, Chelsea deservedly drew level in the 28th minute. Kurt Zouma miscued a weak clearance and Chukwuemeka cleverly shifted the ball away from Tomas Soucek before smashing a fine finish into the far corner from 12 yards.

Chelsea were in command and Raheem Sterling's driving run won them a 42nd minute penalty after the winger was sent tumbling by Soucek's clumsy tackle. But Areola plunged to his right to make a superb save from Fernandez's tentative spot-kick, denying the Argentine midfielder his first goal for Chelsea.

Antonio had just five touches in the first half but the West Ham striker made the most of a rare involvement in the 53rd minute. Chelsea defender Levi Colwill and Axel Disasi were bullied by Antonio, who took Ward-Prowse's pass and used his strength to manoeuvre into position for a ferocious strike that flashed past Sanchez from the edge of the area. — AFP

Barca snatch late win over Cadiz, Atletico draw at Betis

BARCELONA: Pedri and Ferran Torres' late strikes earned La Liga champions Barcelona a 2-0 win over Cadiz in their first competitive home game away from Camp Nou on Sunday. Atletico Madrid drew 0-0 at Real Betis in a dour clash.

Playing at the Olympic Stadium on the city's Montjuic hill while their stadium is rebuilt and upgraded over the next year-and-a-half, Barcelona were nearly thwarted by visitors Cadiz. After Getafe held them to a frustrating goalless draw on the opening weekend, Cadiz almost managed the same feat until Ilkay Gundogan cleverly released Pedri to score.

Substitute Torres drove through the middle and tucked home in stoppage time to put gloss on what was another unconvincing performance. "I'm happy, quite satisfied with the team's work and their positional play too, I think it's a totally deserved victory," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez.

The Catalan coach, banned from the dugout after being sent off against Getafe, selected 16-year-old Lamine Yamal on the right in place of the suspended Raphinha, also dismissed last weekend as tempers frayed.

Yamal, on his first start for the club, came closest for the Catalans in the first half with an angled strike expertly tipped to safety by Jeremias Ledesma. The forward thrilled nearly 40,000 fans — there were around 10,000 empty seats with a low uptake on season tickets because of the temporary move from Camp Nou.

"I think it's very positive for the club and the fans, that 40,000 people came, supporting the team," continued Xavi, despite the relatively quiet atmosphere. At the other end Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen went one better with a superb save to deny Roger Marti one-on-one, after Alejandro Balde gave the ball away on the halfway line.

New signing Oriol Romeu had a goalbound effort blocked after a scramble in the box early in the second half as Barcelona struggled to break down their Andalusian visitors. Ruben Alcaraz almost gave the Yellow Submarine the lead but lashed a shot wide, while Chris Ramos also came close with a rasping effort.



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Spanish forward #10 Ansu Fati vies with Cadiz's Spanish defender #03 Fali during the Spanish Liga football match between FC Barcelona and Cadiz CF at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

Barca midfielder Gavi nodded against the bar at the other end, before Xavi threw on Moroccan winger Ez Abde in his stead. The coach switched to a three-defender system, also bringing on Ansu Fati for Balde as he sought the breakthrough.

Upping the pressure

Barcelona tossed crosses into the area, looking for Robert Lewandowski, but the Polish forward failed to make a nuisance of himself. "The Polish forward needs to have more patience," said Xavi, concerned at Lewandowski drifting from his position to get involved in the play.

"He wants to come, I understand it. You can't lose your positioning. "I think he was good in the second half working for the team, and he set up the goal for Ferran." Abde drew a fine save from Ledesma with a vicious curling effort as Barcelona regrouped following a cooling break in the hazy evening heat.

Eventually they found the breakthrough when former Manchester City midfielder Gundogan dinked a cute ball through for Pedri to slide past Ledesma with eight minutes remaining. The Canary Islander held up a shirt in tribute to Tenerife, currently ravaged by wildfires.

"It was tricky, yes, we should have scored much earlier," Xavi told Movistar. The coach praised Gundogan for his impact in the final third. "That's why we signed Gundogan, he makes the difference with the final ball," he added. — AFP