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Kuwait and Iraq seek to resolve border dispute

Iran to 'pursue rights' over Durra gas field if negotiations fail



BAGHDAD: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah hands a message from HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani on July 30, 2023. — KUNA

BAGHDAD/TEHRAN: Iraq and Kuwait will work towards reaching a definitive agreement on demarcating their borders, including a contested maritime area of the Gulf, their foreign ministers said on Sunday. The de facto land and maritime borders between the neighboring states were established by the United Nations in 1993, three years after Iraq under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

While Iraqi officials have previously expressed a readiness to recognize Kuwait's land border, the maritime border remains a point of contention. Baghdad insists that the delineation should provide it unhindered access to Gulf waters, a lifeline for its economy and oil exports. Because of the long-standing dispute, Kuwaiti coastguards regularly detain Iraqi fishermen and seize their vessels for entering Kuwaiti territorial waters "illegally".

After meeting his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah in Baghdad on Sunday, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad

Hussein said that during their talks "the emphasis was placed on resolving the border issues". He told reporters the border talks would "continue through various technical committees". Baghdad will host a meeting of a legal committee relating to the talks on August 14. Sheikh Salem said there was "complete consensus" between Kuwait and Iraq to "resolve outstanding problems between the two countries, particularly the demarcation of maritime boundaries". Sheikh Salem also announced opening a commercial office at the Kuwaiti consulate in Basra.

Iraq's government under Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani, who was appointed by pro-Iran parties, is seeking closer ties with Arab Gulf monarchies, aiming to strengthen regional economic cooperation and counter the flow of narcotics. In 2021, Baghdad made the final payment of war reparations totaling more than \$52 billion to its neighbor. Saddam's forces invaded Kuwait

in August 1990 and annexed it before being driven out seven months later by an international coalition led by the United States.

Separately, Iran's oil minister said Sunday Tehran would "pursue its rights" to a gas field claimed in total by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait if negotiations fail, the ministry's news agency reported. The offshore zone of the resource-rich Gulf, known as Arash in Iran and Durra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, has long been a focal point of contention between the three countries.

"Iran will pursue its rights and interests regarding exploitation and exploration" of the field "if there is no desire for understanding and cooperation", Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji was quoted as saying by the official Shana news agency. He said Tehran has sought "the path of negotiation and understanding with our neighbors", according to Shana.

Continued on Page 6

Panel doubles child allowance to KD 100 monthly

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee on Sunday approved a proposal to increase social allowance for children from KD 50 to KD 100 per child every month, head of the panel said. MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said the allowance would apply to any number of children, scrapping the current limit of seven children. The proposal must be approved by the Assembly and then accepted by the government to become effective.

Since their election on June 6, a majority of lawmakers have been pressing the government to improve the living standards of Kuwaiti citizens, saying the last time wages were increased was over 10 years ago.

Meanwhile, MP Saud Al-Asfour on Sunday called for lowering the voting age for Kuwaitis from 21 to 18 and also called for allowing servicemen in the police force and the armed forces to vote, lifting a decades-old ban. The proposals were made by Asfour as part of a number of amendments he proposed to the election law which was passed by the Assembly in the first reading on Thursday. The interior and defense committee will be studying further amendments to the law before passing it in the second and final reading.

The main theme of the law calls for the establishment of a high election commission for the first time to supervise and organize parliamentary elections. The commission will consist of seven senior judges. Other amendments proposed by Asfour include calling to make the duration of the seven judges for just one four-year term renewable for one more term. He also proposed that the law must categorically state that political prisoners who were convicted of offending HH the Amir will be able to run in elections. The current law bars them for life from running for public office.

Kuwait to respond firmly against bids to undermine security

KUWAIT: Kuwait will deal "firmly" with any effort aiming to jeopardize the nation's security, Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said on Sunday, emphasizing that no one is above the law. Security personnel will remain vigilant and steadfast in efforts to keep the nation's security intact, he told senior officials from his ministry, underlining the "gratitude" of the country's political leadership for such measures.

This came in a press release issued by the general department of security relations and media at the ministry of interior after Sheikh Talal chaired a security meeting with assistant undersecretaries in the presence of Interior Ministry Undersecretary

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets senior ministry officials on July 30, 2023. — KUNA

Suicide blast kills 44 at Pakistan political gathering

PESHAWAR: At least 44 people were killed and dozens more wounded Sunday in a suicide bombing at a political gathering of a leading Islamic party in northwest Pakistan, officials said. The blast targeted the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) party, a government

coalition partner led by an influential firebrand cleric. More than 400 party members and supporters had gathered under a canopy when the attack took place in the town of Khar, near the border with Afghanistan.

"As we awaited the arrival of the central leadership, a sudden and loud bang echoed through the venue," said Sabeeh Ullah, a 24-year-old supporter who fractured his arm in the blast. "I found myself lying next to someone who had lost their limbs. The air was filled with the smell of human flesh," he told AFP by phone.

Riaz Anwar, the health minister for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said local hospitals reported 44 dead and 123 wounded, including 17 patients in serious condition. "It was a suicide attack, with the bomber detonating himself in close proximity to the stage," he told AFP. Provincial governor Haji Ghulam Ali confirmed the toll. Images from the blast site circulating on social media showed bodies strewn around the scene, and volunteers helping blood-soaked victims to ambulances.

Pakistan's national assembly is due to dissolve in the next few weeks

ahead of elections expected in October or November, and political parties are already preparing to campaign. The blast coincides with a visit by a senior delegation of Chinese officials, including Vice Premier He Lifeng, who are due to arrive in the capital later Sunday evening.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but the local chapter of the Islamic State (IS) group has recently carried out attacks against JUI-F. Last year, IS said it was behind violent attacks against religious

Continued on Page 6

Benzina makes history with hijab at World Cup

ADELAIDE: Nouhaila Benzina became the first player to wear a hijab during a Women's World Cup game when she sported the Muslim headscarf in Morocco's match against South Korea on Sunday. World governing body FIFA lifted its ban on footballers wearing the hijab nearly a decade ago, after previous concerns over player safety.

The 25-year-old defender Benzina, who plays her club football in Morocco, ran out against South Ko-

rea in Adelaide to write her name in the history books. Benzina shared social media posts in the lead-up to the World Cup about wearing a hijab, but has not spoken to the media in Australia and New Zealand about it. She told broadcaster Al Jazeera recently it would be a proud moment. "Lots of work was done over many years, and thank God it had a positive result," she said. "We hope to play at a high level and honor Moroccans."

Several other sports have lifted hijab bans in recent years including basketball, but it is still not allowed during official football matches in France. The Moroccan women, coached by Frenchman Reynald Pedros, are at their first Women's World Cup on the back of a historic runners-up finish at the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations. They were thrashed 6-0 by Germany in their tournament opener, with Benzina remaining on the bench. — AFP



ADELAIDE: South Korea's forward Choe Yu-Ri and Morocco's defender Nouhaila Benzina fight for the ball during a 2023 Women's World Cup match at Hindmarsh Stadium on July 30, 2023. — AFP (See Page 16)



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Kuwait committed to combating human trafficking, says official

Al-Qallaf launches campaign on 'UN World Day Against Trafficking in Persons'



KUWAIT: A campaign entitled, 'Together against Human Trafficking' was launched on Sunday. — KUNA



Government agencies participating in the event.

KUWAIT: Kuwait commits itself to international criteria for combating human trafficking, migrant smuggling and protecting victims, said a Kuwaiti official on Sunday. Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Justice Ministry Hashem Al-Qallaf made the remark while launching a campaign entitled: "Together against Human Trafficking", co-organized by the Permanent National Committee concerned with Implementing the National Strategy to Prevent Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The campaign was launched to mark the 'UN World Day against Trafficking in Persons' which falls

on July 30. The crime of human trafficking has lately become the prime concern of the international community since it is deemed a breach of the basic principles of human rights and freedom, said Qallaf, who is deputy head of the committee.

This crime is not restricted to specific countries and it differs in its forms and manifestations according to how countries define the concept of human trafficking and their compliance with, and respect of, the basic principles of human rights, he added. The well-established values of the Kuwaiti society, notably tolerance, togetherness and respect of others, have reflected on all Kuwaiti pieces of

legislation pertinent to human rights and prevention of human trafficking and persecution of basic human rights, he said.

Kuwait promulgated Law 91/2013 for fighting human trafficking, with penalties ranging from 15 years in jail to death penalty, he pointed out. The Kuwaiti government, with all its sectors, has spared no effort to take all necessary measures to fight this crime and provide the largest possible protection for victims mainly by means of creating the Permanent National Committee concerned with implementing the National Strategy to Prevent Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants in 2018, Qallaf added.

Head of the IOM's Mission in Kuwait Mazen Aboulhosn commended Kuwait for having been in the forefront of the region's countries that enacted laws in the field of fighting human trafficking. He particularly spoke highly of Law 91/2013 and its amendments to cover technological means and to incriminate anyone involved in human trafficking, appreciating the national committee's role in this regard. The IOM seeks to enable concerned government agencies to combat this crime, update relevant legislation and laws and organize workshops for personnel training in dealing with cases, he added. — KUNA



Mazen Aboulhosn

Kuwait University admits 8,457 students for 23/24

KUWAIT: On Sunday, Kuwait University announced the names of 8,457 students admitted to the first semester for the academic year 2023/2024 in the medical, scientific and humanitarian colleges, as well as 601 students for the academic year 2023/2024 in three colleges, including Engineering, Energy, Computing, Systems, Business and Entrepreneurship in Abdullah Al-Salem University.

The Acting President of the University, DR Fayez Al-Dhafiri, said: "I am proud of having a new batch of Kuwaitis join our university. They had the best education at all academic levels until they were able to enroll in various colleges in science and art disciplines." He urged the students to work hard and persevere to be the best representatives of their university in the future and become exemplary students in various scientific fields. He expressed his happiness with this event, "which is of great importance to Kuwait University students, their parents and all university affiliates," Al-Dhafiri said.

He thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Acting Minister of Education, Dr Jassim Al-Ostad, for their support and care for their students throughout their academic career.

Acting Dean of Admission and Registration at the university, Dr Rawaa Al-Jarallah, said: "All students were accepted for the first semester and no student was postponed for the second semester."

"The admission system is unified between Kuwait University and Abdullah Al-Salem University," she said. "The minimum admission limits for scientific disciplines was 70 percent and for the literary disciplines 78 percent. Students with these percentages can apply for the second semester," Jarallah explained. A member of the founding council of the university, Dr Fawaz Al-Enezi, said: "Admission will be sent via email to each student who has been

Exploring and understanding physiotherapy

By Ahmad Ali

KUWAIT: In recent years, physiotherapy has progressively become more of a popular means of treatment not only to deal with injuries, pain or structural conditions, but also as a method of recovery. Kuwait Times spoke to physical therapist Seham Brito to shed light on the concepts, specificities and misconceptions of physical therapy.

Kuwait Times: For those who are unfamiliar, what is physiotherapy?

Seham Brito: Physiotherapy is a science-based healthcare profession, meaning that it applies a holistic approach to promote and maintain physical health by preventing injuries and recovering from them. There are three main areas of physiotherapy — musculoskeletal, which encompasses structural issues, muscular, joints, bones, etc; neurological, concentrating on the functioning of the nervous system; and cardiorespiratory, focusing on the functioning of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

KT: Who would require physiotherapy and who would you recommend it to?

Brito: Everyone and anyone might need to be



KUWAIT: Kuwait University officials during a press conference to announce admissions for the academic year 2023/2024 on Sunday.



accepted from high school graduates, while students admitted from graduates of other educational systems (American, British and others) will be sent special appointments to them to review the Admission and Registration Department to complete the requirements and submit the original documents."

Al-Enezi explained that the minimum differential rates for admission to the College of Engineering and Energy majoring in Medical and Instrumentation Engineering amounted to 91.84 percent, while robotics and mechatronics engineering amounted to 88.08 percent, while the percentage of energy systems engineering is 92.06 percent.

"The minimum differential rates for admission to the College of Computing and Systems majoring

in data science and artificial intelligence amounted to 87.16 percent, while cybersecurity engineering amounted to 92.46 percent, software engineering 88.85 percent and computer systems engineering 89.95 percent," Al-Enezi.

He pointed out that the minimum differential rates in the College of Business and Entrepreneurship in the specialization of supply chain management and logistics services amounted to 82.25 percent, while the specialization of digital marketing "literary" amounted to 83.69 percent, and "scientific" 85.39 percent, while the percentage for the specialization of entrepreneurship and innovation "literary" reached 90.58 percent and "scientific" 81.44 percent. — KUNA



Parents, watch out, your kids may be watching you!

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The idea of marriage can be different from one adult to another, where some may consider marriage as a fairytale that will last forever, while others see it as a responsibility that requires hard work and understanding partners. On the other hand, children can also have a perception of marriage that adults give to them indirectly. Children often see their parents as role models for marriage and observe their interactions. Kuwait Times spoke with some children to learn more about how they see marriage.

Sadeen, 10 years old, said she will never get married because according to her, marriage is all about fighting, cooking for many guests and dealing with ungrateful children. "I would rather live with my cousins, playing all the time. I do not want to fight with a man. It does not look like a nice life," she said.

Meanwhile, Talia Mzanra, 8, had a different point of view, saying marriage is a romantic event between two people who love each other, noting that in order to live happily ever after, they have to buy a big house and beautiful dresses. She explained her father always seems happy when her mother wears a beautiful dress and looks like a princess.

Marriage can also represent emotional security. For Abeer Adnan, 10, marriage is a source of love and support, explaining her father always supports her mother in buying things that make her happy. "I want someone to buy me nice things and let me go shopping. Marriage can help you get things you wish for," she said.

As for Ahmed Hourani, 6, marriage is about being the man of the house. "I am the man of the house when my father is out of the country. I know that my father is responsible for taking care of everything in the house for my mother and sister. I think marriage is hard, but I am a man, I can do it," he said proudly.

Child specialist and counseling psychologist Barehan Hassan affirmed children are seeing more than we want them to see, calling on parents to consider their actions because their kids are watching and picking up attitudes and behaviors and trying them as well to form their perception of future marriage. She added some children may experience confusion or uncertainty about marriage, particularly if they come from families where there is conflict, separation or divorce. "It's crucial to keep in mind that as kids become older, experience more life and refine their understanding of relationships, their attitudes on marriage may change for better or worse."

treated by a physiotherapist at some point in their lives. Many people have this idea that physical therapy only applies when someone has an injury, specifically sport related injuries. In reality, physiotherapy is applicable to athletes, geriatrics, pediatrics, accident injuries, prenatal, etc. Physical therapy can also address cardiovascular, cardiopulmonary and neurological issues. There are also specificity practices such as women's health therapy that evaluate and treat conditions that specifically affect women.

KT: What are the most prevalent cases you see here in Kuwait?

Brito: The most prevalent cases seen are generally musculoskeletal, things related to injuries or disorders, but there are also patients who have work-related complaints like neck or back pain from desk jobs. I also see many cases related to women's health with pelvic problems.

KT: How do you feel about the status of physiotherapy in Kuwait?

Brito: Demand for physiotherapy in Kuwait is growing. It has improved and is in high demand. Many people in Kuwait are becoming more and more aware and familiar with the importance of physical therapy, and there has been a high increase in demand over the last decade. This also applies abroad as well, a lot of people around the world are becoming more familiar with physiotherapy and what it is.

KT: Are there any misconceptions about physical therapy? What explanation would you

give to that?

Brito: Physical therapy is a passive treatment, meaning that it takes time to be effective. Patients sometimes expect it to be a quick fix, and that it would be a rapid and immediate solution, especially patients with chronic conditions who have been dealing and suffering with pain for years. Tissue healing, recovery and nervous system adaptation take time.

KT: Are there any issues that you might encounter as a physiotherapist?

Brito: The issues are those that might impede a patient's recovery. Sometimes patient compliance might not help the recovery process, other times they might not be following their home exercise program or might just not come back for their sessions because of their expectations and thinking that things would be resolved instantaneously. It's important to understand that sessions require follow-ups to be effective and on their own won't amount to much.

KT: When would someone seek physiotherapy over another form of treatment?

Brito: Usually, physical therapy would be an option if a condition can be treated without the exclusive requirement of medical or surgical intervention. Physical therapy can begin a few days after an injury or surgery and can be part of the recovery process. Other treatments can be received alongside physical therapy from other professionals such as medical doctors, surgeons, dietitians, personal trainers, etc.

Local

Strict laws, campaigns needed to protect pets from being abandoned

Activists call for compassion as phenomenon reaches alarming levels

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait has witnessed a remarkable spread of irresponsibility towards animal rights, with a rise in cases of people abandoning their pets, which has reached an alarming level. Due to the concerning spread of this unfortunate behavior, Kuwait Times interviewed Elika Mansouri, founder of iCare Kuwait, and Shahad Al-Otaibi, rescuer of stray animals and abandoned pets.



Shahad Al-Otaibi

Kuwait Times: In what ways can society work together to educate and discourage the act of abandoning pets?

Elika Mansouri: Our society needs to understand that animals are living beings, with physical and emotional needs. When owners abandon their pets, they must understand that these pets would have a very poor chance of survival on the streets after being accustomed to living in a house environment. These animals experience sadness, anxiety and fear when abandoned and will be exposed to car accidents and diseases. In order to educate society about the consequences of abandonment, rescue groups constantly share and post about the poor state of abandoned pets and try to discourage the act of abandoning animals.

Shahad Al-Otaibi: In my opinion, an anti-animal cruelty awareness campaign should focus on the adolescent and youth population. This is because, as I



An abandoned cat suffering from illness spotted by Shahad Al-Otaibi.

perceive it, children are where the demand signal for "pet toys" originate — they are most often the recipients of pet presents or the ones demanding them from their parents. Their request usually comes with a lack of forethought or true sense of responsibility. Children are also more malleable and impressionable than older adults.

For those reasons, I believe that awareness campaigns should start with educational events and lectures in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools to instill an understanding of pet animals as living, breathing and feeling creatures, which require long-term love, care, effort and time commitment, as well as emphasize the suffering and cruelty that home pets experience when their adopters abandon them.

Concurrently, animal rights and rescue groups, in collaboration with the Kuwaiti government, should raise public awareness by using billboards and pamphlets to awaken the public's sympathies for the suffering of abandoned pets. These campaigns can also seek to encourage the public to assist rescue teams with TNR (trap-neuter-release) campaigns, which aim to reduce the number of stray cats, and educate people about the benefits of spaying and neutering.

KT: What are some alternatives to abandoning cats that could ensure their well-being?

Mansouri: Individuals can contact rescue groups on social media platforms to surrender their animals safely. It is logical for any rescue group to have a surrender fee that would go towards basic vetting, food and the overall care of the animal. The establishment of government-based shelters or offering government financial assistance to pre-existing rescue groups is also very crucial for the crisis we are experiencing. There are currently many privately-funded rescue groups that work tirelessly day and night and deserve to be recognized and supported financially. All these groups should be offered the opportunity to apply for permits and registration in order to receive official support and sponsorship. Groups are currently overwhelmed because there is no government shelter as well as no implemented law that punishes or stops people from abandoning their pets, and the number of animals in need surpasses the available resources they have.

Otaibi: Three ideas come to mind if, ultimately, an adopting family is forced to abandon their pets. Firstly, they can ask family, friends and relatives, whom they believe are interested in adopting home pets, to take in their pet. Secondly, those families can seek out groups that foster pet animals and help rehabilitate them. Finally, pet homing families can solicit the help of animal shelters and rescue groups to find a new home for their pets in Kuwait or abroad. The latter option should be a last resort, as rescue groups have thin-stretched resources to deal with their current caseloads.

KT: How does abandoning cats contribute to the burden on animal shelters and rescue organizations?

Mansouri: Kuwait currently struggles with the overpopulation of stray cats. Abandoning your cats adds to the crisis we are already experiencing in the community, and as a consequence, rescue groups will

search and produce high-quality data and insights on the real estate market in Kuwait. By analyzing market trends, monitoring the performance of various property types and identifying emerging opportunities and challenges, a RESI will contribute significantly to enhancing market transparency and efficiency. The availability of accurate and reliable market data will enable investors, developers and policymakers to make informed decisions, ultimately leading to a more stable and robust real estate market. Moreover, increased transparency will attract foreign investments, further fueling growth and development in the sector.

Encouraging sustainable development

Sustainability is an increasingly important consideration in the real estate sector, as the industry grapples with the challenges of climate change, resource scarcity and rapid urbanization. A RESI in Kuwait can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development by conducting research on green building technologies, energy efficiency and environmentally friendly urban planning practices. By fostering a better understanding of the environmental impact of the real estate sector, a RESI will help developers and policymakers devise strategies to minimize negative consequences and promote sustainable growth. This will not only benefit the environment but also improve the long-term viability and competitiveness of the real estate sector as a whole.

Supporting economic diversification

The Kuwaiti government has been actively calling towards diversifying its economy to reduce dependence on oil revenues. The real estate sector has significant potential to contribute to this diversification effort, as it is a major source of employment and investment. By promoting research, innovation and professional development in the sector, a RESI will help unlock its full potential and support the country's broader economic diversification goals.

In conclusion, the establishment of a Real Estate Studies Institute in Kuwait is a vital step towards fostering growth and development in the real estate sector. A RESI will contribute to enhancing professionalism, promoting market transparency, encouraging sustainable development and supporting economic diversification. With the right support from stakeholders, a RESI can serve as a catalyst for positive change and help ensure the long-term success of the real estate sector in Kuwait.



Elika Mansouri is seen surrounded by rescued dogs.

face a shortage in resources and space. The financial, physical and psychological impacts would eventually exhaust rescue groups, which could pause or terminate their rescue missions.

Otaibi: Animal shelters and rescue groups already deal with a huge volume of cases of injured, dying and abandoned pet cats and dogs. They often work with little donations and few funding sources or are outright volunteers. Additional cases of abandoned home pets further strain their limited resources and often leads to the death of those animals that animal shelters and rescue groups do not have the capacity to save.

KT: How can we encourage the public to adopt abandoned cats and pay more attention and responsibility towards this matter?

Mansouri: No positive change can happen unless strict laws are implemented to protect the animals and their rights. Rescue groups can offer open house days or adoption days at pet stores, offering the public the opportunity to adopt their rescues, but this does not solve our issues. Unless the laws are in place on the protection of animal welfare as well as strict regulation on imports and breeding, nothing will stop people from buying pets and easily abandoning them. For example, Saudi Arabia now considers leaving animals under the sun a punishable crime. We frequently see animals struggle in extreme heat, and Kuwait is one of the hottest countries around the world.

Otaibi: I believe those awareness campaigns we discussed at the beginning can also help raise the public's interest in adopting abandoned pets by showcasing success stories of rehabilitated and rehomed pets, highlighting the feeling of fulfillment and happiness that brings to both the readopting family as well as the pet itself. As part of those campaigns, greater emphasis should focus on adopting abandoned pets as opposed to buying pets from private (over) breeders, who, I believe, are contributing to the problem at hand, but that is another conversation.



Abandoned domestic cats found by Shahad Al-Otaibi are seen in this photo.

KT: What are the potential consequences of abandoning pets?

Mansouri: Some of the consequences of abandoning your pet, specifically in Kuwait are dehydration and heatstroke, exposure to extreme temperature, starvation and malnutrition, which hampers the immune system, making them more susceptible to becoming ill, injuries and death on the roads, overpopulation crisis and public disturbance. Public intervention resulted in many of these abandoned cats to recently be trapped in large numbers and disposed.

Also, it has been years since irresponsible owners have been abandoning their pets by the beach. Many rescue groups have been caring for them over the years (including spaying/neutering, vaccination and treatment). All of this goes back to the same issue we have: Lack of strict laws against animal abandonment and cruelty.

Otaibi: In addition to the pain and suffering abandoned home pets experience, the dumping of animals has consequences for the community that many people fail to realize. For example, abandoned animals may pose a road safety risk if they run out in the street while attempting to search for their owners. They may also cause unintentional 'nuisance' to the community while they roam around searching for food, or because of being in distress or feeling unsafe, bark at other dogs (in case of abandoned dogs) or bite another pet or person. Moreover, abandoned cats exacerbate the problem of stray animals in the country, as those cats' mate with other stray or abandoned cats.

Real estate studies institute to catalyze growth of sector

By Mansour Al-Tamimi

The real estate sector plays a crucial role in the economic growth and development of any nation. In Kuwait, the real estate market has been experiencing remarkable growth in recent years, with a steady increase in demand for residential, commercial and industrial properties. However, to sustain this growth and ensure the sector's long-term success, it is essential to establish a specialized institution dedicated to real estate studies and research — a Real Estate Studies Institute (RESI) in Kuwait. This article aims to highlight the importance of such an institute and demonstrate the positive impact it will have on the real estate sector in Kuwait.



Mansour Al-Tamimi

Enhancing professionalism and competence

The establishment of a RESI will contribute to the professionalization of the real estate sector by providing specialized education and training programs for individuals involved in the industry. By offering courses, seminars and workshops in various disciplines such as property management, valuation, real estate finance and urban planning, a RESI will ensure that professionals in the sector are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to meet the evolving demands of the market.

Furthermore, a RESI will serve as a platform for collaboration between academia, industry and government, fostering a culture of innovation and knowledge exchange. This collaboration will lead to the development of new strategies, tools and best practices that will enhance the overall performance of the real estate sector in Kuwait.

Promoting market transparency and efficiency

A key role of a RESI would be to conduct re-



KUWAIT: First Deputy Premier, Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is seen with the graduates during a ceremony held in their honor. — KUNA

Defense ministry raises enlistment age to 55

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah issued a decision on Sunday whereby non-commissioned officers and individuals wishing to re-volunteer in the military no longer have to wait a specified period before they can do so.

The decision also raises the age limit for people who want to join the military to 55 years, in accordance with the controls decided by the Presidency of the General Staff of the Army. According to a statement from the Ministry of Defense, the decision comes to provide an opportunity for the largest number of people to re-volunteer in military service,

with the aim of benefiting from their scientific and field expertise to improve the level of readiness in all sectors of the Kuwaiti army.

5 female officers promoted

Also Sunday, First Deputy Premier, Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the graduation of five female university grads promoted to lieutenants from their rank as non-commissioned officers.

According to a statement, Sheikh Talal called on the graduates to take responsibility in applying all that they learned during their studies to serve their country and enhance its security. The Interior Minister congratulated the graduates on their new ranks and urged them to fulfill their duties diligently. Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt General Anwar Al-Barjas, Assistant Undersecretary for the Minister's office Major General Hamid Al-Baloul, and Assistant Undersecretary for Education and Training Major General Bader Al-Baloul attended the graduation ceremony. —KUNA

Kuwait, Jordan conclude joint exercises

KUWAIT: The joint military drills between Kuwait and Jordan mark a step towards exchanging expertise in combating terrorism, a Kuwaiti official told KUNA. The remarks came on Sunday after the conclusion of the exercises carried out by the Kuwaiti Special Task Battalion in the Commando Brigade of the Kuwaiti Army with the Royal

Jordanian Special Forces, which went on for two weeks.

The two sides looked at mechanisms of planning special operations and developing skills in various fields. The commander of the Special Task Battalion of the Kuwaiti Army's Commando Brigade participating in the joint exercise Ramah Al-Haq (14), Lt Col Abdulwahab Al-Mana said the exercise was a sign of harmony between the leaderships of the Kuwaiti and Jordanian armies and their agreement at the strategic and operational levels.

He praised the cooperation of the Jordanian side and their efforts in facilitating the task of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the exercise, which is being held for the fourteenth consecutive year.—KUNA

News in Brief

Worker dies during shift

KUWAIT: A worker fell to his death in an elevator of a house under construction South of Abdullah Al-Mubarak. Fire Force PR said that Istiqlal search and rescue centers rushed to the site and found the man dead as he fell into the well of the elevator.

18 nabbed in 11 drug cases

KUWAIT: The Criminal Security Sector, represented by the General Administration for Drug Control, has arrested 18 people (10 citizens, four illegal residents, two people of Asian nationality and two people of Arab nationality) in 11 different cases. In total, the suspects were found in possession of about four kilos of narcotic substances of various kinds, 830 tablets of psychotropic substances, 214 bottles of alcohol, a quantity of Lyrica, two weapons (Kalashnikov) and varying amounts of money. The arrests are a continuation of the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to confront drug dealers and smugglers and protect the youth of the country from the dangers of this devastating scourge, the ministry said in a news release. Efforts are ongoing to find and dismantle drug dens, as security men continue to deal "painful blows" to drug dealers, the drug control administration said in a statement. Officers will not go easy on anyone who compromises the security of the homeland and the safety of citizens, it added.

Electricity shutdown rumors inaccurate

KUWAIT: The electricity ministry said rumors circulating on social media about the shutdown of air conditioners in some schools and government agencies and cutting off electricity in industrial areas, chalets, and farms is inaccurate. The ministry said in a statement that the routine emergency plan is implemented annually before the summer season and takes into account all possible scenarios for providing alternatives when need be. The ministry continues its awareness campaigns to save electricity and water, reduce waste in consumption, and preserve and sustain the country's resources through the optimal use of them. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Workers shelter from the sun under a tree in Kuwait City on July 30, 2023, amidst a heatwave. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Mounting oil demand behind rise in crude prices: Kuwaiti experts

Oil consumption, prices forecast to drop in the second half of 2023

KUWAIT: Two Kuwaiti oil analysts said that the rise in crude oil prices in last week's trading, which reached their highest level since last April, was driven by an improved outlook for global oil demand and additional stimulus measures for the Chinese economy.

The analysts said in separate statements to the Kuwait news agency (KUNA) on Sunday that oil prices rose for the fifth week in a row in the futures markets by about 8.4 percent for Brent crude and 6.4 percent for West Texas U.S. crude, the longest weekly gain series for more than a year.

Professor of Petroleum Engineering at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Ahmad Al-Kouh explained that the global economy is still "relatively weak," citing the interest rate hike decisions taken by the US Federal Reserve (central bank) and other central banks in an attempt to support the global economy.

Kouh said that he expects a decrease in global oil consumption in the second half of this year, stressing the need for OPEC + to remain vigilant and continuously follow up on the accelerated developments witnessed by the global oil markets.

He ruled out any future production cuts by OPEC + countries, noting that the recent voluntary cuts announced by the bloc were the "right decision" and served their purpose by maintaining price levels above the \$70 threshold.

Another contributing factor to low prices, he said, is that the number of oil rigs operating in the US fell to its lowest level since March 2022 at 529 rigs "in an indication of the possibility of a decline in future production there".

Energy expert Jamal Al-Gharabally predicted that oil prices will maintain their gains achieved over the past weeks due to the cohesion of OPEC + led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, in addition to Saudi Arabia announcing a new voluntary reduction by one million barrels per day and Russia's confirmation to maintain the current low production rates over the next year.

The rise in oil demand in China has also helped oil prices stay at relatively high levels, Gharabally said, and the decline in global oil inventories, es-



Ahmad Al-Kouh



Jamal Al-Gharabally

pecially in the United States, indicating that forecasts suggest that price levels will remain in the range of \$85 to \$90 until the end of 2023. He said that there is a noticeable improvement in global oil demand because the US economy growth was greater than expected during the second quarter of the year. It can also be attributed to growing hopes that major central banks are nearing the end of their interest rate hike policies. — KUNA



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NBK supports LOYAC's 'KON' program

KUWAIT: As a platinum sponsor, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomes the participants from LOYAC's program "KON". This social entrepreneurship program is co-created with Babson College, the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. The program aims to introduce young adults between the ages of 12 to 16 to the world business and to turn their ideas into action.

Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager Human Resources Group, attended the opening of the program. NBK will take part in the training sessions that will be ongoing until August 10, 2023. Throughout the four-week program, leaders from NBK along with a group of professional leaders, mentors and trainers, locally and regionally, will encourage the 53 participants to create a profitable business that solves social challenges.

NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with LOYAC. NBK is dedicated towards sup-

porting talented young people and empowering them towards achieving their goals.

KON is one of these initiatives that help invest and support young youths. NBK supported KON for eight consecutive years. The program provides its expertise to young people through training sessions and workshops and looks forward to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future.

"KON" students will experience different stages during the program: thinking, planning and doing. The experiential learning journey the students undertake throughout the five weeks supports them to learn skills that include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration. The students also learn technical skills to write up a successful business plan, and how to pitch their business ideas before a jury panel, in addition to a professor from Babson College.

NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. The KON program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in youth and support their aspirations.

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



Australia grounds
Taipan helicopters

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Russia thwarts Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow and Crimea

Drones suppressed by electronic warfare



MOSCOW: A view of a damaged office block of the Moscow International Business Center (Moskva City) following a reported drone attack in Moscow on July 30, 2023. — AFP

MOSCOW: Russia said on Sunday it had downed Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow and the Crimea peninsula, in attacks that damaged two office towers in the capital and briefly shut an international airport. One drone targeting Moscow was shot down on the city's outskirts and two others were "suppressed by electronic warfare" and smashed into an office complex early on Sunday, the Russian defense ministry said, adding that there were no injuries.

Moscow and its environs, lying about 500 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, had rarely been targeted during the conflict in Ukraine until several drone attacks this year. The attack reported Sunday is the latest in a series of recent drone assaults - including on the Kremlin and Rus-

sian towns near the border with Ukraine - that Moscow has blamed on Kyiv.

The defense ministry called it an "attempted terrorist attack". "On the morning of July 30, the Kyiv regime's attempted terrorist attack with unmanned aerial vehicles on objects in the city of Moscow was thwarted," it said on Telegram. "One Ukrainian UAV was destroyed in the air by air defense systems over the territory of the Odintsovo district of Moscow region. "Two more drones were suppressed by electronic warfare and, having lost control, crashed on the territory of Moscow-City's non-residential building complex."

Moscow-City is a commercial development in the west of the capital. Its mayor Sergei Sobyenin posted on Telegram that the "facades of two city office towers were

slightly damaged". He added that there were "no victims or injured". Several windows had been blown out on the corner of the buildings, AFP photos showed, with mangled steel beams visible and documents strewn on the ground below. Police officers had cordoned off the area.

Airport briefly closed

The TASS state news agency reported that the capital's Vnukovo airport was "closed for departures and arrivals, flights are redirected to other airports". Within less than an hour, operations appeared to have returned to normal. Earlier this month, a volley of drone attacks briefly disrupted air traffic at the same airport, to the city's southwest.

The defense ministry also said on Sunday that 16 Ukrainian drones were destroyed

by air defense fire in an overnight attack on Crimea, a peninsula Moscow annexed in 2014. "Another nine Ukrainian drones were suppressed by means of electronic warfare and, without reaching the target, crashed into the Black Sea," the ministry said, adding that there were no victims. Crimea has been targeted by Kyiv throughout Moscow's Ukraine offensive but has come under more intense, increased attacks in recent weeks. Kyiv has repeatedly said it plans to take Crimea back.

The attacks on Moscow come several weeks into a Ukrainian counter-offensive to claw back territory captured by Russia since large-scale hostilities erupted in February 2022. Russia's foreign ministry has said such attacks "would not be possible without the help provided to the Kyiv regime by the US and its NATO allies". On Friday Russia said it

had intercepted two missiles over its southern Rostov region bordering Ukraine, with at least 16 people wounded by debris falling on the city of Taganrog. Shortly after, it said it had downed a second S-200 missile near the city of Azov, with debris falling in an unpopulated area.

On the other side of the border, a Russian strike killed two people in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia on Saturday, authorities there said. And at least one civilian was killed in a missile attack on the northeastern city of Sumy, according to Ukrainian national police, who added that there were five injured. According to public broadcaster Suspilne, the building was destroyed in an explosion at about 8:00 pm. In early July, a Russian drone attack hit an apartment building in the same city, killing three and wounding 21. — AFP

Trapped Indonesian miners feared dead

BANYUMAS: Eight people trapped in an illegal gold mine on the Indonesian island of Java are feared dead, a local rescue official said Sunday, as search efforts entered a fifth day with little progress. Unlicensed mines - many with disregard for basic safety measures - are common across the mineral-rich Southeast Asian archipelago and accidents are frequent. The workers were digging inside a hole with a depth of 60 meters (200 feet) in Pancurendang village in Central Java on Tuesday evening when water suddenly flooded the illegal mine. Rescuers had deployed water pumps around the clock and worked to dam a nearby river in a frantic bid to get the water out of the mining shaft but it remained flooded on Sunday.

"This is already the fifth day. We expect the bad news that the victims have died," local search and rescue agency head Adah Sudarsa told reporters Sunday. Sudarsa said the rescue effort would continue until Tuesday in the hope of retrieving the miners' bodies, which are yet to be found. Authorities had planned to deploy divers to find the miners but local rescue official Priyo Prayudha Utama told AFP "it was not possible" because the mine shaft was too narrow.

Most of the trapped miners had moved from



BANYUMAS: Members of Indonesian search and rescue team carry a generator during a search operation for trapped miners in Banyumas in July 30, 2023. — AFP

West Java to mine in the region, police said. On Friday police charged four people with allegedly operating the mine without a permit. The suspects, including one who remains at large, face up to five years in prison and 100 billion rupiah (\$6.6 million) in fines. In 2021, six people were killed on Su-

lawesi island after an illegal gold mine collapsed. At least 16 people were killed two years earlier when another illegal gold mine on the island collapsed and buried the workers. In 2016, 11 miners died after a mudslide engulfed an illegal gold mine in Sumatra's Jambi province. — AFP

Thai warehouse explosion kills 10

BANGKOK: The death toll from a powerful explosion that leveled an unlicensed fireworks warehouse in southern Thailand rose to at least 10 on Sunday, the local governor said, as police sought the owner on charges of negligence. The blast Saturday afternoon in the town of Sungai Kolok was believed to have been caused by welding during construction work on the building. More than 100 people were injured in the blast, which left only twisted metal beams still standing as rescue workers picked over the debris, with local media reporting hundreds of homes were also seriously damaged.

"We have identified 10 people and found parts of two bodies which we cannot identify yet," Narathiwat provincial governor Sanan Pongakorn told a press conference Sunday. "We

are sending to forensics to do DNA tests but primary reports said they were different (people)," he added. Sanan had previously said the blast was believed to have been caused by a "technical error" during welding. Police on Sunday said they were still investigating the cause, adding they believed the facility was not licensed to store fireworks.

Provincial commander Police Major General Chalernporm Khamkhiew said firecrackers had been delivered shortly before the explosion. "We are investigating if those firecrackers were transported legally or illegally," he said. "As of now, we do not see any licence for possession of firecrackers or firecracker sales," he said. "We assume the factory has no licence." The blast detonated roughly 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds) of gunpowder, he said, leaving two holes roughly two meters deep and six meters (20 feet) wide.

"We have issued a summons to the owner of the factory with the charge



NARATHIWAT: Forensic personnel inspect the site of an explosion that ripped through a firework warehouse in Sungai Kolok district Narathiwat province on July 30, 2023. — AFP

of negligence, which caused the accident," said Colonel Suthawat Thareethai, police chief in Muno district. "We are waiting for him to come." Officials said a command centre had been established not far from the scene, and

authorities had already received 365 complaints from those who had been injured or had their homes and property damaged. Damage to government offices and private schools was also reported, they added. — AFP

Biden, Netanyahu unhappily bound in a key alliance

WASHINGTON: They have known each other for decades, rubbing shoulders at countless international events, but there is little love lost between US President Joe Biden and Benjamin Netanyahu as the Zionist prime minister faces a full-blown crisis over a contested judicial reform. For the Democratic president, a fervent supporter of Zionists for a half-century, the dilemma has become increasingly public as he seeks ways to work with the most far-right government in history.

While Biden continues to insist on the "ironclad" nature of America's support for its Zionist ally, he describes that country's government as the most "extremist" he has known. And while Biden has urged caution over the judicial reform, even denouncing it, the Zionist leader moves ahead unbudged, describing it as a "minor correction" despite the massive protests it has spawned in his country and the sharp criticism from abroad. It is striking: while Biden has involved himself in a Zionist internal matter to a degree rare for a US president, his influence remains clearly limited.

'Regrettable'

The White House on Monday described as "regrettable" the approval by the Knesset of a key measure in the judicial reform plan, which backers insist provides a needed rebalancing of power between the branches of government. In an unusual move, the US president invited to the White House a New York Times columnist, Thomas Friedman, to underscore his opposition to a reform that Biden considers "a source of division."

Beyond the reform itself, the Biden administration has not hidden its frustration over annexation of Palestinian territories, which has gone on despite repeated US calls for the two sides to de-escalate and avoid unilateral measures. But while Washington continues its pro-forma advocacy of a two-state solution for Zionists and the Palestinians, it seems increasingly to be preaching in the wilderness.

The latest tensions are reminiscent of those between President Barack Obama and Netanyahu in 2015, when Biden was vice president and the United States was negotiating a nuclear agreement with Iran, to the manifest displeasure of Zionists. That agreement has been moribund since then president Donald Trump, who was close to Netanyahu, withdrew from the pact in 2018. Repeated efforts by Biden to revive it have been futile. These tensions surfaced again in a squabble over whether Netanyahu would be invited to the White House for the first time since he returned to power late last year. — AFP

International

Coups in Africa's troubled Sahel hampering anti-jihadist efforts

EU suspends financial, security cooperation

PARIS: The coup in Niger, the third in as many years to topple an elected leader in Africa's troubled Sahel, threatens to further hamper efforts against jihadist groups in the region, analysts say. Niger's neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso have each undergone a military coup since 2020, fuelled by anger at the failure to quash long-running insurgencies by jihadists linked to the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda.

In Niger, which faces a two-pronged jihadist insurgency, President Mohamed Bazoum was this week confined to his residence by his own presidential guard, with the head of the elite force, General Abdourahmane Tiani, declaring himself the new leader. Like Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso are impoverished former French colonies that gained independence in 1960. Following their coups, the juntas there forced out French troops, with Mali cooperating with forces from Russia, which has for years strived to increase its influence in Africa.

While it was not immediately clear if Niger's new masters would follow suit, Tiani made clear there would be a change of strategy. "The security approach today has not brought security to the country despite heavy sacrifices," he said after declaring himself leader. Specifically, he questioned "the sense and scope of a security approach to the fight against terrorism which excludes any real collaboration with Burkina Faso and Mali", a strategy taken after the coups in those countries.

Western aid at risk

Analysts say that while increasing cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso may bring benefits, the putschists risked losing financial and military support from the West, which has stood behind Bazoum. Because of diplomatic tensions following the coup in Mali, Niger and French troops could no longer operate freely against IS bases in the country, where attacks on Niger are thought to be organized.

"This crisis cannot be resolved without cooperation from Mali in one form or another," said Tatyana Smirnova, a researcher at the FrancoPaix Centre for conflict resolution. Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, a researcher with the International Crisis Group, said that "we can expect better relations and cooperation between the neighboring countries". But Niger's new rulers risked losing support from the West.

Bazoum was one of a dwindling group of pro-Western leaders in the Sahel, allowing 1,500 French troops and 1,000 US soldiers to be stationed in Niger. The European Union has announced that it was suspending financial and security cooperation with the country, while the United States has warned that "hundreds of millions of dollars of assistance" was at risk. If France and Washington withdraw their forces, it could leave a dangerous security void in a troubled region, analysts said. Nearly all of landlocked Niger's neighbors have jihadist rebels that could take advantage of the void - in addition to Mali and Burkina Faso, there are insurgencies in Benin, Libya and Nigeria.

'Civilians pay heaviest price'

Impoverished populations often make for fertile breeding grounds for extremists and Niger is one of the world's poorest nations - two-thirds desert, it often ranks last in the UN's Human Development Index. It already faces two insurgent campaigns - one which swept in from Mali in 2015 and the other involving jihadists from Nigeria. In addition, in 2022 it was hosting more than 250,000 refugees fleeing violence in Nigeria and Mali, according to the United Nations.

But despite all of its challenges, Niger under Bazoum was a model of cooperation for the West. "Despite its security problems, it was a pole of stability in the region," said Alain Antil, director of the sub-Saharan Africa division at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). Under Bazoum, Niger undertook programs financed by

His rivals now charge that he wants to remain "president for life" - under the increasingly visible protection of private Russian mercenary group Wagner, which first deployed to the CAR in 2018. The country of 5.5 million people is one of the world's poorest. Voting was scheduled to begin at 6:00 am but polling stations opened around one hour late. The polls are due to close at 4:00 pm, with some 1.9 million people called on to cast their ballots. Provisional results are not expected for eight days, while the constitutional court is scheduled to publish the definitive outcome on August 27, according to the national electoral authority.

The proposed new constitution would extend the presidential mandate from five to seven years and abolish the two-term limit. Opinion polls suggest the "yes" camp is likely to triumph. "We know that the 'yes' camp is going to win - but we shall put the emphasis on participation,"

secured under heavy guard at a bunker awaiting a court hearing.

In March, in an interview with the magazine *Semana*, Vasquez alleged that Nicolas Petro received large amounts of money from drug traffickers and smugglers in 2022 for his father's ultimately successful presidential campaign. But instead, the younger Petro used it to live in luxury in Barranquilla, Vasquez alleged. Petro wrote: "I wish my son luck and strength. May these events build his character and may he reflect on his mistakes."

"As a person and father it hurts to see so much self-destruction," he added, and vowed to stay out of the legal proceedings involving his son. Prosecutors confirmed the arrest of Nicolas Petro on charges of money laundering and illicit enrichment. Vasquez was also charged with money laundering. Since the scandal broke, President Petro has denied receiving

and oil resources, last year signed an agreement to jointly develop the field despite objections from Iran, which branded the deal as "illegal". The row over the field stretches back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait each awarded an offshore concession, one to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the forerunner to BP, and one to Royal Dutch Shell.

The two concessions overlapped in the northern part of the field, whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220 billion cu m. Iran and Kuwait have held unsuccessful talks for many years over their disputed maritime border area, which is rich in natural gas. Iranian drilling of the field in 2001 spurred Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to agree on joint offshore projects. Saudi Arabia and Iran ended in March a seven-year rift with a surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal, raising hopes for reduced tensions between the Middle East heavyweights. — AFP

allenges and risks, and maintain an active and continuous presence in order to enhance security in the country and address problems firsthand.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled conveyed to officials of the security establishment the greetings and appreciation of the country's senior leadership for their unlimited contribution in preserving the security of the homeland and citizens, praising the great efforts made by all sectors of the ministry of interior. — KUNA

Pakistan has seen a sharp rise in militant attacks since the Afghan Taliban surged back to power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021. Pakistan's home-grown Taliban group, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has largely directed its campaign against security officials, including police officers. In January, a suicide bomber linked to Pakistan's Taliban blew himself up in a mosque inside a police compound in the northwestern city of Peshawar, killing more than 80 officers.

The militant assaults have been focused in regions abutting Afghanistan, and Islamabad alleges some are being planned on Afghan soil — a charge Kabul denies. Pakistan was once plagued by almost daily bombings, but a major military clearance operation in the former tribal areas starting in 2014 largely restored order. The seven remote districts that border Afghanistan, of which Bajaur is one, were later brought under the control of Pakistani authorities after the passage of legislation in 2018. — AFP



NIAMEY: Nigerien policemen are seen as supporters rally in support of Niger's junta in Niamey on July 30, 2023. Thousands of people demonstrated in front of the French embassy in Niamey on Sunday, before being dispersed by tear gas, during a rally in support of the military putschists who overthrew the elected president Mohamed Bazoum in Niger. — AFP

international donors like stabilizing communities that were targeted by jihadist recruitment and re-integrating former fighters into society. The future of these initiatives is now uncertain.

Although it was not yet clear the direction that Niger's new leaders would take in the fight against the jihadists, Tiani denounced the "extrajudicial freeing" of "terrorist chiefs" by the government. The juntas run-

ning Burkina Faso and Mali have opted for an offensive-heavy strategy against the jihadists that has been marred by recurrent accusations of abuse of local civilian populations suspected of cooperating with the fighters. "It is civilians who pay the heaviest price of such a strategy, which contributed to destabilization and can feed tensions within and between communities," Smirnova said. — AFP

national assembly vice-president and presidential majority spokesman Evariste Ngamama told AFP. The main opposition parties, civil groups and armed rebels have all called on voters to boycott the exercise. The opposition has notably complained about the lack of an up-to-date electoral register and says institutions tasked with guaranteeing a free and fair vote are not independent.

In the capital Bangui, between 2,000 and 3,000 "yes" supporters turned out Friday for a final meeting to drum up further backing for the proposal. But observers said the vote might not inspire much interest among the general populace. "The majority of the CAR population, who are struggling to survive in a difficult economic and security context, doubtless have other priorities aside from this referendum which mobilizes few beyond those close to those in power," said Charles Bouessel, analyst with the International Crisis Group. — AFP

money from the country's powerful cocaine lords. He himself asked that his son be investigated.

Nicolas Petro was born in the 1980s while his father was in the Marxist M-19 urban guerilla insurgency, one of several armed groups fighting the lock on power by traditional political parties. The father recently said he was absent from his son's life due to the civil war, unlike with his five younger children raised after a peace accord with the M-19 movement was signed in 1990. Nicolas Petro was a lawmaker for his father's party in the northern Atlantic department. News outlets published bank records of his showing he had far more assets than his salary from congress justified.

In that department and elsewhere along Colombia's Caribbean coast, the younger Petro became a key player in his father's drive to become president. People in the country's Caribbean region have his-

torically been wary of leftist politicians, but in 2022 they supported Petro as the country elected him as its first leftist president after decades of rule by conservatives. Vasquez said in the March interview with *Semana* that her former husband received the equivalent of \$124,000 from a former drug trafficker named Samuel Santander Lopesierra.



BANGUI: Central African Republic President Faustin Archange Touadéra votes at the Boganda high school in Bangui, on July 30, 2023. — AFP

torically been wary of leftist politicians, but in 2022 they supported Petro as the country elected him as its first leftist president after decades of rule by conservatives. Vasquez said in the March interview with *Semana* that her former husband received the equivalent of \$124,000 from a former drug trafficker named Samuel Santander Lopesierra.

She said President Petro was not aware of the money Nicolas Petro got from the convicted trafficker. Santander Lopesierra served 18 years in prison in the United States for drug trafficking. In another scandal, involving illegal wiretaps, former Colombian ambassador to Venezuela Armando Benedetti threatened to reveal what he said were irregularities in the Petro campaign in the Caribbean region. In leaked conversations with the president's ex-chief of staff, Benedetti suggested Nicolas Petro was involved in these irregularities. — AFP

CAR votes on new constitution; Leader eyes third term

BANGUI: The Central African Republic began voting on Sunday in a referendum on a new constitution that would allow President Faustin-Archange Touadéra to seek a third term in a country which has endured several coups. In 2020 Touadéra won a second term through to 2025, after a vote interrupted by several incursions by armed rebel groups, while he also had to overcome allegations of fraud.

Colombia leader's son arrested over money laundering

BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro's son Nicolas was arrested Saturday on charges of money laundering and illicit enrichment in a scandal linked to Petro's election campaign, officials said. Colombia's first leftist president wrote on Twitter, which is being rebranded as X, that police arrested his son and the son's ex-wife Daysuris Vasquez. Security agents arrested Nicolas Petro, 37, and Vasquez in the coastal city of Barranquilla and brought them to the capital Bogota, where prosecutors said they were

Kuwait and Iraq seek to...

Continued from Page 1

"Iran will not tolerate any violation of its rights," Owji added. Earlier this month, Kuwait had invited Iran for another round of maritime border talks after Tehran said it was ready to start drilling in the field. On Thursday, Sky News Arabia quoted Kuwait's Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak as saying his country would begin "drilling and production" at the gas field without waiting for a demarcation deal with Iran.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who share some maritime gas

Kuwait to respond firmly against bids...

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Lt Gen Anwar Al-Barjas. Sheikh Talal stressed the need to apply the law to everyone without exception, exert more efforts and vigilance, face chal-

Suicide blast kills 44 at Pakistan...

Continued from Page 1

scholars affiliated with the party, which has a huge network of mosques and madrassas in the north and west of the country. The jihadist group accuses JUI-F of hypocrisy for being an Islamic group while supporting hostile governments and the military.

The party's leader, cleric Fazlur Rehman started political life as a firebrand Islamist hardliner but has softened his public image over the years in a bid to forge alliances with secular parties on the left and right of the spectrum. With the ability to mobilize tens of thousands of madrasa students, his party never musters enough support for power on its own, but is usually a key player in any coalition.

Taliban create bonfire of music equipment

HERAT: Authorities from Afghanistan's vice ministry created a bonfire of confiscated musical instruments and equipment in Herat province at the weekend, deeming music immoral. "Promoting music causes moral corruption and playing it will cause the youth to go astray," said Aziz al-Rahman Al-Muhajir, head of the Herat department of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

Since seizing power in August 2021, Taliban au-

thorities have steadily imposed laws and regulations that reflect their austere vision of Islam — including banning playing music in public. Saturday's bonfire saw hundreds of dollars worth of musical gear go up in smoke — much of it collected from wedding halls in the city. It included a guitar, two other stringed instruments, a harmonium and a table — a type of drum—as well as amplifiers and speakers.

Women have borne the brunt of the new government regulations, and are not allowed in public unless wearing a hijab. Teenage girls and women have been barred from schools and universities, and they are also prohibited from entering parks, playgrounds and gyms. Last week, thousands of beauty salons were shuttered across the country after authorities deemed certain makeovers to be too costly, or un-Islamic. — AFP



HERAT: Members of the Taliban stand guard after setting fire to a pile of musical instruments and equipment on July 29, 2023. — AFP

International

Back on track: Europe's night trains make bumpy comeback

Low-cost airlines threaten to relegate sleeper trains to history books

VIENNA: Night trains have made a comeback in Europe thanks to their low-carbon footprint, but after years of neglect, the renaissance has had a bumpy ride. Operators admit that the trains are outdated - with passengers facing the occasional delays, technical problems or malfunctioning toilets - while companies compete in an overloaded network. Despite the challenges, national rail operators are giving night trains another chance while startups are jumping on the bandwagon as climate concerns are making travelers ditch kerosene-burning planes for cleaner modes of transportation.

Sitting at the crossroads between western and eastern Europe, Austria has been at the heart of this revival with the backing of the government even as low-cost airlines threatened to relegate sleeper trains to the history books. Austrian rail operator OeBB, a pioneer in the sector, has Europe's biggest fleet of night trains, serving 1.5 million passengers in carriages that include bed compartments.

The state-owned company considered abandoning its overnight services at one point, but it went the opposite direction and invested in them instead. "Our night trains are nearly fully booked," OeBB spokesman Bernhard Rieder told AFP as summer travel is in full swing in Europe. OeBB runs 20 routes connecting Vienna and other cities throughout Europe. "We have a long tradition with night train service," Rieder said, pointing out how the Alpine nation's mountainous topography makes having high-speed connections difficult.

'Very convenient'

Astrid Reiter, a 27-year-old consultant, booked a night train from Vienna to Zurich. "It's nice because

you basically wake up in a different country," she said. "If everything works out well, it's a very convenient way to travel." She added: "I do hope that other companies other than the Austrian railway company develop more night trains and make it easier to have faster night trains."

Rieder admits that the quality of its service "is not always as high these days as what we want to deliver to our customers". "There was no demand and no request for night trains for over 25 years" causing manufacturing to grind to a halt, he said. In 2018, OeBB ordered 33 new night trains from German conglomerate Siemens to expand its reach and replace part of its ageing fleet. The first trains - with a modern design, more privacy and more shower facilities - are expected to go into service at the end of this year.

Chris Engelsman, co-founder of the Belgian-Dutch startup European Sleeper, also complained about a shortage of "proper night train coaches". Established in 2021, his company inaugurated a Berlin-Brussels link in May. "The train is not always up to the modern standards, but despite that many people would like to travel by night train and the enthusiasm is quite big," he told AFP. "There are breakdowns sometimes or the toilets are not working or electricity is not working properly, things like that," he added, blaming the "lack of investment for decades".

Competition from low-cost flights and a lack of coordination between different European rail operators and companies are other obstacles. It is difficult to compete with some flights' "unreasonably low" prices, according to a recent report by NGO Greenpeace, with the aviation sector benefitting from subsidies and tax exemptions. Rail transport, on the other hand, is "subject to various taxes and fees,"



VIENNA: Passengers board the Nightjet train line Vienna - Venice (Zurich) of the Austrian Federal Railways (OeBB) at the main station in Vienna, Austria. - AFP

in particular for using the infrastructure, said Philipp Kosok, an analyst at the German think tank Agora.

'Complex and expensive'

"Operating night trains is very difficult, complex and expensive," Kosok said, adding that the infrastructure was "overloaded" even at night when freight trains ply the rails. There is also no centralized site to consult timetables and compare prices, with some in the industry complaining of a lack of political will. "There's not really a European approach to train travel at the moment," Engelsman said. French startup Midnight Trains co-founder Adrien Aumont

said his company's aim was to "reinvent" the night train "to make it a truly competitive means of transport against aviation".

Aumont had the idea to create the company when his partner "decided never to get on a plane again". His startup is partnering with a night train maker to relaunch the once popular Paris-Milan-Venice line in 2025. "I realized that it was almost impossible to travel in Europe (without flying). People were asked to get off the planes, but without necessarily offering them solutions," he told AFP. He slammed a service that "has deteriorated" over time, far from the legendary and luxurious Orient Express. — AFP

World Youth Day, the biggest event in Catholic Church

VATICAN CITY: World Youth Day, which takes place next week in Lisbon in the presence of Pope Francis and an expected one million pilgrims, is the largest Catholic event in the world. Initiated in 1986 by Pope John Paul II, the global gathering is normally held every two or three years, although the calendar was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic and the most recent World Youth Day was in Panama City in 2019. The 16th international edition this year runs from August 1 to August 6, presided over by 86-year-old Pope Francis, making his first trip abroad since undergoing hernia surgery in June.

The week revolves around a series of cultural, spiritual and festive events, from concerts to debates and prayer sessions. Events are targeted at Catholics between the age of 16 and 35, although organizers insist that everyone is welcome to attend, with no registration necessary. More than 700 bishops and 20 cardinals will attend, alongside 20,000 volunteers and pilgrims from more than 200 countries, according to the Vatican.

The young people will initially spend time in different dioceses across Portugal, before gathering in the capital, which is preparing with about 16,000 members of law enforcement and emergency services to be deployed. World Youth Day is spread across several venues in Lisbon, a city of 550,000 inhabitants already busy with summer tourists. Key moments with the pope include Thursday's welcome ceremony, the Stations of the Cross on Friday, a vigil on Saturday night and large mass on Sunday morning. The Argentine pontiff is expected to address themes such as climate change, social media and the scandal of clerical sex abuse of children that has caused enormous damage to the reputation of the worldwide Catholic Church. — AFP



VATICAN CITY: Attendees take photos of the Pope as he delivers the weekly Angelus prayer at St Peter's square on July 30, 2023 in The Vatican. - AFP

Clashes kill six in Palestinian refugee camp

SIDON: At least six people were killed Sunday in clashes in south Lebanon's restive Ain Al-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp, said Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas' Fatah movement and a source at the camp. The fighting between Fatah and Islamists in the camp, which erupted overnight, killed a Fatah military leader and four of his colleagues, the secularist movement said.

A Palestinian source inside the camp, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an "Islamist from the Al-Shabab Al-Muslim group" was also killed and six others including the group's leader were wounded. An AFP journalist said clashes at Ain Al-Helweh, the largest of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, were still ongoing on Sunday afternoon. Fatah in a statement confirmed the death of command-



QUEENSLAND: Royal Australian Navy helicopter conduct search and rescue operations in the vicinity of Lindeman Island, Queensland, Australia's military will ground its fleet of MRH-90 Taipan helicopters after a crash during multinational military exercises that left four crew members missing, the army chief said on July 30. - AFP

Australian army grounds Taipan helicopters

SYDNEY: Australia's military will ground its fleet of MRH-90 Taipan helicopters after a crash during multinational military exercises that left four crew members missing, the army chief said on Sunday. The helicopter crashed into waters near the Whitsunday Islands off Australia's subtropical northeast late on Friday, sparking a search by the militaries of three nations, but hopes of finding the missing crew were fading.

Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, the chief of the Australian Army, said on Sunday that Australia would ground its fleet of about 45 Taipan helicopters. "We are not flying the MRH-90 today and won't until we think it is safe to do so," Stuart told reporters in Sydney. Even before the incident, Canberra had announced it would replace its ageing Taipan helicopters with US-made Black Hawks. Australian officials have complained about having to repeatedly ground the European-made Taipans, citing difficulties with maintenance and getting spare parts.

Stuart said the current aim was to keep the Taipans in service until 2024 but "what happens between now and then, from what we learn from this incident, is yet to be determined". Australia's Taipan

er Ashraf Al-Armouchi and four of his "comrades" during a "heinous operation".

The statement denounced an "abominable and cowardly crime" aimed at undermining the "security and stability" of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. A Lebanese soldier was also wounded, hit by shrapnel from "a mortar shell that fell in one of the military posts", the army said on Twitter, which is being rebranded as X. His condition was reported as stable. Fighting between rival groups is common in Ain Al-Helweh, which is home to more than 54,000 registered Palestinian refugees who have been joined in recent years by thousands of Palestinians fleeing the conflict in Syria.

By long-standing convention, the Lebanese army does not enter Palestinian refugee camps in the country, leaving the factions themselves to handle security. The camp has gained notoriety as a refuge for extremists and fugitives. More than 450,000 Palestinians in Lebanon are registered with UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Most live in one of the 12 official refugee camps, often in squalid conditions, and face a variety of legal restrictions, including on employment. — AFP

fleet was grounded for a month after one of the helicopters suffered engine failure during a nighttime training exercise in March, forcing the crew to ditch into the ocean. No one was seriously hurt.

The aircraft that crashed on Friday night was taking part in the Talisman Sabre exercise, which brings together 30,000 military personnel from Australia, the United States and several other nations. Specialist divers have joined the hundreds-strong search for the missing pilot and three other crew, officials said. Debris from the crash was recovered on Saturday, with Channel 9 television footage showing a section of the fuselage being lifted from the water.

Stuart identified the four missing crew and said they were all from the 6th Aviation Regiment, based in Sydney. "You have to feel for their families and their mates," he said. New South Wales Premier Christopher Minns told Sky News one of the missing crew was the son of a distinguished senior police officer. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the crash as a stark reminder "that there are no safe or easy days for those who serve in our country's name".

He also thanked military personnel from other countries for taking part in the search. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, speaking in the northern city of Townsville, said the United States would provide any assistance it could. "Our hearts go out to their loved ones during this terribly difficult time," Austin said of the missing crew. The Talisman Sabre exercise was paused briefly on Saturday but some operations then resumed away from the crash site. — AFP



AIN EL HILOUE: Fatah fighters take position near the entrance of the Ain Al-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp, Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp, during clashes between Fatah movement and Islamists in the camp in the southern coastal city of Sidon on July 30, 2023. - AFP

Greek ecosystems face increasing fire risk, experts say

ATHENS: Two weeks of sweltering heat and wildfires have confirmed fears that Greece's ecosystem is under increasing risk, experts say. Some 50,000 hectares of forest and vegetation have been left scorched, according to estimates by the National Observatory of Athens. This makes the month of July the worst in 13 years in terms of burned land, said Charalampos Kontoes, a research director at the observatory. "It was a dry winter, and spring rains were not enough to maintain" moisture in the soil, Kontoes told AFP.

Civil protection minister Vassilis Kikilias this week said crews had battled more than 660 blazes this month, an average of 50 to 70 fires a day. Businesses and farms on the tourist islands of Corfu and Rhodes, Greece's second-largest island of Evia and the countryside near Volos, central Greece, bore the brunt of the damage this year. The Greek state association insuring farmers, ELGA, estimates that 50,000 olive trees and 2,500 animals and beehives have been destroyed on Rhodes. In the Volos area, the organization said it had found "significant losses" in harvested grain and grapes, in addition to farm machinery and buildings. Major losses in livestock have also hit, it added.

Repetitive fires

Greece suffers forest fires every year. In 2007, they left 84 dead in the Peloponnese peninsula and Evia. In 2018, 103 people died in Mati, a seaside resort near Athens. Three people died in Evia two years ago, and five so far this year. "Repetitive fires endanger the ecosystem. The forests are transformed into agricultural-forest land, the brushwood into scrubland," said Nikos Bokaris, head of the Greek union of foresters.

"The landscape tends to change and resemble African landscapes," he added. In Rhodes, where the fires broke out on July 18, a large part of the local fauna including the island's emblematic fallow deer was seriously affected, said Grigoris Dimitriadis, head of the local environmental protection association. In addition, the European Union's climate observatory Copernicus on Wednesday said smoke emissions from wildfires in Greece had been the highest for this period of time in the last 21 years.

Prevention

Kontoes noted that the mountains around in Athens go up in flames on average every six years. This affects the ecosystem of one of the most densely populated cities in Europe, which houses more than a third of the Greek population of 10.5 million, he said. Bokaris added that the situation is particularly problematic in the Greek capital as "there are few green spaces and concrete buildings create a closed thermal environment". The Greek government, which blames the fires primarily on the climate crisis, is often accused of not doing enough to protect biodiversity and prevent the fires. "This year, prevention started a little late - but firebreaks or other preventive measures are not always a panacea when the fire takes on enormous dimensions," Bokaris said.

The forecaster said Greece in 2022 received 55 million euros (\$60 million) in European funds for fire prevention, followed by another 86 million this year. His proposal is to let the burned land regenerate and prohibit the conversion of "burned forests into areas for cultivation or construction", as often happens. "The climate crisis did not appear suddenly and cooperation between government, local authorities and volunteers is necessary to combat it," said Alexandra Messare of Greenpeace Greece. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JULY 31, 2023

Boursa Kuwait records net profit of KD 8.42 million for H1 of 2023

Company remains committed to promoting Kuwait capital market

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait announced its financial results for the first half of 2023, recording a net profit of KD 8.42 million during the period ended 30 June, 2023, which represented a decrease of 21.4 percent compared to the first half of 2022. The decline can be attributed primarily to lower trading activity compared to the exceptional trading activities witnessed in the same period of 2022, which were the highest first half results for the exchange since its privatization.

In the first half of 2023, most capital markets in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and around the world witnessed a wave of turbulence and uncertainty because of the slowdown in the global economy, which was impacted by high inflation rates and the subsequent intervention of central banks to raise interest rates. Additionally, as a result of the fluctuation of oil prices and a fear that the turmoil of global banks would be transmitted to the region's markets, many market indices saw a gradual decline in their performance, with exchanges witnessing a decrease in trading volume as well.

Despite these challenges, Boursa Kuwait remained steadfast in its commitment to promote the Kuwaiti capital market to the international investment community. The company continues to adopt the best standards and practices of global financial markets, collaborating closely with the Kuwaiti capital market apparatus to enhance market attractiveness, efficacy, efficiency, and transparency in addition to improving the corporate governance of its listed companies.

Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Misri Al-Humaidhi commented on the fi-



Hamad Al-Humaidhi



Mohammad Al-Osaimi

ancial results for the first half of 2023, saying: "Boursa Kuwait has shown remarkable resilience in adapting to the fluctuations of the volatile financial markets and the challenging global economic landscape. The company remains committed to upholding the best-in-class standards and practices of the capital

markets industry worldwide and works diligently to develop the market and enhance its efficiency and efficacy and improve access to it as well as strengthening the corporate governance of all its listed companies."

Al-Humaidhi added, "Boursa Kuwait continues to promote our market and its

listed companies, guided by a progressive strategy that aims to create more investment opportunities and develop a more transparent and solvent capital market through the implementation of a group of enhancements and regulatory projects as well as the technology to raise the capital market's profile locally, regionally, and around the world. I would like to thank my fellow Board members, the Executive Team and the esteemed Boursa Kuwait employees for their efforts to develop and enhance the company and the Kuwaiti capital market."

Boursa Kuwait has made continued strides to boost the attractiveness of the Kuwaiti capital market to foreign investments, in collaboration with its subsidiary, the Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC). These measures include confirmations for international investors: omnibus accounts; and foreign investor KYC (Know Your Customer) through a global custodian, features which are available exclusively in the region to the Kuwaiti capital market. In addition, the KCC ran a series of stress tests for the Central Counterparty Clearing (CCP) system, to ensure that financial brokerage firms can fulfill its requirements and be eligible for membership. The KCC also ran tests with the Central Bank of Kuwait and local banks, as a prerequisite to launching several products like exchange traded funds (ETFs), a platform for bonds and sukuk as well as a derivatives market.

Boursa Kuwait also recently concluded its participation in the London GCC Stock Exchanges Conference, which was organized by HSBC, one of Europe's largest banks. Additionally, Boursa Ku-

wait organized its tenth Corporate Day on the peripheries of the conference, bringing together twelve companies listed in the "Premier" Market, including Boursa Kuwait, with more than 50 globally recognized asset management firms and investment companies. The exchange also participated in the 17th Annual EFG Hermes One-on-One Conference in Dubai, as part of its ongoing and dedicated efforts to engage with local and international investors and raise awareness of the opportunities in the Kuwaiti capital market.

"Boursa Kuwait continues to work on providing the latest tools and solutions available in markets around the world, in collaboration with its various partners in the Kuwaiti capital market. The company also strives to attract more foreign investors and investments to the market, increasing its efficacy and facilitating access to it. In the first half of the year, we saw an increase in the rate of foreign trading as well as in the rate of trading for institutional investors, which is a reflection of investor confidence in the market and an indication of its stability in the face of the challenging worldwide economic landscape," said Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi.

The Kuwaiti capital market has seen an increase in foreign trading, which includes the GCC as well as international investors, by 15.9 percent year to year. Additionally, trades by institutional investors, which accounted for 58 percent of the market in the first half of 2022, have increased to 69 percent of the market, for a percentage spike of 18.4 percent.

Financial highlights of first half of 2023

- Net profit was recorded at KD 8.42 million
- Earnings per share were recorded at 41.94 fils
- Total operating revenue came in at KD 15.14 million
- Operating profit came in at KD 9.89 million
- Total assets were recorded at KD 109.99 million
- Shareholder Equity (attributable to equity holders of the parent company) was recorded at KD 56.85 million

Sunak backs plans for new UK oil and gas exploration

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has backed plans for new fossil fuel drilling off Britain's coast, saying in a Sunday newspaper interview he would be "pragmatic and proportionate" about reaching net zero.

His government is expected to approve the development of Rosebank, near Scotland's Shetland Isles — believed to be the UK's largest undeveloped oil and gas field — as well as other sites in the nearby North Sea imminently.

The prospect has infuriated environmental campaigners, who argue that stopping all new fossil fuel exploitation is essential if Britain is to decarbonize by mid-century. They accuse the British leader of lacking conviction on climate policies and playing politics with the issue, as he eyes a general election due next year amid a cost-of-living crisis.

The main opposition Labour party, well ahead in the polls, said earlier this year it will not issue any new North Sea drilling licenses if it regains power after more than a decade in opposition.

"I think it makes absolutely no sense, as the Labour Party is suggesting, to ban North Sea oil and gas," Sunak told the Sunday Telegraph. "That is just going to weaken our energy security and strengthen the hands of dictators like (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin," he said, arguing it jeopardized 200,000 jobs and threatened £80 billion (\$103 billion) worth of tax revenue.

Sunak, who became leader last October, said his approach was "to support the UK's energy industry" and appeared to suggest that not exploiting new UK oil and gas reserves risked "the lights going out" in Britain. "Everybody sensible recognizes



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (second left) walks with Barratt West London managing director Craig Carson (left), Barratt Developments regional managing director Gary Ennis (second right) and Barratt West London project director Lee Greenwood (right), as they visit Hayes Village, a new housing development under construction by Barratt Homes on a brownfield site, in London, on July 27, 2023. — AFP

that we will need those fossil fuels as part of the transition to net zero," he argued.

'Out of touch'

The comments follow the Conservatives defying dismal national polling to retain former prime minister Boris Johnson's vacated northwest London seat in a July 20 parliamentary by-election. The narrow victory came amid voter unease at Labour mayor Sadiq Khan expanding a scheme taxing the use of the most polluting vehicles, and appears to have emboldened Tory net zero opponents.

In the Telegraph interview, Sunak insisted he was on the side of motorists and said he had ordered a review of so-called low traffic neighborhoods, contentious local authority-led tools to limit vehicle use in designated areas by blocking roads. His government has riled climate campaigners since the surprise by-election win by suggesting some

UK environmental targets could be eased, while offering lukewarm support for the country's ambitious net zero agenda.

Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg on Friday called the UK government "out of touch from reality" after energy minister Grant Shapps said it would look to "max out" North Sea reserves.

Meanwhile, several mainstream pressure groups claiming to represent tens of millions of Britons wrote to Sunak promising to mobilize if net zero policies are watered down. Sunak, who has been criticized for his frequent use of helicopters and planes to travel around Britain, insisted he wants to "leave the environment and our climate in a better state". "But I'm going to do that in a way that is pragmatic and proportionate, and not unnecessarily add costs or hassle to people's lives," he added, noting the current grim economic reality many face. — AFP

Iraqi banks hit by dollar ban

CAIRO: Several private Iraqi banks hit by United States dollar ban under US sanctions said last week they were ready to challenge the measures and face the impending audits, news agencies reported.

A total of 14 Iraqi banks were sanctioned last week for allegedly helping siphon US dollars to Iran. They were barred from conducting dollar transactions as part of a wider crackdown on dollar smuggling to Iran, according to Iraqi central bank officials. The sanctioned Iraqi banks have also called on the Iraqi authorities to provide assistance, stating they were ready to face the audits to come, according to reports.

US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said these measures were not sanctions, as they have been referred to by Iraq's Central Bank governor. Patel said the Treasury Department and Federal Reserve Bank of New York earlier this month removed the Iraqi banks' access to the Central Bank of Iraq's foreign currency sale window. "These actions help limit the ability of bad actors seeking to launder US dollars, profit from the exploitation of money owned by the Iraqi people, and evade US sanctions," Patel said on Thursday.

Iraqi central bank (CBI) Governor Ali Al-Allaq said the institution was following up on the issue and he had no indication the US would impose "sanctions" on more Iraqi banks. He also noted that other banks were able to cover the market's needs for dollar transactions, with the 14 targeted banks representing just 8 percent of external transfers. The 14 banks have been banned from undertaking dollar transactions but can continue to use Iraqi dinars and other foreign currencies, the Canada-based news agency said. Haider Al-Shamma, speaking on behalf of the 14 Iraqi banks, said on Wednesday the sanctions could further weaken Iraq's currency. Notably, the Iraqi dinar fell from just under 1,500 dinars per US dollar last week to 1,580 as of Wednesday. — Agencies

Canada's dock workers reject new salary offer

MONTREAL: Dock workers on Canada's west coast have rejected the latest salary offer from an employers group, after earlier launching a 13-day strike with major economic consequences for the country. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) of Canada — whose leaders had backed the tentative agreement — called on employers to "come to the table and negotiate something that works for our members and the industry," according to a brief statement released late Friday. The employers group, the British Columbia

Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA), said it was disappointed by the rejection of an offer proposed by a federal mediator.

In a statement, it called the proposal "a good deal that recognized the skills and efforts of B.C.'s waterfront workforce while providing certainty and stability for the future of Canada's West Coast ports."

The tentative accord had called for a 19.2 percent salary increase over the course of a four-year contract. "Regrettably," the employers' statement went on, "ILWU's rejection once again leaves businesses, Canadians and all those who depend on a stable, well-functioning supply chain hanging in the balance." It said that while the union had "not communicated their next steps, they retain the ability to provide 72-hour strike notice." A 13-day strike in early July affected crucial economic sectors, notably Canada's automotive industry. Workers rejected

a first agreement in principle on July 18.

After announcing plans to again strike, they canceled that after authorities said the law required 72 hours' advance notice for such action. Negotiations resumed under a federal mediator, resulting in the tentative pact that the workers rejected late Friday. The automation of ports, the cost of living and the issue of subcontracting are the key points separating the two sides.

Key Canadian exports (coal, wheat, canola and other food products) and imports (clothing, petroleum products, automobiles and parts) pass through the ports daily, providing important transit links to Asia and the United States. The Port of Vancouver alone — the nation's largest — handles some Can\$305 billion (US\$230 billion) worth of goods annually, and contributes Can\$11.9 billion to the nation's annual output. — AFP



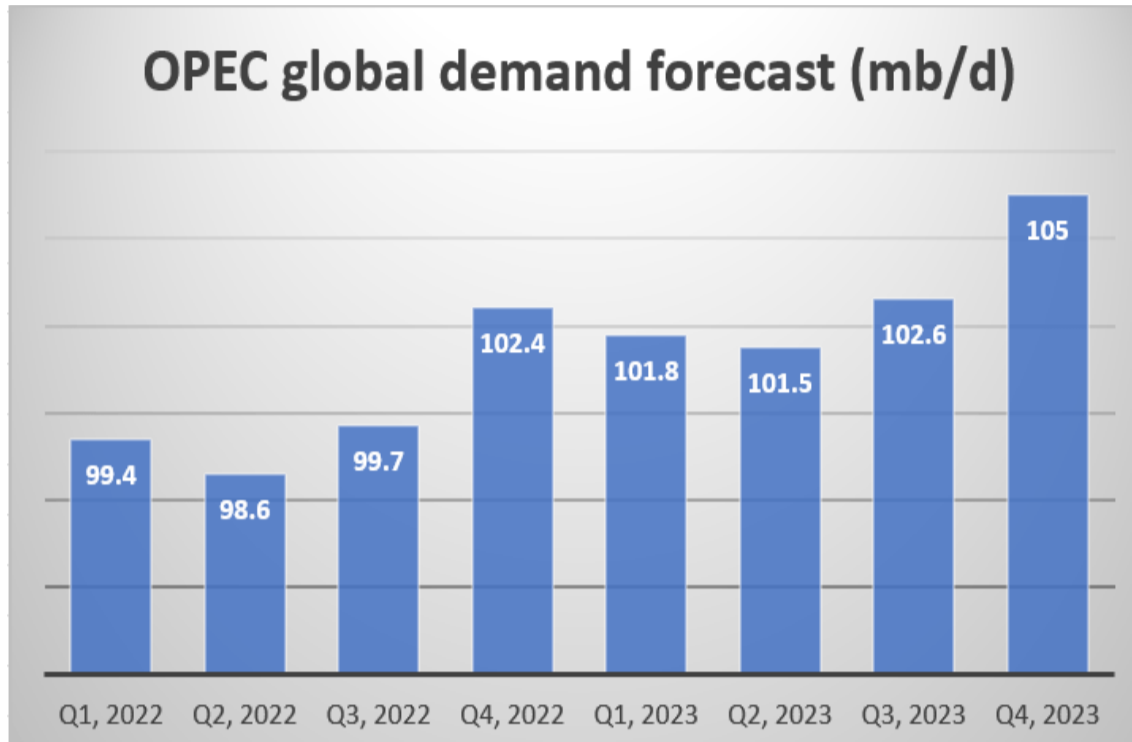
Dock workers on Canada's west coast have rejected the latest salary offer from an employers group, after earlier launching a 13-day strike with major economic consequences for the country. — AFP

Global oil demand growth likely to drop in 2023: IEA

Macroeconomic headwinds, manufacturing slump to hit demand



Persistent macroeconomic headwinds, apparent in a deepening manufacturing slump, have led the IEA to revise its 2023 oil growth estimate lower for the first time this year.



PARIS: Global oil demand is expected to climb by 2.2 mb/d in 2023 to reach 102.1 mb/d, a new record, International Energy Agency has in a recent report. However, persistent macroeconomic headwinds, apparent in a deepening manufacturing slump, have led the agency to revise its 2023 growth estimate lower for the first time this year, by 220 kb/d. Buoyed by surging petrochemical use, China will account for 70 percent of global gains, while OECD consumption remains anemic. Growth is estimated to slow to 1.1 mb/d in 2024, the report said.

World oil supply rose 480 kb/d to 101.8 mb/d in June but is set to fall sharply this month as Saudi Arabia makes a sharp 1 mb/d voluntary output cut. For 2023, global production is forecast to increase by 1.6 mb/d to 101.5 mb/d, as non-OPEC+ expands by 1.9 mb/d. In 2024, global supply is set to rise by 1.2 mb/d to a new record of 102.8 mb/d, with non-OPEC+ accounting for all of the increase.

World oil demand is coming under pressure from the challenging economic envi-

ronment, not least because of the dramatic tightening of monetary policy in many advanced and developing countries over the past twelve months, the agency estimates. Growth in 2023 has been revised down for the first time this year, to 2.2 mb/d from 2.4 mb/d expected previously, with China poised to account for 70 percent of the total. While Chinese demand growth continues to surprise to the upside, a surge in domestic petrochemical activity has undermined steam cracker margins and activity elsewhere.

Demand in the OECD, and Europe in particular, is languishing amid a grinding slowdown in industrial activity. African countries have seen imports and demand decline by higher retail fuel prices after subsidies were dismantled. Even so, global oil demand is set to rise seasonally by 1.6 mb/d from 2Q23 to 3Q23, and to average 102.1 mb/d for the year as a whole. Growth will slow to 1.1 mb/d in 2024, as the recovery loses momentum and as ever-greater vehicle fleet electrification and efficiency measures take hold.

Refinery crude throughput estimates

for 2023 and 2024 have been raised by 130 kb/d and 90 kb/d, respectively, to 82.5 mb/d and 83.5 mb/d. Higher Russian crude runs and the start-up of new refining capacity underpin the revision. Refining margins remain robust, with very strong Atlantic Basin gasoline cracks and rapid gains in diesel, jet fuel and fuel oil more than offsetting weak naphtha cracks.

Russian oil exports fell 600 kb/d to 7.3 mb/d in June, their lowest since March 2021. Estimated export revenues plunged by \$1.5 bn to \$11.8 bn – nearly half the levels of a year ago. Moscow has promised a further 500 kb/d cut to exports from August to stem declining prices and revenues, but may hold production steady as domestic oil demand rises seasonally.

A substantial 44.2 mb build in non-OECD countries, led by a surge in China, pushed global observed oil inventories up by 19.4 mb in May to the highest since September 2021. By contrast, OECD oil stocks drew by a marginal 1.8 mb. Oil on water declined by 23 mb as additional OPEC+ output cuts saw

seaborne oil exports falling to their lowest since January. Preliminary data show a 9.2 mb draw in June. Amid range-bound trading, ICE Brent futures fell by \$1/bbl m-o-m in June to \$75/bbl, as hawkish central bank policies continued to weigh on investor sentiment. Additional voluntary cuts by some OPEC members and a weaker US dollar failed to dispel the macro gloom. Asian crude benchmark Dubai outperformed WTI and Brent, as a tight East of Suez sour crude market contrasted sharply with a comfortably supplied Atlantic Basin. At the time of writing, Brent was trading around \$78/bbl.

Benchmark crude oil prices traded in a narrow range in June as persistent economic woes overshadowed deepening supply cuts from some OPEC+ countries. Amid an overall slackening in oil demand growth, China's widely anticipated reopening has so far failed to extend beyond travel and services, with its economic recovery losing steam after the bounce earlier in the year. North Sea Dated hovered around \$75/bbl for the month, marginally below May levels and a

staggering \$49/bbl less than a year ago. At the time of writing, the North Sea benchmark had inched up to \$80/bbl.

Lower production from Saudi Arabia and core OPEC+ members since production cuts were first implemented last November has so far been offset by higher output from other producers. In June, global oil supply was a mere 70 kb/d below October levels just before the first round of OPEC+ cuts kicked in. Iran, exempt from cuts due to sanctions, ramped up production by 530 kb/d over the same period, reaching a five-year high. At the same time, output recovered in Kazakhstan and Nigeria. Outside of the alliance, supply from the United States rose by 610 kb/d as natural gas liquids output surged to all-time highs while biofuels increased seasonally. But global supply could tumble by more than 1 mb/d this month as Riyadh implements steeper cuts. The Kingdom's crude output is set to plunge to a two-year low of around 9 mb/d in July and August, leaving it trailing behind Russia as the bloc's top crude producer.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 27 JULY 2023

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,215	8,086.73	-0.9%	3.6%	-0.4%	737,170,198	181,684,073	37,306	17.2	1.2	84.3%
Main Market	6,359	5,594.81	-0.2%	2.4%	0.0%	314,339,884	37,095,658	15,395	14.3	0.8	15.7%
All Share	40,573	7,263.44	-0.8%	3.3%	-0.4%	1,051,510,082	218,779,731	52,701	15.0	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,341	1,770.22	-0.5%	3.8%	-1.3%	160,001,020	80,945,433	14,159	19.6	1.2	64.92%
Basic Materials	497	879.96	-2.6%	-3.0%	1.7%	4,073,415	2,927,661	1,219	8.1	1.4	1.22%
Consumer Discretionary	1,107	1,704.32	0.9%	9.2%	14.6%	25,281,368	11,844,057	3,263	14.3	0.9	2.73%
Consumer Staples	188	618.95	0.6%	0.6%	29.0%	2,874,693	1,339,434	313	NM	1.1	0.46%
Energy	203	1,000.72	-2.0%	-1.8%	-12.1%	2,479,300	280,065	259	9.2	0.7	0.50%
Financial Services	3,129	1,297.56	-1.0%	5.8%	3.2%	601,488,868	74,259,453	17,315	23.5	0.8	7.71%
Health Care	79	454.28	-1.6%	1.1%	-1.6%	250	119.25	5	9.9	0.9	0.19%
Industrials	3,266	1,018.00	-1.7%	1.5%	-5.6%	34,148,628	13,987,806	4,648	16.4	0.9	8.05%
Insurance	328	2,131.03	1.2%	1.0%	37.4%	682,367	159,140	143	10.0	0.8	0.81%
Real Estate	2,377	1,240.31	0.2%	2.7%	2.6%	195,282,626	20,150,425	7,558	14.1	0.6	5.86%
Technology	8	602.37	-1.9%	-10.9%	-13.5%	119,961	9,565	20	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	2,831	1,118.74	-2.7%	0.1%	-5.3%	23,720,904	12,604,216	3,560	11.1	1.4	6.98%
Utilities	220	526.32	0.0%	0.0%	6.4%	1,356,682	272,357	239	16.4	2.0	0.54%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ARZAN	142	17.36%	100,246,393	12,941,531	1,797
AMAR	63	15.23%	18,003	1,003	6
IFAHR	165	12.24%	12,640,536	1,947,488	739
CATTL	109	11.91%	446,986	46,268	87
ALDEERA	192	11.63%	13,151	2,417	12

Top Losers

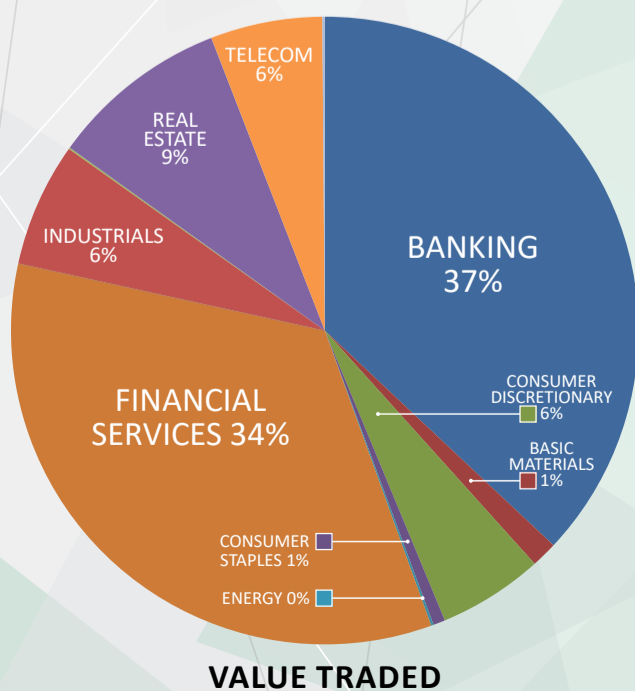
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KMEFIC	73.5	-12.50%	53,600	4,261	22
EQUIPMENT	22.7	-12.36%	1,508,576	36,002	60
ENERGYH	57.5	-10.16%	38,180	2,344	30
EKTITAB	21	-9.87%	16,845,559	350,500	302
SULTAN	126	-9.35%	670,134	89,639	130

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	85	-6.49%	202,978,871	17,580,037	5,028
ARZAN	142	17.36%	100,246,393	12,941,531	1,797
KRE	136	7.94%	54,145,523	6,966,296	1,570
IFA	163	8.67%	53,918,307	8,221,130	873
AAYAN	161	-0.62%	52,707,339	8,459,452	1,080

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	786	0.38%	50,851,050	40,056,569	5,531
GFH	85	-6.49%	202,978,871	17,580,037	5,028
ARZAN	142	17.36%	100,246,393	12,941,531	1,797
BOUBYAN	625	-3.99%	19,753,992	12,542,680	3,048
ZAIN	521	-2.07%	22,123,712	11,624,166	2,574



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume increased by 8% while value dropped 45%. Main Market volume and value dropped by 47% and 56%, respectively.
- Premier and main indexes are moving horizontally to overcome critical resistance.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7263, with support levels at 7248, 7214, and 7178, and resistance at 7286. The Premier index closed at 8086, with support levels at 8060, 7997, and 7945, while resistance at 8116. The Main index closed at 5594, with support levels at 5575, 5550, and 5526, while resistance at 5601.

US, EU central banks hike rates as markets see looming pause

Eurozone data shows weakness • BoJ holds rates, tweaks policy

KUWAIT: In the US, the manufacturing sector grew rapidly, with the latest flash manufacturing PMI coming at 49.0 from 46.3 previously, and beating the expected figure of 46.1. Services, on the other hand, slowed down reaching a figure of 52.4 from 54.4 previously. The slowdown in the services sector is seen as a sign of relief for the Fed, who are anxious to see activity cool to lower inflation.

Federal funds rate

The Federal Reserve delivered a unanimous 25bps hike taking the fed funds rate to a target range of 5.25 percent - 5.5 percent, in line with market expectations. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell stressed that inflation "has a long way to go" before reaching the Fed's 2 percent target. Powell added, "It's certainly possible that we will raise funds again at the September meeting if the data warranted." In their policy statement, the Fed asserted that they "will continue to assess additional information and its implications for monetary policy." Markets are currently pricing in an 80 percent probability of a pause at the September FOMC meeting.

Upbeat GDP

The US economy grew more than expected after quarterly GDP growth came in at 2.4 percent versus a 1.8 percent forecast and 2 percent previous figure. The better than expected prints comes amid an increase in consumer spending and non-residential fixed investment. Meanwhile, the number of people filing jobless claims

reached a 5-month low, with 221,000 people filing for unemployment benefits versus an expectation of 234,000.

Declining pace of inflation

The key gauge used by the Federal Reserve for inflation readings and interest rate decisions came in better than expected. Headline PCE fell to 3 percent from 3.8 percent previously, while core PCE came in at 4.1 percent from 4.6 percent previously. Both figures came in better than market forecasts in what is a welcome sign for the Federal Reserve. Furthermore, the figures are adding fuel to the narrative of slowing inflation, upbeat economic growth, and trying to engineer a successful soft landing. In addition, personal income on a monthly basis came in at 0.3 percent, which is slightly below expectations of 0.5 percent. Finally, personal spending came in line with expectations at 0.5 percent on a monthly basis. The US dollar index ended the week slightly higher at 101.62.

Eurozone data

Fears of the eurozone going into recession seem to have been reignited, especially after the latest data released. The zone's two biggest economies, France and Germany, are in contraction territory when it comes to manufacturing, with both readings below the 50 mark. Starting off with France, the latest flash manufacturing PMI came in at 44.5, some way off the forecasted 46.1 figure, while Germany's is at 38.8. Additionally, there was a decline in the services industry for both countries, with

France's latest flash services PMI reading coming in at 47.4, while Germany's listed at 52.0, both below expectations. Aided by the disappointing numbers coming out from the bloc's two biggest economies, the eurozone as a whole declined in both manufacturing and services. With the decline in the services sector, it is evident that the persistent interest rate hikes by the European Central Bank seem to have finally been embedded into the economy.

ECB signals pause

The European Central Bank (ECB) announced that it would raise its benchmark rate by 25bps to 3.75 percent, matching the high last seen in 2001. The decision is in line with market expectations and is the ECB's ninth consecutive hike in an effort to combat elevated inflation. Speaking on the decision to raise rates, ECB president Christine Lagarde stated that "underlying inflation remains high." Despite this, Lagarde has signaled for the possibility of a pause as soon as the next meeting. She acknowledged that "The near-term economic outlook for the euro area has deteriorated, owing largely to weaker domestic demand." Lagarde stated that the policy meeting in September "could be a hike, could be a pause" in its outcome. In their policy statement, the ECB vowed to remain "data dependent" and acknowledged that "rates will be set at sufficiently restrictive levels for as long as necessary." Markets are pricing in a pause for the September ECB meeting. The euro ended the week in decline, with the EUR/USD currency pair closing at 1.1015.

In the United Kingdom, the private sector is experiencing its weakest pace of growth since January, with flash manufacturing PMI coming in at 45.0 from 46.5 previously. Meanwhile, flash services PMI came in at 51.5 from 53.7 previously. Both readings came in below market expectations amid higher interest rates and elevated cost of living affecting households. The UK has managed to defy expectations and avoid a recession in 2023, however the latest data is among other worrying signs that a slowdown is on the horizon. Chief business economist at S&P global Chris Williamson stated that "manufacturers are cutting production in response to a worryingly severe downturn in orders, both from domestic and export markets." Markets are pricing in a 25bps hike for the upcoming Bank of England meeting. Furthermore, rates are expected by markets to peak at 5.75 percent, down from expectations earlier in the month of 6.5 percent. The sterling ended the week relatively flat, with the GBP/USD currency pair closing at 1.2850.

Inflation slows in Australia

Inflation in Australia slowed more than expected, with prices rising 0.8 percent on a quarterly basis versus 1.4 percent previously. On an annual basis, this represents a 6 percent increase versus 7 percent previously. Both annual and quarterly prints came in much less than market expectations, easing pressure on the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) to deliver another rate hike. Prior to the inflation readings, markets were anticipating a 50

percent chance of a rate hike by the RBA. This has since decreased to 23 percent chance of a hike as moderation of price pressures for domestic travel, accommodation, and automotive fuel helped soften Australia's inflation readings. The AUD/USD currency pair ended the week lower, last trading at 0.6649.

BoJ holds rates

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) announced that they would hold interest rates at -0.10 percent, matching market expectations. Despite this, the BOJ tweaked its policy by allowing more flexibility in its efforts to control the yield curve. Historically, the BOJ has always seemed reluctant to adjust their ultra-loose monetary policy. However, months ago the central bank shocked markets by allowing its 10-year bond yields to reach a threshold of 0.5 percent. Similarly, the BOJ surprised markets this time by increasing that threshold to 1 percent. Some market speculators see this as a move that could potentially translate to a gradual shift away from their historical loose monetary policy. However, markets do not anticipate for an emergence in any tightening whatsoever as it prices in a 97 percent probability of no hike in their next meeting.

The Yen gained following the central bank's decision to tweak yield curve policy before reversing, as the USD/JPY pair ended the week at 141.15.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30660.

Climate campaigners fear net zero policies under threat in UK

LONDON: Britain's climate change mitigation policies could be under threat as political concerns over the country's cost-of-living crisis, energy prices and other factors collide with the aim to decarbonize by mid-century, observers say.

Fears that so-called green policies, such as phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and gas boilers in accommodation, could be downgraded or delayed were stoked by a surprise by-election result last week. The ruling Conservatives defied months of dismal national polls to retain Boris Johnson's vacated northwest London parliamentary seat with a narrow 495-vote victory. Political analysts blamed Labour mayor Sadiq Khan's plan to extend a scheme taxing the use of the most polluting vehicles, known as the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). The High Court on Friday upheld the legality of his expansion, set for August 29, but the electoral fallout appears to have spooked both Tory and Labour strategists ahead of an imminent general election. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters this week that meeting Britain's net zero targets should not "unnecessarily give people more hassle and more costs in their lives".

His spokesman and ministers later clarified that the 2030 commitment around vehicles would not be changed. However, other policies do seem to be shifting. Housing secretary Michael Gove announced he wants to "relax" the deadline for private landlords to make energy improvements to their properties, and hinted he could extend another target to phase out gas boilers. Energy minister Grant Shapps also insisted Britain will "max out" its remaining reserves of North Sea oil and gas, citing the need for energy security after steep price hikes in recent years.

That drew widespread rebuke, including from Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, who on Friday called the UK government "out of touch from reality". Its own climate advisors warned this week that current policies to meet UK environmental commitments do not go far enough.

Meanwhile Labour leader Keir Starmer, whose ambitions on climate policies were already being questioned, has raised environmentalists' eyebrows by not publicly supporting the ULEZ expansion. The party, which appears poised to regain power after more than a decade in opposition, last month scaled back a flagship pledge to invest £28 billion (£36 billion) annually in a transition to "green energy", citing the grim economic climate. "Westminster has lost its mind over 500 votes," Chris Venables, of the Green Alliance, told AFP, referring to the recent by-election and branding the political reaction to it "dangerous". "The conversation we think the British public wants to have is how we take bold and ambitious action, and it feels like Westminster is asking itself if we should take bold and ambitious action," he added. "We've been deeply alarmed by the tone of the conversation."

Polling shows Britons are broadly supportive of policies to address climate change, but wary of any extra costs. Some commentators believe the issue could become increasingly divisive, particularly in 2024 when Khan will face re-election in London in May and a general election is due at some point. Khan's Conservative opponent Susan Hall declared Friday she will reverse the ULEZ expansion on "day one" if victorious. Ed Atkins, an energy transition specialist at the University of Bristol, said his research shows "net zero policies are the next target of right-wing populism and culture wars in the UK". "Narratives are emerging that tie complaints about climate policies being undemocratic or expensive to issues of Brexit, energy security and a 'green elite'," he wrote in a recent article for The Conversation. — AFP

China, Pakistan to mark mega anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng was due in the Pakistan capital on Sunday to mark the 10th anniversary of a mega economic plan that is the cornerstone of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

Since its initiation in 2013, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has seen tens of billions of dollars funneled into massive transport, energy and infrastructure projects. But the project has also been hit by Pakistan struggling to keep up its financial obligations, as well as attacks on Chinese targets by militants.

"After a decade since its inception, CPEC has shown mixed results," said Azeem Khalid, assistant professor of international relations at COMSATS University Islamabad. "The primary goal of connecting China with the Arabian Sea is still relatively low in achievement for China. On the other hand, Pakistan has made notable progress in achieving short-term objectives." In recent years Beijing has been one of Islamabad's most reliable foreign partners — readily providing financial assistance to bail out its often struggling neighbor. Earlier this week, Beijing granted Pakistan a two-year rollover on a \$2.4 billion loan, giving the debt-saddled nation much-needed breathing space as it tackles a balance-of-payments crisis. An IMF report last year said China and its commercial banks held about 30 percent of Pakistan's total external debt.

'Stronger than the Himalayas'

The two countries share a 596-kilometre (370-mile) frontier near the Siachen Glacier in the Karakoram Mountains, one of the world's tallest ranges. Pakistan politicians frequently trot out the phrase "stronger than the Himalayas, deeper than the ocean, and sweeter than



ISLAMABAD: A man walks past Chinese and Pakistani national flags installed on the constitution avenue ahead of the visit of Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, in Islamabad on July 30, 2023. — AFP

honey" to portray the depth and closeness of the relationship with China.

But ties have been strained by numerous hurdles in recent years, including stalled or scaled-back CPEC projects. The economic corridor presents an attractive gateway for China to access the Indian Ocean, but the safety and security of its workers has been a longstanding concern. The corridor linking China's far-western Xinjiang region with Pakistan's strategic port of Gwadar in Balochistan has sparked claims that the vast influx of investment does not benefit locals. Baloch separatists have claimed several attacks on CPEC projects, and thousands of Pakistani security personnel are deployed to counter threats against Chinese interests.

In April 2021, five people were killed in an attack claimed by Pakistan's Taliban at a luxury hotel hosting

the Chinese ambassador in Quetta. Months later, 12 people — including nine Chinese workers — were killed by a blast aboard a bus carrying staff to the Dasu dam site.

Islamabad blamed the explosion on a "gas leak" but Beijing insisted it was a bomb attack. "Security stands out as the core problem that hinders the realization of Chinese goals," Khalid told AFP. "This factor is the primary reason why CPEC has not reached its full functional potential yet." Ahead of the visit, banners celebrating the anniversary and flags of both countries have been put on display across the Pakistan capital. Security is on high alert, and a two-day public holiday has been ordered for the capital to keep people off the streets. Pakistan deftly manages relations with China and the United States, seeking a balance between its strategic interests and regional dynamics. — AFP

Decoupling from China 'an illusion', French finance minister says

BEIJING: France's finance minister said during a visit to Beijing on Sunday that cutting all economic ties with China was "an illusion", as some Western countries question their reliance on the Asian giant.

"We are totally opposed to the idea of decoupling. Decoupling is an illusion," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told reporters at the French embassy. "There is no possibility of having any kind of decoupling between the American, European and Chinese economies."

Le Maire nonetheless defended France's ambition to become more economically independent in certain sectors. But, he added, the concept of de-risking, which has become a byword in the West in recent months, "does not mean that China is a risk". "De-risking means that we want to be more

independent... We don't want to realize, as we realized during the COVID crisis, that we have too much dependence on some very specific components," he added, citing microchips as one example. Le Maire's remarks come as some Western countries seek to reduce their economic dependence on China, particularly Germany, which counts the Asian country as its top trading partner and an important market for its automotive industry.

The United States has also advocated de-risking from China, though US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said during a visit to Beijing earlier this month that a decoupling of the US and Chinese economies would be "virtually impossible".

China, meanwhile, has lashed out at Western efforts to de-risk, with Premier Li Qiang last month calling



BEIJING: Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng (right) with French Minister of Economy and Finances Bruno Le Maire attend the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing on July 29, 2023. — AFP

the concept a "false proposition". Monday to the southern tech hub of Shenzhen to meet with business leaders. — AFP

UAE hosts highest number of Indian expats in GCC

ABU DHABI: Out of the total 13.4 million non-resident Indians (NRIs) worldwide, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have the most significant proportion, making up more than 66

percent. According to data from India's external affairs Ministry, accurate up to March 2022, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosts the highest number of NRIs in the region, with an impressive count of 3.41 million.

As per official government statistics, Bahrain currently houses 320,000 non-resident Indians (NRIs), contributing to the overall Indian population of Gulf countries, which exceeds 8.8 million. NRIs are individuals who hold Indian passports but live in foreign nations. Saudi Arabia comes in second place with 2.59 million Indians, followed by Kuwait with 1.02 million, Qatar with 740,000,

Oman with 770,000, and Bahrain with 320,000 Indian expats.

Apart from the GCC countries, the United States and the United Kingdom also draw a substantial NRI population, hosting 1.28 million NRIs in the US and 350,000 in the UK. Australia, Malaysia, and Canada have substantial NRI communities, showcasing the global presence of Indian expatriates worldwide. In Bahrain, NRIs hold a vital position in the country's diverse cultural milieu and play a significant role in driving its economic growth and development. Their presence reflects the strong ties and shared interests between Bahrain and India, fostering a flourishing bilateral relationship. — Agencies

Lebanese activists fight rampant beachside development



In a pristine patch of Lebanon's north coast, a rare marine visitor has fueled opposition to a seafront development, in a country where unchecked construction has obstructed access to beaches. Residents of Amchit say a Mediterranean monk seal sometimes visits the area, taking refuge in the crystal-blue waters of a sea-cave accessible only by wading or paddling between low rocks to reach a tiny, sheltered cove.



People swim at the "Abu Ali" beach, a narrow crescent of rocky sand is wedged between the edge of a hill and sparkling blue water, in Lebanon's northern coastal village of Kfarabida.

But local environmental group Terre Liban has warned that a proposed development on the ground above risks causing the cave to collapse, destroying the secluded site. "The seal chose this sea-cave because the water is clean" and the covered shore provides a resting place, said Farid Sami Abi Yunes. The architect, 41, is among those campaigning for the cave to be listed as a nature reserve.

Mediterranean monk seals were once abundant but are now considered endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which cites threats

including habitat loss. Milad Fakhri from the National Centre for Marine Sciences says seals have been seen in Lebanese waters in recent years but "no official study has been carried out" into them.

Abi Yunes, one of those lucky enough to have snapped a picture of the seal while kayaking, said he was determined to protect the area. "This villa must not be built... over a cave hosting an animal threatened with extinction," he said.

'Raw sewage'

Residents of Amchit accuse the authorities of green-lighting the construction without considering the furry visitor. Much of Lebanon's seafront is dotted with formal and informal structures and developments, some of them abandoned. Many resorts that now restrict access to the coast are unlicensed, built on land that was obtained during the country's 1975-1990 civil war.

Some establishments charge more than \$30 a day for entry — eye-watering prices in a country gripped by a crushing economic crisis. Local group Nahnoo, which campaigns for the preservation of public spaces, says that more than 80 percent of Lebanon's coast is no longer freely accessible. The group's president Mohammad Ayoub said most of the rest was effectively unusable because of the dumping of "raw sewage".

Rampant construction isn't new in Lebanon but now "people mobilize more to defend the public domain", Ayoub said. His group has registered more than 1,100 construction violations on the Lebanese coast.

Local activists showed AFP several instances of coastal construction that they said impeded public access. Further north in Thourm, Riad Nakhul said the owners of two seaside facilities

had failed to respect a stop-work order issued in June. "Work continues discreetly," said Nakhul, an activist and historian, pointing to part of the coast that had been cemented over and where a pool was being built. "Why don't the authorities get moving and enforce their decision?" he asked. "We have nothing

edge of a hill and sparkling blue water. The space, one of the last public beaches in the area, was formerly home to a civil war-era structure built illegally on the shorefront, said activist Tony Nassif, 26.

"We found out recently that the owner wanted to develop" the structure, effectively taking over

seafront site. Elsewhere, however, swimmers and sunbathers have already been pushed out. Karl Metrebian, 32, said he changed beaches after the one he went to for years in Kfarabida was privatized.

"Everywhere in the world the coast is free," said Metrebian, who works in the entertainment



People snorkle in the Mediterranean sea waters by rocky structures off Lebanon's northern coastal village of Kfarabida.



Environmental activist Clara Khoury points at an under-construction villa in Lebanon's northern village of Kfarabida.

against tourism," he added, but construction of seaside facilities "must be legal".

Demolition demand

In nearby Kfarabida, residents have instead achieved a small victory at the "Abu Ali" beach, whose narrow crescent of rocky sand is wedged between the

the beach, Nassif said. So "we decided to get together to demand it be demolished," he told AFP, pointing to the empty space now free for beachgoers.

Last month in Naqura on Lebanon's south coast, environmental groups including Nahnoo managed to stop preparatory development work at another



This picture shows a view of seaside facilities under construction in Lebanon's northern village of Thourm.



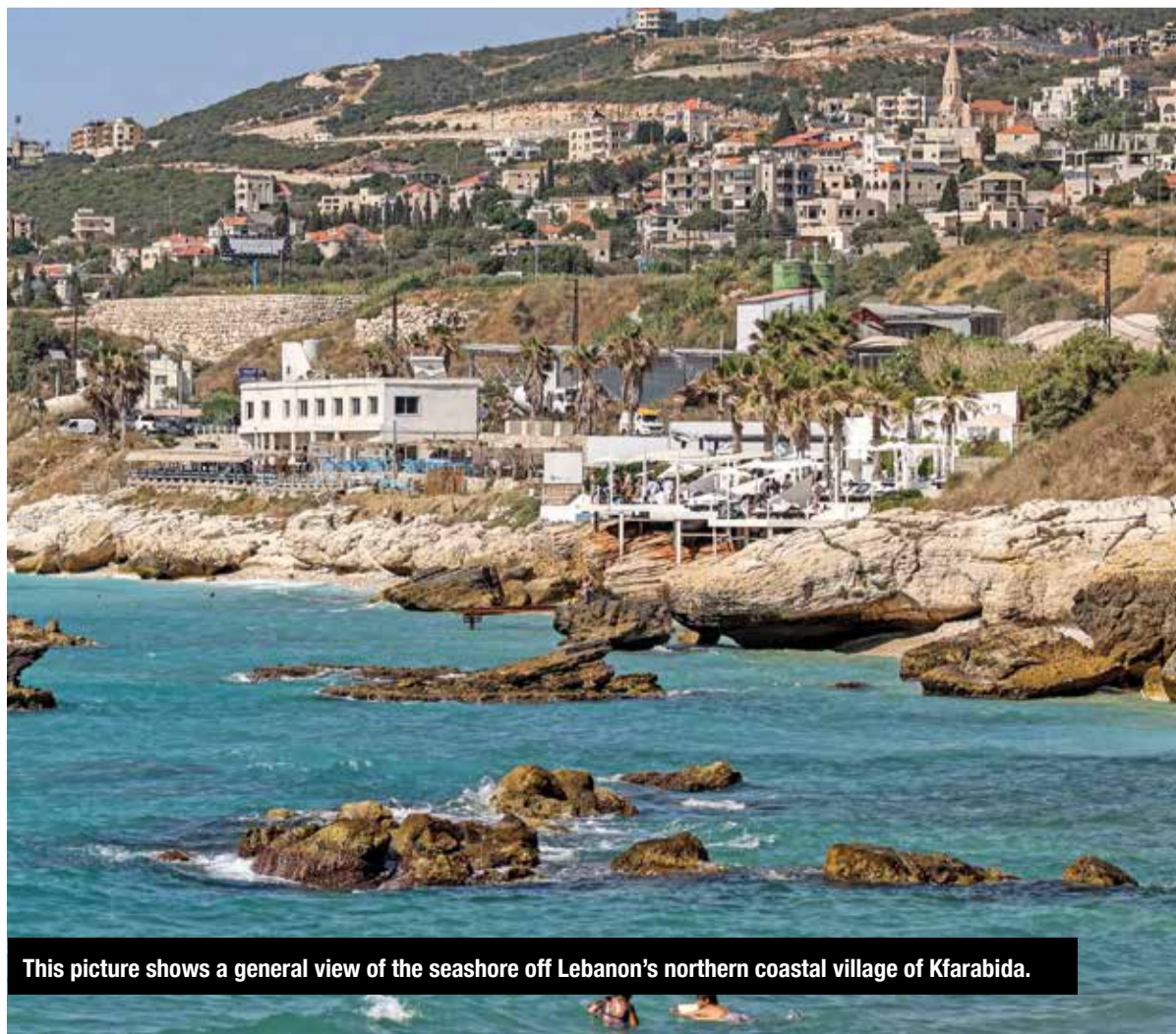
This picture shows a view of seaside facilities under construction in Lebanon's northern village of Thourm.



A youth rides a personal watercraft (jetski) in the Mediterranean sea waters off Lebanon's northern coastal village of Kfarabida.



This picture shows a view of a fenced-off area for new developments under construction near a sea cave believed to be inhabited by seals off Lebanon's northern village of Amchit.



This picture shows a general view of the seashore off Lebanon's northern coastal village of Kfarabida.



Diver Victor Farah navigates a kayak inside a sea cave, believed to be a sanctuary for seals, in Lebanon's northern village of Amchit.



Diver Victor Farah navigates a kayak at the entrance of a sea cave, believed to be a sanctuary for seals, near a fenced-off area in Lebanon's northern village of Amchit. — AFP photos



The entrance of the cave.



Tunnels were used as storage space for water, oil and foodstuffs during the Muslim era.



Arabic caves in Spanish Brihuega, top touristic attraction

In the deep Spanish Brihuega town, there lays a chain of underground corridors named (Arabic Caves), or as called (Cuevas Arabes) in the Spanish language, a landmark that attracts thousands of tourists. The total length of these undergrounds, located in the Guadalajara province, is nine kilometers of which visitors can enjoy walking a distance of 700 meters only in a cave that belongs to private property.

Arabs built the tunnels that lay underneath the whole city, between the 10th and 11th centuries to protect the city during wars, as well as use them as food, oil, and water storage, where its temperature did not exceed 12 degrees all year long. The (Cuevas Arabes) were used during the Spanish Civil War (1936- 1939).—AFP



Drawings on Jars.

In the tropical mountains of Costa Rica, scientists guard a treasure trove of seeds collected over decades as a bulwark against food insecurity and climate change. Some 6,200 samples from 125 species of squash, chilli, tomato and other edible plants are held at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) near the town of Turrialba.



A worker at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) removes seeds from chillies to store them at their seed bank.



In Costa Rica, SAVING SEEDS TO FEED FUTURE GENERATIONS

alba. In temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Celsius, the seeds can be kept for up to 40 years for purposes of research, genetic engineering of plants more resistant to pests, diseases or changing weather, or to replace species that die out.

The bank "is a resource we have for use now or in the future," plant geneticist William Solano told AFP at the facility some 60 km east of the capi-

tal San Jose. It holds seeds from 57 countries, he said, but about 90 percent are from the Central American region, collected from markets and farms or growing wild. The CATIE stockpile, stacked on shelves in hundreds of small, silver envelopes, includes the second-largest collection of squash family seeds in the world. Many of the seeds are not present in banks anywhere else in the world, according to the center.

'Genetic archive'

"In response to climate change, we have here important materials for food security that are locally adapted" to a variety of climate conditions, ranging from humidity to extreme drought, Solano told AFP. As ever-more extreme weather threatens food production, traditional, native seeds are essential to "give sustainability to agri-food systems," he added.

According to seed expert Ester

Vargas of the University of Costa Rica, "there is variability in native seeds that gives them the ability to adapt to different conditions" in the areas of their origin. Seed banks like the one at CATIE serve to guarantee an availability of "crops with high nutritional value" for generations to come, she added. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that almost one in ten people in the world suffered hunger in 2022 -- some 735 million in

total -- with increases in parts of Africa, western Asia and the Caribbean.

The FAO says seed banks help preserve "the most adapted varieties" for a given region. "As climate change has a significant impact on agricultural production, growing local varieties, which have a high degree of genetic diversity, is highly important because these varieties have the ability to bet-



A worker at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) organizes seeds before storing them at their seed bank.



A scientist stores seeds at the seed bank of the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE).



Scientists from the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) collect chili peppers to extract their seeds and store them at their seed bank, in Turrialba, Costa Rica. — AFP photos



Picture of chillies collected at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) to extract their seeds and store them at the seed bank.



A worker at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) removes seeds from chillies to store them at their seed bank.



Picture of coffee seeds collected at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) to be stored at their seed bank.



A worker at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) dries coffee seeds to store them at their seed bank.

Lifestyle



A man pushes a car out of the mud during the 24th World meeting of Citroen 2CV friends near Delemont, northern Switzerland.



A car adorned with fictional cinema character "James Bond" themed decoration.



Minions figurines sit atop the dashboard in a parked car.



A dog is seen peering out the rear windscreen of a car.



A car with former French comedian Michel Gérard Joseph Colucci painted on the hood.

Around 5,000 Citroen 2CVs from across the globe are tooting into the Swiss countryside this week for a mass gathering celebrating the instantly recognizable French classic car. The 24th World Meeting of 2CV Friends, in Delemont in the Jura region, has brought 2CVs of all shapes, sizes and colors to northwest Switzerland.

The 2CV—which stands for "deux chevaux", meaning "two horsepower"—was launched in 1948 as French carmaker Citroen's answer to Germany's Volkswagen Beetle. Considered an economical choice for consumers, more than five million 2CVs rolled off the production lines until 1990, when Citroen had to stop producing them due to emissions standards.



A car drives in the mud during the 24th World meeting of Citroen 2CV friends near Delemont, northern Switzerland.

The six-day event in Delemont began on Tuesday and ends on Sunday. 2CVs from 30 countries are taking part, from neighboring countries including France, Germany and Austria, elsewhere in Europe such as Greece and the Netherlands, and some from as far as Australia. "I think the magic of the 2CV, it's ironically French. It's the perfect design. But it's so simple, it's so easy to maintain, it's so easy to understand," said Matt Damper, who came from Britain with his son. "It's almost adopted as a member of the family. 'It's a way of life; it's not just a car.'"

Zen vibe

The event is taking place on a site covering 53 hectares, which includes 43 hectares of camping space. Food trucks and concerts—spanning alphorns to classic rock, ska to bell-ringing—are laid on to keep the participants going, while spare parts stalls attract keen interest. "Here come a lot of people because my parts are rare. It's not many people in the world repairing complete parts. This is original Citroen parts but refurbished," said Miran, 42, a mechanic from Slovenia. "People like handmade, and personal contact."



This aerial photograph shows a view of the 24th World meeting of Citroen 2CV friends near Delemont, northern Switzerland. --AFP photos

The 2CVs need to follow a one-way route through the neighboring villages, with itineraries designed to help visitors discover the Jura region. Drivers honk horns at one other in a nod of recognition towards fellow enthusiasts. Laurent Habran, 47, a cultural centre director from Belgium, said the vibe was "pretty cool, pretty zen". "We come to have fun. Coming in a 2CV, you can't

be in a rush because it doesn't go very fast anyhow," he said. The first World Meeting of 2CV Friends—a biennial event—was held in Finland in 1975. It is being staged in Switzerland for the



An attendee guides a car in the mud.

third time. The event's budget is 1.7 million Swiss francs (\$2 million).

'Umbrella on wheels'

"There are enthusiasts who have original vintage 2CVs, and there are 2CVs that have been totally transformed, so people also come to look for parts, but above all to meet up, for the atmosphere," said pensioner Christian Corte. The car, with its Bauhaus-inspired curves, designed by Italian Flaminio Bertoni, won generations of fans. Initially designed to get rural France motoring, it was also seen at points as a student car or a motor for hippies. The original specifications envisaged four wheels under an umbrella.

The spec also included instructions

suggesting that a farmer's wife should have no trouble driving it on "the worst roads" and that the suspension should ensure that a basketful of eggs riding on the backseat would survive intact. Gabriel Lindstrom, 30, a real estate worker from Sweden, said: "You don't see so many 2CVs on the road but when you see all of them in one place, it's nice. It makes you happy."

"And it's quite good to be a part of it, to support that movement." A 2CV made of wood, thought to be the only one of its kind, sold for 210,000 euros (\$225,000) at auction in France last month, setting a new price record for the iconic vehicle.—AFP



Stickers adorn the back of a car.



A view of the 24th World meeting of Citroen 2CV friends near Delemont, northern Switzerland.



Twitter, now known as X, reinstates Kanye's account

X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter, has reinstated rapper and designer Kanye West around eight months after his account was suspended, the Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday. Last fall, West posted an image that appeared to show a swastika interlaced with a Star of David, and tycoon Elon Musk suspended the artist from the platform, which he had bought weeks earlier. Musk at the time labeled West's post as an "incitement to violence."



An aerial view shows a newly constructed X sign on the roof of the headquarters of the social media platform previously known as Twitter, in San Francisco.--AFP photos

X's press office did not immediately respond to a query about West's account. By late evening, West had yet to post anything new. West, who now goes professionally as Ye, assured the platform he would not use his account to share antisemitic content or use harmful language, the Journal said. Anti-Semitic remarks by West last year cost him heavily in lost business deals. Adidas cut ties with him after a nearly decade-long partnership, abandoning his Yeezy-branded sneakers.



US rapper Kanye West attends the WSJ Magazine 2019 Innovator Awards at MOMA on November 6, 2019 in New York City.

In May, the German company said the end of its highly successful collaboration with West hit sales by about 400 million euros (US\$441 million) in the first quarter of the year. Gap and Balenciaga also cut ties with the rapper and designer. Since Musk bought Twitter for \$44 billion last October, he has fired thousands of employees and cut moderation of content. In December, he reinstated former president Donald Trump's Twitter account although Trump has yet to return to the platform.—AFP

'Miracle in the Andes' crash survivor dies half century later

Uruguayan Jose Luis Inciarte, one of 16 survivors of a 1972 Andean plane crash immortalized in the film "Alive," died in his home city of Montevideo Thursday aged 75, a friend told AFP. Inciarte, known fondly as "Coche," was part of an amateur Uruguayan rugby team flying to play a match in Chile, accompanied by family members, when their plane crashed on October 13, 1972. Thirty-three of the 45 on board survived the initial impact, but only 16 were left after an ordeal of ten weeks on an Andean glacier without food, shelter, or even warm clothes in minus 30 degrees Celsius (-22 Fahrenheit) at an altitude of some 3,500 meters.

The survivors had to resort to eating the flesh of their dead comrades to stay alive. Rescue finally came after two of the young men—Roberto Canessa and Fernando Parrado -- walked for 10 days into the unknown, hostile terrain, finally spotting people at a river as they were close to their end. The story of survival became known as the "Miracle in the Andes."

'Now we are 14'

"We lost a friend," Canessa told AFP Thursday of Inciarte's death from cancer. "We already lost Javier (Methol), and now we are 14" left over from the 16 who returned home after the crash, he said. Methol died in 2015 aged 79, also from cancer. In 2012, on a trip to Santiago to

commemorate the 40-year-anniversary of the accident, Inciarte reflected on the experiences that marked his life in comments to AFP. "With the passage of time, the anguish, the suffering, the pain of the cold that gnaws at the skin, gave way to hope, to a story of survival, solidarity and friendship," he said at the time.

Inciarte had gone on to become an agricultural entrepreneur. Spanish filmmaker Juan Antonio Bayona, who made a film about the Andes survival story—entitled "Society of the Snow" and due to premier in Venice in September—bid

farewell to his "friend" Inciarte on Instagram. "Today Jose Luis 'Coche' Inciarte left for good, after life gifted him an extension of more than fifty years. As far as I know, he used it well," Bayona wrote. "A life like his is worth four of ours!"

Author Pablo Vierci, who wrote the book the new movie is based on, told AFP Inciarte had been a "good man" who on the mountain "propped up" those whose spirits were failing. "He gave the impression that he was not afraid of death," said Vierci.—AFP



Former Uruguayan rugby players (from left) Daniel Fernandez, Jose Luis "Coche" Inciarte and Roberto Canessa, survivors of the Andes plane crash in 1972, react during a memorial service in Santiago, on October 12, 2002. --AFP

Sports

Barcelona overpower Real Madrid 3-0 in Texas 'Clasico'

Spanish champions' clinical finishing makes the difference

ARLINGTON: Barcelona beat Real Madrid 3-0 in a fiercely contested friendly match on Saturday with an early strike from Ousmane Dembele and late goals from Fermin Lopez and Ferran Torres. The result was harsh on Carlo Ancelotti's team, who struck the woodwork five times and created plenty of opportunities. But Spanish champions Barcelona's more clinical finishing proved to be the difference. A packed AT&T Stadium, home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, witnessed a game which had all the passion and commitment of a real derby despite being a pre-season warm-up.

The crowd were soon on their feet when Oriol Romeu rattled the Real cross-bar with a thundering drive in the fourth minute but Barca soon had their fans celebrating. A cleverly worked free-kick saw Pedri slide a diagonal pass into the path of Dembele, who expertly drilled the ball into the far corner. Real had a great chance to get level just five minutes later when Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo handled in the box but Vinicius Junior blasted the penalty against the bar.

The action was non-stop as Rodrygo then forced Barcelona keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen into a fine, full-length save with a free-kick that was flying towards the top corner. The woodwork denied Real again when Vinicius struck the bar and although Jude Bellingham outjumped ter Stegen, the midfielder's header hit the post.

At the other end, Dembele had a chance for a second after a mistake from Ferland Mendy allowed him to break through on goal, but the French forward's soft shot was easily dealt with by Thibaut Courtois. Tempers flared after a sliding challenge

from behind from Frenkie de Jong on Eder Militao, with players from both teams scuffling on the half-way line and half-time likely came as a relief for American referee Allen Chapman. Real's bad luck continued after the break with Aurelien Tchouameni blasting against the bar while Vinicius continued to torment from the left, poking a shot from a tight angle just wide.

There was no let-up from either side, despite multiple substitutions, but Barcelona's finishing proved to be the difference with substitute Fermin Lopez making it 2-0 with a brilliant blast from outside the box in the 85th minute after being set up by Sergi Roberto. Incredibly, Vinicius, after a jinking run in from the left, struck the bar again with his drive from a tight angle and Barca wrapped up the win in stoppage time. Ferran Torres, ran on to a lofted ball from Lopez, lifted the ball over the advancing Courtois and showed good awareness and balance to turn and slot the ball into the empty net.

Could have been different

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez admitted the scoreline flattered his team. "The result could have been different, the result is a bit misleading, Madrid also had many chances and we shouldn't be over-confident," he said. "The result is very favorable but it doesn't mean we played a super match. There are many things to improve. It was a very even match in which Madrid also had many chances," he said. Xavi also questioned whether he had enough depth for the upcoming season. "I think Madrid have a much bigger squad than us. At the end of the game they were taking players out and they have many



ARLINGTON: Fermin Lopez #29 of FC Barcelona scores a goal past Thibaut Courtois #1 of Real Madrid during the second half of the pre-season friendly match at AT&T Stadium on July 29, 2023 in Texas. — AFP

players in the midfield, physical, technical, they have a wide range of possibilities," he said.

"We tried to play and impose our game and in many moments we succeeded. I am satisfied with the way we competed and in many moments we looked like what we want to be," he said. Ancelotti also played down the scoreline and was pleased by many

aspects. "The result is the least important thing. It hurts to lose, but I'll keep the good things we did," said Ancelotti. "We were good in terms of intensity, we had a lot of chances that didn't go in. Five (against the woodwork) in a game is quite rare, I don't think it has ever happened to me. But it's better if it happens in pre-season," added the Italian. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: Argentina's wing Mateo Carreras (bottom right) tackles South Africa's center Lukhanyo Am during the Rugby Championship final-round match between South Africa and Argentina on July 29, 2023. — AFP

SA survive Argentina onslaught for Rugby Championship win

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa (SA) survived a second-half Argentina onslaught to win 22-21 in Johannesburg on Saturday and finish Rugby Championship runners-up behind New Zealand. Argentina, who trailed 15-9 at half-time, camped in the Springboks' half for much of the second period, but three missed kicks at goal by fly-half Santiago Carreras proved costly. A breakaway try by fly-half Manie Libbok on 69 minutes became crucial as it extended the South African lead to a flattering 13 points.

The Pumas never tired and tries from winger Mateo Carreras and scrum-half Gonzalo Bertranou reduced the gap to a single point. Earlier on Saturday, New Zealand scored six tries to crush Australia 38-7 in Melbourne and claim the southern hemisphere title for the ninth time in 11 editions. "It was a mess-up at the breakdown and we conceded penalties, but we walk away with the win," said No 8 Duane Vermeulen, deputizing as South Africa captain for injured Siya Kolisi. "We pride ourselves on our defense, but there is still work to be done before we defend the World Cup title.

"Argentina play the full 80 minutes and that is what we got tonight. We need to sharpen up on our side."

Pumas hooker and skipper Julian Montoya lamented missed chances. "We did not take our opportunities in both halves and credit to the Springboks for great defending. "But we are not the team we want to be yet. Tonight was a step forward, but there are still lots of things to improve on." Much pre-match attention had focused on dynamic South Africa scrum-half Grant Williams as he prepared to make his first start after three appearances off the bench. But he was concussed after just 10 seconds, colliding with Argentina full-back Jean Cruz Mallia, having clearing the ball on a cold winter night.

Williams was stretched off and replaced by veteran Faf de Klerk, who helped the Springboks beat England in the 2019 Rugby World Cup final in Japan. Montoya was another early casualty, but continued after a head injury was strapped. He left the field later in the half, his face covered in blood, but came back after changing his bandages and his shirt. Two successful penalty kicks by fly-half Santiago Carreras gave the Pumas a six-point advantage on 10 minutes as the hosts were slow to settle. A close-range Libbok penalty halved the deficit and the home team went ahead on 19 minutes through a try from lock Eben Etzebeth, winning his 112th cap. Etzebeth and hooker Malcolm Marx combined in a clever lineout manoeuvre which ended with the second rower charging over near the corner flag. — AFP

Mayers and Brandon King. "Once I can contribute to team wins I am happy. Whether I get a 50, whether I get a hundred, whether I get a double-hundred, as long as we win I am happy," said a delighted Hope. Of his partnership with Carty, he added: "Against such a good bowling attack, we had to push hard for ones and twos and that kept us on course."

Earlier, left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie and seamer Romario Shepherd claimed three wickets each as India, who rested regular captain Rohit Sharma and premier batsman Virat Kohli, tumbled after an opening stand of 90 between Ishan Kishan and Shubman Gill. With their innings also interrupted twice by seasonal showers, the visitors laboured to gain any middle or lower-order momentum. Motie separated the opening pair when Gill, on 34, was held at long-off and Kishan slashed a short ball from Shepherd four balls later to be well held by Alick Athanaze diving at backward-point.

Kishan's 55, his second consecutive half-century, came off 55 balls with six four and one six. Suryakumar Yadav (24) was the only other player in the line-up to last any length of time in the middle as the pace of Alzarri Joseph (2 for 35) also proved unsettling for the visitors. "This will now get the character out of everyone going to a decider rather than a dead match," said stand-in captain Hardik Pandya in putting a positive spin on the loss. "Things didn't go our way today but we still had some good performances so we are all looking forward to the final match." — AFP

Man United, Hojlund 'seal \$82 million deal'

LAS VEGAS: Manchester United have reportedly agreed a deal worth an initial £64 million to sign Atalanta striker Rasmus Hojlund. The Denmark international is the third major arrival at Old Trafford during the summer transfer window after the signings of Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount and Inter Milan goalkeeper Andre Onana. United are understood to have agreed a fee of £64 million (\$82 million) for Hojlund, with a further £8 million in add-ons. The 20-year-old is reported to have agreed terms on a five-year deal with the option of a further season.

Hojlund joined Atalanta in August 2022 from Austrian club Sturm Graz for a reported 17 million euros. He scored nine goals in 32 appearances in Serie A last season. United manager Erik ten Hag was tight-lipped about the reports when asked by reporters on Saturday ahead of Sunday's friendly against Borussia Dortmund in Las Vegas. "I can't talk about the player who is still under contract (with) another club," said the Dutchman. Ten Hag said however that he hoped Mount and Onana would be joined by a new forward, as he tries to get United back in contention at the top of the table.

"With this squad, we built a foundation last season...now we have to find the right players to fit in and who can help to raise the bar. I think we succeeded with Andre Onana, we succeeded with Mason Mount and now we are looking for a striker," he said. The Red Devils finished third in the Premier League



Denmark's forward Rasmus Hojlund

but scored just 58 goals - 36 fewer than champions Manchester City. Ten Hag urged his English forward Marcus Rashford to step up his game. Rashford, who prefers to play wide on the left, scored 17 goals in 35 Premier League appearances last season and had 30 goals in 56 in all competitions.

"Also for Rashly, we expect to raise the bar. He had a good season, but that doesn't give guarantees for another great season. So everything has to be right. First, his base, his foundation, attitude, lifestyle, etc. Giving every training his best, but also to work on his game and work on the way he plays for himself but in the team. So what we are looking for is goals and Rashly, at this moment, he proved he has a very good goalscoring record. But also for him, he wants to make the next step and score more goals in the last season," he said. United face Wolves at home in their opening Premier League fixture on August 14. — AFP

Stuart Broad: England master match-winner

LONDON: Self-proclaimed Test "addict" Stuart Broad was able to quit on his own terms, announcing on Saturday he would retire following the Ashes finale at The Oval. After stumps on the third day of a Test in which England are pressing for a series-leveling win against their arch-rivals might seem an odd time to make such a statement. But Broad, 37, has never been shy of going his own way in a 167-match career that has yielded 602 Test wickets so far—the fifth-highest tally by any bowler. Longstanding England new-ball colleague James Anderson (690) is the only paceman higher than him on the all-time list.

It is all a far cry from a setback early in his international career when Broad was hit for six sixes in an over by India's Yuvraj Singh during the 2007 World Twenty20 in South Africa. Broad, who made his name at English county Leicestershire before joining Midlands rivals Nottinghamshire, recovered and became renowned for an ability to turn a game with match-winning bursts — he has taken five or more wickets 20 times in a Test innings.

He took an astounding 8-15 on his Trent Bridge home ground in Nottingham when, leading the attack in the absence of the injured Anderson, he sparked an Australia collapse to 60 all out during England's 2015 Ashes triumph. By then he was already a public enemy in Australia for his refusal to leave the crease after edging to slip in an Ashes clash on the same ground two years earlier, only for umpire Aleem Dar to rule in his favor. Broad, then on 37, made 65 in a match England won by just 14 runs.

'True champion'

Australia great Glenn McGrath, a childhood hero of Broad's, said Saturday that his fellow seamer's ability to raise his game when most needed made him a "true champion". "He loves the big moments, he loves the pressure and that is the sign of a true champion," McGrath, whose tally of 563 Test wickets was surpassed by Broad last year, told the BBC. "He has been incredible for England for a long, long



England's Stuart Broad

time." Broad only started bowling towards the end of a school career that indicated he might follow in the footsteps of his father Chris Broad, an Ashes-winning batsman.

That batting talent was still on show during Stuart Broad's superb 169 against Pakistan at Lord's in 2010, although he has never been quite the same with the bat since having his nose broken by a bouncer from India's Varun Aaron four years later. A four-time Ashes winner, Broad, with blond hair and boyish good looks, has been a fierce competitor throughout his career.

That was never more evident when, having been left out of England's tour of the Caribbean last year, he regained his place to flourish again under the 'Bazball' regime of captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum. England's leading bowler in the current Ashes series, Broad became just the fifth man to take 600 Test wickets during last week's rain-marred draw in Manchester. "I am addicted to Test cricket," he said afterwards. "I like the grit and competitive nature of it. It's great to be on that list with some of the greats of the game."

Broad has been a particular thorn in the side of David Warner, dismissing the Australia opener 17 times. Although not a bowler of express pace, Broad's ability to generate bounce and late movement from a 6 feet 5 inch frame has repeatedly troubled the best batsmen of his generation. But he said he hoped cricket-lovers would remember him for his will to win, as much as his talent. — AFP

Hope leads Windies to first ODI win over India in four years

BRIDGETOWN: West Indies captain Shai Hope played the sheet anchor role to perfection in taking his team to a series-leveling six-wicket victory over India in the second One-Day International of a three-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday. After his bowlers capitalized on a helpful pitch and an unconvincing India batting effort to dismiss their opponents for 181 off 40.5 overs, Hope's unbeaten 63 and the support of Keacy Carty (48 not out) in an unbroken fifth-wicket partnership of 91 ended a nine-match run of defeats to India in ODIs spanning four years.

It was also a swift comeback in the wake of the Caribbean side's dispiriting five-wicket loss in the opening match at the same venue on Thursday and sets the stage for the series decider on Tuesday at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad. Hope was joined by Carty when Kuldeep Yadav bowled Shimron Hetmyer to leave the home side at 91 for four in the 17th over.

That strike came after Shardul Thakur's three-wicket burst which brought India back into the match following a 53-run opening stand between Kyle

Sports

Crawford punishes Spence

Crawford claims undisputed welterweight world title

LOS ANGELES: Terence Crawford punished Errol Spence on the way to a ninth-round technical knockout to claim the undisputed welterweight world title in Las Vegas on Saturday. Unbeaten Crawford had knocked down Spence three times and had his previously unbeaten foe staggering under a hail of blows when referee Harvey Dock called a halt at 2:32 in the ninth. Crawford added Spence's World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation titles to his own World Boxing Organization crown. Crawford became the first undisputed welterweight world champion of boxing's four-belt era, which began in 2004.

A former lightweight and undisputed light welterweight world champion, he became the first man to win all the belts in two weight divisions. "It means everything because of who I took the belts from," Crawford said. "They tried to blackball me, they kept me out, they kept me out. They talked bad about me, they said I wasn't good enough, that I couldn't beat these top welterweights, and I just kept my head to the sky and I kept praying to God that I would get the opportunity to show the world who Terence Crawford is."

"And tonight, I believe I showed how great I am," added Crawford, who improved to 40-0 with 31 knockouts, taking his string of knockouts to 11 fights. That includes all eight of his fights at welterweight. It was a stunningly dominant performance in what was expected to be a close fight, one that had drawn comparisons to classic welterweight match-ups such as Roberto Duran v Sugar Ray Leonard and to more recent mega-fights like Floyd

Mayweather's 2015 victory over Manny Pacquiao.

Music superstar Eminem provided in-person accompaniment for Crawford's walk to the ring. The sellout crowd at T-Mobile Arena included a who's-who of boxing royalty headlined by heavyweight greats Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield and also featuring Mayweather and Pacquiao. Spence made the running in the opening round, but Crawford, fighting southpaw, began to let his hands go in the second, punishing Spence with a piston-like jab that dropped him at the end of the round.

Flash knockdown

"That was more of a flash knockdown," Crawford said. "I caught him with a left and he didn't think I was coming back with the right." Spence was still moving forward in round three, but the power and accuracy of Crawford's counter punches were devastating. Crawford landed a series of hard punches in the fourth, including a left that rattled Spence. It was more of the same in the sixth, and in the seventh Crawford had Spence down again with a right uppercut followed by a hook to the ear.

He dropped him again with a blow to the chin in the waning seconds of the round. Spence, who had never before been knocked down, fell to 28-1 with 22 knockouts. He came out for the ninth still looking for the big punch that might turn things around. But Crawford was landing at will with Spence struggling to stay on his feet when the referee brought it to a close, sparking a celebration for Crawford who then had an embrace and words of encouragement for his beaten rival.

Spence was fighting for the first time since a



LAS VEGAS: Errol Spence Jr is knocked to the mat by Terence Crawford during round 7 of the World Welterweight Championship bout at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

10th-round stoppage of Yordenis Ugas in April of last year. He didn't fight in 2021, when a planned bout with Pacquiao was scuppered by a torn retina that required surgery. But the 33-year-old said

ring rust wasn't the problem. "He was just better tonight," said Spence, who was already agitating for a rematch that he said he hoped would be at the higher weight limit of 154 pounds. — AFP

Santiago earns decision victory

LOS ANGELES: Mexico's Alexandro Santiago earned a unanimous 12-round decision over former four-division champion Nonito Donaire on Saturday to claim the vacant World Boxing Council bantamweight world title. Santiago, 27, claimed the first world title of his career as he denied the 40-year-old "Filipino Flash," who was aiming to rebound from a brutal second-round knockout loss to Japan's Naoya Inoue 13 months ago. Donaire, who has held world titles at flyweight, bantamweight, super-bantamweight and featherweight, kept it close in the early going and rocked Santiago with a left hook in the third round.

But he couldn't match Santiago's pace as the fight progressed, the Mexican landing a barrage of convincing blows in the ninth round and quickly halting Donaire's momentum in the when the Philippines fighter came out looking to land a big blow. One judge scored the bout 115-113 and the other two saw it 116-112 for Santiago, who improved to 28-3 with five drawn and 14 knockouts. "It's been an honor to fight such a legend like Nonito Donaire," said Santiago, who was brought to tears in the ring as Donaire offered a congratulatory hug in the ring.

Donaire fell to 42-8 with 28 knockouts and said he thought he had more go do in the ring. "Disappointed," he admitted, but added: "I feel good still. I love the sport so much." He said he



LAS VEGAS: Nonito Donaire bites the arm of Alexandro Santiago during the WBC World Bantamweight Championship bout at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. — AFP

and his wife, Rachel, who trains and manages him, will have a conversation to "see where we go from there. "But I know I felt good," he said. "There were just some things that didn't trigger." Was that because he's 40 years old, Donaire was

asked. "I say 'Hell no' to that," he said. The fight at T-Mobile Arena was on the undercard of the highly anticipated welterweight world title unification bout between unbeaten Americans Errol Spence and Terence Crawford. — AFP

Fritz powers into final against Vukic

WASHINGTON: Top-seeded American Taylor Fritz defeated compatriot JJ Wolf 6-3, 7-5 on Saturday to book a title clash with Australian Aleksandar Vukic in the ATP Tour hardcourt tournament in Atlanta. Fritz, ranked ninth in the world, will be chasing his second title of the season after lifting his fifth career ATP trophy in Delray Beach in February. "It was really solid," Fritz said. "I served well the whole match. "Whenever I was in trouble I played a lot of good points, I just did what I was supposed to do and didn't really give him much," added Fritz, who saved both break points he faced.

Vukic, the 27-year-old from Sydney, defeated Frenchman Ugo Humbert 3-6, 7-6 (7-2), 7-5 to reach his maiden ATP Tour final. The Austri-

lian was playing in his first ATP Tour semi-final after upsetting local favorite and Wimbledon quarter-finalist Christopher Eubanks in the quarters. Vukic, who hit 34 winners and 17 aces, came alive in the second set tie-break and having found his aggressive style worked, he powered towards victory against the 38th ranked left-hander Humbert. "This is unbelievable. I was getting totally outplayed. He was destroying me and I kind of just relaxed and then went for it," he said.

"I was down one nil, mini-break in the tiebreak and just went for the return and felt the momentum, felt the crowd, and just used it and then broke in the first game of the third. A little hiccup then, but recovered and I couldn't be happier," he said. Fritz and Vukic have never met before and the Australian knows he is the clear underdog. "It's going to be a tough match. I need to serve well and return well and play like I did in the second and third



ATLANTA: Taylor Fritz misses a shot against JJ Wolf during the ATP Atlanta Open semi-finals at Atlantic Station in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

set and I think anything's possible with this energy, with this environment. "I've got nothing to lose, so let's see what happens," he said. — AFP

Verstappen wins wet, wild sprint race at GP

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Max Verstappen increased his lead by a further eight points in the world championship with a calculated and convincing victory ahead of Australian rookie Oscar Piastri in Saturday's rain-delayed sprint race at the Belgian Grand Prix. Red Bull's double defending world champion rode his luck when McLaren's Piastri snatched the lead by making an early pit-stop to switch from wet to intermediate tyres, to storm back and win by 6.6 seconds.

Verstappen's win extended Red Bull's record this year to 14 wins from 14 races - 11 grands prix and three sprints. He said he agreed with Red Bull's strategy decision, which cost him the early lead, but ensured he was able to go on and win. "I think it was just a safer call," he said. "I could come in first, but then I might be blocked by other cars. There might be a Safety Car and then you lose out massively, so I didn't mind to stay out."

"I mean we lost one position, but we

know we are quick and you could see that when we put the 'inter' tyres on we were flying so it was ok." Looking ahead to Sunday's Grand Prix, when he will start sixth after taking a five-place penalty, Verstappen said his chief concern was not only the possible change of conditions, but also the risk of a collision at La Source, the hairpin first corner.

"I need to pass a few cars so I think the biggest risk is just lap one, especially Turn One. It's always very tricky there so, as long as we stay out of trouble, I think we will have a quick car." Ferrari's Charles Leclerc will start Sunday's main event from pole. Piastri came home a strong second ahead of Pierre Gasly, who gave the beleaguered Alpine team something to celebrate, with Carlos Sainz and his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc finishing fourth and fifth.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton came home fourth on track for Mercedes, but was demoted to seventh

behind Lando Norris, in the second McLaren, after taking a five-second penalty for a clash with Red Bull's Sergio Perez. George Russell was eighth in the second Mercedes ahead of Esteban Ocon in the second Alpine and Daniel Ricciardo, enjoying his second weekend with Alpha Tauri. "I am very happy," said Piastri. "We tried our best and led for a few laps, but we were no match for Max. But it's nice to be up there in P2. All credit to the team."

The race began 35 minutes late, after delays caused by heavy rain, with all 20 cars on full-wet tyres for the start behind the safety car. The race distance was reduced to 12 laps, but it was obvious that in the improving conditions all 20 cars would dive into the pits for intermediates as the race was reduced to 11 laps. Finally, the safety car came in and Verstappen accelerated into Pouchon while Piastri, Sainz, Perez, Gasly and Hamilton all dived in immediately for intermediates leaving Verstappen leading Leclerc at the front.

"Suffering"

"We need to box this lap," said Verstappen, who then pitted, emerging second behind Piastri with Gasly, Perez and



SPA: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen competes during the Formula One Belgian Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps Circuit on July 30, 2023. — AFP

Hamilton behind him, all three gaining from their instant pit-stop decisions. By lap three, the Australian was eight-tenths ahead, his wet-set-up car resisting the Red Bull, which had superior straight-line speed, before Fernando Alonso spun out at the exit of Pouchon. He was unhurt, but he had his first non-finish of the season to mark his 42nd birthday. The safety car was deployed while Red Bull told Verstappen Piastri's left-hand tyres were "suffering".

"I'm not surprised, he's drifting everywhere," said the Dutchman who picked

his moment after the re-start, with five laps to go, to blast past Piastri down Kemmel Straight. Gasly stayed third as Perez and Hamilton tangled when the Briton dived down the inside at Stavelot, but he succeeded later in the lap at La Source and both Ferraris followed in overtaking the Mexican. His team-mate made short work of establishing himself as leader and was four seconds clear of Piastri by lap nine as Hamilton, fourth, was given a five-second penalty for his earlier contact with Perez. — AFP

Hodges eyes first win after late birdie spree

LOS ANGELES: Lee Hodges produced a back-nine birdie blitz to take a stranglehold on the PGA Tour's 3M Open in Minnesota on Saturday and stay on course for the first tour victory of his career. The 28-year-old world number 110 fired a five-under-par third round 66 to open up a five-shot lead heading into Sunday's final round. Hodges, who is yet to win on the PGA Tour, stands on 20 under through 54 holes at the TPC Twin Cities course in Blaine - the first time he has taken a solo lead into the final round.

"I have nothing to lose," Hodges said after Saturday's round. "I'm out here playing with house money. I have a job next year on the PGA Tour, this is all great. This is just icing on the cake." Starting the day four shots clear of the field, Hodges struggled to generate momentum early on with two bogeys and two birdies to reach the turn at level par. But he caught fire after the turn, with back-to-back birdies on the 10th and 11th holes before reeling off three more birdies to take a grip on the leaderboard.

The pick of Hodges' flurry of birdies came on the par-five 18th when he blasted a superb third shot out of a greenside bunker to seven feet before coolly rolling in the birdie putt. Hodges said he plans to continue his aggressive approach when he tees up it Sunday's final round. "It's going to be hard tomorrow," he said. "Not like I can go shoot even par tomorrow. "I'm going to have to keep making birdies. I'm just going to stay aggressive like I have been."

JT Poston leads the pursuit heading into the final round, five adrift after carding a five-under-par 66 on Saturday to stand on 15 under. Poston believes that it will take something special to overhaul Hodges on Sunday. "Lee's playing some great golf, and I would expect him to do the same tomorrow," Poston said. "I know he's chasing his first win and it's probably only a matter of time till he gets it done out here. "For me to get it done I'm going to probably have to shoot something lower than I have this week."

Tony Finau is a further shot back on 14 under after shooting a four-under-par 67, while Australia's Aaron Baddeley is fourth on 13 under after a third round 65. Finau was bullish about his chances of reeling in Hodges in Sunday's final round despite the six-shot deficit. "It's definitely something I can come back from," Finau said. But Lee's playing some great golf, there's no question about it." Four players - Sam Ryder, Keith Mitchell, Billy Horschel and Kevin Streelman - are tied for fifth spot on 12 under, eight off the lead. — AFP

Colombia stun Germany; New Zealand out in tears

Norway thrash Philippines 6-0, Morocco beat South Korea



SYDNEY: Germany's goalkeeper #01 Merle Frohms (left) fails to save a shot from Colombia's forward #18 Linda Caicedo (not pictured) who scores her team's first goal during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group H football match between Germany and Colombia on July 30, 2023. — AFP

SYDNEY: Colombia scored a 97th-minute winner to stun Germany 2-1 on a night of Women's World Cup drama Sunday which also saw Norway and Switzerland into the last 16 but co-hosts New Zealand dumped out in tears. Germany smashed Morocco 6-0 in their opener to underline why they were among the pre-tournament favorites, along with Spain and England, to snatch away the United States' crown.

But they came crashing back down to earth at the hands of a Colombia side inspired by 18-year-old Linda Caicedo and roared on by the majority of a rowdy 40,000 crowd in Sydney. The Real Madrid attacker scored one of the best goals of the tournament so far, darting past two Germany defenders before curling the ball into the top corner to open the scoring.

Germany thought they had salvaged a point in the 89th minute when skipper Alexandra Popp defied the whistles to score from the penalty spot. But with a pulsating game that deep into stoppage time appeared destined for a draw, Manuela Vanegas popped up to head home from close range and put Colombia on the verge of the last 16. "Germany is a world power, that's a reality, but Colombia has been making great strides and today Colombia is a world power," said the defender Vanegas. "I dreamed of scoring a goal in a World Cup, I knew it was going to come and I decided to do it for today's game." Going

into the last round of group matches, Colombia are top of Group H on six points, Germany and Morocco have three and South Korea have zero. Germany's fate is still in their own hands when they face the Koreans next, with Colombia against Morocco. Morocco won a Women's World Cup match for the first time after Ibtissam Jraidi struck early to give them a 1-0 victory over South Korea. In the match, Moroccan defender Nuhaila Benzina became the first player to wear a hijab at the Women's World Cup.

Norway through; NZ out

Norway and Switzerland both emerged out of an excruciatingly tight Group A. Former champions Norway thrashed the Philippines 6-0 in Auckland to squeeze into the last 16 on goal difference from New Zealand. A full house in Dunedin saw the co-hosts held 0-0 by a stubborn Switzerland as the Football Ferns bowed out of their home tournament in tears. The 1995 champions Norway needed a win and they did it in style against World Cup debutants the Philippines, who themselves were still in with a chance of reaching the knockouts. Sophie Roman Haug scored a hat-trick as the Philippines' fairytale journey came to a shuddering halt.

With Norway well ahead, New Zealand now needed to beat Switzerland. The hosts had the

better of the first half with a string of chances, the pick of which saw forward Jacqui Hand rattle the post on 24 minutes. As Norway chalked up the goals in Auckland, the New Zealanders upped the intensity, knowing only a win would be good enough to advance. But the goal they so desperately needed never came. "There are a lot of tears out there, but they should be so proud to finish on four points," captain Ali Riley said.

Australia wait on Kerr

On Monday, Australia will hope to avoid the same fate as their co-hosts. The Matildas must beat Olympic champions Canada to guarantee a place in the last 16 but are still sweating on their skipper and talismanic striker Sam Kerr. She has declared herself available after a calf injury but it remains to be seen how much of a part she plays. "Everyone involved in sport knows that with calf injuries it's one thing that you're available, but there's also risk when you come back from a muscle injury," said Australia's coach Tony Gustavsson. Also in Group B, surprise-package Nigeria need just to avoid defeat against already-eliminated Ireland to progress. Former champions Japan and title contenders Spain meet to decide who tops Group C with both already into the last 16. — AFP

Tunisia's Hafnaoui wins freestyle title



FUKUOKA: Tunisia's Ahmed Hafnaoui celebrates after victory in the final of the men's 1500m freestyle swimming event during the World Aquatics Championships on July 30, 2023. — AFP

FUKUOKA: Tunisia's Ahmed Hafnaoui won the men's 1,500m freestyle title at swimming's world championships on Sunday. Hafnaoui came home in 14min, 31.54sec to finish ahead of American Bobby Finke on 14:31.59 and Australia's Sam Short on 14:37.28. Hafnaoui's time was less than a second off the world record of 14:31.02 set by China's Sun Yang in 2012. "Bobby is so fast in the end of the race, he just pushed us," said Hafnaoui. "It was so close to the world record. I enjoyed the race and thanks Bobby for pushing me."

Short led for most of the race but faded towards the end to leave Hafnaoui and Finke going head-to-head. "I think I deserve it," said Hafnaoui. Short won the 400m freestyle title earlier in the week, pipping Hafnaoui to the line. Hafnaoui, the Olympic 400m freestyle champion, got his revenge in the 800m freestyle final, edging Short after an epic battle. Finke is the reigning Olympic 1,500m champion. Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, who won the race at last year's world championships in Budapest, chose not to defend his title.

The United States salvaged some pride with three golds on the final night of swimming's world championships on Sunday, while Canadian teen Summer McIntosh showcased her immense talent with a second title. The Americans went into the last day of competition in Fukuoka with only four golds to their name, with no chance of catching runaway leaders Australia at the top of the medal table. But Hunter Armstrong kicked off a late gold rush with victory in the men's 50m backstroke, while later US success in the men's and women's 4x100m medley relays capped off the night.

"This is the cherry on top," said women's relay member Regan Smith. "Bringing home a gold for Team USA in the last event means so much to me and all of us." Sixteen-year-old McIntosh won the 400m individual medley to add to the 200m butterfly title she won earlier in the week. Sweden's Sarah Sjöström also picked up her second gold in the women's 50m freestyle, while Lithuania's Ruta Meilutyte set a new world record in winning the women's 50m breaststroke.

Tunisia's Ahmed Hafnaoui took the 1,500m freestyle title after an epic final. Australia finished on top of the medals table with 13 golds, equaling their best ever, but the Americans' final flurry gave them seven to leapfrog over China's five. The US finished with the most medals overall, beating Australia 38 to 25. — AFP

Atletico Madrid beat Man City in friendly

SEOUL: European champions Manchester City lost 2-1 to Atletico Madrid on Sunday at the World Cup Stadium in Seoul in an intense and hard-fought friendly. The two teams fielded starting lineups close to full strength, although Kevin De Bruyne, injured in the Champions League final, remained on the bench. Memphis Depay gave Atletico the lead in the 66th minute, collecting a pass from Angel Correa on the edge of the area to fire past Stefan Ortega who had replaced Ederson in goal at halftime.

Yannick Carrasco added a second from the edge of the penalty area in the 74th minute. City had beaten Bayern Munich in Japan on Wednesday but did not score until Ruben Dias pulled a goal back. Serial goalscorer Erling Haaland played 55 minutes but could not find the net. Atletico manager Diego Simeone said he was satisfied with his side's performance. "We played with the tranquility that characterizes us," he said. — AFP



SEOUL: Manchester City's striker Erling Haaland (top) fights for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Mario Hermoso (right) during a friendly football match between Manchester City and Atletico Madrid at Seoul World Cup Stadium on July 30, 2023. — AFP

Don't underestimate us, Nigeria's coach warns

BRISBANE: Coach Randy Waldrum said his Nigeria team had been "underestimated and underappreciated" as they strive to seal their place in the Women's World Cup last 16 on Monday. Nigeria drew 0-0 with Olympic champions Canada in their opening match and then fought back from a goal down to beat co-hosts Australia 3-2. That left the Super Falcons just needing to avoid defeat in their final game against already eliminated Ireland on Monday.

Waldrum's side suffered a turbulent build-up to the tournament, the American coach clashing openly with the Nigerian football authorities over planning and unpaid wages. Add in being in one of the toughest groups, and Nigeria were not expected to reach the knockout stages for only the third time. Waldrum told reporters on Sunday that they had shown they were better than that and their FIFA ranking of 40th.

"I would say that we were underestimated and underappreciated," the 66-year-old said on the eve of their meeting in Brisbane with the Irish. "Hopefully we've proven that to the world right now that we belong in a higher place (than 40th)." Defender Michelle Alozie agreed, saying it was wrong that their

draw with Canada and win over Australia had been called surprise results by many.

"With regards to Canada, the last game we played against them outside of the World Cup we tied them 2-2 and I think a lot of people forget to acknowledge that," she said. "We've been building this entire time, the last two years that I've been on the team, and so when we came to Australia we felt very confident. "We felt we had a game plan and all we had to do was execute it, especially on the counterattacks, which we did. "So although it might have been a surprise for the rest of the world... we worked really hard for that, so it wasn't much of a shock to us." — AFP