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7 Lebanon marks 4 years since port blast as war fears loom



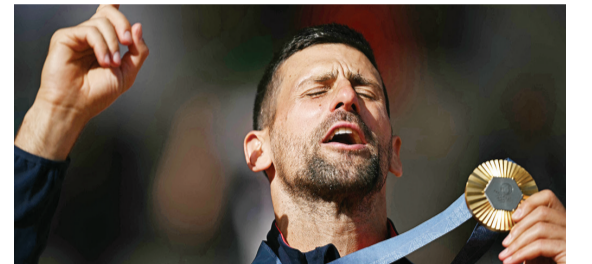
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Bloodbath in Gaza as region boils

Foreign nationals told to leave Lebanon as war fears surge



BEIRUT/GAZA: Urgent calls for foreign nationals to leave Lebanon grew on Sunday with France warning of "a highly volatile" situation as Iran and its allies ready their response to high-profile killings blamed on the Zionist entity. Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement, which has traded near-daily fire with Zionist forces since the Gaza war broke out in October, announced its fighters had fired a new barrage of rockets at the Zionist entity's north overnight into Sunday.

Zionist bombardment of the Gaza Strip continued, witnesses and officials in the territory said, almost 10 months into the war. Gaza health officials said at least 44 Palestinians were killed on Sunday, the day after a round of talks in Cairo ended without result. The civil defense agency said a Zionist strike hit two Gaza City schools - Hassan Salama and Al-Nasser - housing displaced people in the territory's north on Sunday, killing at least 30 people.

Footage showed bodies scattered inside the yard of one of two blast-wrecked schools as residents rushed to carry casualties, including children, and loaded them into ambulance vehicles that took them to at least two nearby hospitals. This brings to at least 11 the number of schools hit in Gaza since July 6. The Zionist military has killed at least 39,583 people in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry, mostly women and children.

The Zionist military earlier said its air forces had

struck around 50 militant targets throughout Gaza in the previous 24 hours. The Palestinian Red Crescent said eight bodies were pulled from a residential building after a Zionist air strike in north Gaza. Medics at Al-Aqsa Hospital in central Gaza said at least five people were killed in a Zionist drone strike on tents housing displaced Palestinians at the medical complex.

The hospital compound is in Deir Al-Balah, an area crowded with thousands of people displaced by fighting in other parts of the enclave. The government media office said the Zionist entity had struck 172 designated shelters, mostly schools, housing thousands of displaced families since Oct 7.

Elsewhere in Deir Al-Balah, three Palestinians were killed when a Zionist missile struck a house. Separate Zionist strikes killed eight others inside their home in Jabalia camp in northern Gaza City and three inside a car. Residents in areas southeast of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis and to the north of Rafah, where there was heavy fighting last month, reported receiving evacuation orders from the Zionist military.

With the Zionist entity on high alert anticipating major military action from Iran-backed Hezbollah and others, Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said: "If they dare to attack us, they will pay a heavy price." Near the commercial hub of Tel Aviv, medics and police said two people were killed on Sunday in a stabbing attack.

Continued on Page 6



Kuwaiti hurdler Youha pulls out due to injury



PARIS: Kuwaiti runner Yaqoub Al-Youha pulled out of the 110-meter hurdles competition at the Paris 2024 Olympics due to an injury, said the national team coach Bader Abbas. In a press release, Abbas affirmed that Youha suffered an adductor muscle injury, and therefore will not be able to complete the tournament's competitions in the second qualifying rounds.

In May, Al-Youha had suffered an ankle injury that prevented him from participating in many major tournaments and championships at the continental level, most notably the Asian Indoor Games Championship as well as the West Asian Championship. Kuwait is participating for the 14th time in the Summer Olympic Games, with a delegation of nine athletes competing in six sports: Shooting, fencing, swimming, athletics, rowing and sailing. — KUNA

Kuwait Times launches program with Gulf Bank

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf, launched the third edition of its Summer Program for 2024 on Aug 4 in partnership with Gulf Bank. Running until Aug 31, this four-week course provides 20 interns with hands-on experience in journalism, including news production, reporting, photography and social media.

In the first week, students attend foundational classes covering journalism practices, critical thinking, news-

paper production and social media engagement. The second week focuses on practical applications such as brainstorming content, developing analytical skills, selecting topics and using generative AI in journalism.

Participants will also visit Gulf Bank to explore journalism from a business perspective, gaining insights into the economic aspects of news. The final two weeks are dedicated to hands-on projects, allowing interns to apply their learned skills to real-world scenarios. (See Page 2)

Calls for PM to quit as 77 killed in Bangladesh

DHAKA: Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi protesters demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resign clashed with government supporters Sunday, with scores killed in one of the deadliest days since demonstrations began. Rallies that began last month against civil service job quotas have escalated into some of the worst unrest of Hasina's 15-year rule and shifted into wider calls for the 76-year-old to step down.

At least 77 people were killed on Sunday alone, including 14 police officers, with the rival sides battling with sticks and knives and security forces firing rifles, taking the total killed since protests began in July to at least 283. Police said protesters attacked their officers, including storming a station in the northeastern town of Enayetur. "The terrorists attacked the police station and killed 11 policemen," said Bijoy Basak, a deputy inspector general.

AFP journalists in Dhaka reported hearing sustained crackles of gunfire after dark on Sunday, with protesters defying a nationwide curfew. At least 12 people were killed in the capital, police and doctors at hospitals said, several with bullet wounds, while 18

Continued on Page 6

Britain hit by worst rioting in 13 years

ROTHERHAM, United Kingdom: UK leader Keir Starmer warned far-right protesters on Sunday they would "regret" participating in England's worst rioting in 13 years, as disturbances linked to the murder of three

children earlier this week flared across the country for a fifth day. Masked anti-immigration demonstrators smashed several windows at a hotel that has been used to house asylum seekers in Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

Unrest related to misinformation about the mass stabbing last Monday in the northwestern English seaside town of Southport has impacted multiple towns and cities, with anti-immigration demonstrators clashing with police.

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KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News Archivist and Digital Creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh welcomes the students.



DHAKA: A garment store is set ablaze amid protests on Aug 4, 2024. — AFP



NOTTINGHAM: Protesters are detained on Aug 3, 2024 during an 'Enough is Enough' demonstration. — AFP



Local

Kuwait Times Summer Program kicks off in strategic partnership with Gulf Bank

Program prepares interns for careers in the dynamic field of media



Summer Program's participants pose for a group photo in Kuwait Times. — Photos by Lea Al-Sabah



Digital Creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh welcomes students.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times, the first English newspaper in the Arabian Gulf, established in 1961, launched the third edition of its Summer Program for 2024, on Sunday, in strategic partnership with Gulf Bank. The program will run from August 4 to 31, 2024. This four-week course will provide 20 interns with hands-on experience across various aspects of journalism, including news production, reporting, photography, and social media.

The program aims to equip participants with practical skills and insights, preparing them for careers in the dynamic field of media. In the first week of the Kuwait Times Summer Program, students will be introduced to a range of foundational classes. One of the key sessions, "How to Be a Journalist," offers a comprehensive intro-



Students seen playing arcade game.

duction to the practices and types of journalism and reporting, providing students with a broad understanding of the field.

Another important class, "Introduction to Critical Thinking," will engage students in theoretical exercises and activities designed to enhance



Some of the students explore the printing machines.

their analytical skills. They will also learn "How a Daily Newspaper is produced," a step-by-step explanation of the work processes at Kuwait Times, highlighting the roles played by various staff members. Additionally, the "FUNdamentals of Social Media" class will explore the art and science of capturing and maintaining an audience's attention through engaging content, teaching students how to effectively utilize social media platforms in journalism.

In the second week, the focus will shift to more practical applications. Students will brainstorm ideas for reports and social media content, learning how to develop and refine their analytical skills. The session on "How to Devel-

op Your Analytical Skills" will provide tips and hints on how to view the world with a critical eye, understand complex issues more deeply, and ask the right questions. They will also delve into "How to Pick a Topic," learning the nuances of selecting relevant and engaging subjects for videos or reports.

The week will conclude with a class on "How to Use Generative AI in Journalism," provided by CODED. This class will teach students how to utilize generative AI for research, analysis, writing, editing, and proofreading, preparing them to leverage advanced technology in their future careers. Participants in the Kuwait Times Summer Program will also embark on an enlightening



Zainb Abbas poses for a picture with a graffiti at the artistic warehouse.

field trip to Gulf Bank, where they will have the unique opportunity to explore journalism from a business perspective.

This visit will allow them to understand the intersection of finance and media. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the economic forces that shape news stories and the critical role that accurate and timely reporting plays in the business world. In the final two weeks of the program, participants will shift their focus to hands-on projects for both the newspaper and social media platforms. During this period, they will have the chance to develop their ideas, putting into practice the skills and knowledge they've acquired throughout the course.

Kuwait's media award promotes creative contents

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi announced Sunday that Kuwait's grand media award will debut next year, coinciding with the country being named the 2025 Arab Media Capital. Following a meeting with public benefit organizations to discuss the award's details, which will be announced in the upcoming period, Al-Mutairi told KUNA that efforts are in full swing to ensure the award's success as a groundbreaking event in Kuwaiti media history. The award pairs with the ministry's strategy to boost creative content, elevate media production, and uphold Kuwaiti media identity, he explained.

The meeting also explored leading practices and experiences in media awards across the Arab world, he added. The award's philosophy centers on empowering meaningful and sustainable media content, enhancing Kuwaiti media sectors, advancing professional development, and driving innovation, Al-Mutairi pointed out. He highlighted the award's strategic goals, which include showcasing Kuwaiti media's regional leadership by honoring outstanding media professionals and institutions, developing media infrastructure and international collaboration by hosting global experts on judging panels, and sharing insights.



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi hold a meeting with officials. — KUNA photos

Categories will include radio, television, printed press, and electronic media, covering genres such as drama, cultural programs, children's and family shows, youth, sports, science, economy, development, news, and music, he added. A new Kuwait media recognition award will also be introduced, annually recognizing a Kuwaiti media figure with long-standing, exceptional contributions to Kuwaiti media over decades, he mentioned.

A technical committee will be established to set goals, define award categories, create criteria, manage nomination timelines, and draft the award's regulations, Al-Mutairi pointed out. An annual high committee will oversee the award process, including category announcements, recipient selection, judging panels, marketing, and ceremony planning, ensuring adherence to standards of transparency, integrity, diversity, and innovation, he stated. — KUNA



A number of Palestinian families at the Al-Najat Charity camp. — KUNA

Kuwaiti charity builds camp for Palestinians in Gaza Strip

GAZA: Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity built a camp for displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis' western region, Gaza Strip, through Palestine's Wafaa capacity-building institute. Wafaa general director Muhaisen Attawneh told KUNA that the camp houses around 100 Palestinian families, as it also provides services to 284 families outside of the camp. The camp also includes a waste water system, a prayer area, and a medical checkpoint, he explained. This project is considered to be of great importance as tens of thousands are forcefully displaced to camps, camps that are now covering a large expanse of Gaza Strip coastline.

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defense agency said Zionist bombardment of a school compound in Gaza City killed at least 17 people Saturday, as the military reported it had hit a Hamas command center. "There are 17 martyrs and several wounded due to shelling on Hamama school," the agency said in a statement, updating an earlier toll of 10 killed.

The Zionist military confirmed the strike, saying it had hit a Hamas command and control center located inside the compound. Earlier, civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said the compound was housing Palestinians displaced from their homes in the ongoing war. The Zionist military said the compound was being used by Hamas militants to manufacture weapons, adding it was a "hiding place for Hamas terrorists." — Agencies



Local

Zain showcases its leading experience in media and PR

Company hosts session for members of Integrated Media Academy

KUWAIT: Zain hosted a special session for participants of the Media Pathway program, organized by the Integrated Media Academy (IMA). The company shared its expertise in media, public relations, community service, corporate sustainability, and customer service, showcasing its success stories and strategies for effective communication through traditional and digital channels.

This initiative aligned with Zain's belief in the significant impact media has on community development and its support of the local media industry. By sharing its expertise, Zain aimed to introduce the program's participants to its experience as one of Kuwait's most socially active private sector organizations. The session provided participants with new insights, skill development opportunities, and enriched the program's overall outcomes.

The session took place at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC), where the company discussed the strategies it uses to effectively communicate with the community through both traditional and digital channels. Zain also highlighted its social responsibilities, including support for health, education, youth, sports, the environment, people with disabilities, women empowerment, employee engagement, and more.

Additionally, the session shed light on some of Zain's top success stories, such as the annual Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan campaign, the biggest local football competition Dawri Zain, and the youth empowerment initiative Innovation Nation. The company emphasized how these successes were achieved through partnerships with public and private sector organizations, including ministries, academic institutions, NGOs, and non-profits.

Zain also explained the roles and responsibilities of its Corporate Affairs and Relations Division, covering areas like building external and internal relations, effective media relations, social media en-



Zain officials with the program's participants.

gagement, corporate sustainability and social responsibility initiatives, and empowering innovation and entrepreneurship. After the session, participants toured Zain's 107 Contact Center to learn about the company's leading customer service practices.

The Media Pathway program is one of many training initiatives offered by the Integrated Media Academy for those passionate about a media career. The academy aims to develop professional media skills and help participants understand the essen-

tials of the industry. The programs include extensive theoretical and practical sessions, along with field visits to media institutions and private sector organizations to learn from their experiences and interact directly with media professionals.



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadi inaugurates the Integrated Dentistry Department at the new Farwaniya Hospital on Sunday in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Dentistry Affairs, Dr Ahmed Asad and other officials. — KUNA photos



MoH inaugurates Integrated Dental Dept, digital links

KUWAIT: The Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadi, inaugurated the Integrated Dentistry Department at the new Farwaniya Hospital on Sunday in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Dentistry Affairs, Dr Ahmed Asad, within the framework of the Hundred-Day Plan of the government's work program. The Ministry said in a statement that the opening comes with

the aim of providing comprehensive medical services to those who are mostly in need - such as bedridden patients.

The department includes two dental clinics, a radiology room, and a sterilization room, which contributes to providing integrated health care and high therapeutic efficiency. This department is considered a specialized initiative to provide therapeutic services. The Ministry explained that the opening of this department, after the launch of a similar department in the new Jahra Hospital, comes as part of a comprehensive strategy to expand the quality of dental services in the country.

In another development, the Ministry of Health launched on Sunday a digital linkage project between hospitals and medical warehouses in the

Subhan region as part of its efforts to develop health services, enhance drug security, and improve the supply chain of medicines and medical supplies. The Ministry said in a press statement that the project will unify the types of medicines and supplies between hospitals and warehouses, set a schedule for orders, and determine how to deliver, inspect, and distribute supplies to hospital pharmacies.

The executive stage will determine the required quantities of medicines and supplies for each hospital. The new electronic system will facilitate medical supply orders, as hospital orders range from 200 to 600 items per order. It will improve the management of disbursement and distribution of medicines and supplies in a timely manner. — KUNA

Ministries of Awqaf discuss ways to counter extremism, terrorism

MAKKAH: The ninth conference of Ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in the Islamic world kicked off in Makkah on Sunday. The summit was organized by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs with the participation of the Kuwait Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The



Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dr Abdul Latif Al-Sheikh, said in an opening speech that Saudi Arabia "is based on the approach of moderation, care for the Islamic principles and values, preservation, and sincere advocacy."

The conference will discuss ways to counter extremism and terrorism as well as ways to promote values of coexistence, tolerance, consolidating the principles of moderation, and strengthening citizenship in the countries of the Islamic world. Minister Al-Sheikh praised the kind patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, stressing the Kingdom's firm approach in promoting peace and religious tolerance.

He stressed the need for cooperation, consultation, activating joint programs, exchanging successful experiences, activating the role of imams and preachers, and enhancing the role of endowment funds in order to achieve growth and sustainability. The conference was attended by ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, muftis, and heads of Islamic councils and associations from more than 60 countries. The Kuwaiti delegation is headed by the undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr Bader Al-Mutairi.

The conference "The role of the ministries of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in promoting the principles of moderation and consolidating the values of moderation" will discuss topics related to the role of the ministries of Islamic Affairs and endowments. The Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr Bader Al-Mutairi, said on Sunday that the conference will also discuss a number of working papers submitted by Kuwait, including those related to the concept of renewing religious discourse. — KUNA



MAKKAH: Ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in the Islamic world meet in Makkah on Sunday. — KUNA photos

KUNA holds course on 'fundamentals of news writing'

KUWAIT: The Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) held a course on 'fundamentals of news writing' on Sunday. This is within the agency's journalism training program for university students. The lecturer, Deputy Editor-in-Chief for International Affairs,



Oqab Al-Qouba, said in a press statement that the topics will cover the theoretical aspect, including the basics of writing press releases, its types, and the logical link in the information, as well as dealing with templates and technical forms of the press release. The course highlights the common mistakes on people's tongues in the Arabic language and also deals with introductory verbs and the art of making and drafting news headlines. KUNA launched its ninth journalism training program for university students last Thursday with an enlightening meeting for the trainees. — KUNA



CSB nominates 50

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) on Sunday announced the nomination of 50 male and female citizens who are registered in the central employment system with a Bachelor of Educational Psychology. The office said in a press statement on its official account on the X platform that the new batch of this specialization comes after the approval of the Ministry of Education to include the specialization among its needs for this year. He explained that a total of 12,904 citizens have been nominated so far. — KUNA



In my view

A disgrace



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

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The Paris 2024 Olympics kicked off last week and this significant sports event will continue until Aug 11. For the first time in Olympic history, the opening ceremony received a substantial amount of criticism. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban criticized the West in general (and not only the French) for recreating a Da Vinci scenario during the Olympics opening ceremony, stating that "there are no morals" in the Western world. "This is a terrible act and a big disgrace," said US presidential candidate Donald Trump.

The criticism stems from the inclusion of a drag queen in a recreation of the Last Supper, which included a depiction of Prophet Jesus (PBUH). Despite the dazzling opening ceremony on the banks of the River Seine, this controversial image revealed to the world that aberrant minorities are able to influence decision-makers in many Western countries.

As a result, the French opening has turned into a struggle that will continue for a long time and will establish new dynamics in the coming years. Committed Christians are now being targeted by these aberrant forces, who previously focused their attacks on other religions, particularly Islam, to find a way to undermine our culture and beliefs. They have made many attempts under various titles such as human rights, liberalism and unrestricted sexual transformation, in addition to launching possibly the largest propaganda campaign in history.

Their colored flags are now used to wrap children's food and are hoisted on top of the largest corporations on their designated day. They also have media platforms where they produce movies and series promoting their agenda, changing their true names to normalize their actions and make them acceptable to the world.

This time, the mistake made by the aberrant leaders will cost them dearly, especially if Trump wins the next presidential election. We will not leave Christians alone as they did with us during the war. We must cooperate with all people of heavenly religions in the fight against the spread of aberration around the world, as this act is not accepted by anyone with values.

Our Almighty Creator warned us against the deeds of the people of Lot (PBUH) and their eventual fate. Muslims today must lead the next war against these evil people, taking advantage of the positive stances that have surfaced in the Western world against this aberration.

KRCS lays foundation stone for development complex in Yemen

Part of 'Kuwait by Your Side' campaign

ADEN: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has laid the foundation stone of the Ghanima Abdulaziz Al-Sager complex project in Al Mahrah Governorate, east of Yemen, as part of the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign. In a press release on Saturday, the humanitarian response institution, the executor of the project, said that undersecretary of Al Mahrah Governorate Awadh Quwaizeran and local officials have laid the cornerstone for this development project.

Quwaizeran lauded the KRCS for supporting development in Yemen in all sectors, thanking His Highness the Amir, Kuwait, the government, and Kuwaitis for this support. Head of the institution office in Hadhramout Salem Bawazir said it is one of the largest projects carried out by the institution on an area of 6,000 square meters. It has five main buildings, including a 13-classroom school, a two-storey health center, and a mosque, in addition to a development center for children and women and other facilities, he added. The project is part of Kuwait's continued backing to Yemen and Yemenis in different sectors, he noted. — KUNA



Officials lay the foundation stone for development complex in Yemen. — KUNA

Scholarship: There should be fairness

By Rayan Al-Ruwayeh

KUWAIT: Government scholarships for master's or PhD programs are frequently awarded to students who have studied abroad rather than those who have pursued their education within Kuwait. Several students complained of the unfair distribution of scholarships in Kuwait, noting that such opportunities can allow young Kuwaitis to gain exposure to global academic standards and practices.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Jawaab Abdullah, 23 years old, who graduated with a bachelor's degree from one of the Kuwaiti universities, said that she sank into a deep depression, feeling as though all her future plans had evaporated when her application to complete her master's scholarship was rejected. The denial of this opportunity left her grappling with a profound sense of loss and uncertainty. She added, "Studying abroad was my dream when I was a kid, but when it was time for me to pursue my studies for a bachelor degree abroad, my parents refused. I was still a kid to them and not ready to live abroad, but they told

me when I grew up, I could go for my master's and PhD degrees. But when it was time for me to do what I wanted, I found it very hard. I felt like a door was slammed in my face."

She continued that it was challenging to travel and complete my studies abroad, despite having all the necessary requirements and paperwork in order, explaining, "This disparity raises questions about fairness and equity. Others are getting this opportunity just because they studied abroad, while those who study in Kuwait face significant obstacles when trying to pursue further education abroad. Both groups of students should have equal rights and support from the government."

She noted that if the student wants to complete his higher study in the country, then two choices are available: either Kuwait University or Abdullah Al-Salem University. "There is a monopoly requirement when you graduate - you have to work for the university," she pointed out. Abdullah indicated that scholarships for master's or PhD programs abroad must be given first to people who studied in the country because others got their opportunity financially and internationally universities are more expensive.

Meanwhile, Yousef Abu-Ghazaleh, 26, who did his bachelor's in London, completed his master's easily, saying, "It was easy for me to complete my masters. I



just applied and got it accepted in two weeks. If you hit the requirements, it is quite easy. I do not think it is a wise step from the government to make it hard for students who studied in the country. They should let them study abroad; they need to have the opportunity to further their studies abroad to expand their perspective. I'm a different person now because of my seven years of studying abroad. I became smarter, wiser, and globally conscious."

Abu-Ghazaleh pointed out that students studying abroad after a bachelor degree should be provided with a scholarship in order for them to complete their studies and gain much useful knowledge and experiences. They will serve and raise their country and fulfill the country's needs.

Amir offers condolences to India over landslides

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences Sunday to President of India Droupadi Murmu over the victims of the landslides in the south of the country. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere condolences over fatalities and wished speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Amir also wished Indians success in their rescue and search efforts for the missing persons. His Highness the Amir prayed to God to help officials in India to overcome the repercussions of this natural disaster. — KUNA



MOGADISHU: A woman reacts while walking in a street as smoke billows in the background after an explosion in Mogadishu. — AFP

Kuwait condemns terrorist attack in Somalia's capital

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Sunday a cable of condolences to the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, on the demise of terrorist attack victims that took place in the capital of Mogadishu. His Highness the Amir wished the injured a speedy recovery, affirming Kuwait's strong condemnation of this terrorist act. Also, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable of condolences to the President of Somalia. Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry stressed Kuwait's utter rejection of all forms of violence and terrorism, affirming its support to the Somali government in all the measures it would take to protect its safety and stability.

The Arab League's Secretary-General Ahmad Abul-Gheit strongly condemned the criminal attack that targeted a hotel restaurant in the Somali capital Mogadishu on Friday and was claimed by an Al-Shabaab terrorist group. In a statement issued by the League, Abul-Gheit condemned the "cowardly" terrorist act that left dozens of casualties and injuries and through which the groups aim to weaken the federal government and spread terror among civilians.

Abul-Gheit stressed the Arab League's solidarity with the Somali government and people in fighting everything that threatens its security and stability. He expressed his sincere con-

demnations to the government and people of Somalia and to the families of the victims and wished speedy recovery for those injured.

An Al-Shabaab suicide bomber and gunmen attacked a busy beach in the Somali capital Mogadishu killing 37 people and wounding scores more, officials said Saturday, one of the deadliest recent strikes in the East African country. The Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists have been waging an insurgency against the internationally backed federal government for more than 17 years. They have previously targeted the Lido beach area, popular with business people and government members.

The assault, for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility in a post on a pro-Shabaab website, began late on Friday when a suicide bomber detonated a device and gunmen stormed the area. Survivors described how following the initial blast gunmen stormed onto the beach intending to "kill everyone they could". Graphic video shared online immediately after showed bloodied bodies on the sand. "The overall number of the dead people we confirmed is 37," Somali Health Minister Ali Haji Adam told journalists late Saturday.

Eleven people are in intensive care units, a further 64 people remain in hospital with wounds, while 137 people with light injuries have been discharged after receiving treatment, he added. Officer Mohamed Omar told AFP that members of the group had "shot civilians randomly". Security forces ended the attack and killed five gunmen, while a sixth member of the group "blew himself (up) at the beach", he added. Police spokesman Abdifatah Adan Hassan said the attack demonstrated the group was not only targeting government officials and soldiers, but also ordinary civilians. — Agencies



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Venezuela opposition leader joins protests against election

Pakistan's Khan 'open to any dialogue' with army, not govt

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BEIRUT: Passengers wait at Rafic Hariri International Airport after their flights were delayed or cancelled in Beirut on July 29, 2024. — AFP photos

Zionist escalation forces travelers to leave Lebanon

Several airlines suspend flights as countries issue urgent calls for foreign nationals to leave

BEIRUT: Travelers waited in long lines at Beirut airport on Sunday, some after cutting summer holidays short, as airlines have cancelled flights and fears have grown of all-out war between the Zionist entity and Hezbollah. "I'm not happy to leave. I wanted to spend the whole summer in Lebanon then go back to work" in France, said Joelle Sfeir from the crowded departures hall at Beirut airport. But "my flight was cancelled and I was forced to book another ticket today," she told AFP. "I cut my trip short so I could find a flight," she added.

Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement has traded near-daily fire with Zionist forces in support of ally Hamas since the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack on the Zionist entity.

But the assassination Wednesday of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, blamed widely on the Zionist entity, hours after a Zionist strike killed Hezbollah's military chief Fuad Shukur in Beirut, has sparked vows of vengeance from Iran and other Tehran-backed armed groups, including Hezbollah, and sent regional tensions skyrocketing.

Several airlines including Lufthansa and Air France have delayed or suspended flights to Lebanon, and countries have issued urgent calls for foreign nationals to leave in recent days. France did so Sunday, warning of "a highly volatile" situation, while the US embassy in Lebanon a day earlier urged its citizens to leave on "any ticket available."

Reservations cancelled

Fears have spiked that months of cross-border violence could degenerate into all-out conflict between Hezbollah and the Zionist entity, who last fought a devastating war in the summer of 2006. The entity bombed Lebanon's only passenger airport in Beirut during that war.

Embassies have repeatedly urged their citizens to leave Lebanon while commercial flights are still available. In the departures hall, families sat on metal seats, children lying in their parents' laps, while passengers watched over piles of bags and checked television screens for flight departures for locations including Istanbul, Amman and Cairo.

The tensions and cancellations have thrown travel plans into chaos for many Lebanese who work or study abroad and who usually use their annual summer holiday to visit relatives and friends back home. Gretta Moukarzel, who runs a travel agency near Beirut, said she had "received a flood of calls from clients who want to leave and who fear being stuck in Lebanon."

Finding seats has been difficult because of the number of cancelled flights and the increased demand, particularly for European countries, she told AFP by telephone. "A large number of Lebanese who were coming to Lebanon for the holiday have cancelled their reservations," she added.

Flights postponed

Passengers also waited in long queues at check-in booths and again to pass through security. Sirine Hakim, 22,



A man rides his moped past a billboard bearing portraits of slain leaders (from left), Ismail Haniyeh of the Palestinian group Hamas, Iranian Quds Force chief Qasem Soleimani, and Hezbollah senior commander Fuad Shukur on the main road near the Beirut International Airport on August 3, 2024.

said she had spent almost three weeks in Lebanon to see family and had to leave due to work commitments abroad. "I was supposed to depart yesterday, but my flight was postponed," she said.

Near the arrivals area, usually crowded during the summer season, just a small number of people were waiting for loved ones. Along the airport road that passes through Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, a huge billboard showed the images of Hamas's Haniyeh and Hezbollah's

Shukur reading: "We will seek revenge".

The slain pair were pictured flanking Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander and head of its foreign operations arm the Quds Force who was killed in a US drone strike in Iraq in 2020. The cross-border violence since October has killed some 545 people in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally. On the Zionist side, including the illegally annexed Golan Heights, 46 people have been killed, according to Zionist army figures. — AFP

Gaza burns cases surge as medical supplies dwindle

JERUSALEM: In Gaza City's Al-Ahli Hospital, five-year-old Amir Habib Al-Habeel screams out in pain from the burns he suffered from a Zionist air strike on his home in Shujaiya a fortnight earlier. He occupies a bed far from his mother, who also suffered burns, and who cannot move to be by her son's side.

Instead, her brother cares for him, the only available guardian after his "father was martyred", as the tearful child says, struggling to remove one of many IV tubes. "We receive daily cases of second- and third-degree burns as a result of rocket attacks and the use of internationally banned weapons by the (Zionist) army," Amjad Eleiwa, an emergency doctor at the hospital, told AFP.

"Most of the cases that come to us are children and women. We don't have any capacity to deal with these burns," he said, explaining that they could not access any of the medical supplies needed to treat burns and had to resort instead to whatever was available in private warehouses and pharmacies. "We are in dire need of medical and logistical support and medicine to deal with these cases and save them."

Burn trauma unit

Medical facilities have in the past weeks reported increasing numbers of burn victims. Julie Faucon,

a medical coordinator at Doctors Without Borders (MSF), told AFP some of the charity's specialists have been working for two months in Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis, "supporting what we call the trauma auto burn unit".

In that time, they have received "more than 69 cases with burns. One case out of five is related to explosions", the burns specialist said. "Three out of four" of the patients they have received are children, she said, adding that 10 of the patients have had burns on more than 20 percent of their bodies.

According to Muhammad Al-Mughayyir, of Gaza's civil defense agency, Zionist forces have been using "new weapons that cause increased ignition and burning". Contacted by AFP, the Zionist military did not reply to a request for comment.

Mughayyir said the weapons reach extremely high temperatures and are "capable of melting bodies". They often target "tent areas made up of nylon containing primitive materials such as wood and plastic, all of which directly affects the speed and rate of ignition", he added. "These burns have a direct impact on people's lives and appearances. They affect skin layers and burn nerves, and there are people who become disabled as a result of that."

No medical supplies

The World Health Organization has said that out of 36 hospitals in the territory, only 15 are partially functional, adding that medical facilities have been targeted more than 1,000 times since war broke out on October 7.

Mohammed Zaqout, the head of hospitals in the Gaza Strip, said "there is only Nasser Hospital in the southern areas, with 12 operating



GAZA: An injured child walks after receiving treatment at Al-Ahli Arab hospital, also known as the Baptist hospital in Gaza City following Zionist bombardment on the Hassan Salameh and Al-Nasser schools housing displaced Palestinians on August 4, 2024. — AFP

rooms, all of which are overcrowded". "There are 16 beds in the intensive care units, all of which are occupied, and we have added a capacity of 24 beds but they are now full," he said. "We try to distribute these cases to field hospitals, but the occupation's massacres against unarmed civilians occur on a daily and hourly basis, and no one in the world intervenes."

Access to treatment abroad has been blocked as most Palestinians cannot leave the besieged territory, as has the entry of most medical supplies, particularly since Zionist forces seized the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt since early May. Faucon similarly highlighted the urgent need for medical supplies, pointing to surging demand among extremely meagre stocks. — AFP

Hundreds protest Zionist treatment of Palestinian prisoners

RAMALLAH: Hundreds of Palestinians marched to protest the treatment of prisoners held in Zionist jails on Saturday, following reports of abuse and even torture. Protesters held up pictures of prisoners and waved Palestinian flags during separate demonstrations in Ramallah and Nablus in the occupied West Bank. "Even if the whole world submits, we will not recognize (the Zionist entity)," chanted the protesters in Ramallah.

Thousands of Palestinians have been detained in Gaza, the West Bank and the Zionist entity since the start of the Zionist war in Gaza, the United Nations human rights office said last week. They have mostly been held in secret and in some cases subjected to treatment that may amount to torture, the OHCHR said in a report.

"For 10 months, we haven't known anything about our sons," Latifa Abu Hamid, a mother of four prisoners, all sentenced to life, told AFP. "We want to check on them and see them. We want to know their situation ... We want our sons."

According to the Prisoners Club, a Palestinian watchdog, about 9,700 Palestinians are currently in Zionist jails, including hundreds under administrative detention. The NGO estimates that arrests have doubled since October 7 compared to the same period last year.

The OHCHR report said that since the October 7 Hamas attacks, thousands of Palestinians — including medics, patients, residents and captured fighters — have been taken from Gaza to the Zionist entity, "usually shackled and blindfolded". "They have generally been held in secret, without being given a reason for their detention, access to a lawyer or effective judicial review," this week's OHCHR report said.

Testimonies for the report suggested that the Zionist entity had subjected prisoners to "a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees". UN rights chief Volker Turk said. The entity did not comment but it has rejected previous critical reports, saying its prisons are run according to international law.

At the Ramallah demonstration, Umm Abdullah Hamed detailed how her brother, son and nephew had all been given multi-decade sentences. "We feel like any family of a prisoner," Umm Abdullah Hamed, whose brother, son and nephew have all been sentenced to decades in prison, said at the Ramallah protest. "We ask God Almighty to hasten their relief and freedom, God willing," she added. — AFP



NABLUS: A woman flashes the V for victory sign during a demonstration in Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, on August 3, 2024, in solidarity with the people of Gaza and Palestinians detained in Zionist prisons. — AFP

International

Pakistan's Khan 'open to any dialogue' with army, not govt

Khan says he holds no grudges against US whom he blames for his 2022 ouster

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's jailed former prime minister, Imran Khan, who blames the military for his ouster and 12-month-old imprisonment on what he calls trumped-up charges, said on Sunday it would be "foolish" not to have "excellent" relations with the army. Ahead of Monday's anniversary of his jailing on dozens of charges ranging from corruption to leaking state secrets, Khan also said in written responses to Reuters questions that he held no grudges against the United States, whom he has also blamed for his 2022 ouster from office. "Given Pakistan's geographical position and the military's significant role in the private sector, it would be foolish not to foster such a relationship," Khan wrote in replies relayed by his media and legal team. "We are proud of our soldiers and armed forces," he said. Khan said his criticisms since his ouster had been directed at individuals, not the military as an institution. "The miscalculations of the military leadership shouldn't be held against the institution as a whole."

On Wednesday, Khan offered to hold "conditional negotiations" with the South Asian nation's military — if "clean and transparent" elections were held and the "bogus" cases against his supporters were dropped. Pakistan's army and government did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Khan's remarks to Reuters. They have both repeatedly denied his assertions. The United States denies any role in his ouster. In his replies, the 71-year-old former cricket star did not specify what he wanted to discuss with the military.

Harris dismisses Trump's proposal for new debate date

ATLANTA: Kamala Harris's campaign branded Donald Trump "scared" Saturday after he proposed changing the debate schedule, as the Republican rallied in Georgia seeking to blunt the vice president's surging momentum in her bid to become America's first woman president.

Trump said he was willing to debate Harris on the conservative-leaning Fox News network on September 4, while declining to participate in a previously scheduled debate on ABC. Trump pitched the idea on his Truth Social media platform before flying to Atlanta and gathering supporters in the same arena where his White House rival had addressed an energized crowd of some 10,000 Tuesday.

The former president repeatedly attacked Harris and unleashed his extreme scaremongering on illegal immigration, falsely claiming there is a flood of murderers from around the world — he singled out "Congos" — being let into the United States by Harris, who

'Open to any dialogue'
The army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half its 76-year independent history, plays an oversized role in the politics and governance of the nation of 240 million people.

No Pakistani prime minister has completed a full five-year term in office, and most have served time in jail. Analysts say most of those secured their release after striking deals with the military, a claim the army denies.

Khan, who lost power in a parliamentary vote of no confidence after falling out with the generals, has said the army has been backing what he calls the politically motivated cases against him, which the military has denied. Still, he said, there would be "no harm" in engaging with the generals if he should be released from jail and seek to return to power.

"We are open to any dialogue that could help improve the dire situation in Pakistan," he said, adding that it was useless to open any such talks with the coalition government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which he says does not enjoy public backing because he claims it won a stolen election in February. Rather, Khan said, it would be "more productive to engage with those who actually wield power."

The military — which says Khan and his party were behind attacks on military installations last year during widespread protests against his detention — has previously ruled out any talks with him. Khan's imprisonment has added to the political volatility in Pakistan, which has experienced a prolonged economic crisis and last month received a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

he said has "destroyed our country." The rambling, 92-minute speech also included Trump's oft-repeated lie that the 2020 election was "rigged" by Democrats. As for debating Harris, Trump said he had "agreed" to the plan with Fox. And he said it would occur in Pennsylvania — a crucial battleground in the presidential electoral system — before a live audience. "We're doing one with Fox, if she shows up," Trump told his Atlanta rally. "I don't think she's going to show up. She can't talk."

The Harris campaign dismissed Trump's idea as "games." "Donald Trump is running scared and trying to back out of the debate he already agreed to and running straight to Fox News to bail him out," Harris's campaign communications director Michael Tyler said in a statement. "He needs to... show up to the debate he already committed to on Sept 10." Trump's proposal to confront Harris on Fox, a network that has long supported him, was his latest effort to recapture momentum in a campaign that had been focused on a rematch against Joe Biden, until the 81-year-old dramatically dropped his reelection bid last month. Since then Harris, 59, has reenergized the Democratic base.

She has raked in donations, reassembled the team behind Barack Obama's two historic election victories, and neutralized the solid lead that Trump, 78, had built against Biden in opinion polls. On Friday, she secured

action from Iran and its allies was likely, while Tehran said it expects Hezbollah to hit deeper inside the Zionist entity and no longer be confined to military targets. The Zionist entity's ally the United States said it would move warships and fighter jets to the region. US President Joe Biden, asked by reporters if he thought Iran would stand down, said: "I hope so. I don't know."

In an interview with ABC News, White House deputy national security adviser Jon Finer said the United States was "doing everything possible to make sure that this situation does not boil over". As part of those efforts it is "so urgent" that a Gaza ceasefire deal be reached, Finer said. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi made a rare visit to Tehran where he met Iran's acting top diplomat Ali Bagheri for "consultations", local media reported.

Haniyeh's killing "has brought the Middle East to its moment of greatest peril in years", the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank said in a report. The potential for a miscalculation that would trigger a war "without constraints... is likely greater now than it was in April", it added. On April 13, Iran fired a barrage of drones and missiles at the Zionist entity — most of which were intercepted — after a deadly strike on Tehran's consulate in Damascus.

The ICG said that securing "a long overdue ceasefire" in Gaza was "the best way of meaningfully reducing tensions in the region". Hamas officials but also some analysts as well as protesters in the Zionist entity have accused Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of prolonging the war. On Sunday, Netanyahu told his cabinet he was "making every effort" to return the captives and was prepared "to go a long way" to do so. — Agencies

brought, hundreds of protesters squared up to riot police carrying shields. Some threw bricks, cans and pots at officers.

The fresh disturbances came after more than 90 people were arrested on Saturday following skirmishes at far-right rallies in Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Blackpool and Hull, as well as Belfast in Northern Ireland. Rioters threw bricks, bottles and flares at police — injuring several officers — looted and burnt shops, while demonstrators shouted anti-Islamic slurs as they clashed with counter-protesters.

The violence is the worst England has seen since the summer of 2011, when widespread rioting took place following the police killing of a mixed-race man in north London. "We're now seeing it (trouble) flooding across major cities and towns," said Tiffany Lynch of the Police Federation of England and Wales. Riots first flared in Southport on Tuesday night following Monday's frenzied knife attack at a Taylor Swift-themed dance party in the northwest coastal city, before spreading up and down England.

Bloodbath in Gaza as region boils...

Continued from Page 1

The assailant, a Palestinian from the Zionist-occupied West Bank, was "neutralized" by police and taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Saudi Arabia joined France, Canada and Jordan in calling on their citizens to leave Lebanon. "In a highly volatile security context", French nationals were "urgently asked" to avoid traveling to Lebanon, and those already in the country should leave "as soon as possible", the foreign ministry in Paris said. The United States and Britain have issued similar warnings.

France on Sunday also urged its nationals living in Iran to "temporarily leave", warning Iranian airspace and airports could close. Several Western airlines have suspended flights to Lebanon and other airports in the region. On Sunday Qatar Airways said the Doha-Beirut route would "operate exclusively during daylight hours" at least until Monday.

Wednesday's assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, hours after the Zionist killing of Hezbollah's military chief in Beirut, has triggered vows of vengeance from Iran and the "axis of resistance" of Tehran-backed armed groups. Haniyeh was Hamas' lead negotiator in efforts to end the war. His killing raised questions about the continued viability of efforts by Qatari, Egyptian and US mediators to broker a truce and exchange of hostages and prisoners.

Analysts have told AFP that a joint but measured

Britain hit by worst rioting...

Continued from Page 1

The violence is posing an early major challenge for Starmer, who was elected only a month ago after leading Labour to a landslide win over the Conservatives. "I guarantee you will regret taking part in this disorder. Whether directly or those whipping up this action online, and then running away themselves," Starmer said in a TV address. He added that there was "no justification" for what he called "far-right thuggery" and promised to bring the perpetrators "to justice".

Footage aired on the BBC showed rioters forcing their way into a Holiday Inn Express in Rotherham. They also pushed a burning bin into the building. It was not clear whether asylum seekers were inside. In the northeastern English city of Middles-



SYDNEY: Supporters of Pakistan's jailed former premier Imran Khan join a pro-Palestinian demonstration to condemn the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, recent Zionist strike on Lebanon and continued offensives in Gaza, during a rally in Sydney on August 4, 2024. — AFP

The political instability since Khan's ouster from power helped force Islamabad to accept the IMF's painful fiscal consolidation requirements, which have burdened the people with heavy taxes, analysts say. The IMF has called for political stability to help put the \$350 billion economy on a

recovery path. Khan rejected the idea of reaching an out-of-court settlement with the government or military, unless they accepted that his PTI party had won a majority in February's election. "The elections were the most rigged in Pakistan's history," Khan told Reuters. — Reuters

the official Democratic nomination, backed by near unanimous party support.

Harris is due imminently to announce her vice-presidential pick, with the popular governor of key state Pennsylvania, Josh Shapiro, a frontrunner. On Tuesday, she launches a countrywide tour with her running mate.

Struggle to 'define her'

Facing a new rival, Trump was racing to define her to voters as he delivered a stream of personal attacks, calling her "crazy," a "Marxist prosecutor," and a "radical left freak" who would cause a "Kamala economic crash" if she were elected. "We have to work hard to define her," Trump told supporters. "She's a horror show." Trump however stopped short of openly questioning the racial identity of Harris, who has Black and Indian heritage. He drew gasps this week at a Black journalists' convention by falsely claiming Harris, who has identified closely with her Black roots all her life, recently "became a Black person" for political convenience.

'Unhinged, angry'

Geoff Duncan, Georgia's former Republican lieutenant governor who turned on Trump after 2020, said in a statement released by team Harris that the

Calls for PM to quit as 77 killed...

Continued from Page 1

were killed in Bangladesh's northern district of Sirajganj. Mobile Internet was tightly restricted countrywide. In several cases, soldiers and police did not intervene to stem the protests, unlike the past month of rallies that repeatedly ended in deadly crackdowns. In a hugely symbolic rebuke of Hasina, a respected former army chief demanded the government withdraw troops and allow protests. Demonstrators in Dhaka, surrounded by a tightly packed and cheering crowd, waved a Bangladeshi flag on top of an armored car as soldiers watched, according to videos on social media verified by AFP.

Asif Mahmud, one of the key leaders in the nationwide civil disobedience campaign, called on supporters to march on the capital on Monday. "The time has come for the final protest", he said. Troops briefly imposed order after violence erupted in July. However, protesters returned to the streets in huge numbers this month in a non-cooperation movement aimed at paralyzing the government.

Vast crowds of protesters, many wielding sticks, packed into Dhaka's central Shahbagh Square on Sunday, with street battles in multiple sites, police said. "There were clashes between students and the ruling party men," police inspector Al Helal told AFP, saying two young men were killed in Dhaka's Munshiganj district. "One of the dead was hacked in his head and another had gunshot injuries." Another po-

They were fueled by false rumors on social media about the background of British-born 17-year-old suspect Axel Rudakubana, who is accused of killing a six, seven and nine-year-old, and injuring another 10 people. Police have blamed the violence on supporters and associated organizations of the English Defence League, an anti-Islam organization founded 15 years ago whose supporters have been linked to football hooliganism.

Agitators have targeted at least two mosques, and the UK interior ministry announced Sunday it was offering new emergency security to the Islamic places of worship. The rallies have been advertised on far-right social media channels under the banner "Enough is enough". Participants have waved English and British flags while chanting slogans like "Stop the boats" — a reference to irregular migrants traveling to Britain from France.

Anti-fascist demonstrators have held counter-rallies in many cities, including Leeds where they shouted, "Nazi scum off our streets", as the far-right

protesters chanted, "You're not English any more". Not all the gatherings have turned violent. A peaceful one in Aldershot, southern England, on Sunday saw participants hold placards that read "Stop the invasion" and "We're not far right, we're just right".

"People are fed up with being told you should be ashamed if you're white and working class but I'm proud white working class," 41-year-old Karina, who did not give her surname, told AFP in Nottingham on Saturday. Commentators have suggested that the demonstrators may feel emboldened by the political ascendancy of anti-immigration elements in British politics.

At last month's election, the Reform UK party led by Brexit cheerleader Nigel Farage captured 14 percent of the vote — one of the largest vote shares for a far-right British party. Carla Denyer, co-leader of the left-wing Green party, said the unrest should be "a wake-up call to all politicians who have actively promoted or given in" to anti-immigration rhetoric. — AFP

Some former military officers have joined the student movement and ex-army chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan turned his Facebook profile picture red in a show of support. "We call on the incumbent government to withdraw the armed forces from the street immediately," Bhuiyan told reporters Sunday in a joint statement alongside other senior ex-officers, condemning "egregious killings, torture, disappearances and mass arrests". "Those who are responsible for pushing people of this country to a state of such an extreme misery will have to be brought to justice", he said.

Current army chief Waker-uz-Zaman told officers at military headquarters in Dhaka on Saturday the "Bangladesh Army is the symbol of trust of the people". "It always stood by the people and will do so for the sake of people and in any need of the state," he said, according to an army statement, which gave no further details and did not say explicitly whether the army backed the protests.

The demonstrations have grown into a wider anti-government movement across the South Asian nation of about 170 million people. It has attracted people from all strata of Bangladesh society, including film stars, musicians and singers. Rap songs calling for people's support have spread widely on social media. "It is no longer about job quotas," said Sakhawat, a young female protester who gave only one name and called Hasina a "killer". "What we want is that our next generation can live freely in the country." — AFP

liceman, who asked not to be identified, said the city had "turned into a battleground". Police and doctors also reported deaths in districts in the north, west, south and center of the country.

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International



CARACAS: Opponents of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro attend a demonstration called by opposition leader Maria Corina Machado over the presidential election disputed results, in Caracas on August 3, 2024. — AFP photos



Venezuelan opposition leader Machado waves a national flag during the demonstration.

Venezuela opposition leader joins protests against election

Maduros' win has sparked deadly protests, 'strong concern' from some EU states

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition leader emerged from hiding on Saturday, declaring "We have never been so strong," as President Nicolas Maduro slammed what he called attempts to "usurp the presidency" following last week's disputed election. Thousands gathered peacefully across Venezuela, including in the capital Caracas where Maria Corina Machado thrilled supporters with a surprise appearance in a truck bearing a banner reading "Venezuela has won!"

Machado, who spent much of the week in hiding after Maduro threatened her with arrest following deadly post-election protests, had backed the candidacy of Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia after she herself was banned from running. Supporters say he won 67 percent of the July 28 vote, and several Latin American countries and the United States have recognized him as president-elect. Others have called on Venezuela to release detailed vote tallies, including EU states France, Germany, Italy and Spain who on Saturday noted their "strong concern" over the results.

Brazil, Colombia and Mexico — which have maintained good relations with Maduro's government — urged an "impartial verification" of the result.

"We have never been so strong as today," Machado told the crowd, adding "the regime has never been weaker." "We are not going to leave the streets," she vowed, surrounded by security. Gonzalez Urrutia was not seen publicly Saturday. Backers cried out "Freedom!" as Machado's truck passed by. Adrian Pacheco, a 26-year-old shopkeeper, told AFP, "Seeing her gives me hope, despite the threats. She is a light for Venezuela."

'Mother of all marches'

Venezuela's CNE election authority, loyal to Maduro, on Friday proclaimed him the winner with 52 percent of the vote to 43 percent for Gonzalez Urrutia, a result that defied pre-election polls. Thousands of Maduro supporters responded to his call for "the mother of all marches" Saturday afternoon, gathering in central Caracas to march to the presidential palace in the name of "national peace." "We will not accept" the opposition's claims of victory and moves to "usurp the presidency of the republic again," Maduro declared at the rally.

After Venezuela's last election, in 2018, Maduro was proclaimed winner amid widespread accusations

of fraud. Eventually the United States and dozens of other countries recognized the then-speaker of parliament, Juan Guaido, as Venezuela's acting president.

But Guaido failed to remove Maduro from office as many had hoped he would, and the once wildly popular young politician has largely faded from public life. "We are at the beginning of a new era, the era of the consolidation of the revolution, the era of well-being," 69-year-old professor Ali Garcia said at the rally.

Maduro, 61, has slammed the international criticism, describing allegations of vote fraud as a "trap" orchestrated by Washington to justify "a coup." The opposition has launched a website with copies of 84 percent of ballots cast, showing an easy win for Gonzalez Urrutia. The government claims these are forged.

Maduro has led the oil-rich, cash-poor country since 2013, presiding over a GDP drop of 80 percent that pushed more than seven million of once-wealthy Venezuela's 30 million citizens to emigrate. Experts blame economic mismanagement and US sanctions for the collapse. Maduro has maintained power thanks to loyalty from the military leadership, electoral bodies, courts and other state institutions, as well as the backing of Russia, China and Cuba.

Security

Maduro on Saturday also said "military and police patrols" would continue throughout the country to "protect the people." Rights groups reported 11 dead in protests Monday and Tuesday as angry Venezuelans took to the streets.

Maduro said two officers were killed, and 2,000 people detained. He has said his administration was preparing two maximum security prisons to hold protest-related inmates. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke Friday with Machado and Gonzalez Urrutia, expressing "his concern for their safety and well-being" and congratulating Gonzalez Urrutia "for receiving the most votes," the State Department said.

Venezuela emigres in cities across the Americas also rallied Saturday against Maduro and his claims of victory. "We don't want violence, we just want him to leave, we only want peace," 43-year-old Maudie Lopez, a crafts worker, told AFP in Colombia's capital Bogota, where hundreds joined in song and prayer. "I want to return to my country." Colombia is housing some three million of the seven million Venezuelans who have fled since Maduro came to power. — AFP



BEIRUT: A sculpted figure representing a man waving a Lebanese flag stands along the road overlooking the port of Beirut on August 4, 2024, as Lebanon marks four years since a catastrophic explosion there that killed more than 220 people. — AFP

Lebanon marks 4 years since port explosion

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Sunday marks four years since a catastrophic explosion at Beirut's port killed more than 220 people. Several marches were set to converge on the port in the afternoon to remember the victims and demand justice. Nobody has been held responsible for the August 4, 2020 disaster — one of history's biggest non-nuclear explosions — which also injured at least 6,500 people and devastated swathes of the capital.

Authorities said the explosion was triggered by a fire in a warehouse where a stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertilizer had been haphazardly stored for years. An investigation has stalled, mired in legal and political wrangling. "The complete lack of accountability for such a manmade disaster is staggering," United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said in a statement on Saturday.

"One would expect the concerned authorities to work tirelessly to lift all barriers ... but the opposite is happening," she said, calling for "an impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation to deliver truth, justice, and accountability".

In December 2020, lead investigator Fadi Sawan charged former prime minister Hassan Diab and three ex-ministers with negligence, but as political pressure mounted, he was removed from the case. His successor, Tarek Bitar, unsuccessfully asked lawmakers to lift parliamentary immunity for MPs who were formerly cabinet ministers.

In December 2021, Bitar suspended his probe after a barrage of lawsuits, while Hezbollah has accused him of bias and demanded his dismissal. But in January last year, he resumed investigations, charging eight new suspects including high-level security officials and Lebanon's top prosecutor, who in turn charged Bitar with "usurping power" and ordered the release of detainees in the case. The process has since stalled again.

A judicial official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that Bitar would "resume his proceedings, starting next week" and intends to finish "the investigation and issue his indictment decision ... by the end of the year".

Bitar will set dates for questioning defendants who have not yet appeared before him, according to the official. If the public prosecutor's office or other relevant judicial officials fail to cooperate, Bitar "will issue arrest warrants in absentia" for the defendants, the official added. Activists have called for a UN fact-finding mission into the blast, but Lebanese officials have repeatedly rejected the demand. — AFP

Floods submerge famine-stricken Sudan camp

ZAMZAM CAMP: A famine-stricken camp in Sudan's conflict-torn Darfur region is facing a significant new influx of displaced people while floods threaten to contaminate water and sanitation facilities, according to satellite imagery published on Friday. The findings from Yale Humanitarian Research Lab show that toilets and nine out of 13 water points have been inundated at the Zamzam camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in North Darfur, raising the risk of cholera and other diseases in an area already facing extreme levels of malnutrition.

The camp, hosting about 500,000 people, has become more crowded as people have fled recent fighting between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which broke out in April 2023. The images analyzed by the Yale researchers show brown floodwaters submerging outdoor toilets and areas where people queue for water. "We need water, food, healthcare, and for God to lift this curse from Sudan, nothing more than that," said Duria Abdelrahman, who told Reuters she had received no aid since arriving in the camp. Women were seen cleaning leaves to eat.

Zamzam is the largest IDP camp in Sudan, and some people have lived there for more than two decades. On Thursday, the world's global hunger monitor determined that Zamzam is experiencing famine, only the third such assessment since the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an international food security standard, was established two decades ago.

In its first response to the famine classification, the RSF on Friday declared "full solidarity" with victims of the famine and repeated an offer to work with the United Nations to facilitate delivery of aid. Aid workers say the army has obstructed humanitarian access during the war while the RSF has looted large quantities of aid that has got through.

Both sides deny impeding relief efforts. "For humanitarians, our worst-case scenario, what we train for as the sum of all fears, is happening on the ground right now," said Nathaniel Raymond, executive director of the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab. "A population already vulnerable due to being food and water deprived, on the move and under siege, now is surrounded by

floodwaters that are contaminated with human and animal feces."

Zamzam is near Al-Fashir, capital of North Darfur and the only significant holdout from the RSF across Darfur. At least 65 people were killed this week as the group besieges the city. The main hospital is out of service after an RSF attack.

Dirty water

Zamzam and other areas where more than 300,000 people have fled are controlled by armed groups that are neutral or allied with the government and therefore offer some protection. But they have little food and few services because the army and RSF have prevented assistance from entering.

Residents say they cannot reach farms as RSF soldiers surround the area, while most have no money for the little food that enters markets. The IPC said the Abu Shouk and al-Salam camps in al-Fashir are likely facing similar conditions to Zamzam. Residents have limited access to fresh water, the Yale researchers said. "The water is unsafe because it mixes with all the dirt," Zamzam resident Yahia Ali told Reuters, pointing to brown rainwater collected in a tarp. "And even though it's dirty we are forced to drink it."

The Yale researchers used satellite imagery to identify enough standing water at the camp to cover at least 125 soccer pitches. The researchers also documented submerged toilets at Al Salam School 36 for Adolescents and another school compound. A Reuters eyewitness said newcomers from Al-Fashir sheltering in a roofless school had water up to their knees.

In Al-Fashir, the Yale researchers documented flooding of hospitals, food and water distribution sites, and markets. The Mawashi Market, where livestock is slaughtered and sold, was also inundated and the researchers called it "a particularly concerning vehicle of contamination".

As of early July, Sudan had 11,000 cholera cases nationwide, according to the health ministry, although none had been recorded in North Darfur. Waterborne disease outbreaks occurred in Darfur during a devastating conflict that began in 2003. Zamzam is one of 14 locations across Sudan where the IPC has said famine is likely, most of them other displacement camps that have seen little aid enter since the latest war began. "This is not just the situation in Zamzam, but the condition of all the other camps in Darfur, more than 171 camps suffering the same conditions," said Adam Rojas, spokesman for the Displacement Camps Coordinating Committee, an activist network. — Reuters



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (right) stands in front of a pair of F-16 fighter jets after giving an award to a Ukrainian fighter pilot during Ukrainian Air Forces Day at an undisclosed location on August 4, 2024. — AFP

Ukraine received first F-16 jets, Zelensky says

KYIV: Ukraine has received its first batch of US-made F-16 fighter jets, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday, adding that more are needed to beat back Russian forces. For more than two years, Ukraine has pleaded with its Western partners for the aircraft — long considered the crown jewel in the sprawling list of military hardware Kyiv has sought. "We often heard the word 'impossible'. Now it is a reality. Reality in our skies. F-16s in Ukraine. We made it happen," Zelensky said, as some flew above him during the announcement.

Zelensky was standing in front of what looked like two grey, partially-covered F-16s branded with the Ukrainian trident, in a location reporters were asked not to disclose for security reasons. "I am proud of all our guys who are mastering these aircraft and have already started using them for our country," he said.

He did not say how many jets had been delivered and declined to comment on their specific tasks, but AFP journalists saw at least two F-16s on the spot. The announcement will likely be welcomed by many and comes as Kyiv's forces are struggling to hold back advances by Russian troops in recent weeks. Kyiv hopes the arrival of the fighter jets — touted for their precision, speed and range — will enable it to better protect itself from Russian bombardment.

Zelensky, however, immediately warned more were needed. "Our partners know that the number of F-16s we have in Ukraine, the number of pilots who have already been trained, is not enough," he said. "The good news is that we are expecting additional F-16s," he added. Several NATO countries have pledged to supply varying numbers of the fighter jets and have been training Ukrainian pilots and crews for months. "Our guys are training a lot," Zelensky said, thanking Denmark, the Netherlands, the US and other allies. — AFP

MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2024

Gulf Bank holds its earnings webcast for first half of 2024

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its investors webcast on Wednesday (31, July 2024) to present and discuss the Bank's financial performance for H1 2024. The webcast was organized by EFG Hermes and presented by Sami Mahfouz, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, and David Challinor, Chief Financial Officer of Gulf Bank. The discussion was moderated by Youssef Dib, Investor Relations Team at Gulf Bank.

Operating environment

Sami Mahfouz, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, commenced the webcast with key updates regarding Gulf Bank's operating environment during the first half of 2024. Sami Mahfouz stated: "As we navigate through 2024, we are witnessing significant economic developments both globally and locally. On the global front, the world economy is showing signs of resilience with increased stability in financial markets, improved consumer confidence, and a gradual rise in international trade activities. Additionally, the anticipation of interest rate movements by the Federal Reserve is a key factor with implications on borrowing costs, investment decisions, and the global economic growth trajectories. Locally in Kuwait, the economy is benefiting from the relative stability in oil prices at current levels, bolstered by ongoing government initiatives aimed at diversifying the economy and fostering sustainable growth."

Sami Mahfouz added, "We continued to exhibit a robust operational performance, reinforced by strong top-line growth and sound financial position metrics. We continue to face headwinds with our credit costs which resulted in a drop of our net profit growth during the first half of the year compared to the same period of last year, however, we remain confident in the Bank's future potential. Having said that, we have seen our loan book expand during the first half of the year, reflecting the success of our strategic initiatives in meeting our clients' evolving needs. This growth in loans displays our capacity to navigate and excel in dynamic market conditions, reinforcing our prominent position in the Kuwaiti banking sector."

He added: "I am pleased to announce the successful completion of Phase II of our core banking system, a significant milestone in our journey towards advancing customer centricity. This achievement strengthens our operational capabilities and reaffirms our focus to meet the evolving needs of our clients in a digitally driven era. We are ready to leverage these technological foundational changes to drive operational efficiencies and



Gulf Bank Deputy CEO
Sami Mahfouz

- Kuwait's economy is benefiting from the relative stability in oil prices at current levels, bolstered by ongoing government initiatives aimed at diversifying the economy and fostering sustainable growth.
- Gulf Bank continuously explore opportunities for growth, both organic and inorganic, to diversify its offerings, cater to a broader market segment, and enhance its competitive position.



Gulf Bank CFO
David Challinor

- The cost income ratio has come down from the first half of 2023, and it's now sitting at 45.7% versus last year at 46.5%.
- In Q2 we saw yet another very strong quarter for loan growth and this brings year to date loan growth for the first half to 5.8%.
- The local market continues to enjoy healthy liquidity levels and we may see a further fall in cost of funds in Q3.



transform our branches into relationship and experience centers aiming to provide a personalized and seamless banking experiences to our clients."

Margins

Regarding margins and their sensitivity towards the benchmark rates, David Challinor remarked: "We disclosed in the full year 2023 financials for every 25 basis points its KD 2.2 million assuming a parallel shift on both sides of the balance sheet. For Q2, the net interest margin was 215 basis points which was a 1-point increase sequentially from Q1. And for the first half the margin was 214 basis points which is 3 points higher than last year." He added: "In terms of the outlook, the local market continues to enjoy healthy liquidity levels so we may see a further fall in cost of funds

in Q3 although I'd still expect the overall margin to remain broadly around the current levels in the short term."

Operating expenses

In terms of operating expense, David Challinor mentioned: "For the first half we've managed to keep a tight lid on operating expense growth to just 3 percent, which is very low when compared to other banks in the system." He added: "When we look at the cost income ratio, this has come down from the first half of 2023, and it's now sitting at 45.7 percent versus last year at 46.5 percent."

Loan growth

When questioned about the drivers for loan book growth during Q2 2024, Challinor noted: "In Q2 we saw yet another very strong quarter for loan growth. To-

tal Gross Loans and Advances grew KD 142 million in the quarter which followed a very strong Q1 where we grew KD 177 million. So, this brings year to date loan growth for the first half to 5.8 percent. And this compares very favorably to the full year 2023 loan growth which was 1.2 percent." He added: "Looking forward, I would expect the second half loan growth to be slower than the first, but still dominated by corporate and with the focus being more on local resident lending."

Potential merger with Boubyan Bank and conversion to Sharia compliant bank

Regarding the latest disclosures made related to the potential merger with Boubyan Bank and to the potential conversion into a Sharia compliant bank, Sami Mahfouz stated: "As far as

the conversion to Islamic, let me take you back to what we have announced on June 11, 2024, that our Board of Directors requested for the engagement of an international consultant to undertake a feasibility study regarding the potential conversion of Gulf Bank to operate in accordance with Islamic Sharia principles. The Central Bank of Kuwait has granted their no-objection to the commencement of this study. As a bank, we are continuously exploring opportunities for growth, both organic and inorganic, to diversify our offerings, cater to a broader market segment, and enhance our competitive position." He added: "More recently we had disclosed on July 31, 2024 that Gulf Bank and Boubyan Bank have presented a proposal for a strategic opportunity for growth and expansion through the merger of the two banks, whereby creating one entity compliant with the provisions of Islamic sharia. This proposal was presented to Gulf Bank's Board of Directors at its meeting held on July 30, 2024 and was approved. Moreover, the Board issued its directives and recommendations to move forward to carry out the needful actions to commence the initial feasibility study and necessary due diligence for the merger, after obtaining the necessary approvals in this regard. Accordingly, Gulf Bank informed the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on July 30, 2024 with the above, and in return received from CBK the necessary guidelines to be followed for the merger process. Based on that, Gulf Bank will commence communications with Boubyan Bank to sign a Memorandum of Understanding and a Confidentiality Agreement in preparation for the initial Feasibility Study. I would like to reconfirm Gulf Bank's compliance with relevant laws and instructions of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the relevant regulatory authorities, and we will be disclosing any material developments in this respect in due course."



LIANYUNGANG, China: Cars for export waiting to be loaded on a ship at a port in Lianyungang, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

China roadmap to boost household consumption

BEIJING: China has issued a set of directives aimed at boosting household consumption, a weakness weighing on growth in the world's second-largest economy, with the plan targeting sectors including child and elder care, and food and beverage. Leaders including President Xi Jinping pledged last month to help boost domestic consumption and ease pressure on China's ailing property sector, following a gathering of the ruling Communist Party's top brass.

The State Council, China's cabinet, published a list of 20 general directives on its website on Saturday evening, constituting a general roadmap for ministries and local authorities as the economy recovers after the lifting of strict pandemic measures at the end of 2022 that had hindered growth.

The plan, which does not include proposed budgets, urges authorities to "increase the supply of care services for the elderly", a sector with growth potential in a country with an ageing population.

It also calls for the development of childcare ser-

vices, as fewer young people opt to have babies due to the high cost of education and lack of social benefits. Income tax reductions are also planned to offset the cost of caring for children under three and senior citizens, according to the document.

Beijing also pledged to ensure that eligible small businesses in the service sector can benefit from greater financial support, particularly from banks. The plan calls for more food-themed festivals to be held, and for the promotion of street food "snacks" — popular with locals — as well as pledges to encourage major foreign companies in the food and beverage industry to open their first outlets in China. China is aiming for GDP growth of "around 5 percent" this year, but second-quarter growth slowed sharply to 4.7 percent year-on-year, according to official figures published last month.

Its growth has been battered by a long-running debt crisis in the property market, which accounts for a quarter of gross domestic product. China's efforts to boost household spending are expected to help the economy hit the government's 2024 growth target of roughly 5 percent, but the authorities may have to do more for consumers from next year or accept slower growth. Trade tensions and local government debt risks leave Beijing few alternatives to revving up consumer stimulus in coming years, but vague promises of "incremental measures" look likely to fall short, analysts say. — Agencies

BoE rate cut adds to sense of turnaround in British economy

LONDON: The Bank of England's first interest rate cut in more than four years will help to foster a cautious sense of optimism about Britain's long-struggling economy, but the scale of the growth challenge facing the new government remains huge. The BoE lowered its benchmark rate to 5.0 percent on Thursday, from a 16-year high of 5.25 percent, offering a bit more relief to households and businesses who are emerging from the inflationary shocks of the COVID pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Data published a few hours before the BoE announcement showed British manufacturers enjoyed a stronger July than their peers in much of the rest of Europe and Asia. British shares which have underperformed since the 2016 Brexit vote - added to recent gains after the BoE's rate cut, with the FTSE 250 index of medium-sized firms hitting its highest since February 2022, before following other markets and falling later in the day on worries about the US economy.

The lowering of bank rate from its 16-year high and the signs of economic recovery after a shallow recession in 2023 are helpful for new Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who has made economic growth - chiefly via reforms to boost the country's weak productivity growth - the top priority of his government. BoE Chief Economist Huw Pill, who voted to keep rates on hold, welcomed the improved outlook for the economy, even if it still represented a historically tepid pace of growth at around 1 percent a year between 2024 and 2026. "That sort of rate, you know, that's better than what we've seen," Pill said. "But at the same time, I think it's fair to say it's not something that we should get too complacent or enthusiastic about."

Michael Browne, chief investment officer of Martin Currie, part of asset management group Franklin Templeton, said the likelihood of further BoE rate cuts would help to foster the sense of turnaround in

Britain. "In this environment, we continue to favor the interest rate-sensitive sectors of house builders, real estate, utilities and in particular the green energy sector," he said.

The BoE's announcement came three days after finance minister Rachel Reeves announced a big public sector pay rise in the first move of her economic policy program that seeks to double Britain's pace of economic growth to around 2.5 percent a year.

But there are a host of reasons for continued caution. The narrow 5-4 vote in favor of a rate cut by the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee underscored the extent of inflation risks still hanging over the economy. Governor Andrew Bailey was at pains to stress that the BoE was not at the start of a series of swift cuts to borrowing costs, saying the stronger performance of the economy in recent months could keep inflation risks on the radar.

Suren Thiru, economics director at accountancy body ICAEW, said the rate cut marked a notable shift in direction but the financial reality facing households and firms had not changed. "This is just one step back from the previous period of 14 rate hikes," Thiru said. Investors are fully pricing only one further cut to interest rates by the BoE later this year. At almost 6 percent, wage growth is running at about double the rate that would normally be consistent with the central bank's 2 percent inflation target.

And while the BoE sharply raised its forecast for Britain's economic growth in 2024 to 1.25 percent, less than half the average before the 2007-08 global financial crisis. In her response to the BoE's interest rate cut, Reeves stressed the hard road ahead, with borrowing costs still putting pressure on many households and the public finances under strain, raising the likelihood of tax increases in her first budget in October. "That is why this government is taking the difficult decisions now to fix the foundations of our economy after years of low growth," she said. — Reuters

Boubyan Bank, Kuwait's fastest-growing bank in premium segment: Mastercard

Al-Mejhem: We have the ability to meet customer needs beyond expectations

KUWAIT: Mastercard, a global technology company in the payments industry, has presented Boubyan Bank with an award for the fastest-growing bank in the premium segment in Kuwait. The prestigious recognition adds to the bank's track record of achievements that consolidates its leadership in providing innovative solutions with the highest standards of quality and performance.

Adel Al-Majed, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Boubyan Bank, received the award in the presence of Abdullah Al-Mejhem, Chief Consumer & Private Banking Officer of Boubyan Bank, Ling Hai, President for Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa (APEMEA) at Mastercard, J K Khalil, Division President for East Arabia at Mastercard, and other Boubyan Bank and Mastercard officials.

On this occasion, Abdullah Al-Mejhem expressed his pride in Boubyan Bank receiving the award. He noted that the accolade represents an appreciation of the bank's efforts to innovate distinctive solutions to provide an exceptional banking experience, complemented by the highest levels of service that suits its customers' modern lifestyle.

Al-Mejhem added that the award reaffirms Boubyan Bank's leadership in offering diverse and value-added services to its premium customers. He also pointed out that the partnership with Mastercard has enabled the bank to mark a series of achievements in recent years by launching multiple secure digital payment solutions, powered by the company's advanced technologies. Most of these innovations were introduced in the local market for the first time, helping position Kuwait as one of the most developed countries in the field of digital banking.

Al-Mejhem clarified that these innovative propositions have brought about a significant shift, fulfilling the aspirations of customers from all segments and exceeding their expectations. The collaboration with Mastercard aligns with Boubyan Bank's proactive and systematic strategy to support digital transformation as the main driver of progress in the financial sector.

For his part, Ling Hai said, "We are pleased to honor Boubyan Bank for its continued efforts to elevate offerings for its customers. The bank's introduction of a variety of innovations and payment solutions has allowed it to cater to the unique needs of each cardholder. We congratulate the team on the exceptional performance in the premium segment thanks to the tailored benefits it offers its high-net-worth customers." Boubyan Bank's premium high net-worth account provides a full-service banking experience to customers with a minimum salary of KD 3,000 or



Al-Majed and Al-Mejhem receiving the award from Mastercard officials.

with a total balance of KD 100,000 and above. The proposition is part of the Bank's strategy to continuously strengthen its leadership in the banking sector through exceptional products and services that cater to the financial, banking and investment needs of the discerning HNW segment.

The Mastercard World Elite credit card provides customers with a variety of valuable benefits that meet their needs and enables them to conduct simple, convenient and secure transactions. The cardholders also get automatically enrolled into the Boubyan Rewards program to enjoy a world of rewards

with every purchase they make using their credit card in Kuwait and abroad.

The card offers a wide range of services that cover many aspects of daily life, such as travel and insurance, as well as discounts at major retail stores and other merchants courtesy of Mastercard.

Data provider Dun & Bradstreet explores sale

NEW YORK: Dun & Bradstreet, a US data and analytics provider that has a market value of more than \$9 billion including debt, is exploring options including a potential sale, people familiar with the matter said on Friday. The Jacksonville, Florida-based company is working with investment bankers at Bank of America to evaluate takeover interest from

potential buyers, which include private equity firms, the sources said.

Cannae Holdings, the company's largest shareholder with 15.6 percent, could roll its stake as part of any sale, one of the sources said. This could help facilitate a deal by lowering the overall purchase price. The sources, who requested anonymity because the matter is confidential, cautioned that no deal is certain. Bank of America declined to comment. Dun & Bradstreet and Cannae did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Dun & Bradstreet's stock rose as much as 23 percent to \$12.66 per share on the news, the highest trading level since February 2023. In mid-afternoon trading, it was up 19 percent to \$12.24, giving the company a market value of \$5.4

billion. The company also had total debt, as of the end of June, of about \$3.7 billion.

Dun & Bradstreet, which traces its origins to 1841, is one of Wall Street's oldest data and analytics providers. It currently serves about 135,000 businesses, including 90 percent of the Fortune 500 companies, according to its website. Dun & Bradstreet listed its shares in New York in 2020, less than two years after an investor consortium led by CC Capital, Cannae and Thomas H. Lee Partners took it private. The company's shares had lost nearly 62 percent of their value between its initial public offering and Thursday's close, as its debt pile limited its ability to invest in its business and profitability suffered while bigger rivals, such as Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, made gains. — Reuters



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 1 AUGUST 2024

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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	36,134	7,865.46	0.8%	-0.4%	5.2%	673,246,250	220,700,627	40,473	17.7	1.4	82.3%
Main Market	7,767	6,071.57	0.8%	0.0%	9.0%	430,644,489	57,071,210	26,016	11.9	0.8	17.7%
All Share	43,901	7,214.13	0.8%	-0.3%	5.8%	1,103,890,739	277,771,837	66,489	13.8	1.0	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	27,023	1,796.56	1.7%	-0.4%	9.0%	375,981,213	150,450,776	20,249	17.9	1.4	61.55%
Basic Materials	427	753.01	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	3,483,776	2,022,831	752	9.6	1.9	0.97%
Consumer Discretionary	1,165	1,689.58	-0.1%	-0.2%	5.3%	48,065,506	13,586,772	5,052	12.8	1.3	2.65%
Consumer Staples	295	967.86	-15.5%	-1.5%	47.0%	3,081,632	2,057,297	891	26.6	1.5	0.67%
Energy	217	1,062.29	1.1%	-1.0%	11.9%	3,500,826	508,646	302	10.0	0.9	0.49%
Financial Services	4,834	1,363.69	0.2%	-0.1%	12.5%	436,755,885	60,535,954	20,175	13.2	0.9	11.01%
Health Care	225	468.00	0.0%	0.0%	-2.9%	0	0	0	14.3	1.6	0.51%
Industrials	2,666	784.32	-1.0%	-0.1%	-13.6%	54,450,174	16,856,095	6,938	14.3	1.0	6.07%
Insurance	975	2,367.90	2.8%	-0.2%	3.3%	5,274,700	1,329,596	1,009	9.3	1.2	2.22%
Real Estate	2,838	1,329.27	-1.0%	-0.3%	9.6%	159,554,647	24,357,349	8,295	13.6	0.7	6.47%
Technology	23	1,629.60	0.9%	-14.5%	181.8%	40,591	8,869.90	39	269.9	1.9	0.05%
Telecommunications	3,034	988.37	-0.9%	-0.4%	-10.6%	11,921,651	5,768,295	2,460	15.5	1.3	6.91%
Utilities	178	423.68	-1.8%	0.0%	-6.9%	1,780,138	289,357	327	13.7	1.4	0.41%

Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GIH	603	18.24%	4,111,072	2,224,742,056	817
INOVEST	105	11.70%	21,605,727	2,210,061	1,020
TAHSSILAT	44	11.68%	1,685,390	73,560	122
GBK	307	11.64%	169,076,677	51,010,477	4,637
UNICAP	180	9.09%	21,981,239	3,813,708	1,066

Top Losers

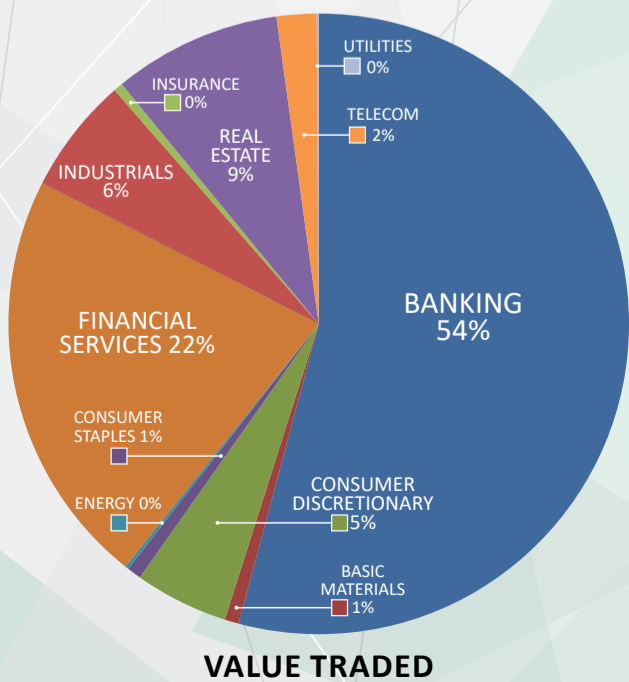
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MEZZAN	870	-16.35%	2,018,547	1,941,376	780
BAYANINV	62.7	-12.92%	89,763,009	6,616,972	3,125
KCIN	1,179	-11.29%	4,020	4,928	19
ALAQARIA	29.5	-11.14%	1,308,039	42,200	72
JAZEERA	900	-7.22%	2,522,232	2,402,850	660

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GBK	307	11.64%	169,076,677	51,010,477	4,637
BAYANINV	62.7	-12.92%	89,763,009	6,616,972	3,125
GFH	101	1.71%	68,588,786	6,951,284	2,095
KPROJ	105	-4.55%	61,100,611	6,528,740	1,188
KFH	734	0.14%	45,044,062	33,234,287	5,332

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GBK	307	11.64%	169,076,677	51,010,477	4,637
KFH	734	0.14%	45,044,062	33,234,287	5,332
NBK	900	3.09%	30,083,736	26,724,791	2,810
BOUBYAN	586	2.45%	26,074,928	15,268,423	3,325
ABK	309	2.32%	36,551,354	11,235,103	1,501



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Markets volume and value increased by 46%, 54%, 36%, and 30%, respectively.
- Premier and Main Indexes continued to perform well despite a slight fall at the end of the week.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7214, with support levels at 7178, 7162, and 7141 and resistance at 7214. The Premier index closed at 7865, with support levels at 7834, 7811, and 7767, and resistance at 7916. The Main index closed at 6071, with support levels at 6058, 6023, and 5990, while resistance was at 6083.

US consumer confidence rises

BoE cuts key interest rate for first time in over four years

KUWAIT: The US Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index increased to 100.3 in July 2024, up from 97.8 in June. The Present Situation Index, reflecting consumers' views on current business and labor market conditions, fell to 133.6 from 135.3. In contrast, the Expectations Index, which gauges consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions, improved to 78.2 from 72.8 in June. Despite this improvement, it remains below the threshold of 80, which often signals potential economic challenges ahead. This data highlights consumers' mixed sentiments, with optimism about the future counterbalanced by concerns about current conditions and economic uncertainties.

Job openings

The number of job openings in the US remained steady at 8.2 million, with a job openings rate of 4.9 percent. Hires were little changed at 5.3 million, while total separations were also stable at 5.1 million. Within separations, quits were at 3.3 million, indicating a quits rate of 2.1 percent. The data shows stability in the labor market, with consistent job openings, hires, and separations across most industries. Notably, job openings increased in accommodation and food services by 120,000 and in state and local government by 94,000 but decreased in durable goods manufacturing by 88,000 and in federal government by 62,000.

The US Federal Reserve has decided to keep the Fed's fund rate unchanged at 5.50 percent in its latest meeting on Wednesday. The decision is considered in line with what the market was pricing. Fed Chair, Jerome Powell, delivered a statement where he stated that the economy has been improving in the second quarter, and that the Fed will adjust monetary policy if the upcoming data continues to show sustainable improvements in inflation. Markets took the statement to indicate that a September rate cut is not off the table, with 27.9

Rates - August 4th, 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0788	1.0781	1.0926	1.0908	1.0800	1.0110	1.0954
GBP	1.2747	1.2704	1.2839	1.2798	1.2800	1.3000	1.2808
JPY	149.37	146.41	149.77	146.54	144.00	148.00	144.62
CHF	0.8732	0.8571	0.8736	0.8575	0.8500	0.8700	0.8487

bps worth of cuts currently priced by markets. The decision comes following labor data which shows the ADP non-farm employment change at 122K, down from 155K the previous month.

A key indicator of manufacturing activity, the US Institute for Supply Management's PMI came in at its lowest point in eight months, coming in at 46.8 versus the expectations of 48.8. This decline was primarily attributed to a slump in new orders. However, experts caution that this downturn may overstate the industry's overall health, as factory production surged during the preceding quarter. While the PMI has now contracted for four consecutive months, it remains above a level historically associated with broader economic expansion.

The latest employment data released by the Labor Department indicates a significant slowdown in job growth. In July, the economy added a mere 114,000 jobs, a pure contrast to the previous month's revised figure of 179,000 and well below economists' expectations. This marks the lowest job growth since January 2021. Moreover, the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.3 percent, signifying a loosening labor market. While sectors like healthcare, construc-

tion, and transportation and warehousing continued to expand, the information sector experienced job losses. Wage growth also moderated, with average hourly earnings increasing by 0.2 percent month-over-month, below estimates. It's worth noting that these figures represent a downward revision from previous months, painting an even less optimistic picture of the labor market's trajectory. The Greenback closed the week, last trading at 103.95.

CPI flash estimate y/y

Inflation in the eurozone ticked slightly higher in July, as seen in the latest CPI flash estimates data. Where the CPI figure was at 2.6 percent y/y, higher than the previous 2.5 percent figure. Core inflation estimates were at 2.9 percent, matching the previous month yet higher than forecasts. Meanwhile, the EUR/USD pair was seen trading at around 1.0828 following the news release. The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week, last trading at 1.0908.

The Bank of England made a significant monetary policy shift on Thursday by reducing its key interest rate for the first time in over four years, bringing it down to 5 percent. This decision, reached by a nar-

row 5-4 vote among policymakers, marked a departure from the prolonged period of elevated rates. The central bank had maintained the interest rate at a 16-year high of 5.25 percent since August of the previous year. Despite market expectations leaning towards a rate cut, the Bank's decision was shrouded in uncertainty until the official announcement. Governor Andrew Bailey justified the rate reduction by citing a moderation in inflationary pressures but emphasized the need for a cautious approach to avoid prematurely stimulating the economy. He underscored the importance of maintaining low inflation as a cornerstone for sustained economic growth and prosperity. The GBP/USD currency closed the week, last trading at 1.2798.

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) has increased its benchmark interest rate to approximately 0.25 percent, up from the previous range of 0 percent to 0.1 percent. This move marks the second-rate hike since 2007. Despite this increase, the BoJ expects real interest rates to remain significantly negative, maintaining accommodative financial conditions to support economic activity. This decision comes amid ongoing efforts to balance economic recovery and manage inflation pressures. The USD/JPY pair was seen trading lower following the decision.

In July, core consumer prices in Japan rose by 2.2 percent y/y, matching markets forecasts and slightly accelerating from June's 2.1 percent increase. This marks the third consecutive month of rising inflation in Japan's capital. Excluding fresh food and fuel costs, inflation increased by 1.5 percent down from 1.8 percent in June. The figures come a week before the Bank of Japan's policy meeting, where markets are pricing in a 70 percent chance of a rate hike. The USD/JPY currency pair closed the week, last trading at 146.54.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30550.

Berkshire halves its Apple stake, boosts cash to \$277 billion

OMAHA: Warren Buffett appears to have soured on stocks, letting cash at Berkshire Hathaway soar to nearly \$277 billion and selling about half its stake in Apple, even as the conglomerate posted a record quarterly operating profit. Berkshire's results released on Saturday suggest the 93-year-old Buffett, one of the world's most revered investors, is growing wary about the broader US economy, or stock market valuations that have gotten too high.

The results followed a stock market selloff that pushed the Nasdaq into correction territory, and a weak jobs report that sparked worries about US economic activity and whether the Federal Reserve waited too long to cut interest rates. "If you look at the entire Berkshire picture and the macroeconomic data, a safe conclusion is that Berkshire is getting defensive," said Cathy Seifert, an analyst at CFRA Research who rates Berkshire a "buy."

Berkshire's cash stake grew to \$276.9 billion as of June 30 from a then-record \$189 billion three months earlier, largely because Berkshire sold a net \$75.5 billion of stocks. It sold about 390 million Apple shares in the second quarter, on top of 115 million sold from January to March, as the iPhone maker's stock price rose 23 percent. Berkshire still owned about 400 million shares worth \$84.2 billion as of June 30. The second quarter was the seventh straight quarter that Berkshire sold more stocks than it bought. Berkshire also repurchased just \$345 million of its own stock, down from \$2.57 billion in the first quarter, and none in the first three weeks of July.

"Buffett doesn't seem to think there are attractive opportunities in publicly traded stocks, including his own," said Jim Shanahan, an Edward Jones analyst with a "hold" rating on Berkshire. "It makes me worry what he thinks about markets and the economy."

Second-quarter profit from Berkshire's dozens of businesses rose 15 percent to \$11.6 billion, or about \$8.073 per Class A share, from \$10.04 billion a year earlier. Nearly half of that profit came from Berkshire's insurance businesses including Geico car insurance, where underwriting profit more than tripled as premiums rose and claims fell. But revenue rose just 1 percent to \$93.65 billion, with little change in major businesses such as the BNSF railroad and Berkshire Hathaway Energy, and a 12 percent drop at the Pilot truck stop chain.

Consumers also showed signs of cutting back, causing revenue to decline at Berkshire's more than 80 auto dealerships because they spent less per vehicle on new cars, trucks and SUVs.

Berkshire's returns from short-term Treasuries should decline once rate cuts begin. Shanahan said that and revenue headwinds "may make it tough for Berkshire to deliver earnings growth in 2025."

The Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate also owns many industrial and manufacturing companies, a big real estate brokerage, Dairy Queen and Fruit of the Loom. Quarterly net income fell 15 percent to \$30.34 billion from \$35.91 billion a year earlier, as rising stock prices in both periods boosted the value of Berkshire's stock investments. Buffett has long urged shareholders to ignore Berkshire's quarterly investment gains and losses, which often lead to outsized net profits or net losses.

Berkshire pledges to keep a minimum \$30 billion of cash, but often lets it build up when it can't find whole businesses or individual stocks to buy at fair prices. Since mid-July, Berkshire has also sold more than \$3.8 billion of shares in Bank of America BAC.N, its second-largest stock holding. — Reuters

Size of looming Fed rate cuts may hinge on job market

NEW YORK: For financial markets, the key question hanging over the Federal Reserve's expected policy easing increasingly revolves around the size of interest rate cuts and less on their timing. The prospect that the US central bank would start reducing borrowing costs in September has been a solid bet for weeks, and Fed Chair Jerome Powell was not shy at his post-meeting press conference on Wednesday in saying that a cut could come at next month's meeting, as long as economic data between now and then leans that way.

The first big dose of that data arrives on Friday, when US central bankers will get a fresh take on a side of their dual mandate that had taken a back seat to inflation until now. Economists polled by Reuters expect the US Labor Department's monthly employment report to show 175,000 jobs were added in July and the unemployment rate held steady at 4.1 percent. If the forecasts are right, the report would signal a slight cooling of a still-strong labor market and would add to the case that Powell made on Wednesday when he said that "what the data broadly show in the labor market is an ongoing, gradual normalization of labor market conditions."

A rate cut at the Fed's Sept 17-18 meeting "could be on the table" if the trend continues, Powell said, language that in no way suggests anything bigger than the quarter-of-a-percentage-point moves the central bank typically makes. But a weaker reading, including fewer jobs gained or an uptick

in the unemployment rate, could bolster the case for a bigger reduction in borrowing costs, either in September or at a following meeting.

"I would not like to see material further cooling in the labor market," Powell told reporters. "If we see something that looks like a more significant downturn, that would be something that we would ... have the intention of responding to." Asked if the Fed could start with a bigger-than-usual rate cut, Powell said it is "not something we are thinking about right now."

Financial markets, however, are clearly already doing so. Interest rate futures are pricing in about a one-in-four chance that the Fed in September will cut its benchmark overnight interest rate by half a percentage point from the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range, where it has been for more than a year. Before Powell's remarks on Wednesday, a half-percentage-point cut next month was seen as a long-shot, one-in-twenty probability. Data on Thursday also fueled bets the Fed will need to respond aggressively, with a measure of factory employment dropping to a four-year-low last month and new applications for unemployment insurance benefits rising to the highest level in nearly a year.

Financial markets are also pricing about a one-in-three chance the Fed's policy rate will be down to the 4.25 percent-4.50 percent range by the end of the year, a level that can't be reached without at least one half-percentage-point cut at one of the three remaining policy meetings of 2024. Economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics, who estimate US employers added a below-consensus 130,000 jobs last month, think even a full percentage point of rate cuts this year may not be enough to keep the economy on an even keel: they project the Fed will start with a quarter-percentage-point cut but escalate its easing with half-percentage-point moves at the Nov. 7-8 and Dec. 17-18 meetings.

Wall Street Week Ahead

Flaring economic worries threaten US stocks rally

NEW YORK: Economic fears are roiling Wall Street, as worries grow that the Federal Reserve may have left interest rates elevated for too long, allowing them to hurt US growth. Alarming economic data in recent days have deepened those concerns. US job growth slowed more than expected in July, a Friday report showed, while the unemployment rate increased to 4.3 percent, heightening fears that a deteriorating labor market could make the economy vulnerable to a recession.

The jobs report exacerbated a selloff in stocks that began on Thursday, when data showing weakness in the labor market and manufacturing sector pushed investors to dump everything from chip stocks to industrials while piling into defensive plays.

Richly valued tech stocks tumbled further on Friday, extending losses in the Nasdaq Composite to more than 10 percent from a record closing high reached in July. The benchmark S&P 500 index has slid 5.7 percent from its July peak. "This is what a growth scare looks like," said Wasif Latif, president and chief investment officer at Saranya Partners. "The market is now realizing that the economy is indeed slowing."

For months, investors had been heartened by cooling inflation and gradually slowing employment, believing they bolstered the case for the Fed to begin cutting interest rates. That optimism drove big gains in stocks: the S&P 500 remains up 12 percent this year, despite recent losses: the Nasdaq has gained nearly 12 percent.

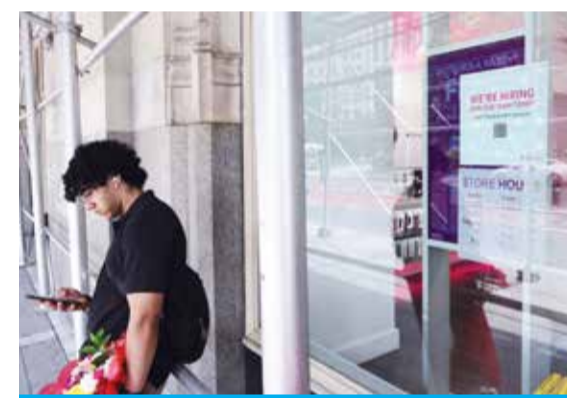
Now that a September rate cut has come into view following a Fed meeting this week, investors are fretting that elevated borrowing costs may already be hurting economic growth. Corporate earnings results, which saw disappointments from companies such as Amazon, Alphabet and Intel, are adding to their concerns.

"We're witnessing the fallout from the curse of high expectations," said James St Aubin, chief investment officer at Ocean Park Asset Management. "So much had been invested around the scenario of a soft landing, that anything that even suggests something different is difficult." Next week brings earnings from industrial bellwether Caterpillar and media and entertainment giant Walt Disney, which will give more insight into the health of the consumer and manufacturing, as well as reports from healthcare heavyweights such as weight-loss drugmaker Eli Lilly.

Bets in the futures markets on Friday suggested growing unease about the economy. Fed fund futures reflected traders pricing an over-70 percent chance of a 50-basis point cut at the central bank's September meeting, compared to 22 percent the day before, according to CME FedWatch. Futures priced a total of 116 basis points in rate cuts in 2024, compared to just over 60 basis points priced in on Wednesday. Broader markets also showed signs of unease. The Cboe Volatility Index known as Wall Street's fear gauge - hit its highest since March 2023 on Friday as demand for options protection against a stock market selloff rose.

Meanwhile, investors have rushed into safe haven bonds and other defensive areas of the market. US 10-year yields - which move inversely to bond prices - on Friday dropped as low as 3.79 percent, the lowest since December. Sectors that are often popular during times of economic uncertainty are also drawing investors.

Options data for the Health Care Select Sec-



NEW YORK: An employment sign is seen on the window of a T-Mobile store in New York City. — AFP

"Our view remains that the Fed is recognizing too slowly that the labor market is cooling and that high inflation is yesterday's problem," they wrote this week. "With interest rates well above neutral, the easing cycle likely will be much faster than markets anticipate if, as we expect, the labor market data continue to weaken and inflation remains benign." The Pantheon Macroeconomics view is not widely held. Most economists expect the Fed will deliver rate cuts in gradual quarter-percentage-point increments, and many still think it will cut just twice this year. US central bank policymakers anticipated only one cut in their quarterly projections in June.

Since those projections were issued, inflation readings have come down, and what happens next with Fed policy increasingly hinges on developments in the labor market. Powell's remarks on Wednesday show that "upside inflation risks are no longer the only - or even clearly the most prominent - concern for the Fed when determining when and how fast to cut rates," Deutsche Bank economists wrote in a note. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during afternoon trading on Aug 02, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

tor SPDR Fund showed the average daily balance between put and call contracts over the last month at its most bullish in about three years, according to a Reuters analysis of Trade Alert data. Trading in the options on Utilities Select Sector SPDR Fund also shows a pullback in defensive positioning, highlighting traders' expectations for strength for the sector.

The healthcare sector is up 4 percent in the past month, while utilities are up over 9 percent. By contrast, the Philadelphia SE Semiconductor index is down nearly 17 percent in that period amid sharp losses in investor favorites such as Nvidia and Broadcom. To be sure, some investors said the data could just be a reason to lock in profits after the market's overall strong run in 2024.

"This is a good excuse for investors to sell after a huge year to date rally," said Michael Purves, CEO of Tallbacken Capital Advisors. "Investors should be prepared for some major volatility, particularly in the big tech stocks. But it will probably be short-lived." — Reuters

MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2024



Black Turtle Dive conservation teacher Sandra Rubio (right) and her 14-year-old conservation and citizen science student Nannalin "Fleur" Pornprasertsom (left) surveying bleached corals around Koh Tao island in the southern Thai province of Surat Thani. — AFP photos

DIVERS TURN CONSERVATIONISTS AS CORALS BLEACH WORLDWIDE



A crown of thorns feeding amongst bleached corals around Koh Tao island.



Black Turtle Dive conservation teacher Sandra Rubio holding a coral health chart used by citizen scientists to track the health of corals.



Bleached corals around Koh Tao island in the southern Thai province of Surat Thani.

A diver glides over an expanse of bone-white coral branches, recording the fish that dart between the ghostly arms extending from the sea floor off the Thai island of Koh Tao. Nannalin Pornprasertsom is one of a growing number of scuba divers learning conservation and citizen science techniques as coral reefs experience a fourth global bleaching event. After a two-week course in Koh Tao, the 14-year-old can identify coral types, carry out reef restoration, and help scientific research on coral health by recording the color and tone of outcroppings at dive sites.

"It's just something that I can do that will have a good consequence for the environment," Nannalin, who has been diving since she was 12, told AFP after a series of dives. "I want to help the reef." And she is not alone. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors — better known as PADI, one of the world's leading dive training organizations — says conservation certifications jumped over six percent globally from 2021-2023. This year, it is launching a major shark and ray census, harnessing its network of divers to collect data that will shape protection policies.

On Koh Tao, Black Turtle Dive offers courses on everything from how to properly "dive against debris" — collecting marine plastic or stranded fishing nets — to coral restoration techniques. "There's an increased awareness," said Steve Minks, a certified conservation instructor at Black Turtle. "There's a lot of bleaching going on and there's a lot of concern about the marine environment."

Death spiral

Coral polyps are animals that depend on algae to provide most of their



Conservation divers from marine research centre Global Reef preparing to drop an artificial structure for coral planting around Koh Tao island.

food. These algae also generally give the reef its color. But when the sea is too warm, the polyps expel the algae. The reef turns white and the coral begins to starve. Coral bleaching has been recorded in more than 60 countries since early 2023, threatening reefs that are key to ocean biodiversity and support fishing and tourism globally. The death spiral is everywhere in the waters of the Gulf of Thailand around Koh Tao. Worst affected are branching species that grow quickly, but are also less resilient.

If water temperatures come down, they will have a chance at recovery. But for now, their spectral stems are even visible from the surface, glimmering through the aquamarine water. "I was not ready for that much bleaching, it's quite an impact," admits instructor Sandra Rubio. The 28-year-old says bleaching and other marine degradation are driving divers to take her

conservation courses. "People want to start learning because they see these kinds of changes," she told AFP.

"And even if they don't really understand why, they know it's not good." She walks students through how to identify species, including soft coral. Wave at it, she explains, mimicking wiggling a hand in the water, and wait to see if it "waves back". The skills taught at Black Turtle and other dive shops are not simply theoretical. Artificial coral reefs are dotted around Koh Tao, actively rebuilding marine habitats. And Nannalin's data on coral health is part of Coral Watch — a global citizen science project that has produced numerous research papers. "What we're doing is collecting data for scientists so they can actually work with governments and authorities," explained Minks.

a boat carries a starfish-shaped rebar structure designed by schoolchildren out to sea, where it will become Global Reef's latest coral restoration project. Since it was founded two years ago, Global Reef has transplanted around 2,000 coral colonies, with a survival rate of about 75 percent, said Gavin Miller, the group's scientific program director. "It's not really going to maybe save coral reefs globally... but what it does do is have a very, very large impact locally," he said. "We have snappers returning. We have resident puffer fish."

Global Reef also hosts interns who are training artificial intelligence programs to identify fish in 360-degree videos for reef health surveys, and collaborates regularly with the dive school next door. And they are studying the surprising resilience of some local coral to persistently high temperatures. "These might be sort of refuges for coral," explained Miller. This year's bleaching has left many marine enthusiasts despondent, but for conservation divers on Koh Tao, it is also a call to arms. "In the previous generations, we didn't have this research and education that we have now," said Nannalin.

"I think people my age should make the most of it and try their best to reverse the things that have already been done." The work also helps Rubio balance the sadness she feels at the changes below the water. "It's not like we are going to change things from one day to another, but we are doing our best, and that is the best feeling," she said. "I'm working every day to do something good for the environment and for the reef that I love." — AFP

'Doing our best'

On a sunny afternoon on Koh Tao,



This aerial photo shows Mae Head pier.



Bleached corals around Koh Tao island.



Conservation divers from marine research centre Global Reef alongside conservation diving interns preparing to drop an artificial structure for coral planting.



A bleached coral around Koh Tao island in the southern Thai province of Surat Thani.



Sweden's Victoria Christensen (right) stands next to a Totoro costume, which her team member Henrik Pilerud (not in picture) will dress up with, ahead of a rehearsal.



Cosplay competitors without makeups take part in a rehearsal before the world cosplay championship 2024.



Cosplay fans pose for photos outside the World Cosplay Summit.

Transformative hobby: Going for gold at Japan's World Cosplay Summit



A cosplay fan poses for photos outside the World Cosplay Summit.



A cosplay fan poses for photos outside the World Cosplay Summit.

It takes intense dedication, hours of prep and a whole lot of sewing: dressing up as Japanese characters may not be an Olympic sport, but these competitors are at the top of their game. Teams from 36 countries and regions faced off in central Japan on Saturday, having faithfully recreated the elaborate outfits, colorful hairstyles and all-important attitude of their chosen anime, manga and video game stars. The championship is part of the World Cosplay Summit in Nagoya, a three-day event that draws thousands of fans - many keen to show off their own costumes. "People really commit to cosplay competitions," said Lettie Shiels from Britain, who won last year's contest with her teammate Claudia Maw.

"We're not just talking about weekends and evenings - I probably averaged about four hours' sleep for a good number of months," she told AFP. The pair, who go by the stage names Tsupo and Clood, met in cosplay circles over a decade ago and have seen their hobby transform from a crafty, DIY subculture into a global phenomenon. Perfecting self-taught skills from make-up artistry to prosthetics, dressmaking and prop design is a key part of cosplay, a combination of the words "costume" and "play".

In Nagoya, contestants are judged on the accuracy and quality of their costumes. "They go pretty hard on that. You have a reference picture, and everything has to be exactly the same. If anything's missing, you'll have points docked," Shiels explained. Then they must perform a two-and-a-half minute skit in character, which former champions Tsupo and Clood have been invited back to Japan to judge. "I want to feel immersed. I want to feel like they love the source material," which will shine through in the choreography, acting and visual effects, Shiels said.

'Smiling inside'

Braving the mid-summer heat and humidity, crowds of Japanese and international cosplay enthusiasts throng

the city center for the annual event, which was first held in 2003. Characters from top manga comics such as "Naruto" and "Slam Dunk" pose for photos next to others in full-body get-ups, including the fantastical mechanical fighters from "Gundam". There are some ground rules: gore such as bloody wounds and bruises is forbid-



Team Britain's Holly Churchill and Jasmine Churchill take part in a rehearsal before the world cosplay championship 2024 during the World Cosplay Summit in Nagoya.

den, as well as costumes that show too much skin or underwear, and any real-life uniforms.

Behind the scenes ahead of the performance round, the pressure is on for the national teams, each formed of two competitors, who have squeezed all their homemade gear on to international flights. Each team is picked at national heats, similar to Eurovision, and this year cosplayers have travelled from places including France, South Africa, India, Mongolia and Thailand. In one of the shared dressing rooms, Irina Tsapreva of Bulgaria, dressed as a character from "Mononoke", is busy affixing realistic looking pointy ears to her partner. "I love many things about

cosplay. First of all, I have always loved carnivals and dressing up, so this is like a holiday for me," said Tsapreva. She has a master's degree in theatre costume design, which helps when embroidering her costume with silk and creating everything else from scratch, including assembling traditional wooden Japanese shoes.



Cosplay fans pose for photos outside the World Cosplay Summit.



The judge and last year's winner Lettie Shiels sits in the dressing room.



Britain's Holly Churchill gets ready in the dressing room.



A photographer takes picture of a cosplay fan.



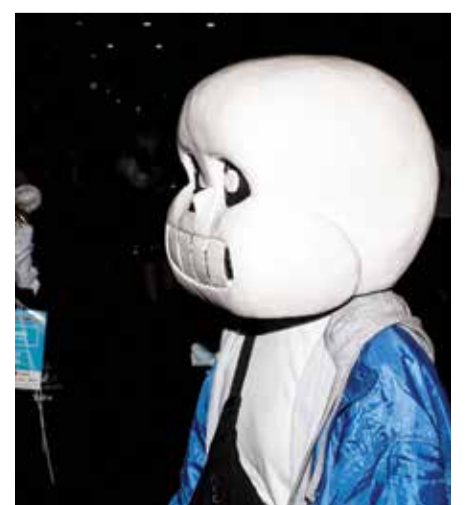
Britain's Jasmine Churchill adjusts her costume in the dressing room.



A cosplay fan walks outside the World Cosplay Summit.



A cosplay fan poses for a photo.



A cosplay fan walks outside the World Cosplay Summit. — AFP photos

Lifestyle



Cosplay fans walk outside the World Cosplay Summit.



Cosplay fans walks outside the World Cosplay Summit.



Sweden's Henrik Pilerud, inside the Totoro costume, and his team member Victoria Christensen (right) pose during an interview with AFP ahead of a rehearsal.



Competitors from 36 countries stand by backstage before the world cosplay championship 2024.



A cosplay fan poses for photos.



A cosplay fan walks outside the World Cosplay Summit.



A competitor takes part in a rehearsal.



Team Germany take part in a rehearsal.



Team Britain's Jasmine Churchill takes part in a rehearsal.



A photo of Hermes' store.

'I'm still here': Joan Chen plays thwarted immigrant mom in 'Didi'

Long before Joan Chen charmed Western audiences with seductive turns in "The Last Emperor" and "Twin Peaks" she was a child star in China, hand-picked for her debut movie role by Mao Zedong's wife. That remarkable personal journey, from Red Army propaganda movies to glamorous Hollywood roles directed by Bernardo Bertolucci and David Lynch, could not appear more different to Chen's character in new coming-of-age film "Didi." Chen plays Chungsing, a Taiwanese single mom and frustrated artist in California, whose 13-year-old is too busy trying to impress his skater friends and navigate adolescent crushes to be nice to his family.

Yet the role - which is already earning Oscars buzz - "poured out of me, because that's the life I've lived," Chen told AFP. "I am, like Chungsing, an immigrant mother, who raised two American children - with such an intimate, loving relationship, but also fraught with cultural chasm, misunderstanding, unmet expectations," she said. It all started for Chen, aged 14, when she was spotted by a film director who worked for Chairman Mao's wife Jiang Qing. "The director picked me out of school,

then sent my dossier and my pictures for her to approve," recalls Chen. "I was so happy that I happened to be the type that they needed. It wasn't my dream. I never thought about it, when they picked me to be an actress. And then slowly, I learned to love it."

She quickly became a beloved movie star in 1970s China - a job that spared her from being sent to work in rural provinces during the devastating Cultural Revolution. Chen moved to the US at age 20, studying film but skeptical about her prospects as an Asian woman in Hollywood. She landed a lead role in Bertolucci's "The Last Emperor," as the wife of China's final dynastic ruler. The film won nine Oscars, including best picture. Yet Chen, now 63, recalls: "Back then, there just weren't any Asian filmmakers or scriptwriters who could create a part for me." "I could have been this ingenue, this breakout new lead (actress)... So that was a shame. Nothing could really follow up."

'Still here'

In "Didi," out in theaters on August 16, Chen's character is a talented artist who had to forsake her ambitions

for her family, in their new country. Chungsing is stoic, quietly bearing her disappointment while devoting herself to her frequently oblivious, Americanized children. Unlike her character, Chen continued to work prolifically through parenthood, acting and directing in both the US and Asian film industries. Chen's part as femme fatale Josie Packard in "Twin Peaks" remains popular with fans of the cult TV series to this day.



Chinese-American actress Joan Chen attends the "Marco Polo" New York Series Premiere at AMC Lincoln Square Theater on December 2, 2014.--AFP photos



Chinese-American actress Joan Chen poses during a photocall for Chinese director Jia Zhang Ke's film '24 City' at the 61st Cannes International Film Festival on May 17, 2008 in Cannes, southern France.

But her Western roles have failed to match the success of her early career. And she still reflects on the "night and day" difference between her daughters' experience growing up in the West, and her own arrival in the United States as an immigrant, with "that uncertainty of the ground you're standing on." "The pains and joys we see in the film is a lived experience for myself as well," said Chen.

With "Didi" winning awards at the Sundance film festival, there are hints of a late-career comeback. Chen and director Sean Wang are earning mentions as dark horses for the next Academy Awards. "I am so thrilled that young filmmakers like Sean exist... when there are enough scriptwriters, directors, then you create more parts for people who look like them," she said. "It's wonderful. And I'm so happy that I'm still here." - AFP

The Hermès heir's scandal: Nicolas Puech's fortune vanishes in a twist

By Dr Esraa Al-Shatti

In a tale that reads like a high-stakes thriller, Nicolas Puech, the 81-year-old heir to the Hermès dynasty, has set the luxury fashion world ablaze with an astonishing revelation. Last year, Puech grabbed global headlines with his daring decision to adopt his 51-year-old former gardener and bequeath him half of his staggering €12 billion fortune.

This audacious plan would have required Puech to liquidate his vast holdings in Hermès, an action that would have dramatically altered the landscape of luxury fashion. However, the narrative took a dramatic turn last month when Puech appeared in a Swiss court, alleging he had fallen victim to a "gigantic fraud." Puech claimed that his financial advisor, Eric Freymond, had mismanaged his wealth for two decades, secretly selling off his Hermès shares. In a sensational twist, Puech's lawyers suggested that he might have lost a staggering €12 billion.

Puech's fortune is deeply entwined with the legacy of Hermès, a luxury brand founded by his ancestor Thierry Hermès in 1837. His wealth, largely inherited from his mother, Yvonne Hermès, is a testament to the family's longstanding prominence in the luxury industry.

On July 24, the Geneva appeals court weighed in with a verdict that only deepened the intrigue. The court upheld the Public Prosecutor's findings, stating there was no evidence of mismanagement by Freymond. The ruling noted with

a hint of sarcasm that the "gigantic fraud" was "undetectable to common mortals" and criticized Puech's claims as vague and poorly substantiated.

Puech's testimony revealed that Freymond had managed his bank statements for the past 24 years. In 1998, Puech transferred his Hermès shares to Swiss banks, granting Freymond full control over his accounts. In 2022, Puech revoked these mandates, dismissed Freymond, and initiated three explosive lawsuits in 2023, accusing Freymond of withholding crucial information about the shares.

The court concluded that Puech had granted Freymond unchecked authority over his assets and could have terminated the agreement at any time. The ruling emphasized that Puech's "blind trust" did not equate to evidence of dishonesty on Freymond's part.

Adding another layer to the mystery, Hermès executive chairman Axel Dumas disclosed during an earnings call that the company had no visibility or control over Puech's shares, intensifying the intrigue surrounding the case.

As this gripping drama unfolds, the burning question remains: what has become of Puech's missing billions? The saga continues to captivate, with no resolution in sight, leaving the world to ponder the fate of a fortune that seems to have vanished into thin air.

Sports

Haaland hat trick powers Man City over Chelsea 4-2

Liverpool blank Man United 3-0 before 77,559 spectators

WASHINGTON: Erling Haaland's hat trick, including two goals in the first five minutes, led Manchester City over Chelsea 4-2 on Saturday in an English club football friendly at Columbus, Ohio. Reigning Premier League champion City scored goals 54 seconds apart in the first half and 71 seconds apart in the second half to dominate the fixture, part of a US pre-season tour for both clubs.

Haaland wore the captain's armband and showed a crowd of 71,280 why he is considered among the world's best players. The 24-year-old Norwegian striker scored on a penalty kick in the fourth minute and, after a Moises Caicedo give away in the Chelsea half, smashed a right-footed shot into the right corner for a 2-0 City lead in the fifth minute — only 17 seconds after the restart.

Oscar Bobb boosted the lead to three in the 55th minute, taking the ball down the right wing and cutting inside to fire a left-footed shot past a defender and just inside the near post. Haaland then completed his hat trick in the 56th minute after City forced a turnover in Chelsea territory.

Haaland took a pass at the top of the box be-

tween two defenders and flicked in a left-footed shot for a 4-0 City edge only 25 seconds after the restart. Raheem Sterling answered for Chelsea in the 59th minute and Noni Madueke added a final goal in the 89th but it was too little and too late.

The game was a preview of the start to the 2024-25 Premier League campaign for both clubs. Manchester City will open the season against Chelsea on August 18.

Liverpool beats Man Utd

In another pre-season US showdown of English giants, Liverpool blanked Manchester United 3-0 before 77,559 spectators at Columbia, South Carolina. Fabio Carvalho, a 21-year-old Portuguese striker, opened the scoring for Liverpool in the 10th minute.

In the 36th minute, Egyptian striker Mo Saleh got to the backline and fired a perfect centering pass to onrushing Curtis Jones, who tapped in with his left foot for a 2-0 Liverpool lead. Greek standout Kostas Tsimikas gave the Merseysiders a 3-0 edge in the 61st minute, knocking in a rebound off the left post. — AFP



COLUMBUS: Manchester City's English midfielder #10 Jack Grealish (C) tries to control the ball during the second half of the pre-season club friendly football match between Manchester City and Chelsea at Ohio Stadium in Columbus, Ohio. — AFP

Canada knocked out of Olympic women's football

MARSEILLE: Canada were eliminated from the Olympic women's football on Saturday in the quarter-finals, going down 4-2 on penalties to Germany to end a controversial title defence which began with a spying scandal. After the match finished 0-0 at the end of extra time, goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger was Germany's hero in the shoot-out in Marseille as she saved from both Ashley Lawrence and Adriana Leon, and then stepped up to convert the winning spot-kick.

Germany, gold medallists in 2016, advance to a semi-final on Tuesday in Lyon against the United States. Canada, who took gold three years ago in Tokyo, go home but just making it to the quarter-finals was a remarkable achievement after they were docked six points in the group stage.

They were hit with the points deduction as well as a fine of 200,000 Swiss francs (\$226,000) by FIFA as a punishment after a staff member used a drone to spy on a New Zealand training session ahead of their opening match at the tournament, which Canada won 2-1.

Canada coach Bev Priestman was given a one-year ban for her responsibility in the scandal, leaving assistant Andy Spence to take interim charge of the team. Canada, who failed in an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport against the points deduction, won all three group games to qualify for the last eight, including beating hosts France. — AFP



MARSEILLE: Germany's defender #15 Giulia Gwinn and Canada's forward #06 Cloe Lacasse vie for the ball in the women's quarter-final football match between Canada and Germany during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Marseille Stadium in Marseille. — AFP

Bastianini wins British MotoGP

SILVERSTONE: Italian rider Enea Bastianini completed the British MotoGP double for Ducati on Sunday by winning the grand prix, while Jorge Martin of Spain reclaimed the championship lead.

Bastianini added to his sprint win on Saturday by racing past Martin inside the last two laps to claim victory, while the Spaniard finished second to move back above third-placed Francesco Bagnaia in the overall riders' championship.

Ducati-Pramac's Martin arrived at Silverstone 10 points behind Bagnaia, who won the last four grand prix, but second-placed finishes in the sprint and grand prix meant he leapfrogged the Italian back into the lead. "We took back the lead so I am really happy with this," said Martin.

The difference between the two was just one point by the time Sunday's main race rolled round and following Martin's second-place finish, he now leads the Ducati rider by three points. Martin took the race lead on Sunday with nine laps remaining but was unable to hold off the surge of the irresistible Bastianini.

"As soon as I saw Enea was catching, I tried to keep it constant, to try to manage a bit for the end but he was much stronger today," said the 26-year-old from Madrid. "Congrats to Enea because he was on another level." It was a weekend to forget for Bagnaia after he crashed out of the sprint and then ceded the lead early in the grand prix race. But his compatriot Bastianini will have fond memories of Silverstone 2024 after producing a stunning late run to sprint to the double.

Starting on the front row, Bagnaia sprang into the lead from the flag but was eventually reeled in just after the halfway mark by Martin, who had started on the second row. Bastianini soon caught up with the two pacesetters and, after going past Bagnaia on lap 14, he made his move on turn three of the 19th lap to fly ahead of Martin and sprint towards the chequered flag.

"It was a very difficult race," said Bastianini. "The last four or five laps, Jorge pushed a lot and it was difficult to close the gap to him but at the end, the last two, three laps, always I have something more and today was the same. "It's arrived this second victory consecutive and I'm really satisfied."

Six-time world champion Marc Marquez of Ducati-Gresini finished fourth, ahead of Fabio Di Giannantonio of Ducati-VR46 in fifth. — AFP



SILVERSTONE: Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider and winner Enea Bastianini (C) celebrates on the podium next to Prima Pramac Racing's second-placed Spanish rider Jorge Martin and Ducati Lenovo Team's third-placed Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia after the MotoGP race of British Grand Prix at Silverstone circuit in Northamptonshire, central England. — AFP

France eye Olympic men's football final, Spain face Morocco

LYON: Thierry Henry's France have their sights set on a place in the gold medal match in the Olympic men's football as they face Egypt in the semi-finals on Monday, while Spain take on an impressive Morocco.

France are dreaming of a second men's football gold - 40 years after their first - on home soil and will be overwhelming favourites against the Egyptians in Lyon.

Henry's team have not conceded a goal on their way to the semis, having eased through the group stage with three wins from three before edging out two-time Olympic champions Argentina 1-0 on Friday.

That match in Bordeaux was marred by clashes between rival players and staff at full-time, but before that Jean-Philippe Mateta netted the decisive goal early on. Henry later likened his side to the celebrated French men's handball team of the 1990s that notably won an Olympic bronze medal and a world title, and were nicknamed "The Nutters".

"I call my players the crazy guys, in a good way," said Henry, an all-time France great who won the World Cup and a European Championship as a player. "I have had the opportunity to play in a lot of competitions. I am not saying I haven't enjoyed what I have done, but the Olympics are different."

France were unable to secure the services of superstar forward Kylian Mbappe but they have a strong side at the Games, where men's football is reserved for under-23s, with the exception of three overage players.

Every member of their starting line-up against Argentina, including captain Alexandre Lacazette and new Bayern Munich signing Michael Olise, played regularly in one of Europe's big five leagues last season.

Henry has plenty of options and will need to find a replacement against Egypt for Enzo Millot, after the Stuttgart midfielder was shown a red card at the end of the quarter-final. Fellow midfielder Manu Kone is also suspended as France target a place in the final at the Parc des Princes in Paris next Friday.

African chance for glory?

Egypt are targeting a first Olympic football medal after surprisingly topping their group ahead of Spain and then eliminating Paraguay in the last eight. Coached by Brazilian Rogerio Micale - who led his home country to gold at Rio 2016 - Egypt are captained by the former Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny.

The winner of men's football gold will come from outside Latin America for the first time since 2000, and there is the possibility of an all North African final. Morocco have been outstanding in reaching the semis, topping their group ahead of Argentina and hammering the United States 4-0.

They may fancy their chances in Marseille against Spain, who are hoping to follow their senior national team's triumph at Euro 2024 by winning football gold for the second time, 32 years on from victory at the Barcelona Games.

Spain's star in the comfortable quarter-final win over Japan was Barcelona's Fermin Lopez, with the midfielder who was part of the campaign at the Euros scoring a brace. Morocco have quality throughout and are also familiar with Spain — captain Achraf Hakimi and exciting winger Ilias Akhomach were born and brought up there, while Abde Ezzalzouli moved to the country as a child and now plays in La Liga for Betis.

"We deserve to be in the semi-finals and if we keep playing like this we will deserve to be in the final," said Akhomach, the 20-year-old Villarreal starlet. "France and Spain are better sounding names given what they have done before. Morocco have not won anything."

"It is true that other countries might be talked about more than us but we know what we want. We came here to win." — AFP

Crawford dethrones Madrimov for WBA welterweight title

LOS ANGELES: Undefeated Terence Crawford made a triumphant super-welterweight debut on Saturday, dethroning previously unbeaten Israil Madrimov to capture a 154-pound world boxing title by unanimous decision.

Crawford, an undisputed champion at welterweight and light-welterweight, took the World Boxing Association crown on judges' scores of 116-112, 115-113 and 115-113. The 36-year-old US southpaw, who has also been a lightweight world champion, improved to 41-0 while Madrimov, 29, fell to 10-1-1.

But Crawford's streak of 11 consecutive stoppage wins over the past eight years was snapped, Madrimov taking him the distance for the first time since Ukraine's Viktor Postol in 2016. "Israil was a tough competitor," Crawford said. "He's real strong. He's durable. He took a lot of good shots. He got me to round 12." Crawford's jump from 147 to 154 pounds had included talk of trying to rise to super middleweight (168) and challenge Canelo Alvarez, but Madrimov came within a round of delivering Crawford's first defeat.

"He had fast speed, a good rhythm upstairs and he was strong. He was very disciplined and he fought a good fight," Crawford said. "I was being patient. I didn't want to rush in with anything. That's how I got caught a couple times, I tried to eat too soon. You could feel the difference. He's a strong guy."

Crawford called an Alvarez fight "another milestone to greatness" and added, "If the money is right, we've got to fight." Madrimov, through a translator, said he felt he did enough to win and sought a rematch. "I fought the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world and I felt I did enough because I am the champion, I was controlling the rhythm, I felt very comfortable," Madrimov said. "I did very well. At least I deserve a rematch."

It was Madrimov's first defense of the WBA crown he won in March with a fifth-round stoppage of Russian Magomed Kurbanov. On the undercard, US southpaw Jose Valenzuela won the WBA world super-lightweight title with a 12-round split decision over Mexico's Isaac Cruz. Two judges scored the fight for Valenzuela by 116-112 while the third saw Cruz a 115-113 winner. "I'm speechless. Dream come true," Valenzuela said. "I was 100 percent sure. I felt like I was in control the whole time using my jab and my footwork. I didn't fall under pressure. I stayed calm."

Valenzuela improved to 14-2 while Cruz, who requested a rematch in the ring, fell to 26-3 with one drawn, losing in his first defense of a crown he won last March with an eighth-round stoppage of American Rolando Romero. — AFP

Sports

PARIS 2024



US Olympic veteran Ledecky relishes prospect of four more years in pool

Katie still queen of the pool in her fourth Olympic Games

Olympics gallery



GUYANCOURT: France's Victor Perez lines up a shot in round 4 of the men's golf individual stroke play of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Le Golf National in Guyancourt, south-west of Paris.



VERSAILLES: France's Pauline Basquin with horse Sertorius de Rima Z competes in the equestrian's dressage individual grand prix freestyle during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.



VAIRES-SUR-MARNE: Slovenia's Peter Kauzer (L), Slovakia's Jakob Grigar (C) and Sweden's Isak Ohrstrom perform a eskimo roll as they compete in the men's kayak cross heats canoe slalom competition.



PARIS: Turkey's Adem Asil competes in the artistic gymnastics men's rings final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.



PARIS: An overview shows France's #01 Helena Cazaute eyeing the ball during the women's preliminary round volleyball match between France and USA. — AFP Photos

PARIS: The records keep piling up for American swimmer Katie Ledecky and the bad news for her challengers is that she has no plans to relinquish her throne. If there were any doubts that Ledecky was still queen of the pool in her fourth Olympic Games she swept them aside with her two gold medals at La Defense Arena.

The 27-year-old's win in the 1500m freestyle felt a formality — she finished more than 10 seconds clear of silver medallist Anastasiia Kirpichnikova. But having lost to Australian Ariarne Titmus in the 400m free in both Tokyo and Paris, her dominance during her Olympic career — no woman has more in any sport — only Soviet-era gymnast Larisa Latynina has as many.

"I think she's rewritten distance freestyle and just swimming in general," said her teammate and 800m free bronze medallist Paige Madden. Ledecky has 14 Olympic medals in total and 21 world championship golds, but while most swimmers are ready to leave behind the daily grind of training and preparation at her age, she shows no such inclination.

Asked after her race whether she would go for a fifth straight gold in 800m at the LA Games, Ledecky said: "I'd love to." In the build-up to the event, she had stated that her aim was to continue for another four-year Olympic cycle.

"I've been consistent over these last few months, and last few years, in saying that I would love to compete in LA and that hasn't changed," she said. "I just take it year by year at this point." What persuades most swimmers to finally call it a day is the gruelling daily routine — the early morning sessions, the relentless work away from the adrenalin rush of major competition.

But this is where Ledecky is different from most. "I probably enjoy the training more than the racing," she said after her latest triumph. "Honestly, if I could go back to training on September 1 and just train all fall I'll be one happy camper."

"It just brings me so much joy to be around my

LeBron's USA step up quest for fifth Olympic gold

PARIS: The unbeaten USA squad led by NBA superstar LeBron James aim to take their pursuit of a fifth straight Olympic basketball gold to the next level when they face Brazil in the quarter-finals on Tuesday.

The Americans rolled through the group stage with a perfect 3-0 record and a tournament-leading plus-64 point differential — but coach Steve Kerr said there are things the United States must improve if they want to emerge with gold when men's basketball concludes on Saturday. "We know we have to play better," Kerr said after the United States prepared to shift from Lille to Bercy Arena in Paris for the knockout phase.

"Part of this tournament is it gets harder as you go," Kerr said. "We have to take better care of the ball. We don't need to make home run plays. We just need to hit singles. Our talent is overwhelming if we make the right play, and I think that's part of it."

The winner of USA-Brazil will face either NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic's Serbia or Tokyo bronze

Marin retires from badminton semi with knee injury

PARIS: Former champion Carolina Marin retired in floods of tears from her Paris Olympics badminton semi-final on Sunday after her right knee buckled in distressing scenes. The Spaniard won women's singles gold at Rio 2016 and was on track to reach the final again but collapsed midway through the second game against China's He Bingjiao. Coaches and He rushed to her side as she lay on the ground for several minutes, clutching her leg. The 31-year-old eventually got up and walked gingerly off the court, then resumed wearing a support. But she could barely move, losing the next two points before falling to the ground again, clearly in great pain, and sobbing uncontrollably.

With the match over, she refused the use of a wheelchair and limped out of the arena to thunderous applause from the Paris crowd, a few of whom were moved to tears by her plight. The fourth seed had won the first game 21-14 and was leading 10-6 in the second. Her coach, Fernando Rivas, told reporters that he had "no words to describe what happened". "Carolina knows that at an Olympic Games, you win or you lose," he said. "But not this way." Marin was hot favourite for the title at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago until she suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury just months before the event. It was her second ACL injury.

"She was in pain, it's a sensation that she already knew," said Rivas, suggesting she may have suffered the same serious injury again. Marin's agonizing withdrawal drew sympathy from her fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, who faces Novak Djokovic in the men's tennis final on Sunday. "All the encouragement in the world," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez also wrote: "You are and always will be a cham-

medallists Australia in the semi-finals. Australia surprised the Serbs in an Olympic tune-up game last month.

In the other side of the draw, host nation France and their fledgling NBA superstar Victor Wembanyama take on Canada while Giannis Antetokounmpo's Greece face World Cup champions Germany.

'Grind out a win'

Kerr is spoiled for choice with a roster that includes James, two-time NBA champion Kevin Durant, Golden State sharp-shooter Stephen Curry and the NBA champion Boston Celtics star Jayson Tatum, to name just a few.

But he says his array of superstars must focus on the basics. "Offensive rebounds," Kerr said. "Our opponents are getting a lot of offensive boards, so just continuing to harp on box outs and extra possessions and making sure that teams aren't able to even out the game with all those extra possessions from our doing."

Brazil's former NBA first-round draft pick Bruno Caboclo averaged 16 points and 7.3 rebounds as Brazil went 1-2 in group play. Vitor Benite connected on 56.3 percent of his three-point attempts, but Brazil just don't look like having the firepower to challenge the United States offensively. James has been the driver of a US offensive that averaged more than 105 points per game in group play. Durant erupted for 23 points against Serbia. Anthony Edwards scored 26 points against Puerto Rico. However, whatever the remaining matchups look like



NANTERRE: US' Katie Ledecky celebrates after winning the final of the women's 800m freestyle swimming event during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Paris La Defense Arena in Nanterre, west of Paris. — AFP

teammates, and just see their improvement, see the work that they put in. "We just have so much fun on the side in the weight room, when we're resting on the wall, things like that." — AFP

on paper, Curry cautioned that the United States must be prepared for adversity on the way to what would be a 17th Olympic gold. "Winning a gold medal, whatever year you look in the history books, maybe besides the 1992 team, everyone has had a battle somewhere," Curry said. "Whether it's shots not falling or it's a team that is playing amazing, you've got to grind out a win."

'Good energy'

France, silver medallists in Tokyo, lost their group finale to Germany to fall in the seedings. Now they'll have to become the first team to beat Canada to keep their dream of gold on home soil alive. "I think we've all got the good will, the good energy," Wembanyama said.

"But now I think we've got to trust the coaching more, just trust our teammates more and do the little things that don't show up on the stat sheets — setting screens, boxing out, all that." France coach Vincent Collet tried to put a positive team on France's lower seeding. "They have more to lose than us in this position," he said of the Canadians, who haven't won an Olympic medal since 1936.

Germany go into the quarters as the second seed, but, like Kerr, Germany coach Gordie Herbert said the supposed easier matchup that provides is an illusion. "You hope you get a little bit easier team (in the quarter-finals)," Herbert said. "But I think you really don't because every team here is really good." — AFP



PARIS: Spain's Carolina Marin receives medical care following an injury in her women's singles badminton semi-final match against China's He Bing Jiao following an injury during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP

pion. All of Spain is with you." China's He will play South Korean world number one An Se-young in the final.

A clearly uncomfortable He, who had hugged her distraught opponent on court, told reporters that she felt "very sad" about what happened. "She was playing perfectly well and I was very passive," said He. "I wasn't thinking about the final at all." An beat Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung 11-21, 21-13, 21-16 in the other semi-final.

In the men's competition, defending champion Viktor

Axelsen of Denmark will play Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the final. Axelsen had to dig deep to beat India's Lakshya Sen 22-20, 21-14 after fending off three game points in the opener.

The Dane also found himself 7-0 down at the start of the second game but came back to beat Sen, who was bidding to become India's first men's champion. "I could definitely feel that he was tense," said world number two Axelsen, who led the Danish fans at La Chapelle Arena in a post-match celebration. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Abdul Kareem Mohamed Rabeek holder of Indian passport No. S0581422, residing at 1/997-c Vasan Nagar, 10th cross, Rettaivaikal, Nachikurichy, Trichy, Tamil Nadu-620102, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that I have changed my name from Abdul Kareem Mohamed Rabeek to Mohamed Rabeek (given name) and Abdul Kareem (surname), father's name from Haidumiah Abdul Aziz Abdu Kareem to Abdul Kareem.
(#5641, 02/08/2024)

PARIS 2024 

Djokovic wins Olympic gold to complete career Golden Slam

Emotional Djokovic celebrated by holding aloft the Serbian flag on court



PARIS: (L-R) Silver medallist Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, gold medallist, Serbia's Novak Djokovic and bronze medallist Italy's Lorenzo Musetti pose with their medals on the podium at the presentation ceremony for the men's singles final tennis event on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Stadium during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: Novak Djokovic defeated Carlos Alcaraz on Sunday to claim a maiden Olympic title and become just the fifth player to complete a career Golden Slam. The 37-year-old Serb, competing in his fifth Games, came through 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2) in an enthralling final at Roland Garros to add Olympic gold to his 24 Grand Slam triumphs.

Victory allowed him to join Andre Agassi, Rafael Nadal, Steffi Graf and the watching Serena Williams as the only players to win all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic singles gold. He also became the oldest singles champion since tennis returned to the Olympics in 1988 and shattered Alcaraz's bid to add gold to the French Open and Wimbledon titles he has already pocketed this summer.

An emotional Djokovic celebrated by holding aloft

the Serbian flag on court before clambering into the players' box to embrace his wife and children. "We almost played three hours, the final shot was the only moment when I was sure I could win the match," said Djokovic, who had lost heavily to Alcaraz in the Wimbledon final last month.

'Finally I did it'

"I put my body, my family on the line to win gold and finally I did it." Alcaraz was distraught and wept as he attempted to conduct a TV interview. "Three hours, a big battle with tough moments," said the 21-year-old after a final in which neither player dropped serve. "It's very painful to lose."

Djokovic carved out a break point in the second game of the opener and three more in the fourth, all

saved by the Spaniard. Then it was the Serb's turn to demonstrate his famed powers of resilience, fighting off three break points in the fifth game and another five in a marathon ninth game.

In a rollercoaster duel, Alcaraz saved a set point in the 12th game but his veteran opponent dominated the tiebreak to claim the opener after a breathless 93 minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier. There was no let-up in the second set, scintillating shot-making alongside rousing defence with Alcaraz fighting off the final's 14th break point in the third game.

Again the set was decided by a tie-break and it was Djokovic with history on the line again sweeping through to take victory after two hours and 50 minutes. Lorenzo Musetti defeated Felix Auger-Aliassime in three sets on Saturday to claim the bronze medal, giving

Italy its first men's tennis medal in 100 years. Later Sunday, Russian athletes can claim their first gold of the Games when Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider face the Italian team of Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini in the women's doubles.

Russian competitors are taking part in the Olympics as neutrals following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022. If Andreeva and Shnaider win gold, their achievement will not be recognised in the medals table while both the Russian flag and national anthem will be banned from the podium ceremony.

Cristina Bucsa and Sara Sorribes Tormo, the Spanish eighth seeds, defeated the Czech pair of Karolina Muchova and Linda Noskova 6-2, 6-2 in the bronze medal match. — AFP

Kuwaiti official commends Paris 2024 swimming competitions

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Asia Aquatics Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah lauded the outstanding organization the swimming competitions in the Paris 2024 Olympics witnessed, adding that the World Aquatics Federation is an example that should be followed to exert efforts in order to achieve more success and to develop the aquatics and take it to new levels at the world level.



Sheikh Khalid Al-Sabah

Al-Bader said president of the world aquatics is considered a national competency that placed Kuwait strongly on the world's sports map, after succeeding in placing the aquatic on the right path and broaden the base of participants worldwide, through extending support and assistance to countries facing problems and remove all obstacles they face through an integrated and clear plan.

Al-Bader hoped that the next period see more development and flourishing of aquatics in Kuwait, under the major interest and continued support by the political leadership and serious work of the federation.

BNK's Ari Sanchez, Juan Lebron win Finland Premier Padel P2 titles

MADRID: Spain's Ari Sanchez won the Finland Premier Padel P2 title on Sunday, improving her position on top of the global ranking. Sanchez won the title with her teammate Paula Josemaria of Spain after beating the Spanish duo of Alejandra Alonso and Andrea Ustero in the final.

Meanwhile, in the men's competition, Spain's Juan Lebron won the Finland Premier Padel P2 title with his teammate Martin Di Nenzo of Argentina, beating the Spanish duo of Jeronimo Gonzalez and Eduardo Alonso in the final. BNK Holding is the official sponsor of Spanish padel players Ari Sanchez and Juan Lebron.



Paula Josemaria and Ari Sanchez



Juan Lebron and Martin Di Nenzo

Algerian teen makes history with uneven bars gold

PARIS: Algerian teenager Kaylia Nemour conjured up "the performance of her life" to become the first African to win an Olympic gymnastics medal with gold on the uneven bars on Sunday. The 17-year-old French-born athlete took the title ahead of China's Qiu Qiyuan with American Sunisa Lee snatching bronze. Defending champion Nina Derwael of Belgium finished fourth.

"I'm so shocked, it's the dream of all my life. I can't believe it has happened, I'm speechless," said Nemour. Nemour's stunning high-flying acrobatic performance earned 15,700 points to push world champion Qiu, 17, into the silver medal position with 15,500.

"In qualifying I had 15,600, when I saw her 15,500 I said, I really had to fight and gave the performance of my life," said the Algerian. "It's crazy, I'm honoured to have this medal after all that has happened, it's a relief." Nemour switched to represent her father's country after the French federation blocked her from competing on medical grounds after a dispute.

US gymnastics great Simone Biles failed to qualify for the uneven bars final. But competing last, teammate Lee snatched bronze ahead of Derwael, a former two-time world champion who was returning after surgery. — AFP



PARIS: Algeria's Kaylia Nemour celebrates after winning the artistic gymnastics women's uneven bars final during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, on August 4, 2024. — AFP