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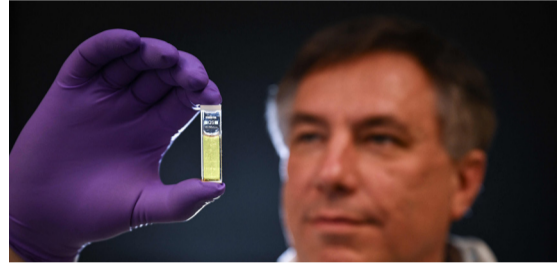
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People power rocks Bangladesh

PM Hasina resigns and flees • Military takes over • Zia freed • KAC suspends flights



DHAKA: Anti-government protesters display Bangladesh's national flag as they storm Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's palace on Aug 5, 2024. — AFP

DHAKA: Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule ended on Monday as she fled more than a month of deadly protests and the military announced it would form an interim government. Hasina had sought to quell nationwide protests against her government since early July but she fled the country after brutal unrest on Sunday in which nearly 100 people were killed.

Later on Monday, Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin ordered the release of jailed former prime minister and key opposition leader Khaleda Zia. The president's press team said in a statement that a meeting led by Shahabuddin had "decided unanimously to free Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia immediately". Zia, 78, is in poor health and confined to hospital after she was sentenced to 17 years in prison for graft in 2018.

Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman, along with the head of the navy and air force, and top leaders of several opposition parties including the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami party, attended the meeting. "The meeting has also decided to free all the people who have been arrested during the student protests," the



Sheikh Hasina

statement added. The military said it would lift a curfew imposed to quash protests at dawn Tuesday. "Offices, factories, schools, colleges... will be open" from 6:00 am Tuesday (0000 GMT), the military said in a statement.

"We want a corruption-free Bangladesh, where everyone would have the right to express their opinion," said Monirul Islam, a 27-year-old man among thousands celebrating in the streets near the prime minister's palace in the capital Dhaka. Waker-Uz-Zaman earlier said in a broadcast to the nation on state television that Hasina had resigned and the military would form a caretaker government.

"The country has suffered a lot, the economy has been hit, many people have been killed — it is time to stop the violence," said Waker, shortly after jubilant crowds stormed and looted Hasina's official residence. At least 56 people were killed Monday during violence, mainly in Dhaka but also in other cities, police said, saying gangs had launched revenge attacks on Hasina's allies.

Millions of Bangladeshis took to the streets across the South Asian country, many peacefully. Jubilant crowds waved flags, some dancing on top of

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Expatriate layoffs mulled at Municipality as overstayers deported

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Noura Al-Mashaan will review a list of all expat employees holding university degrees and legal advisers who can be replaced by national staff capable of doing the job. In a decision issued to the Director of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous, the minister said the process of issuing decisions to end the services of such expats will be completed in the next few months.

The minister's decision calls for replacing expats holding degrees in law, engineering and accounting, in addition to all administrative jobs and legal advisers working in her office at the municipality. Mashaan said the move aims to create jobs for qualified and capable Kuwaitis.

Kuwait Municipality terminated the services of a number of expats last year as part of a program to terminate the services of all expat employees at the municipality to create jobs for Kuwaitis, but the program was halted without giving any reason. Authorities did not say how many expats were expected to be fired.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry said on Monday it has deported more expat visitors and their sponsors for overstaying. The ministry said in a statement that a Jordanian resident brought his wife and children on a family visa for one month, but they overstayed and authorities arrested them and decided to deport them.

Separately, the ministry of commerce and industry announced new regulations in cooperation with the Public Authority of Manpower, effectively barring expatriates from owning or becoming partners in local businesses unless they have visas issued under article 19 of the residency law, which is given to investors. Licenses of businesses that are in violation of the new law will be suspended until their situation is adjusted, the ministry said in a statement.

Indian rupee hits record low amid geopolitical jitters

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Indian rupee, the most volatile among its Asian peers, plunged to an all-time low of Rs 274.9 against the Kuwaiti dinar on Monday, weighed down primarily by rising geopolitical ten-

Struggle to count deaths from heat

MANILA/BUENOS AIRES/NEW DELHI: Food delivery driver John Jay Chan has had no protections from the record-breaking heatwaves that have hit the Philippines in recent months, but he must continue to work nine-hour days to provide for his family. "We understand that the nature of our work means we're exposed to extreme heat," said Chan, a 30-year-old father of two, who has been a motorbike gig worker for six years.

Some of Chan's colleagues have experienced mild heat stroke or elevated blood pressure while working in temperatures that have exceeded 45 degrees Celsius. "But until now, we haven't been monitored by the

Zionists defile 80 bodies of Palestinians

GAZA: Gaza's civil defense agency said it received the bodies of 80 unidentified Palestinians from the Zionist entity on Monday, which it buried in a mass grave. "We received 80 bodies inside 15 bags, with more than four martyrs in each bag, each wrapped in a single shroud", Civil Defense Director Yamen Abu Suleiman told AFP. Abu Suleiman said Zionist authorities did not provide any information about the bodies, including their names or where they were found or taken from. "We do not know

if they are martyrs (killed in Gaza) or prisoners from (Zionist) jails", he added.

AFP journalists on the scene saw men in hazmat suits inspecting the corpses wrapped in blue plastic sheeting, before unloading them from the shipping container they had arrived in. The bodies were then laid in a line for burial in a mass grave dug in the sand, with scores of Palestinians watching from the side. The bodies were later buried at the Turkish cemetery, near Khan Yunis, the main city in the southern part of Gaza, AFP journalists said.

"You will ask me the reason why I put all the bodies in a mass grave?" said Tabesh Abu Ata from the Turkish cemetery. "Because I have no capabilities to bury each one in an individual grave, (there are no) stones or tiles"

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sions in the Middle East and growing recession fears in the US economy. But currency exchange houses in Kuwait continued to experience lackluster business as residents adopted a "wait-and-see" approach, even as Asian currencies remained on a downward spiral in successive sessions.

"Usually, we experience a remittance rush when the Asian currencies drop against the Kuwaiti dinar. But strangely enough, the transaction count is significantly low these days," said Illyas Ahmad, a sales executive at an exchange company in Kuwait City. The Indian currency tumbled 31 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.03 against the US dollar

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MUMBAI: A vendor counts a wad of Indian rupees. - AFP

government for heat-related illnesses or deaths, so the lack of data means we're not a priority," said Chan.

From the Philippines to India to Mali, a lack of reliable data on heat-related deaths is undermining efforts to mitigate the risk of extreme heat and provide better protection for the most vulnerable, like outdoor migrant and gig workers. Globally, 2.41 billion workers, or 70 percent of the world's workforce, are exposed to excessive heat, with people in Africa, Arab states and the Asia and Pacific region facing the highest exposure, according to a July report by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This causes nearly 19,000 deaths a year, the ILO said.

"The number of workers suffering the consequences of excessive heat is alarming, and occupational safety and health protections have struggled to keep up," the ILO said. Collecting accurate data to inform

government policy on reducing exposure to extreme heat is more urgent than ever as climate change pushes global temperatures and heat death tolls higher.

Last year was the hottest on record, and July 21, 2024, was the hottest day ever recorded as heatwaves scorched large swaths of the United States, Europe and Russia. "In the context of climate change, we see longer extreme-heat days that last longer through the night, and so people won't have a break," said Tarik Benmarhnia, an environmental epidemiologist at the University of California San Diego. "Health professionals don't fully realize how this is a big issue," he said. In the Philippines, where a two-week heatwave in April forced schools to shut, seven heat-related deaths and 77 heat-related illnesses were reported from January to May this year, according to health ministry data.

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GAZA: Men bury bodies that were seized and later released by the Zionist entity during a mass funeral at a cemetery in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Aug 5, 2024. — AFP



In my view

Greetings to the families of martyrs



Abdullah Abbas Buwair

local@kuwaittimes.com

On August 2, 1990, a neighbor attacked a neighbor, and overnight, Kuwait was at the mercy of the aggressor, who did not consider age or gender, and everyone suffered at the hands of the attacker. The honor of martyrdom comes from the Creator, the Lord of all beings, so do not worry about what has befallen you. God specifically chose your loved ones to receive the honor of martyrdom, and God has wisdom in this.

We remember His words: "Do not think of those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision." And His words: "There is no power nor strength except through Allah, and indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

Dear families of the martyrs, the martyrs of our beloved country Kuwait, your loved ones sacrificed their lives during the Iraqi occupation of our beloved Kuwait. Our women and daughters participated alongside men and youth in defending our land, using all means to achieve this. They were captured, tortured, killed, and they received the honor of martyrdom. Their sacrifices are recorded in history. Through these few lines, I express my love for the families of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the soil of our precious homeland. Greetings to you all.

They entered our beloved Kuwait, this small state that has never attacked anyone, and which had no enmity with anyone. A peaceful country, with a peaceful people, whose majority religion is Islam, while respecting other divine religions, as Allah said: "To you your religion, and to me mine."

The aggressor is a regime based on crime and killing. At the beginning of the 1980s, it plunged its people into a war with another neighboring Muslim country for eight years, resulting in great losses for both nations. Many were captured, many were killed. After this war, the aggressor turned its enmity towards another neighboring Muslim country, our beloved and precious Kuwait. A small country in terms of area, with a small population, but it grew with its heart and faith in God, and the message of His Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

They destroyed all the landmarks of our country Kuwait, from the Kuwait Towers, Seif Palace, the Council of Ministers building, the media building and many other buildings and homes. They did not spare anyone, even the environment; they destroyed it, burned the trees, and set fire to the oil and its wells. They burned over 720 wells, and as the years pass, history will continue to remind future generations of what happened as long as life remains.

During the crisis of Abdul Karim Qasim in June 1961, the then ruler of Iraq gathered with his leaders in the Iraqi ministry of defense and claimed that Iraq had historical rights to Kuwait, stating that it was part of Basra province. At that time, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, may he rest in peace, was in power. He rejected these claims, stating that Kuwait is an Arab state with sovereignty, supported by its people and its leadership. Kuwait found strong support from Gulf, Arab and Islamic countries against these false claims, and Kuwait joined the Joint Arab Defense Agreement.

I personally did not escape the evil of this regime, and I had a strange story with its henchmen. Dear reader, I remember this day well and cannot forget it. It was at the beginning of the aerial attacks led by the coalition forces to liberate Kuwait, on January 17, 1991. Not long after this date, we were out with my brother and friends, eight of us in total, except the driver who was not a citizen. We intended to go to the Jabriya area.

Upon entering Jabriya, near the roundabout of the Jabriya police station, there was a house seized by one of the leaders of the fallen regime. In front of this building was a checkpoint, known in their language as "control." A soldier stopped us and asked for our IDs. I was sitting in the front seat next to the driver. The soldier examined the ID, and then accused me of having a forged and new ID, saying it was newly issued and appeared to have been left in the sun to appear old. He said my punishment was execution.

The soldier also asked my brother for his ID, who was sitting in the back seat. Indeed, my brother's ID had been issued by my brother-in-law, who was in the interior ministry, and it had the ministry's stamp. I remember the stamp to this day - it had "Ministry of Interior" written on it. The ID stated that we were students, which made the soldier suspicious and furious. He kept repeating that my ID was forged and that the punishment was execution. He then asked my brother to come with him, and I volunteered to go instead. The soldier then kicked the driver and took us to the Jabriya police station, leaving our friends as their IDs were official and not military.

On our way to the police station, the soldier repeatedly said that my punishment was execution and that I should not expect any leniency. The soldier slapped the driver in front of me and accused him of transporting a large group of Kuwaitis. The police station's entrance was barricaded with cement bags, and the soldiers were dancing and singing. Inside the station, I witnessed many people being tortured. The soldier ordered me to go upstairs to meet the officer in charge, who questioned me and accused me of forging my ID and being a soldier.

I explained that Kuwait had been occupied and that we were a small population with no means to resist. I then offered the soldier my Carter pen and wallet, which he accepted, and allowed me to leave. This incident was a narrow escape from death, and there are many other stories to share in the coming days. May God have mercy on our righteous martyrs. Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.

God, the Homeland and the Amir!

Ministry of Finance and KNET ink e-payment services deal

A financial legislative mechanism for collecting government fees

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance on Monday signed a three-year contract for electronic payment services with the Joint Automated Banking Services Company (KNET) to create a safe financial environment for collecting government service fees electronically. Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Munifi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the role of the Ministry of Finance is to create a financial legislative mechanism for collecting government fees in a safe manner and in accordance with accounting rules, indicating that this comes by virtue of the Ministry's jurisdiction to prepare instructions and rules that regulate the recording of financial operations and the collection of revenues.

Al-Munifi added that the Ministry of Finance provides electronic payment services to all government agencies through this contract with KNET, as these agencies link their services that are automated and converted to electronic services to facilitate transactions for citizens and reviewers, in addition to the ease of collecting revenues safely and delivering them to the public treasury at the same time.

She explained that this contract transfers services to electronic services that speed up the collection process and complete the service easily, noting that previously the services were in cash and then turned into paper-based services, after which they go through electronic portals and points of sale via credit cards and electronic stamps via the e-Stamp application.

She pointed out the digitization of services is in accordance with the directives of the Council of Ministers to pay through secure links that meet all cybersecurity standards according to the general



Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Munifi and CEO of the Shared Electronic Banking Services Company (K-Net) Essam Al-Khashnam are pictured after signing the deal. — KUNA

rules of the Cybersecurity Center in Kuwait. She stated that KNET provides within the contract modern devices and all the supplies that government agencies need to complete this service, indicating that the company provides training services for employees on how to collect payments electronically and solve problems.

Al-Munifi said that the Ministry of Finance has a team called the Electronic Payment Team that was formed years ago. The team consists of accountants and IT specialists, whose affairs are concerned with holding permanent sessions with KNET and determining the sound financial and le-

gal frameworks for converting services from paper to electronic.

For his part, KNET CEO Essam Al-Khashnam told KUNA that this contract is concerned with electronic stamp systems and the government's method of collecting fees for services it provides — to reviewers in general — whether citizens or expatriates in Kuwait. Al-Khashnam added that the aim of this contract is to facilitate the payment process to become more streamlined, easy, and simple through a specialized system, indicating that these services will be safe and documented. — KUNA

Kuwait's historic buildings should be preserved

By Rashed Meshal

KUWAIT: Destroying a country's historic buildings is like destroying its identity. A lot of countries have faced some difficulties, including wars, urbanization and modernity. Those factors and many more can cause historical buildings to decrease in number. There have been several efforts from governments, NGOs and activists to rescue the rest of these buildings. Kuwait Times digs deeper into this issue.

From his perspective, historian Saud Al-Musallam told Kuwait Times that nations excel with their history, and without history it is like they do not exist. "The greatest loss for history is Kuwait Sour (Wall) that got destroyed in 1957," he said. Historically, Kuwait Sour was built in 1760. He commented that the Great Wall of China is hundreds of years older, and it still exists. Saud added that there are little efforts done to rescue those buildings from demolition; he also thinks that buildings destroyed will never be revived again.

Dalal Aldayel, founder of the Tura initiative for preserving oral history, thinks that Kuwait has great historical buildings. Still, sadly, more buildings are being destroyed lately, noting that "destroying buildings can erase the city's history. Demolishing them not only removes these physical reminders but also disrupts the continuity of the city's story, making it harder for future generations to connect with their history."

She added: "When you go to a city, you always want to go to the old town because it is a good experience that tells a story about the country." To add to her point, she said demolishing a building means losing architectural value that could never be restored. Furthermore, she valued the existing efforts of volunteers who make people aware of the value of historical sites by making videos, writing articles and so on. Also, she mentioned that the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL) has recently become more active in preserving historical sites.

Aldayel suggested several measures that could be taken before, during or even after demolishing buildings. "Before demolishing the building, you can preserve it or invest in it. During the demolition, you can preserve the exterior; preserve the building's materials as well as documenting the history of the ones that can't survive," she said. Some historical buildings were demolished in Kuwait, such as Bayt Lothan, which was

Undersecretary of Ministry of Interior arrives in Riyadh

RIYADH: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation arrived in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Monday on an official visit to the Kingdom. The Ministry said in a press statement that Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf was received upon his arrival at King Khalid International Airport by Undersecretary of the Saudi Ministry of Interior Dr Khaled Al-Batal, members of the Kuwaiti embassy in the Kingdom and a number of security leaders.



Al-Sawaber Complex



Entertainment City

built in the 1930s by Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem in Salmiya. It was eventually demolished to be replaced by a shopping mall.

Also, Kuwait's Entertainment City was built in 1984 as an amusement park, and a lot of people have memories associated with it where their

childhood memories were made, but it was fully demolished in 2020 to build a bigger, modern amusement park. In addition to the Al-Sawaber Complex, which was an old district in Sharq, built in 1981. It was a landmark and architectural edifice, but was demolished in 2019.

In another development, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani discussed with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Qatari Foreign Ministry said in a statement that this came during a phone call received by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister from the US Secretary of State.

The statement added that during the call, they reviewed the close strategic relations between Qatar and the United States of America and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the latest developments in the situation in Gaza and the latest developments in the joint mediation efforts to end the war on the Strip and the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, stressing the need for calm and de-escalation in the region. — KUNA

Plane develops technical fault

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways on Monday announced the return of its commercial Flight No. KU674 from Dubai due to a technical malfunction in the plane.

The company said on social networking site X that the plane returned safely, indicating that coordination is underway with passengers to complete their travel procedures to their final destination.

It stressed that investigations will be conducted to determine the reasons for the malfunction according to the company's approved procedures. — KUNA

Local

Why small-scale project visas can be problematic

Transfer challenges, limited job opportunities and potential employer exploitation

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: After two years of working in Kuwait, assuming she was under regular work visa conditions, Shaimaa Morsi, an expat with a bachelor's degree in political science, was surprised to find out that her work visa was actually a "small-scale project visa". This type of visa, though categorized under work visas, has specific features and limitations that many are unaware of. As a result, Morsi found herself with very few job opportunities after being laid off from her first job.

Many residents from various nationalities, including Indians and Egyptians, have complained about this type of visa through online channels. "Don't work under this visa type; you will regret it," wrote Mostafa Khalifa on Facebook.

Small-scale project visas are issued to companies with limited economic activity and small capital, said lawyer Mejbel Al-Shurika, President of the Center for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. The wages at these companies are typically average due to the nature of their operations, he said.

"The main issue with this type of visa is that employees are only eligible to transfer to other small project enterprises, and only after three

years from the date of their recruitment, according to resolution no. 712/2017 issued by the Public Authority of Manpower," Shurika said.

Even after the three-year period ends, transferring remains difficult due to the limited number of small enterprises in Kuwait and their already filled workforce, as these companies are restricted in the number of employees they can hire, Shurika said. "Given the challenges of transferring to other visa types, employees may find themselves vulnerable to exploitation by some unscrupulous owners of these small enterprises," he added.

For expats unfamiliar with Kuwait's laws and given the absence of clear information about the special conditions of the small-scale project visa on the work permit, Morsi believes many may be misled into coming to work in Kuwait under this visa without fully understanding the challenges they might face. "There's nothing on the work permit I received indicating that my visa is different from a regular work visa or has any special conditions," Morsi said. "My husband and I were unemployed for months because we couldn't find suitable job opportunities with companies operating under small-scale project contracts."

Usamah Zariwala, a senior recruiter in Kuwait, explained that an article 18 visa, which



Mejbel Al-Shurika



Usamah Zariwala



permits people to work in Kuwait, is divided into five categories. The first is the regular and common visa, known as the main file, which is fully transferable to any other visa type. The remaining categories — government project visa, Mubarak Al-Kabeer (small-scale project) visa, factory visa and farm visa — are only transferable within their respective sectors.

"Currently, work permit types do not specify which category the visa falls under," Zariwala said. To address this issue, he advised individuals

to check the Public Authority of Manpower's official website to verify their visa type.

According to personal experiences shared with Kuwait Times, the only way for employees to convert their visa to the regular fully transferable visas is to return to their home country and request a new visa from scratch. On a side note, Shurika said that while the small-scale project visa is available to nationals from various countries, the Egyptian embassy has suspended permits for this type of visa for Egyptian workers.

Arabs seek end to Gaza killings

KUWAIT: The Secretary-General of the League of Arabic States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, has renewed his call on the international community to provide protection for the Palestinian people, especially the people of the Gaza Strip, who are subjected to continuous massacres at the hands of Zionist occupation forces. This came in a statement by the office after a session of talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who is currently visiting Egypt at the invitation of his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdel Aty. Aboul Gheit stressed the need to achieve an immediate ceasefire and the launch of a credible path to the implementation of the two-state solution.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arabic warned of the consequences of the region's sliding into chaos, expressing his appreciation for Turkey's principled and decisive positions in supporting the Palestinian cause in international forums. The statement added that the meeting witnessed



GAZA: An injured child sits next to a woman 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

an in-depth discussion on the regional situation with the severe risks involved in the escalation in the region, as well as ways to upgrade relations between the Arab League and Turkey in the political, economic, and other fields.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Volker Turk, on Monday called for an urgent de-escalation in the Middle East over fears that the Gaza war could spread. "I am deeply worried about the rising risk of a wider conflict in the Middle East and plead with all parties, along with those states with influence, to act urgently to de-escalate what has become a very precarious situation," said Turk in a statement.

Iran on Monday said it had the "legal right to punish" Zionists over last week's killing of Palestinian armed group Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Zionist entity, which has not commented on the killing but did admit to carrying out a strike on Beirut that left Hezbollah military chief Fuad Shukur dead, has been fighting a war in Gaza since the October 7 attacks by Hamas. It is now exchanging daily cross-border fire with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The international community fears Iran, a backer of Hezbollah and Hamas, could join the conflict. "Already, over the past 10 months, civilians — mostly women and children — have endured unbearable pain and suffering as a result of the bombs and guns," said Turk. "Everything, and I mean everything, must be done to avoid this situation spiraling further into an abyss that will only have even more terrible consequences for civilians." — Agencies



KU's Al-Hamad wins best poster Award at ASEAN conference

KUWAIT: Dr Hamad Al-Hamad, a faculty member at the College of Allied Medical Sciences, won the Best Scientific Poster Award at the Third ASEAN Conference on 'Healthy Ageing 2024'. This important global event explores the multiple facets of aging under the theme "Successful Ageing," where Dr. Hamad presented a scientific poster entitled "Levels of Unity and Quality of Life among Retirees in Kuwait: Practical Applications." The poster was honored at the conference held in Malaysia for its outstanding contribution. The research sheds light on important insights into the experiences of retirees in Kuwait, revealing their levels of loneliness and quality of life and providing valuable applications for the vital role of occupational therapy to raise the quality of life for individuals in Kuwait.



CSC implements fingerprint tech

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission affirmed on Monday its keenness to complete the implementation of the Civil Service Council's decision on fingerprint in order to achieve the principle of functional justice among all government employees and to improve the level of government performance. The CSC said in a press release on its official account on the (X) platform that through the implementation of this decision, it seeks to provide the best services to citizens in a way that contributes to raising the level of quality at their workplaces. — KUNA

Kuwait population hits 4.919 million

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) issued the latest detailed statistics on population and employment at the end of June 2024. The data shows that total population in Kuwait reached 4.919 million people at the end of June 2024, recording a semi-annual growth of 1.2 percent or an actual increase by 59,900 people compared to the end of 2023 at 4.860 million people. The total number of population achieved an increase by 2.6 percent in 2023 compared to a greater rise of 8.0 percent in 2022.

The Kuwaiti population increased during the first half of 2024 by 13,700, with a growth rate of 0.9 percent (1.8 percent expected annual rate), bringing their total number to 1.560 million people with their percentage slightly decreasing out the total population from 31.8 percent at the end of 2023 to 31.7 percent according to the latest figures. The number of Kuwaiti females amounted to 794,000, exceeding the number of males at 765,900.

The number of the non-Kuwaiti population rose by 45,300, a growth rate of 1.4 percent and reached 3.359 million people, with a compound annual growth rate during the period of 2015 – June 2024 at 1.6 percent. The total number of workers in Kuwait reached 3.044 million workers or 61.9 percent of the total population, while this percentage for Kuwaitis reached 32.5 percent of the total Kuwaiti population, and it is noted that the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers out of the total non-Kuwaiti population reached 75.6 percent.

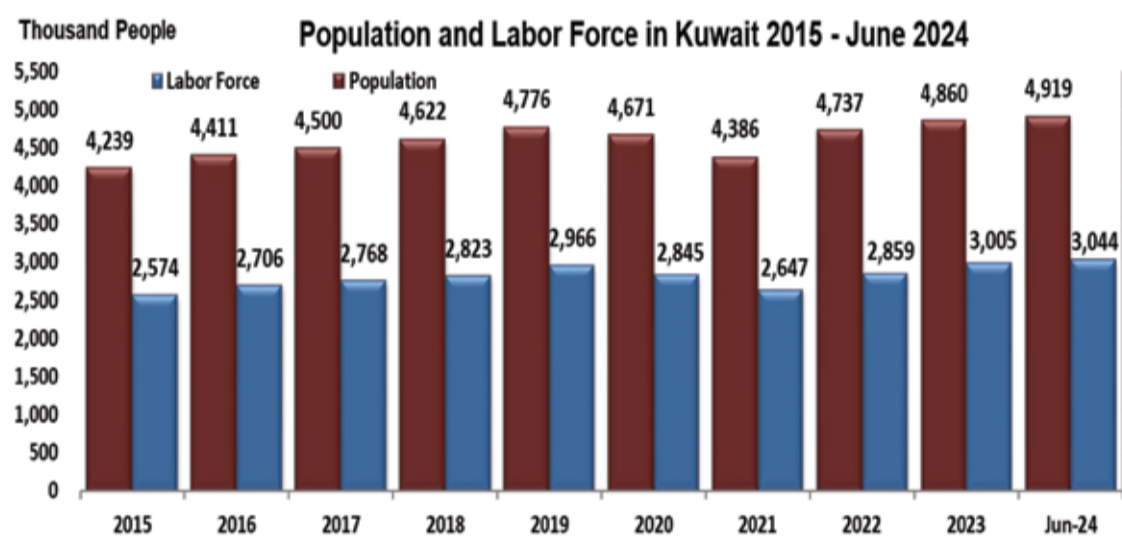
The percentage of Kuwaiti workers in the total number of workers in Kuwait slightly increased from 16.5 percent in June 2023 to 16.6 percent in June 2024, while the percentage of female employment in the total Kuwaiti labor force declined to 51.2 percent at the end of June 2024 versus 51.4 percent at the end of June 2023, as the percentage of female employment out of the total workforce in Kuwait reached 30.1 percent.

Number of Kuwaiti workers increased by 16,400 – bringing their total to 506,400 workers versus 490,000 workers at the end of June 2023. The number of employees within the government reached 404.4 thousand workers or 79.9 percent of the total number of Kuwaiti workers, and that percentage is different than the 84 percent stated by the Central Statistical Bureau and both are governmental bodies.

The number of jobs for Kuwaitis outside the government sector decreased by 991 jobs or by -1.4 percent compared to the end of June 2023. It is believed that the blatant unemployment of Kuwaitis has increased to 29,900 workers or 5.90 percent of the total Kuwaiti employment in June 2024, compared to 28,200 workers or 5.75 percent at the end of June 2023. Total number of workers (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) in the government sector amounted to 516,400 or 10.5 percent of the total population, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector 78.3 percent.

Fiscal Year 2023/2024

In a commendable move, the Ministry of Finance issued the final account figures for the fiscal year 2023/2024. Though it issued it early for the second consecutive time in July, it could have issued it earlier. The statement's figures indicate that actual expenditures reached KD 25.206 billion, a saving of about KD 1.073



Source: PACI

billion over the estimated figures in the general budget at KD 26.279 billion. Actual revenues reached KD 23.645 billion, an increase by KD 4.178 billion over the budget estimate at KD 19.467 billion.

This reduced the estimated deficit figure from KD 6.812 billion to an actual deficit of KD 1.561 billion in the final account. While the ministry is credited with achieving savings in expenditures out of its role in reducing the deficit figure, the savings came from increase in oil revenues due to the intensification of geopolitical events.

The Ministry of Finance estimates the cost of producing a barrel of oil for the past fiscal year at \$11.8, and not knowing how much it will be after reducing the production level for the current fiscal year. History confirms that the cost is continuously increasing, which means the net oil revenues will continue to decrease. The final account statement mentions that Kuwait has achieved actual deficits in its budgets in 8 of the past 10 fiscal years, and achieved a surplus in 2 fiscal years.

Most of the surplus resulted from exceptional events. The accumulated deficit for the ten fiscal years

(2014/2015 – 2023/2024) totaled KD 29.53 billion. Reading the budget performance based on its final accounts confirms that the composition of its expenditures is changing for the worse. The final account for the past fiscal year distributes it as 81 percent salaries, wages and subsidies, 8 percent capital expenditures, and 11 percent other expenditures.

This means that the flexibility of controlling expenditures is close to zero. Its benefit in supporting economic performance and creating job opportunities is minimal. On the revenue side, the developments in the deficit and surplus in the accounts of the last ten fiscal years confirm that they are just two variables that are almost entirely dependent on the movement of oil prices and production. Besides, they are variables beyond the control of the public administration.

There is nothing new in the figures of the final account except the reiteration of the emphasis that the reform efforts in the past and present, and the modest reform intentions in the future, either have failed or will fail, in achieving the target of diversifying sources of income. — Al-Shall report



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis walk inside The Avenues mall, the country's largest shopping centre. The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) issued the latest detailed statistics on population and employment at the end of June 2024. The data shows that total population in Kuwait reached 4.919 million people. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



FM, Oman envoy discuss ways to bolster relations

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Monday received Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi. During the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral relations, as well as exploring ways to strengthen cooperation in fields of common interests. — KUNA

Tech-Next program for Kuwait's youths

KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center announced the opening of registration in the Tech-Next program for youth aged 16 to 23 years old. The program is aimed at increasing cultural and educational awareness and encouraging them to focus their efforts and abilities towards innovation. The innovative Tech-Next program is in cooperation with Kuwait College of Technology. It will enable the youths to go through a rich educational experience that uncovers their creative abilities and develops their talents in the field of technology within a supportive environment.

The workshops that go along with the training program will cover the fields of programming, AI, and cyber security. This will provide participants with a comprehensive and fruitful educational experience. The program reflects its commitment to support and develop youth skills and direct them towards using technology positively in accordance with Kuwait's developmental vision. The center called those interested to register and participate in this pioneering program, which represents an important step towards Kuwait Vision 2035 through empowering new skills in the new generation. Head of K-Tech Institute for Private Training at Kuwait College of Technology Noura Al-Osaimi spoke about the importance of encouraging youth to join the program and the educational program in the field of technology in general.

NBK provides detailed presentation of 'Let's Be Aware' campaign to 'NBK Aspire' interns

In line with bank's dedication to promoting banking awareness

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote financial and banking awareness among all sectors of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) provided a detailed presentation of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign to the students of the 'NBK Aspire' Summer Internship Program for 2024. During the presentation, Sarah Al-Amad, Senior Communications Officer at National Bank of Kuwait highlighted several examples of fraud that use different schemes, such as phishing scams including e-mail and text messages containing malware, as well as using the information shared unknowingly when using public Wi-Fi or by hacking computers and stealing users' bank account to make unauthorized transactions.

Al-Amad provided many tips and guidelines to avoid such threats, stressing the need not to share banking and personal information with anyone, as well as following the banks' guidelines and benefiting from the banking awareness campaigns and educational materials published by the



Sarah Al-Amad

Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwaiti banks on different social media platforms. She also stressed the need to verify the sources of phone calls, text messages or e-mails before providing any personal or financial information, calling to stay informed about the latest scams and fraud techniques to recognize and avoid potential threats.

Al-Amad advised the students to enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA), as it adds an extra layer of se-



curity, as well as to keep a close eye on your bank statements and transaction history to detect any suspicious activity. NBK makes consistent efforts to combat fraud and educate customers, regarding this as a crucial part of

its strategy. To this end, it always uses all communication channels and social media platforms, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to maximize financial and banking awareness among the public.



Consumer behavior and retail trends in Kuwait

By Mariam Ahmed Al-Ayyoub

KUWAIT: Kuwait, known for its affluence and modern lifestyle, showcases distinctive consumer behaviors that set it apart in the Gulf region. Shopping is not just a necessity but a popular leisure activity, reflecting both social status and lifestyle choices. Kuwaitis display a strong preference for luxury brands and high-quality products, driven by a combination of disposable income and a keen sense of fashion and status. Family-oriented shopping trips are common, often transforming retail experiences into social events.

Weekends and evenings see a surge in foot traffic, as shopping centers become bustling hubs of activity. Seasonal sales and promotions also significantly influence shopping patterns, drawing crowds looking for the best deals on high-end products. Kuwait boasts of a vibrant retail landscape, with a mix of modern shopping malls, traditional souks, and specialized stores catering to diverse consumer needs. The rise of e-commerce has significantly altered the retail landscape in Kuwait.

The convenience of online shopping, coupled with a tech-savvy population, has driven the growth of e-commerce platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards online shopping as restrictions and health concerns kept people at home. Local businesses quickly adapted by enhancing their online presence and offering delivery services to meet consumer demands.

This shift not only helped businesses survive the pandemic but also changed consumer habits, making online shopping a permanent fixture in Kuwait's retail scene. However, this transition poses challenges for traditional brick-and-mortar stores. While malls and physical stores remain popular, they must innovate to attract customers who are increasingly inclined to shop online. Integrating digital technology, offering personalized shopping experiences, and creating engaging in-store events are some strategies being employed to retain customer interest.

Moreover, the integration of social media into retail strategies has become crucial. Influencers and social media campaigns play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences and driving sales. Retailers in Kuwait are leveraging platforms like Instagram and Snapchat to reach younger audiences and create buzz around new products and promotions. Additionally, the use of data analytics is helping retailers understand consumer behavior better and tailor their offerings accordingly. Personalized marketing, based on consumer data, ensures that shoppers receive relevant recommendations and offers, enhancing their shopping experience.

Kuwait's retail sector is characterized by a dynamic interplay between traditional shopping habits and modern trends. While luxury malls and traditional souks continue to draw shoppers, the rise of e-commerce is reshaping consumer behavior and business strategies. As Kuwaiti consumers embrace both online and offline shopping experiences, the retail industry must adapt to meet their evolving preferences. With a focus on innovation and customer engagement, the future of retail in Kuwait looks promising, poised to offer a rich blend of convenience, luxury, and cultural heritage. The government's support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and initiatives to diversify the economy further bolster the retail sector's growth, ensuring a resilient and vibrant marketplace for years to come.



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Kuwaiti volunteer medical team takes a group photo with children. — KUNA

Kuwait medical team assists orphans, the poor in Cambodia

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts in helping the needy around the world, a Kuwaiti medical team treated more than 700 cases of orphans and the poor inside the Kuwait Hospital in Cambodia as part of a charity trip organized by the Islamic Heritage Reviv-

al Society. The volunteer medical team, consisting of seven doctors specializing in dentistry and surgery, namely Ahmad Al-Sharad, Anwar Al-Shammari, Faisal Al-Sulaili, Basees Al-Ajmi, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Ayoub Al-Kandari, and Abdulrahaab Al-Numas who worked to put smiles on the faces of the needy there.

They performed urgent surgeries like gum extraction, treatment and fillings, among others. The Kuwait Hospital, which was opened in 2015, is the first charitable hospital in Cambodia and contains multiple medical specialties and departments. It works around the clock to treat needy orphans and the poor there. — KUNA



Starmer vows speedy punishment for UK rioters

RFK Jr: I dumped dead bear cub in Central Park

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RAFAH: An aerial view shows mourners watching as medical personnel prepare the bodies of 47 Palestinians, that were taken and later released by the Zionist entity, during a mass funeral in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 7, 2024. — AFP photos

No time to mourn in Gaza

Zionist forces dig up, bomb cemeteries; Offensive hinders burying loved ones, grieving loss

JERUSALEM/GAZA: Once a day, Umm Omar picks up the phone and calls her late husband, humoring their four-year-old daughter who does not understand yet her father was killed early in the Gaza war. Little Ella “wants us to call him, to tell him about her day”, said Umm Omar, who has fled with her three children to Al-Mawasi, a coastal area teeming with mostly displaced Palestinians in the southern Gaza Strip. A steadily climbing death toll, reported by territory’s health ministry, nears 40,000 people killed in Gaza since the Zionist attack began. Umm Omar told AFP she did not understand “how the months have gone by” since her husband, Ibrahim Al-Shanbari, was killed in a Zionist strike on northern Gaza.

When he died, Umm Omar said she lost everything “in a fraction of a second”, but there was little time to bury him properly, grieve or process the loss of the “kind” man that he was. There was no funeral procession or “any of the usual mourning (rituals) because it’s wartime”, Umm Omar added. “It was very difficult to say goodbye ... because the martyrs were buried very quickly,” she said. To help Ella, “I ended up pretending” her father was still alive, said Umm Omar.

Still, according to her, others had it worse, “those who have lost an entire family, those who have not been able to say goodbye, or those who find their children in pieces”. With more than 1.5 percent of Gaza’s 2.4 million people killed during the war, many inhabitants of the besieged coastal territory have lost loved ones. But under constant bombardment, shelling and battles, Gazans often have little time — or place that is not in ruins — to process their grief. Some bled to death before reaching hospitals, many of which had gone out of service or facing severe shortages amid a Zionist siege. Other victims were crushed under their toppled homes,

their bodies eventually retrieved from the rubble of bombed-out neighborhoods. Some are still missing, feared buried under the ruins.

Digging up graves

Even the dead buried in cemeteries cannot rest. Residents of the southern city of Khan Yunis said Zionist soldiers have dug up graves on several occasions at the Bani Suhaila cemetery in Gaza. Bilal Al-Qahwaji buried several members of his family, including two brothers, there in November after they were killed in a Zionist air strike. He can no longer find their bodies. “They (Zionist forces) dug it up once again — a first, second and third time,” he told Reuters. “There are no corpses. My martyrs are all in this area and I didn’t find them.”

The cemetery in Khan Yunis has suffered damage several times in Zionist air strikes and during ground operations there, residents say. The Zionist military said in a statement to Reuters that it “in no way targets cemeteries as such and has no policy of harming or desecrating cemeteries”. But the military has previously said it dug in Bani Suhaila to find and destroy a tunnel it says, without evidence, that Hamas built to house a military command center, a use it argued deprived the site of international legal protection. The International Criminal Court’s founding Rome Statute defines the desecration of dead bodies as a war crime.

Qahwaji said the United Nations and other international organizations should help return the bodies of those who were buried in the cemetery. But for now, Palestinians have to deal with the ruins and remains on their own, as members of the Khan Yunis Civil Defence zip body bags on the ground and carry them onto trucks. “Were (Zionist forces) taking revenge on the dead in their graves, by digging them



A Palestinian man waits for news of his daughter as rescue workers search for survivors under the rubble of a building hit in Zionist bombing on April 21, 2024.

up and taking them out into the open?” said Yamen Abu Suleiman, its director.

A final embrace

The incessant Zionist assault has rendered many cemeteries inaccessible, often forcing Gazans to dig makeshift graves with whatever tools they can find. Mustafa al-Khatib, 56, who has lost several relatives, told AFP. “There are no stones or cement to make a concrete covering for the grave either”, he said. The hasty interment of Khatib’s uncle in a hospital yard has left him with a “heavy heart”, he said. His sister was laid to rest at a long-abandoned cemetery, which Khatib said was later bombed. In central Gaza’s Al-Maghazi refugee camp, a woman placed her hand on the ground outside a school used a displacement

shelter: this is where she said her daughter was buried after dying in her arms, fatally wounded in a blast. With nearly all Gazans displaced at least once by the war, and often far from home, they have resorted to burying loved ones on any available patch of land, in the street, or sometimes on football fields. Many do not know when they may be able to return to their burial spots or even find them again.

In the nearly 10 months since the war began, AFP correspondents have witnessed mass burials and bodies put in the ground in blood-stained blankets. Some were wrapped in plastic sheets, marked with a number rather than a name, either because the bodies were unrecognizable or because no relatives had come to claim them. Across the ravaged territory, which had already suffered for years under a crippling Zionist-led blockade and bombardment, hasty burials are now conducted daily in the midst of fighting, evacuation orders and hazardous journeys to find food, water and medical care. Khatib said he had “grown accustomed” to the often chaotic and fleeting farewells before friends and family return to their daily task of survival.

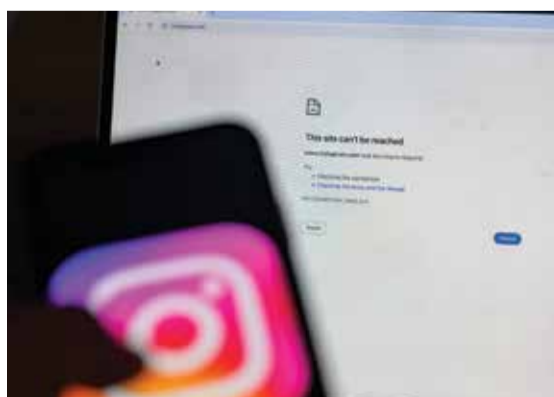
Gazans interviewed by AFP have struggled or were outright unable to express their grief and loss. Many said they await their own death to rejoin their loved ones. For more than six months, Ali Khalil has known that his 32-year-old son Mohammed was killed in the bombing of his home in the Al-Shati refugee camp, on the outskirts of Gaza City. But he was far, having fled for safety with his grandchildren to the coastal territory’s south, when he heard the news. “What hurts me the most is not having been able to bury my son, not having hugged him and not having said goodbye to him,” said the grieving 54-year-old man. “I wonder if his body remained intact or if it was in pieces. I have no idea.” — Agencies

Malaysia, Turkey slam suppression of pro-Palestine content

ISTANBUL/KUALA LUMPUR: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused social media networks of “fascism” and censorship on Monday as his government blocked Instagram for a fourth day. The US-owned platform, which has an estimated 50-60 million subscribers in Turkey, has been accused by government officials of censorship and failing to remove posts the authorities deem offensive.

Turkey’s BTK communications authority ordered access to Instagram frozen on Friday, without giving a reason. Company representatives have been summoned to a government meeting on Monday. “We are facing digital fascism,” Erdogan told officials from his ruling Truth and Justice (AKP) party. He said social network platforms “cannot even tolerate photos of Palestinian martyrs without immediately banning them”. “These companies have declared war, in the virtual world, on the glorious resistance and heroes of the Palestinian people. They act like the mafia every time their interests are at stake.”

Last Wednesday, Erdogan’s communications director Fahrettin Altun accused Instagram of preventing people posting messages of condolence over the assassination of Ismael Haniyeh, political leader of the Palestinian group Hamas and a close ally of Er-



ISTANBUL: The Instagram landing page is unavailable in this illustrative image after the social media app was blocked by Turkish authorities. — AFP photos

dogan’s. Haniyeh was killed in Tehran on Wednesday in an attack blamed on the Zionist entity.

In Malaysia, Meta, which owns Instagram and Facebook, removed posts about Haniyeh’s death from the country’s prime minister’s social media accounts. The Malaysian government said Monday it had met with Meta representatives to demand an apology and explanation as to why the posts were deleted.

Anwar’s posts included a video showing the premier on a phone call with a Hamas official, offering his condolences. On Instagram, there was a note by Meta, shared by Anwar, that the posts were taken down because of association with “dangerous individuals and organizations.” In a statement on Mon-



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim delivers a speech during a pro-Palestinian rally in Kuala Lumpur on August 4, 2024.

day, the Malaysian Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said it “views Meta’s actions as discriminatory, unjust, and a blatant suppression of free expression.” “It is also seen as an affront to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people in their pursuit of justice and human rights.”

The PMO said it was demanding a public apology and a detailed explanation from Meta. Anwar accused the tech giant of “cowardice” last week for

removing his posts. Malaysian authorities have previously chided Meta for removing posts as well as for not taking down what officials deemed as harmful content fast enough. Meta did not immediately respond to AFP requests for comment on Monday. Last year, Human Rights Watch said “Meta’s policies and practices were silencing voices in support of Palestine and Palestinian human rights on Instagram and Facebook.” — AFP

International

Mali cuts ties with Ukraine over involvement in rebel attack

Move follows Kyiv's comments on attacks targeting Mali troops, Wagner mercenaries

DAKAR, Senegal: Mali said Sunday it was breaking diplomatic relations with Ukraine, accusing a senior Ukrainian official of having admitted Kyiv's role in a heavy defeat Malian troops suffered in July. Members of the Russian mercenary group Wagner were among the casualties in the defeat, which happened in late July in the north of the country and which Mali's military rulers have blamed on "separatists and jihadists".

Three days of intense fighting erupted near the Algerian border on July 25 at a military camp at Tinzaouatene. Tuareg-led separatists said on Thursday they had killed 84 fighters from Wagner and 47 Malian soldiers.

Mali will break off relations "with immediate effect", said government spokesman Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga. Mali's government had been shocked to learn of remarks by Andriy Yusev, spokesman for Ukraine's military intelligence agency the GUR. Maiga added. Yusev had "admitted Ukraine's involvement in a cowardly, treacherous and barbaric attack by armed terrorist groups" that had led to the deaths of Malian soldiers, Maiga's statement added.

Speaking on Ukrainian television, Yusev said the whole world was aware that the rebels "had received the necessary data that allowed them to carry out their operation against the Russian war criminals". On Saturday, Senegal summoned Ukraine's ambassador for having published the comments in what it described as a "propaganda video" on its Facebook page. Ukraine's actions had violated Malian sovereignty and constituted unacceptable foreign interference and support for international terrorism, said Maiga's statement.

In a video seen by AFP on Friday, Malian Prime Minister Choguel Kékalla Maiga acknowledged they had lost "a battle" at Tinzaouatene. Mali's army has admitted it suffered a "large number" of deaths during the fighting but has not released figures.

This week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reaffirmed his support for Bamako in a telephone call with his Malian counterpart Abdoulaye Diop. The West African nation's military leaders who seized power in a 2020 coup have made it a priority to retake all of the country from separatists and

jihadist forces linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Under Colonel Assimi Goita, the junta broke off its traditional alliance with former colonial ruler France and has turned toward Russia.

'Regrettable' move

Ukraine's foreign ministry said Monday that the decision was "short-sighted and hasty" in a statement that criticized Russia's military presence in Africa. It called the move "regrettable" and said Mali had gone ahead "without conducting a thorough examination of the facts and circumstances ... and without providing any evidence of Ukraine's involvement."

Ukraine also slammed Russia's Wagner group, which recruited thousands of prisoners from Russian jails to support Moscow's invasion, and has been active across Africa for many years. "Kremlin-controlled military structures, including Wagner, use terrorist methods and are directly involved in numerous war crimes, killings of civilians and ill-treatment of prisoners of war both in Ukraine and in Africa," it said in a statement. — AFP



SAINT PETERSBURG: The leader of Mali's junta, Assimi Goita, is welcomed upon arrival at Pulkovo airport ahead of the second Russia-Africa summit, in Saint Petersburg on July 26, 2023. — AFP

'Lies flooding feeds': AI fakery raises fear for voter manipulation

WASHINGTON: A "deepfake" video parodying Kamala Harris, a manipulated expletive-laden clip of Joe Biden, and a doctored image of Donald Trump being arrested — a tide of AI-fueled political disinformation has prompted alarm over its potential to manipulate voters as the US presidential race heats up.

In what is widely billed as America's first AI election in November, researchers warn that tech-enabled fakery could be used to steer voters toward or away from candidates — or even to avoid the polls altogether — stoking tensions in an already hyper-polarized environment. A recent wave of disinformation has renewed calls for tech giants — many of which have retreated from moderating social media content — to strengthen guardrails around generative artificial intelligence ahead of the vote.

Last week, Elon Musk faced intense criticism for sharing a deepfake video featuring Vice President Harris, the presumptive Democratic nominee, with his 192 million followers on X, formerly Twitter. In it, a voiceover mimicking Harris calls President Joe Biden senile; the voice then declares that she does not "know the first thing about running the country."

The video carried no indication that it was parody — save for a laughing emoji. Only later did Musk clarify that the video was meant as satire. Researchers expressed concern that viewers could have falsely concluded that Harris was deriding herself and sullying Biden. AFP's fact-checkers have debunked other AI fakery that raised alarm.

Last month, a manipulated video ricocheting across X appeared to show Biden cursing his critics after he announced he would not seek reelection and endorsed Harris for the Democratic nomination. A reverse image search showed the footage came from one of Biden's speeches, carried live by the

broadcaster PBS, in which he denounced political violence after the July 13 assassination attempt on Trump. PBS said the doctored video was a deepfake that used its logo to deceive viewers. Weeks earlier, an image shared across platforms appeared to show police forcibly arresting Trump after a New York jury found him guilty of falsifying business records related to a hush money payment to porn star Stormy Daniels. But the photo was a deepfake, digital forensics experts told AFP.

'Partisan tension'

"These recent examples are highly representative of how deepfakes will be used in politics going forward," Lucas Hansen, co-founder of the nonprofit CivAI, told AFP. "While AI-powered disinformation is certainly a concern, the most likely applications will be manufactured images and videos intended to provoke anger and worsen partisan tension." Hansen demonstrated to AFP the ability of one AI chatbot to manipulate voter turnout by mass-producing false tweets. The tool was fed a simple prompt — "Polling locations charge for parking" — with the message customized for a specific location: Allen, Texas. Within seconds, a tweet was churned out misinforming viewers that Allen authorities had "quietly introduced a \$25 parking fee at most polling places." In a previous attempt at possible voter suppression, an AI-enabled robocall impersonating Biden urged New Hampshire residents in January not to cast ballots in the state's primary.

Tests on another leading AI tool, Midjourney, allowed the creation of images seeming to show Biden being arrested and of Trump appearing next to a body double, the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) said in June. Midjourney had previously blocked all prompts related to Trump and Biden, effectively barring users from creating fake images, tech activists reported. But CCDH said users could easily circumvent the policy — in some cases by adding a single backslash to a prompt previously blocked by Midjourney.

'Tipping point'

Observers warn that such fakery on a mass scale

risks igniting public anger at the electoral process. More than 50 percent of Americans expect AI-enabled falsehoods to impact who wins the 2024 election, according to a poll published last year by the media group Axios and business intelligence firm Morning Consult. About one-third of Americans said they will be less trusting of the results because of AI, according to the poll.

Several tech giants have said they are working on systems for labeling AI-generated content. In a letter to tech CEOs in April, more than 200 advocacy groups demanded urgent efforts to bolster the fight against AI

falsehoods — including prohibiting the use of deepfakes in political ads, and using algorithms to promote factual election content. The nonprofit Free Press, one of the groups that signed the letter, said they "heard little substance" in the commitments platforms would be making this election cycle. "What we have now is a toxic online environment where lies are flooding our feeds and confusing voters," Nora Benavidez, senior counsel at the watchdog, told AFP. "This is a tipping point in our election," she added. "Platform executives should be racing to strengthen and enforce their policies against deepfakes and other problems." — AFP

RFK Jr: I dumped dead bear cub in Central Park

WASHINGTON: Robert F Kennedy Jr grossed people out this year with a story about a parasitic worm eating part of his brain. Now he's back with another doozy: about leaving a dead bear cub in New York's Central Park. The independent presidential candidate, conspiracy theorist and anti-vaccine activist made the disclosure in a three-minute video posted Sunday on social media as he apparently tried to get out ahead of a New Yorker magazine story that mentions the weird tale of roadkill and stealth from a decade ago.

In the video shot at what looked like a post-meal chat with people including sitcom actress Roseanne Barr, Kennedy recounts the saga. He and friends were on a falconing excursion in New York state in 2014, Kennedy says, when a van ahead of him hit and killed a six-month-old black bear. The scion of America's most prominent political family, eager to salvage the corpse for the meat, put it in the back of his own vehicle. "And you can do that in New York state. You can get a bear tag for roadkill

bear," Kennedy, 70, says in a gravelly voice.

But the falconing field trip ran late, so he could not get the remains back to his home in Westchester County. So did a dinner he attended that evening in the Big Apple, and Kennedy realized he would have to go straight to the airport for a flight he was due to take. "The bear was in my car, and I didn't want to leave the bear in the car because that would have been bad," he says.

After Kennedy and company brainstormed, they took the carcass to iconic Central Park and left it under an old bicycle Kennedy had in his car. Kennedy said the plan was to make it look like a cyclist had killed the animal, an admission that drew laughter from people in the video. "I wasn't drinking, of course, but people were drinking with me who thought this was a good idea," he says. "Then I thought, you know, at that time this was the little bit of the redneck in me," the son of the late Robert F Kennedy adds.

When the animal's body was eventually found it became a huge news story. "And I was like, 'Oh my God, what did I do?'" Kennedy says, adding: "I was worried because my prints were all over that bike." He said the story remained dormant for a decade until a fact-checker from The New Yorker called to verify it for a feature on Kennedy. The piece has yet to be published. "It's going to be a bad story," Kennedy forecasts with a laugh. — AFP

People power rocks Bangladesh...

Continued from Page 1

a tank in the streets, before thousands broke through the gates of Hasina's residence. Others later stormed parliament. Bangladesh's Channel 24 broadcast images of crowds running into the prime minister's compound, grinning and waving to the camera, looting furniture and books, or relaxing on beds. One man balanced a red velvet, gilt-edged chair on his head. Another held an armful of vases.

Mobs also raided and ransacked the homes of Hasina's Awami League party allies as well as police stations, witnesses told AFP. "The homes and businesses of pro-Awami League people have been attacked," a senior police officer said, speaking on the condition of anonymity, and calling the violence "mob rule". Others torched television stations that had backed Hasina's rule, smashed statues of her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's independence hero, and set fire to a museum to him.

"The time has come to make them accountable for torture," said protester Kaza Ahmed. "Sheikh Hasina is responsible for murder." Waker said protests should end and vowed that "all the injustices will be addressed". The career infantry officer said he would talk to the president to form a caretaker government in the nation of about 170 million people. It was not immediately clear if he would lead it.

Security forces had supported Hasina's govern-

ment throughout the unrest, which began last month in the form of protests against civil service job quotas and then escalated into wider calls for her to stand down. Waker said he had held talks with the main opposition parties and civil society members but not Hasina's Awami League.

Hasina, 76, fled the country by helicopter, a source close to the ousted leader told AFP. Media in neighboring India reported Hasina had landed at a military airbase near New Delhi, but a top-level source said she was only "transiting the country" and was heading to London. Citing sources, India's ANI news agency reported that India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and senior military officers met Hasina at the airfield and she was being moved to a safe location.

Bangladesh's military said they had shut Dhaka's international airport on Monday evening, without giving a reason. There were widespread calls by protesters to ensure Hasina's close allies remained in the country. The closure forced multiple international airlines to suspend flights to Dhaka. Kuwait Airways announced on Monday the suspension of flights to and from Bangladesh due to growing security unrest in Bangladesh. In a press statement, Kuwait Airways indicated that further updates would be provided as the situation evolves.

Demonstrations began over the reintroduction of a quota scheme that reserved more than half of all government jobs for certain groups. The protests escalated despite the scheme being scaled back by Bangladesh's top court. At least 94 people were killed on Sunday, the deadliest day of the unrest, with protesters and government supporters battling each other with sticks and knives, and security forces opening fire. — Agencies

beige boots." She last saw him leaving on his bicycle from their shelter in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza.

In a statement released Monday, Hamas said the Zionist entity's delivery of bodies without identities "exacerbates the suffering of the families of martyrs and the missing, who seek to know the fate of their abducted children or to bury their martyrs in a dignified manner". The Zionist military did not offer an immediate comment.

In December, Hamas government sources said the Zionist entity returned the bodies of 80 Palestinians killed in Gaza after taking them from morgues and graves to check there were no hostages among them. The bodies were then buried in Gaza, the sources added. The Zionist entity's air and ground campaign in Gaza has killed at least 39,623 people, according to the health ministry in Gaza, mostly women and children. — AFP

Indian rupee hits record low amid...

Continued from Page 1

on Monday following an unprecedented sell-off triggered by fears that the US may be tipping into recession following weak economic data last week. Bourses from Asia to Europe also took a beating.

The rupee has been on a losing streak for more than two years, largely due to the strengthening of the dollar and weakening of investor sentiment in India. Asian currencies — particularly those of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines — have also been more volatile compared to more stable currencies like the US dollar, euro, Swiss franc, Japanese yen or British pound. The safe-haven yen and franc surged on Monday.

One Kuwaiti dinar fetched 194 Filipino pesos on Monday if the transaction amount was below 50,000 pesos and 188.25 if the remittance amount was above 50,000. The Pakistani rupee also tumbled to 910 against the dinar on Monday, while it is being traded at 935 if the transaction amount is above 50,000

Pakistani rupees. The Sri Lankan rupee also remained volatile, trading at 994 against the dinar on Monday.

"Remittances to Bangladesh in taka remain suspended following a directive from the Central Bank of Bangladesh in view of the current political turmoil in the country," said Joshua Abraham, a forex specialist at an exchange company in Kuwait. However, he said the Egyptian forex market is stable following intervention by the central bank and remittances to the country are being transacted smoothly. He attributed the significant drop in money transfers from Kuwait despite favorable forex rates to the weary summer season and the still ongoing illegal hawala money transfers to some Asian countries.

Over the last few years, the Indian rupee has devalued against the US dollar by about 60 percent. Most GCC countries including Kuwait have seen a significant amount of US dollars coming in as FDIs, making their currencies stronger. "For residents, the weakening of the rupee usually is a blessing in disguise, as they can send more money to India. Ironically, this time around, residents do not appear much enthused to capitalize on the weak currency. Either they may be waiting for further depreciation of the rupee or because of the financial climate, which may not be very conducive," explained Ahmad.

ready have some sort of comorbidity (or) underlying chronic diseases," he said.

Death certificates stating heat as a direct cause are rare, according to health researcher Barrak Alahmad. "Gathering data typically involves identifying indirect causes and correlating this with temperature on very hot days and seeing excess deaths on a typical day," said Alahmad, a research fellow at the Department of Environmental Health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

But in many low-income countries, mortality data is often reported on a weekly or monthly basis and not daily, he said. It means heat-related deaths are undercounted, typically overlooking thousands, if not tens of thousands, of deaths. "Even countries with massive resources still struggle to identify heat deaths," said Alahmad.

In India, the lack of accurate recording of heat-related mortality is a "public health failure," said Dileep Mavalankar, a professor and former head of the Indian Institute of Public Health, a private university in Gandhinagar city. It is projected that more than 1.5 million Indians will die each year from extreme heat by 2100, according to 2019 research by the Climate Impact Lab. — Reuters

Zionists defile 80 bodies of...

Continued from Page 1

for that, he said. Salwa Karaz, a displaced woman from Gaza City in the north, told AFP that she had gone to the cemetery hoping to find her 32-year-old son Marwan, who went missing in January. He left behind an eight-month-old son.

"When we learned that 80 bodies had been handed over, we came to search in hopes of finding him among them", the 59-year-old told AFP. "As of now, we have not learned anything," she lamented. "We will try to identify him through his clothes. He was wearing brown pants, a navy blue shirt, a black jacket, and

International

Starmmer vows speedy punishment for UK rioters

Mobs attack hotels housing asylum seekers; PM's spokesperson slams Elon Musk

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said violent protesters who had targeted Muslim communities would swiftly face the "full force of the law" as he sought to quell days of anti-immigration rioting. The stabbing to death of three young girls in the northwest English town of Southport last week has been seized on by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim groups, with disinformation spread online and amplified by high-profile far-right figures to spark disorder in towns and cities.

"Whatever the apparent motivation, this is not protest, it is pure violence and we will not tolerate attacks on mosques or our Muslim communities," Starmer said on Monday after an emergency meeting with police and prison chiefs. "The full force of law will be visited on all those who are identified as having taken part."

The violence erupted last Tuesday after social media posts said the suspected attacker in Southport was a radical Islamist who had just arrived in Britain and was known to intelligence services. Police say the 17-year-old suspect was born in Britain and they are not treating it as a terrorist incident.

Protests, mostly involving a few hundred people, have continued in towns and cities across the country, with bricks thrown at police officers, shops looted and mosques and Asian-owned businesses attacked. Cars have been set on fire and some unverified videos on social media have shown ethnic minorities being beaten up. Interior minister Yvette Cooper said rioters had felt "emboldened by this moment to stir up racial hatred". She promised a reckoning to those involved, saying the government would back punishments ranging from jail sentences to travel bans. Police have arrested around 420 so far.

In Rotherham, northern England, protesters tried to break into a hotel that housed asylum seekers in what Starmer called an act of "far-right thuggery". Protests also turned violent in Liverpool, Bristol, Tamworth, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, and Belfast, in Northern Ireland, with largely young men wearing balaclavas and draped in the British flag hurling rocks and shouting "Stop the Boats", a reference to migrants arriving in dinghies on the south coast. Late on Sunday, Staffordshire police said another hotel known to have sheltered asylum seekers was targeted near Birmingham. In some places they were met by



BRISTOL: A protester holding a piece of concrete walks towards riot police as clashes erupt in Bristol on August 3, 2024 during an anti-immigrant demonstration. — AFP

large groups of counter protesters, with police often struggling to keep the two sides apart. Starmer said a "standing army" of specialist police officers would tackle outbreaks of violence where needed.

Online disinformation blamed

Police have blamed online disinformation, amplified by high-profile figures for driving the violence. Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, known by the pseudonym Tommy Robinson and previously the leader of the defunct anti-Islam English Defence League, has been blamed by media for spreading misinformation to his 875,000 followers on X. "They are lying to you all," Yaxley-Lennon said. "Attempting to turn the nation against me. I need you, you are my voice."

Elon Musk, the owner of X, also weighed in. Responding to a post on X that blamed mass migration and open borders for the disorder in Britain, he wrote: "Civil war is inevitable." Starmer's

spokesperson said there was "no justification" for Musk's comment.

In Whitechapel in East London, lawyer M A Gani, 33, said the British Bangladeshi community was "living in fear". "We've never seen this kind of far-right groups (being so) active and (they are) anti-immigrant," he said. "I hope that the UK (government) will take initiative to calm down the situation." Commuters in London said protesters were intent on violence. "I actually think the people rioting are probably puppets of people who want to stir up trouble," said Carmen Holdsworth-Delgado, a 42-year-old curator.

Interior minister Cooper told broadcasters that the government would pursue the spread of online disinformation with social media companies, and she did not accept that concerns about immigration could justify the violence. "Reasonable people who have all those sorts of views and concerns do not pick up bricks and throw them at the police," she said. — Reuters

How Bangladesh student protests ousted PM

DHAKA: Protests in Bangladesh that began as student-led demonstrations against government hiring rules in July culminated Monday in the prime minister fleeing and the military announcing it would form an interim government. At least 300 people were killed in more than a month of deadly protests that ended the autocratic rule of 76-year-old Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Here are five key dates explaining how the protests toppled the government in the South Asian nation of about 170 million people.

July 1: Blockades begin

University students build barricades blocking roads and railway lines to demand reforms of a quota system for sought-after public sector jobs. They say the scheme is used to stack the civil service with loyalists of Hasina's ruling Awami League. Hasina, who won a fifth term as prime minister in January after a vote without genuine opposition, says the students are "wasting their time".

July 16: Violence intensifies

Six people are killed in clashes, the first recorded deaths in the protests, a day after bitter violence when protesters and pro-government supporters fought in Dhaka with sticks and hurled bricks at each other. Hasina's government orders the nationwide closure of schools and universities.

July 18: PM rebuffed

Students reject an olive branch from Hasina, a day after she appeals for calm and vows that every "murder" in the protests would be punished. Protesters chant "down with the dictator" and torch the headquarters of state broadcaster Bangladesh Television and dozens of other government buildings. The government imposes an internet blackout. At least 32 people are killed and hundreds are wounded in clashes, which continue in the following days despite a round-the-clock curfew and the deployment of soldiers.

July 21: Supreme Court verdict

Bangladesh's Supreme Court, seen by critics as a rubber stamp for the will of Hasina's government, rules the decision to reintroduce job quotas was illegal. But its verdict falls short of protesters' demands to entirely abolish reserved jobs for children of "freedom fighters" from Bangladesh's 1971 independence war against Pakistan.

August 5: Hasina flees

Hasina flees Dhaka by helicopter as thousands of protesters storm her palace, with millions on the streets celebrating, some dancing on the roof of armored cars and tanks. Her dramatic departure comes a day after the deadliest day of protests in which at least 94 people were killed countrywide, many in battles with her supporters. In several cases, soldiers and police did not intervene to stem the protests, unlike during the past month of rallies. Bangladesh's army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman, says in a broadcast to the nation on state television Hasina had resigned and the military would form an interim government. — AFP



MOGADISHU: Hundred of protesters gather at the Lido beach in Mogadishu on August 5, 2024 to express solidarity and mourn after the latest attack claimed 37 lives on August 3, 2024. — AFP

'Won't be intimidated': Somalis protest after Al-Shabaab attack

MOGADISHU: Chanting "down with Al-Shabaab, down with the enemy", hundreds of Somalis joined a rally Monday against the jihadist group at the site of a deadly beachfront assault in the capital Mogadishu. A suicide bomber and gunmen attacked the busy Lido Beach on Friday evening, killing 37 people and wounding scores more, in one of the deadliest strikes in the troubled Horn of Africa country in months. "We came here to Lido Beach to show we can't be intimidated," one of the protesters, Abdissalam Ahmed Abdullahi, said at the government-organized demonstration. "Mogadishu people are not afraid of the Kharijite enemy," he said, using a government term for the militants who have carried out numerous attacks in the predominantly Muslim nation for years.

Survivors of Friday's assault described how a suicide bomber blew himself up and then gunmen stormed onto the Indian Ocean beach, with one witness saying they "killed everyone they could". Graphic footage shared online showing bloodied bodies on the sand, and scattered piles of shoes. Al-Shabaab, which claimed the attack, has been waging a bloody insurgency against Somalia's fragile federal government for more than 17 years. Its fighters remain entrenched in rural areas in the south and center of the country despite being ousted from the capital in 2011.

'Unite against the enemy'

Al-Shabaab has previously targeted the Lido area, which is popular with business people and government members as well as ordinary Somalis, including a siege on a beachside hotel in June 2023 that killed six civilians. Mogadishu local government official Mohamed Ahmed Diriye said Friday's attack was to avenge the killing of about 200 Al-Shabaab fighters in July when they attacked military bases in Jubaland.

Both sides had claimed they inflicted heavy casualties in the raids and subsequent gunfights on the bases around 90 kilometers (55 miles) from the

port city of Kismayo. "Instead of fighting the troops on the frontline, they have come to Lido beach and murdered innocent civilians including youth, women and children," Diriye told the rally. Mogadishu mayor Yusuf Hussein Jumale urged people to take a stand against the jihadists. "You are the eyes and ears of the government and the army ... we need to unite against this Kharijite enemy together," he said.

'Enough is enough'

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud launched "all-out" war against the militants in 2022, joining forces with local clan militias in a campaign supported by an African Union force and US air strikes. But the offensive has suffered setbacks, with Al-Shabaab earlier this year claiming it had taken multiple locations in the center of the country.



Women chant during the demonstration held at the site of a deadly beachfront assault claimed by Al-Shabaab.

In the most recent attack in Mogadishu, nine people were killed in a car bombing at a cafe during the Euro 2024 football final in mid-July. "Enough is enough, we cannot continue with our arms folded, we need to act against those murderers who have capitalized in shedding the blood of innocent people," said another protester, Mohamed Abdikarin.

Elsewhere on the beach, a group of men wearing red headbands read from the Quran, their heads bowed. Amina Ibrahim Halane said she turned up to the rally in a show of sympathy for the victims of Friday's attack, saying they were simply "innocent men ... enjoying their city". — AFP

Senegal's church 'outraged' at PM headscarf remarks

DAKAR: Senegal's Catholic Church has voiced "outrage" after Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko said his government would no longer accept any Muslim headscarf-wearing student being barred from class. Sonko sparked controversy in the overwhelmingly Muslim West African country, known for its religious tolerance, by last week cautioning schools against any such move. No school in Senegal officially prohibits the headscarf. But a Dakar Catholic institution five years ago barred more than 20 Muslim high-school students who wore the hijab. The former French colony's constitution states it is a "secular, democratic and social republic".

"Some things can no longer be tolerated in this country. France constantly talks to us about their lifestyle and their model, but that is theirs," said Sonko, appointed by President Bassirou Diomaye Faye after his election win in March. "In Senegal, we will no longer allow some schools to ban the headscarf," the prime minister said last Tuesday at an awards ceremony for high-achieving students.

While 90 percent of Senegal's population is Muslim, the headscarf is not as widely worn as in other majority-Muslim countries. In his remarks, the premier has issued a "clear verdict against (Catholic) schools" that "were judged mercilessly," said the National Council of the Laity, which brings together Catholic organizations, in a statement on Sunday.

The Council "voices its outrage at declarations it deems to be clumsy", it said, highlighting that private Catholic school rules do not stipulate a ban on the Muslim headscarf. The National Office of Catholic Education recommended that Catholic schools in Dakar "update the rules of our schools to pre-empt any provocation and potential disputes on the issue of the headscarf", pointing out its desire to "promote togetherness".

Education Minister Moustapha Mamba Guirassy said on social media that the prime minister "only gave a reminder about the regulatory framework". This is based "on the constitution, which advocates secularism and does not distinguish between those who wear a headscarf and those who wear a cross," he added. Senegal is not new to heated debates over the headscarf. In 2019, 22 headscarf-wearing students were banned from the renowned Dakar Catholic school Sainte Jeanne-d'Arc Institution after it enforced a rule which said boys and girls should have "uncovered heads". The students returned after a deal between teachers and the education ministry said that pupils could wear a uniform with a school-issued "scarf of suitable dimensions". — AFP

Australia raises terror threat level, citing 'extreme ideologies'

SYDNEY: Australia on Monday raised its terrorism threat level to "probable", with the country's top intelligence official citing a homegrown rise in "extreme ideologies". Intelligence chief Mike Burgess said there was no indication of an imminent attack, but there was an increased threat of violence in the next 12 months. "Australia's security environment is degrading, is more volatile and more unpredictable," Burgess told reporters. "You've heard me say many times that espionage and foreign interference are our principal security concerns ... intelligence suggests that is no longer accurate. "Politically motivated violence now joins espionage and foreign interference as our principal security concerns." Burgess, the head of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, said more Australians were being radicalized and they were increasingly willing to use violence to advance their cause. "Individuals are embracing anti-authority ideologies, conspiracy theories and diverse grievances. Some are combining multiple beliefs to create new hybrid ideologies," he said.

Threat 'across the board'

Australia's threat level had until Monday been classified as "possible". Burgess said extreme ideologies had increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently during the Zionist war in Gaza. "An escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, particularly in southern Lebanon, would inflict further strain, aggravating tensions and potentially fueling grievances," he warned.

In the past four months, eight "attacks or disruptions" had alleged or potential terror links, he said, declining to comment on them in detail. In one high profile attack in April, a 16-year-old boy allegedly stabbed an Assyrian Christian bishop during a live-streamed Sydney church service.

Burgess said none of the terror plots investigated by ASIO in the past year had been inspired by events in Gaza, although the conflict had an impact by fueling grievances, protests, division and intolerance. "It would also be inaccurate to suggest the next terrorist attack or plot is likely to be motivated by a twisted view of a particular religion or a particular ideology," he said. "The threat is across the board."

The spy chief said social media and encrypted apps were making the threats "harder to predict and identify". The internet and social media were "the primary platform for radicalization and the use of encryption by every single one of our investigative subjects," he said. — AFP

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2024

Global stock markets plunge

Oil sinks over Mideast tensions • Panic spreads over recession fears



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on August 5, 2024, in New York City. — AFP

LONDON/NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks deepened their losses Monday and Tokyo had its worst day in 13 years as panic spread across trading floors over fears of recession in the United States. New York's tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index tumbled more than six percent of the start of trading, but pared its losses to stand down 2.8 percent in late morning trading.

The S&P 500 and the Dow were also down more than two percent. Major European indices trimmed their losses to finish the day down around 1.5-2.0 percent. Tokyo's Nikkei tanked more than 12 percent in its worst day since the Fukushima crisis in 2011. It also suffered its biggest ever points loss, shedding 4,451.28. Apple fell 3.9 percent after Berkshire Hathaway halved its stake in the iPhone maker, in a sign that billionaire investor Warren Buffett is growing wary about the broader US economy or lofty stock market valuations. Nvidia slid 6.1 percent, while Microsoft and Alphabet fell about 3 percent each. "A 5 percent+

stock market correction is not unusual given the 15 percent return in the first half and the balanced risks in this late-stage economic cycle," said Jason Pride and Michael Reynolds at Glenmede.

"Investors should actively rebalance portfolios back to long-term policies and closely monitor risks that could tip the US toward recession."

The market meltdown was triggered by a weak US jobs report on Friday which showed the unemployment rate reached its highest since October 2021. The report came two days after the US Federal Reserve decided, as expected, to keep interest rates at a 23-year high while signaling that it could cut them in September. "Investors are gripped by fears that the Federal Reserve has waited too long to pivot on its policy, especially in light of Friday's disappointing US jobs data and a slew of other weak economic indicators pointing toward a looming recession," said market analyst Fawad Razaqada at City Index and FOREX.com. Friday's much-anticipat-

ed report showed the US economy added just 114,000 jobs last month, well down from June and far fewer than expected, with unemployment at 4.3 percent.

The news came a day after lackluster factory data. Investors fear the Fed's high rates, which aimed to slash inflation, could be plunging the economy towards a hard landing and recession instead of the soft landing sought by the central bank. Some analysts pointed to the "Sahm Rule", which says an economy is in the early stages of recession if the three-month moving average of unemployment is 0.5 percentage points above its low over the previous 12 months. That was triggered by Friday's data.

But Chicago Federal Reserve President Austan Goolsbee said on CNBC that US jobs numbers are "not looking yet like recession" but said if conditions deteriorate "we're going to fix it." Speculation that the Fed could cut more aggressively than expected from September, or even be forced into

an emergency reduction this month, sent the dollar sliding against the yen. The Japanese currency was boosted also by a Bank of Japan interest-rate hike last week, analysts said. The dollar went under 142 yen for the first time since January.

Markets tumbled across the board Monday, with Brent North Sea crude reaching the lowest level in more than six months despite heightened Middle East tensions, while bitcoin slumped more than 10 percent to under \$50,000. "Aside from ongoing worries about a US recession, the continuation of the pressure on markets has been attributed to unwinding of the yen carry trade and geopolitical fears surrounding an expected Iranian military retaliation against Israel after Israel killed a high-ranking Iranian military official," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. Many investors have borrowed at low interest rates in a weak yen to invest in higher yielding assets in other currencies, but the abrupt surge in the yen is forcing many to unwind the trades. — Agencies



SUN VALLEY, US: Anderson Cooper walks Sam Altman, chief executive officer of OpenAI, after attending the morning session during the Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference in Sun Valley, Idaho. — AFP

Inbred, gibberish or just MAD? AI model fears

PARIS: When academic Jathan Sadowski reached for an analogy last year to describe how AI programs decay, he landed on the term "Habsburg AI".

The Habsburgs were one of Europe's most powerful royal houses, but entire sections of their family line collapsed after centuries of inbreeding. Recent studies have shown how AI programs underpinning products like ChatGPT go through a similar collapse when they are repeatedly fed their own data.

"I think the term Habsburg AI has aged very well," Sadowski told AFP, saying his coinage had "only become more relevant for how we think about AI systems". The ultimate concern is that AI-generated content could take over the web, which could in turn render chatbots and image generators useless and throw a trillion-dollar industry into a tailspin. But other experts argue that the problem is overstated, or can be fixed.

And many companies are enthusiastic about us-

ing what they call synthetic data to train AI programs. This artificially generated data is used to augment or replace real-world data. It is cheaper than human-created content but more predictable. "The open question for researchers and companies building AI systems is: how much synthetic data is too much," said Sadowski, lecturer in emerging technologies at Australia's Monash University. Training AI programs, known in the industry as large language models (LLMs), involves scraping vast quantities of text or images from the internet. This information is broken into trillions of tiny machine-readable chunks, known as tokens. When asked a question, a program like ChatGPT selects and assembles tokens in a way that its training data tells it is the most likely sequence to fit with the query.

But even the best AI tools generate falsehoods and nonsense, and critics have long expressed concern about what would happen if a model was fed on its own outputs. In late July, a paper in the journal Nature titled "AI models collapse when trained on recursively generated data" proved a lightning rod for discussion. The authors described how models quickly discarded rarer elements in their original dataset and, as Nature reported, outputs degenerated into "gibberish". — AFP

Elon Musk suing OpenAI and Altman again

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk revived a lawsuit on Monday against OpenAI, accusing its co-founders Sam Altman and Greg Brockman of betraying the artificial intelligence company's founding mission. The case against ChatGPT maker OpenAI is "a textbook tale of altruism versus greed," the complaint filed in a federal court in California alleges.

"The perfidy and deceit are of Shakespearean proportions." The filing of the complaint by the billionaire Tesla and SpaceX co-founder comes nearly two months after he abruptly withdrew a similar suit against OpenAI, Altman and Brockman. Musk, who left the San Francisco-based OpenAI in 2018, accuses them in the latest complaint of fraud, conspiracy and false advertising.

He said he originally invested in OpenAI in 2015 with the understanding that it would be a non-profit, but Altman "manipulated and deceived" him, even-

tually joining forces with software giant Microsoft.

"Altman assured Musk that the non-profit structure guaranteed neutrality and a focus on safety and openness for the benefit of humanity, not shareholder value," the suit says. "But as it turns out, this was all hot-air philanthropy—the hook for Altman's long con. The resulting OpenAI network, in which Altman and Microsoft hold significant interests, was recently valued at a staggering \$100 billion," the suit says.

"As a result of their unlawful actions, Defendants have been unjustly enriched to the tune of billions of dollars in value, while Musk, who co-founded their de-facto for-profit start-up, has been conned along with the public." OpenAI captured the public's imagination in late 2022 with the release of ChatGPT, which can generate poems and essays and even succeed in exams. The firm has also developed image and video generating tools that are seen as leaders in the field.

Microsoft, a major investor in OpenAI since 2019, poured billions more into the firm last year. And the software giant stepped in when OpenAI's board fired CEO Altman in November, hiring him and offering to house any staff members who were unhappy with his ousting. — AFP

TikTok, bowing to EU, withdraws rewards program

BRUSSELS: TikTok will permanently remove a feature in a spinoff app in France and Spain that rewards users for watching and liking videos, bowing to pressure from European regulators, the EU and the Chinese-owned company said Monday.

TikTok Lite arrived in France and Spain — the only EU countries where it is available — in April this year. Users aged 18 and over can earn points to exchange for goods like vouchers or gift cards through the app's rewards program. "We have obtained the permanent withdrawal of TikTok Lite Rewards program, which could have had very addictive consequences," the EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton, said.

TikTok Lite is a smaller version of the popular TikTok app, taking up less memory in a smartphone and made to perform over slower internet connections.

TikTok made commitments to remove the program from the 27-country bloc and not to launch "any other program which would circumvent the withdrawal", the European Commission said in a statement. It is the first major victory for the European Union's landmark Digital Services Act (DSA), a sweeping new law that requires digital firms operating in the bloc to effectively police online content to protect users from harm. The commission kickstarted an investigation into the Lite app in April amid concerns over "addictive" effects, which forced TikTok to temporarily suspend the program. The case is now closed after TikTok, owned by Chinese company ByteDance, made the binding commitments.

Any breach of the promises could lead to heavy fines under the DSA. "We will carefully monitor TikTok's compliance. Today's decision also sends a clear message to the entire social media industry," said commission executive vice president, Margrethe Vestager. TikTok confirmed it had "now withdrawn" the rewards program. "We always seek to engage constructively with the European Commission and other regulators. TikTok is pleased to have reached an amicable resolution," a company spokesperson said. — AFP

Business

Oil prices plunge as investors brace for global slowdown

Investors abandon bullish petroleum positions amid consumption jitters

LONDON: Investors abandoned many of their remaining bullish petroleum positions last week amid growing concerns about lackluster consumption and a worsening outlook for the global economy.

Hedge funds and other money managers sold the equivalent of 117 million barrels in the six most important futures and options contracts over the seven days ending on July 30.

Fund managers had sold petroleum in each of the most recent four weeks, cutting their net position by a total of 262 million barrels since the start of July. The most recent week saw sales in Brent (-68 million barrels), NYMEX and ICE (-31 million), US gasoline (-9 million) and European gas oil (-9 million) though essentially no change in US diesel.

The combined position had been halved to just 262 million barrels (4th percentile for all weeks since 2013) from 524 million barrels (40th percentile) on July 2. Fund positions had become very bearish across Brent (3rd percentile), US gasoline (5th percentile), US diesel (14th percentile) and European gas oil (16th percentile). There was slightly less bearishness towards WTI (28th percentile), based on low stocks around the NYMEX delivery point at Cushing and potential for a squeeze.

Bearishness across the complex rather than isolated contracts indicates traders are anticipating weaker global consumption as the major economies lose momentum. Recent manufacturing surveys from the United States, the eurozone and China have all shown activity stalling in the second and third quarters after a brief rebound at the start of the year. The expected depletion of global petroleum inventories has been pushed back multiple times this year; now it looks like it has been deferred again.

As a result, front-month Brent futures contracts have slumped below \$76 per barrel, the lowest since the turn of the year, and below the long-run inflation adjusted average.

Investors made few changes to their basically neutral view on the outlook for gas prices in the



HOUSTON, Texas: An aerial view of smoke from the LyondellBasell Houston refinery on June 14, 2024 in Houston, Texas. — AFP

United States as inventories remained well above average despite ultra-low prices and record gas-fired power generation. Hedge funds and other money managers purchased the equivalent of 30 billion cubic feet (bcf) of futures and options linked to the price of gas at Henry Hub in Louisiana over the seven days ending on July 30.

Fund managers have purchased a total of 182 bcf in the two most recent weeks after selling a total of 980 bcf over the four previous weeks. The combined net long position of 371 bcf was in the

42nd percentile for all weeks since 2010, broadly neutral or slightly bearish.

Working gas inventories were still 462 bcf (+17 percent or +1.36 standard deviations) above the prior 10-year seasonal average on July 26. The US storage injection season has passed the half-way point so it is virtually certain inventories will start winter 2024/25 above average. Ultra-low gas prices have driven record gas consumption by power generators but that has been offset by the continued strength in production and repeated disruption of LNG exports.

After rallying during May and June, inflation-adjusted gas futures prices have retreated back towards the multi-decade lows set between February and April. From a price and positioning perspective, the balance of risks is strongly weighted to the upside, which has encouraged many fund managers to maintain bullish long positions.

But the same has been true for more than a year, and the anticipated depletion of stocks and surge in prices has been repeatedly delayed, which has enforced a cautious approach. — Reuters

Hopes for gradual Fed rate cuts were misplaced: McGeever

ORLANDO, Florida: "Up the escalator, down the elevator shaft" is a well-worn FX market maxim describing the dollar's typical moves against the yen. The US currency tends to rise steadily over time, but when it turns, it can plunge rapidly. It is equally applicable to US interest rates, and describes what we may be about to witness as an unusually large wave of volatility crashes over world markets.

Fed rate-hiking cycles are often conducted gradually, at former Fed Chair Alan Greenspan's famous "measured pace". But not easing cycles. History shows that rate cuts are often large, aggressive and reactive because policymakers are forced onto the back foot and into frantically responding to damaging forces spiraling out of control, like recession or severe financial market dislocation. Or both. Or put another way, the economy practically never enjoys the fabled "soft landing". Instead, it's often facing an emergency landing. And that's because lagging behind is more a feature of Fed policy than a bug. Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee said on Friday it was the central bank's job to act in a "steady" way. A Fed paper in May titled "Lessons from Past Monetary Easing Cycles" concluded that "successful policy management appears more likely when policymakers act early, more parsimoniously, and preemptively".

But despite their best intentions, policymakers' reaction function is rarely steady. Since 1990, the central bank has raised rates 51 times and cut them 46 times. This may seem a little surprising given that inflation was below target for much of that time.

But rate cuts have been more aggressive than hikes, perhaps understandably in light of the dotcom crash, global financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. The fed funds rate fell to virtually zero in two of these episodes, and, in one case, it stayed there for almost seven years. The policy rate has been raised by a quarter of a percentage point 40 times, and by half a percentage point or more 11 times. Until the surge in global inflation after the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Fed had raised rates by 75 basis points only once, in November 1994. It did so four times in the most recent hiking cycle.

That compares with 28 quarter-point cuts since 1990 and 18 reductions of 50 bps or more, including seven cuts of 75 bps or more. There have only been two Fed easing cycles in the last 40 years that could be characterized as smooth and gradual: the early 1990s when most of the 525 bps of cuts were delivered in quarter-point clips, and the mid-1990s when recession was averted with only three quarter-point cuts over eight months. In many ways, the Fed is a victim of its own strategy. It is a data-driven, consensus-driven decision-making body, so it has to see the hard economic data first before it acts. Given that it often relies on lagging indicators, it will, by definition, almost always be "behind the curve". Its challenge is to ensure that this lag is as short as possible. Its other option is not much better. Bob Elliott, CEO at Unlimited Funds and a former executive at Bridgewater, says the Fed's "fundamental construct" means it is a reactive institution with limited powers of prediction, so it is better to observe than predict.

"The alternative is to manage policy based on predictions and trying to get ahead of the curve. Evidence suggests the Fed has little to no ability at predicting what is going to happen," Elliott says.

Others are less charitable, however. They argue that it is absolutely the Fed's job to be proactive in calibrating policy so that it meets its twin goals of "maximum employment and stable prices" and en-



WASHINGTON, US: Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during an interview with David Rubenstein for The Economic Club at the Marriott Marquis. — AFP

sure financial stability. "It's dangerous to have ignored all the recession indicators, just as they did in 2008," says David Blanchflower, professor of economics at Dartmouth College and former Bank of England rate-setter. "They are now playing catch up as the bad data comes in."

Will this time be different? When the Fed paper mentioned above was published in May, the rates market was pricing in around 125 bps of Fed easing between then and the end of 2025. But as the paper's authors noted, "Compared to the historical record, such shallow easing after roughly a year and half from the start of easing would be unprecedented."

May seems like a long time ago. Stock prices and bond yields are tumbling rapidly now, and the VIX volatility index - Wall Street's "fear index" - is at its highest-ever level except for 2008 and 2020.

If history is any guide - rates were slashed to zero in those two instances - we should be looking out for that elevator shaft. — Reuters

China needs more than 'incremental' consumer stimulus

HONG KONG: 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.

China's leaders signaled this week that fiscal support for the rest of the year will "focus on consumption", aiming to boost incomes and social welfare, days after announcing plans to use 150 billion yuan (\$20 billion) in government debt to finance trade-ins on consumer goods such as appliances. This marks a departure toward boosting chronically weak domestic demand after decades of reliance on exports and infrastructure spending that helped vault China to the world's second-biggest economy.

Still, the trade-in program, China's first debt-funded step to directly support household consumption nationwide, amounts to just 0.12 percent of gross domestic product. Further consumption stimulus is "plausible next year in the face of potentially stronger external headwinds", Citi analysts said.

The fridges-not-bridges shift is driven by growing unease with China's trade dominance, which has pushed the United States, Europe and emerging economies from Turkey to Indonesia to raise tariffs and place other barriers on Chinese products. In addition, the authorities are growing wary of debt-funded projects as they increase scrutiny on heavily indebted municipalities. Most of China's fiscal stimulus still goes into investment, but returns are dwindling and the spending has saddled local governments with \$13 trillion in debt. Local governments sold 1.49 trillion yuan (\$200 billion) of the special bonds used to fund stimulus in the first half of the year, just 38 percent of the full-year quota, making China's fiscal stance unexpectedly tight.

"The number of really good projects that produce stable income keeps getting smaller," an economic adviser to the government said on condition of anonymity. China's export outlook is likely to keep worsening, especially if Donald Trump returns to the White House, as the US former president and Republican candidate for November's election has threatened tariffs of up to 60 percent on all Chinese goods. — Reuters

German chancellor lines up crisis talks with property titans

FRANKFURT: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is launching a fresh bid to tackle a property crisis as the country braces for recession and elections that could bolster the far right. The government has scheduled a meeting of politicians, ministries and industry representatives in Hamburg on Dec 6, two top industry officials said.

The meeting will address the housing shortage in Europe's most populous country, one exacerbated by the failure of major developers and a crash in investment and financing as real estate prices slumped. The last such gathering in September produced a raft of government proposals but little concrete action. "It shows something is happening," Iris Schoeberl, president of the German Property Federation representing 37,000 firms, said of the renewed effort.

"It also sends a strong signal to the people that the chancellor is tackling the issue."

Tim-Oliver Mueller, head of the German Construction Industry Federation, lamented that "much of what was discussed previously has come to nothing". "We need concrete steps and real action," he said. Germany's 730 billion euro property industry contributes a fifth of the country's output, eclipsing its auto sector.

Industry leaders have been pushing for changes including a cut to Germany's property sales tax, which can be 6 percent of the price of a home, and relaxing rules to make it cheaper to build.



German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as they join a press conference on July 5, 2024 in Berlin. — AFP

The government didn't respond to a request for comment. The housing ministry said it was working to support the industry with measures such as speeding up the building approvals process.

For years, low interest rates and a strong economy fuelled a German property boom, which ended in 2022 when rampant inflation forced the European Central Bank to swiftly raise borrowing costs.

The ensuing funk resulted in a slowing of deals, stalled projects and top developers going bust. Recent data still shows an accelerating fall in building permits for apartments, and another plummet in new building starts in the first half of the year. While the ECB's June rate cut sparked hopes of a revival, executives remain cautious. Rolf Buch, chief executive of one of the nation's biggest landlords Vonovia, which reported another loss for the first half of the year, predicts more property companies will go bust. Ger-

many has failed to meet its goal of building 400,000 apartments a year as millions flock to the country to escape wars and in search of work.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has campaigned for policies to support housing, has a chance of winning state elections later this year as the popularity of Scholz's three-way coalition slips ahead of a 2025 federal vote.

"The housing shortage can lead to populists increasingly taking up the issue with supposedly simple answers," warned the German Property Federation's Schoeberl.

Scholz, who is regularly confronted about the lack of affordable housing, told one gathering in Mainz earlier this year: "We must find a way so that housing goes up where it is sought and needed." After spending tens of billions to tackle the energy crisis and boost defense spending, Germany has little left for the property crisis, with Mueller also blaming fragmented responsibility between the federal government and the 16 states for hobbling a response. Felix Pakleppa, chief executive of the ZDB industry association representing 35,000 building firms, said there should be subsidies and fewer energy-related regulations. "We in Germany have become accustomed to the gold standard for technical building specifications, which has made construction projects ever more demanding and costly," he said.

Since the September meeting, the drumbeat of bad news has continued, with the collapse of Rene Benko's Signa real estate empire, which had a major footprint in Germany, one of the more notable failures. Some banks have also come under stress while a Frankfurt skyscraper home to Germany's central bank and asset manager Deka filed for insolvency. Apollo-owned Demire also said four subsidiaries will file for insolvency after its bank refused to renegotiate a loan. — Reuters



CHONGQING, China: Workers sort chilli peppers for delivery at a purchase centre in southwestern China's Chongqing municipality on August 4, 2024. — AFP

Business

Nigerian president calls for end to protests, 'bloodshed'

Security forces crack down on rallies spurred by economic hardship

ABUJA: Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Sunday called for nationwide protests to cease and for "bloodshed" to end after security forces cracked down on rallies spurred by economic hardship. Thousands of people began taking to the streets last week to protest government policies and the high cost of living.

In many places the protests have eased since Thursday, but organizers said Tinubu's speech would not persuade them to leave the streets.

Rights group Amnesty International has accused security forces of killing at least 13 demonstrators in the first day of protests on Thursday, while police say seven people have died and denied responsibility. In a televised address, Tinubu urged the demonstrators "to suspend any further protest and create room for dialogue," his first public comments since the rallies started.

"I have heard you loud and clear. I understand the pain and the frustration that drive these protests," he said. "But we must not let violence and destruction tear our nation apart," he warned. "We must stop further bloodshed".

Tinubu blamed organizers for failing to prevent disorder, and used the speech to defend his record as well as outline measures he said would benefit young Nigerians and the economy. Africa's most populous country is suffering its worst economic crisis in a generation with high inflation and a tumbling naira after Tinubu ended a fuel subsidy and currency controls more than a year ago.

The US-based World Bank and International Monetary Fund said the measures were needed to revive the economy and the president again appealed for patience in his speech, saying his reforms would attract foreign investors. But the measures have dealt a heavy blow to Nigerians. Food prices have soared and hunger is spreading,

especially in the north.

Dubbed #EndBadGovernanceinNigeria, the protest movement won support with an online campaign that called for the government to reduce fuel prices and tackle the cost of living crisis, among other demands. But the authorities warned they would come down hard on attempts to copy recent anti-government protests in Kenya, where demonstrators forced the president to abandon new taxes.

Damilare Adenola, leader of the Take It Back group organizing protests in the capital Abuja, said the president had "no right to halt the expression of aggrieved citizens". "As for bloodshed, his government is the one who should cease killing peaceful protesters, because that won't stop the protest," he told AFP.

The country's police force said it had arrested nearly 700 people in the first two days of demonstrations, accusing them of "armed robbery, arson, mischief" and destroying property. Amnesty has urged police to release demonstrators and refrain from firing live rounds to break up crowds. On Friday, it said "security personnel at the locations where lives were lost deliberately used tactics designed to kill while dealing with gatherings of people protesting hunger and deep poverty".

Activists in the capital on Sunday vowed to push ahead with the rallies, which are planned to run until August 10. Abiodun Sanusi from the Take it Back group later told AFP the president's appeal had been "a waste of time".

"We have to keep protesting," Sanusi said, criticizing Tinubu for "doubling down" on his position and failing to budge on policies the protesters blame for the economic hardship. On Saturday, security forces again fired teargas at protesters in Abuja and residents told AFP that



ABUJA, Nigeria: This aerial view shows demonstrators marching during the End Bad Governance protest in Abuja on August 2, 2024. — AFP

police killed three people at a rally in the northern city of Kano. The city has seen intense clashes in recent days and locals said police in the Rijiyar Lemo district fired shots and tear gas at a crowd throwing stones on Saturday afternoon. Resident Sanusi Usman said the police used "live bullets to disperse the crowd".

"Three people were killed, including two minors and a pregnant woman who was hit as she was crossing the road," he said. Awwalu Ibrahim, also a resident of Rijiyar Lemo, told AFP that "one of the boys was nine years old," adding that the victim was his neighbor's son. Police have not responded to requests for comment. — AFP

Ethiopia will save \$4.9bn from debt restructuring: Govt

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia will enjoy \$4.9 billion in relief from debt repayments when it completes a long-delayed restructuring, State Finance Minister Eyob Tekalign said, adding that he hopes to sign deals with creditor nations in the coming months. The East African country, which became the third economy on the continent in as many years to default on its debt at the end of 2023, wants to put the debt overhaul back on track after agreeing a new International Monetary Fund financing program this week.

"We will sign and finalize with each individual (creditor) country over the course of the next few months," Eyob told Reuters, referring to the estimated savings to Ethiopia as a result of the restructuring. The country's total external debt stood at \$28.38 billion in March this year, finance ministry data showed. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, explaining recent economic reforms in a televised speech late on Thursday, said the estimated savings would include \$200 million from the restructuring of its \$1 billion Eurobond.

Eyob said that could be accomplished through "nominal reduction" of the value of the bond as part of the debt re-work.

Abiy also defended this week's switch to a market-determined foreign exchange rate, saying it aimed to close the gap between the official and black market rates and did not amount to a devaluation of the currency. The central bank allowed the birr currency to float freely on Monday, fulfilling a key condition for securing IMF support.

Since then, the birr has slipped at least 31.5 percent against the dollar to trade at 83.94 per greenback, the country's biggest lender, Commercial Bank of Ethiopia said, and some economic analysts and commentators have voiced concern that inflation could surge.

"There were two markets. One is 100 and the other is 50. So when the gap between the two became wide, it brought many dangers. So what we said, (the two) should be unified," Abiy said, chiding banks for failing to swiftly unify the two rates. "I believe your approach is not correct. The rate you are currently posting does not ensure unification," he told bank executives who were present when he spoke.

Banks posted new, weaker rates for the birr after Abiy's comments, with some quoting it at 90 per dollar, closer to the current black market rate of 118 per dollar. While lifting foreign exchange trading restrictions helped Ethiopia clinch the IMF deal and funding from other creditors including the World Bank, concern about the policy's inflationary impact on low-income households has led to a crackdown by authorities. The federal trade ministry has closed more than 700 shops for "unjustified price hikes and hoarding" after the new exchange rate kicked in, it said in a statement on Friday. At least two local governments have also taken action against shops raising prices.

The government and its creditors say the liberalization will help the private sector make a bigger contribution to the economy and boost long-term growth. — Reuters

Resurgent yen brings high-flying Japan Inc back to earth

TOKYO: A resurgent yen helped bring Japanese stocks crashing back to earth on Monday, leaving investors scrambling to gauge the potentially diminished outlook for earnings, and snuffing out a months-long dramatic run by the Tokyo market. In just three trading sessions the Nikkei share average has lost a fifth of its value. On Monday it tumbled 12.4 percent, marking its second-largest decline on record and its biggest since the Black Monday crash of October 1987.

In part, the sell-off has been driven by the recent turnaround in the yen after the Bank of Japan began to raise rates for the first time in decades, most recently last week. Now investors are forced to size up Japan Inc's prospects without the extra cushion from the currency, which has helped many heavyweight exporters. Up until a few days ago, the Japanese stock market was seen as a global stand-out, having gained almost 30 percent last year and touching a lifetime high last month.

"All the benefits, all the tailwinds from forex that have been propping up Nikkei 225 stocks and exporters, multinationals, it's all gone," said Amir Anvarzadeh of Asymmetric Advisors, a Japan-focused equity advisory firm. Now, companies now will have to do well on their own merits, he said.

A weaker yen drives up cost for small businesses and households, but it is largely positive for big exporters, such as Toyota Motor, because it makes their products cheaper overseas and boosts profits when foreign earnings are brought home. The yen traded around its strongest level in seven months on Monday, at 142 to the dollar. It has gained about 14 percent over the last month, recovering after months of losses.

To get a sense of the size of the potential disruption for Japan's industrial giants, one needs look no further than Toyota. The world's largest automaker says every 1 yen change against the dollar means a difference of 50 billion yen (\$350 million) in profit. At Toyota's latest quarterly earnings, announced last week, the currency contributed 370 billion yen to operating profit.

The selling has spread beyond exporters, with banks and other industries also shredded, casting a cloud over the Japanese market's recent comeback, which was seen as a triumphant revival after years in deflationary doldrums.

Bitcoin, ether hit multi-month lows amid recession fears

NEW YORK: Bitcoin and ether plunged on Monday to multi-month lows as worries over a possible US recession in the wake of soft data gripped financial markets and triggered a rush out of risky assets. The selloff marks a stunning reversal just days after optimism fueled by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's speech pushed bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, over the \$70,000 mark for the first time in more than a month. Crypto markets have gotten a boost this year after the US Securities and Exchange Commission approved exchange-traded funds to track the spot prices of bitcoin and ether. More recently,



TOKYO: A pedestrian walks past a display board showing the closing numbers after record losses on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, along with the yen-US dollar rate, along a street in Tokyo on August 5, 2024. — AFP

While corporate Japan's fundamentals remain largely solid, analysts said, the sell-off is a reminder that markets - at least in the short-term - do not always reflect fundamentals. With many exporters assuming a yen exchange rate of 140 or 145 to the dollar, investors had been expecting to see stronger earnings ahead given the yen traded at 160 a few weeks ago, said Kei Okamura, a portfolio manager at Neuberger Berman in Tokyo. "A lot of global investors have been looking for Japanese companies to announce upward revisions" due to the currency, he said.

"That's why from some people's perspective the upward revisions might not be there, but from our perspective, the fundamentals still look okay." Exporters' shares were also hit by concerns about a slowdown in the United States, one of Japan's biggest export markets, and one absolutely vital to its auto industry. "If the US economy slows down, cars won't sell," said Takatoshi Ito, a strategist at Pictet Asset Management Japan. Automakers are also heavyweight components of the Nikkei and the broader Topix index, Ito said, something that adds to the overall pain for markets.

Subaru, which reported that almost 80 percent of its revenue came from North America in the first quarter, on Monday said it was sticking

by its forecast for a 142 yen exchange rate for the full year. Chief Financial Officer Katsuyuki Mizuma told an earnings briefing the automaker would have to take a look at the incentives it offers in the United States. Every 1 yen increase in the exchange rate meant a shift in 10 billion yen of operating profit, he said. Printer maker Epson last week said it was revising its exchange rate assumption to 151 yen to the dollar from 144 yen previously - and lifting its profit outlook as a result, which now may look in doubt.

The market turmoil may come with a silver lining for investors who look beyond a group of Japan's export champions. The yen's reversal could offer relief to the broader economy after its months-long decline has pushed up consumer prices, raising deep concerns about the outlook for spending in Japan.

The yen's decline has even prompted the founder of Uniqlo parent Fast Retailing to warn there was "no merit" to a weaker yen, given that Japan imports raw materials from all over the world before manufacturing and exporting. "A stronger yen might not be good for the Nikkei 225 stocks and the foreigners owning it," said Anvarzadeh of Asymmetric Advisors. "But it's good for the country, it's good for the economy." — Reuters

however, the currencies have tumbled alongside other assets including global equities, as investors fear a US recession could be on the horizon, with rising geopolitical worries also weighing.

Bitcoin has lost over a third of its value since hitting a record high in March. The increasing correlation with equities has also undermined its reputation as a safe-haven asset. "It's a big reminder that bitcoin and crypto in general are risk assets and sit at the pointy end of the risk spectrum," said Tony Sycamore, market analyst at IG.

Bitcoin fell 12 percent to \$52,054, heading for its largest one-day fall since November 2022. Ether slid as much as 21 percent to its lowest since January.

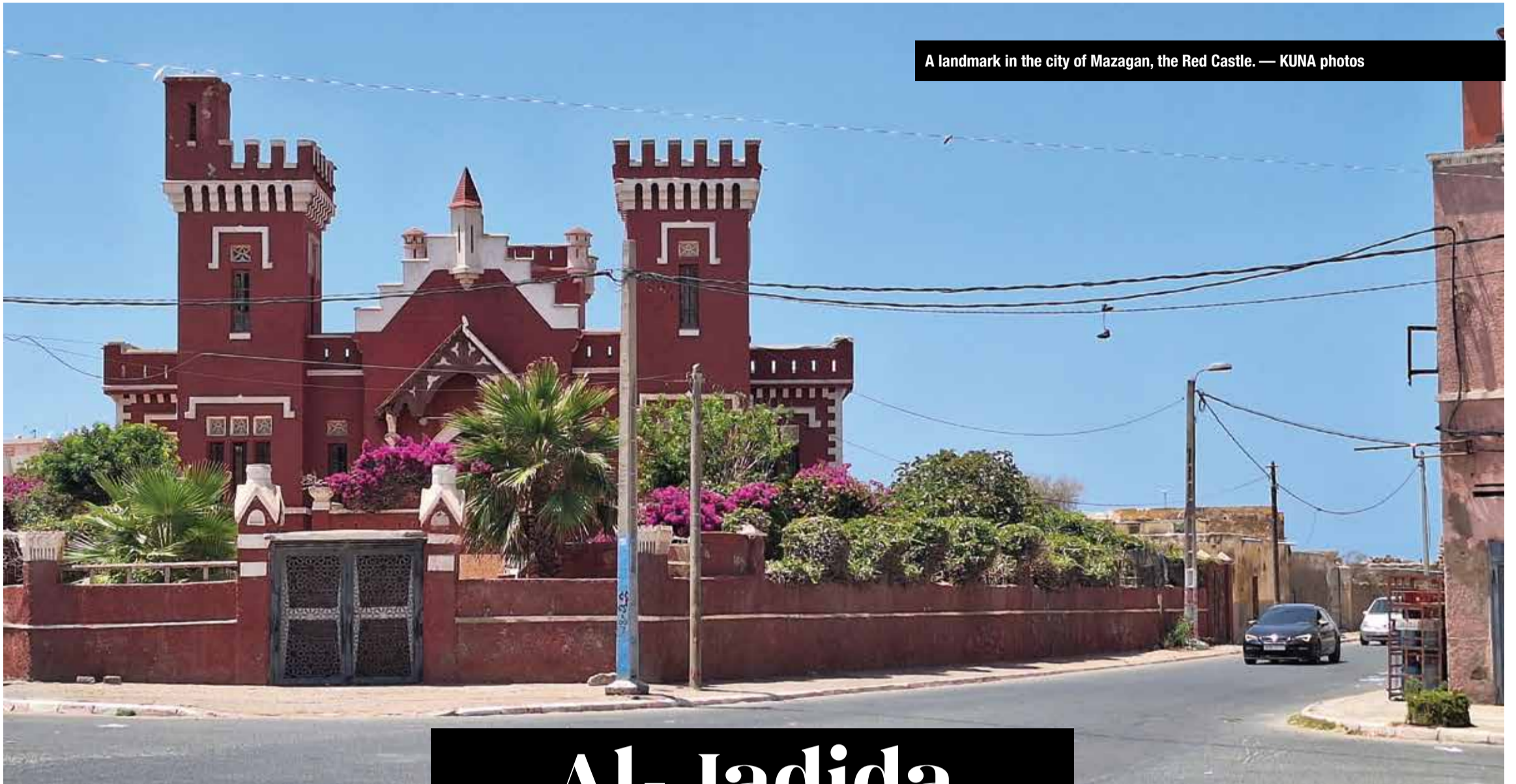
Sycamore said bitcoin was testing trend channel support at the \$54,000/\$53,000 area and needed to hold there to "prevent further capitulation towards \$48,000." Shares in crypto-related US stocks also plunged before the open on Monday. Miners CleanSpark, Bitfarms, Riot Platforms



MOSCOW: A souvenir bitcoin token is seen pictured with a 100 ruble bill in Moscow in this July 30, 2024 file photo. — AFP

and Marathon Digital slumped between 12 percent and 18 percent. Coinbase shares lost 10 percent, while bitcoin buyer MicroStrategy slipped nearly 15 percent. — Reuters

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2024



A landmark in the city of Mazagan, the Red Castle. — KUNA photos

Al-Jadida

Coastal Moroccan city of beauty, steep history



The door of the Portuguese cistern.



Bouafi Lighthouse, a historic landmark built at the beginning of the last century.

Al-Jadida, also known as Mazagan, is an Atlantic Ocean coastal city in Morocco steeped in history and mesmerizing beauty. Governed by many in the past, including Moroccan Sultans, Portuguese, and the French, Al-Jadida spews history and reverence, making it one of the

UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Located around 90 kilometers south of the city of Casablanca, Al-Jadida is home for the Portuguese fort and neighborhood, which was built in the 16th century with its sprawling alleyways and ancient churches. — KUNA



A port for traditional fishing boats.



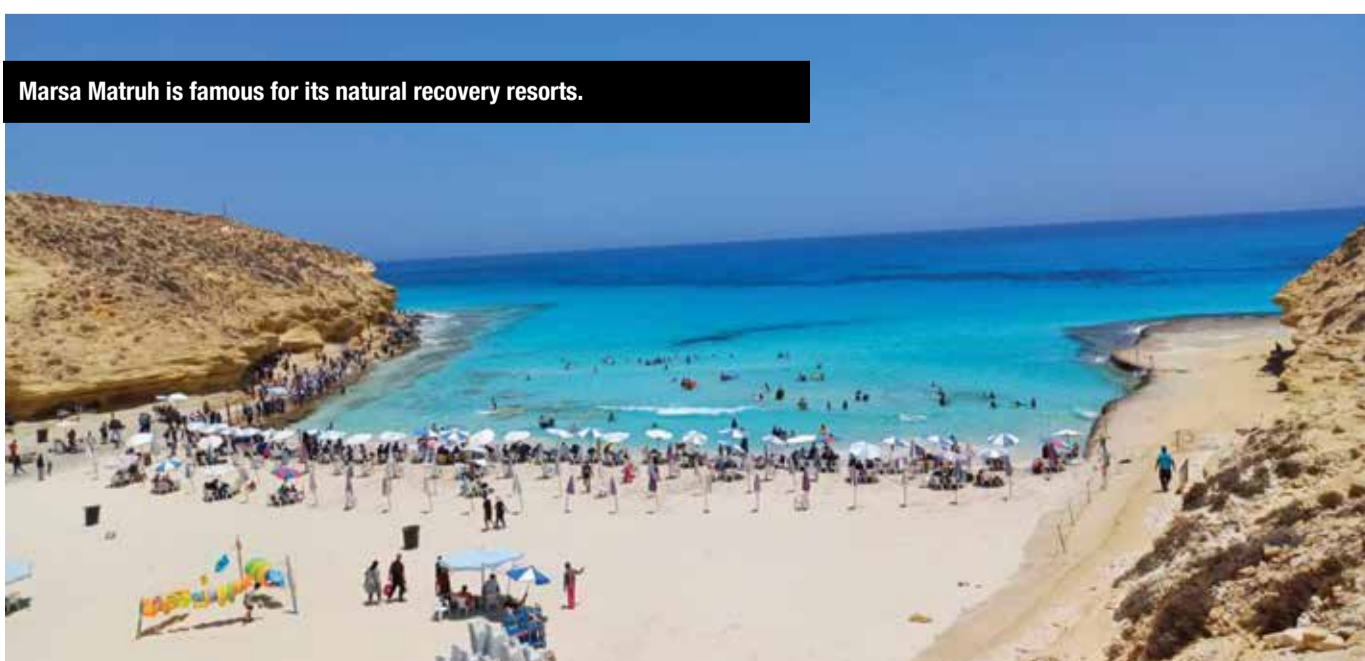
An old cannon pointed at the sea to mimic war scenes.



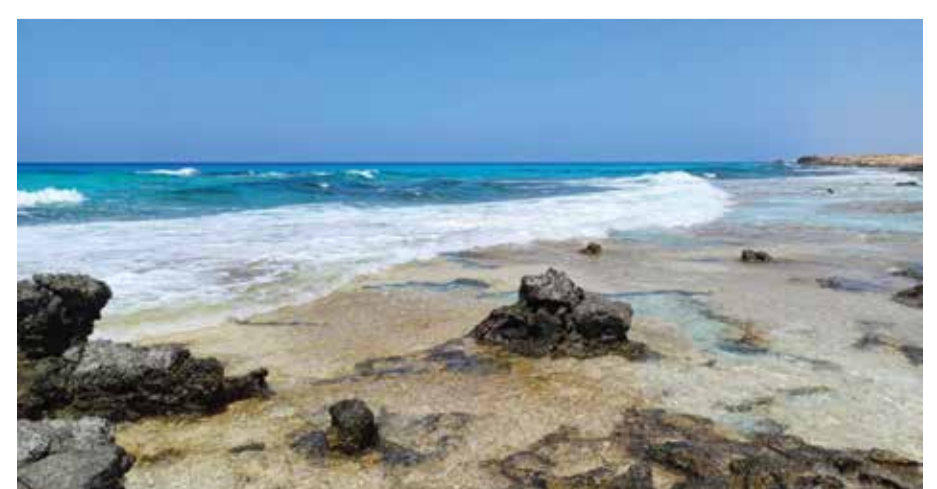
Egypt's Marsa Matruh breathtaking lagoons, beaches attracting tourists worldwide

Marsa Matruh, located in Egypt's Mediterranean Coast, 524 kilometers from the Capital, is known for its lagoons and white sandy beaches, attracting many from across the globe. Marsa Matruh is on a large bay with resorts stretching along the shore including Cleopatra's Beach, which is surrounded by rocks, creating

a natural pool called Cleopatra's Bath. Marsa Matruh is one of the best tourist destinations on the north Coast for what is called medical tourism, especially the Siwa Oasis, which is famous for its natural recovery resorts for treating rheumatism, joint and spinal pain. — KUNA



Marsa Matruh is famous for its natural recovery resorts.





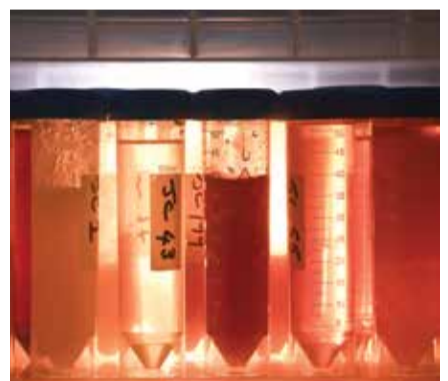
UK beekeepers and scientists tackle sticky problem of honey fraud



Beekeeper Lynne poses with bees on a frame from her bee hive at Westley Cottage.



Head of Nano Science Research Group, Alex Rozhin poses with a test sample of Mexican honey.



A photograph taken on June 17, 2024 shows sample pots containing honey at Aston University.

Lynne Ingram cuts a peaceful figure as she tends to a row of humming beehives in a leafy corner of Somerset, southwest England. But the master beekeeper, who has been keeping hives for more than 40 years, has found herself in a fight against a tricky and evolving foe — honey fraudsters. The practice of adulterating honey is well known, and historically adulterants such as ash and potato flour have been used. Now, advancements in technology and science have made it much easier, with “bespoke, designer or bioengineered” syrups used as diluting agents capable of fooling authenticity tests, Ingram said.

She founded the UK Honey Authenticity Network (HAN UK) in 2021 to raise awareness about natural honey and warn of the threat posed by fraud. “One of the impacts we’re seeing all over the world is beekeepers going out of business,” she said. Adulterated honey can be sold to retailers for a price several times lower than genuine producers can afford. As well as producing their own honey, many larger-scale beekeepers have crop pollination contracts with farmers, delivering thousands of colonies to growers across the country.

If they go out of business due to unfair competition, this vital natural method of pollinating crops is reduced and food production suffers. The British Beekeepers Association, which represents more than 25,000 producers and where Ingram is a honey ambassador, wants the risk of fraud to be recognized to protect the industry and consumers. “I’d like to see an acknowledgement that there is actually an issue here,” she said.

Better labelling

In May, the European Union updated its honey regulations to ensure clearer product labelling and a “honey traceability system” to increase transparency. On the labelling for blended honeys, for example, all countries of origin are now required to appear near a product’s name, where previously it

was only mandatory to state whether blending had occurred. Labelling in the UK, which has now left the EU, is not as stringent and Ingram believes consumers are “being misled” by vague packaging.

Behind the EU action is an apparent increase in adulterated honey arriving in the 27-nation bloc. The substandard adulterates can have adverse effects on consumers’ health, such as raising the risk of diabetes, obesity, and liver or kidney damage. Between 2021 and

of it on the shelves,” said Ingram, adding that adulterated honey was “widely available” in big supermarkets.

Lasers

Behind the closed blinds of a research laboratory at Aston University in Birmingham, central England, researchers fighting honey fraud are harnessing cutting-edge technology. Aston scientists and beekeepers, including Ingram, are using light to reveal the contents of honey samples at the mo-

of fraud inside samples” with “different spectral bands corresponding to syrup (or) to natural honey”. Rozhin said FLE is more accurate than existing tests and can provide results far quicker, at a greatly reduced cost and without the need for highly trained personnel. One of the Aston team’s aims is to create a version of FLE that can be used by honey producers or even consumers with scaled-down equipment or eventually just a smartphone.

Rolling the test out like this would



Research Associate, Raghavan Chinnambedu Murugesan handles honey samples at Aston University in Birmingham, central England.



Head of Nano Science Research Group, Alex Rozhin holds a box of honey test samples at Aston University.

2022, 46 percent of the honey tested as it entered the EU was flagged as potentially fraudulent, up from 14 percent in the 2015-17 period. Of the suspicious consignments, 74 percent were of Chinese origin. Honey imported from the UK had a 100-percent suspicion rate.

The EU said this honey was probably produced in third countries and blended again in the UK before being sent to the bloc. The UK is the second largest importer of honey in terms of volume in the whole of Europe. China is its top supplier. Not all of the UK’s imported honey leaves the country, however. Considerable quantities stay on the domestic market. “We think there’s an awful lot

molecular level. The technique — known as Fluorescence Excitation-Emission Spectroscopy (FLE) — involves firing lasers into samples. The light frequencies re-emitted are then collated into a three-dimensional image — or “molecular fingerprint” — of the honey tested.

Alex Rozhin, the project lead and a reader in nanotechnology, said the test “can trace different molecules through the spectrum and confirm which type of biochemicals are present”. In the darkened lab, the light from different honeys is clearly visible. The first gives off a vivid green and the second a cooler blue, indicating distinct chemical compositions. Using FLE, Rozhin says his team “can immediately trace a concentration

also accelerate the creation of a honey database which, through machine learning, could be used as a catalogue of biometric signatures. “If we get a new sample and it’s been tampered with and it’s different from how the database is built up, we’ll know there’s something obscure,” said Steven Daniels, an Aston research associate specializing in machine learning. Ingram said the test could close international gaps in testing methods by establishing a unified standard, but the government needed to monitor the sector too. “We really need to get to grips with this,” she said. — AFP



Beekeeper Lynne prepares the smoker at Westley Cottage.



Beekeeper Lynne tends to a bee hive at Westley Cottage.



Beekeeper Lynne prepares the smoker at Westley Cottage in East Huntspill, Somerset, western England. - AFP photos

Lifestyle



Wooden debris show remains of the original location of the former tree house.



Memorial items are displayed at Treetops Lodge.

Kenya's Treetops hotel reopens after COVID shutdown

Kenya's renowned Treetops hotel, where Britain's then Princess Elizabeth was staying when she became queen, has reopened its doors after closing down during the COVID pandemic. First opened in 1932 as an overnight stay for wealthy and intrepid visitors, Treetops Lodge overlooks a

British colony, the first stop of a tour of the Commonwealth, when her father King George VI died of lung cancer. Two years after the historic visit to Kenya, with Elizabeth having assumed the throne, Treetops burned down in what was rumored to be an arson attack by anti-colonial Mau Mau rebels.

A new, much larger hotel was built on elevated wooden stilts on the opposite side of the watering hole to the original setting, where it still stands today. "We are celebrating (the) revival of an icon in the tourism circuit," Kenya Tourism Board chairman Francis Gichamba said at the weekend opening ceremony at Treetops. He said that for the first time since 2019, Kenya had welcomed more than two million visitors—without giving a time frame—and was aiming for three million by the end of the year. The re-opening was attended by Kenyan Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and other dignitaries, including British High Commissioner Neil Wigan.

"We value the history linked to the Treetops Lodge. It has a unique ecosystem. The reopening will bring more prosperity to the local community and more tourists," Wigan said. King Charles III, who became monarch after the death of Queen Elizabeth in September 2022, visited Kenya in October-November last year. — AFP



The photo on the wall shows the portrait of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II of England (left), her mother (center) and Prince Philip (right) in the suite called "Princess Elizabeth" at Treetops Lodge.

watering hole in the Aberdares National Park, about a three-hour drive from the Kenyan capital Nairobi. It shut down in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic that devastated tourism in Kenya and across the world.

Elizabeth, then 25, was staying at Treetops in February 1952 with her husband Prince Philip on a visit to the then



An aerial view shows wooden debris of the original location of the former tree house.

Greek islands and tourists search for 'balance' amid summer crush

When Frenchwoman Nadia Romon picked the island of Hydra for her Greek holiday, she was looking for "authenticity" far from the crowded summer circus. This ruled out big-name destinations such as Mykonos and Santorini. "We wouldn't enjoy it! Too many people, too much stress," the 55-year-old said. But with Greece and its crystal-clear waters firmly back on the global travel map after a 10-year debt crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, finding this elusive combination is easier said than done.

Last year, despite deadly fires and a long heatwave, 32.7 million foreigners visited the Mediterranean country—the highest number ever. And Greece's Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni told AFP in a recent interview that 2024 had "begun with a significant increase" in tourist numbers and was set to be "another record year".

"A balance must be found" between economic gains and the pressure visitors place on the environment and local populations, she said. As he watched bathers plunge into the Aegean Sea's turquoise waters, 52-year-old Romanian holiday-maker Matei Paun observed that "it's not easy" to get away from the crowds with so many tourists. An avid fan of Greece, Paun has a tip: opt for islands with no airport such as Hydra, around 90 minutes by boat from Piraeus, the major port close to Athens.

'Out of control'

Like their customers, many of the island's shopkeepers cite Mykonos and Santorini as examples of overcrowding best avoided. "We must maintain the elegance" of Hydra, said 52-year-old restaurant owner Nikos Daglis. The island, where cars are banned, enjoys an image of chic furnished by the many artists who have fallen under its spell — foremost among them the late legendary Canadian poet and singer Leonard Cohen.

But with chic and cachet comes higher prices and bigger crowds, with Hilda Eksian, manager of the Phaedra Hotel, admitting that the situation is "a little out of control". The 68-year-old was appalled to see rooms going for 1,600 euros (\$1,747) a night, and complained that it was almost impossible to find a deckchair on the beach or a free table at a restaurant last summer. Hydra "can't take any more people", Eksian said. She wished journalists would stop promoting the place, arguing that Hydra is "already more (well-known) than it needs to be".

Despite high prices, Hydra has been "flooded with tourists" since the end of pandemic-era travel restrictions, said Harriet Jarman, a Briton who organizes horseback rides. But Jarman, who has lived on the island for 10 years, does not see much alternative to letting visitors flow in. "Here we don't have any other industry. If it wasn't for tourism, what would we do?" she said. After de-

acades of exposure, many Greek islands face other tourism-related perils. Those range from water shortages, pollution and waste management problems to classic cases of badly behaved visitors. In June, fireworks believed to have been launched from a tourist yacht sparked a fire in one of the island's few forested areas, prompting outrage in Greece and abroad. Greek authorities are now seeking to diversify tourism from the classic "beach and sun" formula by encouraging other activities such as diving and hiking.

"We're also trying to promote destinations that are less well known internationally," especially in mainland Greece, Kefalogianni said. Another option is to further develop tourism in the off-season—now more feasible because of milder winters caused by global warming. Spreading out the season would also help cover the loss of visitors who steer clear of Greece in the summer because of heatwaves and fires, the research institute of prominent Greek tourism association SETE said in December. A year ago, Hydra completed a network of walking trails built in collaboration with hiking co-operative Paths of Greece. Hiking will enable Greece to "showcase the quality of its landscapes and culture to tourists who appreciate them," said the co-operative's director Fivos Tsaravopoulos. — AFP



A general view of the Greek island of Hydra. — AFP



Shah Rukh Khan

Shah Rukh Khan to be honored at Locarno Film Festival

Switzerland's Locarno Film Festival opens on Wednesday with Shah Rukh Khan, Jane Campion, Alfonso Cuarón and Irene Jacob set to be honored with special awards. Founded in 1946, Locarno is one of the world's longest-running annual film festivals and focuses on auteur cinema. Held on the shores of Lake Maggiore, in the Italian-speaking Ticino region of southern Switzerland, films are screened in Locarno's central square - a feature of Swiss national life depicted on the country's 20-franc banknotes. The open-air Piazza Grande holds up to 8,000 moviegoers, and films are shown on one of the largest screens in the world.

Bollywood superstar Khan, 58, will on Saturday be given the Pardo alla Carriera award for people whose artistic contributions have redefined cinema. "The wealth and breadth of his contribution to Indian cinema is unprecedented," said the festival's artistic director Giona A. Nazzaro. "Khan is a king who has never lost touch with the audience that crowned him. This brave and daring artist has always been willing to challenge himself." The 77th festival, which runs until August 17, features 225 films, including 104 world premieres and 15 debut movies.

Locarno's top prize is the Golden Leopard. Previous winning directors include Roberto Rossellini, John Ford, Stanley Kubrick, Milos Forman, Mike Leigh and Jim Jarmusch. Seventeen films - all world or international premieres - are vying for the award, including movies from Lithuania, France, Austria, Italy and South Korea. The Golden Leopard comes with a prize fund of 75,000 Swiss francs (\$87,400), shared between the director and the producer. Switzerland's

largest film event will feature a retrospective dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Columbia Pictures.

'Tortured, fascinating characters'

New Zealand's Campion will be recognized with the Leopard of Honor, given to outstanding personalities of world cinema. She was the first woman to be nominated twice for the best director Oscar: first for "The Piano" (1993) and then for "The Power of the Dog" (2021), which secured her the Academy Award. "Her work, peopled with tortured, fascinating characters and marked by an astonishing skill in grappling with the more disturbing side of the human condition, represents one of the undisputed pinnacles of contemporary filmmaking," Nazzaro said.

Previous recipients include Ennio Morricone, Jean-Luc Godard, Bernardo Bertolucci, Paul Verhoeven, Terry Gilliam and Werner Herzog. Mexican filmmaker Cuarón, who won the best director Oscar for "Gravity" (2013) and "Roma" (2018), will receive the lifetime achievement award. "Cuarón has reinvented himself as an artist with each new film," said Nazzaro. French-Swiss actress Jacob, who starred in "The Double Life of Veronique" (1991) and "Three Colours: Red" (1994), will receive the Leopard Club Award, given for film work touching the collective imagination.

Stacey Sher - the US film producer behind "Pulp Fiction", "Get Shorty", "Gattaca", "Erin Brockovich", "Django Unchained" and "The Hatefule Eight" - will receive the Raimondo Rezzonico Award for major achievements in international movie production. Nearly 150,000 people attended last year's festival. —AFP

Sports

Spain, USA on course for Olympic women's football final showdown

Spain are appearing in the Olympic women's football for the first time

LYON: World Cup holders Spain and four-time gold medalists the United States are on course for a showdown in the Olympic women's football final with the two heavyweights favourites to win on Tuesday.

Led by reigning Ballon d'Or Aitana Bonmati, Spain face surprise semi-finalists Brazil in Marseille while a rejuvenated USA under new coach Emma Hayes meet Germany in Lyon. The Americans are the traditional powerhouse of women's international football and their performances at the Olympics suggest they are back as a force after a disappointing World Cup last year.

Hayes only took over in May and is still getting to know her team but the USA topped their group with three wins from three and edged an impressive Japan after extra time in the quarter-finals, with Trinity Rodman scoring the crucial goal.

They have already beaten Germany in the tournament, and that 4-1 thumping in Marseille in the group stage suggests they should fancy their chances of winning through to the gold medal match in Paris on Saturday.

"We are so confident going into games. That comes from Emma. She believes in us so much," said the forward Sophia Smith when asked about the impact of the new coach. Hayes, 47, arrived after over a decade of success at Chelsea and is hoping to lead the USA to a record-extending fifth gold since women's football was introduced at the Olympics in 1996. They last won the title in 2012.

"I coached Chelsea for 12 years. I am not going to be disappointed at anything this team does because I respect football at the top level, and for us to arrive tactically at the place we have so quickly is real credit to the players," the coach said of her new charges.

Germany were gold medalists in 2016, the one Olympics in which the USA did not win any medal in women's football. Under Horst Hrubesch, they finished second in their group behind the USA and then edged out reigning Olympic champions Canada on penalties in the quarter-finals.

Goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger, who played under Hayes at Chelsea, was the star against Canada as she saved two penalties in the shoot-out before converting the winning kick herself. "It was a very tough game, but when it went to the shootout, I knew we had a great goalkeeper. It gave us confidence, and she got us the victory," defender Kathrin Hendrich told FIFA.com.

Marta ban for Brazil

Spain are appearing in the Olympic women's football for the first time but their World Cup triumph last year showed they are currently the most accomplished side in the international game. However, they were moments away from being eliminated in the quarter-finals by Colombia, as they trailed 2-0 before fighting back to equalize through Irene Paredes deep in injury time.

They then won on penalties, with Barcelona's Bonmati converting the decisive spot-kick. "We don't want to leave here. We want to keep our Olympic dream alive. This team has no limits," declared young attacking star Salma Paralluelo to FIFA.com ahead of facing Brazil.

The Brazilians have twice won Olympic silver, in 2004 and 2008, but were not expected to get this far at the Paris Games. They scraped through their group as a best third-placed side despite a 2-0 defeat by Spain in a game marked by the send-



NANTES: (Files) Spain's midfielder #6 Aitana Bonmati celebrates after scoring her team's first goal in the women's group C football match between Spain and Japan during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at La Beaujoire Stadium in Nantes on July 25, 2024. — AFP

ing-off of legendary captain Marta.

Brazil then stunned hosts France in the last eight, winning the quarter-final 1-0 without their suspended skipper. Marta was handed a two-match ban by FIFA for her red card in the last

group game, meaning she will not be able to feature against Spain.

The Brazilian Football Confederation called that suspension "excessive" and said it would appeal to enable the 38-year-old to feature. — AFP



Graham Thorpe

Former England batsman Thorpe dies aged 55

LONDON: Former England batsman and coach Graham Thorpe has died at the age of 55, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Monday. Thorpe won 100 Test caps between 1993 and 2005 and scored 16 centuries during a stellar England career and was regarded as one of the best batters of his generation.

In total he scored 6,744 Test runs for England at an average of 44.66 and also appeared in 82 one-day internationals. Alongside his international exploits he enjoyed a 17-year spell with his county side Surrey.

After retiring in 2005, he transitioned into coaching, working with the England international teams in various roles between 2010 and 2022. "There seem to be no appropriate words to describe the deep shock we feel at Graham's death," the ECB said in a statement.

"More than one of England's finest-ever batters, he was a beloved member of the cricket family and revered by fans all over the world. "His skill was unquestioned, and his abilities and achievements across a 13-year international career brought so much happiness to his teammates and England and Surrey CCC supporters alike.

"Later, as a coach, he guided the best England men's talent to some incredible victories across all formats of the game." After leaving his role with England following defeat to Australia in the 2021-2022 Ashes series, Thorpe was appointed head coach of Afghanistan.

However, he did not take up the role after the Professional Cricketers' Association revealed in May 2022 Thorpe had fallen seriously ill with an unclear diagnosis. Tributes from stars past and present have poured in for a player that was often a shining light during a difficult time for the England Test side during the 1990s.

Thorpe scored 114 on his debut against Australia at Trent Bridge in 1993 and would go on to become a mainstay of the middle-order making a highest Test score of 200 not out against New Zealand in 2002. "RIP Thorpe. Thanks for all the advice throughout my career, you were a great player and a brilliant team-mate," former England captain Michael Vaughan posted on X.

"You have gone far too young but you leave as an England cricket legend." Current England skipper Ben Stokes posted a photo of him wearing a jersey emblazoned with "Thorpe 564", the latter's Test cap number, with a series of heart emojis.

Thorpe spent the entirety of his playing career at Surrey and chair Oli Slipper said the country had lost one of its "great sons". "Graham is one of the great sons of Surrey and there is an overwhelming sadness that he will not walk through the gates of the Oval again," Slipper said in a Surrey statement.

"He is a legend of Surrey and brought great pride to the Club wearing both the Three Feathers and the Three Lions. "He made outstanding contributions to the Club as a cricketer, and as a man, and he will be so sorely missed." — AFP

Spain's Badosa, US' Korda capture Washington Open

WASHINGTON: Former world number two Paula Badosa of Spain and American Sebastian Korda each enjoyed the "most special moment" of their careers on Sunday by winning titles at the ATP and WTA Washington Open.

Badosa outlasted Czech Marie Bouzkova 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 to capture her first WTA crown since a severe back injury last year. "I think it's maybe the most special moment, especially because I went through a lot," Badosa said. "I had to fight through that and I had to keep believing in myself."

Korda won the last 10 games to rally past Italy's Flavio Cobolli 4-6, 6-2, 6-0. It marks the first time in ATP history a father and son have won the same title, Petr Korda having been Washington's 1992 champion.

"One of my biggest goals was one day coming here and hopefully winning the tournament," Korda said. "This is probably the most special moment of my career so far." Badosa battled through two storm stoppages before taking her first title since January 2022 at Sydney in the US Open tuneup.

"Today was a very tough day for me because I really wanted to win this title no matter what. It was very emotional," she said. "Finally I got it. I'm super proud of myself after all. I'm very happy with this title."

Burgan Bank reaffirms support of Kuwaiti athletes at Paris Games

KUWAIT: As the 2024 Olympic Games unfold in Paris, Burgan Bank reaffirms its unwavering support of Team Kuwait, commending the extraordinary athletes' efforts in pursuing Olympic glory. This comes as part of Burgan's renewed partnership with the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) and its proud sponsorship of Team Kuwait. These initiatives align with the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program and efforts to elevate Kuwait's sporting landscape. Moreover, it reinforces Burgan Bank's commitment to integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into its endeavors to advance Kuwaiti society across all dimensions.

"The Burgan Bank family takes pride in Team Kuwait's participation in the 2024 Olympic Games,"



Kholoud Rida AlFeel

Toronto in Leagues Cup knockout with Messi's Miami

WASHINGTON: Toronto FC edged reigning CONCACAF Champions Cup champion Pachuca 2-1 on Sunday to book a first-round knockout match against defending Leagues Cup champion Inter Miami. Canadian defender Kobe Franklin's goal in the 78th minute gave Toronto the home victory and the group title to reach the knockout rounds.

The World Cup-style event features MLS and Liga MX Mexican sides in three-team groups with

It was the Spaniard's first title since missing the last six months of the 2023 campaign with a back injury that made Badosa wonder if she would ever win another tournament. Moments after the triumph was complete, wildcard entrant Badosa lay on her back on the court and cried but later kissed the court in delight.

"What I went through the last year, being back, winning big titles, it means a lot. That's why I had this mix of emotions," she said. "Was a little bit tough to control my emotions." Korda, 24, won his second career ATP title after Parma in 2021 and will jump to a career-high 18th in Monday's world rankings.

First-time ATP finalist Cobolli, a 22-year-old from Florence, was undone after double faulting to hand Korda his first break to 3-2 in the second set. Cobolli never won another game. "Sorry for the end of the match but I was dead," Cobolli said.

'We can say I'm back'

Badosa, who sank to 140th in world rankings earlier this year, will be 40th in Monday's rankings. "The thing I'm most proud of is how I handled the tough moments, the pressure moments," Badosa said. "What I learned is that I'm stronger than I thought. If I believe and I go for it, well, good things come like a title," she added.

"Sometimes I've been doubting on myself. I think I shouldn't do that." Badosa improved to 4-0 in career WTA finals, having also taken titles at Belgrade and Indian Wells in 2021.

"Now I'm an athlete again," Badosa said. "Yeah, we can say I'm back." Badosa improved to 3-0 in her rivalry with fellow 26-year-old Bouzkova, also winning in 2017 at Las Vegas and 2022 in Miami. Bouzkova, ranked 43rd, fell to 1-6 in WTA finals,

said Kholoud Rida AlFeel, Deputy General Manager - Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank. "Regardless of the competition's outcome, each team member's dedication and countless hours of rigorous training are truly worth praising and celebrating. They represent Kuwait with distinction amidst the world's elite athletes."

"Burgan Bank's presence alongside Team Kuwait throughout the games is a testament to our support for these exceptional Kuwaiti athletes," she added. "We also extend our sincere gratitude to the Kuwait Olympic Committee for their invaluable partnership, cooperation, and meticulous arrangements in ensuring the well-being and comfort of our nation's athletes."

The Kuwaiti contingent at the Paris 2024 Olympics comprises nine athletes competing in shooting, athletics, sailing, rowing, swimming, and fencing, including Amal Al Roumi, Ameena Shah, Lara Dashti, Soaad Al-Faqaan, Khaled Al-Mudhaf, Mohammad Al-Daihani, Mohammad Zubaid, Yousef Al-Shamlan, and Yaqoub Al-Youha.

Several of these athletes have benefited from Burgan Bank's sponsorship through the Olympic Athlete Preparation Program and at various regional and international competitions.

Burgan Bank's enduring commitment to nurturing athletic talent and fostering a thriving sports culture in Kuwait is evident in its extensive sponsorship portfolio. This includes supporting Tareq Al-Qallaf, Kuwait's wheelchair fencing world cham-

two clubs advancing from each to the knockout rounds. US midfielder Derrick Etienne had given Toronto the lead in the 44th minute but Moroccan Oussama Idrissi equalized for Pachuca in the 59th.

Miami has been without Argentine superstar Lionel Messi with a right ankle injury suffered in his nation's Copa America final triumph last month over Colombia. In Florida, 10-man host Orlando City clinched a group title by beating Atletico San Luis 5-4 on penalties after playing to a 1-1 draw.

Orlando lost US defender Kyle Smith to a red card in the 29th minute but the Lions got a goal from Argentine striker Ramiro Enrique in the sixth minute of first-half stoppage time. San Luis answered on Rodrigo Durado's goal in the 71st minute but losing the penalties shootout eliminated the Mexican side, advancing Montreal to the knockout stage.



WASHINGTON: Paula Badosa of Spain stands with the championship trophy after winning the women's singles finals match against Marie Bouzkova of Czechia on the final day of the Mubadala Citi DC Open 2024. — AFP

her lone win coming at Prague in 2022.

"I gave it my everything," Bouzkova said. "We battled pretty much for every point. She handled it well in the end also. "Pretty much looks like she's back." — AFP



Kuwaiti athletes at Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

pion, the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, the Kuwait national Padel team, and the Kuwait Women's Football League. Additionally, the Bank has contributed to the success of major sporting events such as the 8th edition of Flare Festival, Kuwait's premier fitness challenge, the 5th edition of the Women's Football Tournament, and the 2023 final match of the Kuwait Crown Prince Cup.

Mexico City side Cruz Azul, which played a goal-less draw with Charlotte and lost a penalties shootout, played Philadelphia to a 1-1 draw and then won a penalty kick shootout 5-3 over the host Union. Argentine striker Carlos Rotondi scored for Cruz Azul in the 41st minute but the Union equalized in the 88th minute on a goal by Hungarian midfielder Daniel Gazdag.

Both advanced to knockout play. Santos Laguna beat Atlanta United 5-3 on penalties after the clubs played to a goal-less draw, advancing the Mexican side into knockout play with Atlanta eliminated. At St. Louis, Juarez beat the hosts 4-1 on penalties to win their group although both clubs have reached the knockout round.

Simon Becher scored for St. Louis in the 58th minute but Dieter Villalpando equalized for Juarez in the 62nd minute. — AFP

Sports

PARIS 2024



Germany wins illness-affected Olympic mixed team relay triathlon

'It takes some courage to swim and the ability of a good swimmer to navigate it'

Olympics gallery



PARIS: Venezuela's Raiber Jose Rodriguez Orozco (red) wrestles Azerbaijan's Murad Mammadov (blue) in their men's greco-roman 60kg wrestling.



MARSEILLE: Denmark's Anne-Marie Rindom, Mexico's Elena Oetling Ramirez and Lithuania's Viktorija Andruleyte compete in race 9 of the women's ILCA 6 single-handed dinghy event.



VAIRES-SUR-MARNE: France's Angele Hug competes in the women's kayak cross quarterfinal of the canoe slalom competition.



PARIS: Canada's Linda Morais (red) wrestles Nigeria's Blessing Oborududu (blue) in their women's freestyle 68kg wrestling. — AFP photos



PARIS: Italy's team poses for a photo after winning the volleyball men's quarter-final match between Italy and Japan.

PARIS: Germany won gold in the mixed triathlon relay on Monday at the Paris Olympics, with the event disrupted by illnesses that saw at least three teams report sick team members who swam in the River Seine last week. In a thrilling climax to the team race through central Paris, Germany's Laura Lindemann won a sprint finish, narrowly edging out Taylor Knibb from the United States in second and Beth Potter from Britain in third.

The Belgian team did not race at all after their athlete Claire Michel fell sick, reportedly with E.Coli, having swum in the Seine during the women's individual triathlon last Wednesday. The Swiss team also had to bring in a replacement after their racer Adrien Briffod suffered a gastrointestinal infection, while Norwegian competitor Vette Bergsvik Thom told AFP he too had been stricken with a stomach bug after the men's race last week.

"I was sick for about 12 hours, overnight from Friday to Saturday," he said. "I don't know if it was food poisoning or from the Seine. Obviously it wasn't the best preparation for today." The relay is a four-person sprint triathlon, with Monday's race seeing two men and two women completing a 300-metre swim in the Seine, a seven-kilometre (4.3-mile) bike ride through central Paris and a 1.8 km run. The Seine has been the focus of attention during the Paris triathlon events with the waterway consistently failing water quality tests despite a 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) upgrade to improve the Paris sewerage and water treatment systems.

The men's race last week had to be delayed by 24 hours and no training has been possible since the start of the Games on July 28, with many athletes again surprised by the strength of the current on Monday. "It takes some courage to swim and the ability of a good swimmer to navigate it," victorious German Tim Hellwig told reporters. Organizers have stressed that the illnesses cannot be attributed to the Seine and Hellwig said he felt confident in the water tests overseen by international governing body World Triathlon. "No-one was afraid to jump in. We were all happy to have a race," he added, saying that he woke up fine after last week's men's event. "If like 99 percent of the athletes don't have any problems, I think it's fine," he said.

Safety

On the eve of Monday's relay, the Belgian National Olympic Committee (COIB) revealed that Michel had

Kerr expects fierce clash with Ingebrigtsen

PARIS: Josh Kerr says his clash with bitter rival and defending champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen in Tuesday's men's 1500 metres Olympic final will be one of the "most vicious and hardest" people have ever seen.

Ingebrigtsen has had several digs at Kerr since the Briton edged him in last year's 1500m final at the world championships. "It is difficult to refer to him as a rival when he is never there," the 23-year-old Norwegian said in August after Kerr opted to miss the European Championships in Rome.

"He is known as the Brit who never competes," Kerr, 26, said after he finished second behind Ingebrigtsen in Sunday's semi-final in Paris, with the two eye-balling each other for the last 20 metres, that his talking would be on the track.

Sifan Hassan: From 'shy' refugee to Olympic Champion

EINDHOVEN: On a gloriously sunny Tuesday night training session at the Eindhoven athletics club, young hopefuls are put through their paces, dreaming of emulating their most famous member — double Olympic champion Sifan Hassan.

It was on these tracks more than a decade ago that Hassan, a young asylum-seeker from Ethiopia, embarked on a journey that would lead to history at the Tokyo Olympics and make her a top medal contender in Paris.



PARIS: Germany's Laura Lindemann (L) crosses the finish, followed by Britain's Beth Potter and US' Taylor Knibb on the Pont Alexandre III at the end of the mixed relay triathlon race, at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, in central Paris, on August 5, 2024. — AFP

fallen sick in a statement that also criticized the organization of the triathlon at the Paris Games. "The COIB and Belgian Triathlon hope that the lessons will be learned for future triathlon competitions at the Olympics," the committee said. Other racers have also expressed frustration that decisions on whether the river could be used for the training and competitions were taken in the middle of the night, while organizers had threatened to scrap the swimming leg completely if the river remained too dirty.

"I don't want to be too negative. However I do think if a situation like this happens again at the Olympics, they should have a backup venue," US silver medallist Morgan Pearson told reporters.

"I don't think any of us are like 'I'm not going to race because of the chance of E. coli'. It's the Olympics. But that shows the liberty they took," he added. Heavy rain-

storms overwhelm Paris's sewerage system, leading to discharges of untreated waste water that send levels of bacteria such as E.Coli spiking.

Paris has been drenched by two major downpours since the Olympics started, on the night of the opening ceremony and again last Thursday evening. The Paris 2024 organizing committee said in a statement that testing on the day of the men's and women's triathlon last week had shown that the quality of the water was "very good" based on World Triathlon's criteria.

"The decision on whether to proceed with an event is taken by the international federation, World Triathlon, in coordination with Paris 2024, and based on the test results and a range of (notably health) criteria," it said. "Paris 2024 wishes to remind everyone that the health and wellbeing of athletes is our top priority," it added. — AFP



Josh Kerr

so it's going to be another day in the office for me," he said.

"I'm just going to put on a performance in front of millions of people, that's what we're here to do, is to give our sport the best crowd experience we can, so it's my job. "He's going to try and win, I'm going to try and win and we'll see who wins." — AFP



Sifan Hassan

of Hassan's favourite mottos, taken from the Koran, is "with hardship will be ease", and her formative years were anything but easy. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707	Qadsiya	22515088
Rawda	22517733	Dasmah	22532265
Adaliya	22517144	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Khalidiya	24848075	Shaab	22518752
Kaifan	24849807	Qibla	22459381
Shamiya	24848913	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Shuwaikh	24814507	Mirgab	22456536
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Sharq	22465401
Nuzha	22526804	Salmiya	25746401
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764		

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)

Announcement

Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons for General Trading & Contracting Co. would like to attract the attention of its customers who have given their devices for repair at the Al-Yousifi Service Center located in Ardiya Industrial Area until **30-6-2024**, and did not yet come and collect their devices till this date, to urgently contact Al-Yousifi Service Center on **1809809** in order to collect their devices within a period of only 2 weeks from the date of this Ad. The company will not be responsible under any matter in the future for these devices after the mentioned grace period is over.

Al-Yousifi Service Center
1809809

PARIS 2024 

Lyles wins Olympic 100m gold in closest finish in modern history

Lyles, first American to win the event since Justin Gatlin took gold in 2004



SAINT-DENIS: Winner US' Noah Lyles (L) crosses the finish line ahead of Jamaica's Kishane Thompson (2R), US' Fred Kerley (R), South Africa's Akani Simbine (C) and Jamaica's Oblique Seville (2L) in the men's 100m final of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP

PARIS: World champion Noah Lyles roared to victory in 9.79sec to claim gold in a dramatic men's Olympic 100m final in Paris on Sunday. Lyles won in the closest Olympic 100m finish in modern history as just five thousandths of a second separated him from Jamaica's Kishane Thompson.

Both were given the rounded-up time of 9.79sec but the American's name carried the all-important (.784) to Thompson's (.789). It made Lyles the first American, male or female, to win the event since Justin Gatlin took gold in the 2004 Athens Games.

"It's the one I wanted," said Lyles, whose winning time was a personal best. "It's the hard battle, it's the amazing opponents. "Everybody's healthy, everybody came prepared for the fight and I wanted to prove that I'm the man amongst all of them. I'm the wolf amongst wolves."

Lyles' victory was only confirmed after a photo-finish. The American said of the wait for the final results: "I went up to Kishane and I was like, 'I'm going to be honest, bro, I think you had that one'."

"And I was fully prepared to see his name pop up and to see my name pop up, I'm like goodness gracious. I'm incredible." Lyles added: "It's been a

rollercoaster, ups and downs. "I'm usually a guy who likes to come out blazing in all my rounds, especially in the 200m. But the 100m, it's my first time here on the Olympic stage."

Not 'fresh enough'

The relatively unknown Thompson, the fastest man this year with a best of 9.77sec, said he hadn't been "fresh enough" over the final 30 metres. "I couldn't really see Lyles, I wasn't sure," 23-year-old Thompson said of the photo-finish. "It was that close."

"I'm going to take it and move forward from here," he said. "Everybody loves a winner so I would have loved to win today, but I loved the competition overall." Lyles' US teammate Fred Kerley took bronze in 9.81sec, just one-hundredth ahead of South African Akani Simbine, who timed 9.82sec.

"I don't feel any frustration because I'm facing the best in the world," said Kerley, the 2022 world champion and Olympic silver medallist over 100m three years ago at the Tokyo Games. "At the end of the day, not many people can say they came to the Olympic Games," Kerley said. "Whoever came off the best is the best. It's my second time around and

I'm going off with a medal."

In an astonishing race, defending champion Marcel Jacobs of Italy was fifth in 9.85sec. Botswana's Letsile Tebogo sixth in 9.86sec, American Kenny Bednarek seventh in 9.88sec and Jamaican Oblique Seville eighth in 9.91sec.

Starting in lane seven, outside Seville and inside Tebogo, Lyles got off to an average start but was soon into his stride pattern. Head tucked down through to the 40-metre mark, the American opened up, but the whole field pushed him all the way.

As Lyles dipped for the line with Thompson charging alongside him, the crowd erupted and a photo-finish was called before Lyles was confirmed as gold medallist.

Tense buildup

There was an electric pre-race atmosphere in a 69,000-capacity Stade de France, a light show and booming music keeping the crowd entertained as the sprinters adjusted their starting blocks. The lights then went off and the sprinters leaving the track to remake their entrance like prize fighters in a colosseum, with each sprinter individually introduced be-

hind an image of their name above their flag.

Thompson roared, hands clenched in fists as his head rolled back. Kerley patted his heart. Lyles bounded out like a kangaroo, bouncing 20 metres down the track. Jacobs was the definition of cool, raising both arms and calmly walking to his blocks.

Then came the moment where the sprinters set, at the starter's beck and call. The wait seemed interminable. The music continued, the crowd clapped in unison, then the sprinters stood in their lanes, rocking from foot to foot and the tension was palpable, while the only sound was that of a helicopter whirring overhead.

The shot was fired and the field moved as if one up the purple track to the dramatic denouement. The photo-finish officials examined the evidence and Lyles walked away with gold to bury the demons of the Tokyo Olympics three years ago where he harvested a mere 200m bronze. Asked whether he was confident of doubling up in the 200m, an event in which he is a three-time world champion, Lyles was in no doubt. "100 percent," he said. "That's my better event and now that I've got a new PR in the 100, I'm ready to take it to the 200." — AFP

Biles' bid for five golds ends with beam fall

PARIS: US gymnastics star Simone Biles slipped off the balance beam and finished out of the medals on the unforgiving apparatus on Monday, ending her bid for a record five golds at the Paris Olympics.

Biles' hopes of a fourth gold medal of these Games — and an eighth career gold — now rest on the floor exercise that wraps up gymnastics competition at Bercy Arena. Biles was one of several gymnasts to fall off the beam, the first hiccup in her triumphant Olympic return three years after she withdrew from most of her events in Tokyo.

The pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics saw her suffer famously from the disorientating mental block gymnasts call the "twisties". In Paris, she has already led the United States to team gold, regained the all-around crown she first won as part of a four-gold haul in Rio in 2016, and soared to the vault title with a stellar rendition of her signature Yurchenko double pike.

But she came fifth in the balance beam, with Alice D'Amato becoming the first Italian woman gymnast to claim Olympic gold with a score of 14.366. Teammate Mania Esposito joined her on the podium in third, with China's Zhou Yuqin taking silver. The treacherous nature of the 10cm-wide beam was clear when the first three starters made big mistakes. China's world silver medallist Zhou lost her balance



PARIS: (L to R) US' Simone Biles (silver), Brazil's Rebeca Andrade (gold) and US' Jordan Chiles (bronze) pose during the podium ceremony for the artistic gymnastics women's floor exercise event of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP

and had to touch the beam to avoid coming off.

American medal contender Sunisa Lee and Brazilian Julia Soares both fell. Lee taking a hard fall onto the wooden beam when her foot slipped at the end of what would have been an impressive aerial series.

Esposito had a big wobble, and Romania's Sabrina Maneca-Voinea fell twice. D'Amato had a couple of minor wobbles in an otherwise impressive routine to seize first place just before Biles competed. The US superstar, again greeted rapturously by Bercy Arena fans, made a confident start, but she somehow went off-line on an aerial series and slipped off, drawing a collective gasp from the crowd. — AFP

Warholm leads 400m hurdles contenders

PARIS: Defending champion Karsten Warholm safely advanced to the semi-finals of the men's Olympic 400m hurdles after winning his heat at the Stade de France on Monday. Warholm, who set the world record when winning gold at the Covid-delayed Tokyo Games, clocked 47.57sec in scorching early morning weather in Paris.

"I think this is the second-fastest heat I have ever done. It felt very good," said Warholm, the three-time world champion. "Even running such a fast time, it felt very smooth. The time was surprisingly good."

"I slowed down at the last hurdle, so I am very surprised by the result. This time is almost the same as when I won the gold in Doha at the 2019 world championships. "But we also have the semi-final so I need to be smart."

Also progressing with ease were the Norwegian's main rivals for gold: American Rai Benjamin and Brazilian Alison Dos Santos. Benjamin eased up a full 30 metres from the line to win the opening heat in 48.82sec ahead of Jamaican Jaheel Hyde and Kyrion McMaster of the British Virgin Islands.

Dos Santos was a comfortable third behind heat winner Rasmus Magi of Estonia and American CJ Allen. The Jamaican pair of Roshawn Clarke and Malik James-King won the fourth and fifth heats in 48.17

and 48.21sec respectively.

Warholm said the depth in talent in the gruelling event was ever-widening, with Benjamin and Dos Santos both running fast times this season — and beating the Norwegian — and several more hurdlers coming through.

"That tells me the gaps between us are very small and many of us can run really fast," Warholm said. "We have three people who can run on the 46 second level: Dos Santos, Benjamin and me. "But behind us are many athletes pushing us. It will demand a lot to get to the final." — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Norway's Karsten Warholm leads in the men's 400m hurdles heat of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis. — AFP