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Sheikh Salem Al-Ali passes away

Kuwait mourns Al-Sabah Family patriarch, National Guard Chief

KUWAIT: Kuwait lost on Monday patriarch of Al-Sabah Family and Chief of the National Guard, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, who passed away at the age of 98, after spending long years in the service of his country. Throughout his career, His Highness occupied a number of significant official and honorary positions, alongside an abundance of charitable projects and societal endeavors inside and outside of the country.

Sheikh Salem was born in 1926 in Al-Sheoukh neighborhood in the heart of what is currently Kuwait City, and began his tutelage at the hands of Al-Mulla Hamada and Al-Mulla Marshad Al-Sulieman, as was the tradition at the time. Following this, Sheikh Salem enrolled in the first official school of the country, Al-Mubarkiya, and after that Al-Ahmadiya school, where he received both scientific and literary education.

In the early '50s and after oil revenues began to accelerate development in the country, Sheikh Salem joined public service, as he headed a number of projects that contributed to the construction of the country and modernizing its lifestyle. In the early stages of his career, Sheikh Salem closely worked with Sheikh Fahad Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as he served as his deputy when the latter

was chief of the municipality and public works departments.

Sheikh Salem, in 1959, headed the constructions council tasked with development and planning projects, as well as serving as chief of the public works department tasked with executing these projects. In the early '60s, Sheikh Salem took over the position of Chief of the Municipal Council, laws of which at the time stipulated that its speaker should be from the ruling family.

In the aftermath of Kuwait's independence in 1961, Sheikh Salem was a

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member of the Constitutional Assembly, and contributed to the writing of the constitution. He occupied the position of Minister of Public Works in the country's first formed government following independence, during the reign of the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. He continued serving as Public Works Minister until 1964, and was also granted his first honorary position in 1963 as head of Kuwait Engineering Society.

Crowning his long career, in the year 1967, Sheikh Salem became Chief of Kuwait National Guard, establishing it as a vital national entity responsible for the

safety, security and stability of the country. During his presidency, Sheikh Salem was intent on supporting the army in defense of the country against all who attempted to violate its borders, as well as cooperating with the police force in safe-keeping stability and protecting the front-lines against all threats.

Sheikh Salem also handled a number of notable security and military positions, including member of the higher defense council since 1969, and member of the National Security Council since 2005. In appreciation of his devotion and service to the country, late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued a decree bestowing the title of His Highness upon him.

The late Sheikh Salem was also known for his contribution to humanitarian and social projects, including his donation of KD 100 million in 2007 for citizens in need and parents of martyrs, as well as KD 10 million for families of martyrs. In 2000, he launched the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Informatics Award, an exemplary activity on local and regional levels, aiming to raise awareness and encourage talents. Sheikh Salem also had a special interest in nature, as he was enamored with the desert, hunting trips and nautical activities. — KUNA



His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ الْمُطَهَّرُ اجْعَلْ لِي بِرَأْسِي وَمِنْ عِبَادِي وَرَجَائِي
مَدَقَّ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمِ

It is with deep sadness and a heavy heart that

Zain Group

mourns the passing of the Patriarch of Al-Sabah Family,

Chief of the National Guard, His Highness

Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

may he rest in peace.

We extend our deepest condolences and sincerest sympathy to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

to His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah

and to the entire Al-Sabah family.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Local

PM receives
Omani envoy

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday received Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi. Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhlil attended the meeting. — KUNA

In my view

Violations of world
order between Iran
and Zionist entity

Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

There were many important events in history that many people do not read that still cast shadows over our world today. Some of them are the 30 years of war that took place just before the end of the middle ages between France and Spain (1618-1648). This war, away from its causes and details, ended with the peace treaty known as the peace treaty of Westphalia. This treaty regulated relations between rival countries at that time and established the order that became a world order later, and we are still following it. This treaty was based on cooperation and partnership instead of intervention and control. The treat approved the following:

(1) The diplomacy of conferences that took the shape of meetings between kings, princes, and presidents to exchange views.

(2) Put an end to the long wars between religious powers and approved the equality principle between countries without consideration of their domestic religious system. It was the first step towards establishing secularism in international relations.

(3) The system of having permanent diplomatic missions.

(4) Deters a state that seeks to expand at the expense of other countries and prevents this expansion so that the balance of power between countries is not disturbed.

(5) Emphasizes that the sovereign nation-state is the only actor in international relations.

The West was committed to the principles of this treaty all through the centuries. Until recently, most superpowers adhered to the principles of that treaty that became a world order, and Kuwait was liberated from the Iraqi invasion based on those principles. If we follow the relation between the Western World and Russia, we will see that the Western World is committed to the world order that the treaty has established.

The only clear breach of this treaty is what we see in the Middle East struggle, in regards to the Zionist entity and Iran, as the Zionist entity broke all principles of international treaties and for many decades, yet it was not sanctioned or stopped. Also, Iran adopted the principle of exporting the revolution and interfered in the affairs of other countries contrary to international law. Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping received a number of leaders for the Belt and Road Forum, a project considered China's comprehensive model of development.

This Chinese invitation began as a simple economic project in September 2023 and was quickly developed into a call for a new world order following the major violations by Western countries in the world order they created. The Middle East today is on top of a volcano that is about to erupt, and the main reason for this danger is the non-compliance by superpowers with the international law in our area.

The reasons for this Middle East crisis are many. They extend from the historic relation to greed. The international laws are overlooked in our region, and it is wise for our leaders to realize this. They must cooperate with China in its next project so that the West will be committed to their relations with us and our region according to international law and not according to their interests.

Charity distributes
food items, medicines
to displaced Sudanese

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Charitable Development Society announced on Monday that it distributed food items and health aid to 1,000 displaced Sudanese in eastern Chad. The displaced people are in dire humanitarian conditions due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. Director of Humanitarian Work and supervisor of the implementation of

Zain's stars bring joy to kids
at Bayt Abdullah Hospice

Company hosts joyful event in partnership with KACCH & BACCH



KUWAIT: Zain recently hosted a heartwarming event to spread happiness at Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, featuring the biggest stars from its beloved theatrical plays. The event brought joy to children and their families in collaboration with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH).

The event was joined by stars from Zain's theatrical plays and Max marketing campaign, including Fatimah Al Saffi, Hamad Ashkanani, Laila Abdullah, Talal Sam and Bibi Al-Abdulmohsen. These stars created unforgettable memories for the children, bringing smiles and laughter to everyone. The event also featured a special corner displaying the stars' costumes from Zain's widely popular plays, offering wonderful opportunities for capturing memorable moments.

Throughout the event, fun activities like balloon, bubble, and science shows were held, bringing joy not only to the children but also to their parents, families, and friends. Attendees engaged in these activities with enthusiasm, and Zain also hosted arts and crafts sessions to empower the children to express their creative side.

Additionally, the company presented special

gifts to the children, making the experience even more special. Zain's participation in this event is part of its ongoing partnership with KACCH and BACCH, a collaboration that has resulted in numerous successful initiatives over the years. Through this partnership, Zain aims to demonstrate the private sector's key role in supporting civil society organizations and creating a lasting positive impact in the community.

Founded in 1989 and registered as a non-profit, charitable organization by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2003, the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals continues its mission to offer play programs and pediatric psychosocial services and emotional support for hospitalized children and their families in almost all government hospitals across Kuwait. As an extension of KACCH, Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH) opened in 2012 as the first children's hospice in the Middle East, giving children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions in Kuwait the specialized care they need.

BACCH works to ensure the emphasis is placed on quality of life and the best day-to-day care possible, while providing children and their families with expert medical, clinical, psychosocial,



emotional, and spiritual support. All services provided by KACCH & BACCH for children and their families are offered at no cost. Zain continues to work towards fostering a spirit of giving, sharing, bonding, and community by directly supporting programs and initiatives that serve humanitarian needs. The company puts its social responsibility as a top priority, embodying and reflecting the values of its brand: Zain, A Wonderful World.

PAM and envoy
discuss hiring
Ethiopian workers

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) has expressed its readiness to harness all efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation with the Ethiopian Embassy and facilitating the process of recruiting Ethiopian workers to work in Kuwait in light of the benefits and protection granted to them by the Kuwaiti Labor Law. Acting Deputy Director General for Labor Affairs at the Authority, MUSAED AL-MUTAIRI, the Ethiopian ambassador, SAIED MOHAMED JIBRIL, and his accompanying delegation discussed ways to enhance

Maryam Sultan: Prolific
globetrotter with 197
nations under her belt

KUWAIT: Globetrotter Maryam Sultan had achieved an outstanding feat by traveling around the world, visiting 197 countries, a daunting task that had many challenges, wonders, and delights. In an interview with KUNA on Monday, Sultan provided her more insight into her wondrous journeys that saw her conclude her quest in Uruguay last June. She spoke about her experiences and the difficulties faced on

aid, Dr Mohammad Al-Rashidi, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the displaced Sudanese are in a very bad situation.

They do not have the most basic humanitarian services or infrastructure, in addition to the severe shortage of food, medicine, water, and health supplies. Al-Rashidi added that the Charitable Development Society, in cooperation with local partners in Chad, distributed relief aid in eastern Chad.

This includes food supplies like rice, oil, flour, sugar, and various medicines for treating malnutrition. Charity Development Association has allocated about KD 37,000 (about \$120,000) for the campaign. — KUNA



cooperation between the two countries.

Al-Mutairi stressed that all its employees are ready to cooperate with government agencies and diplomatic missions for the development and humanitarian goals of Kuwait. In turn, the Ethi-

opian ambassador expressed his happiness with the meeting, thanking the officials for their efforts in relation to Ethiopian manpower issues and expressing the constant endeavor to develop relations between the two countries.

She added that traveling alone helped her discover different cultures, as she was curious to know more countries and taste local foods. She said that she preferred countries such as North Korea, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Madagascar, and Mauritania that did not have foreign involvement in their culture. She explained that during her travels, she learned tolerance and acceptance of things that were culturally, intellectually, and ideologically different, noting that those differences must be built on mutual respect. Perhaps Sultan's journey is one of many shared around the globe, but surely her achievement adds to the interconnectivity of humanity and people all over the world. — KUNA

those trips, one of them during a group-climbing trip in Nepal, where a member was fatigued and unable to continue, so a helicopter with the help of the Saudi embassy extracted the person.

She faced other risks, including being in countries where diseases and epidemics were widespread, going to places that lacked security in some areas, as well as experiencing ground shaking while climbing a volcano in Ethiopia. She stressed the need for sufficient fitness to endure most conditions. Sultan revealed that her passion for traveling began in 2006 with a group of friends, noting that in 2012 she turned to solo traveling, and her passion amplified the want to visit dangerous and remote places even if they were countries suffering from wars and epidemics.



Officials distribute medical supplies and food items to Sudanese people. — KUNA photos



Local

Kuwait mourns Al-Sabah Family patriarch, KNG Chief Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

Condolences pour in from senior officials and ambassadors



His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

Deputy PM, Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah

First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah extended on Monday heartfelt condolences to the political leadership of Kuwait on the passing of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of the Kuwait National Guard. In a statement, the ministry of defense conveyed Sheikh Fahad's prayers for Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and his sincere sympathies to His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the entire Al-Sabah Family.



KNG Deputy Commander Sheikh Faisal Al-Sabah

Deputy Commander of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with the National Guard Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Rifai, and others mourned the demise of the head of the KNG His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. In a press statement, the National Guard expressed deep pride and respect for Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah's distinguished contributions to the establishment of the Kuwait National Guard and offered heartfelt sentiments and prayers.



GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jasem Al-Budaiwi expressed on Monday his sincere condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah Family on the passing away of the commander of the Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. The Secretary-General said that the deceased was one of the men who built the modern Kuwait, and a well-known symbol of giving and charity in Kuwait and abroad, and he made significant achievements and contributions in serving his country and people, leaving clear imprints on the path of development and charitable work in Kuwait. Al-Budaiwi prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow His boundless mercy and forgiveness upon the deceased, and to grant his family strength, patience, and solace during this time of mourning.



US Ambassador Karen Hideko Sasahara

We were saddened to learn of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. Sheikh Salem served his country in many roles from the 1950s to today, including as Commander of the Kuwait National Guard. This is a loss for his family and for the nation he loved so well. He will be missed.



French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher

It is with great sadness that we received the news of the death of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard. On behalf of the government and people of France, I extend my sincere heartfelt condolences and sincere sympathy to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and to the honorable ruling Al-Sabah Family and the Kuwaiti people.



British Ambassador Belinda Lewis

I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, the Dean of the Al-Sabah Family. Sheikh Salem Al-Ali was a respected leader and a pillar of the Kuwaiti community. His dedication to public service, his unwavering commitment to the welfare of his people, and his contributions to the nation will be remembered with great respect and admiration. On behalf of the British Government, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to His Highness the Amir, the Al-Sabah Family and the people of Kuwait during this time of loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all, and I am confident that Sheikh Salem Al-Ali's legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.



Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Toutouchi

After a lifetime of dedication and service to Kuwait, we received with sorrow the news of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. He held a special place in our hearts and he served his country with utmost sincerity and wisdom, sacrificing everything for the development and prosperity of Kuwait. We extend our condolences to the honorable Al-Sabah Family and the brotherly Kuwaiti people on this great loss. We belong to Allah, and indeed to Him, we shall return.



Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika

I convey my deepest condolences to the Al-Sabah Family, the government and the people of Kuwait on the passing away of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of National Guard of Kuwait and the oldest member of the Al-Sabah Family. His sad demise marks the departure of a prominent leader of Kuwait.



Italian Ambassador Lorenzo Morini

We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard and extend our deepest condolences to his family and the people of Kuwait. His Highness was a friend of Italy and a keen supporter of the deep and longstanding partnership between our two countries. We mourn his passing and remember his significant contributions to the development and progress of his country.

Ministry seeks to improve quality of health services

KUWAIT: The Assistant Undersecretary for Medical Support Services Affairs, Dr Abdullah Al-Faras made a field tour of the new Farwaniya Hospital, where he was briefed on the progress of work in the physiotherapy department, and examined the treatment services provided to patients. During the tour, Dr Al-Faras expressed great interest in identifying the challenges and observations facing the department, stressing the need to overcome all difficulties to ensure the provision of the best possible medical services to the auditors.

Dr Al-Faras explained that this tour comes within the framework of the Ministry of Health's continuous endeavor to improve the quality of health services provided, and enhance the efficiency of performance in various departments, praising the efforts made by the medical and administrative staff in the hospital and stressing the importance of continuous development and modernization in order to meet the needs of the valued citizens.



Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Photo shows a view of Marina Crescent in Salmiya. — Photo by Zakir Mansoori

NBK shares golden tips on fraud protection with 'NBK Aspire' interns

Part of bank's active participation in the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

- NBK strives to increase customer awareness about fraud schemes and protection measures
- Using strong and different passwords helps protect accounts from unauthorized access

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote financial and banking awareness among all sectors of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its active participation in the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this context, the bank organized an awareness session for the students of the 'NBK Aspire' Summer Internship Program for 2024, in which they gave a detailed presentation about the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, and the channels used by the bank to increase awareness about fraud and protection methods. They also presented some practical cases and presented advice and guidance that should be followed to avoid falling victim to these threats. The bank called to enable two-factor authentication (2FA), which adds an extra layer of security for online banking and financial accounts, as well as to keep a close eye on bank statements and transaction history, to identify any suspicious or unauthorized activity.

NBK advised the trainees to be cautious of e-mails, text messages, or phone calls that ask for personal or financial information, as scammers typically send phishing e-mails from illegitimate websites using the logo of well-known organizations such as banks, telecom or big companies, so that the user cannot distinguish between real and fake mes-

sages. The bank also affirmed that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such messages representing fraud attempts to steal customers' banking information.

Among the key tips shared with 'NBK Aspire' interns was using strong passwords to protect different personal accounts online, creating different passwords and not using the same password for all accounts, and updating them regularly. Additionally, the bank urged them to use long passwords that contain at least 8 characters with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols, as the longer the password, the more difficult it is to hack. It also warned against using personal information in passwords, such as birth date, family names, and simple number sequences, to ensure protecting the security of your important information.

With the ever-growing fraud threats using various techniques, NBK is keen to protect customers and increase their awareness of how to steer clear of these threats. To this end, the bank advised to ensure computer, smartphone, and other devices used for banking are protected with up-to-date antivirus software and security patches, as well as to set up transaction alerts with the bank so that customers receive notifications for any withdrawals, transfers, or changes to your account.

The bank also explained to the students that financial knowledge and staying informed about the latest scams and fraud techniques are key to recognizing and avoiding potential threats, calling trainees in case of suspecting any fraudulent activity on their accounts, they should immediately contact the bank to report it and take necessary actions to secure the account. NBK employs its strong customer commu-



nication capabilities as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different sectors of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector. The 'NBK Aspire' aims to encourage students to engage in the banking business experience during their summer vacation, reflecting the bank's steadfast commitment with corporate social responsibility by empowering and upskilling the young generation to play an active role in the future.

NBK, Coaches Circle Academy ink exclusive collaboration deal

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) signed an exclusive collaboration agreement with Coaches Circle Academy – Vancouver Canada, under which the academy provides training for the bank's leaders to enhance their training skills in coaching, so that they can develop the capabilities and skills of the bank's employees. This step aligns with the bank's continuing investment in its human capital, regarding them as its most valuable asset, by providing the best-in-class training programs and workshops, to enhance their skills in the areas of leadership, strategy implementation, change management and innovation, in order to keep pace with the fast-paced developments in the banking industry.

According to the agreement, NBK's leaders will participate in Coaches Circle Academy training program titled 'The Transcendence Leader-Coach' (TLC). The program's objectives include developing coaching competencies, enhancing communication and problem-solving skills, increasing employee engagement and performance, promoting leadership development, building trust and collaboration, and driving organizational success. The exclusive agreement with Coaches Circle Academy will enable the bank's leaders to benefit from the TLC training program to emerge as Neo-Leaders who can navigate a world of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (the VUCA world).

The program also develops participants' skills, which will enable them to train and qualify the Bank's employees to play a greater role in the development of the business and assume leadership positions within the Bank in the future. The program seeks to develop a set of key organizational health and leadership skills including transparent leadership skills, strategic thinking, decision making, enhancing communication and developing employees, creating positive environment and motivation, fostering account-

ability through role clarity, and managing expectations and generation gaps.

Commenting on this collaboration, Emad Al-Ablani, GM – Head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said, "This program is part of our broader strategy to extend the coaching culture within the bank. NBK holds a firm conviction that employees are its most valuable assets, as work team efficiency guarantees the quality of the various banking services provided by the bank. Therefore, it always strives to develop its human capital, including leaders and employees, by providing them with the best-in-class training and development programs, in collaboration with the best local and international educational institutions."

"This transformative four-month program aims to empower our leaders by expanding their knowledge, skills, and mindset. The program adopts a hybrid training model, blending in-person sessions with on-demand micro-learning to provide maximum flexibility and accessibility. Participants will engage in seven days of in-person sessions and complete Gallup Strengths Assessments, ensuring a comprehensive and impactful learning experience," he explained.

"This training program comes in continuation of our efforts to develop the bank's human capital, which will reflect positively on the services provided to customers, as NBK considers its employees as the cornerstone of all its successes achieved over more than seven decades," he noted. NBK stands out as one of the most attractive employers by offering equal opportunities and embracing diversity in the workplace and focusing on training and upskilling employees to help them build a successful career and position themselves as future leaders within the bank. This makes NBK the private sector employer of choice for Kuwaiti fresh graduates.



Emad Al-Ablani



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Putin orders Russian army to 'dislodge' Ukrainian forces

Wildfire spreads to edge of Athens

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GAZA: People inspect the damage in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood following Zionist bombardment on August 11, 2024. — AFP

US orders nuclear submarine to Mideast

Hamas calls for implementing Biden truce plan; Zionists kill 107 over 2 days in Gaza

WASHINGTON/GAZA/JERUSALEM: United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has ordered a guided missile submarine to the Middle East and the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly to the area. The order on Sunday evening followed a telephone call between Austin and Zionist Minister of Defense Galant.

Austin "reiterated the United States' commitment to take every possible step to defend (the Zionist entity) and noted the strengthening of US military force posture and capabilities throughout the Middle East in light of escalating regional tensions", the Pentagon said in a statement.

According to Al Jazeera, the USS Georgia, a nuclear-powered submarine, was already in the Mediterranean Sea in July, according to a US military post on social media, but it is rare for the US to publicly announce the deployment of a submarine. The Abraham Lincoln has been in the Asia Pacific and had already been ordered to the Middle East to replace the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier strike group, which is scheduled to begin heading home. Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told a parliamentary commission on Monday that the country had strengthened its defenses and organized "offensive options" as "threats from Tehran and Beirut may materialize".

Calls for truce grow

The US and Zionist are fortifying Zionist defenses as international pressure mounts for a ceasefire in Gaza. On Monday, Britain, France and Germany made a joint plea for an end to the Zionist war in Gaza with "no further delay". The call came a day after Palestinian group Hamas urged mediators to

implement a truce plan presented by US President Joe Biden instead of holding more talks.

"The fighting must end now, and all hostages still detained by Hamas must be released," French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a joint statement. "The people of Gaza need urgent and unfettered delivery and distribution of aid," it said. "There can be no further delay."

The Zionist entity has accepted the invitation from the United States, Qatar and Egypt to send negotiators for talks planned for Thursday. "The reason we're doing that is to finalize the details of the implementation of the framework agreement," Zionist government spokesman David Mencer told a news conference.

The government of Benjamin Netanyahu was slow to publicly embrace the proposal after Biden laid it out on May 31, and some far-right Zionist ministers still oppose it. Hamas said Sunday it wanted the implementation of the plan, which Biden said was approved by the Zionist entity and was later endorsed by the UN Security Council, "rather than going through more negotiation rounds or new proposals".

Unveiling the plan, Biden had said the first phase of the proposed roadmap would include a "full and complete ceasefire" lasting six weeks, with Zionist forces withdrawing from "all populated areas of Gaza" and some hostages freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by the entity. The second phase would see the remaining living hostages released as the warring sides negotiate "a permanent end to hostilities", followed by "a major reconstruction plan for Gaza" and the return of dead hostages' remains.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and an Afghan academic, said engagement at the talks was a "smart approach". "The international community can't solve the women's rights issue. What they can do is try to create an environment" to gradually stabilize the economy in Afghanistan, Baheer said. "Economic stability naturally brings with it some sort of opening for politics as well."

Security the 'priority'

The Taliban authorities, who are still pushing to fill Afghanistan's seat at the UN, are also forging regional ties. "Currently we have very good relations with neighboring, regional and Muslim countries," Mujahid said, adding that about 40 countries had embassies or consulates in Afghanistan.

While Western embassies in Kabul have been closed for three years, Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran and Central Asian republics have established de facto diplomatic relations with Kabul. Russia is also preparing to remove the Taliban from its list of terrorist organizations, while Beijing has appointed its first ambassador to Kabul since the takeover.

Fears over the growing security threat from the Islamic State group's branch in the region, known as Islamic State Khorasan Province, have also spurred engagement. Last week, the UN warned that IS-K posed the greatest external terrorist threat to Europe and was growing in strength. Mujahid insisted the IS threat was being overblown. "We have brought the phenomenon of ISKP to nearly zero," he told AFP. After ousting the foreign-backed government and ending their 20-year insurgency, the Taliban rulers have made security one of their highest priorities.

'Dialogue'

The Taliban authorities still allocate a large part

'Have to go somewhere'

Pressure for a ceasefire grew after a Zionist air strike on Saturday killed 93 people at a school housing displaced Palestinians in Gaza. Gaza officials told AFP on Monday that they had identified the bodies of 75 of those killed, while others were charred and torn apart. AFP could not independently verify the toll which, if confirmed, would be one of the largest from a single strike during the 10-month-old war.

The Zionist entity's retaliatory military offensive in Gaza has killed at least 39,897 people, according to a new toll from the territory's health ministry. The toll includes 107 deaths in the previous 48 hours, according to ministry figures. Zionist authorities say the assault is in response to an attack which killed nearly 1,200 people in the entity.

In the city of Khan Yunis on Sunday, ravaged by months of bombardment and battles, AFP journalists said hundreds of Palestinians had fled northern neighborhoods after the Zionist entity issued fresh evacuation orders. "We have to go somewhere, and we don't know if it will be good or bad," said Majd Ayyad, as families gathered their meagre belongings and left in pick-up trucks, on foot or using donkey-drawn carts.

On Monday, residents told AFP Zionist forces struck Khan Yunis and Rafah from the air. Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, which has been fighting alongside Hamas in Gaza, said its militants were battling Zionist troops in Khan Yunis. In the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, Suhail Abu Batihan said Israeli bombardment was "causing terror" among residents. "We demand that the Palestinian negotiator, the world, Qatar and Egypt intervene to stop this war." — Agencies

of the national budget to security despite Afghanistan no longer being at war and its economy in dire straits. And while Afghans may welcome restored security after more than 40 years of successive conflicts, many also struggle to feed themselves and strain under tightening restrictions.

A civil society activist, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal, described the rules on daily life as becoming "stricter and stricter". Government affairs are mostly run through religious edicts from the reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, based in the Taliban southern stronghold of Kandahar.

Politically, there is no visible opposition: parties are banned and there are no elections. "There is no one to challenge the Emir," the civil society activist said. The UN has described a "climate of fear" in the country, where popular protests are virtually non-existent.

The Taliban government rejects these accusations. "We don't accept that we are totalitarian," Mujahid said. The authorities have "mechanisms... to convey the voice of the people to the government", spokesman Mujahid said, referring to provincial councils comprising clerics and tribal elders. "They might not be the same as in the previous government or what are common in democratic governments, but we have developed these mechanisms in an Islamic way and we are committed to the country's interests," Mujahid said.

Baheer, based in Kabul, said he still believed dialogue could bring about change. "What we can do is constantly speak to the nation and these people (the Taliban authorities), creating a larger national pressure and ultimately ... hoping that they realize that they are up against the people and they have to compromise," said the academic. — AFP

Kenya cult leader on trial over for manslaughter

NAIROBI: The leader of a Kenyan starvation sect went on trial for manslaughter on Monday over the deaths of more than 400 of his followers in one of the world's worst cult-related tragedies. Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie and dozens of other suspects pleaded not guilty in January to multiple counts of manslaughter, one of several cases against them over what is known as the "Shakahola Forest Massacre".

Mackenzie appeared in a magistrate's court in the Indian Ocean port city of Mombasa along with 93 other suspects, prosecutors and court officials said. "There has never been a manslaughter case like this in Kenya," prosecutor Alexander Jami Yamina told AFP, adding that they will be charged under a Kenyan law dealing with suicide pacts. "This is going to be a very unique manslaughter case."

Mackenzie is alleged to have incited his followers to starve to death in order to "meet Jesus" in a case that provoked horror in Kenya and across the world. He was arrested in April last year after several bodies were first discovered in the remote Shakahola forest that lies inland from the Indian Ocean town of Malindi. Rescuers spent many months searching the scrubland and have now unearthed around 448 bodies from mass graves. Autopsies revealed that the majority of victims had died of hunger. But others, including children, appeared to have been strangled, beaten or suffocated. Previous court documents also said that some of the bodies had their organs removed.

Some bodies released

The charge sheet lists 95 defendants — 55 men and 40 women including Mackenzie's wife. But one accused woman died in police custody due to "complications related to long term illness and the effects of the fast," Yamina told AFP, adding that she passed away "a month or so ago". At least 420 witnesses have been prepared by the prosecutors, with hearings scheduled to run for four days until Thursday. "Due to the gravity of the case, we have prepared well," Yamina said. In March this year, the authorities began releasing some victims' bodies to distraught relatives after months of painstaking work to identify them using DNA. So far 34 have been returned. Mackenzie had set up his Good News International Church in 2003, but said he closed it in 2019 and moved to Shakahola to prepare for what he had predicted would be the end of the world in August last year.

The grisly case led the government to flag the need for tighter control of fringe denominations, while questions have been raised about how Mackenzie managed to evade law enforcement despite a history of extremism and previous legal cases. — AFP

Afghanistan's Taliban score diplomatic wins, consolidate power

KABUL: Three years into its rule of Afghanistan, the Taliban government has achieved some diplomatic wins even as it has consolidated power and enforced its strict version of Islamic law. The Taliban rulers continue to operate without official recognition from any country — its restrictions on women a major sticking point.

But concern over Afghanistan's worsening humanitarian crisis, the threat of terrorism, and hard-nosed pragmatism have led to some international engagement. The most notable example was the Taliban government's participation, for the first time, in United Nations-hosted talks in June in Qatar to discuss economic issues and counter-narcotics efforts.

Chief Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, who led the delegation, said the gathering was further proof that: "Afghanistan has come out of isolation". "We are in favor of positive meetings with the condition that Afghanistan's situation is taken into account," he told AFP in a recent interview ahead of this week's three-year anniversary of the Taliban taking back power.

The talks went ahead after Kabul obtained the agreement of the UN — which has described restrictions on women in Afghanistan as "gender apartheid" — that civil society and women's rights groups would not attend.

Obaidullah Baheer, grandson of former warlord

International

Wildfire spreads to edge of Athens

Evacuations ordered in 25 towns as Greece battles worst fire this year

PENTELE, Greece/ATHENS: A fast-moving wildfire fueled by searing summer heat and strong winds spread to the edge of Athens on Monday, torching trees, houses and cars and forcing the evacuations of more than 25 towns and villages, Greek authorities said. Almost 700 firefighters backed by volunteers, 190 fire engines and 33 waterbombing aircraft battled the blaze that broke out at 3 pm (midday GMT) on Sunday near Varnavas 35 km (20 miles) north of the capital.

By Monday the fire, the worst in Greece this year, had advanced to the fringes of Athens' densely populated northern suburbs around the heavily wooded Mount Penteli, sending columns of smoke into the air across the horizon. There were so far no reports of deaths. Thirteen people were treated by rescuers and medical staff for smoke inhalation and two firefighters for burns, fire brigade spokesperson Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said.

At least 25 areas were forced to evacuate residents, government officials said, along with at least three hospitals, and power cuts occurred in parts of the wider Athens region. Police had so far helped evacuate more than 250 people, and some residents spent the night in shelters.

Summers in Greece have long been marked by wildfires but hotter, drier weather linked to climate change have made blazes more frequent and intense. Wildfires fanned by extreme heat have also raged this month in parts of Spain and the Balkans. As a phalanx of flames closed in on backyards on the outskirts of Athens, some residents in Penteli stayed put, trying to put out pockets of fire using hoses or tree branches as smoke swirled around them.

"It hurts, we have grown up in the forest, we feel great sadness and anger," said 24-year-old resident Marina Kalogerakou, her mouth and nose covered by a red bandana as she poured a bucket of water on a burning tree stump. Another resident, Pantelis Kyriazis, crashed his car as he tried to escape the encroaching flames. "I couldn't see, I hit a pine tree and this is what happened," he said, gesturing towards his damaged car and nursing a bleeding elbow.

Record heat, scant rain

The southeastern Mediterranean country this year experienced its warmest winter on record and is on track for its hottest ever summer. Large areas of Greece, including the location of this week's blaze, have seen little or no rain for months. Greece is on high fire alert at least until Thursday with temperatures forecast to reach up to 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). Authorities have called for an emergency response involving the army, police and volunteers during that period.

On Sunday, the blaze threw up flames as high as 25 meters (82 feet) and spread "like lightning", the fire brigade said. By nightfall, thick smoke had darkened the sky over Athens. The blaze on Monday reached the village of Grammatiko north of Athens, the seaside municipality of Nea Makri and the town of Marathonas. Areas previously under control appeared to be rekindling, said fire brigade spokesperson Vathrakogiannis.

Passenger ferries to the port of Rafina were diverted to Lavrio southeast of Athens due to the advancing blaze. With winds forecast to strengthen



VARNAVAS: Women embrace after being rescued during a wildfire in Varnavas, north of Athens, on August 11, 2024. — AFP

further, "we have a very difficult day ahead of us", Theodore Giannaros, researcher at the National Observatory of Athens, told state TV ERT.

The blaze reminded residents of a 2018 fire that

killed 104 people in the seaside town of Mati, near the capital. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis cut short a holiday on the island of Crete to visit the fire brigade's operations center on Monday. — Reuters

In Iraq's summer, Kurdistan's Arbil aches for water



ARBIL: Iraq Kurd boys splash their faces with potable water distributed by a mobile tanker, as summer temperatures soar in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's northern autonomous Kurdish region. — AFP

ARBIL, Iraq: The taps have run dry, and the wells are almost empty. In the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, 80-year-old Babir hasn't bathed in weeks and impatiently waits for trucked-in water deliveries. "There is nothing worse than not having water," said Babir, who gave only his first name, in his modest house in Arbil's Darto suburb. As in several other densely populated areas of Arbil and its suburbs, Babir and his neighbors rely on groundwater as their primary water source.

But for years, they have dreaded summer, when relentless drought, a lack of wells and power outages that bring pumps to a halt leave them cut off the supply of water. For everything from bathing to watering plants, cooking and washing, they have been forced to depend on trucked-in water. Usually "we bathe once every fortnight," said Babir, dressed in traditional Kurdish sarwal trousers.

From the roof of his house, he shouted for a water truck as it drove up into the street, then hurried downstairs to request a refill for his home. This time, the truck belonged to a local aid group. When such assistance is unavailable, the retiree has to pay from his meagre pension or rely on family for water and other essentials.

Over the years, residents of several districts have taken to the streets many times to demand solutions, but Babir said appeals to officials had fallen on deaf ears. He said he was considering moving "to a place with water."

Dried wells

Iraq is known in Arabic as the Land of the Two Rivers, referring to the once mighty Tigris and Euphrates. But the rivers' water levels have plummeted and the UN classifies the country as one of the most impacted by some effects of climate change. Authorities blame the drought as well as dams built upstream in neighboring Turkey and Iran.

Arbil relies on 1,240 wells dotted across the city alongside the Iffraz water station that draws from the upper Zab River, which has its source in Turkey and joins the Tigris in Iraq. Its governor, Omed Khoshnaw, told reporters earlier this month that "more than 25 percent of wells have dried up this year," adding that Arbil should rely less on groundwater.

Amid the crisis, the city's local authorities say they have allocated 1.5 billion Iraqi dinars (\$1.1 million) to help solve it, including by digging new wells and providing power via generators and the electricity grid. Local official Nabz Abdul Hamid said that power outages have heavily impacted pumps for wells in residential areas. "We have now provided an uninterrupted electricity supply to most of the wells," he told AFP, adding that officials were working to fix the broader problem including by improving the Iffraz plant supply.

'Radical solutions'

In the Darto district, one person skillfully maneuvered the aid truck's hose as a torrent of water gushed into a tank. A young girl waited to fill plastic bottles while other children joyfully splashed water on their faces, finding relief from the relentless heat. — AFP

Deadly floods in war-torn Sudan displace thousands

KASSALA, Sudan: Amna Hussein sat grieving in a disaster relief tent in eastern Sudan, where she fled with her children after deadly floods displaced thousands in a country already reeling from war. "My father died in the floods," Hussein said in Kassala, a state on the border with Eritrea.

Sudan has experienced an intense rainy season since last month, with intermittent torrential flooding mainly in the country's north and east. Authorities have not released an updated death toll, but 34 people have died in the northern town of Abu Hamad alone, according to the Sudanese Red Crescent. "All our houses have collapsed. Mine has been totally destroyed. We're sitting in the street with nowhere to go," flood victim Umm Ayman Zakarya Adam told AFP in Abu Hamad.

Authorities in Kassala on Friday issued an "urgent call" to the international community, asking for "immediate assistance to rescue victims" of the flooding. They said that in Kassala "thousands of people have been affected by the floods which have destroyed many homes." Every year between May and October peak flow on the Nile is accompanied by torrential rains, destroying homes, wrecking infrastructure and claiming lives, both directly and through water-borne diseases. The impact is expected to be worse this year after nearly 16 months of war that has displaced millions of people into flood zones.

In Wadi Halfa, in the north of the country, near the Egyptian border, "around 3,000 homes and health facilities were severely damaged," according to local authorities. "I'm speaking to you from a hilltop where my family and dozens of others took shelter last night after we were completely surrounded by rising waters," said Mohammed Othman, a resident of Wadi Halfa, speaking to AFP by phone.

Homes lost

More than 73,000 Sudanese have been affected by the floods, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Among those, over 21,000 have been displaced and 14,300 had their homes destroyed.

In Kassala, despite health authorities spraying in-



ABU HAMAD: People save things from a destroyed house following heavy rains in Abu Hamad, in Sudan's River Nile state, some 400 kilometers (nearly 250 miles) north of Khartoum, on August 9, 2024. — AFP

secticide at the displacement camps, an AFP journalist reported that swarms of flies were making living conditions even more difficult for the displaced. A doctor in Kassala, who spoke on condition of anonymity, reported a rise in cases of diarrhea, particularly among children. Medical workers have said this may indicate a rise in cholera, which health authorities have struggled to control with the war decimating Sudan's healthcare system.

Since April of last year, a war between the Sudanese army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by his former deputy General Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and displaced millions of people both within and outside of Sudan. Both sides are accused of war crimes, including the deliberate targeting of civilians and blocking of aid, worsening the country's already stark humanitarian crisis. According to the UN, more than 260,000 people have been displaced to Kassala state by the war.

Repeatedly displaced

Omar Babiker and his family took refuge in Kassala after the RSF arrived on their doorstep in Sudan's central Al-Jazira state. The floods forced Babiker to

move again to a camp for the displaced, where he is still vulnerable to the rains. "The floods caught up with us when the waters surrounded our tents," he told AFP.

In Aroma, a town 40 kilometers (25 miles) to the east of Kassala, floods submerged entire houses, forcing residents to take refuge on a roadside. Humanitarian organizations have warned that the rainy season could isolate entire regions, making rescue efforts even more difficult. "Some have been displaced three or four times since the start of the conflict. They have lost their belongings, including food rations," said Olga Sarrado, spokesperson for the UN refugee agency (UNHCR).

They "are facing significant challenges in accessing clean water and sanitation facilities, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases," she added. To the west of Kassala, white tents stretch out over five square kilometers (two square miles). "These tents don't protect us from the rain," said Fathiya Mohammed, a displaced mother trying to light a fire despite the ever-present dampness. Like others in her situation, Mohammed counts on a single daily meal distributed by a kitchen staffed by volunteers. "We know it's not enough, but it's all we can provide," a volunteer said. — AFP

As US heat deaths rise, some landlords oppose air conditioners

NEW YORK: Summers in New York City are difficult for Anthony Gay and his family. A small, portable air conditioner in his bedroom is the only relief they have from soaring temperatures in their Brooklyn rental. "The rest of the apartment is literally unbearable to walk through," said Gay, 40, whose asthmatic son struggles to breathe in the heat.

Heat can be a killer. An estimated 350 New Yorkers die prematurely each year because of extreme heat, according to the city's 2024 Heat-Related Mortality Report. Lack of access to air conditioning at home is the most important risk factor in such deaths, it said. Yet, across the United States, about 12 percent of homes — or about 12.7 million households — had no access to air conditioning in 2020, according to the most recent government data. Many more had some air conditioning, like Gay, but not enough to beat the heat.

Most often, homes with little or no air conditioning are occupied by low-income residents — often renters — and people of color, a 2022 Boston University analysis of 115 US metro areas found. That leaves them vulnerable as climate change makes heatwaves more frequent, more intense and longer lasting. Heat stress now kills more people globally each year than any other weather-related cause, according to the World Health Organization — and many of these deaths occur indoors.

A Reuters survey of housing regulations in all 50 US states found that, while nearly half of them require landlords to maintain existing air conditioning units, none require that air-conditioning be provided. Nor do rental housing regulations describe air-conditioning as an essential service like plumbing, heat and electricity.

However, a small but growing number of US states, cities and counties have adopted legislation that im-

pose maximum indoor temperature standards on rental housing. Now, America's two largest population centers — New York City and Los Angeles County — as well as Austin, Texas, are proposing new indoor temperature maximums for renters. New York is proposing a cap of 78 Fahrenheit (26 degrees Celsius), and Austin is considering 85 Fahrenheit (29 C), while LA County has yet to formalize its target. New York City and Austin's proposals would require that landlords install cooling systems, given the difficulty of retrofitting old building stock to allow for better air flow and other passive measures. The moves are setting up a showdown with powerful landlord lobbies. Similar bills in other jurisdictions — California, Texas and Hot Springs, Arkansas — have failed in recent years after landlords' groups told policymakers they would need to raise rents to compensate for the costs of upgrading home electrical systems and adding air conditioning.

A matter of life and death

While air conditioning accounts for about four percent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions, which fuel climate change, research shows it also saves lives. A 2016 study estimated a 75 percent drop in the number of US heat-related deaths on hot days during the latter half of the 20th century after AC was introduced, according to findings published in the Journal of Political Economy.

Heat-related deaths are undercounted globally, epidemiologists say. The United Nations, in a report this year, said that modelled estimates suggest that between 2000 and 2019, approximately 489,000 heat-related deaths occurred each year, with nearly half of those in Asia. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that heat-related deaths have been increasing, with approximately 2,302 in 2023 versus 1,602 two years previously. However, that data only includes death certificates that specifically mention heat and is regarded by many experts as a dramatic undercount.

Record-breaking heat waves in recent years have spurred some new legislation. Following the 2021 heat dome that hit the Pacific Northwest, the US state of

Oregon in 2022 and Spokane, Washington, in 2024 approved measures to limit landlords' ability to stop tenants from installing their own air-conditioners over concerns about liability or utility bills.

But many of America's warmest cities and states are struggling to pass laws on safe temperatures. The Arkansas mountain city of Hot Springs last year abandoned a proposal for cooling standards in rental units after receiving complaints from landlord groups, said Phyllis Beard, a member of the city's board of directors.

In an August 2023 email sent to the board, reviewed by Reuters, Hot Springs landlords said the proposal would "hurt the most vulnerable in our community by making affordable housing difficult if not impossible to provide". Upgrading a single-family US home to a central air-conditioning system or adding an in-window unit to older homes generally costs between \$2,000 and \$10,000, according to figures from the American Society of Home Inspectors.

Climate shift

In LA County, the board of supervisors — its five-member governing body — is expected to vote later this year on a bill that could impact the county's 3.4 million households, more than half of whom are renters. "There once was a time where we realized that people dying of the cold indoors is something that we needed to regulate," said LA County supervisor Lindsey Horvath who put forward the motion. Many US jurisdictions require that rental housing can meet minimum indoor temperatures: California state law stipulates a minimum of 70 F (21 C). "Now with the way that the climate has shifted, we also have to think about those higher (temperatures)," she said.

By mid-century, central Los Angeles is expected to experience three times more days of temperatures above 95 F than it did between 1981 and 2000. Some California tenant groups worried that passing laws to force apartment upgrades could lead to evictions followed by higher rents — as the state's eviction law allows landlords to remove tenants if a home renovation requires a permit and will take more than 30 days or is considered "unsafe". — Reuters

International

Putin orders Russian army to 'dislodge' Ukrainian forces

Ukraine has captured 28 towns and villages in Kursk region: Russian governor

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin ordered his army on Monday to "dislodge" Ukrainian troops who have entered Russian territory as authorities said over 120,000 people had been evacuated away from the fighting. Kyiv launched a surprise offensive into Russia's western Kursk region last Tuesday, capturing over two dozen settlements in the most significant cross-border attack on Russian soil since World War II.

"One of the obvious goals of the enemy is to sow discord, strife, intimidate people, destroy the unity and cohesion of Russian society," Putin told a televised meeting with government officials. "The main task is, of course, for the defense ministry to dislodge the enemy from our territories," he said.

Some 121,000 people have fled the Kursk region since the start of the fighting, which has killed at least 12 civilians and injured 121 more, regional governor Alexei Smirnov told the meeting with Putin. Authorities in Kursk announced on Monday they were widening their evacuation area to include Belovsky district, home to some 14,000 residents. The neighboring Belgorod region also said it was evacuating its border district of Krasnoyarskiy.

Ukraine has pierced into the region by at least 12 kilometers (seven miles) and has captured 28 towns and villages, with the new front 40 kilometers long, Smirnov said. A top Ukrainian official told AFP over the weekend that the operation was aimed at stretching Russian troops and destabilizing the country after months of slow Russian advances across the frontline. Putin said Russia would respond by showing "unanimous support for all those in distress" and claimed there had been an increase in men signing up to fight. "The enemy will receive a worthy riposte," he said.

'Maximum losses'

The assault appeared to catch the Kremlin off guard. Russia's army rushed in reserve troops, tanks, aviation, artillery and drones in a bid to quash it. But it conceded on Sunday that Ukraine had penetrated up to 30 kilometers (20 miles) into Russian territory in places. It said some forces were near the villages of Tolpino and Obshchy Kolodez, around 25 kilometers and 30 kilometers from the Russia-Ukraine border. A Ukrainian security official told AFP, on condition of anonymity, that "the aim is to stretch the positions of the enemy, to inflict maximum losses and to destabilize the situation in Russia as they are unable to protect their own border".

The Ukrainian official said thousands of Ukrainian troops were involved in the operation. Russia's defense ministry said on Monday that its air defense systems had destroyed 18 Ukrainian drones — including 11 over the Kursk region.

'It's scary'

Russia's emergency situations ministry said on Sunday that over 44,000 residents in the Kursk region have applied for financial assistance, TASS news agency reported. Russia's rail operator has meanwhile organized emergency trains from Kursk to Moscow, around 450 kilometers away, for those fleeing. "It's scary to have helicopters flying over your head all the time," said Marina, refusing to give her surname, who arrived by train in Moscow on Sunday. "When it was possible to leave, I left."

Across the border in Ukraine's Sumy region, AFP journalists on Sunday saw dozens of armored vehicles daubed with a white triangle — the insignia apparently being used to identify Ukrainian military hardware deployed in the attack. At an evacu-



KURSK: This handout photograph taken and released by the Government of Kursk region of Russia on August 9, 2024, shows women and children being evacuated from the town of Rylysk in Kursk region. — AFP

tion center in the regional capital of Sumy, 70-year-old retired metal worker Mykola, who fled his village of Khotyn some 10 kilometers from the Russian border, welcomed Ukraine's push into Russia. "Let's let them find out what it's like," he told AFP. "They don't understand what war is. Let them have a taste of it."

Analysts think Kyiv may have launched the assault to relieve pressure on its troops in other parts of the

frontline. But the Ukrainian official said: "Their pressure in the east continues, they are not pulling back troops from the area," even if "the intensity of Russian attacks has gone down a little bit". The Ukrainian official said he expected Russia would "in the end" stop the incursion. Ukraine was bracing for a large-scale retaliatory missile attack, including "on decision-making centers" in Ukraine, the official said. — AFP

UK welcomes 'de-escalation' of far-right violence

LONDON: The UK government welcomed Monday the "de-escalation" of far-right inspired disorder and rioting following a knife attack that killed three children, but insisted officials remain on "high alert". Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokeswoman was speaking a day after hundreds of people gathered for the funeral of nine-year-old victim Alice da Silva Aguiar. Mourners wore white, a tradition for some in Portugal, where Alice's parents hail from. "She was taken from us in an unimaginable act of violence that has left our hearts broken beyond repair," they said in a statement released through police, adding she was "full of joy, light, and love". Two other girls — Bebe King, six, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven — also died in the attack. Ten others were injured including eight children.

The violence in English towns and cities came after misinformation spread about the alleged perpetrator of the mass stabbing on July 29 at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport, northwestern England. "We welcome that there has been a de-escalation this weekend. But we're certainly not complacent and remain on high alert," the prime minister's spokeswoman said.

The stabbings sparked a riot in Southport the following evening, on July 30, and violence in more than a dozen English towns and cities as well as in Northern Ireland over the ensuing week. Starmer's spokeswoman added that authorities had acted decisively to quell the unrest but that there was no room for complacency. "We also recognize that the job is not done until people feel safe in their communities, but thanks to the work of our police officers, prosecutor and judiciary, we have seen a swift response from the justice system," she said. "Within a matter of days, we've seen criminals involved arrested, charged, sentenced and behind bars."

Child attacks police

Officials pointed the finger at far-right agitators and opportunist "thugs" accused of using the Southport tragedy to further their anti-immigration, anti-Muslim agenda. Misinformation spread online in the immediate aftermath of the stabbing spree, claiming that the perpetrator was a Muslim immigrant.

One of those rioting was a 12-year-old boy who on Monday admitted throwing a missile at a police van in Manchester, also in the northwest. District Judge Joanne Hirst said the boy — who cannot be named due to his age — had been more involved in the violence than any other accused person she had seen "coming through these courts, adult or child". British-born Axel Rudakubana has been charged with murder and attempted murder over the mass stabbing. His parents originally come from Rwanda, which is overwhelmingly Christian. A motive for the atrocity has not been disclosed, but police have said it is not being treated as terrorism-related. — AFP



LONDON: People hold anti-racism placards as they take part in a "Stop the Far-right" demonstration in London on August 10, 2024. — AFP



Students chant slogans as they protest to demand accountability and trial against Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina near Dhaka University. — AFP photos

Police back on Bangladesh capital's streets as strike ends

DHAKA: Bangladeshi police resumed patrols of the capital Dhaka on Monday, ending a weeklong strike that left a law and order vacuum following the abrupt ouster of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina. Officers vanished from the streets of the sprawling megacity of 20 million people last week after Hasina's resignation and flight abroad ended her 15-year rule.

Police were loathed for spearheading a lethal crackdown on the weeks of protests that forced her departure, with 42 officers among the more than 450 people killed. They had vowed not to resume work until their safety on duty was guaranteed but agreed to return after late-night talks with the new interim government, helmed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. "It's good to be back," assistant commissioner Snehashish Das told AFP while standing at a busy intersection directing traffic. "As we feel secure now, we are back on duty."

Student-led protests against Hasina's government had been largely peaceful until police attempted to violently disperse them. Bangladesh was experiencing a "revolution" after Hasina's ouster, Yunus told reporters, after "the business of the whole government collapsed". He had been instructed by the protests' student leaders to take office, he said, adding he told them: "Because you ordered me to do this, I take your order."

Several top allies of Hasina, among them the chief justice and the central bank governor, stepped down after students issued them ultimatums to quit their offices. However, Yunus said their resignations had been conducted legally. "I'm sure they will find the legal way to justify all of this, because legally ... all the steps were followed," he said at a late-night briefing on Sunday.

'Heinous attacks'

Around 450 of the country's 600 police stations were targeted in arson and vandalism attacks over the past month, according to the national police union. Some began reopening late last week under guard by the army, an institution held in higher esteem for largely refusing to participate in the crackdown.

In the police's absence, the students who led the protests that toppled Hasina volunteered to restore law and order after looting and reprisal attacks in the hours following her departure. They acted as traffic wardens, formed overnight neighborhood watch patrols and guarded Hindu temples and other places of worship, quickly settling the unrest.

Yunus' de facto cabinet now administering the country said it had noted with "grave concern"

some attacks on Hindus and other minorities. The cabinet said in its first official statement on Sunday night it would work to "find ways to resolve such heinous attacks". Bangladeshi Hindus account for around eight percent of the country's 170 million people and have regularly been the targets of violence during periods of upheaval.

Hundreds have arrived on India's border since last week, asking to cross. The leadership of Jamaat, Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, said it would meet representatives of the Hindu community and other minority leaders later Monday in a bid to ease tensions.



DHAKA: A Bangladeshi police officer gives instructions to drivers after police called off their strike and resumed their duties following a meeting with the interim government in Dhaka on August 12, 2024.

'Contest the elections'

Hasina, 76, fled by helicopter to neighboring India a week ago as protesters flooded Dhaka's streets in a dramatic end to her iron-fisted tenure. Her government was accused of widespread human rights abuses, including the extrajudicial killing of thousands of her political opponents.

But new home minister Sakhawat Hossain said the government had no intention of banning Hasina's Awami League party, which played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's independence movement. "The party has made many contributions to Bangladesh — we don't deny this," he told reporters. "When the election comes, (they should) contest the elections."

Yunus returned from Europe on Thursday to head a temporary administration facing the monumental challenge of steering democratic reforms. The 84-year-old won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his pioneering work in microfinance, credited with helping millions of Bangladeshis out of grinding poverty. He took office as "chief adviser" to a caretaker administration — all fellow civilians bar Hossain, a retired brigadier general — and has said he wants to hold elections "within a few months". — AFP

Man arrested after child stabbed in Leicester Square

LONDON: London's Metropolitan Police said Monday a 32-year-old man had been arrested after an 11-year-old girl was "seriously injured" in a stabbing in Leicester Square in the city center. The young victim will require further treatment in hospital but her condition is "not life threatening", while her 34-year-old mother also suffered minor injuries, police added.

The police said in a statement the 32-year-old man was arrested at the scene and that officers were not looking for anyone else in connection with the attack. "An urgent investigation is now ongoing and detectives are working to establish the details around exactly what happened," Detective Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah said. "At this stage we don't believe the suspect and the victims were known to each other. "While we continue to work to establish the suspect's motive, at this stage there is nothing to indicate the attack was terror-related."

It comes exactly two weeks after the knife attack in Southport, northwest England, in which three girls were killed and eight other children injured, as well as two adults. The mass stabbing sparked riots across England, after rumors online that the attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker. A British-born teenager has been charged with murder and attempted murder. That case is also not being treated as terrorism.

'Terrible'

Monday's stabbing took place in the heart of the British capital, in an area heavily frequented by tourists and shoppers. A security guard told the Press Association (PA) news agency that he intervened and took a knife from a man attacking the 11-year-old child on the west side of Leicester Square. The 29-year-old guard at a nearby store, who gave his name as Abdullah, said he heard a scream and then saw someone "stabbing a kid".

"I jumped on him, held the hand in which he was (carrying) a knife, and just put him down on the floor and just held him and took the knife away from him," he said. "Then a couple of more people joined as well, and we just held him until the police came."

Desmond, 45, told PA that the suspect — described as a "young, white, skinny male wearing a black T-shirt and jeans" — appeared to focus the attack on the girl. The witness, a street entertainer who performs as Darth Vader on the streets of Leicester Square every day, reported the perpetrator putting her in a headlock and stabbing her. "It was so terrible, I've never seen a thing like that," he said. "I saw the woman was screaming with all her strength." Jessah called it "a horrific incident" and paid tribute to people "who bravely intervened". "They put themselves at risk and showed the best of London in doing so," she added. — AFP



LONDON: Police officers stand by a cordoned off area in Leicester square, London after a woman and an 11-year-old girl were stabbed on August 12, 2024. — AFP

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024

Three years after return of Taleban, Afghan economic woes loom large

World Bank warns of zero growth over next 3 years amid massive unemployment

KABUL: Despite three years of improved security following the end of the Taleban's insurgency, Afghanistan's economy remains stagnant and its population is in the grips of a worsening humanitarian crisis. A third of Afghanistan's roughly 40 million people live on bread and tea, according to the United Nations, there is massive unemployment, and the World Bank warns of zero growth over the next three years.

But there have been some positive changes since the Taleban takeover in 2021 - even if their government remains unrecognized by any other country. The currency has been resilient, corruption is no longer ubiquitous, and tax collection has improved. Authorities have also built "economic, commercial, transit and investment" ties in the region, according to Ahmad Zahid, deputy commerce and industry minister. Afghanistan has great mineral and agricultural potential, which the Taleban government is attempting to exploit, but they are impeded by poor infrastructure and a lack of domestic and foreign expertise and capital. Though Afghans welcome the improved security in their lives, many are just trying to make ends meet. AFP spoke to four people from different parts of the country ahead of the anniversary of the fall of Kabul this week:

The optimistic businessman

For 54-year-old Azizullah Rehmati, business is booming — his saffron company in the western province of Herat is set to double production this year. Until 2021, his "Red Gold Saffron Company" hired armed guards to escort the valuable spice from the factory to the airport, but the improved security climate has done away with the need for such overt protection.

"Now there is no problem," said Rehmati, who exports to 27 countries. At his processing facility, women sort the red stigmas of the precious saffron spice with tongs. Taleban government restrictions on women have slashed their participation in the workforce,



HERAT, Afghanistan: Afghan female workers sort and process dry saffron at a facility in Herat. — AFP

but Rehmati's company is among the 50 percent of Afghan employers who still hire women. Still, a key challenge for Rehmati — and Afghanistan as a whole — is the crippled banking sector.

"It is so important that we have the banking channels reopened," said Sulaiman Bin Shah, deputy trade minister under the previous government. The sector has been blocked by international sanctions and the freezing of central bank assets.

Rehmati's bank can't send money abroad — or receive transfers — meaning he has to resort to more expensive private money changers in Dubai. Getting

visas for foreign trips is also a major problem.

Many foreign nations shuttered their embassies in the wake of the Taleban takeover and Afghan passports are rated the worst in the world by the Henley Index, which tracks global ease of travel.

"We will fall back from the world market," Rehmati said. Wahid Nekzai Logari played in Afghanistan's national orchestra and performed concerts on the sarinda, a traditional stringed instrument, as well as the harmonium. "I supported my whole family. We had a good life," said the 46-year-old in his modest home in a Kabul suburb. But the Taleban government has prohibited

public performances of music, deeming it un-Islamic, leaving thousands involved in the industry destitute.

"Now I'm unemployed," Logari said. To feed his family of seven he sometimes drives a cab — earning just 5,000 afghanis a month (\$70), a fifth of what he used to earn from his concerts.

"Nobody told us, 'you can't play music anymore, but we'll find you a way to feed your family,'" he said.

Abdul Wali Shaheen wanted to "die a martyr's death" in the Taleban ranks, but after their victory he swapped his rocket launcher for a computer at the Department of Information and Culture in Ghazni province. "I wasn't as stressed (then) as I am today," the 31-year-old said wryly.

"All we did was wage jihad, now it's harder. I have more responsibilities in regards to the people." Still, Shaheen's monthly salary of 10,000 afghanis is enough to feed his family of five, and he is happy with the direction the country is going. "I give the Emirate a 10/10 for these three years," he said. "Everything is going well and we have hope for the future."

The order to close beauty salons last year "broke her heart", but Sayeda — not her real name — reopened in secret four months ago elsewhere in Kabul. "We found this place to rent, with the condition that customers come very discreetly and that some of our employees sleep here so that neighbors think a family lives here," said the 21-year-old manager.

"Before, we had 30 to 40 customers a day, now it's six or seven," said Sayeda, who has nevertheless kept her 25 employees so that "everyone has an income". Sayeda's salary has dropped from 25,000 afghanis per month to between 8,000 and 12,000. "We're working in hiding and we don't know for how much longer," she said, noting the risk of being shut down by the police.

When they've "found some (underground) salons, they broke the equipment, mistreated the staff" and imposed fines, she said. — AFP

As war halts Zionist permits, Palestinians return to farming

BAYT DAJAN, Palestinian Territories: Hussein Jamil held a permit to work in Zionist entity for 22 years until the war in Gaza broke out. Now, after setting up a greenhouse in a West Bank village, he swears he'll never go back. Harvesting his tomatoes in the occupied West Bank, the 46-year-old says his former Zionist entity boss has already called several times to ask him to return. "But I told him that I would never go back to work there," he says in Bayt Dajan near Nablus, the northern West Bank's commercial centre. There, dozens of men have returned to the traditional pursuit of tilling the land, rather than board buses to queue at the heavily guarded checkpoints that lead into Zionist entity. "It's a very useful job and above all safer" than working in Zionist entity, says Jamil, as he tends to his plants with his sons.

Zionist entity stopped issuing work permits for Palestinians after the Oct 7 attack. Zionist entity strikes in Gaza have so far left 39,790 dead, according to the health ministry. Jamil was one of 200,000 Palestinians from the West Bank who were working in Zionist entity legally or illegally, according to the Palestinian General Confederation of Labor, and who lost their livelihoods overnight. Salaries in Zionist entity are more than double what Palestinians can make in the occupied territories, according to the World Bank.

Many of those workers are now busy in the greenhouses that have sprouted up in recent months on the hillsides where, Palestinian elders say, their ancestors once grew wheat. Working this way, "we are independent and peaceful," says Jamil, adding: "It's much better than working in Zionist entity. Here we work on our land." Economic prospects have dimmed since the war, with West Bank unemployment leaping from 12.9 percent to 32 percent in the final three months of 2023. Some 144,000 jobs have been lost in the territory, many because of rising violence that has prompted the army to block roads, strangling economic activity.

Since Oct 7, at least 617 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by the Zionist entity army or settlers, according to an AFP count based on official Palestinian data. Every day, around \$22 million in income is lost in the West Bank, according to International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates. In Bayt Dajan alone, 300-350 men worked in Zionist entity out of a population of 5,000. Mazen Abu Jaish, 43, who spent 10 years working in Zionist entity, took his time before deciding to pick up his shovel and rake and set up a tomato greenhouse. "We waited, thinking that we would get our jobs back again after the war," he told AFP.

But unlike previous wars in Gaza, which never lasted more than a few weeks, the current conflict is fast approaching its first anniversary. "So we ended up getting together with 35 other people from the village and we decided to start farming rather than keep waiting," says Jaish. Since Oct 7, 15 hectares of Bayt Dajan have been covered by greenhouses with tomatoes and cucumbers, grown by people who used to work in Zionist entity, municipal officials say. — Reuters



BAYT DAJAN, Palestinian Territories: A Palestinian farmer works in a tomato plantation in a greenhouse in Beit Dajan in the occupied West Bank on July 30, 2024. — AFP

Chinese economy pulling down oil demand: OPEC

PARIS: Uncertainty about Chinese economic growth is weighing on global oil demand this year, OPEC said on Monday, leading the producers cartel to slightly revise down the robust projections it made in July. "The world oil demand growth forecast for 2024 is revised

down slightly by 135,00 barrels a day from the previous month's assessment," the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a report released Monday.

"It now stands at a healthy 2.1 million barrels a day, well above the historical average of 1.4 million seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic." It said the main reason for the revision was "softening expectations for China's oil demand growth in 2024". It noted that oil prices rose between January and May before slipping from May onwards. OPEC blamed the declining prices on "concerns about China's economic performance" as well as "easing geopolitical risk premiums and mixed economic indicators." — AFP

Filipino fishermen fear solar farm on lake will hurt incomes

MANILA: Fishing has been a lifeline for Alejandro Alcones for the past four decades, but he now fears his small boat may be replaced by a floating solar farm on the Philippines' largest lake. Alcones is part of a group of fishermen opposed to the government's plan to place solar panels atop Laguna de Bay, one of the country's biggest sources of freshwater fish, as it looks for renewable energy sources to meet growing demand for power.

"Laguna Lake gives life and income to fishermen like us who didn't finish school. It also gives many displaced workers here an alternative way to earn by fishing," said Alcones, a 55-year-old father of two who lives near the lake. An archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, the Philippines is hampered by limited land resources as it pursues a target to produce half of its electricity from renewable sources by 2040, compared with just a fifth in 2021.

Unlike traditional solar farms on land, floating photovoltaics - or solar panels installed on reservoirs, ponds and offshore waters - are an attractive alternative for fossil fuel-dependent countries with scarce land and high population density. Last year, Indonesia opened Southeast Asia's largest floating solar facility on a man-made reservoir. But these novel projects may compete with people who depend on fishing and agriculture, according to a January report by the Responsible Energy Initiative of Forum for the Future, a collective of nongovernmental organizations pushing for "ecologically safe and socially just" renewable energy. The report described the Laguna Lake project as a "testing ground" for the technology and the world's first large-scale photovoltaics operation on a natural lake.

Under the project, Laguna Lake, which spans 91,000 hectares southeast of Manila, will host three floating solar projects atop 2,000 hectares of water that will generate about 2 gigawatts of electricity to supply the Laguna area and the capital by 2026. Contracts have already been awarded to three companies that must still undergo an environmental impact assessment before construction can start.

Alcones is one of the 13,000 people who depend on the lake for their livelihoods, according to the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), a state agency responsible for the preservation, development and sustainability of the area.

The LLDA regularly meets with fisher groups to hear their concerns and the government "doesn't want to dislocate them as much as possible" when the solar project gets underway, said Mhai Dizon, the LLDA's renewable energy project coordinator. But the Philippines' largest fishermen's alliance, the National Federation of Small Fishermen Organizations in the Philippines, or Pamalakaya, accused the LLDA of only consulting local government officials and small groups of Laguna fishermen.

Following a request by Pamalakaya, it met with the LLDA in Manila in July, when it raised concerns that the Laguna solar project could impact more than 8,000 fishermen, including 2,000 people who work in aquaculture, according to Ronnel Arambulo, Pamalakaya's vice chairperson. "We are worried that the floating solar farms will further shrink our fishing grounds that have already been reduced by past development projects," Arambulo told The Thomson Reuters Foundation outside of the meeting, which was closed to press.



PARANAQUE CITY, Philippines: Fishermen unload their catch for the day at a fish port in Paranaque, Metro Manila. — AFP

Fishermen from Pamalakaya fear the project would reduce catches and pose hazards to communities if they become untethered during strong typhoons and rising water levels. Arambulo said. The panels could also impede boats and destroy docks, he said. Waterborne solar panels are still being tested and raise "numerous questions" about potential long-term effects on the environment and local communities, according to the Responsible Energy Initiative report. Coastal soil erosion, increased sedimentation and siltation, disruption of photosynthesis and diminished fishing yields as the ecosystem changes are among potential risks. "Depending on their specific location and scale, floating solar can reduce access to fishing grounds by independent fishermen," said Marvin Lagonera, Forum for the Future's energy transition strategist in Southeast Asia.

He described a "rights-based approach" in clean energy transitions as essential. "This includes meaningfully engaging with impacted communities," including civil society, environmental groups and local communities, he said. The Laguna Lake project would generate enough electricity to supply 2 million homes, Mylene Capongcol, assistant secretary at the Department of Energy, said in a statement. "The Department of Energy supports the development of floating solar projects as this will contribute to the government's target of a 35 percent renewable energy share in the power generation mix by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040," she said. Transitioning to renewable energy is becoming ever more urgent for the Philippines.

It is now Southeast Asia's most coal-dependent country, with about 62 percent of its electricity production fired by the dirty fossil fuel last year, according to a report from the energy think tank Ember. The slow adoption of clean energy is due in part to competition with agriculture for space, with just 18 percent of the island nation's total land deemed arable.

But floating solar panels can help defuse tensions over land rights that have plagued solar development elsewhere, research firm Rystad Energy said in a report. At present, floating solar farms account for just 500 megawatts of power production across Southeast Asia, but another 300 MW would come online this year alone, it estimated. "Countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand are well-positioned to be at the forefront of this growing trend," the report said, and pointed to the Philippines' inland lakes as suitable for solar farms. Lagonera also saw the technology as a chance for the Philippines to accelerate its shift to green energy. "With the Philippines' ambitious renewable energy targets, floating solar systems present an innovative alternative and opportunity to scale renewable energy," he said. — Reuters

'Underconsumption core' now trends on TikTok: Do I need it?

Focus on more frugal lifestyles and prioritizing quality over quantity

WASHINGTON: Exhausted from a rising cost of living in the United States and non-stop ads, some young adults on TikTok are pushing back. "When every moment of your life feels like you're being sold something and the price of said item keeps going up, people will burn out on spending money," Kara Perez, an influencer and financial educator, told AFP.

Social media has long had room only for picture-perfect homes, lavish closets and an abundance of beauty products. But a new trend is sweeping the other way — urging repurposing, more frugal lifestyles and prioritizing quality over quantity.

Known as "underconsumption core," it spotlights living sustainably and using what you have, a reversal of the excess and wealth that dominates ad-heavy Instagram and TikTok. "When you get 300 videos on TikTok about people who have 30 Stanley cups, you want to have as many as you can afford. People want to fit in," said Perez, who repurposes jars as cups.

A video with over 100,000 views from TikTok user loveofearthco critiqued the tendency toward overconsumption often amplified and encouraged on social media: "I spent money I didn't have on things I didn't need."

Another account, nevadahavenaars, shared what "normal" consumption looks like: used furniture, a modest closet, decor upcycled from glass bottles, meal prep and a downsized skincare collection. Despite financial hardships felt particularly by Gen Z and millennials, the US economy is thriving, with record corporate profits and high prices on shelves.

In a way, "that feels almost 'gaslighty' to consumers" amid a period of economic and geopolitical uncertainty, culture and consumer marketing analyst Tariro Makoni told AFP. She argued that Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) plans commonly adopted by many young adults' budgets exacerbate consumption and represent a distortion in access to wealth. But years of inflation have forced many to the conclusion that they cannot keep up with the spending habits of those on their social media feeds.

A Google Trends analysis shows US searches for "underconsumption" hit a high point this summer, surfacing alongside queries about "overproduction"

and the "Great Depression." Many young adults have developed a "compulsive behavior to spend down to their last pound on a fashion item," said UK-based influencer Andrea Cheong who recently shared an "underconsumption core" style video of her mending old clothes.

It is an addiction tied to a pressure "to articulate who we are through possessions," Cheong noted. In contrast, "underconsumption core" breaks from traditional core trends promoted by influencers, who often sell an ever-changing purchasing blueprint embodying the latest trend and aesthetic, according to Cheong. She and Makoni agreed that the shift also reflects increased calls for authenticity from content creators.

Now, "conserving is cool" said Makoni — "we saw very similar patterns after 2008" during the financial crisis. Over half of Gen Z adults — age 18 to 27 — polled in a 2024 survey by Bank of America stated the high cost of living as a top barrier to their financial success, adding that many do not make enough money to live the life they want.

"The social media trend of 'underconsumption' is another way for Gen Z to make the most of their money and be environmentally friendly at the same time," said Ashley Ross, head of consumer client experience and governance at Bank of America. While younger generations worry about making sustainable choices, a lack of financial autonomy drives their decisions.

"Let's be honest, no one's gonna change their GDP for sustainability. We don't live in that world... The motivation for people to do these things has always been to save money," said Cheong. But she told AFP "underconsumption" trends ultimately provide the most accessible approach to sustainability for those who seek it. The message is simple: "Buy less, buy better." Low consumption brick-and-mortar initiatives cast a wider net of profiles and generations. Anjali Zielinski, 42, joined a "Mending 101" workshop in Georgetown, DC in the hopes of acquiring new skills. She brought her daughter, Mina, seven, along with her. In addition to providing an outlet to her daughter's creativity, she hopes the craft will teach her the "value of our possessions and the work that goes into them." — AFP



WASHINGTON: Textile artist Sophie Canter (second left) teaches a "Mending 101" workshop in the Georgetown neighborhood in Washington, DC. Activities and crafts focusing on low-consumption are gaining popularity on and offline amid financial hardship and purchasing fatigue. — AFP

BT shares jump as Bharti eyes quarter of telecoms group

LONDON: Shares in British telecoms group BT jumped over six percent Monday after the conglomerate run by Indian tycoon Sunil Bharti Mittal agreed to buy almost one quarter of the company. BT said in a statement that Bharti plans to acquire the 24.5-percent stake in BT owned by Altice UK, which is led by French billionaire Patrick Drahi. Bharti Global is buying 10 percent immediately, with the remainder purchased following regulatory approval, in the hope of replacing Altice UK as BT's largest shareholder.

Bharti must pass UK security clearances — owing to the sensitive nature of the telecoms sector — before acquiring all of the near 25-percent

stake, which is valued at about £3 billion (\$3.8 billion) according to BT's market value ahead of the announcement. Bharti Global is the international investment arm of Bharti Enterprises — owner of Indian telecoms giant Bharti Airtel.

BT chief executive Allison Kirkby said the "scale of investment from Bharti Global is a great vote of confidence in the future" of the group. Bharti said it "endorses BT's goal to transform the UK's telecoms landscape by building fibre, rolling out 5G technology and developing market-leading services". In reaction, BT shares were up 6.4 percent in late morning trading, pulling London's top-tier FTSE 100 index higher.

"Inevitably there will be speculation about what Bharti intends to do with its stake but, for now, it is ruling out any bid for (all of) BT," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "Management will be glad to hear Bharti are supportive of the company's current strategy, although clearly they will want to see evidence of progress that can revive a share price which has gone nowhere in the last five years." — AFP

Rain-hit crops create triple whammy for French grain farmers

PARIS: Jean Lefevre like many French farmers has just endured one of the worst wheat harvests in decades as rain barely stopped from the moment he started sowing his grain last October to when he started gathering the crop last month. France, the European Union's largest grain producer, has experienced particularly wet weather in the past year, including a month of continuous rain in October-November, the wettest spring ever and violent storms last month.

The rainy weather and soggy fields delayed sowings and hurt crop development, so much so that the farm ministry estimates France will harvest its worst wheat crop since the 1980s, down 25% from last year. Other cereals like winter barley have also been badly hit. "Since October we have had our feet in the water. We have sown in very complicated conditions, and today we are still harvesting in wet soil again. I have neighbors who got stuck with their harvesters or with their trailers," said Lefevre, 43, who farms in the Oise region of northern France.

Wheat is the most widely grown cereal in France, with about half of it exported either within or outside the EU, helping the country's trade balance, even if France has faced stiff competition from Black Sea countries in recent years. Being a player on the world market, however, exposes France to swings in global prices. While farmers might have hoped to see local prices rise in the face of tight supplies, they actually remained pressured by a global grain glut linked to hefty crops in major producers such as competitor Russia.

Rising production costs since the pandemic — including for equipment, fertilizers and renting land — have been another problem, which together with low crop volumes and depressed prices present a triple whammy for farmers. "It's all at once, catastrophic crops, low prices and costs that have never been as high," said Laurent Pollet, who grows crops on 200 hectares of land in the Oise region.

Most farmers expressed frustration that the crisis comes as France only has a caretaker government since parliamentary elections last month called by President Emmanuel Macron. "When both crops and prices are bad, results are catastrophic. Some people will need psychological help and most of us will need financial support," Lefevre said.

"But without a government, it's very complicated. We were already talking to a wall, now we are talking to the wind." Lefevre joined thousands of farmers who protested earlier this year, blocking major highways around Paris, saying they were not paid enough and were choked by excessive regulation on environmental protection. Wheat growers say the grain crisis is unlikely to trigger new protests, mainly because they don't have time. "We are harvesting, rapeseed sowing starts in 10 days, then we move on to wheat sowing, we have the beet harvest from mid-September, we are in a tunnel until Nov 15. So going back to the street is not an objective," said Emeric Duchesne, another grain grower in the Oise. — Reuters

Oil investors cut positions amid market meltdown

LONDON: Investors cut their petroleum positions to the lowest level for at least a decade early last week, part of a broad-based retreat from risk amid rising concerns over a global economic slowdown. Hedge funds and other money managers sold the equivalent of 110 million barrels in the six most important petroleum futures and options contracts over the seven days ending on Aug. 6. Fund managers had been net sellers in each of the five most recent weeks, reducing their combined position by a total of 372 million barrels since the start of July.

By Aug 6, the combined position had been slashed to 152 million barrels, the lowest in records dating back to 2013. The most recent week saw sales across the board in Brent (-53 million barrels), NYMEX and ICE WTI (-31 million), European gas oil (-13 million), US diesel (-9 million) and US gasoline (-5 million). Position changes were fairly evenly divided between the liquidation of former bullish long positions (-60 million) and initiation of fresh bearish shorts (+50 million).

The sell-off was the fastest since January and February 2020, when traders were bracing for the spread of the coronavirus epidemic from China to the rest of the world. As a result, fund managers held a record low position in Brent, and near-record low positions in the rest of the petroleum complex.

The speed, scale and breadth of selling was consistent with a broad risk-off move across asset markets as well as concerns about a slowdown in the major economies and deterioration in the outlook for oil consumption. In recent weeks, oil traders have focused more on the future consumption threat rather than the slow depletion of global inventories.

But the extremely bearish positioning in Brent and other contracts has created a potentially attractive entry point for new bullish long positions — provided a slowdown is averted. Front-month Brent futures prices have bounced back above \$80 per barrel from a low of just \$75 per barrel at one point on Aug 5.

With positions now extremely bearish, the recession-on trade in the oil market has become crowded and vulnerable to reversal. The price bounce is consistent with fund managers repurchasing some short positions to take profits and perhaps establishing some fresh bullish long positions to anticipate the short-covering rally and a fading recession risk.

Portfolio managers made few changes to their broadly neutral position in US natural gas as inventories continued to deplete slowly despite ultra-low prices encouraging maximum summer consumption by power generators. Hedge funds and other money managers sold the equivalent of 40 billion cubic feet (bcf) of futures and options linked to the price of gas at Henry Hub in Louisiana, reversing purchases of 30 bcf the week before. The net position was basically unchanged at a net long of 332 bcf, in the 41st percentile for all weeks since 2010, best characterized as neutral verging on moderately bearish.

Working gas inventories accumulated by just 71 bcf over the four weeks ending on Aug. 2, the smallest seasonal increase in data going back to 2010, as generators continued to binge on cheap gas. The unusually small accumulation of inventories this summer has helped narrow the record surplus inherited from winter 2023/24. Inventories are 441 bcf (+16 percent or +1.35 standard deviations) above the prior ten-year seasonal average, down from a surplus of 664 bcf (+40 percent or +1.47 standard deviations) on March 15. — Reuters

Al Dirwaza Account

The Biggest Number of Winners in Kuwait



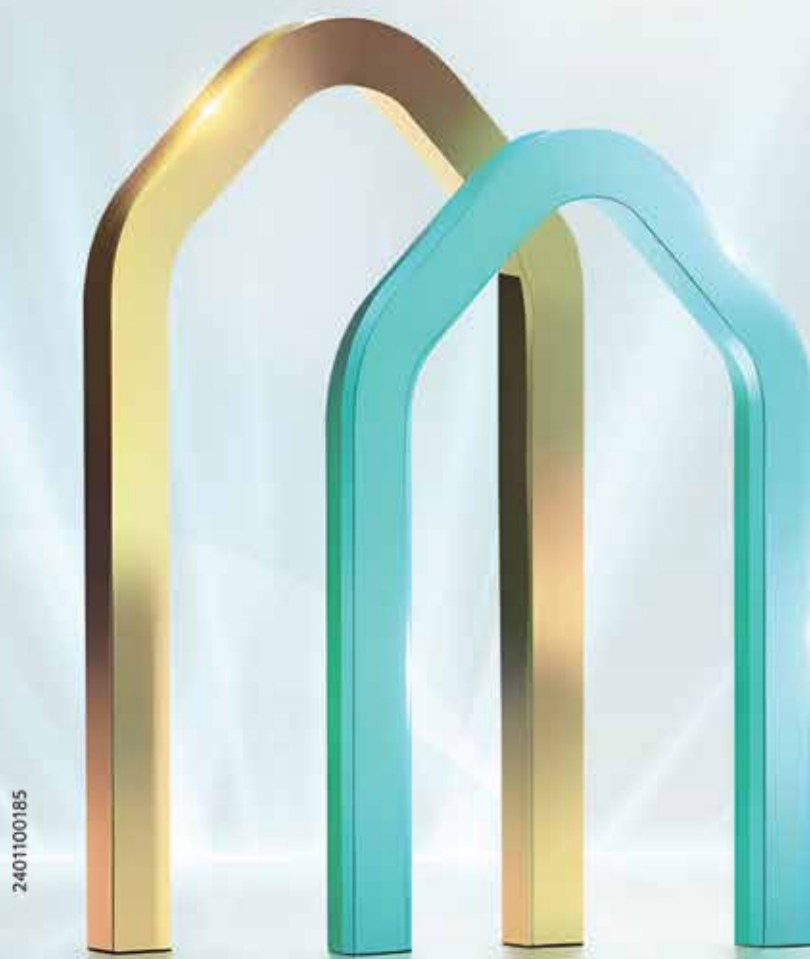
Weekly, Monthly & Yearly Draws



The Highest Expected Annual Profit Rate up to %2



KD1 = a chance



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Business

World youth unemployment rate lowest for 15 years: UN

Post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery has not been universal in all regions

GENEVA, Switzerland: Global youth unemployment is at its lowest level for 15 years, the United Nations said Monday, though not all regions have yet recovered from the COVID-19 slump.

The number of 15- to 24-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is concerning, the UN's labor agency said, adding that the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery has not been universal in all regions. "Young people in certain regions and many young women are not seeing the benefits of the economic recovery," the International Labour Organization said.

At 64.9 million, the total number of unemployed young people worldwide in 2023 was the lowest since the start of the millennium, the ILO said. At 13 percent, the youth unemployment rate last year represents a 15-year low and a fall from the pre-pandemic rate of 13.8 percent in 2019, it said.

"It is expected to fall further to 12.8 percent this year and next," it added. "The picture, however, is not the same across regions.

In the Arab States, East Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific, youth unemployment rates were higher in 2023 than in 2019."

The ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 report cautioned over the growing casualization of work for young people — and the widening gap in the supply of young graduates and the number of suitable jobs for them to take up. It said too many young people were NEETs and opportunities to access decent jobs were limited in emerging and developing economies.

The NEET rate stood at 20.4 percent in 2023 — and two in three NEETs are women. The NEET rate was 28.1 percent for young women in 2023, and 13.1 percent for young men. Globally, more than half of young workers are in the informal employment. Only in high- and upper-middle-income economies are the majority of young workers today in regular, secure work. "None of us can look forward to a stable future when millions of young people around the

world do not have decent work and as a result, are feeling insecure and unable to build a better life for themselves and their families," said ILO chief Gilbert F Houngbo. "Peaceful societies rely on three core ingredients: stability, inclusion, and social justice; and decent work for the youth is at the heart of all three," the former prime minister of Togo added.

The report said that despite the positive economic and labor market signals, surveys show young people are increasingly anxious about the future. "Many young people today feel stressed about job loss and job stability, the state of the economy, a lack of social mobility across generations, and their prospects for eventual financial independence," it said. Houngbo said this could be because most available jobs "are temporary and lack social protection."

"We have seen very little progress in getting more young people in decent jobs, and this in fact has been the overall trend for the last 20 years," he said. — AFP



NEW YORK: An employment sign is seen on the window of a FedEx store on August 2, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

Malaysia's palm oil stocks hit 4-month low

KUALA LUMPUR/MUMBAI: Malaysia's palm oil stocks fell for the first time in four months to a four-month low in July as growth in exports outpaced improvement in production, the industry regulator said on Monday. The fall in stocks in Malaysia, the world's second-largest palm oil producer after Indonesia, would support benchmark futures, which are trading near their lowest level in seven months. Malaysia's palm oil stocks at the end of July fell 5.35 percent from the previous month to 1.73 million metric tons, the lowest since March, the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) said.

Crude palm oil production gained 13.97 percent from June to 1.84 million tons, while palm oil exports rose 39.92 percent to 1.69 million tons, MPOB said. A Reuters survey had forecast inventories at 1.80 million tons, with output at 1.82 million tons and exports at 1.52 million tons.

"The fall in stocks is bullish for palm oil prices as inventories have eased, defying market expectations of a slight increase. Stocks are now at the same levels as last year," said Anilkumar Bagani, research head of Mumbai-based Sunvin Group. However, a sharp rise in palm oil prices is unlikely as the market anticipates strong production in August amid lower exports, said a New Delhi-based dealer with a global trade house. Exports of Malaysian palm oil products for Aug. 1-10 fell 17.7 percent to 435,413 tons.

"Even after the recent drop in prices, palm oil's discount to rival soybean and sunflower oil is still far lower than normal. It needs to correct further, or rival oils need to increase in price to make palm oil more attractive," the dealer said. — Reuters

BoE's Mann says UK wage pressures may last for years

LONDON: Catherine Mann, an external member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, said in a podcast released on Monday that goods and services prices were set to rise again and wage pressures in the economy could take years to dissipate. Mann voted against this month's cut in interest rates and said in the Financial Times podcast that she put her hawkishness at 7 out of 10, down from 10 out of 10 earlier this year when she voted to raise rates further from their 16-year high of 5.25 percent. "There is an upwards ratchet to both the wage setting process and the price process and it may well be structural, having been created during this period of very high inflation over the last couple of years," she said.

"That ratchet up will take a long time to erode away," she added. British inflation returned to its 2 percent target in May but data this week is likely to show it rose back above it to 2.3 percent and the BoE has forecast it will reach about 2.75 percent later this year as the effect of last year's fall in energy prices fades.

Mann said she saw upward pressure on wages from the fact that wages had risen fastest for the lowest paid, compressing pay scales and creating a potential demand over the coming years from better-paid workers to restore the earnings premium they previously enjoyed. Britain's new Labour Party government has said it will continue the previous Conservative government's goal — achieved last year — of keeping the minimum wage at two thirds of median earnings, one of the highest in the world.

Some businesses too would seek to match competitors' past price rises and solid demand also meant they would feel less pressure to pass on cost savings from recent strengthening of sterling, she added. Figures out on Monday from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development showed that employers expected to raise pay by 3 percent over the coming year, the lowest amount in two years and below the 4.1 percent in a similar BoE survey. — Reuters

Oppn demands regulator quit over Adani probe

MUMBAI: India's opposition has called on the chief markets regulator to resign after US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research claimed past investments compromised an investigation into the Adani Group.

The Adani Group, a sprawling ports-to-power Indian conglomerate, saw \$150 billion wiped from its market value last year after a bombshell report by Hindenburg accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud. India's top court asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to investigate the allegations.

Hindenburg then accused SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband on Saturday of having held investments in offshore funds a senior Adani family member also allegedly used. Buch has rejected the allegations as "baseless" and the Adani Group

Kenya aviation workers to strike over airport deal

NAIROBI: Aviation staff at Kenya's main international airport will go on strike from next week over a contested investment proposal from an Indian conglomerate, their union said on Monday. About 10,000 members of the Kenya Aviation Workers Union will walk out from August 19, its secretary general Moss Ndiema told AFP. The dispute centers on plans by the Kenyan government to enter into an investment agreement with India's Adani Group to expand, modernize and operate Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

"We are opposed to the Adani deal which we think has not followed the due process of the law," said Ndiema. Under the proposal, Adani would invest \$1.85 billion to expand the airport in exchange for operating it for 30 years, according to documents seen by AFP.

Adani would add a second runway and upgrade the passenger terminal, according to the airport operator Kenya Airport Authority (KAA). "We suspect rightly that this public private partnership idea is laced with corrupt intents," said Ndiema.

"People want to rip off KAA, in short, they want to take away JKIA and privatize it without following the due process."

Kenya's government has defended the deal as a necessary measure to refurbish JKIA, one of Africa's busiest hubs, often hit by power outages leak-

S Africa battles to fund grid upgrade for green energy

PRETORIA: South Africa's plan to expand its power grid, now the biggest bottleneck to replacing coal with renewables, has hit a snag: finding investors to lend the necessary \$21 billion to a near-bankrupt state monopoly. Since May's election brought a coalition government to power, there has been a policy shift favoring renewables, after years of bureaucratic delays and contradictory messages about South Africa's willingness to give up coal, which provides 80 percent of its power.

But as private providers — including Mainstream Renewable (owned by Aker Horizons), EDF Renewables and Acciona — prepare to transform the sector, many face another problem: how to get power from sunny and windy outposts to energy-hungry urban centers. Six officials told Reuters over the past month they were considering options for financing some 14,000 kilometers (8,700 miles) of power lines and pylons, but hadn't yet found a solution. "Our quest to decarbonize ... relies heavily on our ability to expand the grid," new Energy Minister Kgosisentso Ramokgopa told Reuters at his office in Pretoria late last month.

"But raising 390 billion rand (\$21.30 billion), the state doesn't have the balance sheet to roll out that size of capital investment." Meanwhile, donors offering a total of \$11.6 billion mostly in loans to fund climate-related projects are reluctant to lend the needed cash to state power firm Eskom without sovereign guarantees, which the government cannot currently provide, two donor

has called Hindenburg's latest claims "malicious, mischievous and manipulative". However, opposition Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi said the securities regulator had been "gravely compromised" and called for her resignation, as well as a joint parliamentary investigation.

"The integrity of SEBI, the securities regulator entrusted with safeguarding the wealth of small retail investors, has been gravely compromised by the allegations," Gandhi said in a statement Sunday.

"Honest investors across the country have pressing questions for the government: Why hasn't SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch resigned yet?" he said. Gautam Adani, the family-run conglomerate's founder and the world's 12th richest person according to a Bloomberg index of the world's billionaires, denied Hindenburg's original allegations and called its report a "deliberate attempt" to damage its image for the benefit of short-sellers. The forensic financial research firm also claimed that Vinod Adani, Gautam's elder brother, "manages a vast labyrinth of offshore shell entities" in tax havens including

Mauritius, Cyprus and several Caribbean islands. Hindenburg, citing whistleblower documents, has now also accused Buch and her husband of having held investments in offshore funds that Vinod Adani also allegedly used.

Buch denied the allegation and the SEBI said Hindenburg's allegations against the Adani Group had been "duly investigated", with only one probe yet to be completed. Mahua Moitra, a lawmaker from the opposition All India Trinamool Congress party, said on social media platform X there was "no national interest" in defending what she termed a "compromised regulator who should resign". Gautam Adani is considered a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and opposition parties and other critics say their relationship helped him to unfairly win business and avoid proper oversight.

Shares of Adani Group companies slipped in early trading on Monday, with flagship firm Adani Enterprises falling as much as 5.5 percent before paring its losses. Most of its other stocks, including Adani Total Gas and Adani Energy Solutions, also recouped some of their losses in afternoon trading. — AFP



NAIROBI: Kenya Airways staff (left) help passengers to book flights and hotels, on the second day of a strike by pilots organized by Kenya Airline Pilots Association (KALPA), at the Jomo Kenyatta International airport in Nairobi. — AFP

ing roofs. "The airport we have in Nairobi is made of canvas," President William Ruto said last month. "We need to work with investors to give us a new airport." "I have seen very many people saying William Ruto wants to sell the airport, am I a madman? How do you sell a strategic national asset? You have to be insane," he told a town hall meeting in the coastal city of Mombasa.

KAA said last month that the deal would be "subjected to technical, financial and legal reviews alongside requisite due processes", without giving

country sources and a South African source involved in the program, told Reuters. That is because of its high debt levels — Eskom owes over 400 billion rand, even after receiving billions in government debt relief. Broke municipalities also owe the utility 78 billion rand, which Ramokgopa calls an "existential threat". Representatives of the German and French partners in the donor-funded program did not respond to emailed questions, while British partners declined to officially comment.

Burning coal has rendered South Africa among the world's top 15 greenhouse gas emitters — above Italy, France and Britain. It is seen as a test case for aid to developing countries to switch to green energy, alongside Vietnam and Indonesia. But years of blackouts from aging power stations have also ravaged Africa's most industrialized economy, and Eskom only ended them earlier this year by firing up its coal burners to full capacity, most likely increasing emissions.

A bidding process to bring in independent producers to generate power and sell it to Eskom last year failed owing to insufficient grid capacity, Rudi Dicks, head of project management at President Cyril Ramaphosa's office, said. The core issue is that the grid stems from the northeastern coal belt, but the sun beats down hardest on the semi-desert Northern Cape, while coastal Eastern Cape gets the best winds. "You really need to reconfigure the entire grid ... (but) they are chugging along building at less than 10 percent the pace that's needed," Crispian Oliver, head of the Presidential Climate Commission, told Reuters.

Eskom's plan involves building 1,400 kilometers of transmission lines every year for at least 10 years. Last year, it managed 74 km (45 miles). "There's simply no way Treasury can put out (sufficient) ... guarantees," Oliver told Reuters, remarks echoed by Ramokgopa. "The alternative is to ... get the private sector to take on large portions of the risk," Oliver said, via mezzanine finance.

a timeline. Last year, Adani Group, the sprawling ports-to-power Indian conglomerate, saw billions of dollars wiped from its market value after a report by the US-based Hindenburg Research firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

Gautam Adani, the family-run conglomerate's founder and the world's 12th richest person according to a Bloomberg index of the world's billionaires, denied Hindenburg's allegations and called its report a "deliberate attempt" to damage its image for the benefit of short-sellers. — AFP



CAPE TOWN: Delegates network during the Green Energy Africa/Africa Oil Week conference in this file photo. — AFP

A Treasury spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment, but the two donor sources said options included escrow accounts — in which a neutral third party holds the funds and releases them when both sides have met their obligations — and offtake agreements with private firms that would fund construction in exchange for future earnings. The latter could unlock cash from the United States, which currently doesn't fund transmission as it will not work with public institutions.

"Should a framework involving private entities be established, we would be open to exploring partnerships," Emilia Adams, a US embassy spokesperson, said. Eskom CEO Dan Marokane told Reuters that to attract private companies into transmission, the regulator still needed to overhaul tariffs "because investors want to know with certainty what their return expectations can be".

He hoped this would happen by year-end. Dicks, meanwhile, said the Treasury had agreed in principle to fund some grid buildout on a case-by-case basis, and that work was underway to get private firms involved. "But that's 18 months away," he said. "And we need to build right now." — Reuters

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024



Mannequins with the faces and heads covered with tin foil at a men's apparel store in Kabul.



FACELESS MANNEQUINS SHOW OFF CLOTHES IN AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan's capital, shop windows display dazzling ball gowns and three-piece wedding suits — with the face of each mannequin covered. The morality police have asked stores to hide the mannequins' faces and photographs of models, according to a clothes seller in Kabul. "It makes the display a bit ugly," said the 22-year-old, but it "doesn't affect sales". When the Taliban swept back to power in August 2021, it imposed its austere interpretation of Islamic law, including an edict against depicting human faces. "The environment must be Islamic," said the salesman in Kabul, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals.

Women's evening dresses come in bright colors, some styles leaving shoulders exposed or with plunging necklines — almost all sparkling with sequins. The dresses are bought to be worn only in private, at gender-segregated weddings or engagement parties. The heads of the mannequins sporting each dress are wrapped in plastic, foil or black bags. "Later, they may order that the arms are also cov-



Veiled mannequins dressed in women's attire are pictured at a shop in Kabul. - AFP photos

ered in plastic," the salesman predicted. Other shops display traditional Afghan wedding dresses with full-bodied skirts and intricate embroidery. The Taliban government has told women to completely cover up in public. Women running errands in Kabul's

shopping district were seen wearing abaya robes and covering their faces with a medical mask.

'We make do'

After the ban on depicting human faces was introduced in January 2022,

religious police in Herat decapitated mannequins by cutting and snapping off the heads. The rule is now enforced nationwide by teams from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Dressed in long white jackets, they visit Kabul's stores multiple times each week. At a multi-story Kabul shopping centre, the mannequins' heads are now mostly covered by plastic bags or wrapped in foil.

"In some areas, the 'Vice and Virtue' visit on certain days, so (the shopkeepers) cover and then uncover the faces of the mannequins," said Popalzai, a shopkeeper using a pseudonym. "But here, there are between three and six guys who come two or three times a week. They check from a distance, they are much softer than before," added the shopkeeper, who experienced the Taliban government's first reign between 1996 and 2001. At the entrance to his store, male mannequins in Western clothes such as jeans or three-piece suits — discouraged by the Taliban authorities — are all hooded.

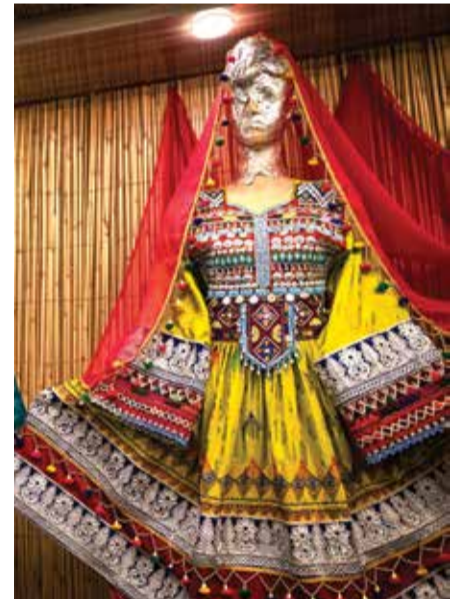
One of them is wearing sunglasses.



es. Customers and sellers seemed unfazed by the eerie, headless figures. "There are more serious problems," said another shopkeeper, referencing the tough economic climate and the restrictions on women's education and work. "This is not very important for Afghan people," he said. "We make do with it." — AFP



Mannequins with the faces and heads covered with tin foil at a men's apparel store in Kabul.



Ancient Pompeii reveals two more victims of eruption, with coins and jewelry

Archaeologists in the ancient Roman city of Pompeii have discovered the remains of two more victims of the volcanic eruption almost 2,000 years ago, the site said on Monday. The skeleton of a man and a woman were found in a small, makeshift bedroom in a villa which was being reconstructed when the eruption struck, the Pompeii archaeological site said in a statement. The woman was lying on a bed with gold, silver and bronze coins around her, along with jewelry including gold and pearl earrings. The man lay at the foot of the bed. The once-thriving city of Pompeii, near Naples, and the surrounding countryside was submerged by volcanic ash when Mount Vesuvius exploded in AD 79.

The eruption killed thousands of Romans who had no idea they were living beneath one of Europe's biggest volcanoes which buried the city in a thick layer of ash, preserving many of its residents and buildings. The latest victims discovered had chosen the small room as a refuge, waiting for the end of the rain of rock fragments which had blocked the door and prevented them from escaping. — Reuters

Scientists propose warming up Mars by using heat-trapping 'glitter'

The idea of transforming Mars into a world more hospitable to human habitation is a regular feature of science fiction. But could this be done in real life? Scientists are now proposing a new approach to warm up Earth's planetary neighbor by pumping engineered particles — similar in size to commercially available glitter and made of iron or aluminum — into the atmosphere as aerosols to trap escaping heat and scatter sunlight toward the Martian surface. The idea would be to augment the natural greenhouse effect on Mars to raise its surface temperature by roughly 50 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius) over a span of a decade.

This alone would not make Mars habitable for people, but the scientists who developed the proposal see it as a potentially doable initial step. "Terraforming refers to modifying a planet's environment to make it more Earth-like. For Mars, warming the planet is a necessary, but insufficient, first step. Previous concepts have focused on releasing greenhouse gases, but these require large amounts of resources that are scarce on Mars," said University of Chicago planetary scientist Edwin Kite, who helped lead the study published this week in the journal *Science Advances*.

"The key elements of our paper are a novel proposal to use engineered nanoparticles to warm Mars' atmosphere, and climate modeling that suggests this

approach could be much more efficient than previous concepts. This is important because it presents a potentially more feasible method for modifying Mars' climate, which could inform future Mars exploration strategies," Kite added.

NASA has sent robotic rovers to explore the Martian surface and the InSight Lander to study the planet's interior. The US space agency's Artemis program aims to put astronauts in the coming years on the lunar surface for the first time since 1972 in preparation for potential future human missions to Mars. There are numerous challenges

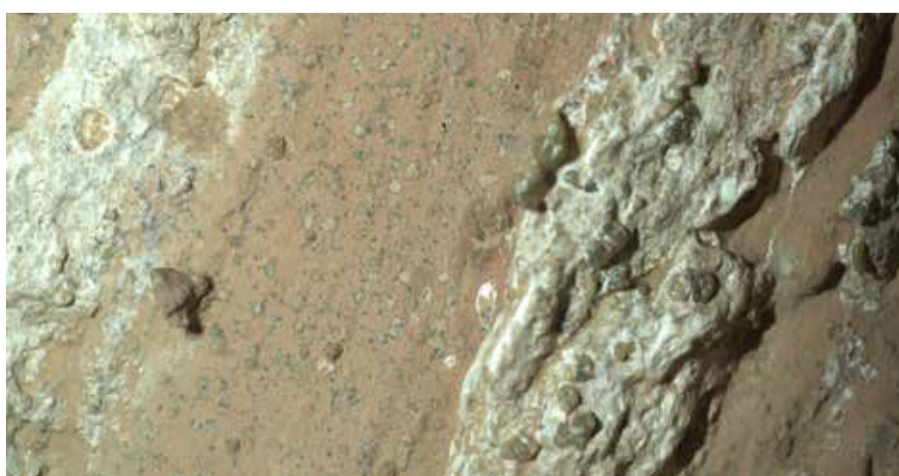
to human settlements on Mars: lack of breathable oxygen, harmful ultraviolet radiation due to its thin atmosphere, salty soil hostile to growing crops, dust storms that sometimes cover much of the planet and more. But its frigid temperatures are a serious impediment.

"We propose to show that the idea of warming Mars isn't impossible. We hope that our finding encourages the broader scientific community, and the public, to explore this intriguing idea," said study lead author Samaneh Ansari, a doctoral student in the electrical and computer engineering department at

Northwestern University in Illinois. The median Martian surface temperature is about minus-85 degrees Fahrenheit (minus-65 degrees Celsius). With its tenuous atmosphere, solar heat on the Martian surface readily escapes into space. The proposal would aim to allow liquid water to exist on the surface of Mars, which has water in the form of ice at its polar regions and its subsurface.

The scientists proposed continuously releasing tiny rod-shaped particles — nanorods — into the atmosphere at a rate of about eight gallons (30 liters) per second for years. "The idea is to either ship the material or better yet, ship the manufacturing tool and make the nanorods on the planet since iron and aluminum are abundant on the surface of Mars," Ansari said.

The researchers are mindful of the possibility of unintended consequences in terraforming another world for humankind's benefit. Scientists, for instance, are eager to learn whether Mars has harbored life in the past — or perhaps currently, in the form of subsurface microbes. "Although nanoparticles could warm Mars, both the benefits and potential costs of this course of action are currently uncertain. For example, in the unlikely event that Mars' soil contains irreducible compounds toxic to all Earth-derived life, then the benefit of warming Mars is nil," Kite said. — Reuters



This handout image obtained courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS shows a reddish rock nicknamed "Cheyava Falls" in Mars' Jezero Crater on July 18, 2024, in an image captured by NASA's Perseverance rover. — AFP



Fireworks sparkle in the sky at the end of the closing ceremony.

SEINE-SATIONAL! PARIS BIDS TRIUMPHANT 'AU REVOIR' TO OLYMPICS

Tom Cruise abseils into closing ceremony



Tom Cruise waves the Olympic flag.

Hollywood star Tom Cruise abseiled from the roof of the Stade de France at the climax of the Paris Olympics closing ceremony on Sunday, leaving the country to reluctantly bid farewell to a Games hailed as one of the most successful in history. Cruise descended on a wire in front of 71,500 spectators, grabbed the Olympic flag and jumped on a motorbike, to the delight of athletes and fans.

In a preview of what the world can expect when the Games head to Los Angeles in 2028, the "Mission Impossible" star was then shown boarding a plane and skydiving into the Californian city before adorning the iconic Hollywood sign with the Olympic rings. Los Angeles band Red Hot Chili Peppers, singer Billie Eilish and rappers Snoop Dogg and Dr Dre then performed a mini-concert on a beach framed by the azure waters of the Pacific Ocean. Newspapers in France and Europe hailed a fitting end to a dazzling fortnight that has mixed sport and culture while modernizing the Olympic format. — AFP



US actor Tom Cruise descends from the roof of the stadium during the closing ceremony.



US singer H.E.R performs during the closing ceremony.



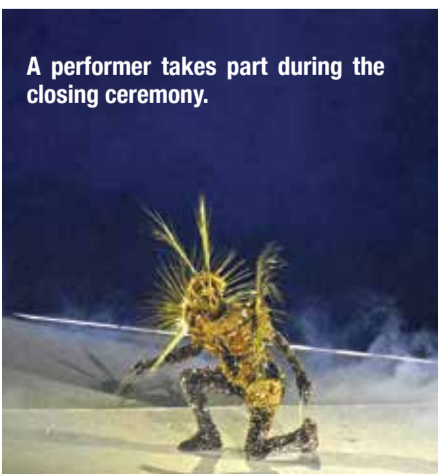
An overview shows Tom Cruise leaving the stadium with the Olympic flag on a motorbike during the closing ceremony.



(From left) FINNEAS and Billie Eilish perform at the LA28 Olympic Games Handover Celebration.



Snoop Dogg performs at the LA28 Olympic Games Handover Celebration.



A performer takes part during the closing ceremony.



(From left) Flea, Anthony Kiedis, Chad Smith and John Frusciante of Red Hot Chili Peppers perform at the LA28 Olympic Handover Celebration.



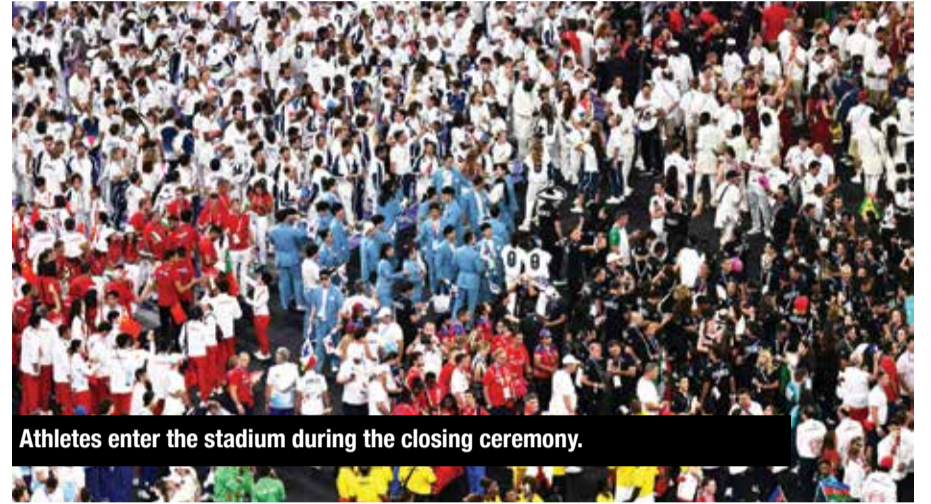
French pianist Alain Roche plays the "Hymne to Apollo" as French lyric tenor Benjamin Bernheim sings during the closing ceremony.



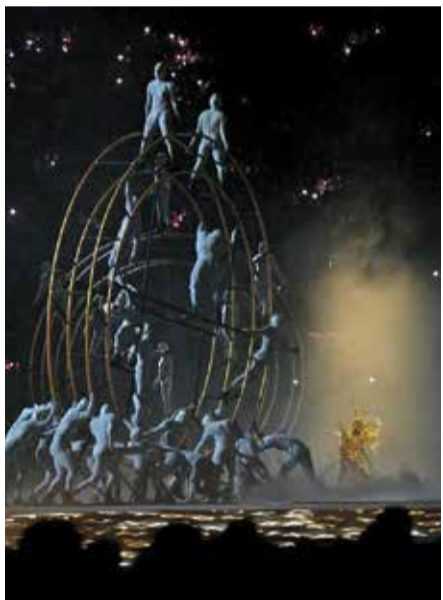
Athletes enter the stadium during the closing ceremony.



Fireworks illuminate the sky during the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Stade de France.



Athletes enter the stadium during the closing ceremony.



Dancers perform during the closing ceremony.



US actor Tom Cruise receives the Olympic flag from US gymnast Simone Biles and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass.



(From left) Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg perform at the LA28 Olympic Games Handover Celebration.



French singer-songwriter Yseult performs during the closing ceremony.

Waste into gold: Oyster shells repurposed as magic 'Seawool'

Growing up on Taiwan's west coast where mollusc farming is popular, Eddie Wang saw discarded oyster shells transformed from waste to function — a memory that inspired him to create a unique and environmentally friendly fabric called "Seawool". Wang remembered that residents of his seaside hometown of Yunlin used discarded oyster shells that littered the streets during the harvest as insulation for their homes.

"They burned the shells and painted the residue on the walls. The houses then became warm in the winter and cool in the summer," the 42-year-old told AFP at his factory in Tainan. "So I was curious about why oyster shells have such a miraculous effect." Wang's Creative Tech Textile company, established in 2010, was already producing an "eco-fabric" — a polyester material made out of recycled plastic bottles — but he felt its texture was a bit "ordinary".

So he started working with a research institute to experiment making fabric out of the oyster shell residue, in 2013 coming up with the right formula that produces a material similar to wool. Today, his factory in Taiwan uses around 100 tons of oyster shells a year to churn out around 900 tons of Seawool, a trademarked and patented fabric. The fabric and clothing generate around NT\$200 million (US\$6.1 million) a year, with the bulk of it sourced by outdoor and sus-



A worker smoking next to oyster shells at the Gijin Seafood Factory.

tainability clothing brands in Europe and the United States. The Made-in-Taiwan fabric would not be possible without the island's unique oyster farming culture, Wang said.

'A magical yarn'

"This industry chain cannot be found anywhere else overseas," he says. "We have people to harvest oysters, we have specialists to clean oyster shells, and we have people for drying and calcining (treating) oyster shells." The small island of Taiwan has

a hefty appetite for oysters, harvesting an estimated 200,000 tons a year with the fleshy meat appearing in local cuisine such as crispy omelettes and silken noodle dishes.

But its popularity also means that about 160,000 tons of shells are discarded yearly, according to data from the agricultural ministry. They pile up on the streets of aqua-farming towns — the majority in western cities such as Yunlin, Changhua and Chiayi — causing environmental issues by emitting fishy smells and providing breeding

sites for mosquitos. At Wang's factory, the shells are ground into nano beads and combined with yarn made from recycled plastic bottles.

"It creates a magical yarn," he said. "Oyster shell is a material with low thermal conductivity — it does not absorb heat nor does it dissipate heat." Turning the shells — which capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere — into Seawool also does not require water, making it a "low-carbon product," said Wang. A half-hour drive from his showroom where activewear jackets, sweaters and pants are displayed, state enterprise Taiwan Sugar Corporation (TSC) also has a factory that grinds discarded shells into a powder that is used in manufacturing household items, like incense sticks. The crushed shells help to reduce smoke and the toxic chemicals emitted from burning incense, said Chen Wei-jeu, deputy chief of TSC's biotech business division.

From waste to gold

"We hope oyster shells can have multiple industrial applications and interested companies can use it as a raw material to make their products more environmentally friendly and add value to their products," Chen said. Before the shells get to the factories, farmers in Chiayi — a county famed for producing oysters — collect the molluscs at dawn from racks installed along the coast.



A woman displaying a piece of fiber extracted from oyster shells at the Seawool textile factory.

They are sorted into baskets before being sent to plants such as Dai Sen-tai's factory, where they are machine-washed before being sent to small family-run businesses that shuck the meat and send the shells south. Dai, whose family have been in the oyster farming industry for three generations, said he is happy that Taiwan is breathing new life into the sea waste. "When I was a child, no one wanted oyster shells — they were dumped and discarded everywhere," he told AFP. "It's good that the waste has been turned into gold now." — AFP



A worker collecting oysters at a factory in Dongshi Township in Chiayi County.



An employee working at the Creative Tech Textile company which repurposes discarded oyster shells into Seawool.



Boats sailing past oyster farms in Dongshi Township in Chiayi County. — AFP photos

Sports

Athanaze heroics guide West Indies to South Africa draw

Maharaj presented the greatest threat to the hosts

PORT OF SPAIN: Alick Athanaze missed out on a maiden Test century but played the key role in ensuring the safety of a draw for the West Indies against South Africa on the final day of the rain-affected first Test of a two-match series at Queen's Park Oval on Sunday.

Set the unlikely victory target of 298 after the Proteas declared their second innings at 173 for three just before lunch, Athanaze's determined 92 and a fifth-wicket partnership of 65 with Jason Holder (31 not out) guided the hosts from the discomfort of 127 for four just after tea to 201 for five at the end of play.

As in the first innings, Keshav Maharaj presented the greatest threat to the hosts, the left-arm orthodox spinner claiming four for 88 to finish with match figures of eight for 164. Coming to the crease with the West Indies in trouble at 18 for two just after lunch due to early strikes by Maharaj and Kagiso Rabada, Athanaze displayed admirable restraint in an innings spanning over three hours during which he faced 116 balls and stroked nine fours.

However that discipline wavered with the end of play in sight as the 25-year-old left-hander from Dominica, clearly keen to get to the landmark, top-edged a sweep off Maharaj to give Ryan Rickelton a comfortable catch at backward square-leg.

"It was just about dragging the length back and trying to exploit the rough outside his off-stump," said player of the match Maharaj in explaining his plan to claim Athanaze's wicket. "Full credit must go to him though for the way he played. I just tried to stick to my plans and utilise different angles from the crease."

Earlier, Tristan Stubbs' aggressive 68 off 50 balls (six fours, two sixes) led the Proteas' pursuit of quick runs on a bright, sweltering morning.

'Not enough time'

His maiden Test half-century was supported by openers Tony de Zorzi (45) and Aiden Markram (38) in scoring at almost a run-a-ball before captain Temba Bavuma declared when Stubbs was bowled by veteran seamer Kemar Roach.

"We expected the wicket to break up a little more than it did," Bavuma said. "In the end we just didn't have enough time, plus the elements got in the way of what could have been a really good competitive game of cricket." West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite, who fell in the first over of the innings, slicing an ambitious lofted drive to cover off Maharaj, was not thinking about a draw when he walked out to bat with opening partner Mikyle Louis.

"We believed we could have gotten the runs," he stated bluntly. "We knew it wasn't going to be easy, but my message to the boys was to back themselves and fully commit to their plans at the crease." Given the significant interruptions by rain – more than two days' playing time was lost – there is already concern the second and final Test, scheduled for the Guyana National Stadium from Thursday, will also suffer a similar fate.

It again raises questions about the wisdom of scheduling international cricket – especially Test matches – in the southern Caribbean at the heart of the rainy season. — AFP



PORT OF SPAIN: Kyle Verreyne (C) of South Africa takes the catch to dismiss Kavem Hodge (R) of West Indies during the 5th and final day of the 1st Test match between West Indies and South Africa at Queens Park Oval, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on August 11, 2024. — AFP

Rublev to face Popyrin for ATP Montreal title

MONTREAL: Andrey Rublev powered into his second ATP Masters 1000 final of the season on Sunday as he lined up a title match against Alexei Popyrin in Montreal. Fifth seed Rublev, who won the Madrid Masters title in May, overcame a two-hour rain interruption as he beat Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-4, 6-2 in their semi-final.

He faces off Monday evening for the trophy against Australian Popyrin, who put out last week's ATP Washington winner Sebastian Korda 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 in 92 minutes. Rublev has had a patchy 2024, melting down several times on court in frustration with his play and being disqualified last February in Dubai for blowing up at a linesman.

But the Russian, who skipped the Paris Olympics to be prepared for the North American hardcourts that continue next week in Cincinnati, said he made the right scheduling choice. "That was the plan, to be set for the US Open," he said. "I guess if I'm in the finals of Montreal, it must be working."

Rublev will be competing in the sixth Masters final of his career and tuned up for the title bid by knocking out top-seeded world number one Jannik Sinner in a Saturday quarter-final. He said it was not easy facing Arnaldi, whose ranking will move to around 30th, putting him in the frame for a US Open seeding. "He can hit hard out of nowhere and doesn't give you any rhythm. The wind did not help," Rublev said. "After the rain delay I played much better. I was focused and could dictate and play more aggressive." Popyrin twice traded first-set breaks with Korda, but totally dominated the tiebreaker to love.

The Aussie broke to start the second set and held the margin all the way to victory as he reached his first Masters final. "It means the world to reach this final, it's amazing," he said. "It's an amazing feeling and achievement. I have to pat myself on the back."

"But tomorrow will be all hands on deck and back to work. "The first set was topsy-turvy, a few breaks here and there. But I stayed mentally strong and took momentum into the tiebreaker. "I really needed to win in two sets — I don't know if my legs would have made it into a third."

'He's really quick'

Popyrin beat Rublev on clay last spring in Monte Carlo but knows the seed is also a huge hardcourt danger. "He plays a tough game on hardcourt," Rublev said. "He's really quick." Rublev came out after the rain interruption in his win over Arnaldi and produced a double break after less than 30 minutes to reach the final. "It was worth it, all this week was worth it," Rublev said of the rain delays that have plagued the event. "I'm happy to be in my first Canadian final. Now I just want to recover, rest and be ready for tomorrow."

Rai wins rain-hit PGA Wyndham Championship

WASHINGTON: Aaron Rai withstood a 36-hole marathon final Sunday to win the rain-hit Wyndham Championship, taking his first PGA title after American Max Greysenman squandered a four-stroke lead. The 29-year-old Englishman sank a birdie putt on the last hole from just inside seven feet in the gloom of twilight to secure the victory at Greensboro, North Carolina.

"Incredible. A dream come true," Rai said. "I'm extremely grateful. I think it hasn't sunk in just yet. An amazing achievement." Rai fired a bogey-free six-under par 64 after a third-round 68 earlier to finish 72 holes at Sedgefield Country Club on 18-under 262.

That was good enough for a two-stroke victory over Greysenman, whose four-hole roller coaster run on the back nine in the fourth round ended with heartbreak. "I had a four shot lead with five holes to go? If you're doing that in a PGA Tour event, you're



MONTREAL: Andrey Rublev plays a forehand against Matteo Arnaldi of Italy in the men's singles semifinal round match during Day Six of the ATP Masters 1000 National Bank Open at Stade IGA in Montreal, Canada. — AFP

In a pair of quarter-finals held over by rain, Alexander Zverev missed a chance to collect his 50th victory of the season in a 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 6-4 loss to American Korda and Popyrin accounted for Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5.

Meanwhile, defending champion Jessica Pegula advanced to the WTA Toronto Masters final on Sunday by defeating Diana Shnaider 6-4, 6-3, giving her a chance to be the event's first back-to-back winner since 2000. Sixth-ranked Pegula eliminated the 24th-ranked Russian in 83 minutes to book an all-American final on Monday against Amanda Anisimova, who ousted US eighth seed Emma Navarro 6-3, 2-6, 6-2. Pegula, trying for the first Canadian repeat since Martina Hingis in 1999-2000, is 2-0 against Anisimova, most recently winning in April at Charleston.

"She's probably one of the biggest, cleanest ball strikers I've ever played against, so when she's on it can be really tough," Pegula said of Anisimova. "Tomorrow definitely is going to be a battle and I'm going to have to do my best to just make her play a lot of extra balls and try to be aggressive when I can, because when she's on she can hit a lot of winners and take the racquet out of your hand sometimes, so I'm going to have to be smart tomorrow."

Shnaider, a 20-year-old left-hander, had a break point in the eighth game but netted a forehand and Pegula held for a 5-3 lead. She then broke on the longest rally of the match, 21 shots, when Shnaider netted a backhand to end matters. Pegula moves into her 13th career WTA final, seeking her sixth title and second of the year after Berlin in June.

Shnaider, who ousted US top seed and reigning US Open champion Coco Gauff, was coming off a silver-medal effort in Paris Olympics doubles.

doing something exceptionally well so that's what I'm going to walk away with," Greysenman said.

"Stuff happens. I'm just going to walk away with more confidence, look at the positive things and learn from the mistakes." Japan's Ryo Hisatsune and American J.J. Spaun shared third on 265 with US amateur Luke Clanton another stroke adrift.

A tropical storm dumped more than six inches of rain on the course to wipe out play on Thursday and set the stage for finishing the second round early Sunday then completing the last 36 holes at sunset. Rai, who trailed most of the day, sank a 13-foot birdie putt at the par-3 12th to climb within two of Greysenman, who responded by holing out for eagle from the fairway from 91 yards at the par-4 13th hole, leaping to a four-stroke lead at 21-under.

But the drama was far from done as Greysenman squandered his entire advantage on the very next hole. Greysenman bounced his tee shot at 14 off a right side cart path and out of bounds, then put his third into the left rough, his fourth into a bunker and made a quadruple bogey to fall level with Rai at 17-under.

Greysenman made a tap-in birdie at the par-5 15th but followed with a four-putt bogey at the par-3 16th, missing twice from inside four feet to leave Rai ahead

'Still hungry'

Anisimova reached her fourth career WTA final by dispatching her fourth top-20 foe of the week, a career first. She also ousted third-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in a quarter-final. "This is a huge accomplishment for me and something I've been working really hard towards," Anisimova said. "I'm just super happy with my week here and I'm pretty surprised with how well I've been able to do so far."

"I'm still hungry for more and I hope that I can really do well tomorrow." At 132nd in the world, Anisimova became the lowest-ranked finalist at the Canadian tournament in 40 years, as she seeks a third WTA title after Bogota in 2019 and Melbourne in 2022.

Anisimova took a nine-month mental health break from tennis last year and fell to 373rd in the world rankings at the start of the year, but has ensured a return to the top 50 in the next world rankings. "I knew that when I stepped away that I really wanted to come back and I didn't want to finish my career on that note," Anisimova said.

"There was still a lot I wanted to achieve, and just not finish at such a young age, because I had sacrificed so much and given so much to the sport." Navarro netted a forehand to surrender a break and a 5-2 lead in the final set to Anisimova, who closed with an ace to eliminate her compatriot in one hour, 55 minutes.

Anisimova fired 28 winners to 10 for Navarro in windy conditions. "It was tough out there again today, super windy, struggled on my serve a little bit just with the wind," Navarro said. "In the end, she handled the conditions probably better than I did." — AFP



GREENSBORO: Aaron Rai of England poses with the trophy after the final round of the Wyndham Championship at Sedgefield Country Club on August 11, 2024 in Greensboro. — AFP

by one. Rai blasted his approach at 18 just inside seven feet and made the birdie putt for a two-shot edge.

When Greysenman couldn't manage another hole out from the 18th fairway, Rai's triumph was assured. "I just did a good job of sticking to what we do well," Rai said. "It was amazing to finish it off that way on 18." Rai has won twice on the DP World Tour, the 2018 Hong Kong Open and 2020 Scottish Open. — AFP



(From left) President of International Aquatics Hussein Al-Musallam, IOC member Gunilla Lindberg and Sheikh Khalid Al-Sabah.

Al-Bader: Asia proving tougher in aquatics

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Asian Aquatics Federations Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah participated in handing the medals for the men's 10-meter diving of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Al-Bader said the diving competitions were highly competitive and strong by all participants, as they sought an achievement to be included in the Olympic records.

He said the Asian athletes succeeded in winning different types of medals despite the difficult competition, proving that Asia was and will be the tough number to deal with in aquatics.

He said Kuwait Federation will start from now to prepare athletes for the next Olympics to be held in Los Angeles 2028, through continued hard work, while removing all obstacles they face.



Hamza Behbehani

Boxer Hamza in Bangkok for WBC Asia belt match

KUWAIT: Martial Arts Champion and Professional Boxer Hamza Behbehani left for Bangkok, Thailand, in preparation for his match with the second ranked Thai boxer Ikafab Aurayouan in the 90 kg category for the WBC Asia belt in the match that will be held on Sunday evening in Bangkok. There will be 10 matches on the card in boxing and Muay Thai including players from America, India, Iran, Britain, Cameroon, Pakistan and host country Thailand.

On his part Behbehani said he is technically, physically and mentally ready for his match, adding that "I joined a training camp for 8 continuous weeks, training mornings and evenings by specialized coaches, in addition to having a nutrition specialist to be at the best possible shape".

He said that he will work hard to win the Asian belt and the first start in the world ranking, despite the strength of the Thai opponent, who will play in front of his compatriots. Behbehani lauded the support of Kuwait Olympic Committee and its Vice President Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and thanked all those who supported him.

Sports

Irish Olympian Daniel Wiffen hospitalized after Seine swim

'I'm disappointed to miss out on the opportunity to be flag bearer last night'



Daniel Wiffen

PARIS: Irish double medal-winning Olympian Daniel Wiffen said Monday he had "rushed" to hospital in Paris with a stomach bug, two days after taking part in the marathon swimming in the River Seine. The 800m swimming champion and 1500m bronze medallist was meant to be carrying the Irish flag during Sunday's closing ceremony, but did not appear.

"Thanks everyone who reached out, I'm incredibly disappointed to miss out on the opportunity to be flag bearer last night," Wiffen wrote on X in the early hours of Monday. "Yesterday I rushed to hospital as I was very unwell with a bug that I am being treated for, and am feeling better now."

Wiffen took part in the men's 10-kilometre marathon swim in the River Seine on Friday, finishing 18th with a time of 1 hour 58 minutes. He did not link his illness to the water and organizers stress that health problems should not be automatically

attributed to the river. On Monday, Paris Olympics organizers wished Wiffen "a speedy recovery" but said that they were not aware of "any established link between the illness and the Seine's water quality." "Water quality on the day of the men's marathon swimming was considered 'very good' or 'excellent' across all four testing points and well within the thresholds established by World Aquatics," the organizers said in a statement.

At least three athletes out of more than a hundred who took part in the men's and women's triathlons on July 31 reported illness after diving into the Seine during the swimming leg of the event. They included Belgian triathlete Claire Michel who also needed medical care after suffering three days of vomiting and diarrhoea due to a virus.

The Seine was dogged by pollution problems during the Olympics despite a 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5

billion) upgrade to improve the Paris sewerage and water treatment system. Due to summer rains and storms, which lead to untreated waste water being discharged into the river, the Seine failed tests on multiple occasions.

Of 11 days of events and training scheduled in its murky waters, only five got the green light. Paris 2024 organizers insist that the two bacteria monitored by health authorities and sports federations — E.Coli and enterococci — were at acceptable levels when the outdoor swimming events took place.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo is planning to open three public bathing spots in the river next year as part of what she sees as a key part of the Olympics legacy in the City of Light. "If like 99 percent of the athletes don't have any problems, I think it's fine," German triathlete German Tim Hellwig told reporters after winning the mixed relay event on August 5. — AFP

Olympics equipment heads for 'second life' post-Games

PARIS: The stands have fallen quiet and the Athletes' Village is emptying. What happens to all the equipment now the 2024 Paris Olympics are over? Organizers have plans for it. Over decades, the Olympics have forged a reputation for monumental waste, with whole stadiums sometimes left to rot once the two-week sporting extravaganza moves on. But Paris promised to do things differently, using temporary venues to cut construction work but also forcing suppliers to think about a "second life" for the equipment they supplied, from tennis balls to the sand for the beach volleyball.

"Before we ordered anything, we thought about what this thing is going to become afterwards," Paris 2024 sustainability director Georgina Grenon told AFP in an interview last week. The approach is new for a major global sports event, with her team initially looking for ideas they could copy from FIFA football tournaments or past Olympics before deciding they needed to invent one themselves.

"We also hired consultants and nobody could tell us if this had been done before," explained Grenon, whose team involves an expert in the so-called "circular economy". The first step was drawing up an inventory of everything they needed for the biggest show on earth. "It's as if you're organising a wedding. If you know you have 100 guests, then you need ten tables, 100 chairs etc," she said. The Paris Olympics involved 32 different sports and around 10 million spectators. "We made the list and it amounted to about six million things, six million objects," she explained.

Happy sports clubs

At the start of the procurement process, every time Paris 2024 issued a tender, they included a clause asking the supplier to propose a second life for their products. "We did this so that they could understand that we were not just looking to buy an object. Then it was up to them to propose us the best model," said Grenon. Many of the facilities and much of the equipment used for the Olympics will be immediately redeployed for the Paralympics, which run from August 28 to September 8. But after that, they will head to new homes.

The extra-fine sand used for the beach volleyball court in front of the Eiffel Tower, one of the Games' iconic venues, has been promised to a club in the Paris region. Paris 2024 logos are set to be scrubbed off podiums so that they can be used elsewhere.

The 600,000 items of office furniture leased from French company Lyreco will be taken back and used by the firm to launch a new second-hand furniture business. The more than 14,000 mattresses made from recycled plastic used in the Olympic Village will be given to the French army, while their cardboard bases will be recycled. The tennis balls used at Roland-Garros, including those hit by teary gold medal-winner Novak Djokovic, will be donated to French sports clubs, as will much of the other sports equipment from javelins to shot puts. — AFP

Coe to give IOC presidency tilt 'serious thought'

PARIS: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said Sunday he would give "serious thought" about throwing his hat into the ring to succeed Thomas Bach as head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Bach, who has led the Olympic movement since 2013, told a session of IOC members on Saturday that he will not seek to remain in charge for a third term. "New times are calling for new leaders," the 70-year-old German lawyer said.

Coe, whose third and final term as athletics chief ends in 2027, has long been suggested as a successor to Bach. "I've always made it clear that if the opportunity arose, I will obviously give it serious thought," Coe told reporters.

"The opportunity has arisen and clearly I need to think about that." "Of course I'm going to consider this." While not immediately committing to a tilt, two-time Olympic 1500m gold medallist Coe, chairman of the 2012 London Games bid, then listed attributes that would make him a suitable candidate.

"I have been involved in the Olympic movement for the larger part of my life," he said. "I've chaired an Olympic Games from bid through delivery, two years of legacy. After that, I've been privileged to compete in two Olympic Games."

"I chaired the National Olympic Committee and



Sebastian Coe

I now have the best job in the world, as president of the number one Olympic sport. "These are experiences that, if you put together with other aspects of my life, I think would be beneficial to the role."

Coe is also a proven innovator, having taken over a World Athletics in dire straits after predecessor Lamine Diack was embroiled in a cover-up of Russian doping cases. Coe has earned credit for taking a hardline stance in banning Russian and Belarusian athletes in response to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Equally he attracted flak from some fellow federation presidents for taking the revolutionary step

of paying Olympic track and field gold medallists \$50,000 each in prize money.

Innovate and change

Coe, who was a British Conservative Party lawmaker from 1992-97, added that there were many other potential candidates within the Olympic movement "who have good qualifications for that role". "We're a diverse group of global people, international candidates who would fit that bill," he said.

Ever the politician, Coe added: "I would encourage others to consider that within the movement because choice is important. I take that very seriously, and I think the membership needs to have a good range of quality qualified people to look at."

Asked about what his vision for the IOC might be, Coe stressed that the incoming president would require a "laser-like focus on the need to innovate and to change". "We know that the Olympic Games is fundamentally about sport. I've sensed in recent times that sport... in a way, has slipped down the agenda."

"I've heard a lot in the last year or so about solidarity, empowerment and sustainability, they're health checks, and every good organization should have those at the heart, we do in World Athletics, and we're not the only organization."

"They are absolutely the essentials of a good organization, but that's not how we should be defining ourselves. "No. This is a sporting organization. "My view here, and not just in Paris, but in the last few years, is that sport is going to have to make sure that it is really punching its weight in this space, because at the moment, we have some challenges." — AFP

Barbosu to be awarded Chiles' Olympic bronze

PARIS: Romanian gymnast Ana Barbosu will be awarded the Olympic floor exercise bronze medal originally given to Jordan Chiles, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said Sunday. The IOC decision follows a Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruling on Saturday which cancelled the re-evaluation of Chiles' score on the grounds that the appeal of her degree of difficulty was lodged by the US team four seconds after the regulatory deadline, set at one minute.

After the review, the score for Chiles, who won team gold with the United States, was upgraded to 13.766 points, meaning she moved from fifth to third position. That was enough to earn bronze behind Brazil's Rebeca Andrade and US superstar Simone Biles.

But it was a devastating blow for Barbosu who thought she had bagged bronze with her score of 13.700, and was already celebrating with the Romanian flag. USA Gymnastics on Sunday formally submitted a letter and video evidence to CAS, showing that head coach Cecile Landi's inquiry request was submitted 47 seconds after the publishing of the score.

"The time-stamped, video evidence submitted by USA Gymnastics Sunday evening shows Landi first stated her request to file an inquiry at the inquiry table 47 seconds after the score is posted, followed by a second statement 55 seconds after the score was originally posted," USA Gymnastics said in a statement.

"The video footage provided was not available to USA Gymnastics prior to the tribunal's decision and



PARIS: Bronze medallist US' Jordan Chiles poses during the podium ceremony for the artistic gymnastics women's floor exercise event of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Bercy Arena. — AFP

thus USAG did not have the opportunity to previously submit it." In the letter, USA Gymnastics requested that the CAS ruling be revised and Chiles' bronze-medal score of 13.766 reinstated. Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu had called the original decision that cost Barbosu bronze a "scandalous situation" and said he would boycott the Olympic closing ceremony. One of the defining images of the Paris Games shows Biles and Chiles, bowing to Andrade, on the podium.

"We're in contact with the national Olympic Committee of Romania to discuss the reallocation ceremony and that of the United States regarding the return of the bronze medal," an IOC spokesman told AFP. "I can barely express my emotions, I can't believe it," Barbosu said after learning she was awarded her country's only medal in the gymnastics competition. — AFP

Thorpe took his own life: Wife Amanda

LONDON: Graham Thorpe's wife Amanda has revealed the former England cricketer took his own life after battling depression and anxiety for several years. Aged just 55, Thorpe's death in August plunged the cricket world into mourning for the popular star.

He enjoyed an impressive England career as an elegant batsman between 1993 and 2005, before spending 12 years in various coaching roles. But Thorpe was hospitalised in May 2022 and declared "seriously ill".

Amanda Thorpe has now revealed in an interview with The Times that the former Surrey player attempted suicide two years ago before taking his own life earlier this month. "Despite having a wife and two daughters whom he loved and who loved him, he did not get better. He was so unwell in recent times and he really did believe that we would be better off without him and we are devastated that he acted on that and took his own life," Amanda Thorpe told The Times.

"For the past couple of years, Graham had been suffering from major depression and anxiety. This led him to make a serious attempt on his life in May 2022, which resulted in a prolonged stay in an intensive care unit."

The left-hander featured in 100 Test matches and 82 one-day internationals for England, scoring over 9,000 runs for his country, including 16 Test hundreds. But he was unable to overcome his mental health battle despite the support of his family and doctors. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| Kaizen center | 25716707 |
| Rawda | 22517733 |
| Adaliya | 22517144 |
| Khaldiya | 24848075 |
| Kaifan | 24849807 |
| Shamiya | 24848913 |
| Shuwaikh | 24814507 |
| Abdullah Salem | 22549134 |
| Nuzha | 22526804 |
| Industrial Shuwaikh | 24814764 |
| Qadsiya | 22515088 |
| Dasmah | 22532265 |
| Bneid Al-Gar | 22531908 |
| Shaab | 22518752 |

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Qibla | 22459381 |
| Ayoun Al-Qibla | 22451082 |
| Mirqab | 22456536 |
| Sharq | 22465401 |
| Salmiya | 25746401 |

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Ebsiba, holder of Indian Passport No. Y1280869 having permanent address H.No. 11/412, Karthianikattu (H) Theyyappara, Kodenchery, Kozhikode, Pin- 673580, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Ebsiba. Name: Ebsiba Eldose and surname: Eldose Skaria. **(5649#, 13/08/2024)**

Kozhikode, Pin- 673580, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Edson. Name: Edson Eldose and surname: Eldose Skaria. **(5648#, 13/08/2024)**

I, Edson, holder of Indian Passport No. Y1280872 having permanent address H.No. 11/412, Karthianikattu (H) Theyyappara, Kodenchery, **(5647#, 11/08/2024)**

I, Darvuri Haribabu holder of Indian Passport No. S0588642, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Darvuri Haribabu to Daruru Haribabu (given name) and Daruru (surname). **(5647#, 11/08/2024)**

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

France bids reluctant farewell to dazzling Paris Olympics

Olympic champion swimmer Leon Marchand extinguishes cauldron

PARIS: France bid a reluctant farewell on Monday to an "enchanted" fortnight of Olympic sport as athletes headed home from Paris praising a dazzling edition of the Games that has breathed new life into the biggest show on earth.

Hollywood star Tom Cruise delivered stardust at the closing ceremony on Sunday evening — and a link with the next Games in Los Angeles — by abseiling into the national stadium. The "Mission Impossible" star descended on a wire in front of 71,500 spectators, grabbed the Olympic flag and jumped onto a motorbike, to the delight of thousands of dancing athletes and awe-struck fans.

The final act of the Paris Olympics brought relief that an event foreshadowed by worries about terror attacks, strikes or protests had passed off with barely a hitch. But there was also sadness that two weeks of high-spirited celebration had come to an end.

"Keep the flame alive," urged the front-page headline of France's biggest sports newspaper, L'Equipe, which featured new national swimming hero Leon Marchand and urged French people to maintain the spirit "of this enchanted fortnight". At the Athletes' Village in northern Paris, bleary-eyed athletes were packing their bags after a late night, with the French capital's two main airports braced for a huge influx of travellers and sports equipment.

Magda Skarbonkiewicz, a Team USA fencer, said she would return home filled with memories of competing inside the Grand Palais, one of the historic venues used around the French capital. "It's such an iconic venue and just nothing like I've ever seen before," she told AFP. "It's amazing to see so many people care about fencing the way the French people do."

'Seine-sational'

During Sunday night's closing ceremony, which stressed the Olympics' core message of peace and cooperation, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach had praised the Paris Games for being "sport at its best".

"These were sensational Olympic Games from



SAINT-DENIS: International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach (L) and France's President Emmanuel Macron shake hands during the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis, on the outskirts of Paris. — AFP photos



SAINT-DENIS: French swimmer Leon Marchand holds the Olympic flame during the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Jardin des Tuileries (Tuileries Garden) in Paris, on August 11, 2024.

start to finish," Bach said. "Or dare I say: Seine-sational Games," the IOC chief quipped in a pun about the river flowing through Paris which was a sometimes fickle star of the event. Observers had seen Paris 2024 as essential for the Olympics brand as a whole, coming after a COVID-affected edition in Tokyo and a corruption-tainted version in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Around 9,000 athletes flooded into the Stade de France on Sunday night for a show that featured music from French electro act Air, guitar band Phoenix, Belgian singer Angele and the Cambodian rapper VannDa.

"We knew you would be brilliant, but you were magic," Paris 2024 organizing chief Tony Estanguet told the crowd during a triumphalist speech. He said the Games had transformed "a nation of implacable complainers" into "unbridled supporters who don't want to stop singing". Much of the media commentary has focused on the uplifting impact of the Games on the generally morose national mood. Just weeks before the Olympics, snap elections called by President Emmanuel Macron delivered a hung parliament and a historic number of seats for the far-right National Rally party.

"The Paris Games offered the capital and the entire country more than two weeks of fervour and happiness that were so unexpected and appreciated given that they came after a political period dominated by the sad passions of decline and xenophobia," said an editorial in Le Monde newspaper.

"For 17 days the stereotype of the indifferent, grumpy Frenchman went missing," wrote sports writer Owen Slot in The Times newspaper, adding that Paris had "made the Olympic Games look more beautiful than ever before."

Next stop: LA

The closing spectacle marked the beginning of the four-year countdown to the LA Games, and American gymnastics icon Simone Biles joined Los Angeles mayor Karen Bass as the Olympic

flag was formally handed over.

The ceremony followed 17 days of drama-filled sporting action lit up by Biles, American sprinter Noah Lyles, Pakistan's javelin king Arshad Nadeem and casual Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec, who has become an Internet sensation.

They also featured a damaging gender row about two female boxers, Imane Khelif of Algeria and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting, who both went on to win gold. The last day of sporting action saw the United States pip China for top spot in the battle for medals after the US women's basketball team squeezed past France 67-66 to clinch the last gold of the Games.

The win — the eighth consecutive Olympic women's basketball title won by the USA — ensured the Americans finished level with China on 40 golds each. The USA however finished on top of the overall medal table with a total of 126 medals, with China in second place on 91. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Gold medallist Netherlands' Sifan Hassan celebrates during the podium ceremony for the women's marathon of the athletics event during the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis.

CONDOLENCES

convey their deepest condolences to

His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

and the Al-Sabah Family

on the sad demise of

His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

Patriarch of Al-Sabah Family and Chief of the National Guard

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him