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Ali Marafi

Hamas dismisses Gaza 'truce illusion' as death toll mounts

Zionist airstrike kills 10 in southern Lebanon



GAZA: Palestinians mourn their relatives, killed in Zionist airstrike, at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir El-Balah on August 17, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: A senior Hamas official on Saturday dismissed optimistic talk by US President Joe Biden that a Gaza truce is nearer after negotiations in the Gulf emirate of Qatar. "To say that we are getting close to a deal is an illusion," Hamas political bureau member Sami Abu Zuhri told AFP. "We are not facing a deal or real negotiations, but rather the imposing of American diktats," he was responding to Biden's comment on Friday that, "We are closer than we have ever been."

Biden spoke after two days of talks in Qatar where Washington tried to bridge differences between Zionist entity and Palestinian Hamas militants. The two sides have been at war for more than 10 months in the Gaza Strip. Previous optimism during months of on-off truce talks has so far proven futile. But the stakes have significantly risen since the killings in quick succession in late July of Fuad Shukur, a top operations chief of Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement, and Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh.

Their deaths led to vows of vengeance from Hezbollah, Iran and other Tehran-backed groups in the region which blamed Zionists. In an effort to avert a broader conflict, Western and Arab diplomats have been shuttling around the Middle East to push for a Gaza deal which they say could help avert a wider regional con-

flagrations. Biden's secretary of state, Antony Blinken, was to head to Zionist entity in a bid to finalize an agreement.

As efforts towards a truce continued, so did the killing on Saturday in Gaza and Lebanon. Lebanon's Health Ministry said Zionist air strike in southern Lebanon killed 10 people including a Syrian woman and her two children. The strike was among the deadliest in southern Lebanon since the onset of near-daily exchanges of fire between Zionists and Hezbollah following the start of the Gaza war in October. Zionist military said it struck a Hezbollah weapons storage facility. In Hamas-run Gaza, civil defense rescuers said a Zionist airstrike killed 15 people from a single Palestinian family. The fatalities in Al-Zawaida helped push the Gaza health ministry's war death toll to 40,074.

"We are in the morgue seeing indescribable scenes of limbs and severed heads and children who are dismembered," said Omar Al-Dreemli, a relative. The Gaza war has displaced most of the territory's population, destroyed much of the housing and other infrastructure, and left diseases spreading. The United Nations on Friday appealed for seven-day pauses in the fighting so it could vaccinate children against polio, after the Palestinian health ministry reported Gaza's first polio case in 25 years.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Police arrest six for forgery

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Interior arrested six people accused of forging residency permits. In a press statement on Saturday, the Ministry said that the criminal group transfers residency permits and driving licenses for foreign workers in exchange for sums of money. The move came upon directives of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, in line with the Ministry's efforts to arrest residency traders, it pointed out, affirming keenness on decisively combating law violators. — KUNA

Container ship leak contained

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ports Authority said that firefighters managed to contain a flammable liquid leak from a container ship as it was getting ready to set sail from Shuaiba Port on Friday. Officials of the containers' station at the port notified Kuwait Fire Force and emergency measures were implemented timely to tackle the problem, according to a statement posted to KPAs X account. — KUNA

Mobile biometric scanners

KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior said that mobile biometric scanners would be sent to persons with medium and severe disabilities at their homes to register their finger and face prints as from Sunday, August 18. The initiative, made by the Ministry's General Department of Criminal Evidence in collaboration with the General Directorate of Information Systems, aims to make it easier and more convenient for those persons to access to online government services. (See Page 3)

Hezbollah reveals its military muscle

BEIRUT: Hezbollah has gradually revealed its military capabilities in 10 months of cross-border clashes with Zionists, analysts say, including footage of purported underground missile facilities released Friday amid fears of all-out war. The Lebanese Shiite Muslim movement, armed and financed by Iran, has traded near-daily fire with Zionist forces in support of its ally Hamas.

Fears of a major escalation skyrocketed after a Zionist strike last month on Beirut's southern suburbs killed Fuad Shukur, one of Hezbollah's top commanders, hours before an attack in Tehran, blamed on Zionists, killed Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniyeh. Since Zionists and Hezbollah last went to war in 2006, the pro-Iran militant group has increased its military strength, according to analysts.

On Friday it released a polished video appearing to show its fighters trucking large missiles through tunnels at an underground facility. Riad Kahwaji, head of the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, a security consultancy, said it was "the most explicit video Hezbollah has ever released showing the size of its tunnels". It also showed "for the first time what appeared to be missiles big enough to be



EL KFOUR, Lebanon: People inspect the damage to a building after a Zionist airstrike in the southern town of Kfour, in the Nabatiyeh district, on August 17, 2024, amid the ongoing cross-border clashes between Zionist troops and Hezbollah fighters. — AFP

ballistic missiles", he told AFP. Hezbollah likely released the video to "deter" Zionists from a major operation against it, he said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Zionist entity is "prepared both defensively and offensively"

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Gaza's undertakers stack 'graves on top of graves'

GAZA: Undertakers are working like bricklayers in a Gaza cemetery, piling cinder blocks into tight rectangles, side by side, for freshly dug graves. More than 10 months into the Gaza war, so many bodies are arriving at the cemetery in Deir El-Balah that the men, working in the hot sun, hardly have space to bury them. "The cemetery is so full that we now dig graves on top of other graves, we've piled the dead in levels," says Saadi Hassan Barakeh, leading his team of gravediggers.

Barakeh, 63, has been burying the dead for 28 years. In "all the wars in Gaza", he says he has "never seen this". Previously, Barakeh also oversaw burials at the nearby Ansar cemetery, which covers 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres). But now "the Ansar cemetery is completely full. There were too many dead", he says, his clothes smeared in dirt from digging graves. He now handles just the Al-Soueid cemetery, with its 5.5 hectares of graves.

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Europe on alert as mpox spreads

STOCKHOLM: Health authorities have warned that Europe must be ready for more cases of a deadly strain of mpox that has killed hundreds of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The World Health Organization urged pharmaceutical firms to ramp up vaccine production and China said it would screen travelers for the disease after the first cases of the more deadly strain to be recorded outside Africa were announced in Sweden and Pakistan.

France's Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said his country was on the "highest alert" and would imple-

ment "new recommendations" for travelers to risk areas. Mpox is caused by a virus transmitted to humans by animals but can also spread human-to-human through close physical contact. It causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions.

The WHO on Wednesday declared the rapid spread of the new Clade 1b strain an international public health emergency - the agency's highest alert. This follows the spread of the more deadly mpox from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to other African countries. "We do need the manufacturers to really scale up so that we've got access to many, many more vaccines," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters.

The WHO is asking countries with vaccine stockpiles to donate them to countries with outbreaks. Harris said mpox was "particularly dangerous for

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WEST HOLLYWOOD: Registered pharmacist Sapna Patel demonstrates the preparation of a dose of the monkeypox vaccine at a pop-up vaccination clinic in Los Angeles. — AFP



Local

Burgan Bank unveils its central hub for innovation and transformation

'Burgan Lab' designed as a catalyst of customer-centric solutions

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the launch of its innovation and digital transformation central hub, "Burgan Lab", in its latest effort to foster a culture of collaboration, creativity, and excellence. Stemming from the Bank's vision to be the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, "Burgan Lab" is designed as a catalyst of customer-centric solutions that optimize every step of the Burgan banking journey using advanced tools and cutting-edge technologies. This falls under the umbrella of Burgan Bank's committed digital transformation and human capital development strategies.

"In a fast-paced industry where every day presents new challenges and opportunities for

growth, maintaining our success as a leading banking institution in Kuwait and a preferred financial partner of choice requires anticipating needs before they transpire and innovating state-of-the-art solutions that are in tune with the latest technologies and market aspirations," said Omar Khalifouh, Acting Deputy General Manager – Digital Transformation at Burgan Bank.

"To keep up with the ever-evolving market, we are very excited to launch 'Burgan Lab', a hub where the brightest, most aspiring talents can brainstorm, experiment, and develop advanced banking and financial solutions that enable customers to lead a life of comfort,

convenience, and fulfillment through agility and innovative digitization efforts."

Building on Burgan's culture of creativity, adaptability to change, and strategic foresightedness, "Burgan Lab" is set to offer a year-long series of workshops, training sessions, and focus groups that aim to push the boundaries of customer satisfaction and banking excellence, leading with its first "Burgan Lab Academy". In addition to its concrete impact on fast-tracking banking and financial innovation at Burgan Bank, the Lab will also play a significant role in upskilling the Bank's top talents and harnessing the creativity of Kuwait's young and fresh minds, ultimately contributing to

the advancement of the domestic talent pool and national calibers in preparing tomorrow's digital transformation leaders.

As a certified Great Place to Work, Burgan Bank strives to remain an employer of choice by developing new programs and spaces that guarantee continued growth and development for its employees across all departments and employment grades. Previous efforts that combined Burgan's commitment to digital transformation, learning, and development include its deployment of the personalized digital learning and development program, CK Connect, which enables staff to acquire new knowledge and skills at their own pace and in line with their interests and needs.



Omar Khalifouh

Kuwait welcomes Sudan's decision to open 'Adri' crossing

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has welcomed the decision of Sudan Transitional Sovereignty Council to open the "Adri" border crossing, to deliver humanitarian aid to those affected by the war. In a statement, the Ministry said the move is a vital step to save lives and prevent the spread of famine in the Darfur region. The Ministry also called on all parties to take immediate and effective steps to ensure the provision of protection to humanitarian and relief workers through the crossing, and to facilitate the delivery and transfer of aid to those in need. The Ministry reiterates its affirmation of the State of Kuwait's firm and supportive position on the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sudan.

Also, the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi welcomed the decision. In a statement, Al-Budaiwi said that such critical step will contribute to ease the suffering of those affected by the war, save lives in the Darfur region and its surroundings. GCC chief called on all parties to take immediate and effective measures for dialogue among parties involved, and to ensure the provision of protection to humanitarian and relief workers through the crossing.

Meanwhile, Sudan's paramilitaries have agreed to cooperate on humanitarian deliveries, following the Sudanese government's decision to open a key border crossing with Chad, countries staging talks in Switzerland said Saturday. War has raged since April 2023 between the Sudanese army under the country's de facto ruler Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The brutal conflict has triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The United States is staging ceasefire and aid talks, which began at an undisclosed location in Switzerland on Wednesday. While an RSF delegation has come to Switzerland, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are unhappy with the format and are not participating. The talks are co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and Switzerland, with the African Union, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and the United Nations acting as a steering group.

In a joint statement, the five countries, the UN and the AU welcomed the decision to open the crossing from Chad into North Darfur for the coming three months. "We also welcome the RSF's commitment to cooperate with humanitarian deliveries, notably through the crucial Dabbah route to Darfur and Kordofan, and to protect humanitarian personnel in their work," they said. "These constructive decisions by both parties will enable the entry of aid needed to stop the famine, address food insecurity and respond to immense humanitarian needs in Darfur and beyond. "The parties should immediately communicate and coordinate with humanitarian partners to efficiently operationalize these corridors with full and unhindered access."

The statement also called on the international community and humanitarian organizations to "seize this moment" to move aid and help save the lives of the most vulnerable. The fighting has forced one in five people to flee their homes, while tens of thousands have died. More than 25 million across the country - more than half its population - face acute hunger. Famine has been declared in a Darfur displacement camp. The closure of the Adri crossing has been a longstanding concern for aid groups struggling to get food and supplies into Sudan's Darfur region. — Agencies

Oil minister returns to Kuwait after treatment in Turkey

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Emad Mohamed Al-Atiqi returned to the country Saturday after completing his treatment in Turkey.

Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji and several ministers and senior officials greeted him upon his arrival at the airport. — KUNA

Interior Minister orders removal of violations in Failaka

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, on Saturday, ordered the removal of all encroachments on state property at Failaka Island. The order came as he went on an inspection tour to examine all violations on the island. In a statement published by the interior ministry on X, Sheikh Fahad stressed the importance of the cooperation of all concerned parties, each in their field, to uphold the law and take all legal measures against violators.

He also emphasized the need to deal firmly and immediately with encroachments on state property and apply the law to everyone without exception, stressing that no one is above the law. At the end of the tour, he thanked the efforts of all employees on the island from various ministries of state, and their dedication to carrying out the tasks entrusted to them sincerely, to preserve the country and its stability. Sheikh Fahad was accompanied during the



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Emad Mohamed Al-Atiqi (center) is greeted by Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (second right) and other officials. — KUNA

tour by the Director General of the General Directorate of the Coast Guard Brigadier General Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Sabah, the Director General of Al-Assima Governorate Security Directorate Brigadier General Suleiman Al-Jarrah, the Director General of the General Department of Relations and Security Media Brigadier Nasser Eid Bou Salib, the Supervisor of Building Conservation at the Ministry of Finance Abdullah Hamoud Abu Shaiba, and the Director of the Survey Department at Kuwait Municipality Hisham Qassem Al-Balam.



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef



this came during an inspection visit conducted by Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah to the building of the Operations Department of the General Directorate of Traffic in South Sabahiya.

The Minister of Interior was briefed on the progress of work in the central control operations room and the role of traffic monitoring cameras in following up traffic on main roads and intersections, in addition to the mechanism for registering indirect violations. He also inspected the central control operations room and the Ministry of Interior's plan to intensify security and traffic personnel and the deployment of checkpoints in various areas to enhance security control and arrest violators.

Intensify traffic control

In a separate statement on Friday, the interior minister emphasized the need to intensify the presence of traffic men in various roads and vital intersections to firmly address any violations of the law or any practices that endanger the safety of vehicle drivers and road users. The General Directorate of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior said in a statement that



AQABA: The third Kuwaiti ship arrives in Aqaba port in Jordan. — KUNA photos

Kuwait sends ship to Gaza loaded with 1,600 tons of aid

AQABA: The Kuwait Society for Relief (KCR) announced on Thursday the arrival of the third Kuwaiti ship in Aqaba port in Jordan, supplying some 1,600 tons of necessary aid to relieve Palestinians in Gaza.

wait have had historic relations for many years, adding that Awadhi embodied these relations over the past period. Manar Al-Dabbas, Jordan's Ambassador in London, said Awadhi was one of the distinguished Arab ambassadors in his duties. He noted Awadhi was knowledgeable and professional in his duties, and he could gain appreciation of the council and decision-makers' circles in the UK. Kuwait's diplomacy has been outstanding in all fields, he affirmed.

The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Bangkok Mohamed Failakawi is also ending his term. On the occasion, Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his wife, Queen Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshana, received Ambassador Al-Failakawi at the royal palace. During the reception on Thursday, Failakawi conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the King, wishing him everlasting well-being, and further progress and prosperity for the friendly country and people of Thailand, Kuwait's Embassy in Bangkok said in a statement received by KUNA. Failakawi was named Kuwait's Ambassador and Plenipotentiary to Thailand in 2019. — KUNA



The Kuwait Society for Relief officials pose for a photo.

Omar Al-Thuwaini, the second in command at the Kuwait Society for Relief, told KUNA that unloading the ship will be in cooperation with Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), noting that the supplies are expected to enter Gaza by the end of the month through the land borders with Gaza.

In a similar statement to KUNA, the head of relief and projects sector at KCR Mahmoud Al-Mesbah said that the ship's cargo of 1,600 tons included approximately 650 tons of essential food parcels and about 450 tons of medical supplies. The shipment included some 5,000 packages containing mother and

newborn care supplies, 35,000 packages containing clothes, utensils, and personal hygiene supplies, as well as around 500 tons of shelter supplies, containing 1,200 fully equipped tents, Mesbah added.

He praised the efforts of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs, Kuwaiti charities, the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), and JHCO, for greatly contributing to achieving this feat. This aid ship sent by Kuwait, is the third of its kind, as part of the campaign launched by Kuwait Society for Relief along with 30 charities and governmental institutions last December. — KUNA

2 Kuwaiti diplomats end their terms in London, Bangkok

LONDON: The Council of Arab Ambassadors in London honored on Thursday Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Bader Al-Awadhi on the occasion of the end of his tenure. Speaking to KUNA, the dean of Arab diplomatic corps and Ambassador of Bahrain to the UK Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khalifa said the Kuwaiti envoy made big efforts to strengthen the UK-Kuwait and the UK-Arab ties. Awadhi has many contributions to the council in London through his participations in the meetings held with the British side, Khalifa said, wishing Awadhi every success in his coming duties.

Yemen's Ambassador to the UK Yassin Noman told KUNA in a similar statement that Yemen and Ku-



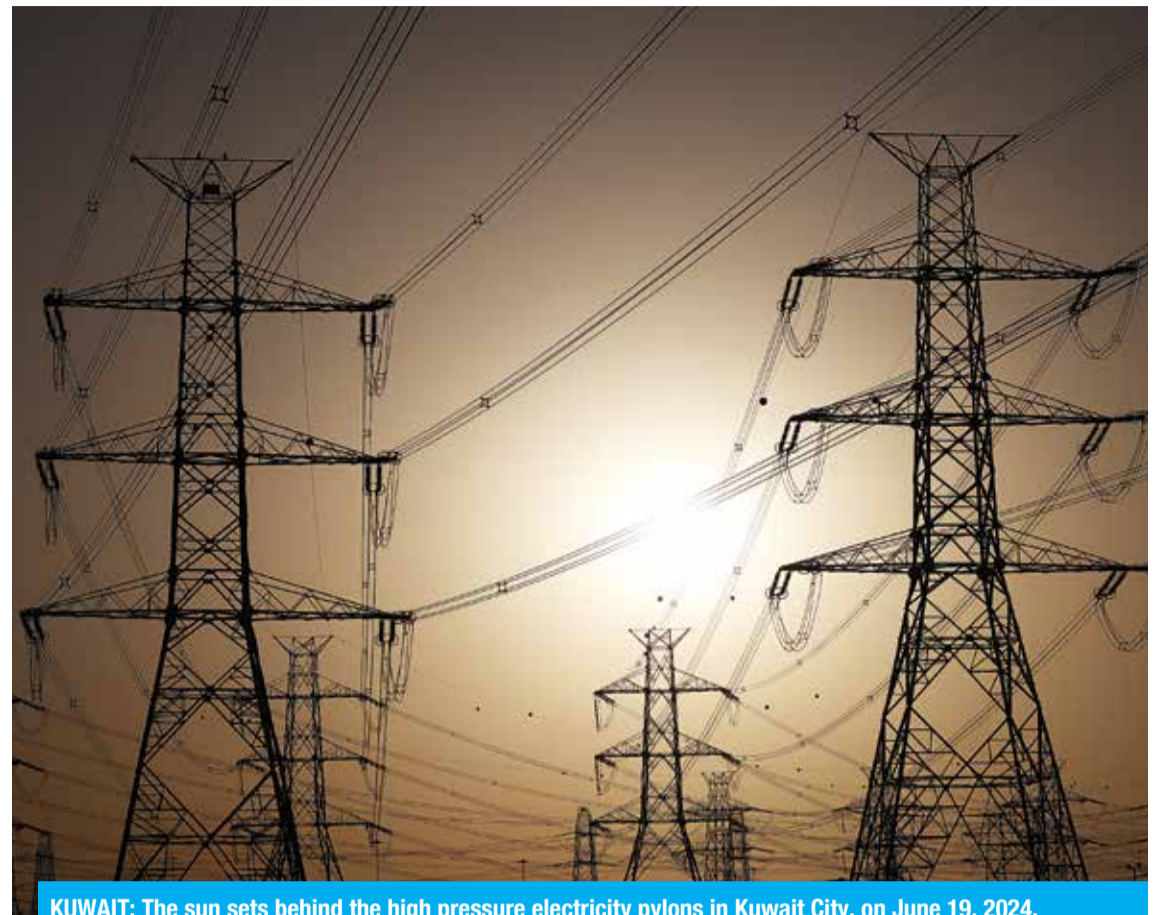
BANGKOK: Thai King and his wife receive Ambassador Mohamed Failakawi at the royal palace.



LONDON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Bader Al-Awadhi (left) receives a souvenir from fellow diplomats on the occasion of the end of his tenure. — KUNA photos



Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC). — KUNA



KUWAIT: The sun sets behind the high pressure electricity pylons in Kuwait City, on June 19, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Massive fuel shortage forces electricity cuts in Kuwait

Interruption of seawater supply causes complete shutdown of gas operations at Ahmadi refinery

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Several non-residential areas in Kuwait faced temporary power cuts Saturday after a shortage of fuel rendered power plants inoperable. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) feeding the plants was cut short after Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) gas liquefaction units went into complete shutdown due to an interruption of seawater supply, according to a KNPC statement published on KUNA. The water, which is provided by the Public Authority for Industry, is necessary for cooling gas liquefaction units in the Ahmadi refinery. The shutdown affected gas supply across Kuwait, including power generation units in electricity and water desalination plants.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said it was "forced" to disconnect electricity Saturday afternoon from some parts of non-residential areas including Abdali, Wafra, Rai, Sulaibiya, Amghara, and Subhan as a precautionary measure to protect the integrity of the country's electrical distribution network. Nearly two hours later, the ministry announced power was back in the affected areas. In a statement, the ministry apologized for "having to reduce the electrical loads in these areas."

The seawater shortage happened at 7 am, leading KNPC to activate its emergency plan, the company said in a statement to KUNA without explaining the cause behind it or blaming the Public Authority for Industry for any

shortcomings. It said the Public Authority for Industry was able to restore seawater supply at 8 am, after which the refinery gradually began to operate normally. The company praised "the level of technical coordination between all concerned authorities, which resulted in the restoration of normal work."

Deputy CEO for Operations and official spokesperson of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Ali Al-Ajmi said the company has rushed to meet the liquefied gas needs to fill the shortage resulting from the temporary interruption in gas supplies on Saturday morning. Ajmi affirmed in a statement to KUNA "the company's commitment to meeting Kuwait's needs for gas and its keenness to provide the network of power

generation stations with its needs of low-sulfur fuel oil needed to operate these stations." He said KIPIC was keen on supporting national efforts to ensure the regularity of the operation of power generation stations.

Kuwait has been grappling with electricity shortages all summer, much to the dismay of the people who rely on airconditioners to survive the scorching heat. In June, people were in disarray after the electricity ministry resorted to programmed power cuts across the country, including in residential areas, in what the ministry said were precautionary attempts to protect the stability of the power grid. The ministry blamed soaring temperatures for the power cuts, calling on the public to limit consumption between 11 am and 5 pm to ensure uninterrupted supply.



Ali Al-Ajmi

Kuwait explores renewable energy solutions in Vienna

VIENNA: Ambassador to Austria and permanent envoy to international organizations in Vienna Talal Al-Fassam and officials in Burgenland Energie discussed cooperation in the renewable energy field. In a statement received by KUNA on Friday, Ambassador Al-Fassam said that renewable energy is key to Kuwait's long-life energy strategy, adding the discussions revolved around a partnership beneficial for both sides. During his visit to the company's headquarters, Al-Fassam noted that it is an integral part of the Kuwait Vision 2035 of creating and exploring different energy resources. Fassam learned of the company's recent environment-friendly technologies and methods of connecting solar and wind power, as well as means of reducing carbon emissions and achieving sustainable development. Burgenland Energie AG operates as an energy service company that provides electricity, natural gas, and heat, as well as energy solutions for customers in Austria. — KUNA



VIENNA: Ambassador to Austria in Vienna Talal Al-Fassam is seen during his visit to the Austrian company. — KUNA

KAPP shortlists companies for Dabdeba, Shagaya

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) announced on Saturday the qualification results of the companies and consortiums applying for the Dabdeba Electric Power Generation Project and the Shagaya Renewable Energy Project - Phase III (Zone 1 PV Project). The authority said in a press release to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, it announced the results of the qualification of companies and alliances applying for qualification that have been approved for participation in the next phase of the project, listing companies and alliances from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and local and foreign companies.

KAPP had issued a call for specialized local and international companies and alliances to submit qualification applications for the two projects in January. According to KUNA, the two tenders are for the construction of renewable energy plants to be located within the Al-Shagaya complex in Jahra Governorate, about 100 km from the Kuwait City. It aims to involve the local and international private sector in the design, financing, construction, operation and maintenance of a renewable energy plant with a net capacity of 1100 MW through photovoltaic (PV) technology.

The plants' output will feed Kuwait's electrical grid through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for a period of 30 years.



JAHRA: Part of the Al-Shagaya Concentrated Solar Power Project is seen in this photo taken from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research website.

The projects are expected to help Kuwait fulfil its commitment to reduce carbon emissions and actualize the government's plans to use the expertise and capabilities of the private sector to develop the country's infrastructure. It's also seen as a means to develop the local economy by attracting foreign capital and creating job opportunities for citizens.

Kuwait has been planning a solar expansion for a while: Kuwait is committing to sourcing 15 percent (or 14 GW) of its power from renewables by 2030, including from planned increases to Al-Shagaya's power capacity from 70 MW to 4 GW to replace eight oil and gas-

fired power stations. In July, Kuwait's Finance Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, discussed Al-Shagaya with commissioner-general of China's representative office in the Middle East and North Africa. The discussion highlighted that Al-Shagaya renewable energy station (Area 3 + 4) will be executed by Chinese companies. The park currently includes a 50 MW thermal solar plant, a 10 MW wind farm, a 10 MW PV plant, and 132 kV overhead transmission line connected to the national grid. The expansion project is not expected to kick off operations before 2027.

People with special needs can register biometrics at home

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Interior said Friday that mobile biometric scanners would be sent to persons with medium and severe disabilities at their homes to register their finger and face prints as from Sunday, August 18. The initiative, made by the ministry's General Department of Criminal Evidence in collaboration with the General Directorate of Information Systems, aims to make it easier and more convenient for those persons to access to online government services. Persons with disabilities can communicate with the security department and get an appointment for registering their biometric prints via the WhatsApp No. 94458124, according to a statement from the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media. The Ministry of Interior extended the time limit for Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates to register their biometrics until September 30 and December 31, respectively.

Kuwait first announced it was introducing home biometrics for some people in April. Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, had directed providing the biometrics equipment necessary for doing the service at home for the elderly and ill people, who are unable to head to the interior ministry's centers. The directives aim to facilitate the service for the people facing compulsory directives.

Failure on the part of citizens and expats to get their biometric scans done will lead to a halt on all transactions of the ministry. Ministry personnel continue to take biometric fingerprints at Kuwait's border outlets, the Kuwait International Airport and specific centers at several security premises across the country.

The Ministry of Interior last week emphasized the importance of completing biometric fingerprint registration for all citizens and residents before the set deadlines. According to local media, over 2.5 million individuals, including citizens, residents, and Gulf citizens, have completed their registration. — Agencies



KUWAIT: A man completes his biometric scan at one of the locations designated by the interior ministry as officers look on. — KUNA

Kuwait participates in 43rd World Scout Conference

CAIRO: The activities of the 43rd World Scout Conference kicked off in Cairo on Saturday with the participation of Kuwaiti high-level delegations and representatives of international bodies, in addition to 176 national scout organizations. The Kuwaiti delegation is led by the Chairman of the Scout Arabic Committee and the President of the Kuwait Scout Association, Dr Abdullah Al-Turaiji.

International Commissioner of Egyptian Scouts Mohamed Omar stressed in his speech during the opening session that hosting the conference, which



CAIRO: Presenters speak at the opening ceremony of the 43rd World Scout Conference. — KUNA

closes on August 23, "allows us to shed light on the scouts' rich cultural heritage and our values of peace, solidarity and leadership."

"It is an opportunity for Egyptian Scouts to contribute to the global dialogue on how scouting can continue to empower the next generation," Omar, who is the executive director of the council, added.

Secretary-General of the World Scout Movement Ahmed Al-Hindawi, said in his speech that the movement's mission "as the world's leading movement in the field of youth education is the most important at the moment." The conference addresses a range of important topics including peace, sustainability, youth leadership, human rights and non-formal education and aims to inspire the leadership of national scout organizations through keynote talks and workshop sessions. The conference is attended by UN bodies and a number of other international organizations, including the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Kuwait. — KUNA

Shuttered Red Fort to be part of holiday festivities

National holidays committee sits for first planning session before busy season



The Red Palace

KUWAIT: Special events are planned at the Red Fort, also called the Red Palace, for Kuwait's national holidays in February 2025, the Standing Committee for National Holidays and Occasions said in their first planning session for next year's holiday season held Thursday.

The announcement, which was included in a write up of the meeting published on Kuwait's state news agency KUNA, is one of few involving the Red Palace since it was closed to the public a few years ago. The palace, which is of great historical significance to Kuwait, has been the center of restoration efforts helmed by a team of experts under the supervision of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. The palace was built in 1897 to protect Al-Jahra and gains some of its significance for being the location of the Jahra Battle in 1920.

Little has been officially announced



Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi

about the project, apart from a visit in July by Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. At the time, the minister was briefed on the progress of the first two stages of the restoration project, including the renovation of the roads, sidewalks, terraces, gardens and parking lots.



KUWAIT: The Standing Committee for National Holidays and Occasions holds its first planning session for the 2024-2025 season. — KUNA photos

The project also includes a brand new "Arms & Armory Museum". A timeline of the project is not publicly available, and no date has been set for the palace's reopening. Including the fort in the committee's plans for the February festivities indicates Minister Al-Mutairi, who chairs the committee, is confident it will be ready for visitors in time.

At the meeting, Mutairi highlighted several occasions the committee will be busy planning for in the next few months, including the GCC summit in December, and the 26th Gulf Cup football tournament, to be held from December 21, 2024 until January 1, 2025.

"We have a huge institutional memory, so it must be properly utilized to plan for these events," Minister Al-Mutairi told KUNA. He said the committee has sought this year to involve the private sector, holding several coordination meetings with private sector representatives. There

are also plans to advertise for the festivities through the information ministry's "Platform 51", a streaming service currently showing local content produced by the ministry, including live streaming of state media television channels. The platform is the Kuwaiti government's answer to similar platforms which launched years ago in the region, such as ADtv and Shahid.

The committee also unveiled its logo for this year's national festivities, according to KUNA. The committee said it decided to keep last year's logo but chose a particular shade of blue to match the country's official color. The color code and logo will be used across the country's institutions, he emphasized. The celebration of Kuwait as the 2025 Arab Cultural Capital is also set to be an event to look forward to, with a flag raising ceremony and an artistic show about Kuwait's history, the committee said.



KUWAIT: Artworks created by participants are displayed at the exhibition honoring the 1977 Kuwaiti TV series "Darb Al-Zalag". — KUNA photos



The audience views cardboard cutouts depicting iconic scenes from the show.



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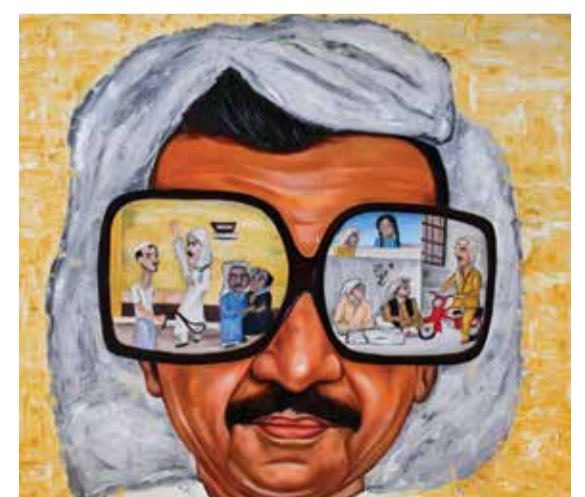
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Exhibition honors iconic Kuwaiti television series

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) celebrated Thursday the winners of an art competition held to honor the 1977 Kuwaiti TV series "Darb Al-Zalag" or the "slippery road", KUNA reported. The series, one of the most well-known in Kuwaiti drama, follows the adventures of two brothers as they try, often unsuccessfully, to find ways to set up a business after becoming rich overnight. It stars three of Kuwait's acting legends: Abdulhussain Abdulredha, Saad Al Farraj and Khaled Al-Nafisi.

The competition was preceded by an exhibition held at the National Kuwait Library which coincided with the death anniversary of its star Abdulredha, who passed away on August 11, 2017, according to KUNA. It was organized by NCCAL in cooperation with the Arts Center Company for Art Production and Distribution. Maytham Abdul, Fatima Sadiq and Fatima Yusuf won the jury selection, while Saba Al-Said, Omar Al-Ariman were voted for by the public.

The patron of the exhibition, Sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, congratulated the winners of the award, telling KUNA that they presented works of art worthy of the stars of the series, which continues to have a strong impact on viewers across the Arab world.



A participant is awarded after winning the art competition.



Thai king pardons ex-PM Thaksin in birthday amnesty

Five bullet-riddled bodies found tied to electric pole

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NEW YORK: Healthcare workers with New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene work at intake tents where individuals are registered to receive the monkeypox vaccine in New York City. — AFP photos

WHO urges manufacturers to ramp up production of mpox vaccines

Mpox surge declared public health emergency

GENEVA: The World Health Organization has urged manufacturers to ramp up production of mpox vaccines to rein in the spread of a more dangerous strain of the virus. The WHO on Wednesday declared the mpox surge a public health emergency of international concern — its highest alert level — with Clade 1b cases soaring in the Democratic Republic of Congo and spreading beyond its borders.

"We do need the manufacturers to really scale up so that we've got access to many, many more vaccines," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters. The WHO is asking countries with mpox vaccine stockpiles to donate them to countries with ongoing outbreaks. Two mpox vaccines have been used in recent years — MVA-BN, produced by Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic, and Japan's LC16.

Harris said there were 500,000 MVA-BN doses in stock, while an additional 2.4 million doses could be produced quickly, if there was a commitment from buyers. For 2025, an additional 10 million doses could be produced, upon a firm procurement request. "LC16 is a vaccine that is not commercialized but produced on behalf of the government of Japan. There is a considerable stockpile of this vaccine," Harris added, saying the WHO was working with Tokyo to facilitate donations.

'Drop in the bucket'

The Doctors Without Borders charity said countries with vaccine stockpiles but no outbreaks "must donate as many doses as possible" to affected countries in Africa. It urged Bavarian Nordic to lower its



GOMA: A health worker takes a sample at the mpox treatment centre of the Nyiragongo general referral hospital, north of the town of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

prices, saying MVA-BN was out of reach for most countries where mpox is a threat. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the world's largest humanitarian network, said it faced significant challenges tackling mpox. Bronwyn Nichol, IFRC senior public health emergencies officer, said most vaccine stocks were in wealthy nations, and those sent to Africa so far were "a drop in

— and its new mutated variant. The new strain, called clade 1b, was first detected among sex workers in the DRC in September 2023. Sweden this week reported the first case of the variant outside of Africa, and the EU's health body urged countries to increase preparedness. Pakistan reported Asia's first case. "It is not surprising... that travel between continents has brought this case to Europe," said Brian Ferguson, an Associate Professor of Immunology, University of Cambridge. He added that cases were likely to spike in Europe and elsewhere as "there are currently no mechanisms in place to stop imported cases of mpox". Containing the epidemic will require "rapid international co-operation", said Francois Balloux of the University College of London Genetics Institute — adding there was "no evidence of transmission in Europe at this stage".

Who is affected?

Clade 1 mpox is "known for causing more severe disease in young children, pregnant women, and immune-compromised people", said Jonas Albarnaz, who specializes in pox viruses at the Pirbright Institute in Britain. Clade 1b is driven by sexual transmission and mostly infects young adults, Albarnaz said. It has also been recorded spreading through non-sexual contact between people, including children playing together at school. Clade 1b causes death in around 3.6 percent of cases, though infants and children are more at risk, according to the WHO.

Where is affected?

More mpox cases were reported in the first half of this year than in all of 2023, according to WHO figures. The majority of recent cases have been in the DRC, where 548 people have died so far this year, the government said. Over the last month, previously unaffected countries such as Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have reported outbreaks, according to the Africa CDC. None have reported deaths, the WHO said. Nigeria has flagged 39 cases of a milder strain

the bucket". "There is a critical shortage of testing, treatment, and vaccines across the continent. These shortages are severely hampering the ability to contain the outbreak," she said.

'Complex picture'

The WHO, headed by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, is due to issue temporary recommendations to countries on handling the mpox surge. There are two subtypes of the virus: the more virulent and deadlier Clade 1, endemic in the Congo Basin in central Africa; and Clade 2, endemic in West Africa. The upsurge in the DRC is being driven by outbreaks of two different Clade 1 strains, Tedros told a meeting Thursday of the UN health agency's Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response. The first is an outbreak in north-west DRC of what was previously known as Clade 1, now called Clade 1a. This outbreak is primarily affecting children and is spread through multiple modes of transmission, he said.

The second in northeastern DRC is a new offshoot of Clade 1 called Clade 1b, which was first detected in September last year and is spreading rapidly, mainly through sexual transmission among adults. The spread of Clade 1b, and its detection in neighboring countries, were the main reasons behind the WHO sounding its highest alarm. "It's a complex picture, and responding to each of these outbreaks, and bringing them under control, will require a complex, comprehensive and coordinated international response," said Tedros. — AFP

Al-Qaeda kills 16 pro-government fighters in Yemen

DUBAI: A bomb attack on Friday in southern Yemen killed at least 16 pro-government fighters, a military official said, in one of the deadliest operations claimed by Al-Qaeda jihadists in months. An explosive-laden vehicle targeted a site of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a separatist group allied with the government, said STC spokesperson Mohammed Al-Naqib. The attack at the barracks in Abyan province killed at least 16 fighters and wounded 18 others, Naqib said, blaming Al-Qaeda which claimed the operation.

The death toll was expected to climb due to the severity of the injuries, Naqib told AFP. Al-Qaeda in a statement said a bomber detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at the military post, according to the US-based SITE Intelligence Group. Yemen is a hotbed for jihadists such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), considered by the United States to be the Sunni extremist group's most dangerous offshoot. AQAP frequently attacks both Yemeni security forces and Western targets.

It has claimed numerous high-profile attacks in the United States and Europe - including the 2015 assault on Charlie Hebdo magazine in France's capital that killed 12 people - although these have declined in recent years. In Yemen, Al-Qaeda jihadists attacked separatist troops in March in the country's south, killing two. In August 2023, a bombing blamed on the group also in southern Yemen killed four STC fighters. Another Al-Qaeda attack that month killed five STC fighters.

And almost a year earlier, 21 separatist fighters were killed in an Al-Qaeda attack on Abyan in September 2022. In March this year, AQAP announced that Saad Al-Awlaki, a Yemeni national wanted by the United States, had taken the helm of the organization after the death of its former leader, Khalid Batarfi, following a long illness. Long on the front line of the war against Al-Qaeda, Yemen erupted into conflict in 2014 when Iran-backed Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa.

A Saudi-led military coalition intervened the following year on the side of the country's internationally recognized government. Born in 2009 from the merger of Al-Qaeda's Yemeni and Saudi factions, AQAP grew and developed in the chaos of the war. But it is now just one of many armed movements in southern Yemen, including the Islamic State jihadist group and UAE-trained separatist militias that back the internationally recognized government against the Houthis. — AFP

What we know about new mpox outbreak

PARIS: A surging mpox outbreak in Africa was declared an emergency by the World Health Organization this week and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), an EU agency, on Friday said more imported cases to Europe were "highly likely". The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) declared its first-ever Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS) for the deadly disease. It is the second time the WHO has issued its public health emergency warning since the epidemic first spread around the world in 2022. Now the virus has crossed from its epicenter in the Democratic Republic of Congo to other African nations and was detected this week for the first time in Sweden and Pakistan.

What is mpox?

The disease, formerly known as monkeypox, was first detected in humans in the DRC in 1970. There are two subtypes of the virus: clade 1 and clade 2. The deadlier clade 1 has been endemic in the Congo Basin in central Africa for decades. The less severe clade 2 has become endemic in parts of West Africa. Mpox can spread human-to-human through sexual or close physical contact. Symptoms include fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions. The virus gained international prominence in May 2022, when a less deadly strain called clade 2b spread around the world, mostly affecting gay and bisexual men. Between January 2022 and June 2024, 208 deaths and more than 99,000 mpox cases were recorded across 116 countries, according to the WHO.

What is new?

The latest surge has been of the deadlier clade 1



MIAMI: A sign announcing monkeypox vaccination is setup in Tropical Park by Miami-Dade County and Nomi Health in Miami, Florida. — AFP

of mpox this year, health officials said Friday. Sweden and Pakistan this week reported the first mpox cases outside of Africa, with the WHO warning more cases of the new strain were likely in Europe.

Is there a vaccine?

During mpox's global spread in 2022, vaccines were deployed in Europe and North America which helped control the outbreak. But vaccines have not been made widely available in the African countries most affected by mpox. The US Department of Health said Wednesday it would donate 50,000 doses of an mpox vaccine to DRC. On Tuesday, Africa CDC head Jean Kaseya announced an agreement with the European Union and Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic to distribute 200,000 doses across the continent. Although that would not be enough, Africa could secure another 10 million vaccines, Kaseya told a media briefing. Bavarian Nordic said Friday it was seeking European approval to use its mpox vaccine in children aged 12 to 17. — AFP

International

Trump rallies, Harris hits the road in pre-convention campaigning

Harris woos voters with price-cutting plans

WASHINGTON: Republican Donald Trump held a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, followed closely by Kamala Harris who is taking a bus tour through the crucial battleground state ahead of her big moment at the Democratic National Convention. Trump's rally in the small town of Wilkes-Barre will give him a chance to take the spotlight off the vice president, who has enjoyed a whirlwind entry into the race since her boss President Joe Biden abruptly pulled out on July 21.

Trump will highlight his dark vision of a failing America, which he blames in increasingly drastic terms on Harris. "Hard-working Americans are suffering because of the Harris-Biden administration's dangerously liberal policies," his campaign said ahead of the rally. "Prices are excruciatingly high, cost of living has soared, crime has skyrocketed, and illegal immigrants are pouring into our country," it said, although a recent crackdown on the Mexico border has stemmed much of the flow of undocumented workers and asylum seekers.

The campaign also insisted that "in Kamala Harris's America, crime runs rampant" - even if statistics show that violent crime has dropped sharply. Trump will take the same message to another small Pennsylvania town, York, on Monday. With polls showing the head-to-head race against Harris very close, it's the swing states - especially Pennsylvania - that will decide the final result in the US electoral college system. Trump lost the state by a narrow margin against Biden in 2020 but has strong support in the rural areas and small towns.

Harris will be close on Trump's heels over the weekend before heading to the Democratic conven-

tion. The celebratory bash in Chicago will feature three days of speeches from party leaders, including Biden and former president Barack Obama, before her own speech Thursday to accept the nomination. But first, Harris and running mate Tim Walz, the down-to-earth governor of Minnesota, will be joined by their spouses on a bus tour around western Pennsylvania on Sunday, the campaign said.

Their route will start in the Democratic urban stronghold of Pittsburgh before threading through the "critical battlegrounds" of Allegheny and Beaver counties, the campaign said. The goal will be to expand on Biden's 2020 success, the campaign said, by seeking to drive up turnout in Democratic Allegheny "while simultaneously making inroads in historically conservative counties like Beaver." The Harris campaign touted its sophisticated ground game, noting it has 36 field offices in Pennsylvania and "the Trump campaign still has little to no public presence."

Also this weekend, volunteers and organizers will fan out nationwide, "talking to the voters who will decide this election about Vice President Harris's vision to take this country forward by putting the middle class first, in contrast with Donald Trump's dangerous, extreme" agenda, the campaign said.

Fight over economy

With the November 5 election day rapidly approaching, Harris is trying to distance herself from unpopular Biden policies, while getting ahead of Trump's attempts to brand her in extreme terms, like "communist." This week has seen the two sides home in on voters' worries about the economy.



BEDMINSTER: Republican presidential candidate, former US President Donald Trump holds a news conference outside the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster on August 15, 2024 in Bedminster, New Jersey. — AFP

Trump hammered Harris on Thursday, saying she has a "very strong communist lean" that would bring the "death of the American dream." On Friday, Harris held an event in North Carolina - another vital state in the electoral college math - to unveil a series of proposals for easing the burden of post-COVID

pandemic inflation. She noted that the US economy is booming while conceding that "many Americans don't yet feel that progress in their daily lives." But "Donald Trump fights for billionaires and large corporations," she said. "I will fight to give money back to working and middle-class Americans." — AFP

Treachery, treason: More questions than answers after drug lord arrest

MEXICO CITY: The surprise capture on US soil of Mexican drug lord Ismael "Mayo" Zambada has all the suspense of a Netflix nailbiter - and all the mystery, too. Wild claims of cross-border kidnapping, murder and political intrigue swirl around his arrest. But there are many gaps in the story, and few official details - fueling mistrust, analysts say, between US and Mexican authorities. Zambada, 76, co-founded the powerful Sinaloa drug cartel with Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman in the 1990s.

He escaped capture for much of his life despite a US reward of \$15 million for his capture. Then, seemingly out of the blue, Zambada was detained on July 25 with El Chapo's son, Joaquin Guzman Lopez, after they landed in the United States on a private plane. Zambada's lawyer and the US ambassador to Mexico have claimed he was taken against his will. In a statement issued after the arrest, Zambada said Guzman Lopez had invited him to a meeting at a ranch outside Culiacan, Mexico, on July 25.

There, he claimed, he was led into a dark room and "ambushed," handcuffed and bundled into a pickup truck with a hood over his head. He said he was driven to a nearby landing strip and "forced onto a private plane," which landed, according to Zambada, in El Paso, Texas - though a US official says it landed in Santa Teresa, New Mexico. Adding to the mystery, two of Zambada's bodyguards disappeared during the operation, Zambada said - one of them the police chief of Mexico's Sinaloa state. "When I read the statement it sounded like a novel," former DEA agent Mike Vigil told AFP.

The United States and Mexico have both denied involvement in Zambada's capture, though Mexico City has alluded to conversations between Guzman Lopez and US officials. But Zambada has sought to draw in Mexican officials, saying he had been on his way to meet the governor of Sinaloa state, Ruben Rocha - a supporter of



MEXICO CITY: View of the front pages of Mexican newspapers showing the news of the capture of Ismael 'El Mayo' Zambada, in Mexico City. — AFP

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Guzman Lopez, Zambada said, had asked him to mediate in a conflict between Rocha and opposition lawmaker Hector Cuen. Zambada then claimed Cuen was "murdered" at the same place he was ambushed, while he was there.

But on Monday, the Sinaloa prosecutor's office released video footage allegedly showing Cuen's murder - on July 25, but in a robbery at a gas station in Culiacan. Rocha, for his part, has denied any links to the Sinaloa Cartel and said he was in Los Angeles on the day in question. Lopez Obrador and Mexico's new president-elect, Claudia Sheinbaum, have backed up his claim. On Thursday, the Mexican attorney general's office said it would charge anyone involved in Zambada's "illegal" handover with "treason."

Experts say Zambada's story could be a ploy to avoid standing trial in the United States, where he has pleaded not guilty to charges of drug trafficking and money laundering, among others. His defense could argue "there was an extraterritorial application of American justice," Mexican security expert David Saucedo told AFP. But Vigil said this was unlikely to work, pointing to a Mexican national prosecuted on US soil two decades ago for the murder of a DEA agent, despite claiming he was illegally detained. — AFP

Canada remembers Harris as homesick student who loved to dance

MONTREAL: Kamala Harris spent her adolescence in Montreal often pining for her California hometown, but former Canadian classmates remember the American presidential candidate as an outgoing student with a big smile, who loved dancing. It was in 1976 at the age of 12 that the vice president and Democratic candidate in this year's US presidential race discovered the harsh, cold winters of Canada's second largest city.

Her divorced mother uprooted her and her sister Maya from their California hometown of Oakland to take a job researching cancer at Montreal's Jewish General Hospital. "The thought of moving away from sunny California in February, in the middle of the school year, to a French-speaking foreign city covered in twelve feet of snow was distressing, to say the least," Harris recounted in her 2019 memoir.

The first woman, first African-American and first Asian-American to become vice president of the United States, Harris has said little about her years in Canada and her biography on the White House website does not even mention them. Although she didn't speak French when she arrived in Montreal, her mother insisted on enrolling her in a French-language school. After struggling to pick up French, she transferred to a bilingual school with artistic and musical programs and then to Westmount High School, an English-language public high school, where she graduated in 1981.

Harris was "very friendly, very outgoing. Nice to everybody," former classmate Anu Chopra Sharma told AFP, describing her friend as a bright student who took the time to help others. "We all had a



MORRISVILLE: US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris arrives at Raleigh-Durham International Airport in Morrisville, North Carolina. — AFP

tough time with French, because we weren't native French speakers," she commented. French is spoken by the majority in the province, but in the 1970s and 1980s tensions between English and French speakers peaked as a Quebec nationalist identity tied to the language of Moliere took shape - marked by two failed referendums on Quebec independence. Westmount High School, located in a wealthy and English-speaking borough of Montreal, accepted students from nearby neighborhoods and so "a lot of the kids were working class," said former art teacher Mara Rudzitis. The student body was also ethnically diverse, drawing from Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Chinese immigrant communities.

Active and very sociable, Harris, now 59, was at the time a member of various clubs and participated in a school fashion show. As a young girl, born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, she found sisterhood in disco dance troupes "Super Six" and "Midnight Magic," according to a school yearbook. Old photos show Harris and fellow dancers in glittery costumes busting a move. "She was always smiling, laughing, as you see her today. She was getting along with anybody," said her friend Dean Smith. Rudzitis remembers a "very smart" teenager with a lot of friends, who loved learning and spending time in the art room during lunch breaks. — AFP

Hamas dismisses Gaza 'truce...'

Continued from Page 1

Zionists claimed the killing of Shukur, in a strike on south Beirut, but has not commented directly on the killing of Haniyeh while he visited Tehran. On Friday, Hezbollah released a polished video appearing to show its fighters trucking large missiles through tunnels at an underground facility. On his visit to Zionist entity, Blinken will seek to "conclude the agreement for a ceasefire and release of hostages and detainees", the State Department said. Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators are working to finalize details of a framework agreement initially outlined by Biden in May. He said Zionists had proposed it. In a joint statement after two days of talks in Qatar, the mediators said they presented both sides with a proposal that "bridges remaining gaps".

Talks aiming to secure a deal are to resume in Cairo "before the end of next week", they said. Hamas did not attend the Doha talks. An official of the Islamist movement,

Osama Hamdan, had told AFP the group would join if the meeting set a timetable for implementing what Hamas had already agreed to. On Friday, officials said that Hamas will not accept "new conditions" from Zionists. A prospective cessation of hostilities has centred around a phased deal beginning with an initial truce. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office on Tuesday had detailed its conditions for a truce, including "a veto on certain prisoners" being released from its jails.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who met French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne in Cairo on Saturday, emphasized the need "to seize the opportunity" offered by the ongoing talks and "spare the region from the consequences of further escalation." Egypt's presidency said. Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi of Jordan blamed Netanyahu for "impeding attempts to finalize" a deal and urged pressure on him. Netanyahu has denied being the obstacle to a deal, blaming Hamas.

As truce talks took place, thousands of civilians were on the move again after the military issued fresh evacuation orders ahead of imminent military action in central-southern Gaza. "During each round of negotiations, they exert pressure by forcing evacuations and committing massacres," said Issa Murad, a Palestinian displaced to Deir El-Balah. — AFP

attack which triggered military offensive that has killed at least 40,005 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry, which does not provide a breakdown of civilian and militant deaths. "I buried a lot of women and children, and only two or three guys from Hamas," says Barakeh.

If Zionists "have a problem with (Yahya) Sinwar, why do they harm children?" he adds, referring to the alleged October 7 attacks mastermind who is now Hamas's overall leader. "Let them kill Sinwar and all the others, but why the women and children?" Mounds of freshly dug soil are reminders of recent burials. Graves with white headstones fill nearly all the available space, while men dig new holes in the few vacant areas. The team forms a human chain to carry the cinder blocks, whose price has soared since Gaza's factories closed due to a lack of fuel and raw materials. "One shekel (\$0.27) before the war, 10 or 12 today," he lamented.

Besides gravediggers and the workers carrying cinder blocks, hardly anyone comes to funerals anymore, Barakeh says. "Before the war, there were sometimes 1,000 people at one funeral; today there are days when we bury 100 people and there aren't even 20 to lay them to rest." — AFP

Europe on alert as mpox spreads...

Continued from Page 1

those with a weak immune system, so people who maybe have HIV or are malnourished", and was also dangerous for small children. The United States has said it will donate 50,000 doses of an mpox vaccine to DRC and Attal said France would also send vaccines to risk countries.

Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic said Thursday it would be ready to make up to 10 million doses of its mpox vaccine by 2025 but that it needed contracts to start production. The Stockholm-based European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said the overall risk in Europe was "low". But it warned that "effective surveillance, laboratory testing, epidemiological investigation and contact tracing capacities will be vital to detecting cases." "Due to the close links between Europe and Africa, we must be prepared for more imported clade I cases," ECDC director Pamela Rendi-Wagner said in a statement.

The virus has swept across DRC, killing 548 people so far this year, the government said Thursday. Nigeria has recorded 39 mpox cases this year, but no deaths, according to its health authorities. Previously unaffected countries such as Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have reported outbreaks, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Sweden's Public Health Agency announced Thursday it had registered a case of Clade 1b. The patient was infected during a visit to "the part of Africa where there is a major outbreak of mpox Clade 1", epidemiologist Magnus Gisslen said in a statement. The mpox strain in the Pakistan case was not immediately known, the country's health ministry said in a statement.

It said the patient, a 34-year-old man, had "come from a Gulf country". China announced it would begin screening people and goods entering the country for mpox over the next six months. People arriving from countries where outbreaks have occurred, who have been in contact with mpox cases or display symptoms should "declare to customs when entering the country", China's customs administration said. Vehicles, containers and items from areas with mpox cases should be sanitized, it added in a statement. — AFP

Gaza's undertakers stack 'graves on...'

Continued from Page 1

Yet even with one cemetery instead of two, he works "every day, from six in the morning to six in the evening". "Before the war, we had one or two funerals per week, maximum five," he says, wearing a white prayer cap that matches his long beard. "Now, there are weeks when I bury 200 to 300 people. It's unbelievable."

Gaza's death toll of just over 40,000 in more than 10 months of war, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry, is straining its people as well as its cemeteries. Barakeh bears daily witness to the tragedies. Hoe in hand, he gives encouragement to his 12 workers as they prepare and close dozens of graves every day. At night, however, some images are hard to forget. "I can't sleep after seeing so many mangled children's bodies and dead women," he said, adding: "I buried 47 women from one family." The October 7

Hezbollah reveals its military muscle...

Continued from Page 1

and "determined" to defend itself after the killings of Shukur and Haniyeh. Pressure has been mounting to secure a truce that could avert a wider war, in parallel with intensified diplomatic efforts in Lebanon to avoid an escalation. Kahwaji said that since October, "Hezbollah has been testing its tactics and weapons arsenal, and also looking for holes and vulnerabilities in the Zionist defense systems." The group has used surveillance drones to locate Iron Dome air defense systems, with a view to overwhelming or destroying them, he said. Hezbollah has made extensive use of inexpensive, sometimes locally produced drones to put pressure on Zionist air defenses, analysts note.

The group has released three videos purportedly showing drone footage over military and other facilities in northern Zionist entity including the port city of Haifa, and the

annexed Golan Heights. "The drones help Hezbollah detect blind spots in the Zionist radars and sensors. The group exploits the mountainous terrain and low flying of drones to evade early warning sensors," said Kahwaji. "Repeated attacks enable Hezbollah to establish a better idea of Zionist defenses and map potential entry points," he added.

Military analyst and retired Lebanese army general Khalil Helou said the drones are harder to detect because they are small and "have a very small radar print". Hezbollah also exploits the fact that the Zionist army has little reaction time, he added. "Hezbollah began firing Katyusha rockets, drones and guided missiles at the same time to overwhelm the Iron Dome," Helou said. Hezbollah's anti-tank missiles can also cause significant damage because the Iron Dome system aims to intercept "indirect fire such as rockets or missiles, but is useless against direct fire", he added.

Aram Nerguizian, a senior associate at the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, described Hezbollah's military "probing actions" as "a double-edged sword". "They expose gaps in Zionist defenses and are learning opportunities for Hezbollah operators," he said. — AFP

International

India doctors embark on strike over colleague's rape, murder

'Hands that heal shouldn't bleed'

NEW DELHI: Indian doctors held a nationwide strike on Saturday, escalating protests after the "barbaric" rape and murder of their colleague that has channeled outrage at the chronic issue of violence against women. The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata on August 9 sparked furious protests in several cities across the country.

Many have been led by doctors and other healthcare workers but also joined by tens of thousands of ordinary Indians demanding action. In Kolkata, thousands held a candle-lit vigil into the early hours of Saturday morning. "Hands that heal shouldn't bleed," read one sign held by a protester in the eastern city. "Enough is enough," read another at a rally by doctors in the capital New Delhi. "Hang the rapist," another said.

The murdered doctor was found in the teaching hospital's seminar hall, suggesting she had gone there for a rest during a 36-hour shift. An autopsy confirmed sexual assault and, in a petition to the court, the victim's parents said they suspected their daughter was gang-raped. One man, who worked at the hospital helping people navigate busy queues, has been detained. However, Kolkata's police were accused by an angry public of mishandling the case and the city's High Court transferred the investigation to India's top Central Bureau of Investigation to "inspire public confidence".

'Struggle for justice'

Those in government hospitals across several states on Monday halted elective services "indefinitely", with multiple medical unions in both government and private systems backing the strikes. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) escalated

protests on Saturday morning with a 24-hour "nationwide withdrawal of services", and the suspension of all non-essential procedures. "We ask for the understanding and support of the nation in this struggle for justice for its doctors and daughters," IMA chief RV Asokan said in a statement ahead of the strike.

The IMA called the killing "barbaric". "The 36-hour duty shift that the victim was in and the lack of safe spaces to rest... warrant a thorough overhaul of the working and living conditions of the resident doctors," the IMA said in a statement. Doctors are demanding the implementation of the Central Protection Act, a bill to protect healthcare workers from violence.

"There is a lack of proper infrastructure," said 29-year-old Akanksha Tyagi, a resident at the Lady Hardinge Medical College in New Delhi who took part in one of the multiple protests around the country. "After working for 24-36 hours at a stretch, there's no proper place for us to rest," she said. The strike disrupted outpatient services. At Delhi's Ram Manohar Lohia public hospital, one of the city's busiest, many who had turned up for their scheduled appointments were turned away. Shivdev Kumar, 50, had travelled over 20 kilometers with the tuberculosis reports of his daughter, only to find the doctor's room locked. "I had no idea, otherwise I would not have such a long way," he said.

'Monstrous'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanded on Thursday swift punishment for those who commit "monstrous" deeds against women. Sexual violence against women is a widespread problem in India - an average of nearly 90 rapes a day were reported in



BENGALURU: Medical professionals hold posters amid nationwide strike by doctors to condemn the rape and murder of a young medic from Kolkata, at a hospital in Bengaluru on August 17, 2024. Indian doctors held a nationwide strike on August 17, escalating protests after the "barbaric" rape and murder of their colleague that has channeled outrage at the chronic issue of violence against women. — AFP

2022 in the country of 1.4 billion people. For many, the gruesome nature of the hospital attack has invoked comparisons with the horrific 2012 gang rape and murder of a young woman on a Delhi bus.

That woman became a symbol of socially conservative India's failure to tackle sexual violence against women. Her death sparked huge, and at

times violent, demonstrations in Delhi and elsewhere. Under pressure, the government introduced harsher penalties for rapists and the death penalty for repeat offenders. Several new sexual offences were also introduced - including for stalking - and officials who refuse to register rape complaints can now be jailed. — AFP

Thai king pardons ex-PM Thaksin in birthday amnesty

BANGKOK: Thailand's controversial former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been granted a royal pardon, his lawyer said Saturday, a day after his daughter became the kingdom's new premier. The 75-year-old billionaire is one of thousands granted amnesty by King Maha Vajiralongkorn in a gesture of clemency to mark his birthday. Thaksin was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse of power charges dating back to his time in power when he returned to the kingdom almost a year ago after 15 years of self-exile.

But his sentence was cut to one year by the king and he was later released on parole because of his age and poor health. The amnesty was announced in the official Royal Gazette, and Thaksin's lawyer Winvat Chatmontree said that the two-time premier benefitted. "Thaksin Shinawatra is among those granted the royal pardon," he said on his personal Facebook account. "He will later receive a document from the prison saying he is a free man."

The Royal Gazette published on Saturday said that "the king had given opportunities for those to improve themselves and benefit their country". The pardon for prisoners with good conduct came almost a month after King Vajiralongkorn celebrated his 72th birthday in late July. The ex-PM was originally set to complete his one-year parole on August 31.

Shinawatra heiress as PM

Meanwhile, the 37-year-old daughter of billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra became Thailand's prime



Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra greets his supporters with his youngest daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra after landing at Bangkok's Don Mueang airport in this file photo. — AFP

minister Friday, the third member of the influential but divisive clan to lead the country. Paetongtarn Shinawatra — the youngest leader in Thailand's history as a constitutional monarchy and the second woman premier after her aunt Yingluck — assumes office after two court rulings that threw the kingdom's politics into turmoil.

She will hope to avoid the fate of her father and aunt, both of whom were ousted as PM by the army during a two-decade power struggle between Thaksin and the kingdom's conservative pro-military, pro-royalist establishment. Lawmakers approved Paetongtarn of the Pheu Thai party as premier by 319 votes to 145. House of Representatives Speaker Wan Muhamad Noor Matha said on live TV.

Paetongtarn said she was "very honored and happy". "I really hope that I can make people feel confident. I hope to improve the quality of lives and empower all Thais," she told reporters. "I decided that it's about time to do something for the country and the party. I hope that I can do my best to make

the country go forward." Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet — like Paetongtarn, the child of a previous premier — sent congratulations. China also congratulated Paetongtarn, with a foreign ministry spokesperson saying Beijing stood "ready to work with Thailand to carry forward" the two nations' longstanding ties.

Court rulings

Paetongtarn's elevation to the top job came about after the kingdom's Constitutional Court sacked previous premier Srettha Thavisin for appointing a cabinet minister with a criminal conviction. Srettha's ouster on Wednesday in a case brought by army-appointed former senators was the latest round in the long-running scrap between the Thai elite and populist parties linked to Thaksin, a telecoms tycoon and one-time Manchester City owner. Paetongtarn helped run the hotel arm of the family's business empire before entering politics in late 2022, and she was a near-constant presence on the campaign trail during last year's general election.

That vote saw the upstart progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) win the most seats after pledging to review the country's strict lese-majeste laws and break up powerful business monopolies. But conservative senators — all appointed by the last junta — blocked MFP's attempt to form a government. Pheu Thai subsequently struck an alliance with pro-military parties once staunchly opposed to Thaksin and his followers, leading to Srettha's ascension.

Less than a year later, he became the third Pheu Thai prime minister to be kicked out by the Constitutional Court. Srettha was ousted over his appointment of Pichit Chuenban, a former lawyer associated with Thaksin's family who had a corruption-related conviction. Last week, the top court also voted to dissolve MFP and ban its executive board members from politics for 10 years, though the party swiftly relaunched itself as the People's Party. — AFP

Five bullet-riddled bodies found tied to electric pole

QUETTA: The bullet-riddled bodies of five people were found hanging from an electric pole in southwestern Pakistan on Friday, government officials said. The bodies were discovered early morning near a college in Dalbandin city, close to the borders with Afghanistan and Iran in Balochistan province, where Islamist and separatist militant groups have waged a long and bloody insurgency. "Five bullet-ridden bodies were found hanging from an electric pylon," Atiq Shahwani, a senior government official in the area, told AFP. "They have been shifted to a local hospital. Doctors have ascertained that the cause of death is multiple bullet wounds, mostly in the chest area."

He said the men were likely killed on Thursday. No missing persons reports were registered with local police and the men had not yet been identified, he added. Balochistan, Pakistan's least populous province, is home to several militant groups, some fighting for independence or a greater share of the region's mineral resources, with security forces often the target of bombings. Islamist groups are also behind sectarian violence in the region. — AFP

Libya UN-brokered deal at risk as fears mount

TRIPOLI: Reemerging bloodshed and power struggles in Libya have raised fears of a broader escalation, threatening to deal a fatal blow to the UN-brokered political transition and push the war-torn country deeper into turmoil. The vast North African country of 6.8 million people has struggled to recover from years of conflict after the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that overthrew longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Libya remains divided between a UN-recognized government based in the capital Tripoli and a rival administration in the east, backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Although relative calm has returned in recent years, clashes still periodically break out between Libya's myriad armed groups. Earlier this month, nine people were killed and dozens wounded in fighting east of Tripoli between two groups, both affiliated with the UN-recognized government of Abdulhamid Dbeibah. On Sunday, a group of men, some of them armed, briefly besieged the Central Bank of Libya headquarters in the capital, local media reported, in what they said was an attempt to force the resignation of its governor, Seddik Al-Kabir.

US ambassador Richard Norland said attempts to oust Kabir were "unacceptable", warning that replacing him "by force can result in Libya losing access to international financial markets". In office since 2012, Kabir has faced criticism over the management of oil resources and the state budget, including from figures close to Dbeibah. Norland, in a post on social media platform X, said the confrontation in Tripoli "highlights the ongoing risks posed by the political stalemate in Libya".

And recent moves by the eastern parliament have signaled that "certain parties aim to pressure the international community into reaching a new agreement" on the country's governance, said Khaled Al-Montasser, a professor of international relations at the University of Tripoli. The parliament in the eastern city of Tobruk said on Tuesday that the government in Tripoli was "illegitimate", also moving to strip the Presidential Council - formed under the 2021 UN transition agreement - from its role as high commander of the Libyan armed forces. Haftar and his sons who hold key posts in the eastern administration have similarly questioned the legitimacy of the UN-recognized government. — AFP

During heatwave, temperatures 'are not the only threat'

MADRID: Spain has just emerged from a 21-day heatwave that engulfed Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza, posing a health threat which extends far beyond the actual temperature, according to Julio Diaz, a researcher at Madrid's Carlos III Health Institute.

Isn't heat what kills during a heatwave?

"The impact of heat on health is far more than just temperature... its effect can be felt across income levels, age groups, socio-economic conditions, healthcare, and different cultural approaches to heat," says Diaz. "We divided Spain into 182 regions... and in each one, we worked out the temperature at which people start to die as a result of the heat. In Seville, 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) is not even classed as a heatwave, whereas in A Coruna (in northwestern Spain), the temperature which defines a heatwave is 26 degrees. "When there is a heatwave, only 3.0 percent of mortality is due to heat stroke. Heat kills by aggravating other illnesses."

Why are first heatwaves the most deadly?

"In the first heatwave (of the year) much more people are likely to be susceptible (to death) than the second because it claims the frailest, leaving fewer susceptible people in the second and fewer still in the third... That's why the first heatwave always has a greater impact on mortality. This is what in epidemiology we call the 'harvest effect'."

Why are living standards a factor?

"It's clear that the impact of heat is much greater in poorer neighborhoods. "It is not the same thing to experience a heatwave in a room with three people and one window and no air conditioning or fan, than going through the same thing in a villa with a



BILBAO: People sit in the shade next to the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum as Spain faces the fourth heatwave of the summer. — AFP

swimming pool. It's not even a question of having air conditioning or not, but about being able to turn it on. During this heatwave, the price of electricity in Spain skyrocketed."

What is heatstroke?

"Heatstroke happens when a person is exposed to high temperatures... and their body is not able to regulate that temperature. If you go out in the sun at 42C or exercise at those temperatures, your body is unable — no matter how much it sweats, which is the main mechanism for regulating heat — to lower and maintain its temperature at 37C. When your body is no longer at 37C... your organs stop working properly, including your brain. Then hyperthermia sets in and the person can die."

What is 'heat culture'?

"In 2003, Europe suffered a brutal heatwave and

70,000 people died in 15 days. People were not prepared, and there were no prevention plans, which meant it had a brutal impact on mortality. Now nobody doubts that heat kills. But people adapt. Between 1983 to 2003, for every degree above the temperature classed as a heatwave, the mortality in Spain increased by 14 percent. But after 2003, it barely increased by three percent.

In a city like Madrid, you never used to see older people wearing shorts but nowadays they all wear them—you see them going out for a walk wearing a hat and with a bottle of water. In places where they are used to having heatwaves, there are now much more air conditioning units and secondly, homes are much more adapted to cope with this heat. People don't go out from 3:00 pm, that's why the siesta exists in Spain. And in the southern Andalusia region, the villages are painted white and the streets are wide so the wind can freely circulate." — AFP

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2024

Gulf Bank concludes sponsorship of 33rd Memorial Pearl Diving Journey

Pearl diving organized by Kuwait Sea Sport Club, under the patronage of HH the Amir



A group photo of the Gulf Bank team with Salma Al-Hajjaj and Bader Al-Ali.



The pearl diving ship sponsored by Gulf Bank.

KUWAIT: In line with its commitment to fostering sustainability and preserving Kuwaiti heritage, Gulf Bank concluded its sponsorship of the 33rd Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving. Organized by the Kuwait Sea Sport Club and held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the event engaged 150 young Kuwaitis from August 10 to 15.

Al-Dasha ceremony initiated the diving journey involving four ships, departing from the coast of Kuwait Sea Sport Club in Salmiya. Young participants honed their diving skills in the waters of Hairat Al-Khiran, paying tribute to their fathers and forefathers who were once pearl divers. The memorial journey for pearl diving events culminated in 'Al-Qaffal Day', which drew a large crowd of citizens and guests to welcome the returning diving ships and their crews. Assembling at designated points opposite the honor platform, they showcased the harvested oysters. Al-Falaq (the process of oyster shucking) then commenced, while a group of young divers showcased marine arts, including Al-Dawari and Al-Haddadi. This served as a prelude to the formal pearl harvest demonstration on the platform. The young divers formed a line in front of the honor platform, signaling the start of the ceremony. Activities on Al Qaffal Day included a tour of the Gulf Diving and Maritime Heritage Revival Journey exhibition, organized by the Kuwait Sea Sports Committee for Marine Heritage. Participants also visited the corner of Expo 965 Team for Heritage Crafts Exhibitions and Talented Kuwaitis. The event showcased a display of collectibles and handicrafts.

Before embarking on the pearl diving journey, the young participants underwent comprehensive training in both the theoretical and practical aspects of traditional diving. This included instruction on preparing and equipping the diving vessels for the journey, as well as acquiring knowledge of marine arts. Commenting on the event, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj expressed pleasure in the community's appreciation for Kuwaiti heritage and the young people's avidity for knowledge about pearl diving. This reflects their strong desire to preserve their heritage and immortalize the memory of their pearl-diving ancestors.

"Gulf Bank's support for the 33rd Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving is part of its ongoing commitment to sponsoring civil society organizations and assisting them in achieving their objectives," Al-Hajjaj stated. "We believe that the private sector plays a crucial role in supporting the civil society organizations and associations." She pointed out that Gulf Bank's sponsorship of the event demonstrates its strong commitment to raising awareness among young people about the significance of preserving Kuwaiti heritage and its ancient traditions.



Ships return after the pearl diving expedition.

- **Salma Al-Hajjaj: We are committed to raising awareness among young people and preserving Kuwaiti heritage**
- **The pearl diving journey resonates with Gulf Bank's identity, symbolized by 'AlBoom' logo and epitomized by its flagship savings account, 'AlDanah'**

This aligns with the bank's ongoing efforts to foster sustainability in society by supporting various events and initiatives that showcase authentic Kuwaiti heritage.

Al-Hajjaj emphasized that Gulf Bank, an integral part of Kuwaiti society, continues its pioneering role in preserving authentic Kuwaiti identity, customs, and traditions through its sponsorship of various social activities and events. She noted that the diving journey resonates with Gulf Bank's identity, symbolized by 'AlBoom' logo and epitomized by its flagship savings account, 'AlDanah', and the sea-inspired design of its headquarters in the heart of Kuwait City. Meanwhile, a large number

of the Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej team expressed keen interest in participating in the activities of the Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving, sponsored by the bank. This enthusiasm stems from the bank's deep-rooted belief in the importance of reviving the nation's heritage and preserving ancient Kuwaiti traditions. By commemorating the hardships and challenges faced by their ancestors, the journey aims to inspire new generations of Kuwaitis to uphold the traditions and values forged during this pivotal chapter of their history.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional

customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience. In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.



Salma Al-Hajjaj reviews the pearl diving results.



Young divers return after the pearl diving expedition.

China's youth unemployment jumps to 17.1%

BEIJING: Youth unemployment in China ticked up to 17.1 percent in July, official figures showed, the highest level this year as the world's second-largest economy faces mounting headwinds. China is battling soaring joblessness among young people, a heavily indebted property sector and intensifying trade issues with the West.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, who is responsible for economic policy, on Friday called for struggling companies to be "heard" and "their difficulties truly addressed", according to the state news agency Xinhua. The unemployment rate among 16- to 24-year-olds released Friday by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was up markedly from June's 13.2 percent.

The closely watched metric peaked at 21.3 percent in June of 2023, before authorities suspended publication of the figures and later changed their methodology to exclude students. Nearly 12 million students graduated from Chinese universities this June, heightening competition in an already tough job market and likely explaining July's sharp increase in joblessness. In May, President Xi Jinping said countering youth unemployment must be regarded as a "top priority".

Among 25- to 29-year-olds, the unemployment rate stood at 6.5 percent



BEIJING: Job seekers attend an employment fair in Beijing. — AFP

for July, up from the previous month's 6.4 percent. For the workforce as a whole, the unemployment rate was 5.2 percent. However, the NBS figures paint an incomplete picture of China's overall employment situation, as they take only urban areas into account.

The new unemployment figures come on the heels of other disappointing economic data from Beijing, including figures showing dampened industrial production, despite recent government measures aimed at boosting growth. Industrial production growth weakened in July, with

the month's 5.1 percent expansion down from June's 5.3 percent and falling short of analyst predictions. China's major cities also recorded another decline in real estate prices last month, a sign of sluggish demand. Demand for bank loans also contracted for the first time in nearly 20 years, according to official figures published earlier this week. International challenges are also mounting, with the European Union and the United States increasingly imposing trade barriers to protect their markets from low-cost Chinese products and perceived unfair competition. — AFP

Gold hits record high as global markets rise

NEW YORK: Gold hit a record high on Friday as global stock markets gained on reassuring data about the health of the world's biggest economy and likely US interest rate cuts. Expectations of US interest rate cuts weakened the dollar, while oil prices tumbled as weak Chinese demand expectations offset ongoing tensions in the Middle East, according to traders.

The gold spot price rose to a record high of \$2,509.41 an ounce as investors snapped up the haven investment in the face of an increasingly likely US interest rate cut in September and heightened geopolitical risks. "The sharp drop in bond yields amid expectations of rate cuts by the Fed" have pushed gold prices higher, said City Index and FOREX.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada.

All three major Wall Street indices shook off an early slump to close higher Friday, ending a positive week. "We had very big moves over the past two weeks off the low," Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments told AFP. "And now we are only five percent below the all-time high."

"That shows us that there is still a lot of demand for stocks at lower prices," he added. Weak US jobs data and a Japanese interest rate hike

double-whammied stock markets at the beginning of the month, as investors who had financed investments in red-hot US tech shares by borrowing in weak yen faced the prospect of immense losses as the value of the Japanese unit bounded higher.

In Asian trading, the Nikkei 225 jumped 3.6 percent as the yen was lower against the dollar early in the day. London bucked the positive trend in Europe as a strengthening pound weighed on multinationals earning in dollars. On the corporate front, shares in German chemicals giant Bayer jumped 11.3 percent after a US court victory in the group's long-running fight against claims that its glyphosate-based weedkillers cause cancer.

Oil prices slumped, with the price of a barrel of Brent crude oil from the North Sea closing down 1.7 percent at \$79.68 per barrel. "The significant price recovery on the oil market has run out of steam in recent days," said Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch. "For one thing, the feared retaliatory strike by Iran (on Zionist entity) has so far failed to materialize, which has probably favored a partial pricing out of the risk premium," he added. "In addition, new demand concerns are weighing on the market." Major oil producer Iran has threatened to retaliate against Zionist entity for last month's killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. — AFP

Business



NBK hosted a unique event onboard a luxury yacht on Umm Al-Maradim Island.



NBK unveils 2nd Al-Jawhara Millionaire for 2024 onboard a yacht on Umm Al-Maradim Island

Al-Jawhara Junior grand prize winner was also announced during the event

KUWAIT: Marking the unveiling of the second grand prize draw for Al-Jawhara and Al-Jawhara Junior Accounts for 2024, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a unique event onboard a luxury yacht on Umm Al Maradim Island. With a stunning maritime backdrop, the event featured a variety of entertainment activities, contests, and draws for the audience who showed remarkable engagement.

The celebration was attended by a number of NBK executives, where the draw was conducted in the presence and oversight of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as a representative of Deloitte, revealing Al-Jawhara Account holder Abdullateef Majeed Abdulkareem Ramadhan as the lucky winner of the KD 1 million prize, making him the second Al-Jawhara millionaire for this year.

In addition, Al-Jawhara Junior Account holder Abdulmohsen Anwar Abdulmajeed Behbehani was announced as the winner of the grand prize worth KD 10,000, noting that the grand prize draws for both Al-Jawhara and Al-Jawhara Junior Accounts are conducted three times a year.



Al-Othman

- We seek to complement our top-notch products and services with unmatched benefits and rewards
- The event featured engaging entertainment activities, competitions and draws on valuable prizes

Celebrating the announcement of the winners, the event featured a variety of engaging entertainment activities and games for children and adults. It also included a number of competitions and draws on valuable prizes include Galaxy smartphones and two cruises on board a luxury yacht to Umm Al-Maradim Island in collaboration with the Waves app.

Comprehensive banking experience
Commenting on this occasion, Moham-

med Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking at National Bank of Kuwait said, "Today, we are celebrating the first millionaire in Al-Jawhara grand prize draws for this year, as well as the winner of Al-Jawhara Junior grand prize. This aligns with our strategy to reward customers from different segments through an array of special draws, prizes and offers all year round."

Al-Othman added, "Al-Jawhara and Al-Jawhara Saver accounts as well as the Al-Jawhara Junior draw are instrumen-

tal tools to promote a culture of savings and financial inclusion among the public," noting that "NBK always seeks to provide customers with a comprehensive banking experience in which top-notch products and services are complemented with unmatched benefits and rewards."

"NBK has increased the total amount of the Al-Jawhara Account prizes to KD 5 million starting this year, and recently launched Al-Jawhara Saver Account, offering customers a bonus interest rate up to 1.5 percent for the first year, in addition to the chance to enter the monthly and grand draws if savings reach KD 5,000 and above. The bank is also offering customers who have been banking with it for more than two years double chances, in case they were not eligible to earn the existing double chances," he explained. "Seeking to enhance the benefits and rewards provided to Al-Jawhara Account holders, NBK introduced Al-Jawhara Junior Draws for Al-Jawhara Account holders below the age of 21 with 7 winners of monthly draws (KD 1,000 for 3 winners and KD 500 for 4 winners) in addition to 1 winner of KD 10,000 prize with each grand prize draw,"



A representative from the Ministry of Commerce during the draw.

he mentioned.

NBK has already increased Al-Jawhara prizes by more than the double in early 2023, making it the biggest in Kuwait, with KD 20,000 prize weekly, KD 125,000 monthly, and grand prizes worth KD 1,000,000 each, three times a year.

Political uncertainty diminishes chance of Japan's rate hike

TOKYO: The political uncertainty left by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's decision to step down will likely lead to a pause, rather than a full stop, to the Bank of Japan's plan to raise interest rates steadily from near-zero levels. How long that pause could be will depend not just on how the ruling party leadership race plays out, but how market moves affect the political debate on the preferred pace of rate hikes, analysts say.

Kishida, who hand-picked Kazuo Ueda as BOJ governor last year, said on Wednesday he will not stand in his ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) leadership race in September. The BOJ worked closely with Kishida's administration in preaching the benefits of higher wages. Days before the BOJ's rate hike in July, Kishida said the central bank's policy normalization would support Japan's transition to a growth-driven economy in a sign of his backing towards exiting ultra-low interest rates.

Kishida's departure leaves a political vacuum that heightens uncertainty on economic policy, and complicates the BOJ's efforts to steer a smooth exit from easy monetary conditions in coordination with the government. Those seen as leading candidates have mostly endorsed gradual increases in Japan's current ultra-low interest rates, partly as a means to keep sharp yen falls at bay.

Shigeru Ishiba, seen as a frontrunner to succeed Kishida as next LDP leader and thus premier, told Reuters that the BOJ was "on the right policy track" in hiking rates gradually. Other leading candidates, such as party heavyweights Toshimitsu Motegi and Taro Kono, have also called on the need for higher interest rates and hawkish communication by the BOJ. The only advocate of aggressive easing is dark horse candidate Sanae Takaichi, who belongs to a party group that supported former premier Shinzo Abe's stimulus policies.

"Takaichi might be an exception, but most candidates don't seem to be against the BOJ's policy normalization. If so, there won't be much disruption to the bank's long-term rate hike path," said veteran BOJ watcher Mari Iwashita.

The BOJ by law is granted independence from government interference in setting monetary policy. But it has historically come under political pressure to use its monetary easing tools to re-



A woman walks past the Tokyo Stock Exchange building along a street in Tokyo. — AFP

flate the economy. That policy tension is in part driven by the government's power to appoint BOJ board members including the governor, which then needs parliament approval to take effect.

With the weak yen intensifying the strain on households through rising living costs, many politicians will likely nod to gradual rate hikes for now, analysts say. That means the BOJ will likely stay the course and keep raising rates - albeit at a slower pace than initially thought. A survey taken by think tank Japan Center for Economic Research on July 30-Aug. 6 showed many economists projecting another rate hike by year-end. "The weak yen has been enemy No. 1 for many lawmakers, which means there is less political pushback against rate hikes than in the past," said a source familiar with the BOJ's thinking.

Data showing the economy rebounded in the second quarter on robust consumption helps justify further rate hikes, analysts say. The BOJ has too much to lose by ditching a carefully crafted plan to roll back a decade-long radical stimulus program, which put an end to negative rates in March and led to an increase in short-term rates to 0.25 percent from 0-0.1 percent in July.

The BOJ remains a global outlier on monetary policy. The central bank kept rates ultra-low even as its U.S. and European counterparts hiked aggressively since 2022 to combat red-hot inflation. Now, the BOJ is raising rates while its peers have begun easing and yet it's some way off from normalizing policy.

Governor Ueda has said further rate hikes are necessary adjustments of excessive monetary support, rather than a full-fledged tightening - a stance he is likely to maintain. But the BOJ also has good reason to ride out the storm by standing pat at the next policy meeting on Sept. 19-20, which will likely be close to the date of the LDP leadership race.

The US presidential election may also heighten market volatility and keep the BOJ from acting at a subsequent rate review on Oct 30-31, analysts say. "The BOJ will hold off on rate hikes at least until December, when Japanese and US political events run their course," said Toru Suehiro, chief economist at Daiwa Securities. The BOJ would also need time to build trust with the new prime minister, who may have to wait until November to be approved by parliament.

An academic turned governor, Ueda has few associates in political circles, which heightens challenges in communicating smoothly with the new administration, some analysts say. There is no guarantee politicians will keep favoring rate hikes, if the yen's downtrend reverses course. A spike in the yen, caused in part by the BOJ's July rate hike, led to a plunge in stock prices that forced the central bank to back-track on its hawkish communication.

"If the weak-yen tide reverses, some politicians may begin to question whether the BOJ needs to hike rates further," said Naomi Muguruma, chief bond strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities. — Reuters

Low jobless claims allay US recession fears

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits dropped to a one-month-low last week, suggesting an orderly labor market slowdown remained in place, and dashing financial market hopes that the Federal Reserve could cut interest rates by 50 basis points next month.

The economy's resilience was reinforced by other data on Thursday showing retail sales increased by the most in 1-1/2 years in July. Investors have been on edge after a jump in the unemployment rate to a near three-year high of 4.3 percent in July sparked fears that the economy was either in recession or nearing a downturn, concerns not shared by most economists. "The economy is not going off the rails," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BONDERS. "There is no storm brewing in the labor markets that could possibly argue for a giant-sized 50 basis points rate cut."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 7,000 to a seasonally adjusted 227,000 for the week ended Aug. 10, the Labor Department said. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 235,000 claims for the latest week. The second straight weekly decline erased the increase in late July, which had boosted claims to an 11-month high. Much of the rise last month was blamed on temporary motor vehicle plant shutdowns and disruptions caused by Hurricane Beryl in Texas.

Unadjusted claims fell 4,500 to 199,530 last week amid big declines in California, Texas and Massachusetts. Layoffs remain historically low, with much of the slowdown in the labor market coming from businesses scaling back hiring, trailing an immigration-induced surge in labor supply. The US central bank's 525 basis points worth of rate hikes in 2022 and 2023 are curbing demand. Financial markets lowered the odds of a half-percentage-point rate reduction at the Fed's Sept. 17-18 policy meeting to 27.5 percent from 41.5 percent before the data, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool. They saw a 72.5 percent chance of a 25-basis-point rate cut, up from 58.5 percent earlier.

The Fed has maintained its benchmark overnight interest rate in the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range for a year. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher. The dollar rose against

a basket of currencies. Treasury prices fell. "If the economy continues to be resilient, especially in conjunction with slowing inflation, then the Fed can begin a rate-cutting cycle without the economy entering recession and history shows this is an extremely positive environment for the stock market," said Chris Zaccarelli, Chief Investment Officer at Independent Advisor Alliance.

Companies pulling back on hiring, however, mean it is becoming harder for laid-off workers to land new jobs. The number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid, a proxy for hiring, fell 7,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.864 million during the week ending Aug. 3, the claims report showed. The so-called continued claims are near levels last seen in late 2021.

Nonetheless, the labor market continues to underpin consumer spending through still-high wage growth. A separate report from the Commerce Department's Census Bureau showed retail sales jumped 1.0 percent in July, the largest increase since January 2023, after a downwardly revised 0.2 percent drop in June. Economists had forecast retail sales, which are mostly goods and are not adjusted for inflation, advancing 0.3 percent after previously being reported as unchanged in June. Retail sales increased 2.7 percent year-on-year in July. Subsidizing inflation, bargain hunting and consumers trading down to lower-priced substitutes are sustaining spending.

Receipts at motor vehicle and parts dealers rebounded 3.6 percent, reversing a 3.4 percent drop in June that was blamed on a cyberattack. Online store sales gained 0.2 percent after jumping 2.2 percent in June. Sales at gasoline stations edged up 0.1 percent. Building material and garden equipment store sales increased 0.9 percent. Sales at food services and drinking places, the only services component in the report, rose 0.3 percent after ticking up 0.1 percent in June. Economists view dining out as a key indicator of household finances. Furniture store sales advanced 0.5 percent. Receipts at electronics and appliance outlets vaulted 1.6 percent.

But consumers spent less at clothing retailers as well as sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores. Retail sales excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services rose 0.3 percent last month after advancing by an unrevised 0.9 percent in June. These so-called core retail sales correspond most closely with the consumer spending component of gross domestic product.

Last month's gain and June's unrevised increase in core retail sales put consumer spending on a higher growth path early in the third quarter. — Reuters

Business

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait-Egypt announces outstanding financial results for H1 2024

Net profit soars 154%, reaching EGP 4.315 billion

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt) recorded outstanding financial results during the first half of 2024, reporting a significant increase in net profit by 154 percent, reaching EGP 4.315 billion compared to EGP 1.699 billion during the first half of 2023. This reflects the continued strong performance of the bank in the Egyptian banking sector. Net Interest Income increased by 68 percent to reach EGP 2.988 billion by the end of June 2024, compared to EGP 1.779 billion during the same period in 2023. Net Fees and Commissions income grew by 82.3 percent, reaching EGP 855 million compared to EGP 469 million at the end of June 2023.

Furthermore, the Bank's Total Assets grew by 30.5 percent to reach EGP 127.4 billion, compared to EGP 97.6 billion at the end of 2023. Total Customer Deposits increased by 25 percent, to reach EGP 103.8 billion compared to EGP 83.1 billion at the end of 2023, and Total Gross Loans Portfolio increased by 26.1 percent, reaching EGP 62.4 billion compared to EGP 49.5 billion at the end of 2023. The Non-Performing Loans (NPL) ratio was 1.62 percent at the end of June 2024. Commenting on the results, Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, stated, "Our strong financial results in the first half of this year confirm our ongoing success in strengthening our position within the Egyptian banking sector, which enjoys promising growth opportunities." He added that ABK-Egypt has achieved in becoming one of the fastest-growing banks, as reflected in the financial indicators achieved during the first six months of the current year, and emphasized the commitment to continue achieving strong growth rates across all levels."

He added that ABK-Egypt continues to develop plans to face economic challenges at the local, regional, and global levels. He further noted that ABK-Egypt is fully prepared to finance major projects within Egypt's development vision, fulfilling its role as a responsible banking institution in the Egyptian market. He stressed the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors to elevate the Egyptian economy to higher levels in the future.

Marafi elaborated that the Bank's results demonstrate its ability to continue achieving growth across most of its financial indicators, thanks to its prudent approach, its commitment to meeting all customer needs, gaining their satisfaction, and investing in providing a distinguished



Chairman of ABK-Egypt Ali Marafi



CEO and Managing Director of ABK-Egypt Khaled El Salawy

and integrated banking experience through its website, mobile application, and branches.

Marafi affirmed ABK-Egypt's commitment to supporting all efforts by the Egyptian government, the Central Bank of Egypt, and other responsible entities that pave the way for economic stability and growth in Egypt. Marafi stated that ABK-Egypt continues to develop its plans, keep pace with changes in the banking industry, provide the latest technology



in its branches, and expand its presence across Egypt. He highlighted the introduction of the latest technologies as part of the ongoing digital transformation plan, which will help the Bank achieve further successes in the future.

ABK-Egypt issued its first sustainability and carbon footprint report during the first half of 2024, in line with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), reflecting the importance of measuring the Bank's perfor-

mance using sustainability criteria. Marafi noted that issuing the Bank's first sustainability report reflects its full commitment to the highest levels of governance and transparency in dealing with various stakeholders, disclosing the results of its operations and their impact on environmental, economic, and social levels. He stressed the Bank's commitment to leaving a positive impact and reducing emissions from its activities across all departments and divisions.

The report covers the most important achievements and initiatives of the Bank in 2023, in addition to its accomplishments in economic, social, environmental, and governance areas. It confirms that the Bank prioritizes contributing to achieving Egypt's Vision 2030 for sustainable development, driving economic growth, and integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices into its various activities and operations, while designing and developing a model for managing environmental and social risks.

Best retail bank

In the first half of this year, ABK-Egypt was named the Best Retail Bank in Egypt at the Banking Excellence Awards ceremony organized by MEED, in recognition of the Bank's outstanding performance and success in meeting the needs of customers from various segments. Marafi stated that the award confirms its success in earning the trust of international

institutions specialized in performance evaluation, gaining customer confidence, and keeping up with continuous developments in the banking industry.

Proven track record

Khaled El Salawy, CEO and Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, said, "Our Profit Before Tax increased by 140 percent, reaching EGP 5 billion at the end of the first half of 2024, adding a new achievement to our proven track record." He added that this reflects ABK-Egypt's pursuit of achieving its strategic objectives and reaching a distinguished position in the banking sector in Egypt. El Salawy praised the efforts of ABK-Egypt's employees and all members of the Executive Management for their commitment to applying best practices to achieve sustainable growth.

El Salawy mentioned that the Bank's strategy focuses on increasing its market share among retail and corporate customers, explaining that the Bank invests significantly in developing the digital services and products it offers in the market and keeping up with technological developments to enhance the customer experience and support the Central Bank of Egypt's plan to achieve financial inclusion across all segments of Egyptian society. He pointed out that ABK-Egypt continues to participate in and sponsor various community initiatives in collaboration with many partners across different sectors, ensuring that the Bank meets the needs of underprivileged segments in the country and launches numerous initiatives to enhance its presence. El Salawy explained that ABK-Egypt continues to meet the financing needs of small and medium enterprises, helping them grow their businesses, given their significant role in the Egyptian economy and contributions to supporting the efforts of responsible entities to achieve economic prosperity and growth.

He affirmed that the Bank continues to offer a variety of loans to retail customers, which helps gain their trust as their preferred banking partner. In conclusion, El Salawy mentioned that the Bank continues to invest in developing its employees' capabilities by organizing numerous training programs, helping them enhance their performance and productivity, and increasing their levels of innovation. This, in turn, allows the Bank to offer more products and services that meet the needs of all customer segments in the Egyptian banking sector.

PPP structure and financing

By Hassan Abdulrahim

This section of Visionary Consulting Company's Guide explores key concepts of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) financing, examining the main financing options, key contractual relationships, and methods to assess financing costs and overall profitability.

Financing Alternatives for PPP Projects

Two primary methods exist for financing PPP infrastructure projects: corporate finance and project finance.

1. Corporate finance: In this approach, the borrower, typically a company, borrows money directly from a bank and repays the loan using revenues generated from the completed infrastructure. If these revenues fall short, the borrower must rely on other business activities to cover the shortfall. The risk with corporate finance is significant, especially for large infrastructure projects. A project failure could endanger the entire company.

2. Project finance: Project finance, the preferred method for PPPs, offers a solution by establishing a dedicated project company known as a special purpose vehicle (SPV). The SPV is legally separated from the parent company, insulating it from direct exposure to financial risk. Financing is secured by the project itself, which means lenders rely solely on project revenues to recover their loans. Although this increases the risk for lenders, leading to increased scrutiny, it protects the parent company from financial fallout if the project fails. In a project finance structure, most contractual relationships involve the SPV, with the most critical being the PPP contract signed between the government entity and the project company. The SPV subcontracts project activities, such as construction and operation, to specialized firms, while the parent companies involved agree on rights and responsibilities through shareholder agreements.

Equity and debt financing in PPP projects

Financing a PPP project typically involves both equity and debt.

1. Equity Financing: Equity contributors, often a consortium of companies involved in the project, provide the initial capital for the project company. Institutional investors may also participate. Equity holders bear the highest risk as they are the first to invest but the last to be repaid. This risk also means they have the potential for the highest returns. The dynamic is similar to purchasing a home: if you invest personal savings and borrow the rest, when selling the house at a lower price, the lender gets repaid first before you see any return. In PPP projects, lenders have financial recourse before equity contributors receive any repayments or returns.

2. Debt Financing: Debt is usually issued to PPP projects by commercial banks, international finance institutions like the World Bank, or export credit agencies. Interest rates depend on the level of risk involved. Lower-risk projects enjoy lower borrowing costs, while high-risk projects may struggle to secure financing. One challenge with bank financing is that banks rarely issue loans for the long durations PPP projects require, typically 20 years. Loans



often mature after 5-10 years, leading to the need for refinancing. While refinancing poses a risk if financing becomes unavailable, it can also offer opportunities to lower borrowing costs if done after the construction phase when the project's risk profile decreases.

Calculating the cost of PPP project financing

The cost of financing a PPP project is influenced by risk, cost, and bankability factors, and is often expressed through the concept of leverage, the ratio of debt to equity. For example, if a project is financed with 25 percent equity and 75 percent debt, it has a leverage ratio of 3:1. The financing cost is calculated using the Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC). If equity providers expect a 15 percent return and lenders charge 5 percent interest, the WACC would be 7.5 percent. Reducing the equity share decreases the WACC, as equity financing is more expensive than debt. However, increasing leverage (more debt) also raises financial risk, as a smaller equity base is available to absorb potential losses.

Governments usually prefer reasonable leverage ratios to balance risk and financing costs. The analysis of private financing shows that PPP project financing costs are generally higher than those for traditional infrastructure projects financed through public debt, which is considered less risky. For a PPP project to be worthwhile, these additional financing costs must be offset by efficiency gains or other advantages.

Assessing PPP project profitability

A key factor in determining the success of a PPP project is profitability, which depends on the cash flow generated over the life of the project. Revenues typically come from either end-users or the government. Profitability is determined by comparing projected revenues against estimated costs over the project's life, with cash flows generally negative during construction but turning positive afterward. PPP projects require a comprehensive financial model to generate accurate cash flow projections and profitability indicators like the Internal Rate of Return (IRR). The IRR measures the profitability of an investment by comparing the initial investment to the returns generated over time. A higher IRR indicates greater profitability.

For example, if a project has an IRR of 10 percent, it is equivalent to investing \$100 and selling it for \$110 after a year, generating a \$10 profit. The quality of these profitability indicators depends on the accuracy of revenue and cost projections. Adjusting key assumptions, such as increasing cash flow, can significantly impact profitability measures like the IRR. Ultimately, a PPP project becomes more attractive as projected profitability (IRR) increases beyond the cost of financing (WACC).

Investors and governments must carefully evaluate these projections to ensure the financial viability of the project. Based on the discussion above, it is obvious that financing and profitability are critical factors in the success of a PPP project. Project finance, typically preferred for PPPs, offers a way to mitigate financial risk through the establishment of a special purpose vehicle. Equity and debt financing play key roles, with equity contributors bearing higher risks but potentially enjoying higher returns, while debt financing introduces both challenges and opportunities.

Assessing the cost of financing and the project's profitability is crucial for making informed decisions about the viability of a PPP project. These calculations, along with careful risk management, ensure that the project can deliver value while maintaining financial stability.

Note: Hassan Abdulrahim is senior instructor, Economics & Finance, at Canadian College Kuwait and Deputy CEO at Visionary Consulting Company

Beryl, excess inventory pressure US single family homebuilding

WASHINGTON: US single-family homebuilding dropped to a 16-month low in July, likely weighed down by Hurricane Beryl and an oversupply of new homes as higher mortgage rates and prices depress sales. The fifth straight monthly decrease in homebuilding reported by the Commerce Department on Friday suggested the housing market remained subdued at the start of the third quarter. A slowing labor market also poses a challenge to the housing market recovery.

"The decline is likely due to a combination of an already strong supply of new homes for sale and the expectation from builders of relatively weak expected sales in the coming months," said Daniel Vielhaber, an economist at Nationwide. "It is costly for builders to keep finished homes on the market, builders appear to be increasingly hesitant to put further resources into building up the supply of new homes."

Single-family housing starts, which account for the bulk of homebuilding, tumbled 14.1 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 851,000 units last month, the lowest level since March 2023, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau said.

Homebuilding plunged 22.9 percent in the densely populated South, likely depressed by Beryl, which struck Texas early in the month. Starts also plummeted 27.1 percent in the Northeast. They slipped 1.4 percent in the West, but increased 16.8 percent in the Midwest.

Single-family housing starts dropped 14.8 percent on a year-on-year basis in July. Residential investment, which includes home building, contracted in the second quarter after rising for three consecutive quarters. The housing market has weakened following a spring resurgence in mortgage rates. The average rate on the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage peaked at 7.22 percent in May. It has since dropped to 6.45 percent amid optimism the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates next month, but there has not been a strong rise in demand for home loans.

New housing inventory has surged to levels last seen in early 2008. Construction had been

buoyed by a dearth of previously owned homes for sale. But the stock of existing homes has also risen from historic lows. A National Association of Home Builders survey on Thursday showed homebuilder sentiment fell to an eight-month low in August. Builders blamed "challenging housing affordability conditions" for the fourth straight monthly drop in confidence.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading slightly higher. The dollar slipped against a basket of currencies. US Treasury yields fell.

"While we do expect a rebound in construction and sales activity in August, we are a little perturbed that lower interest rates are not generating a bigger rally," said Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics. "Even though lower interest rates should provide ongoing support to new home sales, the existing oversupply in some regional markets could be a bigger constraint than we previously anticipated."

Starts for housing projects with five units or more increased 11.7 percent to a rate of 363,000 units in July. Overall housing starts plunged 6.8 percent to a rate of 1,238 million units, the lowest level since May 2020. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast starts would fall to a rate of 1,330 million units. Starts were down 16.0 percent from a year ago. Permits for future construction of single-family homes slipped 0.1 percent to a rate of 938,000 units in July. Multi-family building permits dropped 12.4 percent to a rate of 408,000 units. Building permits as a whole decreased 4.0 percent to a rate of 1,396 million units.

"Lower mortgage rates will provide some support to homebuilding at the margin, but this will likely be at least partly countered by weakness in the labor market providing an offsetting hit to housing demand," said Oliver Allen, senior U.S. economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

The number of houses approved for construction that were yet to be started increased 2.6 percent to 279,000 units. The single-family homebuilding backlog rose 5.1 percent to 143,000 units. The completions rate for that housing segment rose 0.5 percent to 1,054 million units. Overall housing completions declined 9.8 percent to a rate of 1,529 million units.

The number of housing units under construction decreased 1.6 percent to a rate of 1,539 million units. The inventory of single-family housing under construction slipped 2.1 percent to a rate of 653,000 units. — Reuters



LOS ANGELES: A for sale sign is displayed outside of a home for sale on August 16, 2024 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2024



UAE'S ARCHITECTURAL BOOM DESIGNATES GULF COUNTRY'S URBAN PLANNING MODEL

The architectural boom taking place in the United Arab Emirates is ushered in by prosperity and development in the real estate sector, paralleled with the world's most developed nations. The massive projects include skyscrapers, residential towers, and hotels all with imaginative designs, paint an image of UAE's success in becoming a model of urban planning. Global reports bear witness to UAE's architectural development, as real estate service company JLL recently reported that total value of current construction projects is estimated at USD 590 billion; a considerable leap in the sector.

Lately, the UAE accomplished a number of iconic architectural feats, including Etihad towers, Capital Gate

or the leaning tower of Abu Dhabi, Al-Dar building, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Museum of the Future and many more. By the end of this year, the real estate market value would reach AED 2.6 trillion (approx. \$707 billion), specialized German data platform Statista indicated. It attributes this extensive growth to mounting interest of high-income affluent individuals in Emirati real estate investments. Official data from municipal and transport department in Abu Dhabi showed that real estate transactional services in 2024 Q1 reached around AED 15.9 billion (approx. \$4.3 billion), with some 5,127 transactions of varying natures achieved, reflecting versatility of Emirati market.



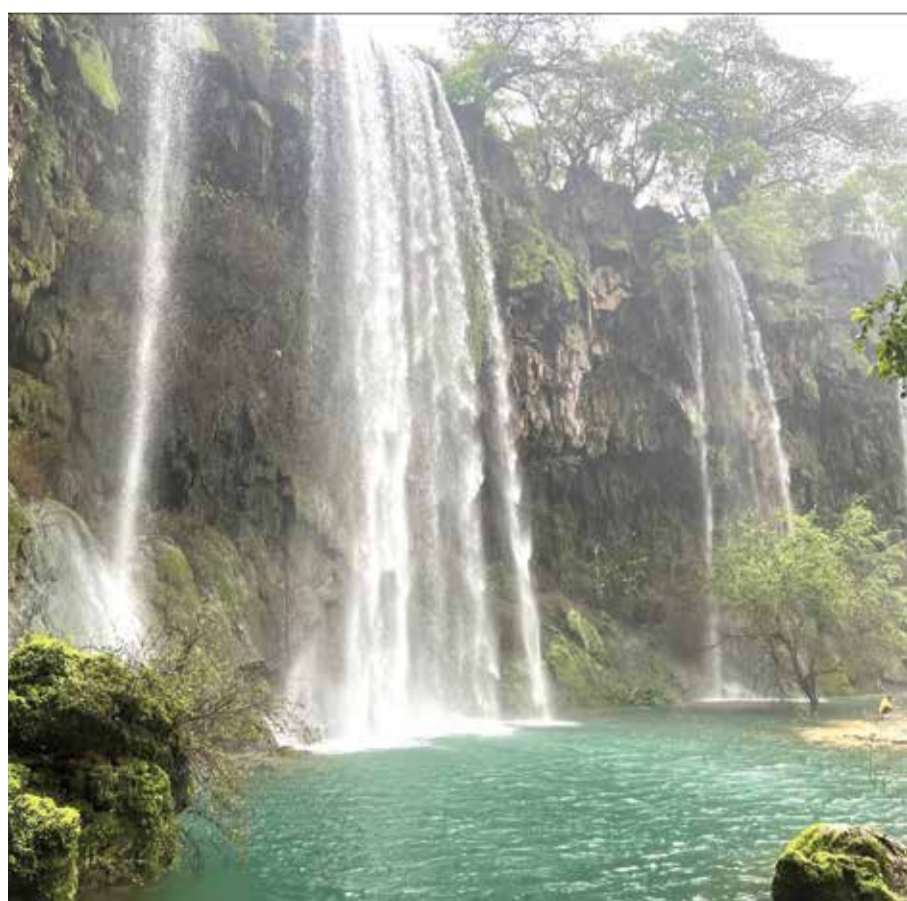
The Abu Dhabi real estate scene is reinvigorated by government stimulants, and high-quality projects, that not only appealed to investors but also boosted the state's global standing in

the market. As for trading volume in Al-Sharjah, it increased by 35.6 percent compared to same period of previous year prompted by an exponential growth of transactions with 10,809 in

first half of 2024 as opposed to 6,592 in same period of 2023.

These results are considered the highest since 2012, as the Emirate of Sharjah achieved notable leaps appealing to the interest of investors and gaining their trust in its real estate market supported by a variety of benefits exclusive to the Emirate. Residential units in Dubai grew by 6,600 brand new unit in the first half of this current year, taking total to 736,000 units with expectations of 20,000 more by end of year.

According to local data 50,000 new investors came into the market and real estate transactions achieved AED 357 billion (approx. \$94 billion), marking 23 percent of growth. — KUNA



Ain Athum: A must-visit tourist destination

Ain Athum is one of the most renowned natural water springs in the Dhofar Governorate of Oman, famous for its stunning waterfalls that flow continuously throughout the fall season. This makes it an ideal destination for tourists and nature lovers seeking to immerse themselves in lush landscapes and crystal-clear lakes. Situated 33 kilometers from

Salalah, Ain Athum is encircled by misty mountains, offering a scenic drive that enhances the journey.

Tourist sites across Dhofar are well-equipped with facilities, as the Sultanate of Oman remains committed to enhancing services to ensure an unforgettable experience for visitors. — KUNA

Ketamine Queen: The alleged dealer charged over Matthew Perry's death

A woman allegedly known as the "Ketamine Queen," who prosecutors say sold "Friends" actor Matthew Perry the drugs that would kill him, didn't look very regal when she appeared in a Los Angeles court this week. If they can prove their case against Jasveen Sangha - that she made thousands of dollars from the troubled celebrity, selling him ketamine from her North Hollywood drug emporium - she might never see the outside of prison again.

In the meantime, her court appearance in a green Nirvana sweatshirt and baggy sweatpants was a far cry from the party-filled jet set lifestyle that investigators say she normally leads. The dual British-American national was one of five people charged in connection with the October 2023 death of the much-loved Perry, who was found unresponsive in the pool of his swanky Los Angeles home.

Others included Perry's live-in personal assistant, a go-between and two medical doctors who are alleged to have sold \$12 vials to the celebrity for as much as \$2,000 each, as they exchanged texts wondering "how much this moron will pay." But it was the arrest and charging of Sangha that has particularly shone a light on the seedy side of Hollywood glamour.

Court documents allege Sangha, 41, ran a huge drug operation out of her comfortable apartment - dubbed the "Sangha Stash House" - where investigators discovered ketamine, methamphetamine, cocaine and prescription medication like Xanax. Her source for the ketamine, she told broker Erik Fleming - who is also charged in connection with Perry's death - was a "master chef" and a "scientist" through whom she boasted she could "fill any order."

"She only deal[s] with high end and celebs," Fleming is said to have written to



Actor Matthew Perry attends the 2003 TV Land awards at the Palladium Theatre in Hollywood on March 2, 2003. — AFP Photos

Perry's personal assistant. "If it were not great stuff she'd lose her business."

High roller lifestyle

Photos posted on the internet show Sangha partying with actor Charlie Sheen, a man with well-documented addiction problems. Her own Instagram account is packed with proof of a glitzy lifestyle that appears to include trips on private jets and plates of caviar in an airport lounge. Other photos show her sporting a range of designer wear, including jewelry from Van Cleef & Arpels, shoes by Louis Vuitton and clothes from Chanel.

But the high-roller lifestyle was apparently funded through a trade in misery, exploiting the desperation of addicts like Perry. The dozens of doses of ketamine she allegedly sold him came in unmarked glass vials with a cheap blue plastic cap.

Prosecutors say Sangha was a consummate saleswoman, offering a sample for Perry to try before he committed serious money. "It's unmarked but it's amazing," she allegedly texted the middleman. "He [can] take one and try it and I have more if he likes." And the final batch Sangha is alleged to have supplied - the one that resulted in Perry's death at just 54 - came with a sweetener: ketamine lollipops, prosecutors say. Hours after news of the actor's death emerged, Sangha set out to cover her tracks, investigators say, ordering middleman Fleming to "delete all our messages."

Two weeks later, she jetted off to Tokyo, posting smiling pictures of her posing in a kimono. The trip was one of around a dozen foreign jaunts she has taken since Perry died, a Los Angeles judge heard on Wednesday, which have also included Antigua and Mexico. — AFP



This undated image of the indictment from the US District Court for the Central District of California against people who reportedly supplied ketamine to "Friends" star Matthew Perry shows alleged evidence discovered in what authorities have dubbed the "Sangha stash."

Lifestyle



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift, so-called "Swifties", pass merchandise stalls outside Wembley Stadium in London on August 15, 2024, ahead of the first of five concerts she is playing at the stadium. - AFP photos



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift gather on Olympic Way outside Wembley Stadium.



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift pass merchandise stalls.

Fans converge on Wembley as Taylor Swift returns to stage

Fans flocked to London's Wembley Stadium on Thursday ahead of Taylor Swift's return to the stage a week after her Vienna concerts were cancelled due to a foiled suicide attack plot. Hundreds of ecstatic so-called "Swifties" streamed towards the stadium hours before the American mega-star was due to wrap up the European leg of her "Eras" tour with the first of five sell-out shows. "It doesn't feel real, that it's actually happening!" excited ticket-holder Katie Moulson, 24, told AFP as she arrived at Wembley mid-afternoon.

Around 90,000 fans will again pack the venue each night, with additional ticket checks and restrictions in place after the scare over the Austrian plot. Revelations of an Islamic State-inspired plan to launch an attack using explosives and knives there led to the cancellation of all three of her concerts in the Austrian capital last week. Three alleged Islamic State sympathizers have been arrested on charges of plotting the atrocity, which was thwarted with the help of US intelligence. London's Metropolitan Police has said there was "nothing to indicate" any links with her upcoming gigs in the capital.



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift pose for a selfie next to a mural of the performer created by street artists MurWalls, outside Wembley Stadium.

But it was working "closely with venue security teams and other partners to ensure there are appropriate security and policing plans in place". Fans have been warned on Wembley's website to expect "additional ticket checks" around the stadium.

No 'Tay-gating'

The extra security had not dampened the spirits of fans decked out in glittery skirts, tassled jackets, cowboy hats and stacks of friendship bracelets - a current must-have for "Swifties" - as they descended on northwest Lon-

don. "After Vienna, it's good to hear that they've upped the security", student Brodie MacArthur, 23, told AFP, as she arrived wearing a long white dress inspired by Swift's latest album, "The Tortured Poets Department". "In the back of your head, there's still worries. But there are a lot of people here to keep it safe," she added.

Swift's return to the British capital, following three sold-out shows in June, comes two weeks after three young girls were killed in a stabbing at a dance class themed around the pop star's music in northwest England. Following the knife attack, the star said she was "completely in shock" and at a "complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families". She has not yet commented on the decision to cancel the Vienna shows. This time in London fans without tickets will not be allowed to "Tay-gate" the event - the practice of Swift fans standing outside the venue during the live show to hear the music. The stadium's website says that "no one is allowed to stand outside any entrance or... at the front of the stadium" and "non-ticket holders will be moved on". While the practice was not permitted at

her June concerts there, some fans still managed to gather outside Wembley.

No 'Tay-gating'

After two performances in Madrid at the end of July, Swift noted around 50,000 "people came out and listened to the show" from a nearby hillside on both nights, "participating in the show from afar". Her last appearances in the British capital were attended by some high-profile names. They included Keir Starmer, who was then running to become Britain's prime minister, and Prince William - celebrating his birthday - along with his children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte.

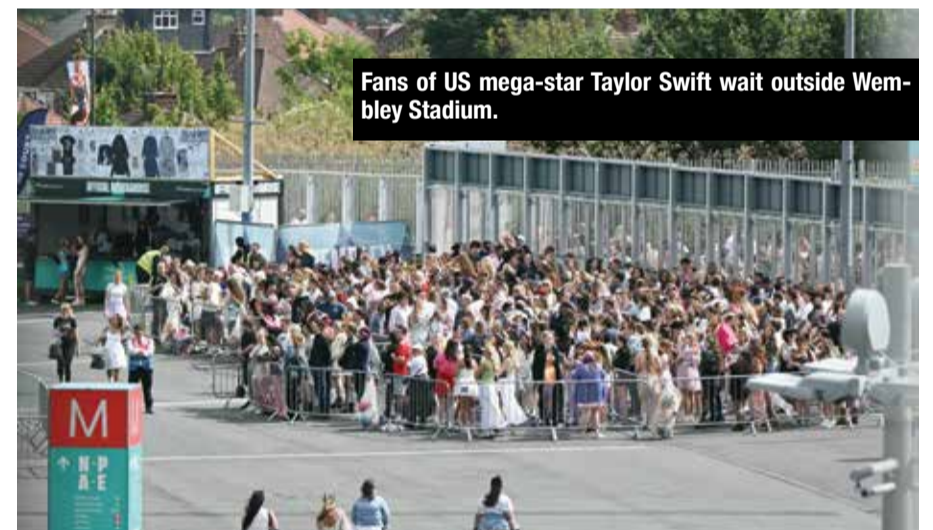
The singer posted a photo posing with the royals and her boyfriend, American football player Travis Kelce, with the caption "Happy Bday M8! London shows are off to a splendid start". After wrapping up the European leg of her record-breaking tour - which began in Paris in May and saw the star perform across the continent - Swift will head back to North America. Its final leg there starts on October 18 in Miami. — AFP



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift pose for a photograph in front of the 'Swiftie Steps' a mural created by the British artist Frank Styles, outside Wembley Stadium in London.



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift gather outside Wembley Stadium.



Fans of US mega-star Taylor Swift wait outside Wembley Stadium.

US actress Gena Rowlands dies at 94

Gena Rowlands, an award-winning US actress best known for starring in the films of her first husband, director John Cassavetes, died at age 94, according to US media reports. Rowlands died surrounded by family at her home in Indian Wells, California, US entertainment publication TMZ reported. No official cause of death was immediately given, but Rowlands's son Nick Cassavetes said in June she had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for the past five years, according to the New York Times.

Rowlands starred in 10 films by John Cassavetes, and was married to him for nearly 35 years until his death in 1989. Starting in the 1960s, the couple formed an enchanting and explosive on-screen partnership over three decades that explored themes of passion and self-destruction against a backdrop of alcohol and infidelity.

In what many consider her finest role, Rowlands captured to devas-

tating effect the descent of a housewife into mental illness in "A Woman Under the Influence" (1974), bringing her the first of two Oscar nominations. "Incapable of an unreal moment," said Woody Allen of the actress, whom he cast in his 1988 film "Another Woman." "Whatever I say about Gena isn't enough because she's so incredible," said Winona Ryder, quoted in the LA Times in 1992 when the two co-starred in Jim Jarmusch's "Night on Earth."

A storied career

Rowlands was born on June 19, 1930, in Cambria, Wisconsin, into a cultured middle-class family. Her father was a state senator and her mother was a painter and occasional actress. She enrolled in New York's American Academy of Drama and in 1953 met Cassavetes, a fast-talking and exuberant Greek-American. A year later they were married. It was their collaboration that generated her stand-out perfor-



US actress Gena Rowlands arrives to attend the screening of "The Neon Bible" on May 23, 1995, during the 48th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 23, 1995.

mances, the highlight arguably being "A Woman Under the Influence" which also brought an Oscar nomination for Cassavetes as director.

Rowlands was captivating as housewife Mabel who descends into madness after years of quiet, complicated dominance by her hardworking, silent husband, played by Peter Falk. In 1989, Cassavetes died from liver failure after years of alcoholism. Rowlands continued to make films and also worked for television, winning four Emmys.

She and Cassavetes had three children, all of whom have gone on to work in film and television. Her son Nick directed her in "The Notebook" alongside Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams in 2004. In 2012, she married retired businessman Robert Forrest and in 2015 was awarded an honorary Academy Award, the same year she retired from acting. — AFP



Actress Gena Rowlands displays her hands after making her handprints at her Hand and Footprint ceremony in front of the TCL Chinese Theater IMAX in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos

Gena Rowlands: Five key films

US actress Gena Rowlands was nominated for two Oscars and delivered memorable, heartfelt and often troubling performances. Here are five of her best:

'Lonely Are the Brave' (1962)

In this low-budget, critically acclaimed Western, Rowlands is a loyal friend in love with a noble cowboy who is resisting the modern world, played by Hollywood titan Kirk Douglas. Rowlands only appears in a few scenes, but her performance had an immediate impact. "I'd never seen anyone that beautiful with a certain gravitas. It was particularly unique in that time, when many women were trying to be girlish," said actress Mia Farrow in 2015, quoted in Elle magazine. "Gena did none of that. There was a directness - not that she wasn't fun and didn't smolder - but it came from a place that was both genuine and deep," Farrow said.

'Faces' (1968)

Nominated for three Oscars, this domestic drama directed by independent US filmmaker John Cassavetes - Rowlands's husband - follows four people over a night of drinking in which painful tensions about an unravelling marriage emerge. Rowlands reveals a great range of expression and emotion in the film, which is shot mostly close-up and appears unscripted but was in fact carefully written.

'A Woman Under the Influence' (1974)

In arguably her greatest role, Rowlands is at her most subtle and moving as the loving and vulnerable housewife and mother, Mabel, who slowly descends into heartbreaking madness. She was nominated for an Oscar and

won a Golden Globe, the film remaining a classic of devastating emotional force. "The performance is as startling today as it was in 1974," says a 2015 article on the website of acclaimed US critic Roger Ebert. "It is the kind of performance that raises the bar for everyone else. It shows the enormous gap between skill and genius."

'Opening Night' (1977)

As an aging actress trying to mount a play with an equally troubled co-star, Rowlands offers a lesson in how to handle the role of an alcoholic with integrity, tragedy and even some humor. She was "at her most radiant," wrote The New York Times in 1991 about the film in which she is again directed by Cassavetes, to whom she was married for more than 30 years. "Miss Rowlands, as she has shown in other films directed by her husband, can be incomparably funny while coming apart at the seams," the paper said.

'Gloria' (1980)

Having fun as a gangster's high-heeled wife saddled with the guardianship of a young orphan called Phil, Rowlands won a second Oscar nomination for her role in one of Cassavetes' last films before his death. The British Film Institute on its website celebrated "another eye-popping performance," referring to Rowlands' typically intense and passionate presence on screen. She "has a lot of talent and realizes it with gusto in 'Gloria', whether she is gunning down a hood at point-blank range or taking Phil to a cemetery... to say farewell to his parents," The New York Times reported on its release. — AFP



Sudanese mechanic Asawar Mustafa works on a car.



Sudanese mechanic Asawar Mustafa works on a car.

'I WANTED THE JOB': SUDANESE WOMAN DEFIES LIBYA PATRIARCHY AS MECHANIC

Wrench in hand, Asawar Mustafa, a female Sudanese refugee in Libya, inspects an oil filter in the women-only section of a garage in western Libya, where being a mechanic is considered a man's role. That hasn't deterred the 22-year-old whose main concern until recently was survival, having fled the war in Sudan with her family and abandoned her last year of studies in pharmacy.

"At first, the experience was a bit difficult," said Asawar, who came to Libya with her four sisters, mother and brother, who works in the men's section at the same garage. She said she was afraid of "making mistakes and damaging the customer's car". But as she honed her skills, she became "passionate" about mechanics, even in the face of misogyny.

People have told Asawar "your place is at home" and "in the kitchen", and that "this is not a job for you", she said. But the young woman was determined "not to let it become an obstacle... On the contrary, it was funny to me that someone would say that without knowing my circumstances."

"I had one goal: I wanted the job."



Women drive into a women-only section of a garage.

Each day, Asawar, wearing a white scarf and black blouse, welcomes a number of female drivers from Misrata, a large port city about 200 kilometres east of Tripoli. "It's great to see women making inroads in all fields," including mechanics, said Fawzia Manita, a customer. "More and more women are driving in Libya and need to feel comfortable in a place where they are dealing with women, whereas if they were dealing with men, they would feel intimidated," said the 39-year-old.

Fleeing Sudan

Libya is struggling to recover from years of war and chaos following the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that overthrew longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Given its proximity to Italy, whose southernmost island of Lampedusa is around 300 kilometres (186 miles) away, Libya is also a key departure point for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, who risk perilous Mediterranean journeys to reach Europe.

Last month, authorities said that up to four in five foreigners in the North African country were undocumented.

The Mustafas left Sudan last October amid the war that broke out in April 2023 between the Sudanese army under Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The conflict has left tens of thousands dead, according to the UN. While more than 10.7 million Sudanese have been internally displaced, 2.3 million have fled to neighboring countries.

After a 10-day voyage through the desert, Asawar arrived in Kufra, an oasis where the UN says more than 40,000 Sudanese refugees live alongside 60,000 locals. The town is around 1,200 kilometres (745 miles) away from Misrata, where Mustafa finally found a job. "Those days were the worst days I've ever lived," she told AFP, without wanting to elaborate. She was reluctant to talk about her experience travelling first to Benghazi, in the northeast, then the capital Tripoli, in the west, then Misrata.

'More comfortable'

At the repair shop, the encouragement of her 19-year-old brother, Sahabi has been a lifeline. "I'm here for her if she needs help" and "reassurance," said Sahabi. Abdelsalam Shagib, the 32-year-old owner of the shop, has also been supportive of Asawar, his only female employee. He said the services offered to female clients should be diversified and conducted by more women. The profession "must not remain reserved for men", he said.

"Women may want to work in this field," he said. According to the World Bank, the proportion of women in the labor force in Libya reached 37 percent in 2022. There are other garages in Libya that offer a section for female drivers, but Shagib said his is the first to provide services by a woman. "Today, women who come here are happy to deal with a woman and are more comfortable," said Asawar. She said that as long as "a woman is determined," no job "is a man's monopoly". "If the desire is there, you should not hesitate." — AFP



Sudanese mechanic Asawar Mustafa works on a car in the women-only section of a garage in the northwestern Libyan city of Misrata. — AFP photos



Sudanese mechanic Asawar Mustafa (right) speaks with a customer in the women-only section of a garage.



Sudanese mechanic Asawar Mustafa works on a car in the women-only section of a garage.

Madonna visits Pompeii, donates to local kids' theatre

Pop superstar Madonna spent her 66th birthday at Pompeii and donated to a local theatre project supporting at-risk kids, the archaeological site said Saturday. The Material Girl visited the famed UNESCO site Friday night with her entourage, meeting a group of teenagers involved in "Dream of Flying", a theatre project organized by the Pompeii museum that involves local youth in cultural presentations.

"As made known during the meeting, the artist decided to support the project... financing the entire year 2024/2025," wrote the museum in a statement. Pompeii's director, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, gave Madonna and her group a private tour, after which some of the young actors presented a sampling of their work.

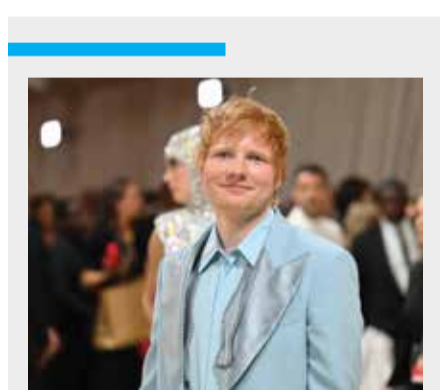
Fans had waited for hours outside the complex's entrance to catch a glimpse of the singer. Organizers said the project, now in its fourth year and

with a budget of about 250,000 euros, has involved about 300 teenagers and children from the area, who take part as actors, musicians and writers. After a premiere at Pompeii's large theatre this year, the project toured Bologna and Ravenna, with a performance in Vicenza scheduled for the fall. Next year's play has not yet been chosen, but would likely be a comedy by Aristophanes, Pompeii site organizers said.

The text will be amended by the children "to give voice... to their experiences in a mixture of classicism, contemporaneity and jokes in Neapolitan", the statement said. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD sent a giant cloud of gases and volcanic ash over the city of Pompeii, burying and preserving its buildings and objects, and even residents itself. — AFP



US pop star Madonna performs onstage during a free concert at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on May 4, 2024. — AFP



British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran arrives for the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 6, 2024, in New York. — AFP

Pop star Sheeran purchases minority stake in Premier League Ipswich

Pop star Ed Sheeran has acquired a minority stake in Ipswich Town, the Premier League football club announced. The 33-year-old English singer-songwriter, a lifelong fan of the team, has taken a 1.4 percent stake in the club, having been a shirt sponsor of both Ipswich men's and women's teams since 2021.

But an Ipswich statement said Sheeran will not join the board at Portman Road as his shareholding is a passive and minority investment only. "I am really excited to have bought a small percentage of my hometown football club," said Sheeran.

"It's any football fan's dream to be an owner of the club they support, and I feel so grateful for this opportunity." The 2024/25 season sees Ipswich returning to the top flight of English football for the first time in 22 years. — AFP

Missouri woman arrested for scheme to steal Elvis estate Graceland

A Missouri woman was arrested on Friday for an alleged "brazen scheme" to steal ownership of Graceland, the historic home of Elvis Presley, from the family of the King of Rock and Roll, the Justice Department said. Lisa Jeanine Findley, 53, faces federal mail fraud and identity theft charges and could face a maximum penalty of more than 20 years in prison.

"The defendant orchestrated a scheme to conduct a fraudulent sale of Graceland, falsely claiming that Elvis Presley's daughter had pledged the historic landmark as collateral for a loan that she failed to repay before her death," Nicole Argentieri, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, said in a statement.

"As part of the brazen scheme, we allege that the defendant created numerous false documents and sought to extort a settlement from the Presley family," Argentieri said.

According to court documents, Findley claimed that Lisa Marie Presley, Elvis's only child, who died in January 2023, had borrowed \$3.8 million in 2018 from a company called Nausany Investments, pledging Graceland as collateral for the loan, and failed to repay the debt.

"Findley allegedly fabricated loan documents on which Findley forged the signatures of Elvis Presley's daughter and a Florida State notary public," the Justice Department said.

A foreclosure sale of Graceland had been scheduled to be held in May, but a Tennessee judge blocked the auction of the Memphis property at the last minute after Elvis Presley's granddaughter, actress Riley Keough, filed a lawsuit alleging the loan documents were forgeries. — AFP



Visitors queue to enter the Graceland mansion of Elvis Presley on August 12, 2017, in Memphis, Tennessee. — AFP

Sports

South Africa again overwhelm Australia in Rugby Championship

Springboks were sloppy in the early exchanges, making uncharacteristic errors

PERTH: South Africa once again overpowered Australia in the Rugby Championship on Saturday with a 30-12 victory in wet and slippery conditions at Optus Stadium.

The two-time reigning World Cup champions scored the game's only four tries in front of 58,197 fans, many supporting the Springboks, with Perth home to a strong South African community. South Africa made 10 changes after a 33-7 triumph last week in Brisbane and overcame a grittier Wallabies in a ferocious contest with several players forced off due to head injuries.

Neither team was comfortable claiming the ball in either the air or on the ground, which had noticeable damp spots after torrential rains. The Springboks, who boasted 14 World Cup winners, struggled initially to handle the slippery conditions and only led 11-9 at half-time, before overwhelming the Wallabies with three second-half tries.

Despite running out of gas, it was an improvement from the Wallabies, who played with a harder edge after their physicality had been questioned. They made five changes, with powerful winger Marika Korobete proving an inspired inclusion in his first Test since last year's World Cup.

But Australia's record slipped to 3-2 under new coach Joe Schmidt, who had given his team a dressing-down after the first Test defeat. After a slow start

in Brisbane, a pumped-up Australia hit the ground running and a breakout penalty was calmly converted by fly-half Noah Lolesio.

The Springboks were sloppy in the early exchanges, making uncharacteristic errors. They were ignited by a dashing Cheslin Kolbe, but his pass was fumbled by Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu as a certain try went begging.

South Africa were rewarded for a period of dominance when fullback Apehele Fassi finished off a chain of slick passes from transition in a spectacular opening try. The Springboks threatened to pull away but failed to capitalize on several fast break chances. They also suffered a blow when stand-in captain Salmaan Moerat was forced off the field with a head injury.

The Wallabies hit back and could have led at the interval only for Lolesio to spray a penalty from 25 metres to the right. South Africa came out aggressively after half-time with Marco van Staden barreling over the line to extend their lead.

After heavy rain lashed the ground, the game went into a lull before reserve Max Jorgensen ignited the home team on debut. But South Africa proved formidable in the maul leading to Malcolm Marx barging over the line for two late tries as their bid to end a five-year title drought in the competition started strongly. — AFP



PERTH: South Africa's Salmaan Moerat (C) holds the Nelson Mandela Plate with his players after their victory during the Rugby Championship Test match between Australia and South Africa. — AFP

All Blacks crush Pumas in second test

AUCKLAND: New Zealand thumped Argentina 42-10 on Saturday as Will Jordan grabbed two of their six tries in The Rugby Championship to avenge last week's shock defeat by the Pumas.

Fly-half Damian McKenzie scored 17 points as the All Blacks defied wet conditions in Auckland in a skilled attacking display to maintain their 30-year unbeaten record at Eden Park.

It was a vast improvement on the 38-30 loss in Wellington last week, with an explosive first-half performance pushing the hosts 35-3 ahead through five converted tries.

It was built on a dominant display from the forwards, who heeded the call for "redemption" by coach Scott Robertson after they were outplayed last week. "We said all week about looking at ourselves in the mirror. For the All Blacks, we have to bring that every week," New Zealand captain Ardie Savea said.

"We can't rely on a loss to get that response. It was about playing in the right areas of the field. I thought Da-



AUCKLAND: New Zealand's Caleb Clarke (C) is tackled during the Rugby Championship Test match between the New Zealand All Blacks and Argentina. — AFP

mian and 'Baz' (fullback Beauden Barrett) controlled the game really well and allowed us forwards to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

Argentina's scrum was overpowered and they weren't the same force at the breakdown in a performance punctuated by mistakes. Their lone try came late in the match to fullback Juan Cruz Mallia, with tighter defence from the visitors levelling the second-half score at 7-7.

Pumas captain Julian Montoya, who missed the first Test through injury, said his side was outclassed. "We weren't good enough this week. We need to try to be consistent, week in, week out and we didn't do it," he said. "We made a lot of mistakes, we need to be better. Congratulations to the All Blacks. They were quality today."

It was New Zealand's best performance under first-year coach Robertson in his fifth match in charge. New

Zealand have now won their past 50 Tests in Auckland since their last defeat there against France in 1994.

McKenzie landed all six conversion attempts and his general play was superior to the first Test, mixing an astute long kicking game with some clever chips to counter the Pumas.

He also opened the scoring with a try after pouncing on a chip from Jordie Barrett. Santiago Carreras responded with a Pumas penalty goal before Savea powered over for his 27th Test try, lifting him level with former skipper Richie McCaw for the most by an All Blacks forward.

Wingers Jordan and Caleb Clarke were both put into space for tries, Jordan capitalizing on a blindside break from scrum-half TJ Perenara.

McKenzie's sweetly timed pass put Barrett across just before the interval.

Jordan continued the rout soon after the break, lifting him to 33 tries in as many Tests in his first starting appearance since last year's World Cup.

The game entered a lull before Mallia's try and a late yellow card was shown to All Blacks hooker Asafo Aumua for a high tackle. New Zealand's next two Rugby Championship Tests are against the world champion Springboks in South Africa, while Argentina will host Australia in two Tests. — AFP

USA's McCarthy shares lead with Matsuyama

WASHINGTON: American Denny McCarthy and Japan's Hideki Matsuyama shared the lead on 11-under after the second round of the PGA Tour's St. Jude's Championship in Memphis on Friday. Despite struggling with a hip injury, McCarthy posted a fine 7-under round of 63 while Matsuyama shot 64 to head into the weekend on top of the leaderboard.

The 31-year-old McCarthy, who has yet to win on the PGA Tour but suffered playoff defeats this year and last, got off to a fine start with four birdies in his opening six holes before a bogey on the par-4 seventh.

He recovered with a birdie on the par-3 eighth and showed the same resilience when he bogeyed the 12th and immediately birdied on the next hole. "It was a really good round. I did everything pretty well. I putted well. I hit a lot of good iron shots. Bounced back nicely after a couple of the bogeys I had. Everything felt really solid today," he said.

McCarthy's performance was even more impressive given the hip trouble he has been coping with. "I don't want to divulge too much. It's bothering me, and I've been able to do enough the last few days to push through it," he said.

"The heat really helps it. It really loosens it up. But I've had to spend a lot of time post-round, pre-round getting it loose, getting it ready to go to play a full round." Matsuyama started with a birdie on the par-4 first hole but then missed a short birdie putt on the second and he bogeyed the par-3 fourth after driving into the water.

From then on though, the 2021 Masters champion was in control, bogey-free and making five more birdies. Matsuyama is looking for his 10th win on the PGA Tour and his second of this season following his victory at the Genesis Invitational in Los Angeles in February.

American Sam Burns was a stroke behind the leading pair after carding a 63 with an eagle on the par-5 third hole. Scottie Scheffler, fresh off his Olympic gold medal in Paris, leads the FedEx Cup playoff standings and is in contention yet again with his solid bogey-free 65 putting him on nine-under, two off the leaders.

"I did a good job of having some nice up-and-downs to kind of keep the momentum and the round going. I holed a nice putt for par early in the round on 5 and then I had a couple nice chips after that getting it close to the hole making what could have been a stressful par into a pretty stress-free par with some nice pitches. Overall it was a pretty good day," said the reigning Masters champion. — AFP

India's Chopra eyes bigger returns after Olympic silver

NEW DELHI: India's javelin star Neeraj Chopra said Saturday that missing out on Olympic gold hurt, but the injury-hit athlete eyes bigger returns in upcoming competitions.

The 26-year-old won silver in Paris after Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem won gold with an Olympic record of 92.97 metres in the javelin final. Chopra, who made history in 2020 Tokyo Olympics with India's first ever Olympic track and field gold, threw further in Paris with 89.45 metres — not too far off his personal best of 89.94m.

"There is no comparison with a gold medal," Chopra told reporters by phone from Switzerland, where he is training for upcoming tournaments. "Winning back-to-back medals for your nation is good and taking a lap of the ground with your coun-



Neeraj Chopra

try's flag is always a wonderful feeling," he added.

"But the national anthem playing when your flag goes up with you on top of the podium was missing." However, he said he was pleased with his silver. "We have to accept what we have," he said. "I am happy with what I got."

Chopra built on his breakout success in Tokyo

by winning world championship gold last year, but missed a few competitions due to a groin injury. But the well-built star, who hails from the northern Indian state of Haryana — a nursery of athletes including Olympic wrestlers and boxers, remains confident of future success.

"I believed that I could cover more distance," Chopra said on his mindset after Nadeem's monster throw in Paris. But Chopra said he will not set himself targets of 90 metres and more. "I leave this to God. Just prepare well, and give it a rip, the javelin will travel," he said.

Chopra became a national hero after his Tokyo gold, earning million-dollar endorsement deals with his boyish charm, changing hairstyles and an infectious smile. However, Pakistan's Nadeem shot to overnight stardom after his throw gave his nation's their first individual Olympic gold.

Nadeem's father-in-law gifted him a buffalo for the Olympic feat. But Chopra isn't surprised, saying he had been given a large container of ghee, or clarified butter. "In Indian villages... gifts such as buffaloes, motorbikes and tractors are common," he said. — AFP

Markram, Verreynne put South Africa in charge of 2nd Test

PROVIDENCE: Half-centuries by Aiden Markram at the top of the innings and Kyle Verreynne at the end of the day put South Africa in charge of the second Test against the West Indies on Friday. At stumps on the second day, the Proteas were 223 for five in their second innings, for an overall lead of 239 runs.

Having dismissed the home side for 144 in the morning session to earn a nominal 16-run first innings lead, the Proteas go into day three looking to Verreynne and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder to further extend a sixth-wicket partnership that has already realized 84 runs.

After 17 wickets tumbled on a frenetic opening day, day two saw a return to regular Test match programming with the typical ebbs and flows of a long, energy-sapping day. Starting the morning at 97 for seven in reply to South Africa's first innings total of 160, Jason Holder's unbeaten 54 (88 balls, six fours and one six) was vital in getting the home side closer to their opponents' first day effort.

He put on 40 for the last wicket with considerable assistance from local hero Shamar Joseph. Buoyed by a five-wicket haul on his first day of senior international cricket in his homeland, Joseph took advan-



PROVIDENCE: Tristan Stubbs (R) of South Africa hits 4 as Joshua Da Silva (L) of West Indies watches during Day 2 of the 2nd Test match between West Indies and South Africa. — AFP

tage of being dropped first ball to belt 25 with four fours and one six before falling leg-before to left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj.

"I was just trying to eke out as many runs as we

could," said Holder at the end of the day. "First session tomorrow is obviously crucial for us. The most important thing is not to let the runs get too far away, let them sweat a little bit more for their runs, and I

believe, with the amount of time left in the game, that we can chase anything they give us."

Verreynne, Mulder in runs

With the first innings of both teams very much dominated by the bowlers, Markram and opening partner Tony de Zorzi changed the tone of the match with an attacking start to the second innings. West Indies' bowlers pulled back the scoring rate deeper into the afternoon session and it was Jayden Seales who eventually separated the pair after they had put on 79 when de Zorzi (39) feathered a catch to wicketkeeper Joshua da Silva. Their discipline brought greater rewards at the start of the final session as South Africa lost four wickets for 19 runs to be in trouble at 139 for five, a slide triggered by Gudakesh Motie's dismissal of Markram for 51 (108 balls, six fours).

Seales (3 for 52) and left-arm orthodox spinner Motie (2 for 61) led the Caribbean side's fightback and the West Indies sensed the chance to dismiss South Africa before the end of the day. However wicketkeeper-batsman Verreynne, whose unbeaten 50 has come off 71 balls and included seven fours, found a resolute partner in Mulder, the all-rounder following up his haul of four for 32 in the West Indies first innings with a determined 34 not out.

Notwithstanding the need to preserve their wickets first and foremost, both looked for opportunities to score and Mulder did anything but shut up shop in the day's final two overs as he hoisted Motie and occasion left-arm spinner Kavem Hodge for the two sixes of his innings so far. — AFP

Sports

PSG begin post-Mbappe era with win at Le Havre

Comfortable win in the end for Luis Enrique's team

LE HAVRE: Paris Saint-Germain began their defence of the Ligue 1 title with a 4-1 win at Le Havre on Friday in their first competitive game since the departure of talisman Kylian Mbappe to Real Madrid. Lee Kang-in gave PSG the lead inside three minutes in Normandy only for Gautier Lloris to equalize, but late goals by Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola and a Randal Kolo Muani penalty sealed the victory for the reigning French champions. It was a comfortable win in the end for Luis Enrique's team, with their substitutes ultimately making the difference as PSG's strength in depth proved too much for a team who only just avoided relegation last season.

"It is the first game back and it's a very good start," said PSG's Spanish coach. The French international trio of Kolo Muani, Dembele and Barcola all began the game on the bench, while Portugal midfielder Joao Neves came on at half-time for his debut after joining from Benfica for a fee that could reach 69.9 million euros (\$76.7m) including bonuses. Yet Le Havre will wonder what might have been had a Josue Casimir goal — which would have put them in front early in the second half — not been disallowed by VAR for a handball. "We had highs and lows, but the substitutes did a lot of good for us," added Luis Enrique.

"The final score disguises the fact that there are things to improve upon. We gave away lots of easy balls and had we gone 2-1 down that might have changed everything." PSG have not made any marquee signings to fill the enormous void left by Mbappe, who departed for Madrid in June after scoring 44 goals last season and registering a club-record 256 across his seven years at the club. It remains to be seen if Luis Enrique's team can repeat their performances of the last campaign, when they swept all the domestic honors and reached the semi-finals of the

Champions League. The Spanish coach was without several regulars here, with left-back Nuno Mendes suspended while Fabian Ruiz is not yet ready to return after helping Spain win Euro 2024.

Late goals

There was a debut on the left wing for Ibrahim Mbaye, who is only 16 and was one of three teenagers in PSG's starting line-up alongside Yoram Zague and Warren Zaire-Emery, both 18. South Korea star Lee opened the scoring when he collected a Goncalo Ramos pass on the right wing before sending a shot into the far corner with the aid of a deflection.

However, the visitors were then dealt a blow as Ramos was forced off with an ankle injury, and his replacement Kolo Muani then sent a header crashing back off the bar. Le Havre, in their first game under new coach Didier Digard, improved as the game went on and Abdoulaye Toure had a goal disallowed for offside just before the half-hour mark. They were level three minutes into the second half when Lloris, the brother of former France captain Hugo, turned in Christopher Operi's free-kick. The hosts then thought they had taken the lead on 53 minutes when skipper Casimir ran through to score, but VAR ruled his effort out after a long check for a handball. Lee struck the frame of the goal before Dembele, who had been sent on for the final 20 minutes, gave PSG the advantage again on 85 minutes with a header from a Neves cross. Barcola curled in a superb third a minute later, and Kolo Muani then won and converted the late penalty which wrapped up the win for the visitors at the Stade Oceane. Last season's runners-up Monaco face Saint-Etienne on Saturday, while Roberto De Zerbi's first game in charge of Marseille will be away to Brest, who surprisingly finished third in the last campaign. — AFP



LE HAVRE: Le Havre's French forward #77 Steve Ngoura (R) and Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian defender #05 Marquinhos (C) jump for the ball during the French L1 football match between Le Havre AC and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at The Stade Oceane in Le Havre. — AFP

Barbosu gets contested Olympic bronze

BUCHAREST: Romanian gymnast Ana Barbosu received Olympic bronze at a ceremony in Bucharest on Friday after the International Gymnastics Federation awarded it to her instead of US gymnast Jordan Chiles following a bitter row.

A score revision over degree of difficulty lifted Chiles to third in the floor exercise at the Paris Olympics on August 5, causing heartbreak for Barbosu who thought she had won bronze. Romania appealed the decision, and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled the US appeal for the score revision came too late.

Chiles, 23, said Thursday that being stripped of a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics has been devastating and heartbreaking and delivered her an unjust blow. On Friday, Barbosu, 18, said she felt "very happy and grateful", though saddened that "there have



BUCHAREST: Romanian gymnast Ana Maria Barbosu poses with her Olympic bronze medal. — AFP

been such problems at a high level".

"We as athletes have done absolutely nothing wrong," she said, adding she hoped for Chiles and fellow Romanian gymnast Sabina Voinea, who also contested her own score in the floor final, to get "happy conclusions".

After the medal — a different one than was given to Chiles — was placed around her neck in a short ceremony held by the Romanian Olympic and Sports

Committee, Barbosu told reporters: "I didn't realize it was that heavy."

She added she hopes to bring more medals to the eastern European country, which used to have a powerful gymnastics programme but had not taken part in the Olympics for the past 12 years. "I tell the girls who want to do gymnastics to have faith that if they want something, it will come true if they stick with it and put in the hard work," Barbosu said.

In spite of the hot afternoon, she patiently posed with the medal for photographers, kissed it and then took photos with some children. USA Gymnastics has vowed to continue to fight for Chiles' medal.

One of the defining images of the Paris Games shows Chiles and silver winner US superstar Simone Biles and Chiles bowing to gold winner Brazil's Rebeca Andrade on the podium.

In her remarks Thursday, Chiles also said a swirl of social media attacks have been extremely hurtful as she tries to recover from the controversy over the floor exercise final. Chiles, Barbosu and Romania's Voinea have all been attacked online.

Romania's gymnastics federation has asked for the attacks to stop, as did Barbosu's mother, Pompilia Barbosu, on Friday, "begging as a mother to stop all the defamations". — AFP

Mueller doubles up as Bayern start Kompany era in style

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller scored twice in three first-half minutes as Bayern Munich beat second-division Ulm 4-0 in the German Cup on Friday in their first match under coach Vincent Kompany. Harry Kane and Kingsley Coman then scored late in the second half to complete the rout in the first competitive fixture of the German football season.

Winners of 20 German Cups, Bayern have failed to make it past the quarter-finals of the competition since winning the treble in 2019-20. Bayern brought in Kompany as manager in the summer after failing to win a trophy last season, their first trophyless campaign since 2012. — AFP

Today's Matches

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Brentford v Crystal Palace	16:00
Chelsea v Manchester City	18:30
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Real Sociedad v Rayo Vallecano	22:30
Mallorca v Real Madrid	22:30
ITALIAN SERIE A	
Bologna v Udinese	19:30
Verona v SSC Napoli	19:30
Cagliari v Roma	21:45
Lazio v Venezia	21:45
FRENCH LEAGUE	
Auxerre v Nice	16:00
Toulouse v Nantes	18:00
Angers v Lens	18:00
Montpellier v Strasbourg	18:00
Rennes v Lyon	21:45

Maresca pleads for time after chaotic spending spree

LONDON: Chelsea's new coach Enzo Maresca has a Premier League baptism of fire when champions Manchester City visit on Sunday as the Italian scrambles to form a cohesive team from another chaotic transfer window for the Blues. In keeping with Chelsea's transfer policy since a takeover two years ago, fronted by LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly, the London club have embarked on a spending spree focusing on promising young talent.

Winger Pedro Neto's £54 million (\$65 million) move from Wolves is the standout from nine new arrivals for an estimated £160 million. But after splashing well over £1 billion on signings over the past two

years, Chelsea's website lists 43 first-team players and over 50 are still contracted to the club when those on loan are included.

Many have been sidelined from Maresca's pre-season training to focus on finding moves before the transfer window closes at the end of the month. "At the moment if I start to think I have 43 players it is not a good thing," Maresca said on Friday. "(Co-sporting directors) Paul (Winstanley) and Laurence (Stewart) they are there in charge of finding solutions for these kind of players. I'm not the guy in charge of finding solutions for loan players, otherwise they have to pay me double!"

To add to Maresca's task he has to win over a discontented fan base. Many in the Chelsea support were craving some stability as Mauricio Pochettino turned around a poor start to finish strongly and climb up to sixth in the Premier League. Instead, the club's hierarchy had more change in mind as Pochettino departed after just one season in charge. Supporters are also unhappy at seeing players that have come through the club's youth system sacrificed to balance the books.

Conor Gallagher is not available for selection on Sunday despite the collapse of his move to Atletico Madrid. Maresca has been handed a five-year contract following his success in leading Leicester back to the Premier League in his only season at the King Power.

A 'double squad'

The 44-year-old's only other senior managerial role was a short-lived stint at Parma in 2021, but his time working alongside City boss Pep Guardiola was also crucial in helping him land the Chelsea job. "All the managers need time," said Guardiola on Friday.

"I don't know if Chelsea is the place to do this but give him time and it will work." Despite working at some of the world's richest clubs, Guardiola's preference has always been to work with a smaller squad to maintain harmony among his players.

And he has sympathy with the situation Maresca inherits. "When you see a double squad, yeah it's a lot!" Guardiola added. "But the reason why they do it is not my business." The last time Chelsea beat City was in the 2021 Champions League final. — 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, **AMENA**, Holder of Indian Passport No. **N9725423** having permanent address Vajhi Mohalla Nai Abadi Partapur Banswara, Rajasthan, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name **AMENA** and surname **DUDHWALA**.

(18/08/2024)

I have changed my old name from **Mohmad Ubed Abdul Saddique** to new name Kagzi Mohammed Ubed Abdul Saddique & I will be known as new name which please note. SD: Kagzi Mohammed Ubed Abdul Saddique, ADD: C-30.

(6152#, 15/08/2024)

Ihsan Park, Block No. 272/B, near Kasturi Hotel, Isroli, VRC- Bardoli, PO-Bardoli, Dist - Surat, Gujarat - 394601.

(6153#, 15/08/2024)

I have changed my old name from **Abdul Saddique Abdul Aziz** to new name Kagzi Abdul Saddique Abdul Aziz, & I will be known as new name which please note. SD: Kagzi Abdul Saddique Abdul Aziz, ADD: C-30, Ihsan Park, Block No. 272/B, near Kasturi Hotel, Isroli, VRC- Bardoli, PO-Bardoli, Dist - Surat, Gujarat - 394601.

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Liverpool manager Slot off to winning start at Ipswich

‘I think we needed to win the long balls through the air’



IPSWICH: Ipswich Town's Irish midfielder #11 Marcus Harness (2nd L) controls the ball during the English Premier League football match between Ipswich Town and Liverpool. — AFP

IPSWICH: Arne Slot got off to a winning Premier League start as Liverpool manager thanks to two quickfire goals from Diogo Jota and Mohamed Salah in a 2-0 win at newly-promoted Ipswich on Saturday. Slot has the unenviable task of succeeding Jurgen Klopp at Anfield, but the Dutchman will have been heartened by a commanding second-half performance. “The first taste in the first half was maybe as expected because they were all on top of us, very aggressive. Second half was a joy to watch,” said Slot.

Ipswich were riding the crest of a wave after back-to-back promotions and a return to the Premier League for the first time in 22 years. Celebrity fan and minority owner Ed Sheeran was in at-

tendance at Portman Road, although the singer-songwriter had to leave at half-time to attend a gig in Serbia. Sheeran saw the best of the Tractor Boys, who were far from overawed by their illustrious opponents early on. Omari Hutchinson had a shot blocked inside two minutes before Jacob Greaves headed the best chance of the first half too close to Alisson Becker. Slot is the only new face at Anfield as Liverpool are the only side in the Premier League yet to make a signing in the transfer window. The need for some fresh faces was shown in a sloppy and slow first 45 minutes on the ball. However, Slot's half-time team talk did the trick as the Reds were a different side

after the break and could have ran out far more convincing winners. “First thing was we don't have to speak about tactics if you lose so many duels,” added Slot. “I think we needed to win the long balls through the air. That helped and gave us control. I don't think Ipswich could keep up with the tempo in the second half.” Greaves needed to make a vital clearance to prevent Salah's effort curling in at the far corner. But Liverpool also had a narrow escape as a potential penalty for a Virgil van Dijk push on Liam Delap was ruled out for a marginal offside in the build-up. Luis Diaz missed a glorious chance to open the scoring when he scooped over from close range after wonderful play from Trent Al-

exander-Arnold and Dominik Szoboszlai to tee up the Colombian. Alexander-Arnold's teasing cross was then headed wide by Jota with the goal gaping. Liverpool's pressure finally told on the hour mark as another defence-splitting pass from Alexander-Arnold opened up Ipswich and Salah unselfishly squared for Jota to make amends for his earlier miss. Five minutes later it was 2-0 as Salah pounced to score for the ninth time on the opening weekend of the season for Liverpool after a one-two with Szoboszlai. Ipswich goalkeeper Christian Walton made a string of saves in the closing stages, notably from Salah and Conor Bradley, to prevent a more embarrassing opening

day defeat. Kieran McKenna's men had been unbeaten at home in the league for nearly 12 months. But Ipswich were given an early lesson in the gulf in quality between the Championship and Premier League. Things will not get any easier for Ipswich next weekend when they travel to defending champions Manchester City. Liverpool, on the other hand, have the chance to build up some early momentum under Slot. Either side of a trip to Manchester United next month, they face Brentford, Nottingham Forest, Bournemouth, Wolves and Crystal Palace in their next six Premier League games before the October international break. — AFP



KUWAIT: Qadisiya Sports Club and Yarmouk Club players in action.

Qadisiya Sports Club begin its campaign in style

KUWAIT: Qadisiya Sports Club football team began its campaign for winning Kuwait Zain Football Championship with a win against Yarmouk Club (1-0) Friday evening. Al-Qadisiya which lost its first match against Kuwait 1-0, was able to score relatively early in the match in the 12th minute by its Brazilian striker Igor Rossi who received a pass from veteran player Bader Al-Mutawaa. The second half of the match saw Qadisiya's level drop specially after its players Athbi Shihab and Muath Al-Dhafiri were injured, as Yarmouk players attempted to do something but failed. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi did not find its match with

Tadhamon easy, as Al-Arabi scored in the 40th minute, then Tadhamon answered 3 minutes later. Nigerian player Anayo Iwuala added a second goal for Al-Arabi, only to have Talal Al-Ansari answer it, and that is how the first half ended (2-2). Al-Arabi's winning goal was scored by Ahmad Al-Khaldi from the spot. Al-Arabi now has (6) points, while Tadhamon remain with one point.

Kuwait Zain Football League Standings

Team	Played	Won	Draw	Loss	Points
Al-Arabi	2	2	0	0	6
Fahahel	1	1	0	0	3
Salmiya	1	1	0	0	3
Kuwait	1	1	0	0	3
Qadisiya	2	1	0	1	3
Tadhamon	2	0	1	1	1
Yarmouk	2	0	1	1	1
Nasr	1	0	0	1	0
Kazma	1	0	0	1	0
Khaitan	1	0	0	1	0

Zirkzee a hero as Man Utd beat Fulham in opener

MANCHESTER: Joshua Zirkzee made himself a Manchester United hero on his debut with a late winner to beat Fulham 1-0 in the opening match of the Premier League season on Friday. Zirkzee, lacking match fitness after his £36.5m (\$47 million) move from Bologna last month, came on only for the final half hour. The Dutch international saved the Red Devils from a frustrating evening at Old Trafford when he poked in Alejandro Garnacho's cross on 87 minutes. “To win here in my first home game and to grab a goal, it couldn't be better,” said Zirkzee. “I've been told (scoring at the Stretford End) is one of the best feelings at Manchester United. I'm so thankful and blessed I could experience it in my first game. It's an amazing feeling.” United boss Erik ten Hag survived at the end of last season, despite finishing eighth in the Premier League, thanks to winning the FA Cup.

Whether that shock victory over rivals and English champions Manchester City in May could be a springboard remains to be seen after a performance that was eerily reminiscent of many last season. “I have seen many spaces where we have to improve but that is normal,” said Ten Hag. “It (the win) is good to strengthen the belief.” The Dutchman revealed on the eve of the game that his side were “not ready” for the new campaign with key players missing through injury or a lack of match fitness, and it showed. Bruno Fernandes started in a centre-forward role in the absence of Rasmus Hojlund, while Zirkzee was on the bench after returning to pre-season late following Euro 2024. Noussair Mazraoui was thrown straight into the starting line-up at left-back after joining from Bayern Munich this week. But there was no place in the squad for Jadon Sancho even though the winger and Ten Hag appeared to have settled their differences. Fulham won at Old Trafford last season for the first time in 20 years in February during a torrid campaign for United. Little seemed to have changed in the opening 20 minutes as the visitors started confidently and Andre Onana did well to prevent



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder #18 Casemiro heads the ball during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

Kenny Tete's dipping effort finding the top corner. But United grew into the game after a slow start.

‘Kill in the box’

Twice Fernandes missed huge chances by firing too close to Bernd Leno before the German goalkeeper spread himself brilliantly to this time deny Mason Mount a rare goal since his move from Chelsea just over a year ago. “We created a lot of chances and we should have scored earlier,” added Ten Hag. “That is the only criticism of the team: Kill in the box!” Ten Hag turned to Garnacho and Zirkzee from the bench in the search of a winner. In doing so United left themselves open and Fulham could have secured another famous three points at the Theatre of Dreams. Andreas Pereira's poor pass cost Alex Iwobi the chance to run clean through on goal. Moments later Lisandro Martinez produced a goal-saving clearance from Pereira's dangerous low cross. Instead it was the home side that snatched all three points. Garnacho's ball from the right was not the best, but Zirkzee managed to get a toe on it to divert it beyond Leno into the far corner. United should have had a second in stoppage time when Garnacho somehow skewed wide with an open goal to aim at from Marcus Rashford's unselfish pass. But United held on to give Ten Hag the winning start he badly needed. — AFP